

Sexuality Among Modern Orthodox Teenage

Girls in Israel:

A Study of the Effects of an Educational Intervention

Volume 1

Yocheved Debow

School of Education

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This work was carried out under the supervision of

Dr. David Resnick

School of Education

Bar-Ilan University

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Glossary

Hareidi – An adjective describing Ultra-Orthodox Judaism. A central tenet of the Ultra-Orthodox approach is to reject modernity in principle. Ultra-Orthodox society strives to implement a complete separation from secular society and a complete separation of the sexes.

Halakhah – The collective body of Jewish law, including those of Biblical and Rabbinic origin. It includes customs and traditions which have become accepted into the body of Jewish law.

Halakhic – An adjective describing practice in accordance with Jewish law.

Halakhot – A plural noun describing the specific laws which together make up the body of Jewish law.

Kedushah – Holiness.

Mechanechet/Mechanech – A home-room educator. In religious schools the home room educator is a central figure in the school that has responsibility for the academic, social and religious growth of students in his or her class. They conduct regular one-on-one conversations with students in their class and usually seek to nurture a deep relationship with their students.

Mikvah – A ritual bath used for purification purposes. Orthodox couples refrain from sexual intimacy during the time that a woman has her period and for a waiting time of seven days thereafter. Orthodox married women must immerse themselves in a ritual bath to purify themselves after this hiatus before resuming sexual relations. As a matter of custom, some men, also immerse themselves. The custom can be at regular intervals, (either daily, before Shabbat or holidays) or on a more ad hoc basis. Immersion for men is sometimes connected to a purification process in response to sexually inappropriate behavior.

Minhag – A custom that is not rooted in Biblical or Rabbinic law and may differ from community to community. A custom may become as binding as law.

Mitzvah – A commandment of Jewish law, usually Biblical in origin.

Modern Orthodox – An adjective describing a sociological subset of halakhic Jews which actively engages secular society. In Israel, this group is also described as “National Religious” or “Religious Zionist”.

Normation - The term Green uses to describe the process whereby one becomes governed by a norm.

Shemirat Negiyah – Observance of the Jewish laws forbidding physical touching between the sexes.

Shomer (m.)/Shomeret (f.)Negiyah – Someone who is observant of these laws.

Tzniut – Modesty. While it encompasses a broad range of behaviors it is most commonly used to refer to women’s clothing and the expectations of Jewish law with regards appropriate dress.

Ulpana – A Modern Orthodox girls’ boarding school in Israel. Ulpanot (pl.)

Abstract

The Modern Orthodox Jewish community in Israel seeks to combine commitment to Jewish law with membership in secular society. This community therefore experiences tension when transmitting traditional norms of conduct which are in conflict with contemporary norms of behavior. The tension is particularly acute in the area of sexuality, because the community permits intermingling of the sexes in formal and informal frameworks while forbidding any form of pre-marital sexual activity.

This study explores how Modern Orthodox Israeli teenage girls understand sexuality, both in their tradition and in secular Israeli culture, exploring contradictions between the two. Baseline information was gathered via in-depth interviews from a class of tenth grade girls concerning their personal norms as well as their knowledge and attitudes in the area of sexuality. Utilizing a classroom-based intervention, participants were given a course of fifteen classes in “Life Values and Intimacy” education. In follow-up interviews, the impact of the course on their norms, as well as on their knowledge and attitudes was assessed.

Principal Theoretical Guidelines

Sexuality and Society

The traditional objectivist approach to human sexuality employs physiological descriptions in order to measure and analyze the objective phenomenon of human sexual behavior. This approach locates sexuality primarily in the body. In contrast, the constructivist approach to human sexuality defines sex and sexuality as a product of external social forces such as social status and political power. Foucault’s work showed the limitation of an objectivist approach and in its place defined sexuality as a domain of nature controlled by social powers. Feminist researchers, building on Foucault’s ideas, view human sexuality as a social and political construct focused on the preservation of patriarchal schemes and gender differences. Recognizing that human sexuality is a culturally entrenched construct underscores the need to produce sexuality education materials tailored specifically for the Modern Orthodox community. This has become increasingly necessary with the heightened sexualization of the majority culture. Transmitting traditional norms in areas of modesty, sexuality and relationships for the Orthodox community requires an approach that engages modernity while remaining deeply rooted in the religious tradition.

Sexuality Education Requires a Moral Context

Early proponents of sexuality education programs claimed to be offering value-free sexuality education. However a gradual consensus emerged that the idea of value-free sexuality education was false. One could not teach about sexuality, even in the most factual way, without conveying judgments about the morality of sexual activity. Assuming that sexuality education cannot take place in a moral vacuum, the question of an appropriate ethical framework became important for sexuality educators to address.

The essential debate concerning moral education revolves around two positions – the moral development approach, represented most notably by Kohlberg, and the directive approach of Character Education championed by Lickona. Kohlberg’s approach identifies certain principles of justice and fairness as representing the pinnacle of moral maturity. Students participate in open-ended discussions of moral dilemmas in order to determine and justify moral conclusions based on the principles of justice and fairness. Kohlberg emphasized the importance of the process of moral reasoning and the need for actually experiencing moral dilemmas to further moral development. The Character Education approach argues that children need to be taught right from wrong and will not necessarily arrive at mature moral sensibilities without direct instruction. These two poles are reflected in the variety of Jewish approaches to moral education including the Autonomous approach which encourages thoughtful, autonomous decision making, the Normative-Prescriptive approach in which traditional values are transmitted by knowledgeable educators and the Deliberative approach in which the student plays an active role in determining conclusions about behaviors. A novel approach to moral education is offered by Thomas Green in *Voices: The educational formation of conscience*. He describes his approach for “members of an already formed moral community concerned with the task of improving that life and preserving it in the next generation”, which aptly describes the Modern Orthodox community and therefore will be adopted for our research purposes.

Green defines conscience as “reflexive judgment about things that matter.” Central to his thesis is the idea that the primary goal of moral education is to develop a person’s capacity for “self governance” based on the acquisition of social norms. In his formulation, norms are defined as paradigmatic rules of conduct which prescribe how people think they ought to behave, even when not necessarily behaving so. Green delineates ascending levels of commitment to a particular norm: accordance, compliance, obedience and observance. He sees the development of a sense of prudence, doing what is right in the service of self-interest, as a critical step towards mature conscience. Green also broadens the scope of what we view as moral activity to include the individual’s desire to achieve excellence in the execution of a

particular craft. Drawing insight and inspiration from various voices of conscience a person is expected to take responsibility for his own moral life. These voices do not always agree but exhort the individual to different, sometimes contradictory ends including excellence in craft, loyalty in membership, and sacrifice to duty. I utilized Green's approach to moral education to analyze and understand the ways in which participants acquire norms – "normation" in Green's terms. Through this analysis, I was able to present conclusions about the process of normation to Jewish laws associated with sexuality such as *shemirat negiyah* and modesty. I further used Green's ideas to suggest educational directions for curricula in these areas.

Sexuality Education: A History

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, sexuality education has been the subject of much debate in the United States and the approach to education in this area has undergone significant evolution. When programs did not succeed in curbing the rising rate of sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancies, new approaches were explored. Four generations of sexuality education programs can be identified in the United States, which reflect changing paradigms.

The first generation of sexuality education programs was developed in the 1970's. Educators provided information about sexual behavior, contraception, and pregnancy, as well as the negative consequences of unwanted pregnancies. It soon became clear that providing information was not sufficient to change behavior. The second generation of sexuality education programs developed during the early 1980's focused on decision-making and values clarification exercises in an effort to better equip students to make healthy, thoughtful decisions about sexual behaviors. Teen pregnancies and cases of teenage sexually transmitted diseases continued to rise. The third generation of sexuality education programs developed in the 1990's was known as "Abstinence-only" programs, which taught that the only safe policy to protect against sexually-transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancy was abstinence. In response to abstinence-only policies, a fourth generation of programs known as "abstinence-plus" approaches or comprehensive sexuality education, were developed which present abstinence from sexual activity as the method of choice for adolescents but also include a comprehensive discussion of contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, and other sexuality issues like homosexuality. As part of this fourth generation, a task force in Cleveland, Ohio developed a set of guidelines known as the "Life Values Curriculum: Health Education for the Jewish Day School." These were rooted in the guidelines for sexuality education developed by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). They followed the recommendations of SIECUS for comprehensive sexuality education with substantial modifications to fit the needs of

the Orthodox school community. Based on the Life Values Curriculum guidelines, I developed The Life Values and Intimacy education curriculum, a classroom ready set of materials for grades three through twelve. The intervention employed in this study selected materials from this comprehensive curriculum.

Family Life Education in the State Religious School

Ulpanot were the first religious schools to teach any form of Family Life education in the upper high-school grades. Content focused on women's roles and the centrality of the home for the religious family and classes were based on Jewish law and Jewish philosophy. The Unit of Sexuality Education in the State school system was established in 1973. Later, (in the late 70's) "The Unit for Family Life Education" was established in the State religious school system. The term "Family Life Education" reflected the ambivalence surrounding the Unit and the underlying philosophy that the central purpose of these classes was to promote life values which focus on the family, rather than on sexuality. Religious educators recognized the need for a religious response to the increasingly permissive nature of society's attitudes to sexuality but were still hesitant to teach about sexuality in religious schools. They chose to focus on family as a guiding principle of Family Life education curricula in the State religious schools, and avoided addressing issues of sexuality.

While Family Life education officially became a subject taught in Israel's State religious school system in the 1980's, it has never been widely taught. In those schools which do teach it, courses generally occur only in the upper school grades and almost exclusively in girls schools. In many schools the emphasis in these classes is on forming a girl's character in preparation for life as a wife and mother, in order to perpetuate traditional gender roles rather than to help her negotiate her present dilemmas relating to sexuality, modesty and relationships. In schools which are geared towards matriculation in "Family and Intimacy", courses focus on texts dealing with laws of marriage and divorce. They generally present traditional gender roles and offer little, if any, sexuality or relationships education. Attempts to implement courses based in alternative materials have been unsuccessful. However, in 2005 the Unit of Family Life Education published a comprehensive volume of curricular materials for the State Religious schools. The volume is an important response to the need for Family Life education materials developed specifically for the Modern Orthodox community. However, it is not fully comprehensive, omitting important topics such as homosexuality, pornography, internet usage and *shemirat negiyab*. No assessment of the new curriculum has yet been published.

Choosing a Philosophy of Sexuality Education

In her study of Family Life educators in the State religious school system in Israel, Samet distinguishes three common approaches to sexuality education within the religious community: silencing, post facto, and proactive. Silencing is by far the most common approach, and maintains that religious teenagers are not aware of their sexuality and any attention to the subject is unwarranted stimulation. The post-facto approach views teaching about sexuality as a necessary but unfortunate response to the contemporary reality. Ideally, students should remain innocent until such information is needed before marriage. However, students' exposure to majority culture leaves religious educators with no choice but to formulate a Jewish response to counter the information they receive from their surroundings. In this approach, only minimal education should be provided. The third approach is educationally proactive and views Family Life education as a vital part of adolescent education. It emphasizes a positive approach to sexuality from within a perspective of Jewish law, rather than focusing on all that is forbidden. The Life Values and Intimacy Curriculum is rooted in the proactive approach and expands it into a comprehensive curriculum which addresses related topics such as decision making, self-esteem, and communication skills.

Methodology

In the current study, the case study method of qualitative research was utilized. All twenty-two members of a tenth grade class (ages 15-16) in a religious girls' Ulpana in Israel participated in the study. These students are representative of the Israeli Modern Orthodox community. They were chosen as a purposeful sample that can provide information about the research topic.

The research consisted of three phases. In the first phase, I gathered baseline information from the participants concerning their knowledge and attitudes to both the secular culture and their own society in areas of sexuality, using semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Participants were asked to identify the central influences on the development of their knowledge and attitudes in areas of sexuality. They also identified who they considered to be most informative and helpful when seeking information or advice in areas of sexuality. Participants were asked to describe the ways in which they understood the different sexual value systems to which they are exposed including secular culture (especially as experienced through the media); Orthodox Judaism's "official stance"; and the values of their home and peer group. In addition, the study explored whether participants talk about issues of sexuality and relationships with their male peers' as well as their own perceptions about their male peers knowledge and attitudes in areas of sexuality.

In the second phase of the research, participants took part in a weekly course in Life Values and Intimacy education in the school taught by a staff member who was a veteran Family Life educator. The course was adapted from a comprehensive curriculum (grades three through twelve) I have developed which is innovative in several ways. It is the first comprehensive, curriculum developed for the Modern Orthodox School adapting internationally accepted guidelines for sexuality education to accord with Jewish tradition. It is comprehensive, from the belief that students need to be educated in a broader range of topics from a younger age, than is current practice in religious schools in Israel. Currently, most religious schools which teach Family Life education do so only in eleventh and twelfth grades and rarely address issues of sexuality. The current study in the tenth grade reflected the first opportunity to utilize any of these materials in an Israeli setting.

The curricular content incorporates Life Values education (values and personal skills, human development, society and culture) as well as Intimacy education (relationships, sexual behavior, and sexual health). The fifteen units include a general approach to adolescent development, male and female anatomy and physiology, understanding sexuality, issues of living in a mixed male-female society, sexual abuse and harassment, Jewish law regarding the prohibition of touch between the sexes (*shmirat negiyah*) and issues of modesty.

In the final stage of the research, post-intervention semi-structured, in-depth interviews assessed participants' experience of the course, its impact on their knowledge and attitudes, and whether the process affected their readiness to discuss issues of sexuality more openly.

In addition to interviews with participants, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with other key informants: teachers, the school principal, the school rabbi, youth group leaders and mothers. These interviews complemented the data gathered from the participants and provided a more complete perspective on their experiences.

Data was analyzed based in grounded theory using an inductive method. This requires approaching the research topic without a defined set of assumptions or hypotheses to be proven. The analysis progressed through interplay between the data and its interpretation through the pertinent theoretical literature. This approach offers an opportunity for the theory to be developed based on an exploration in the field. It also allows the researcher to explore new avenues with participants as new implications emerge from the theory. Thus, the material offered by the participants was allowed to guide the direction of the research while still maintaining structure and consistency.

Findings

Pre-Interviews

The pre-interviews provided information about Modern Orthodox teenage girls and their knowledge and attitudes in areas of sexuality. Participants had received little formal or informal education, either at home or at school on topics of sexuality and relationships. Participants reported that their mothers rarely initiated conversations even on topics such as puberty. They were most likely to turn to friends for knowledge and advice, although many did feel that mothers could be turned to for information. Participants rarely confided in their mothers about relationships. While they reported few explicit conversations with parents about sexuality and relationships, they reported knowing their parents standards for behavior in areas of sexuality, modesty and relationships. Despite the lack of explicit communication, parents evidently succeeded in transmitting their standards in subtle and indirect ways.

Participants were most likely to turn to their peers when dealing with issues of relationships with boys. Despite the significant influence of peers on each other, participants expressed unwillingness to correct their friends' behavior when they acted at variance with Jewish law in areas of sexuality and relationships. Many participants considered these areas to be in the realm of personal choice and therefore comment or critique about behaviors was viewed as inappropriate.

Participants felt that the majority culture has a powerful impact on them, normalizing behaviors in areas of sexuality and relationships not consistent with Jewish law. The exposure to a majority culture with permissive norms in areas of sexuality and relationships made participants more conscious of how restrictive the expectations of Jewish law were in relationships between the sexes. This knowledge sometimes made the stringent expectations of Jewish law in areas of sexuality and relationships more contentious.

Participants reported knowing little about the way their male counterparts experience the challenge of maintaining commitment to Jewish law. They related that boys were less likely to be normed to *shemirat negiyah* and suggested that boys had more difficulty keeping this area of Jewish law. They explained this discrepancy in difficulty as a result of more active hormones, particularly during teenage years. Participants were convinced that boys received even less sexuality education than they had.

The pre-interviews also provided information regarding commitment to Jewish law in the areas of sexuality, modesty and relationships. Participants, even those who identified themselves as firmly committed to tradition, identified modesty and *shemirat negiyah* as areas of conflict.

Commitment to Jewish law presented a challenge to many participants who are still negotiating their relationship with Jewish law and the behavioral standards it sets for them.

Post-Interviews

The post-interviews indicated that participants generally found the course to be educationally beneficial. They reported that the course opened new perspectives on the interface between Jewish law and human sexuality. Whereas most participants did not change their behaviors, they did attest to having become more aware and more thoughtful about issues of *shemirat negiyah*, modesty and relationships. About half the participants expressed enthusiasm for the course while two found it to be irrelevant. Others found it worthwhile but sought improvement in the nature of the content.

Participants acknowledged that the class instructor established an atmosphere conducive to safe, open, and respectful dialogue. Pitfalls identified in other studies as negative approaches to sexuality education were, by and large, avoided. For example, the instructor did not demonize boys, objectify women or present a negative picture of sexuality in order to encourage restraint. Instead, topics were addressed in a thoughtful and engaging manner. Participants found of particular interest the units on sexual abuse as well as *shemirat negiyah* as seen through a male perspective. The use of media enhanced the impact of several units. Some participants offered suggestions for improvement, while others claimed to be fully satisfied. The school in which the research was conducted confirmed the success of the intervention and has adopted the course into its regular schedule.

The research confirmed that Modern Orthodox students in the turbulent adolescence years seek Jewish conceptions of sexuality and relationships based in classic sources. Therefore, both parents and Modern Orthodox schools could better serve the needs of their teenagers by developing and providing educational tools to help them face the challenges of sexuality in their lives.

The Nature of Participant Normation

A complex picture of normation emerges from these Modern Orthodox participants, particularly with regards a standard of touching based in Jewish law (*shemirat negiyah*). While participants' behavior regarding *shemirat negiyah* was varied, they were all committed to the ban on premarital sexual intercourse. This finding is significant in that it sets Modern Orthodox teenagers apart from their secular counterparts. The uneven commitment to *shemirat negiyah* coupled with the absence of a need to conceal breaches of conduct on the part of many participants indicates that *shemirat negiyah* is not a communal norm.

Implications for Education

Thomas Green's approach to moral education was used to interpret the experiences of participants as well as formulate a model for sexuality education.

Normation in the School

Green believes that normation occurs inside communities, not schools. However, I found several instances of the school and classroom acting as communities that support normation. Furthermore, the strength of Modern Orthodox schools is that, together with homes, neighborhoods, and youth movements, a coherent community does exist. Several aspects of the school in this study (its involvement in informal frameworks, the role of home-room educators who act as whole-student educators; partial dormitory and extended hours) recommend this school model as a community capable of promoting normation. Nevertheless, the school hardly succeeded at fostering normation in areas on which the study focused such as modesty. The in-school tensions surrounding issues of modesty reflect the out-of-school tensions regarding *shemirat negiyah* and modesty. Both are accurate reflections of the uneven nature of normation in the Modern Orthodox community on many issues.

The data indicated that Ulpanat Bina as a school community did not possess a norm of modesty consonant with the expressed standard of the school dress-code. Students felt free to disregard the official standard of modesty in the school. This fact reduces the possibility of fostering normation in a school like Ulpanat Bina. However, other data present possibilities for fostering normation. Although only one incident was identified during the research, the model of the home-room educator who was able to foster a change in dress-code beyond the classroom for certain groups of girls can serve as a possible model. Perhaps rather than view Ulpanat Bina as one community, it can be seen to comprise many sub-communities, sometimes identified by classes and sometimes even in smaller peer-based groups. The school can play a role in encouraging membership in the sub-communities which adhere to school norms. Methods available to the school in encouraging such movement include clubs, and activities which gather students of similar levels of normation around a particular activity (such as intensive learning experiences, social action or community service) with the added agenda of religious fortification to a level of normation more consonant with the school standards.

Educating to Self-Control

Self-governance, which Green views as the central component of moral education, requires self-control. Some Modern Orthodox educators tend to deny teenage sexuality and the

tensions it produces rather than address them. Even when addressed, they tend to present struggles with sexuality as temporary teenage issues rather than as one of the many temptations in areas of sexuality, modesty and relationships likely to recur throughout life. Encouraging strong normation to self-governance should be a fundamental goal of Life Values and Intimacy education in the Modern Orthodox community as a central part of the modern religious personality.

The Dialectic of Authority and Autonomy

Negotiating the dialectic of authority and autonomy presented a challenge to both participants and teachers. The ethos of the school placed autonomy ahead of authority. Thus educators struggle to find a place for religious authority as expressed in Jewish law within a modern sensibility which nonetheless promotes autonomy. Unable to resolve the tension between authority and autonomy, teachers either avoid educating where they sense student resistance (e.g. modesty, *shemirat negiyah*) or seek to elicit student assent to the tradition through rational reasons with universal appeal.

The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum is committed to the position that it is morally and religiously preferable to perform commandments from a commitment based in free-will and inner conviction rather than from compliance to an imposed standard. The curriculum tries to strengthen inner conviction through the giving of reasons. However, the lack of autonomous commitment on the part of the individual student does not negate the validity of the commands themselves.

There is a tension between educating toward religious commitment to an external standard and promoting autonomous conviction to that standard. The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum can acknowledge this dialectic and help students struggle with the inherent tension which is viewed as being an intrinsic aspect of being a rational religious person. Thus, Life Values and Intimacy education asserts that living the tension is not a compromise but is, rather, what it means to live an active religious life.

The Place of Reasons in Life Values and Intimacy Education

Raised in modern, Western culture, which is a rational, reason-giving culture, participants believe that compelling reasons lead to assent and then to action. Reasons are often employed when teaching Jewish law, particularly issues like *shemirat negiyah* which participants find challenging. Participants believe in a powerful reason that eludes them, the force of which would convince them to adopt *shemirat negiyah*. This assumption was found to be problematic because it does not reflect the ways in which decisions are actually made. Still, the presentation of sound

reasons for a particular practice is an important educational aim and serves the goal of normation. However, Green maintains that while reasons are an initial step to strong normation by promoting a sense of prudence, reasons in and of themselves do not lead to moral behavior. Moreover, it is important to educate Modern Orthodox students to tolerate the lack of reason sometimes found in Jewish law and educate towards an intrinsic commitment to Jewish law *per se*. Such an approach will assist them in maintaining commitment when they encounter a Jewish law that cannot be “beautified” to fit modern sensibilities. Green’s formulation of the voice of sacrifice as being necessary in order to engender strong normation is applicable for Modern Orthodox educators. It is this voice that is most significant for a community of text and tradition, as it offers an understanding of what it means to be commanded. This conscience of sacrifice, of the duty to transcend one’s needs, aptly describes what would be necessary to view Jewish law as a norm: an external, sacred standard.

Putting the Struggle in Context

Strong normation depends on developing a reflexive voice from within, not an instructive voice from without. A crucial aspect of Life Values and Intimacy education can be in confirming for Modern Orthodox teenagers that they are not alone in their conflict. The discovery that they share their struggles and conflicts with many other Modern Orthodox teenagers can help students feel less alone or ashamed. Discussing the challenges of living in both a Modern and Orthodox world can provide students with new perspectives on their internal debates. Offering support and empathy and admitting that simple solutions are not always available can assist students as they navigate the complex territory of sexuality and Jewish law and come to be normed, to varying degrees, to Jewish law in the areas of sexuality and relationships.

A Coherent and Comprehensive Approach

Green’s work provides the basis for a coherent and comprehensive education to commitment to traditional norms, including *shemirat negiyah* and modesty. It allows an authentic expression of religious idiom without the loss of meaning inherent in translating that idiom into secular language. Green’s approach presents the Modern Orthodox educator with a model for reintroducing into the curriculum a sense of the sacred as expressed in Divine command, along with the conscience of sacrifice. The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum, based in ideas propounded by Green, can speak of reasons and duties, promote critical thinking, autonomy *and* deference to authority, and invoke the idea of the sacred in service of strong normation in the areas of sexuality, modesty and relationships.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Background

Introduction

Youth develop concepts and ideas about sexuality in their childhood, which are then strengthened or reframed based on their adolescent experiences (Greydanus, Pratt & Dannison, 1995; Rodriguez, 2000). Therefore, culturally appropriate sexuality education is an important component of individual and social development (Ward & McLean Taylor, 1992; Irvine, 1995; Rodriguez, 2000). Nonetheless, in many communities, the process of selecting a curriculum for sexuality education generates controversy, debate, and high emotions (Kirby, 1997; Blinn-Pike, Berger & Rea-Holloway, 2000; Wiley & Terlosky, 2000).

In Modern Orthodox¹ Jewish communities, the subject of sexuality usually remains unaddressed (Weiss, 1999; Debow & Woloski-Wruble, 2007). The challenge of having to face one's rising sexual curiosity alone without guidance and advice can cause emotional difficulties for the developing teenager (Weiss, 1999; Snegroff, 2000). Nevertheless, this is a common occurrence in many Israeli State Religious schools (Weiss, 1999).

Sexuality education presents a particular challenge for the Modern Orthodox community because while Modern Orthodox culture allows exposure to Western values and there is intermingling of the sexes in formal and informal frameworks, pre-marital sexual activity is strictly forbidden (Maimonides, 1190/1967, *Mitzvah* 253). The question of how to transmit tradition in a world in which majority culture provides powerful negative socialization to that tradition, particularly regarding sexual abstinence before marriage, is therefore a central challenge (Dagan, 1991; Goodman, 1995; Hess, 2004).

“Family Life education” officially became a subject taught in Israel's State Religious school system in the 1980's. The courses in Family Life focus almost solely on Jewish law. They provide little if any discussion of sexuality or relationships (Goodman, 2005). Growing up in twenty-first century society saturated with sexuality and sexual images, Modern Orthodox youth are immersed in a culture which is inconsistent with traditional values. This ongoing exposure to sexually-saturated stimuli precedes any formal education which could provide a countervailing view (Hyde & Delamater, 2003). In the absence of comprehensive sexuality education from within the Modern Orthodox subculture, youth are left on their own to process the approach to

¹ The term “Modern Orthodox” refers to a sociological group in Israel, also known as “National Religious” or “Religious Zionist” (Liebman, 1982). Following Shachter's lead (2000), the term Modern Orthodox will be used because the compound term best reflects the tension between being part of modern, Western society on the one hand, and maintaining commitment to a traditional, lifestyle based in Jewish law on the other (Liebman, 1982). Moreover, for this study, the nationalist elements are not relevant.

sexuality of the broader culture and, often by default, the approach of the broader culture constitutes their primary sexuality education (Greydanus et al, 1995; Snegroff, 2000; Escobar-Chaves et al, 2005). To date, there has been no research exploring how Modern Orthodox Israeli teenagers process the information, both traditional and modern, which they receive, or their existing social norms in the area of sexuality and relationships. The process of transmitting traditional values, particularly those that are not consistent with majority cultural values, often provides a challenge for the Modern Orthodox community (Hess, 1990; Dagan, 1991; Goodman, 1995; Hartman Halbertal, 2002).

As part of this research, I developed a curriculum for sexuality education for the Modern Orthodox School. It provides an approach to the school-based transmission of Orthodox Jewish norms in areas of sexuality and relationships utilizing the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) framework, in conjunction with a proactive approach towards sexuality education. I have called it “Life Values and Intimacy Education.” I will also utilize Green’s (1999) approach to moral education to analyze the ways in which participants in this research acquire norms. Through this analysis, I hope to further the process of norm acquisition in areas of sexuality and relationships in Modern Orthodox schools.

Sexuality and Society

Among researchers of human sexuality there is intense debate on the question of the origins and foundations of sexuality. The traditional scientific and objectivist approach employs internal physiological indices in order to measure and analyze the objective phenomenon of human sexual behavior. This approach locates sexuality primarily in the body. In contrast, the constructivist approach to human sexuality defines sex and sexuality as a product of external social forces, such as social status and political power (Gergen, 1985; Cavaglion, 1997). Foucault’s (1978) critical work showed the limitation of an objectivist approach. Instead, he defines sexuality as a domain of nature controlled by social powers. Feminist researchers, building on Foucault’s ideas, view human sexuality as a social and political construct focused on the preservation of patriarchal schemes and gender differences (Chafetz, 1974; Fine, 1988): “Society provides the collective cultural history, social scripts and language that form the foundation for gendered identities” (Sears, 1992).

Any study of sexuality education must recognize that the ways societies think about and understand sexuality will constrain the ways they educate about it (Irvine, 1995). Therefore, I begin with a general examination of Western approaches to understanding human sexuality as a basis for identifying the relevant approaches for the Modern Orthodox community. Human

sexuality is defined by the World Health Organization (2000) as a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction.

The Difference between Gender and Sex

Before discussing the various approaches to sexuality, a note is in order regarding the terminology utilized in the academic literature. As early as the 1970's, the term "gender" as opposed to "sex" was adopted by feminist scholars as a way of distinguishing socially constructed aspects of male-female differences from biologically determined aspects (Unger, 1979). With the increase in number of gender-studies programs in academic institutions, as well as the rise of feminist literature, the opinion that sexuality is not purely a biological phenomenon has become more prevalent (Pryzgodna & Chrisler, 2000). Most social scientists recognize that aspects of male-female differences are socially and culturally constructed which is what is indicated by the term "gender" (Haig, 2004). I shall observe this convention in my writing.

The Essentialist Approach to Sexuality

The traditional and still most common way of thinking about sexuality employs physiological descriptions in order to measure and analyze the 'objective' phenomenon of human sexual behavior. This essentialist approach identifies human sexuality as an internal, individual physical force (Irvine, 1995). The underlying assumption of the essentialist approach is that sex and sexuality have certain objective components that are natural, inevitable, universal, and biologically determined, and therefore measurable, making the study of sexuality a part of science in its "scientific" base (Weeks, 1985; Cavaglion, 1997).

Essentialism's depiction of sexuality as a primal force finds expression in the term "biological determinism," reflecting the idea that sexual instincts cannot be controlled since they are biologically based urges and impulses. Another assumption rooted in essentialism is that there is universality and stability to sexuality since it is only superficially influenced by culture (Delamater & Hyde, 1998). This approach implies that people in different cultures and time periods will have similar views on sexuality and sexual practice. Essentialist approaches to sexuality often present the male and female sex drives as fundamentally different; men are portrayed as more driven by sexual urges and therefore more sexually aggressive than women; women are less driven by sexual urges and are therefore able to tame or control the powerful male drive (Weeks, 1985; Kehily, 2002). Cross-cultural studies on sexuality have shown vast differences in what is considered normal and acceptable sexual behavior (Weeks, 1985; Gagnon, 1990), which has significantly undermined the traditional essentialist position. A newer form of

essentialism, which has become known as modern essentialism, contends that only some characteristics of humans or human sexuality are biologically based, while other properties are culturally constructed (Sayer, 1997; DeLamater & Hyde, 1998).

The Social-Constructionist Approach to Sexuality

Over the last few decades, social scientists and historians have challenged the essentialist approaches. The social constructionist approach argues that sexuality is a fluid, changing concept that acquires meaning through the social, political, and cultural influences of the time. Thus, what a society considers sexual will vary greatly across cultures (Irvine, 1995).

Cross-culturally, sexual activity considered “acceptable” in the United States is viewed as “stigmatized” in other cultures; similarly, sexual activity considered “unacceptable” in other countries is not “stigmatized” in the United States. For example, non-marital coitus is accepted in the United States, but is stigmatized harshly in many Moslem countries; topless sunbathing among women at public beaches is accepted in Western Europe, but illegal and condemned in most of the United States. Violation of these cultural norms often results in strong negative reactions. (Moser & Kleinplatz, 2005)

Social constructionists emphasize that to understand an individual’s sexuality, one must understand how sexuality is defined and experienced in the society in which that individual lives. The range of meanings ascribed to sexual behaviors by any particular society play a central role in defining sexuality for members of that society (Irvine, 1995).

The Socio-Historical Approach to the Study of Sexuality

The socio-historical perspective affirms social-constructionism and emphasizes a diachronic, historical analysis of sexuality. Sexuality is viewed as having been formed by numerous and varied forces, subject to complex transformations over time (Weeks, 1981). It is not only a product of anatomy and physiology, but is influenced by the political, economic, and moral realities of any given time period (Aries & Bejin, 1985). The historical constructs of family, childhood, and adulthood, as well as the roles of males and females in any given society, all contribute to the definition of sexuality (Cavaglioni, 1997).

Weeks (1985) surmises that the powerful feelings produced by sexuality and discussion of it indicate just how deeply it is laden with assumptions embedded in cultural history. This fact explains why scientific definitions of sexuality continue to evade us.

Which sexual interests are proscribed often changes; masturbation, oral sex, anal sex, and homosexuality were once considered mental disorders or symptoms of other mental disorders but are now typically accepted as part of the spectrum of healthy sexual expression. Similarly, there are conditions that were accepted as “normal” in the past, but are now classified as mental disorders (e.g., hypoactive sexual desire, sexual aversion disorder, and female orgasmic disorder). It is exceedingly difficult to eliminate historical and cultural factors from the assessment of unusual sexual interests. As such, empirically based, scientific definitions of healthy and pathological sexual behavior continue to elude us. (Moser & Kleinplatz, 2005)

The Influence of Foucault on Ideas about Sexuality

Michel Foucault, in his *History of Sexuality, Volume I* (1978), provides not only a historical survey of Western sexuality but more importantly, in his terms, a “political history” of the construction of “the truth of sexuality.” Sexuality has been, and continues to be, defined by social institutions and professionals that have the power to establish norms in areas relating to sexuality. Hence, Foucault’s famous statement that sexuality is a means through which power is exercised (1977).

Foucault’s innovation was in viewing the human organism as unstable and flexible, itself a product of the definitions of society:

In a society such as ours...there are manifold relations of power that permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. (Foucault, 1980, p. 93)

The term “discourse” is used by Foucault to define ways of knowing and understanding the world. The discourses which have taken place in the world of medicine, law, religion, and education have formed the historical construct “sexuality.” He explains that each society, through the use of discourse, creates “regimes of truth” according to its beliefs, values, and mores.

The Foucaultian approach enables one to view sexuality education as a discursive field in which multiple discourses are simultaneously at play. These discourses may be competing and contradictory in their aims. We can identify three domains of discursive practices relating to sexuality that exist in school settings: the official school curriculum for sexuality education; the actual teaching of sexuality education (with its attendant language and ideas) in the classroom; and the informal cultures of students in sexual matters (Kehily, 2002).

Feminist Approaches to Sexuality

While feminism predates Foucault, feminist researchers have built on Foucault's ideas, viewing sexuality as culturally mediated and not a biological given. They view sexuality as an unformed entity that is defined and manipulated by political forces in any given society (Cavaglioni, 1997). Western society has conceptualized sexuality as an area of male power. Thus, human sexuality is viewed by feminist researchers as a social and political construct focused on the preservation of patriarchal schemes and gender differences (Chafetz, 1974; Fine, 1988). Discussions of feminist researchers revolve around three major claims in the area of gender differences: gender is a social construct; gender is a tool of oppression; and gender influences our processing of knowledge (Ross, 2004).

While feminist thinkers span a theoretical spectrum that is far from monolithic, they tend to agree that the most significant differences between males and females do not derive from innate physiological or biological differences (Putnam Tong, 1998). Feminists draw a separation between *sex*, which refers to innate, biological differences, and *gender*, which is as a cultural construct learned by socialization. They argue that biological sexual differences between males and females are less significant than their biological similarities, and they suggest that it is human civilizations which have imposed the more comprehensive gender distinctions. Cultures have established life patterns, ritual, manners, and habits "appropriate" for each sex (Miller 1986). Social, legal, and religious pressures are then applied by society to impose conformance to these norms (Ross, 2004). Simone de Beauvoir, in her classic work, *The Second Sex* expressed this concisely:

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman... it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature which is described as feminine. (1953, p .7)

Essential to de Beauvoir's early critique of the patriarchal structure at the basis of all Western society is the idea that male dominated society by definition views woman as "other." While the male gender is normal and dominant, the "not male" gender is then defined as different and deviant. De Beauvoir argues that this societal approach needs to change. She proposes that since women do not have an innate essence, they can redefine and recreate their role and identity.

A Socio-Historical Approach to Sexuality and Judaism

The study of the history of sexuality among Jews was pioneered by David Biale (1997), who surveyed Jewish attitudes towards sex and sexuality from Biblical times until the present. He

shows how ideas have changed and developed and were influenced by the attitudes and practices of the various cultures in which Jews lived. For example, Biale explains that ascetic traits that were incorporated in Jewish thought and practice during Talmudic times were not based on Biblical tradition. Rather, they were more likely to have been adopted from the influences of Greco-Roman culture, whose view of sexual pleasure was far more negative than that of the Jewish tradition (Seidman, 1994). Boyarin (1995) also argues that Rabbinic Judaism is an amalgam of Biblical Judaism and Hellenistic Judaism that invests significance to both the body and soul.

Perhaps most significant for our purposes is Biale's critical analysis of contemporary Jewish responses to sexuality and its place in American culture. He discusses a booklet written by Rabbi Norman Lamm (1966) at the height of the sexual revolution as an example of cultural influences. Using psychology and contemporary philosophy, Lamm presents a thoroughly modern, logical explanation and defense of the Orthodox sexual ethic and laws of family purity. He shows how Judaism inculcates a positive yet modest attitude towards sexuality, one which would serve as a needed counterbalance to contemporary American society.

Lamm's defense of Orthodox Jewish practice in thoroughly modern terms reflects the influence of modern values on the Orthodox. (Biale, 1992, p. 213)

Instead of thinking about Lamm's book as an example of a one-way influence of modern values on a traditional society, it might make more sense to think of it in terms of the two way interaction of tradition and modernity. At times, the very act of reflecting on a new perspective that modernity brings to the fore can lead to an enhanced appreciation and understanding of the tradition. The tradition is then effectively 'modernized' in that it is found to be newly relevant to modern concerns.

Jewish Feminist Approaches to Sexuality

A sense of being an outsider, an "other," is expressed by Jewish feminists in their writings. They struggle with being part of a tradition that excludes women from an active role in most communal ritual practice and policy formation and gives women subordinate status (Plaskow, 1990). Testimony to this sense of exclusion is evidenced by the titles of two classics of Jewish feminism: *The Jew Who Wasn't There: Halakha and the Jewish Woman*, by Rachel Adler (1983) and "*The Other Half: Women in the Jewish Tradition*," by Paula Hyman (1976). In the body of traditional and halakhic literature (literature based in Jewish law), the male is the representative

Jew (Ross, 2004). It is this privileging of the male and marginalization of the female that feminist Jewish thought seeks to correct.

Some Orthodox women who acknowledge the ideas and challenges that feminism raises seek to bridge the gap between its teachings and attitudes about women, and the traditional status of Orthodox women. Gender roles have been clearly defined in Jewish tradition, with rabbinic tradition supporting the concept of two clearly distinct genders, often, although not always, understood to be in a hierarchical relationship (Ross, 2004). Significant differences in obligations of Jewish law and practice between males and females have been justified with arguments about their different “essences” (Loew, 1609/1971; Hirsch, 1837/1962). Orthodox Jews embrace observance of Jewish law as developed by the rabbinic tradition and are committed to both the divine origin of the Written Law – the Bible – and the divine authority of the Oral Law. Many Orthodox women, living in a world which offers them equal opportunities in the intellectual realm and in professional practice, are troubled by issues of status in the system of Jewish law. As a response to this dissonance, Orthodox Feminism emerged, which

...believes in the equal dignity of women within Orthodoxy; expanding the spiritual, intellectual, ritual, and communal opportunities for women to the fullest extent possible within Jewish law.” (Greenberg, 2003, p. 53)

Contemporary feminist sensibilities have encouraged women to separate traditional views of difference between males and females and obligatory differences in practice mandated by Jewish law from those who utilize these differences to devalue women. Perhaps most significantly, Orthodox feminists seek greater responsiveness on the part of rabbis who have the responsibility for carrying the tradition forward.

I can forgive the Rambam [(Maimonides, a twelfth century Jewish scholar) for regarding men as superior to women]. He lived in a Moslem society at a time when women really were not in the same position that men were... But when a rabbi today tries to justify the reasoning [behind Jewish law’s exclusion of women] with the same kind of apologetics, that’s what I can’t forgive. We can’t try to sensitize the Rambam. But, we can certainly attempt to open the eyes and hearts of our rabbis and teachers today. We can tell them that this hurts. (D. Koren, quoted in Ross, 2004, p. 45)

While some aspects of the tradition are considered immutable by Modern Orthodox Jews, the nature of the Oral Law allows flexibility and responsiveness to changing circumstances.

How exactly that flexibility is realized is debated, but Jewish feminists argue that it needs to address their concerns.

The Impact of Society on Sexuality Education

Sexuality educators should be cognizant of the culturally constructed aspects of human sexuality. Sexuality education includes such culturally determined topics as legitimate sexual behavior and gender roles. Sexuality education for teenagers in the Modern Orthodox community growing up in the twenty-first century must also address issues of gender and Judaism. Although complex, it is important to find ways to balance the strictures of tradition while incorporating the newly-developed sensitivities and possibilities made available to women in modern society.

The underlying assumptions about sexuality and its roots are significant in defining the education Modern Orthodox adolescents will receive.

Teaching about sexuality is much more than lectures on sexually transmitted diseases, appeals for sexual abstinence or the distribution of contraceptives. Understanding that cultures construct different meaning about sexuality must be at the curriculum core. As we gain a greater appreciation for how various cultures construct meaning about sexuality and how adolescents reconstruct these cultural meanings or classroom messages, we also may better appreciate and honor the values of those who desire sexual curricula at variance with our preferences.
(Sears, 1997, p. 275)

Recognizing the centrality of culture in constructing meanings about sexuality reiterates the necessity of producing sexuality education materials tailored specifically to the needs of the Modern Orthodox School. The Modern Orthodox community embraces the majority culture yet negotiates a complex dynamic of excluding certain aspects of it (Berman, 2001). The tensions that a Modern Orthodox sexuality curriculum must navigate have increased given the heightened sexualization of the majority culture. Transmitting traditional norms in areas of sexuality and relationships requires an approach that engages modernity while remaining deeply rooted in the tradition.

Transmitting Traditions and Norms

The process of transmitting traditional norms, especially those that are not consistent with majority cultural values, is the source of much debate in religious communities in general

(Hess, 2004) and the Modern Orthodox community in particular (Hess, 1990; Dagan, 1991; Goodman, 1995; Hartman Halbertal, 2002). All learning takes place within a context and the context of twenty-first century post-modernity presents particular challenges for the Modern Orthodox Jew (Goldmintz, 1996). Educating for commitment to Jewish law is a central goal for Modern Orthodox schools wishing to transmit traditions to the next generation. However, the question of how best to educate to continued commitment to religion remains unclear. In the next section I will discuss approaches to moral education and sexuality education and explore the possibility of teaching sexuality education in Modern Orthodox schools using a moral education approach.

Sexuality Education Requires a Moral Context

Early proponents of sexuality education programs claimed to be offering values-free sexuality education. However, even the first sexuality education programs, which ostensibly provided only information, often had a hidden curriculum, transmitting a particular set of values: for example, “girls must protect their virginity and getting pregnant before one is married is wrong” (Lamb, 1997). Over the years, as approaches to sexuality education have shifted, a gradual consensus emerged that values-free sexuality education does not exist (Pollis, 1985; Reiss, 1995; Morris, 1997). What has changed in the present is that values are more openly discussed (Halstead, 1997).

Assuming that sexuality education cannot take place in a moral vacuum, the question of what ethical framework is appropriate for sexuality education is important for sexuality educators to address (Reiss, 1997). A possible solution comes from the world of moral education. While educators and theorists have viewed sexuality education and moral education as separate enterprises, there are commonalities between them, the most apparent being that they are both committed to transmitting values-based thinking. A merger of the two could provide a possible model for sexuality education (Lamb, 1997). While the danger of sexuality education becoming “moralistic rather than morally related” (ibid, p. 302) must be addressed, this can be done by remaining sensitive to the issue to prevent this outcome. A moral education approach deserves attention, particularly in a traditional society.

In practice, sexuality education in Modern Orthodox schools in Israel is presented in the context of “Family Life education”. Whatever minimal format is taught, is usually provided by male and female home-room educators (*mechanchim* and *mechanchot*) who are expected in this capacity as in general, to serve as warm and inspiring religious role-models for their students (Samet, 2005). Most teachers of sexuality education in Modern Orthodox schools in Israel have a strong background in the study of Biblical and rabbinical writings and view the subject of

sexuality education as one that should be presented through the prism of religion and tradition. These teachers are often versed in moral education and the transmission of norms and are already well placed to use a morality-based approach to sexuality education.

Approaches to Moral Education

The essential debate concerning moral education revolves around two positions – the moral development approach, represented most notably by Kohlberg (1981), and the directive approach of Character Education (Lickona, 1993). The first emphasizes an open-ended discussion in which students come to moral conclusions through a process of moral reasoning and in which the main focus is upon process. Kohlberg suggests that children, given proper opportunity for moral discourse, will come to develop a mature moral sense. He seeks to develop children who are moral thinkers through a process of moral reasoning (Kilpatrick, 1992). Kohlberg's school of thought owes its philosophic roots to a vision of liberal education that emphasizes the innate abilities of a child and conceives education as the collection of experiences that best allow these innate potentialities to develop. Children learn and construct knowledge on their own and schools should allow them to grow unencumbered. In this approach to education, the teacher is not an authority figure who holds the answers but rather one who serves as a facilitator, encouraging the student to analyze and deliberate over moral dilemmas and gradually develop a more sophisticated ability to reach complex levels of moral thinking through exposure and involvement in discussing those dilemmas. The student is granted complete autonomy to make decisions, as Kohlberg advocated that it was in the process of developing reasoned arguments that moral development took place.

The Character Education approach to moral education sharply criticizes Kohlberg's methods on both theoretical and empirical grounds. It argues that children need to be taught right from wrong and will not necessarily arrive at mature moral sensibilities without direct instruction (Lickona, 1993). Reed (1997) claims that Kohlberg himself came to realize that moral deliberation through autonomous reasoning often did not lead to moral development and that he shifted his focus toward fostering more conventional moral thought. The Character Education approach draws on more traditional views of education, which conceive of young minds as blank slates and educators as those charged with the task of filling students with proper knowledge and attitudes. Character Education, while not necessarily reverting to puritan school-house methods, does tend to align with more religious approaches and employs among its instructional methods the presentation of models of good character and narratives of virtuous action with unambiguous conclusions.

These two poles are reflected in the variety of Jewish approaches to moral education presented below.

Jewish Approaches to Moral and Sexual Education

The Autonomous Approach

Borowitz (1969) addressed the challenge of developing a Jewish sex ethic in an attempt to offer an alternative traditional voice to counter the new attitudes to sexuality and sexual behaviors prevalent in society in the 1960's. Called *Choosing a Sex Ethic: A Jewish Inquiry* and written for the college student, it addressed the issue of sexuality from a Jewish perspective. Borowitz sought to establish a Jewish ethic, which he describes as one based in doing what God wants of the individual.

Working through various approaches to sexual behavior, Borowitz offers four possible ethics of sexuality: an ethic of healthy orgasm, an ethic of mutual consent, an ethic of love, and an ethic of marriage. He underscores that it is only the fact that contraception exists that allows for any form of ethical sexual activity without fear of bearing children. Ultimately, he rejects each of the above ethics and comes to the conclusion that since sexuality is one of God's gifts to human-kind, one should choose to do what God wants. Borowitz encourages people to strive for moral excellence. Rather than make excuses for mediocre moral behavior such as, "I'm doing the best I can," or "I'm only human," one must rise above self-justification and make moral excellence a reality of one's existence. Borowitz bemoans the fact that many Jews give up much of their Jewish faith and traditions in order to minimize restrictive differences between them and their non-Jewish counterparts, in their efforts to become a part of the non-Jewish world. He recommends the alternative of staying connected to one's Jewish roots, acquiring self-control, and waiting for marriage to engage in a sexual relationship. Accordingly, one would live up to the highest ethical standards, live a truly ethical life, and fulfill God's will by practicing abstinence.

Borowitz believes that people should make thoughtful, autonomous decisions about sexual behavior. Borowitz's approach, while advocating doing God's will, is not based in Jewish law but rather on an independent sense of an ethic that would fulfill God's will. It is up to the individual to pass judgment and make personal decisions rooted in an assessment of God's will in this area.

The Normative-Prescriptive Approach

Rosenak is critical of the normative-prescriptive approach to education common in many Modern Orthodox schools. This approach views "the duty of pedagogues to convey known,

cherished, and even sometimes immutable goods to the young” (Rosenak, 2005). The educator is enjoined to provide students with information coupled with a sense of the religious obligation incumbent upon them, which should suffice in leading students to internalize and accept these practices upon themselves (Samet, 2005; Rosenak, 1987). The teacher is viewed as the transmitter of a tradition which has absolute authority. The community rewards observance of ritual behavior and sanctions misbehavior, since ritual behavior is intrinsic to identity (Rosenak, 2005). Thus, the teacher in a classroom that educates prescriptively represents the absolute authority of the tradition, which needs no justification but makes moral and behavioral demands of the community of believers. The student is expected to accept the authority of tradition, to listen and to absorb the information, and then to implement it in practice. As described by Rosenak,

To be specific, in all *normative* or *prescriptive* education, the educating generation sees itself as initiating the young into (what is to become) “their” culture, and lays down guidelines for getting to know and appropriating the goods of heritage. Learners in normative educational frameworks are expected to come to appreciate the wise, to emulate them, and to engage knowledgeably in what these sages define as worthwhile activities. In normative-prescriptive education, teachers and mentors are expected to represent and embody the conviction that the highest truths are best and most sublimely known, from within the community of the faithful. (2005, p. 4)

The prescriptive approach strives to nurture loyal members of a community. While the prescriptive approach was the central mode of religious education for many years, educators in Modern Orthodox schools have come to realize that it is no longer a sufficient approach for transmitting tradition to the next generation (Goldmintz, 1990; Sherlow, 2004; Samet, 2005). For most Modern Orthodox teenagers, informing them of their religious obligation is no longer enough to effect an internalization of traditions and acceptance of them as a way of life. Eliach (1971) a veteran Jewish educator offers perspective on why this is so.

We teach our students the importance of authority in that we have to accept the rulings of the Sages and of the *poskim* [codifiers]. Whatever is written in the Torah cannot be questioned...; but we also teach literature, history and science in which any authority may be challenged.

Students being educated in a modern world which champions critical thought and questioning as a central component of their education tend to be able to think critically about their traditions as well. Therefore religious education for the Modern Orthodox community must allow for a carefully constructed place for critical thinking.

The Deliberative Approach

Rosenak's deliberative approach offers an alternative approach that he claims is better suited to Orthodox education in an open society (Samet, 2005). The deliberative approach, (described recently by Rosenak (2005) as the "implicit approach,") requires more active involvement on the part of the student. Rather than being a passive recipient of a definitive tradition, the student is an active partner in the conversation, engaging the text, exploring it, and questioning without *a priori* assumptions regarding the conclusions one ought to reach. A central aspect of deliberative education evolves from human experiences with the world and with God.

Implicit theology and the implicit life take off from an attitude of openness; the search for meaning is conducted in the everyday of mundane life more than in the practice of hallowed liturgies and rituals. The emphasis is on human fears, hopes, and aspirations "in the presence of the divine," rather than on God's demands. (Rosenak, 2005, p. 6)

In Rosenak's approach, traditional texts are respected and held in esteem, but they are examined anew from the standpoint of modern analysis and must "pass before the bar of moral and existential judgment" before they are accepted by the deliberative student. Jewish law then, does not hold authority over students, although it is recommended as worthy of attention and study. According to this approach, there is no reliance on an authoritative "word" descending from heaven. Human intelligence is viewed as both responsible and capable of exploring and developing solutions to problems. If these solutions emerge as being contradictory to the tradition, the teacher who is accepting of the student's right to choose does not interfere with the student's alternative conclusions.

While this approach allows for much more active engagement on the part of the student as the student himself is a seeker of solutions, the concern for a traditional community is the possibility that the student may come to conclusions that are not in line with the community norms, and will choose to reject them.

The autonomous approach of Borowitz and, to a lesser degree, the deliberative approach of Rosenak, is of limited use to Modern Orthodox education because their emphasis on

autonomous choice contradicts Orthodoxy's commitment to the binding nature of Jewish law. Ultimately, both Borowitz and Rosenak found their approach on the autonomous assent of the individual rather than the heteronomous acceptance of divine command. The weakness of the prescriptive approach on the other hand, while recognizing the authoritative voice of Jewish law, does not develop adequate mechanisms for engendering commitment in an autonomous world. An alternative approach is offered by Green (1999) who develops his approach to moral education for "members of an already formed moral community concerned with the task of improving that life and preserving it in the next generation" (p. 30), which aptly describes the Modern Orthodox community. He conceives of moral education as the "formation of conscience in *all* of its voices" (p. 20) and envisions the individual listening to interior voices that offer advice, counsel, judgment and reproach. The aim of moral education is to encourage conversations between various moral voices,

not only to the standard moral voices, such as imperatives of duty and obligation, but also to judicious advice from prudence, to urgent clamoring from our interests, special or not-so-special, to our ties of kinship, to our feelings of friendship and so forth. (Diller, 2003, p. 514)

This approach will be explored further in the following sections.

The "Voices" Approach to Moral Education

Thomas Green presents a compelling approach to moral education in his book, *Voices: The Educational Formation of Conscience* (1999). He provides a basis for our work because he identifies his approach as particularly applicable to communities of text and liturgy, which aptly describes the Modern Orthodox community. His emphasis is in exploring what is involved in *acquiring* a norm rather than discussing the nature of norms or which moral norms are worthy.

Green introduces his approach by identifying moral education as the formation of conscience, which he defines as having three central features. Conscience is "the exercise of reflexive judgment about things that matter and is formed by the acquisition of norms, norms that take on the role of governance" (p. 23). Each individual renders judgment on his or her own actions, both in advance and in retrospect. Conscience is based on the approval or disapproval that a person feels about themselves rather than on the ways others judge them, a form of self-governance. It is this reflexive quality of judgment that Green argues is an essential component of conscience.

An additional essential component in the development of conscience is the emotional dimension which accompanies self-judgment. Green describes these as “moral emotions.” They are the emotional reaction we have to our behaviors after serious self-reflection and self-assessment as “the self stands in judgment of the self”: pride at having fulfilled one’s duty; remorse for moral failure (Green, p. 26).

Green terms the third essential feature of conscience “particularity.” This refers to the idea that on any occasion, judgment and self-reflection is made independently for each specific case and is not carried over from one situation to another.

Green presents his formulation of moral education as being applicable to a broader range of behaviors than the common definition of morality, incorporating all areas in which there is self-judgment.

It can incorporate self-judgment not only in relation to moral conduct in the modern narrow sense of “moral”, but also to personal ideals, social memberships, and standards of craft, including even the exercise of intellectual skills. (p. 22)

He describes the development of conscience as evolving from the interactions between various internal voices, each of which emphasizes a different aspect of morality, leading to a debate amongst all the voices.

The crux of the matter is found not in the domination of one voice over another, but in the conversation, even argument among them. It is in the conduct of that conversation that moral education must find its path, not in the mythic conviction that there is a progressive path of development that leads from the dominance first of one voice then another along lines of some morphological progression to a mature character. (Green, 2003, p. 531)

In a clear criticism of Kohlberg’s approach, Green’s emphasis is both on the self-reflective role that each individual ought to play in deciding their moral behavior as well as in the fact that there are simultaneous voices impacting on each moral decision. None of these voices necessarily represent a higher moral level of thinking, although each has the capacity to bear relative moral weight depending on the situation at hand.

The five voices that Green identifies as playing a central role in the development of conscience can speak significantly to a community of text and tradition, which is important in applying Green’s approach to Jewish education, especially of the Modern Orthodox community.

The conscience of craft refers to standards of excellence in the practice of any craft or skill. A person internalizes a standard of expectation for their work and desire to meet that standard.

To possess a conscience of craft is to have acquired the capacity for self-congratulation or deep self-satisfaction at something well done, shame at slovenly work, and even embarrassment at carelessness. (p. 62)

While craft is not usually viewed as involving conscience, Green argues that self-governance applies to the execution of a craft or skill, be it knitting, public speaking or sports.

The *conscience of membership* refers to our sense of loyalty towards a group with whom we have shared norms, such as our family, our neighborhood, or our community.

It would have to be a membership of a sort that makes reflexive judgment possible, a membership in the light of which one can critically judge one's own performance and that of others. (p. 69)

In the Modern Orthodox community examples of this might be keeping kosher, or choosing to be careful not to gossip.

Central to Green's philosophy is the existence of a *conscience of sacrifice* or *duty*, a notion people avoid since it suggests a willingness to allow injury or harm to oneself. Green purposefully uses the word in order to emphasize "the kind of turning from pure self-interest" (p. 92) that is necessary for this voice of conscience. It is this voice that is most significant for a community of text and tradition, as it offers an understanding of what it means to be commanded. This conscience of sacrifice, of the duty to transcend one's needs, aptly describes what would be necessary to view Jewish law as a norm, an external, sacred standard.

Green recognizes that turning away from one's own self-interest to serve a higher end does not take place without struggle:

In proportion as the magnitude of the sacrifice grows, then just so much does the appeal of duty need a more substantial struggle on its behalf in order to prevail. (p. 89)

Conscience also speaks in the *voice of memory*, which refers to the combination of texts, traditions and customs transmitted across time that have gradually come to form a tradition. They are the roots from which a person draws sustenance. This process works for individuals and their family traditions as well as for the very extended family of Jewish tradition.

Finally, there is the *conscience of imagination*. This voice of conscience enjoins people to consider the possibilities of what *could* be, what a community might become or might strive to become if stretched to full potential, what the character of the community would be if it was all that it ought to be. The idea of having an ideal towards which a community strives and of considering greater potentials and stretching towards them is also found in Judaism, especially in the prophetic tradition.

Green proposes that there is an additional prerequisite for moral education, the existence of the “sacred.” While he argues that the sacred does not have to stem from a religious sensibility, it certainly can. He argues that it is only in a context in which awe or reverence can be provoked that moral education can endure.

The aim of moral education is that beyond good reasons we have good conduct and good character, that our conduct comes to be *governed* by moral norms. For that to occur, it must be possible at *some* point to arouse moral horror, excite awe, and provoke reverence... In a world in which nothing is sacred, moral education is impossible... The possibility of moral horror signals not only the presence of the sacred, but an essential prerequisite for moral education itself. (p. 112-113)

The sense of the sacred as presented by Green is an excellent model for a community whose religious life revolves around the practice of Jewish law. The Jewish tradition views morality as emanating from God, “the Holy” who enjoins the Jewish people to become holy, like Him. Laws are worthy of commitment and sacrifice because they are a product of the Divine.

“Normation”

The importance of forming a conscience is its being the first step towards an acquisition of norms, or, in Green’s term, “normation.” Normation is the process by which governance, an effective regulation of conduct, is established. Central to this thesis is the idea that the predominant goal of moral education is to develop a person’s capacity for “self-governance,” a capacity based in the acquisition of social norms. Here, too, Green differentiates his understanding of social norms from the common notion of a simple, rote acquiescence to the various behaviors that others in society are performing without any internalization of standards. Instead, he explains:

A social norm ...does not describe how persons behave; rather it prescribes how they think they ought to behave. It is not merely a statement of what people do,

but a rule formulating what they think they ought to do. Social norms thus are paradigmatically rules of “ought” and “should”. (p. 32)

Green emphasizes that social norms are not always rules, and living a moral life does not simply mean following a series of rules. Norms are paradigms that are developed and acquired gradually. The acquisition of norms is thus not to be understood as the acquisition of knowledge; it has more to do with the building of feelings (Kaufmann, 2003).

Green addresses the question of how to establish when normation has occurred. He explains that observing compliance or non-compliance to a particular norm would not be sufficient to establish whether an observed behavior is actually normed. The presence of normation can only be established by knowing the feelings associated with a particular behavior. For example, when an individual chooses not to perform a particular behavior, does he feel guilty or remorseful? Does an individual who has chosen to perform a particular behavior present a public face of compliance while privately being disdainful and critical of this behavior? The answers to these questions would reflect different levels of commitment to a social norm. Green delineates a progression of levels of commitment to a norm: accordance, compliance, obedience, and observance.

Accordance merely describes that a particular behavior follows a pattern or rule. It does not give us any information regarding the reason for the behavior. *Compliance* implies behaving in accord with a particular norm. However, a person may be compliant because it is more convenient than non-compliance; this would reflect no commitment or identification with the norm. *Obedience*, on the other hand, derives from an acceptance of authority of the norm. Behavior that is obedient to a particular rule or norm usually evolves as a result of a sense that the norm is legitimately commanding. However, obedient behavior may also occur in order to avoid the possible consequences of not being obedient; it may not reflect an internalized commitment to the norm. When a norm has been fully adopted by a person, we can say that they are *observant* of the norm such that not observing the norm will lead to feelings of discomfort and guilt.

A person might lie, attempt to conceal the fact, and then feel guilty about it, thus disobeying a common norm of truth-telling and at the same time showing deference to its authority, and in that sense, remaining “observant” of it. Such evasive behavior, such concealment, always announces that there is a norm in the neighborhood, that it is known to the agent, and is at the work of governing – even when the resulting conduct can be described as disobedient. So norm

acquisition is not some moral tendency of behavior. Far from it! Neither is the presence of norm-governed conduct evident from the fact that one's behavior often, mostly, or even always corresponds to what the norm would prescribe. *It is shown rather by one's response to violations of the norm.* That a person's speech is guided by the rules of grammar is not displayed in the fact that his or her speech is grammatical. On the contrary, it is revealed in the ways that such a person corrects his or her speech in the face of error. Norm observance is revealed in the editing. (Green, 2003, p. 527)

Normation can be either strong or weak. Normation which invokes moral emotions of self-assessment is strong normation. When norms are practiced for technical reasons, or viewed as weak rules of prudence, the result is weak normation. Green viewed moral education as striving to foster strong normation. Drawing insight and inspiration from various voices of conscience, a person is expected to take responsibility for his moral voice (Schwartz, 2000).

The curriculum for sexuality education in the Modern Orthodox school that I developed as the basis for this research, utilizes Green's approach to moral education to analyze and understand the ways in which participants acquire norms. Through this analysis, I hope to further an understanding of the process of normation.

Sexuality Education

Introduction

The Life Values and Intimacy Education curriculum is rooted in the guidelines for sexuality education developed by SIECUS (1991, 1996). Understanding the genesis and underlying assumptions of the curriculum begins, therefore, with a review of sexuality education and Family Life education in the United States, from which the SIECUS standards were developed. Surveying developments in the field in the United States can provide useful information for work here in Israel since huge resources have been invested in the United States towards the development of sexuality education curricula and programs. Moreover, as a federally-funded educational topic, evaluation research has been conducted on many of these programs, including follow-up on programs adopted by various state school systems. Substantial resources have been invested and research has been conducted identifying the most effective programs (Kirby, 1997, 2007).

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, sexuality education has been a debated topic in the United States (Kirby, 2000). The approach to education in this area has undergone

tremendous changes since then, with perhaps the most dramatic shift of focus taking place in the 1960's. It was in 1964 that the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) was chartered as an organization devoted to fostering research, curricular development, implementation, and evaluation in sexuality education (Donovan, 1989).

Sexuality Education: A Historical Overview

Four generations of sexuality education programs can be identified in the United States, which reflect changing paradigms of the times (Scales, 1986). When programs did not succeed in curbing the rising rate of sexuality transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancies, new approaches were explored (Kirby, 1989; Moran, 2000).

The first generation of sexuality education programs was developed in the 1970's in response to the escalating number of teen pregnancies and incidence of sexually transmitted diseases in the aftermath of the sexual revolution of the sixties. At that time, the belief was that sexuality education programs, which would provide American youth with information about sexual behavior, contraception, and pregnancy, as well as the negative consequences of unwanted pregnancies, would effectively prevent unprotected sexual activity (Kirby, 1999). The outcomes from this approach indicated that providing information was not sufficient to change behavior (Dawson, 1986; Stout & Rivera, 1989; Kirby, 1985). In response, educators turned to a more psychological approach to sexuality education, hoping to identify underlying mechanisms for changing human behavior.

The second generation of sexuality education programs in the United States developed during the early eighties. Moving away from programs based exclusively on knowledge, sexuality education shifted its focus to educate towards decision-making and values-clarification exercises. The underlying theory was that if students were granted opportunities to explore their values and clarify them in relation to sexuality and sexual behavior, as well as to practice their problem-solving and decision-making skills, they would be better equipped to make healthy, thoughtful decisions about sexual behaviors. These programs did meet with some success (Greydanus, Pratt & Dannison, 1995). However, teen pregnancies, as well as cases of teenage sexually transmitted diseases, rose to rates that surpassed those of all other industrialized nations (Panchaud, Singh, Feivelson & Darroch, 2000; Singh & Darroch, 2000). New approaches to sexuality education were deemed necessary.

The third generation of sexuality education programs was developed in the 1990's. A debate about sexuality education in the United States intensified as major federal funding was directed towards a new approach to sexuality education – “abstinence-only” education. A new law in 1996, Public Law 104-193, required that key elements of abstinence education include:

- Abstinence from sexual activity outside of marriage is the expected standard for all school age children.
- Sexual activity outside of the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects.
- A mutually faithful, monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human behavior.

Abstinence-only programs generally do not mention contraception. If mentioned, it is presented only in terms of its failure rates and inability to successfully protect against pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases (Wiley & Terlosky, 2000). Those who support these programs argue that teaching about effective means of contraception gives a mixed message to students and cannot be combined with a program that advocates abstinence (Concerned Women for America, 1998). These programs also do not address homosexuality.

Opposition to the abstinence-only approach was vocal pointing out that more than fifty percent of American high school graduates are sexually active (SIECUS Report, 2003). These students must be educated about safe-sex practices rather than taught about abstinence, which is a stance that they ignore completely.

In response to abstinence-only policies, a fourth generation of programs known as “abstinence-plus” approaches or comprehensive sexuality education was proposed (Kirby, 2000; Wiley & Terlosky, 2000). These programs present abstinence from sexual activity as the method of choice for adolescents. It is the only completely foolproof way to protect oneself from sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. Along with this approach that encourages sexual abstinence, abstinence-plus includes a scientific discussion of contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, and other sexuality issues like homosexuality.

There has been little conclusive research to date indicating that abstinence only programs are successful at reducing teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (Kirby, 2007). In contrast, studies of some abstinence-plus curricula for sexuality education indicate a delay in the onset of intercourse among students and a reduction in the frequency of intercourse or the number of sexual partners. In addition, studies suggest that these programs generally increase the use of contraceptives (Kirby, 1997, 2007).

By 1991, SIECUS had been concerned for some time about the lack of information available to schools and teachers in areas of sexuality, and in particular the lack of any standardized curriculum (Donovan, 1989). Taking the initiative, SIECUS convened a task force and developed “National Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education.” These guidelines were updated in 1996 to reflect societal and technological changes that had occurred since 1991,

and updated again in 2004. This new concept, comprehensive sexuality education, was defined by SIECUS (2004) as seeking to assist young people in understanding a positive view of sexuality, provide them with information and skills about taking care of their sexual health, and helping them make sound decisions now and in the future. Four major goals are established for comprehensive sexuality education programs:

1. To provide accurate, age appropriate information about human sexuality.
2. To provide a venue for young people to develop and understand their values, attitudes, and beliefs about sexuality.
3. To help young people develop relationships and interpersonal skills.
4. To help young people exercise responsibility regarding sexual relationships, including addressing abstinence, pressures to become prematurely involved in sexual intercourse, and the use of contraception and other sexual health measures.

The SIECUS guidelines identify six key concepts in order to fulfill these goals: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture.

The SIECUS approach to sexuality education has met with substantial opposition, particularly from the Christian right who fiercely oppose comprehensive sexuality education in favor of abstinence-only education (Moran, 2000). However, while substantial modification to the SIECUS guidelines was necessary to fit the needs of the Modern Orthodox Schools, it is the very comprehensive nature of the guidelines which provided an excellent framework from which to develop a sexuality education curriculum for the Modern Orthodox School. The SIECUS guidelines, as clearly stated in the introduction (2004) did not purport to be a text book, or a curriculum. They provided an organizational framework of the knowledge of human sexuality and family living. Written with values reflecting the beliefs of most communities in a pluralistic society, SIECUS recommended that the characteristics and values of each local community would need to determine the exact content of the specific curriculum for each particular population.

Sexuality education has developed gradually, moving to incorporate a broad range of topics which serve to nurture sexually healthy adults. While the spectrum of educational topics has been expanded within the framework of comprehensive sexuality education, it still incorporates a heavy emphasis on issues of sexuality and sex education in its earlier, narrow definition.

Sexuality Education in Israel

Introduction

State sponsored education in Israel is divided into two systems, general and religious. Sexuality education must be discussed separately for each system, as the systems are independent of one another. While this study investigates sexuality education in the State religious system², it is important to understand the development of sexuality education in the State educational system as a whole since the religious system often develops its curricula in response to developments in the general system. There is also a separate ultra-Orthodox (*Hareidi*) educational system, which in general, does not have any formal sexuality education classes. When young men and women become engaged, they are educated on an individual or small group basis in preparation for marriage. This study will not deal with the *Hareidi* community.

Cavaglioni (1997) conducted a comprehensive study of sexuality education in the general system including the various school texts, in order to identify the manifest and hidden content of sexuality education. His study did not include the State religious system. He found that many of the teachers in the classroom were loathe to discuss issues of sexuality directly and generally focused instead on “safer” topics such as family, communication, relationships in general. In addition, he found that most school texts and manuals affirmed sexual, middle class, Western sexual values such as self-restraint, obedience, commitment, duty, responsibility and patriarchal gender roles. Teachers evaded discussion of explicit biological and sexual information.

Only three academic studies to date have been conducted in the State religious system on Family Life education, two addressing specific curricula and narrowly focused in scope (Freed, 1976, Rappaport, 1999) and one exploring the experience of Family Life education teachers (Samet, 2005). Samet’s study offers an extensive description of Family Life education in the religious school system. These will be surveyed below.

Since this study is exploring the Israeli Modern Orthodox community norms in areas of sexuality and relationships, it is important to try and ascertain these norms as reflected in Israeli Modern Orthodox popular culture. Information can be drawn from articles and books by

² The State religious school system has under its auspices several different school frameworks, which reflect different levels of commitment and religiosity at the elementary school level. There are local State religious girls’ and boys’ schools, which are usually a mixture of an Orthodox and a traditional student body. There are Torani schools, which reflect a deeper commitment to halakhic practice and in which the student body is more likely to be committed to a halakhic lifestyle. At the high-school level, in addition to the aforementioned frameworks, there are also *Ulpanot* and *Yeshivot*, schools with high levels of Judaic and secular subjects, long hours, and an intensive commitment to learning and Jewish law. Materials produced by the State religious system must therefore be applicable to the range of frameworks they serve.

religious educators and rabbis discussing the religious issues and obligations associated with education in the areas of sexuality, modesty and relationships. Written for the community of educators, these are generally published in religious journals or education manuals geared to the religious educator, (Samet, 2005). In addition, quotes of and interviews with rabbis and educators found in newspaper and journal articles published in the Modern Orthodox community provide information about the approach taken by Modern Orthodox leaders in these areas of education. The above materials were therefore utilized in the following literature review.

The General State School System

In the pre-State period at the beginning of the 20th century, there were attempts to create a new sexual reality for the Jewish community in Israel (Cavaglione, 1997). In the late 1930's and early 1940's, these were limited to a number of local initiatives, mainly in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. These initiatives were heavily influenced by Freudian thought, emerging from the Psychoanalytic Institute of Jerusalem and the Public Health Services of what was at the time a voluntary health service of the Jewish community – Hadassah. In addition, the socialist *Hashomer Hatzair* movement, comprised of immigrants heavily influenced by profound upheavals in the countries from which they emigrated (Russia, Poland and central Europe), created the Kibbutz community, central to which was a new model for communal living. A core element of this new model was a redefinition of the role of the family as part of the collective. In this context, *Hashomer Hatzair* made attempts to develop sexuality education programs in its educational institutions (Shtarkshall & Zemach, 2004). For various reasons, the early years of the State saw little development in sexuality education (Cavaglione, 1977).

Broader interest in sexuality education developed in the 1960's, when a number of sex education guidebooks were published by concerned professionals (Shtarkshall & Zemach, 2004). The concerns at that time centered on an apparent increase in sexual behavior among youth. When sexually transmitted diseases among Israeli youth became a concern in the early 1970's, a move towards a comprehensive approach to sexuality education developed (Cavaglione, 1997). The first national study of sexual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors among Israeli adolescents was carried out in the early seventies by Lancet et al., (1978). As a result of this study, a multi-disciplinary committee was established, which developed an outline for a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum. This led to the formation of the Unit for Family and Sex Education at the Ministry of Education in 1973 (Cavaglione, 2000). In its early stages, the unit developed educational programs and trained sexuality educators, allowing voluntary implementation of sexuality education within the school system. By 1978 a curriculum for family life and sex education had been developed and was formally adopted by the Ministry of

Education, although it was not yet compulsory. Soon after, the unit was merged into the Psycho-educational Services of the Ministry of Education.

The first case of AIDS in the United States was reported in 1981 (Fact Sheet on AIDS, NIAID Web site, <http://www.niaid.nih.gov>). The incidence of the disease quickly rose to epidemic proportions in the Western world and sparked a rise in public interest in sexuality education in general and preventative education concerning AIDS in particular. In Israel too, AIDS was a catalyst in formalizing sexuality education. Combined with a number of other factors, including a rise in concern about teenage sexual behavior, the perception of adolescents as being an at-risk group, and the sense of inadequacy on the part of parents in the area of sexuality education for their children, the AIDS crisis precipitated renewed discussion at the Ministry of Education regarding the importance of sexuality education (Shtarkshall & Zemach, 2004).

Only in 1987 did sexuality education become compulsory in the State educational system (Cavaglione, 2000). The mandate established criterion for sexuality education, including a minimum of sixteen hours of teaching classes at three different levels, first through twelfth grade. At each level, there would be sixteen hours of teaching (Shtarkshall & Zemach, 2004). However, implementation was somewhat haphazard, dependent on the creativity and commitment of a particular principal to implementation, availability of trained teachers and a sufficient budget (Shtarkshall & Zemach, 2004).

A Ministry of Education report surveying sexuality education in the general educational system in the school year 2000-01 indicated that while some form of sexuality education took place in most schools, the quality and quantity of this education varied greatly (Asulin & Barnea, 2002). Schools generally did not educate on a consistent basis, and classes were more likely to occur only in some grades (6, 8, 11), with very little or no sexuality education in others. The study suggested that sexuality education that is both developmentally appropriate and preventative ought to take place on a more consistent basis, particularly during the high school years. Report recommendations included addressing the absence of sexuality education in ninth and tenth grade, and questions were raised about topics rarely addressed (family, human sexuality and development, internet use, pornography).

Perhaps the most significant critique of the implementation of the sexuality education program in State schools spoke to the issue of time allotment. Class time, it was reported, was often not formally allotted to sexuality education, and even when allotted, it was often the first class to be cancelled when other topics, considered a higher priority, needed to be addressed. This was particularly the case in the older grades (Asulin & Barnea, 2002). While this cancellation

of classes is often true for non-matriculation subjects in high schools in Israel, the ease with which these classes were cancelled does reflect a lack of commitment to sexuality education. The Education Ministry report confirms findings from research in the United States which indicate that a successful sexuality education program needs substantial time commitment on a regular basis across grades, as well as trained teachers and an individual in the school responsible for ensuring that the sexuality education program is fully incorporated in the curriculum (Kirby, 1989, 1997, 2000).

Family Life Education in the State Religious School System

History

The first religious schools to incorporate any form of Family Life education were the Ulpanot (girls' religious boarding schools).³ Long before the Unit for Family Life and Sexuality Education was established by the Ministry of Education, a number of these schools provided classes in Family Life education in the upper high-school grades. Learning focused on women's roles and the centrality of the home for the religious family and classes were based on Jewish law and Jewish philosophy. Classes were often taught by a rabbi's wife, who was invited to the school specifically to teach these classes (Nerya, 1980). A more formal framework was created in the late 1960's, when an integrative program for learning Oral Law was introduced, making matriculation exams in Oral Law a possibility for girls (Eisenberg, 1988). One of the matriculation units in Oral Law evolved into a program entitled "Matrimony and Family," which included topics such as engagement, marriage, divorce, and forbidden relationships. The fact that this was a matriculation subject gave more weight and seriousness to the class in the schools in which it was taught. As a class in Oral Law, the topics studied were often taught by men and were based on Jewish law, with some occasional Jewish philosophy. Educating about healthy relationships was rarely addressed. In addition, the content of the curriculum was limited to marriage, not the sexual and emotional development of the teenager. Nevertheless, these classes did identify the need for a more comprehensive discussion of family life beyond the topics covered for the matriculation. As a result, some Ulpanot took the initiative to establish classes that approached topics of family life from a broader-based philosophical, and sometimes even emotional and interpersonal, perspective (Samet, 2005).

³ *Ulpanot* were conceived in order to provide a comprehensive religious educational environment. As full facility boarding schools, they were designed to create an intense learning environment in order to develop learned, intensely committed religious young women. Today, some *Ulpanot* offer only part-time dormitory facilities, with students boarding one, two, or three nights a week.

The Unit for Family Life Education in the State Religious School System

Soon after the Unit for Family Life and Sexuality Education in the general school system was established in 1973, a parallel unit was slated for the religious system. When the unit opened the State religious system chose to name their unit, “The Unit for Family Life education,” dropping sexuality education from the title altogether. This symbolized a categorical rejection of sexuality education outside of the context of preparation for marriage, as reflected in a policy statement of the Department of Religious education:

Human sexuality is not, in our view, an independent area of study, but rather an area whose justification lies only within the context of family life. (Department of Religious education, Ministry of Education, 1983)

The proposed opening of the Unit was the source of much controversy in the Department of Religious Education within the Ministry of Education. *Petachim*, a journal of Jewish thought, dedicated an entire issue to a discussion of the pros and cons of Family Life education (Aderet, 1971; Bantowitz, 1971; Padan, 1971; Shefner, 1971). Many of those involved in establishing Family Life education in the State religious system wrote about the complexities of incorporating this topic within religious schools. Over time, a number of articles have appeared in *Shma'atin* and *Be-Sdei Chemed*, journals for the religious educator, presenting opinions as to whether Family Life education belongs in the religious school setting (Nerya, 1973; Munk, 1975; Harpenas, 1977; Rokeach, 1978; Ron; 1985). Munk (1975), a rabbi and educator, is representative of these views:

The commonly accepted definition in non-religious circles of the purpose of this education is to prepare children and youth for a sexual life that is both healthy and happy ... We cannot possibly accept this definition of purpose. We are interested in educating our boys and girls to a life of holiness and purity. (p. 99)

Many emphasized the inherent differences between the purpose of this education in a religious school and sex education in the secular schools. The central tenet guiding those involved in the Unit for Family Life education was in differentiating between sexuality education and Family Life education. The latter was viewed as a consciously chosen alternative to the former based on the different values that each represents (Fried, 1976; Harpenas, 1977; Goodman, 1995).

An important difference between sexuality education practiced in secular schools and Family Life education in the religious schools is easily identified by considering the relative value given to the family. While in Western society the family is losing its character, we as religious people attribute a very central position to the family, and see it as an ultimate value. (Solberg, 1997)

Brown (1984) maintained that sexuality education implies a listing of facts and techniques, and suggested that the religious community needs to provide relationship education for its students, teaching the value of friendship and the importance and methods of meaningful relationships. Only when this has been presented can there be a context on which to build sexuality education in preparing students for married life.

Most rabbis and educators did not view incorporating Family Life education in State religious schools as ideal. For example, in an article discussing the need for Family Life education in the State religious educational system, Harpenas (1977) decries the corrupt reality that forced the subject of sexuality into the public arena, a holy subject which ought to belong only in the private domain. However, in response to pervasive sexuality in society, he argues the need for a religious response and views the school system as an excellent avenue for reaching religious students in order to neutralize the pervasive effects of society's cavalier attitudes towards and public involvement in sexuality.

A focus on family, as mentioned earlier, was a guiding principle of Family Life education curricula in the State religious schools. This approach found expression in the first curricular guidelines developed for Family Life education in the religious schools (Grizim, 1979). The curriculum focused extensively on family issues, including, for example, classes on honoring parents and treating others with respect. In addition, the central role of the program was to instill the norms of Jewish law in the student body, in particular norms of behavior in areas of modesty and behavior between boys and girls. As a subject based on Jewish law, teachers chosen were usually teachers of Jewish law who had no training in psychology or biology. Therefore, even when the curriculum suggested materials from the fields of psychology and biology, teachers usually skipped over them, as they didn't know how to present them. Sometimes, guest lecturers such as doctors or nurses were invited to supplement the classes, but these presentations usually took the form of frontal lectures, with no possibility of open discussion and questions (Samet, 2005).

In the eighties and nineties, numerous programs emerged in the girls' high-schools. Usually, they were the result of efforts on the part of an individual teacher and they stayed within a single classroom in a single school. They were dependent on the initiative of a competent

educator within the system. Additionally, these courses were developed for twelfth-grade students only. Some schools chose to turn to outside resources in order to educate their students in family life, developing an off campus seminar model. Students spent a few days in an institution outside of school that specialized in presenting these topics to the religious market and would prepare a workshop to meet what they perceived to be, the needs of the students (Biale, 2007). This was adopted as a model because it provided a response to the needs of the students without the teachers themselves having to address issues of family life. The advantages of these programs were that information that teachers did not possess could be provided to the students in a non-threatening environment. Since those giving the workshops were strangers to the students, and teachers were usually not expected to be present at these workshops, students could feel free to ask questions and raise issues that they might have been uncomfortable raising at school. However, the seminar model also gave an implicit message to students that Family Life education is a topic for discussion with unfamiliar educators and only outside of school.

It is important to note the absence of a parallel process in the boys' religious high-schools. Weiss (1999) was the first to publicly address this absence, presented in the voice of a religious teenage male:

Naturally, I was very preoccupied with the physical changes I was experiencing in my body and my attraction to the other sex. I had a tremendous need for information on the topic. I can remember myself coming to book stores and secretly looking at magazines. I would look at the columns for questions and answers on sexual development in order to find answers to my questions. Most of my sources were not reliable and presented the subject in a distorted fashion. Even the secular educational books which I managed to acquire confused me. Their message was that everything is permitted and even advisable and it was clear to me that they were in opposition to the messages of religious education. On the other hand, I did not have around me a system which would guide me and give me the tools to fulfill what was expected of me. I felt really torn. I was too shy to talk to friends because I did not know if similar things were happening to them. I started to have doubts as to whether I belonged in the Yeshiva framework or not. My frustration was exacerbated because I was meticulous in observing commandments and was bitterly disappointed with myself because I was failing miserably in the area of these urges and desires. In addition to the secular sources I found, I was also drawing information from "Breslav"

literature,⁴ for example, “The booklet about *Shemirat Ha-Brit* (keeping the covenant)”⁵ which uses elements of intimidation. My guilt feelings over my involvement with urges and desires tormented and depressed me, and I tried to atone for my actions with fast days and various other methods. I felt tremendous shame when I read books secretly. I thought I was deviant. And that I had no one to turn to. It took me years to overcome the anxiety and attitude I developed towards the subject. Perhaps the situation I am describing is a little extreme, but I know that many religious teenagers have similar experiences on some level or another. To this day I have tremendous anger towards those mechanchim (male home room teachers) who neglected to discuss a subject which was so significant for me, and left me to a draining and lonely Sisyphean struggle. (p. 12-13)

This poignantly captures the lonely struggle of the religious teenager. Having no one available to talk to leaves them guilty and in a state of despair, a reality confirmed in a recent personal account of life in a Modern Orthodox boys’ boarding school (Daum, 2007).

The Current Situation in the State Religious Schools

Sexuality education is a perplexing topic to the State religious school system (Admonit, 1999; Steinsaltz, 2000). Hartman and Samet (2007) note that some educators have interpreted commitment to modesty to require excluding sexuality from classroom instruction. This often translates into an avoidance of sexuality education. The State religious school curriculum focuses considerable attention on details of Jewish law connected to keeping Shabbat, Jewish holidays, and the dietary laws, as well as a full array of commandments concerning inter-personal ethical behavior. However, on the topic of sexuality which many Modern Orthodox teenagers consider their most pressing area of curiosity and interest and about which Jewish law has clear opinions, the school often chooses to be silent. This silence itself communicates the sense that Judaism is uncomfortable about sexuality or, even worse, that it has nothing positive to say on the subject (Debow & Woloski-Wruble, 2007).

For many years the most common approach in the Orthodox community opposed educating teenagers about sexuality and Jewish laws relating to it as inappropriate and unnecessary (Achituv, 1976). If Jewish laws of sexuality were to be spoken about at all, it was only in the home. The areas of Jewish law mentioned above are also addressed at home but

⁴ Breslav is a form of *Hassidut* that is passionate in nature. They publish numerous booklets encouraging many types of intensive behaviors in order to avoid falling prey to desire. In addition, instilling fear is used as a method for helping people avoid succumbing to their urges.

⁵ “*Shemirat Ha-Brit*” is a term used in the Orthodox world to refer to the proscription of masturbation.

nevertheless merit formal study in school. Moreover, the research in the non-Orthodox population indicates that parents hesitate to talk about sexuality and intimacy with their children (Santrok, 1998; Kaiser Family Foundation Report, 2001; Kirby & Miller, 2002). Therefore, the need to address these areas in the school framework, as well as to help parents become partners in this endeavor, ought to be an important component of religious education (Rodriguez, 2000; Friedman, 2006).

While Family Life education officially became a subject taught in Israel's State religious school system in the early eighties, it is still not widely taught (Cherka, 1999; Admonit, 2002). In those schools which do teach Family Life education, courses are limited to the upper high school grades and almost exclusively to girls' schools (Admonit, 2002, Goodman, 2005). In many schools, the emphasis in these classes is on forming a girl's character in preparation for life as a wife and mother, in order to perpetuate traditional gender roles (Rapoport, 1999). Ayala, for example, enjoys the "Holiness" class in her school because it is teaching her important lessons for a perfect married life.

I like the holiness class, the class is interesting and it is also very interesting to step out of the routine of learning a little, and it is also very important because the teacher is guiding us how to really live happy and correct married lives in the future. It is really a fun class and the *Rabbanit* [Rabbi's wife who teaches the class] is also lovely and smart, the class also serves us well, because, after all, ultimately what is the main purpose, you want to have a perfect married life and you certainly want to learn about that. (Rapoport, 1999, p. 493)

Other courses focus on issues of marriage and divorce in Jewish law with little, if any, sexuality or relationship education (Goodman, 2005). Sexuality and relationships which are of concern and interest to most Modern Orthodox teenagers are not included in the curriculum (Sherlow, 2004; Hartman & Samet, 2007). In addition, the content of Family Life education classes focuses wholly on marriage and relationships in the future, while not addressing any possible issues girls or boys may be experiencing in their current lives (Admonit, 2002).

Although a number of possible curricula for Family Life education are available, in practice, teachers interested in offering classes in sexuality and relationships beyond those based in the twelfth-grade family purity in Jewish law course usually prepare materials themselves. In addition, they have to find time to teach these materials in a schedule that offers little opportunity for studying non-matriculation subjects. Therefore Family Life education only takes place in schools in which there are teachers and administrators fully committed to the endeavor.

Some schools that have recognized the necessity of classes in family life have implemented them with teachers with no background or training in Family Life education. Despite the good intentions, research indicates that being taught by a teacher without training in the field can sometimes be more problematic than not being taught at all (Bowden et al, 2003).

Approaches to Family Life Education in State Religious Schools

Samet (2005) identifies three approaches to sexuality education in the Modern Orthodox schools in Israel: silencing, post facto, and proactive.

The Process of Silencing

In “*The History of Sexuality*,” Foucault (1978) identified a process of silencing that takes place regarding topics of sexuality. This process need not be total in order to affect its goal.

There was a policing of statements. A control over enunciations as well: where and when it was not possible to talk about such things became much more strictly defined; in which circumstances, among which speakers, and within which social relationships. Areas were therefore established, if not of utter silence, at least of tact and discretion: between parents and children, for instance, or teachers and pupils, or masters and domestic servants. This almost certainly constituted a whole restrictive economy, one that was incorporated into the politics of language and speech. (p. 18)

Others have commented on the use of silencing in sexuality education. Michelle Fine (1988) writes critically about the silencing of the female voice, as well as a lack of discourse presenting sexuality in a positive light in the sexuality education classroom in the United States public school system. She identifies clearly defined positions that teachers are encouraged to present, as well as those that sexuality educators are taught not to address:

Sexuality education in public schools is typically constructed around an “official curriculum” that “structures in” hegemonic silences. (Phillips & Fine, 1992, p. 243)

This critique of sexuality education in public schools questions the ways in which language, silence, and ideologies are used to maintain and encourage sexuality education of a particular kind, while implicitly denying the legitimacy of others. While the problem of silencing seems to be common to sexuality education in the West, the nature of the silencing in the Modern

Orthodox world has its own unique quality arising from a number of religious concepts and beliefs of religious educators as delineated below.

1. Modesty

Hartman and Samet (2007) have noted that there are educators and parents who argue that sexuality and intimacy are topics that do not belong in classrooms. These people claim that the value of modesty precludes sexuality education because education requires public discussion of private matters. To strengthen their argument, they bring a quotation from the Talmud: “One does not discuss issues of illicit sexuality with three people together” (Babylonian Talmud, *Chagiga*, 11b). An examination of the context of the quotation reveals that the sages of the Talmud are not concerned here about modesty but rather error. When three people sit together discussing issues of this nature, one may engage the teacher and the other two may distract each other and leave with a misunderstanding about what is, and is not, permitted. The Talmud is specifically concerned here with errors in identifying prohibited relations that are not explicitly mentioned in the Torah (“hidden forbidden relations”) and not about sexuality and intimacy. In general, the tendency to oppose education about sexuality actually seems to contradict the approach of the Talmud, in which many tractates deal explicitly with sexual matters. These tractates have always been taught in classes and there are no records that topics which dealt with sexuality were avoided because of a prohibition to discuss sexuality in a group forum.

2. Irrelevant to Students at this Age

Another central argument brought by proponents of the silencing approach stems from an interpretation of the Biblical text: “Do not wake or rouse love until it please!” (Song of Songs 2:7). The interpretation asserts that any talk about sexuality may arouse teenage youth to the topic; innocence and ignorance are preferable.

In an interview with Leah, a teacher and administrator whose role as a supervisor for the Unit for Family Life education is to persuade rabbi educators of the need to talk to male students about sexuality, she reveals that a principal claimed that such discussion was simply unnecessary, as his students had no problems with or questions about sexuality.

I told him, “Sir, either you don’t know your own pupils, or your “frogs” have dug themselves so deep into the mud that you are unable to hear them croaking. Meanwhile, they may be drowning in the mire. I know of the problems your students are experiencing because my [female] students are their partners.” But still, [the Yeshiva rabbis] tell me, “Don’t awaken and don’t arouse” – that’s their rule. There is no way they would initiate a discussion on the issue! (Hartman & Samet, 2007, p. 80)

In order to adopt this approach, one must assume that teenagers in Modern Orthodox schools are not aware of their own sexuality. While some Orthodox educators persist in this position, it contradicts research on teenage sexuality (DeLamater & Friedrich, 2002), as well as the record of internet discussions of at least some Modern Orthodox teenagers (www.thelockers.net).

3. Harmful to Students at this Age

Most Modern Orthodox classes are heterogeneous with students who span a range of knowledge and awareness about sexuality. While Modern Orthodox youth are for the most part influenced by the majority culture and are aware of the liberal approach to sexuality it espouses, some remain quite sexually innocent. Being raised within a traditional subculture that rejects any sexual activity until marriage can create conflicts for the sexually aware teenager. For those whose awareness remains dormant for longer, there is less conflict. Many religious educators would promote this dormant stage for as long as possible in order to delay tensions. These teachers argue that sexuality and intimacy are matters that relate primarily to marriage and are therefore inappropriate to address until students are approaching marriage. These teachers assume that addressing topics of sexuality would be harmful for their students, opening up possibilities that they have not previously considered.

4. Futile

An additional reason propounded to justify the silencing approach stems from the realization on the part of teachers that the Jewish law has expectations far removed from the current norms of the average Modern Orthodox student in areas of male-female interactions. Teachers are fearful of talking about the Jewish law and issues relating to it when they sense that their students are not living within the boundaries of Jewish law in these areas. They prefer to say nothing rather than present approaches that their students will probably find untenable (Samet, 2005). This is in line with a principle in Jewish law that it is better for someone to sin out of ignorance rather than deliberately, knowing that his actions violate the law (Babylonian Talmud, *Beitz'a* 30a).

For many educators, arguments for the silencing approach stem from their own discomfort at addressing topics of sexuality (Samet, 2005; Lerman, 2007). Not trained or educated in these areas, and usually coming from a background where neither parents nor teachers spoke to them about sexuality, they feel ill-equipped to address student questions and concerns about sexuality.

The Post-Facto Approach

The post-facto approach towards sexuality education in the Modern Orthodox community sees the need for Family Life education as a response to a crisis. Ideally, say the proponents of this approach, these topics should not be taught at all. However, since the reality in which Modern Orthodox teenagers are being educated is such that they are exposed to a constant barrage of information with varying degrees of reliability about sexuality from the secular world, religious educators must respond.

Family Life education did not become part of the system as a result of educational improvements... but rather as a result of the undermining of standards within our society... [as] a result of the complete collapse of values... We must relate to this new and unexpected role as an emergency-based mission imposed upon us for the purpose of preventing any further disintegration of the foundations of our society. (Harpenas, 1977, p. 20)

This theme repeats itself in the writings of almost all of the early educators involved in introducing Family Life education in the State religious schools. *Rabbanit* Rachel Neriya was an early proponent of Family Life education in Orthodox schools and named her first book *Facing the Confusion Created by the New Permissiveness* (1973). The book was written in direct response to the norms and values that Modern Orthodox youth were exposed to and which were antithetical to religious values. While her writings express a clear sense of mission in being the first to counterbalance secular ideas and concepts about sexuality with an alternative for the Modern Orthodox community, she repeatedly apologizes for breaking the silence. In response to the rule “do not arouse and do not awaken,” she asserts unequivocally that it is not the discussions in the classroom that awaken students, for they are exposed to far more provocative discussions in the secular media.

The idea that students have already become exposed to and influenced by the broader culture in areas of family life serves as the impetus for other educators to share Neriya’s educational vision. Shlomo Aviner, a prominent rabbinic leader in the Modern Orthodox world, says in response to the question of whether these topics should be addressed at all given that the discussion conflicts with the value of modesty:

It seems to me that this [idea of not discussing topics of sexuality because of modesty] is not true and we are obligated to discuss all these topics. In particular, because if we do not talk about them – others will. Our students are not living in

a vacuum, they listen to the radio, watch television and read newspapers. They absorb all sorts of influences from there which are totally distorted, and we have no means to prevent that. We want all of these topics to be addressed and recounted in a straightforward manner. (Aviner, 2000, p. 141)

The Proactive Approach

The third approach is educationally proactive (Samet, 2005), espousing Family Life education as a necessary part of adolescent education. It views not talking about these matters as a repression of children's natural curiosity about sexuality. Rather, children are seen as deserving straightforward, age appropriate answers to their questions about sexuality so that they can better understand the physical and emotional changes they undergo with regards their sexuality and interest in relationships. Students should also be taught about Judaism's nuanced and positive approach to sexuality and pleasure in the appropriate contexts. In addition, its proponents recognize the need to provide education to sexuality from an authentic Orthodox position to students who are exposed to contrary cultural approaches to sexuality in the general media. The proactive approach does not focus only on that which is forbidden, but emphasizes a positive approach to sexuality from within a perspective of Jewish law. The proactive approach is not found in boys' institutions at all, and only partially in girls' institutions (Samet, 2005).

Yet, in an article on the topic of teaching modesty to girls from within a spiritual framework, Sherlow (2004) analyzes critically the problems of the current system.

This is the picture that our students have formulated: We, their rabbis and female educators, only talk about what is dangerous and what is forbidden. We are not prepared to open up a discussion with them concerning what is permitted and what is necessary...and we have no message concerning the very areas in which they are interested... Therefore, family life classes, whatever they are called, are not the most exciting class for our students... Generally, the topics that are addressed have very little relevance to their current lives, and therefore – there is not a high level of interest. (Sherlow, 2004, p. 299)

This analysis of girls' experience of family life classes in the schools that actually do have a program is a sobering introduction to the nature of the proactive approach in the field. It highlights the fact that while there are schools that espouse a proactive approach to Family Life education, they generally educate with two goals. Family life educators often choose to emphasize the dangers of relationships between the sexes and the rules of that which is

forbidden. Alternatively, in reaction to the dramatic changes in women's roles in the Western world, they view the central purpose of this education as forming a girl's character in preparation for life as a wife and mother in order to perpetuate traditional gender roles (Rapoport, 1999). In a study of holiness classes in an *Ulpana*, the researchers found:

The home is seen as an arena for fulfilling the Jewish ideal of family life, which is conceived as the province of women. The intense official discourse on this issue is related to the *Ulpana*'s urgent need to contend with the upheaval in this domain caused by women leaving the home to go to work and by new ideas of womanhood and the role of women. (Rapoport, Garb & Penso, 1995, p. 55)

As noted, the *Ulpanot* as a group introduced Family Life education into their schools before there was an official Unit of Family Life education in the Ministry of Education. The purpose of these classes, however, was not to educate about the struggles or questions students may have been experiencing in areas of sexuality or relationships, but rather to counterbalance modern notions of feminism and womanhood and attempt to educate the next generation of women to traditional roles.

The division of roles between the sexes necessitates that each of the sexes be educated towards fulfilling their roles... It is important to develop in women an understanding of the tremendous, important responsibility and significant mission that being homemakers and mothers to their children is, to nurture in women a positive attitude to the very nature of motherhood. (Neria, 1980. p. 61)

In schools in which courses were introduced under the rubric of Oral Law and focused almost entirely on the laws of family purity, there was little, if any, sexuality or relationships education (Sherlow, 2004; Goodman, 2005). Thus, despite the proactive nature of these endeavors, the family life classes did not provide an open forum for conversations in the areas of sexuality and relationships most needed by the students.

Sherlow promotes a radical alternative form of the proactive approach. After commenting on the reasons existing classes in Family Life education do not satisfy students, he suggests considering what it is that students themselves are interested in hearing. This would probably prove more popular and successful, rather than deciding for them what it is that they need to hear.

Let's return to the girls – what are they interested in learning? They would like to know about the nature of women and the nature of men and the differences between them, as much as one can generalize; in the power of their burgeoning physicality; in the essence of physical attraction, its power and its danger; in the possibility of living a passionate life in holiness; in issues that they see in the adult world – that which is beautiful and pure, and in crises and perversions; in brief – all of the varieties of experience. (Sherlow, 2004, p. 299-300)

Family Life Education Curricula in State Religious Schools

As noted earlier, the history and development of sexuality education in the State school system has been well documented in the work of Cavaglioni (1997). Through an analysis of books, texts, and transcripts of Ministry of Education discussions he presents a comprehensive picture of approaches to sexuality education utilized in Israel. Family Life education in the State religious system has not been subject to the same scrutiny, although Samet (2005) provides a valuable historical review in her study.

While much has been written by educators about the need to implement more comprehensive Family Life education programs both for boys and girls in the various State religious schools (Samuel, 1985; Grizim, 1994; Solberg, 1997; Neuman, 2003; Kehat, 2003), relatively little has been done. However, several initiatives should be noted.

The first syllabus for Family Life education in the religious sector was published in 1988 (Grizim, 1988). It offered curricular suggestions for Family Life education for kindergarten through twelfth grade. The syllabus was divided into four sections: Me, the Family, Society, and the Nation. Prior to and in conjunction with the publication of the syllabus, a number of experimental pamphlets were produced for different grade levels and were distributed to teachers to use with their students as part of this program (1979, 1985, 1987). The syllabus itself reflected a broad range of issues, but the booklets offered a very neutral curriculum focused primarily on Jewish law that did not address significant issues of family life, and certainly not sexuality education. In addition, there were no lesson plans provided for teachers, but rather suggestions for topics to be discussed with little guiding materials offered for actual classroom practice.

The most detailed educational materials available are those produced for twelfth-grade students, which evolved in response to the introduction of a twelfth-grade Oral Law matriculation examination for girls on the subject of “Marital Relations and Family – *Isbut U-Mishpacha*” in the early 1980's. Topics included in the curriculum for matriculation are engagement, the sanctification of marriage and the marriage ceremony, marriage, divorce and

laws governing mixing between the sexes. While this curriculum established a formal framework for classes on these topics and opened conversation about them in twelfth-grade classes, sharp criticism regarding curricular content abounds (Chadad, 2002). In particular, one of the most commonly used books written for the curriculum is “Faithful House” (*Bayit Ne’eman*), which has no author but is described at the front as having been written “with much effort by rabbis and teachers with rich experience in education.” This book has been fiercely criticized as being antiquated and archaic in its approach to women as well as replete with content of no relevance to Modern Orthodox teenage girls. Critics say its content and approach trivializes Jewish law for students and alienates them from the tradition. The curriculum presents, for example, relationships between men and women as hierarchical in nature, with a woman’s role as being to serve her husband, and not from a point of view which religious female teenagers would find relevant to their religious lives today. The book is still offered as the formal text of study for the matriculation exam. In response to criticism of the book, a number of revisions were produced (Eisenberg 1988, 1996, 1998).

Suggestions to change the curricular content of the twelfth-grade matriculation exam to include broader male-female issues and issues the Modern Orthodox young woman may face in changing times have not met with success. An important example of an effort to implement change that was thwarted is that of the experimental curriculum “*Seder Nashim: The Woman in the Family and in Society in Light of Jewish Sources*” (Admonit & Wasserman, 2004). It was written as an alternative to “*Bayit Ne’eman*”. *Seder Nashim* offered a new approach for the Oral Law unit on family purity, with a much broader perspective, taking into consideration the issues that women today struggle with and presents a source-based approach to the issues. Rabbi Yaakov Ariel, a prominent rabbinic leader, writes in his recommendation at the beginning of the book:

This gathering of our sources, both ancient and modern, is rich and diverse, based in Jewish law and lore, enabling a deep and broad learning of topics related to women and the family. It offers an opportunity to understand the Jewish laws and philosophical outlook of our holy Torah and its applications to a changing world throughout the generations.” (Rabbi Ariel, 2004)

Implementation of this curriculum in the schools has been prevented by supervisors of Oral law matriculation exams in the Department of Religious Education at the Ministry of Education, and no other alternatives have been offered in its place.

An early pioneer in both teaching and writing about Family Life education was *Rabbanit* Rachel Nerya. Taking it upon herself as a mission, she lectured to students and their parents on

these topics across the country before any formal programs were established. In addition, she published broadly on the topic (Nerya, 1974; 1979; 1983; 1995). Throughout the eighties and nineties, there was not an insignificant amount of literature produced in these areas, which seemed to evolve in response to questions emerging from teenagers themselves. In particular, Rabbi Aviner has been a prolific writer on this topic (1978; 1985; 1991; 1994; 1999; 2000), and is responsible for opening up a topic that was commonly not talked about (Samet, 2005).

An additional experimental curriculum for twelfth-grade students that has been developed for the Modern Orthodox school, “Gender and Family in Judaism” (Biale et al, 2006), was spearheaded by *Koleich*, the organization of Modern Orthodox feminists, and addresses issues relating to males and females and their roles and interactions from a religious, feminist perspective. In that vein, the program is offered to both male and female students. It has been distributed to heads of boys and girls high schools in the Modern Orthodox community but has met with only minimal implementation (Personal communication, T. Biale, 3.3.09).

In 1995, a new team of Family Life educators under the leadership of Rivka Cherka became responsible for the Unit for Family Life education (Personal communication, D. Rosenberg, 18.11.07). They were aware that their most important endeavor was to provide educational materials appropriate to the Modern Orthodox community. In an effort to produce materials that could be used in the various frameworks of the State religious school system, the staff of the Unit for Family Life education was divided into teams, each focused on developing materials on a particular topic. The topics related to teenagers and their present experiences such as, for example: on being a teenager, on boyfriends and girlfriends, and on establishing a family. These were subdivided into topics for various grade levels. In addition, a diverse group of family life educators, teachers, rabbis, psychologists, and counselors was assembled to assist in writing the educational curriculum. Materials were piloted in a number of schools that reflected the range of state religious institutions. In addition, the staff of the Unit for Family Life education offered a number of workshops dedicated to Family Life education and invited high level administrators from the Religious Department of Education to attend. These administrators came to recognize the importance of Family Life education and gradually changed their attitude from one of “why bother?” to inquiring as to the most successful approach to utilize (D. Rosenberg, personal communication, 18.11.07).

After ten years of work, a curriculum appeared entitled, “*The Orthodox Family: Educating towards Coping in a Changing World?*” (Cherko et al, 2005). The range of professional backgrounds of those who contributed to this work is reflected both in the content and in the diverse methodologies represented in this volume. This effort represents the first attempt to produce

comprehensive Family Life educational materials for the State religious sector. The curriculum is geared towards both male and female students. With evidence that boys Yeshiva high schools were not providing Family Life education (Weiss, 1999; Samet, 2005; Daum, 2007), the Unit for Family Life education developed curriculum materials which would also be appropriate for use in boys Yeshiva high schools in the hopes of encouraging administrators in these institutions to implement classes in family life. This material is being implemented in many State religious high schools across Israel and is beginning to stimulate the development of Family Life education in far more, including State religious boys' high schools (D. Rosenberg, personal communication, 18.11.07). While potentially offering a rich resource, the extensive nature of the curriculum hampers its efficacy, making it difficult to identify a particular topic for a particular age group. In addition, there are still important topics that are not addressed such as homosexuality, pornography, internet usage and *shemirat negiyah*⁶. No assessment of the new curriculum has yet been published.

In addition to these official materials provided by the Unit of Family Life education educators who lacked resources gradually created their own materials for the classes they taught. A number of these resources have been noted in an article by Solberg (1997). Undoubtedly, there are many more teacher-made materials across the country, but no formal record of them exists.

Popular Modern Orthodox Literature about Sexuality

Throughout the eighties and nineties, a significant amount of literature was produced in these areas in response to questions emerging from teenagers themselves. Rabbis and female educators wrote important articles and books on topics related to teenage sexuality (Even-Denan & Gamas, 1997; Chaikin, 2000; Schwartzbaum & Sedan, 2000; Shapira, 2003; Shapira & Shapira, 2004). While these are not educational curricula or lesson plans for educators, they demonstrate a movement towards more open discussion through the publication of materials accessible to teenagers. In addition, there has been a proliferation of Modern Orthodox websites which offer an "Ask the Rabbi" service. All questions are accepted anonymously and answers by Rabbis and their assistants are posted on the internet site. Questions in areas of sexuality, relationships, and modesty abound (For example, www.kipa.co.il/ask, www.moreshet.co.il/web/shut/shut.asp).

⁶ *Shemirat negiyah*, or "being *shomer*," is the term used to describe the observance of the Jewish laws forbidding physical touching between the sexes. According to Jewish law, men and women who are not married must refrain from any physical contact. This terminology, which literally means "guarding touch", does not appear in the halakhic literature, and seems to have originated from American teenagers and has been adopted by the Israeli teen population as well.

The Life Values and Intimacy Approach: Finding a Framework

As mentioned earlier, SIECUS, the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States convened a task force and developed “National Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education.” These guidelines were updated in 1996 to reflect societal and technological changes that had occurred since 1991, and updated again in 2004. The SIECUS Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Kindergarten-12th Grade (1991, 1996, 2004) were not designed as a textbook or a curriculum. Rather, they provide a framework for education about human sexuality and family living within four developmental levels from kindergarten through high school. Written with values reflecting the beliefs of most communities in a Western pluralistic society, SIECUS recommends that the characteristics and values of each local community determine the exact content of the specific curriculum for each particular population. Their work provides a framework to be used by communities across the world and these guidelines have been adapted to produce national models in several different countries.

Soon after SIECUS produced their first guidelines in 1991, a group of Modern Orthodox educators in the United States formed their own task force spearheaded by Wieder (1999) and developed what became the “Life Values Curriculum: Health Education for the Jewish Day School”. The document followed the recommendations of SIECUS, with substantial modifications to fit the needs of the Orthodox school community (see Table 1, which shows the six key concepts as well as the topics in each key concept included in the curriculum from kindergarten through twelfth grade). The curriculum provided only a framework, not classroom-ready materials. As part of this research, I developed a “Life Values and Intimacy Education Curriculum for the Modern Orthodox Israeli School,” including comprehensive units of classroom-ready materials for a tenth-grade class of girls based on the framework provided by “Life Values Curriculum: Health Education for the Jewish Day School.” (See Table 2 for list of topics). The curriculum I developed is based on these guidelines. The curriculum also takes into account the recommendations for a successful sexuality education program provided by Kirby (2000). These materials are an innovative contribution to Modern Orthodox education. (See Vol. 2 for full copy of curriculum materials).

School-based Life Values and Intimacy Education is designed to help students build a foundation of beliefs and norms regarding sexuality as they mature into healthy adults that is rooted in Jewish law. It aims to facilitate student development and commitment to adopt the norms of Jewish law in areas of sexuality. The fundamental goal is to aid the essential process of developing an independent conscience that is aligned with Jewish law with regards sexuality and relationships for Modern Orthodox students. Thus for example, when teaching students about

their sexuality within the context of Jewish law, the curriculum is able to simultaneously normalize the sexual struggles that challenge many Modern Orthodox teenagers, while encouraging observance to Jewish law as an ideal. This approach of making the challenges both natural and speak-able is critical in helping teenagers realize that they are not alone in their struggle and can find comfort and support in a shared community (Rosenfeld, 2007).

The Life Values and Intimacy approach views students as deserving of straightforward, age-appropriate answers to their questions about sexuality. It views avoidance of discussion about these matters as repressive in an unnecessary and unhealthy way, stifling students' natural curiosity about sexuality. Speaking honestly and explicitly to students empowers them to better understand their bodies and themselves and keeps them from a world of hearsay and confusion.

The Life Values and Intimacy approach does not focus on what is forbidden, but rather emphasizes a positive approach towards sexuality from within a perspective of Jewish law. The message offered to teenagers is multifaceted, as they are educated to harness their sexuality and exercise self-control in the present while simultaneously being taught that sexuality is viewed positively and encouraged in the appropriate context in the future. The message should offer the perspective that the need for self-control is not limited to teenage years but will find expression throughout their religious lives as a necessary aspect of a religious sexual life (Berkovits, 1976/2002). Life Values and Intimacy Education, as a comprehensive sexuality education program, spans a much broader spectrum of issues than those related to sexuality alone. Topics such as relationships and communication are included because these are building blocks in the development of healthy relationships. Topics not usually dealt with in formal Jewish law curricula, such as *shemirat negiyah* and homosexuality are also addressed. Sexual harassment and abuse, as well as a positive approach to sexuality itself, are presented. The curriculum is designed to provide students with information and tools that they need to face the questions, challenges, and dilemmas they may experience in these areas. Life Values and Intimacy educators can facilitate a thoughtful, open, honest forum for discussion of sexuality related topics so that Modern Orthodox students no longer need to look elsewhere for information and a value system about sexuality.

Table 1: Key Curricular Concepts and Topics

Based on *Life Values Curriculum: Health Education for Jewish Day Schools* (Wieder et al, 1999)

<p>Key Concept 1: Values and Personal Skills</p> <p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Values Decision Making Communication Appropriate Assertiveness Negotiation Looking for Help 	<p>Key Concept 4: Sexual Behavior</p> <p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexuality throughout Life Masturbation Shared Sexual Behavior Abstinence Human Sexual Response Fantasy Sexual Dysfunction
<p>Key Concept 2: Relationships</p> <p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families Friendship Love Socializing Marriage Parenting 	<p>Key Concept 5: Sexual Health</p> <p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproduction, Contraception & the Family Abortion STD's , including HIV Infection Sexual Abuse Reproductive Health
<p>Key Concept 3: Human Development</p> <p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproductive Anatomy & Physiology Reproduction Puberty Body Image <i>Tzniut</i> Sexual Identity & Orientation 	<p>Key Concept 6: Society & Culture</p> <p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexuality and Society Gender Roles Laws of Family Purity Sexuality & Religion Sexuality & the Arts Sexuality & the Media

Table 2: Life Values and Intimacy Education Topics for the Tenth Grade

Unit 1: Introduction to the class
Unit 2: Adolescent Development
Unit 3: Anatomy & Physiology: The Female Reproductive System
Unit 4: Anatomy & Physiology: The Male Reproductive System
Unit 5: What is Sexuality?
Unit 6: Living in a Male-Female Mixed Environment: Creating Boundaries
Unit 7: What is Holiness (Kedushah)?
Unit 8: Sexual Harassment and Abuse
Unit 9: Being Shomer (Negiyah)
Unit 10: Tzniut (Modesty): Beyond Elbows
Unit 11: Closing Session
Optional unit: Celebrating the Body

Choosing a Name: Life Values and Intimacy Education

While the Modern Orthodox community may be uncomfortable with the term “sexuality education,” the formulation “Family Life education” is also problematic. Family Life education reflects the idea that topics being taught relate to family, and that the focus is on preparing young teenagers for their future relationships as husbands or wives and as parents. Whereas this is an essential component of the education that should be provided for students as they grow older, their current concerns about sexuality and relationships also need to be addressed. This is especially the case in the Modern Orthodox community.

The conflict between living as an Orthodox Jew and simultaneously living in the modern world is acute in the areas of sexuality and relationships. Ranging from adolescents who confront the media’s portrayal of sexuality but lack a Jewish response from their schools and parents, to singles who try to find a balance between their desires and halakhic restrictions [restrictions of Jewish law] as they remain single for longer, to the newly married who are trying to reconcile their expectations with reality and want to find a healthy way to incorporate this new dimension into their relationship, individuals at all stages of life are struggling. (Rosenfeld, 2007, p. xvi)

It is important not only to prepare them for future family life, but to give them tools to adopt an approach rooted in Jewish law to the sexuality issues that they face in their teenage years as well. The name of any course or program in this area should reflect this approach.

The name “Life Values and Intimacy Education” reflects the content of the educational materials, which incorporate Life Values Education (values and personal skills, human development, society and culture) as well as Intimacy Education (relationships, sexual behavior, and sexual health). “Intimacy education” was chosen over “sexuality education” because it reflects a broader spectrum of topics than issues of sexuality alone. In addition, the term intimacy is a less provocative term than sexuality, particularly for the Modern Orthodox community.⁷

⁷At the first introductory class in the school in which this research was conducted, the teacher challenged the students to suggest a name for the course. Explaining that Family Life education didn’t seem to appropriately describe the topics of the course, she offered a prize to the student who could provide a better title. None were forthcoming.

Rationale for the Current Intervention

The current study is an attempt to formulate a new approach to sexuality education for the Modern Orthodox community in response to the deficiencies of the existing approaches. As described above, many Rabbis and educators have concluded that even in those schools which provide Family Life education, the topics addressed do not address the current and real concerns of Modern Orthodox teenagers (Solberg, 1997; Neuman, 2003; Kehat, 2003; Sherlow, 2004; Goodman, 2005; Samet, 2005). In addition, there is no systematic curriculum which addresses issues of relationships and sexuality enabling students gradually to develop an understanding of issues in these areas in a scaffolded way throughout high school. This despite research indicating that sexuality education is most effective when it is comprehensive, beginning when children are young and continuing throughout their years of formal education (Hyde & Delamater, 2003). There is a vacuum in most Modern Orthodox day schools with regards educating about issues of sexuality, relationships and modesty. This phenomenon puts children at a high risk for conflict as they struggle without guidance to make sense of their own traditional value system in the face of secular culture. In the absence of a comprehensive sexuality education from within the system, children are left on their own to process the cultural messages they are exposed to, and often by default these messages become the only education they receive about these topics (Debow & Woloski-Wruble, 2005). The current intervention utilizes a curriculum I developed offering a new model of sexuality education for the Modern Orthodox day school. This alternative educational model combines a theoretical framework that is traditionally based while incorporating internationally accepted guidelines for sexuality education and addressing issues of current concern to Modern Orthodox teenagers in these areas. The teaching of this new curriculum at Ulpanat Bina is the current intervention.

Contributions of the Current Intervention

This research is groundbreaking in several ways. The current study will contribute to the field of sexuality education for the Modern Orthodox community by providing both baseline knowledge and assessing the impact of an innovative intervention. Interviews with participants will provide baseline knowledge in the areas of sexuality, relationships and modesty. In addition, participants will be asked to describe how they react to the various approaches they encounter relating to issues of relationships and sexuality including the Jewish law as they understand it, the norms of modern secular society, and the norms of their own communities. This information has never been documented in this cultural subgroup.

Although there are some religious schools that teach Family Life education, they generally do so only in twelfth-grade and not at the tenth-grade level. Even when Modern Orthodox schools teach Family Life courses they often address a limited number of topics, rarely addressing current teenage concerns such as whether to have a boyfriend or not.

A central component of the research will be an exploration of the ways in which educating about sexuality in a classroom situation impacts on teenagers' knowledge and attitudes in these areas. In particular, I will explore how they "come to be normed" (Green, 1999, p. 43) to their tradition in these areas.

Chapter 2: Methodology

A Qualitative Approach

Research method and design must be compatible with research goals and allow for answers to the questions posed. When the phenomenon under study requires an in-depth understanding of individuals and research explores a reality that is socially constructed and complex, a qualitative research model is the method of choice (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Qualitative research strives to understand process and emphasizes the value of the subjective interpretation of the participants, their opinions, and their perspectives. Qualitative data is gathered from a natural environment through a process of observation and exploration. The primary research tool is the researcher; while instruments may be used to gather data, it is the researcher who is actually in the field, interviewing, observing, and participating in the lives of research participants. Thus, the researcher becomes the primary instrument of research, one that is not automatized, but rather has a personal response to whatever is seen and heard (Ely et al, 1991; Lofland & Lofland, 1995). In addition, the theory and analysis of data are inductive and grounded in the field (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Tzabar Ben Yehoshua, 1995; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

This study utilizes the case study method of qualitative research. According to Cohen & Court (2003), the case study's central aim is the intensive investigation of contemporary phenomena within a real-life context. The case in question can be an individual, but it can also be a tribe, a classroom, or a society (ibid., p. 283). This method is particularly appropriate when the phenomenon needs to be studied within its context (Yin, 1994). The approach to the research is based in grounded theory, a theory that is developed inductively from the data in the field (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

This research, which seeks to analyze the ways in which Modern Orthodox teenage girls relate to sexuality, is highly personal. It requires a gentle, probing exploration of individuals who are just beginning to develop their understanding in this area. A qualitative approach allows for exploring different ways of understanding issues as they are defined and interpreted by the participants themselves (Bogden & Biklen, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This study is an opportunity to hear the actual voices of teenagers, rather than allow teachers, parents, principals, or rabbis to speak for them.

The Current Study

In the first phase of the study, I gathered baseline information from Modern Orthodox teenage girls in an Israeli high school (“participants”) concerning their knowledge of and attitudes towards sexuality both in secular culture and their own cultural subgroup. In the second phase of the study, participants took part in a semester long course in their school based on the Life Values and Intimacy Curriculum I have developed. The curriculum is entitled “Life Values and Intimacy Education” to reflect the content of the educational materials, which incorporate Life Values education (values and personal skills, human development, society and culture) as well as Intimacy education (relationships, sexual behavior, and sexual health).

The third, final phase of the research was post-intervention interviews with participants to assess the impact of the course on their knowledge and attitudes, as well as to learn about their impression of the course and their recommendations for future sexuality education for Modern Orthodox teenage girls.

All participants were given a full description of the purpose of the research study. Parents were informed about the course intervention and accompanying research. They were offered negative permission slips, but no parents chose to remove daughters from the project.

Research was conducted intensively in the school with different groups throughout a two year period and across two different grades, giving the researcher the opportunity to become familiar with the institution both through teachers and students as well as from my own varied experiences in the school. Familiarity with the day to day running of the school allowed me to appreciate the multiple dynamics at play in this educational institution. In addition to interviewing all participants, I conducted interviews with various administrators and members of the school staff, particularly those involved in areas of education related to the research (e.g. home room teacher and Jewish law teacher). These interviews were conducted towards the end of the research so as not to influence the way in which I would approach the participants. However, my interviews with the adults were guided by information and questions I had gathered through my interviews with the participants.

Participants

The participants were all 22 members of one tenth-grade class (ages of 15-16) in a religious girls’ high school in Israel. These students represent a diverse cross-section of the Modern Orthodox community. Parents are mostly professionals, including rabbis, educators, doctors, lawyers, nurses, computer programmers, and business people. In most families, both parents have academic training. Girls come from religious families; some feel they were more

religious than their parents, some have parents who had chosen to become religious, and some are not sure they will be as religious as their parents when they grow up. Some participants have siblings who are no longer religious, while others have siblings who have become intensely religious. Participants come from families with at least four children, often more.

The participant population cannot be identified as representative of the Modern Orthodox community as a whole. As students in an *Ulpana* style school (an intensive religious high-school framework for girls which incorporates a dormitory facility), located in a settlement area, participants tend to be from families which hold themselves to a high standard of religious practice. In addition, the families of about half the participants are of North American origin. Norms regarding exposure to and involvement in secular culture often differ between native Israeli families and those who come from a North American background.

Regarding preserving the anonymity of subjects, I have been careful to mask information that might serve to identify participants. I have chosen the fictitious name Ulpanat Bina for the research site and have similarly masked information that might identify the various adults who were interviewed. In addition to all these precautions, the fact that this doctorate is written in English for an academic institution unconnected with the communities studied also serves to protect the identities of those involved. Finally, each participant chose a pseudonym for themselves which is used in referring to them or reporting their statements in this study.

The School Setting – Ulpanat Bina

Ulpanat Bina was purposefully chosen as representing the Modern Orthodox target population (Mason, 1996). It is a Modern Orthodox religious high-school that can be identified as positioned between a full *Ulpana*, an intensive religious high school framework for girls which incorporates a full time dormitory facility, and a State religious high school, which provides a less intensive Judaic studies program and does not offer a dormitory option. While Ulpanat Bina is not a boarding school, students are expected to sleep at the school one or two specific nights a week, during which time informal educational programs take place. Three quarters of the student population comes from the local settlement communities, while about a quarter come from neighboring cities.

The administration, composed of individuals well educated in religious and secular domains, is committed to a vision of synthesis between religious and secular education. The school identifies itself as being deeply committed to religious values while providing an excellent secular education. There are four central goals towards which Ulpanat Bina aims:

1. To provide a vibrant religious education including broad based knowledge and understanding of Judaism and Jewish texts while nurturing a deep commitment to religion. The administration is fully aware of the challenges that confront students seeking to live religious lives in a post-modern world and strives to provide a religious education which addresses these challenges. This education is provided in both formal and varied informal settings addressing the intellectual and emotional realms.
2. To encourage each student to be cognizant of her unique talents and to develop them so that she can come to serve society to the best of her abilities. Ulpanat Bina has a well developed volunteer program for ninth and tenth-grade students. In addition, more than half of the tenth and eleventh-grade students serve as counselors in various youth groups.
3. To engender academic excellence of the student body by providing a rich and varied academic program. This includes high level courses in the sciences as well as a well developed liberal arts program, including music and art.
4. To give each student personal attention and the opportunity to develop significant relationships with home-room educators and other educators. Home-room educators are carefully chosen and given extensive responsibility for their students. In addition, the staff includes counselors whose responsibilities include informal education programming as well as activities on dorm nights.

Ulpanat Bina's administrative staff is constantly reviewing and re-evaluating the education it offers students, aware of the centrality of their role in preparing the next generation of Modern Orthodox female adults.

Ulpanat Bina presents a different model of Israeli Modern Orthodox girls' school to that described by Rapoport (1999) in her study of Family Life education in a Modern Orthodox Ulpana. Rapoport's study highlights the process of socializing girls to embrace first and foremost their roles as future wives and mothers. Ulpanat Bina accepts a student body that aspires to excellence in all areas and encourages its students to succeed at a high level matriculation, study in universities and take on influential positions in society. In that sense the two schools represent different visions of the ideal Modern Orthodox woman and demonstrate that there are a number of streams within Modern Orthodoxy with different goals for their youth, particularly their women.

The administration at Ulpanat Bina is attuned to the importance of Life Values and Intimacy education and has for many years implemented a course in Family Life education in the senior year. They willingly agreed to pilot the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum in the tenth-

grade. Throughout the intervention, the administration was helpful and supportive. While there were difficulties in scheduling and implementing the intervention, these were more the result of competing interests and disorder rather than a lack of support. In fact, on its own initiative, Ulpanat Bina has continued to offer the course the year after research was completed at the school.

The Course Instructor

The success of any curriculum is dependent, at least in part, on the ability of the teacher to present it effectively. Teaching about sexuality is considerably different from teaching other topics since the nature of the material is highly personal and requires a degree of comfort on the part of the teacher that must be developed through training (Wight, 1997; Carter & Wengert, 1998; Wight & Buston, 2003). The ideal teacher provides a non-threatening, safe classroom environment so that students can feel comfortable asking honest questions and addressing various issues of sexuality. The teacher must also find a balance between the curriculum and her own comfort level and sense of ownership over the material.

Since the competence and appropriateness of the teacher in sexuality education is a key factor in the success of any intervention (Bowden et al, 2003), the school for this study was also chosen based on the availability of an appropriate teacher. Ulpanat Bina is fortunate to have on staff an educator who is an expert in the field. This educator, who we will call Adina, developed the program for Family Life education for the twelfth-grade prior to this research. She has taught teachers and participated in numerous training programs in the field of Family Life education, often as the instructor, and was a member of an exclusive group of educators who were brought together to discuss issues of Family Life education for boys' and girls' Modern Orthodox high schools in Israel. In fact, after reading an article highlighting her work in a local newspaper, I had consulted with her while writing the original version of the Life Values and Intimacy Curriculum.

Adina's role in the school is that of 11th and 12th grade guidance counselor. She was eager to participate in the intervention because she believes in the value of implementing sexuality education at an earlier age than is accepted practice. In addition, she was interested in the opportunity to meet with the students on a regular basis and connect with them through these classes. The fact that an expert in the field was available to teach the course as a full partner in implementation and development of the intervention was a pivotal factor in the choice of Ulpanat Bina.

Adina and I met frequently throughout the intervention to discuss implementation in terms of both content and atmosphere. The original curriculum for the intervention had been

developed based on our meetings, interviews with girls, and the American version of the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum. We made changes to the curriculum during the course to address issues that arose from the class. We began the intervention cognizant of the need for flexibility in curricular content and responded to the needs of this particular group of students. This joint endeavor meant that implementation of some topics differed from the original approach I had planned on, while others were not presented at all. Nonetheless, the central thrust of the curriculum was preserved.

Pilot Study

In the academic year 2007-08 a pilot study was carried out in Ulpanat Bina. Two tenth grade groups (25 participants in total) participated in a shortened Life Values and Intimacy intervention. Participants were interviewed before and after the intervention, and the data and suggestions they offered, shaped the planning of the intervention in 2008-09.

Pre-Interviews

I introduced each pre-interview by explaining the general topic and purpose of the interview and I explained how participants' confidentiality would be protected. I explained that participants were not expected to disclose anything that would make them uncomfortable, as some of the topics involved private matters. They were invited to ask me to stop or move on to another question at any time. These were necessary prerequisites to protect the participants and help them feel comfortable (Ely et al, 1998).

I attempted to be sensitive to each participant's level of comfort and did not proceed with questions that seemed to cause discomfort or did not elicit much response. This meant that on three or four occasions, I moved on from a particular question because the participant seemed uncomfortable or unwilling to answer it. This sensitivity sometimes led me to contend with what has been described as "the unsayable" (Rogers et al, 1999), what is *not* said in an interview. He offers four different types of "the unsayable," and interviewers are encouraged to be mindful of them: talking in the negative, self-correcting, unclear statements, and silence. The interviewer must be attuned to these responses and find appropriate ways to explore them, recognizing that they may reflect discomfort with the subject or approach. While it is important to be aware of the "unsaid," it is no less important to avoid over-interpretation of the silences and discomfort.

My training as a child clinical psychologist proved valuable throughout the interview process. It helped me to maintain a neutral stance while being attentive to the nuances of

participant's words and affect. I found myself drawing on that training in order to wait for participants to find the words they were comfortable saying without offering my suggestions to assist them.

In preparing for the pre-interview, I submitted my proposed questions to the administrators in the school for their feedback and approval. Knowing that sexuality is a topic rarely discussed, I tried to be sensitive to the population and was careful to address topics in a way that was appropriate for the participant population. The first interview submitted was considered too provocative; for example, words like "intimacy" were thought likely to cause discomfort to participants. Together with a senior administrator and the course instructor, I rephrased some of the questions so that the content remained, for the most part, intact.

The pre-intervention interviews lasted about forty-five minutes to an hour. Interviews took place in a private room in the school. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to provide a data source that could be reviewed and analyzed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The central questions presented to the participants were the following:

1. Can you share with me anything you remember learning formally in the school setting about puberty, modesty, relationships between boys and girls, and being *shomer negiyab* (being careful about physical touching between the sexes)?
2. Were there any other frameworks (youth groups, workshops, at home) in which you learned about these topics? Do you remember what you learned?
3. Who would you turn to if you had questions in these areas?
4. If you had a problem and you needed advice, who would you turn to?
5. Can you give me an example of a conversation you have had with friends about any of these topics?
6. When you watch a movie in which there are intimate scenes, what do you do? What do you feel? How do you think you are affected by it?
7. Have you ever encountered anything that made you uncomfortable on the internet?
8. In what frameworks do you meet with boys? What do you usually do together?
9. Are you aware of the halakhic expectations of male-female interactions? Do you understand these expectations?
10. How do you think Modern Orthodox teenagers your age contend with these expectations? What might be difficult?
11. Do you think there are any special needs for Modern Orthodox teenagers growing up in today's world in these areas?

12. Who do you think is responsible for educating about relationships, boys and girls, modesty, etc.?
13. What do you think are the central influences on your knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in these areas?
14. What recommendations would you make if you were developing a program to teach about intimacy to Modern Orthodox students your age?

In addition, towards the middle of the interview, participants were given a sorting activity. From a pile of cards on which different topics were listed, they were asked to sort the cards into two groups: topics they had learned about and topics they had not learned about. They were then asked to sort the cards a second time into two new groups: topics they had never heard of and those about which they were interested in learning more. If participants were interested in learning about many of the topics, they were asked to identify the three they were most interested in learning. The list of topics to be sorted were: Anatomy and physiology, holiness, teenage boy-girl relationships, peer pressure, pornography, communication between the sexes, knowing when and how to ask for help, birth control, gender differences, modesty, what's sexuality, sexually-transmitted illnesses, sexual abuse, being *shomer negiyah* [avoiding physical touching between the sexes], and homosexuality. The cards were handed to participants in random order. A sample of the complete interview can be found in the appendix.

The Curriculum

The Life Values and Intimacy Education curriculum for the Modern Orthodox School is a comprehensive, classroom-ready curriculum. It combines a theoretical framework that is based in Jewish law, educational theory concerning the transmission of norms (Green, 1999), as well as the internationally accepted guidelines for sexuality education (Debow & Woloski-Wruble, 2007). It represents a vision of comprehensive school-based education towards thoughtful decision-making, lifestyles, and relationships. It includes fifteen sessions for each grade at the middle and high-school levels and recognizes that an effective intervention in which normation can take place is based on active learning, ideally through multiple teaching methods (Kirby, 2007). Students are encouraged to personalize the material by incorporating games, role-playing, brainstorming and small group discussions.

Developed originally for an American Jewish day school population, I adapted a portion of the Life Values and Intimacy Education curriculum to suit the cultural and social setting of a tenth-grade class in a girl's religious high school in Israel. The adapted curriculum was taken

from a ten year scoped and sequenced program, from third to twelfth grade (Debow, 2008). Therefore not all topics could be addressed in the current intervention. For example, in the original curriculum, homosexuality is discussed in earlier and later units to tenth grade and so was not addressed in the current intervention. The decision not to discuss homosexuality was also based on the fact that it was not one of the topics requested by participants, (nor did it arise during the intervention). The current adaptation was based on consultation with an experienced, Israeli high school Family Life educator and took into account the experience from the pilot study. The curriculum for this research was tailored to the specific educational needs of the tenth-grade class in the school in which the intervention took place. The choice of topics included in our research was determined based on what had already been learned by the class in which the intervention took place (as based on information from the pre-interview), avoiding the topics which were to be learned in eleventh and twelfth grade. Below is a short description of the units in the course developed for the intervention.

Course Content

Unit 1: Introduction to the Class

Students are introduced to the course, its purpose and the topics to be addressed. An icebreaker activity helps participants to experience the atmosphere the course tries to engender. Expectations are coordinated between the teacher and the participants. Ground rules are established regarding confidentiality within the group, as well as norms for discussion in the course. Examples might include: “We will treat each other with respect at all times,” “There are no stupid questions,” and “We will follow the agreed upon lexicon of language for discussion in the classroom.”

Unit 2: Adolescent Development

This unit presents and discusses the dramatic changes in all aspects of development which take place during adolescence. Participants are invited to think about the developmental changes that take place from ages one to three. They then compare and contrast this stage of development with the changes that puberty brings in areas including those that are physical, cognitive, emotional, and psychological in nature. Participants are given information on the changes of puberty and introduced to various theories of development and adolescent changes (Freud, Piaget, Erikson).

Unit 3: The Female Reproductive System

This unit includes a comprehensive presentation utilizing diagrams to help participants become fully familiar with their reproductive system in particular, as well as their body functions in general. A basic understanding of female sexuality is presented.

Unit 4: The Male Reproductive System

This unit includes a comprehensive presentation utilizing diagrams to help participants become fully familiar with the male reproductive system. A basic understanding of male sexuality is also presented.

Unit 5: What is Sexuality?

This unit begins by broaching the word “sexuality” and identifying a broad based definition of it. Two philosophical approaches to pleasure are then presented (Living by the Pleasure Principle and Pleasure is Forbidden), and discussed. Through an analysis of these different approaches, and using Biblical texts for guidance, participants are offered sources that present a positive Jewish approach towards pleasure and sexuality.

Unit 6: Living in a Male-Female Mixed Environment: Creating Boundaries

This unit discusses relationships and the changes some of them go through (friendships, relationships with parents) during adolescence. The possibility of teenage boys and girls feeling love for each other is discussed and text based sources are presented identifying concerns about boyfriend-girlfriend relationships. An interesting Talmudic text is presented to close the unit on possible concerns and the fact that sometimes they are misplaced.

Unit 7: What is Kedushah?

This unit gives students the opportunity to explore the ways in which sex and sexuality are used in mass media advertisements and commercials. They then contrast this use of sexuality with the Jewish concept of *Kedushah*, holiness.

Unit 8: Sexual Harassment and Abuse

Participants discuss various scenarios of sexual harassment and abuse based on scenes from the Israeli movie “Campfire” (“*Medurat Hasbevel*”, 2004), which puts the private crises of a mother and her two daughters within the framework of the Settlement movement in the 1980’s. The film centers on a restless, widowed mother who has never been in love, and wants to move to a settlement and her two young daughters, rebellious Esti and the more silent, more withdrawn 15-year-old Tami who is just discovering boys as an object of romantic interest. The central scene used for this unit takes place on *Lag Ba’Omer* night, a night on which traditionally youth gather

around bonfires until late into the night. After beginning relatively innocently, the scene spirals to the sexual abuse of young Tami by a group of teenage males at a bonfire in the woods. The scene breaks off when the chief bully has a hand clasped tightly over the mouth of a twisting, struggling Tami. In addition, participants are shown a scene of cat-calling towards the three women, as well as scenes with Tami after the incident showing how devastating the incident was for her. The scenes are discussed and participants are invited to share their experiences and are presented with information about sexual harassment and abuse. Participants are presented with various strategies for self protection.

Unit 9: Being Shomer Negiyah

Participants view a movie produced by religious high school boys about *shemirat negiyah* and the impact that it has on a relationship for a religious high school couple. The movie, *B'nogeiyah Eleinu*, revolves around a failure in *shemirat negiyah* by a young religious teenage high-school couple. The boy reacts strongly to this failure, totally rejecting his girlfriend and trying to find solace by becoming more fervent in religious learning and commitment, including immersing himself in a ritual bath. The girl, completely taken aback and gradually overwhelmed by this sudden intense reaction from her boyfriend, tries to appease him but is completely rebuffed. The movie explores the dynamics of relationship between the boy and the girl, as well as between the boy and his friends and the girl and her friends.

The viewing is followed by a discussion and analysis of the movie, focusing on how accurate a portrayal it is, and the difference between the male perspective presented by the movie and that of female students. Studies on the significance of touch are presented. The unit is completed with an in depth text study of Jewish laws about *shemirat negiyah*.

Unit 10: Tzniut (Modesty): Beyond Elbows

Using various stimulus objects, students are invited to present a feeling or comment about modesty. This exercise helps to gather the thoughts and feelings that participants have about modesty and triggers a conversation about both the positive and negative associations that teenage girls growing up in a Modern Orthodox world associate with modesty. Participants then respond to a questionnaire that lists various statements about modesty. This provides the basis for a discussion on the topic. A broad-based understanding of modesty that views it as an approach to life in all areas of behavior for both males and females is presented and discussed.

Unit 11: Closing Session

Students are asked to join the instructor in assessing the course. The discussion includes highs and lows of the course, further issues they are interested in exploring, and an assessment of what

participants would change and improve. In addition, participants are each asked to share something positive they learned from each other.

Curricular Intervention

The actual intervention differed somewhat from the curriculum outlined above. From the outset, the curriculum was designed with the possibility that the process of implementation would be dynamic, responding to developments in the classroom regarding the topics which needed to be addressed.

In the academic school year of 2007/08, a strike of high school teachers lasting 64 days disrupted the academic year across the country and directly affected the implementation of the course. The strike began after the first class and continued for most of the first semester of school. As part of an effort to continue implementation despite the strike, a three hour morning workshop was developed for all tenth-grade students, focused on topics in the course curriculum. The research participants were invited to participate in the workshop, although attendance was not made mandatory because of the strike. The content was also adapted somewhat, as a three hour workshop had to be conducted differently from a one hour a week course. Most participants were present, but the framework was not that of the small group intervention, as had been planned and which is viewed as a significant component of the intervention.

The strike ended in December, and the course was implemented from then until April. While there was continuity once the strike was over, the full impact of the intervention was affected negatively by the hiatus. In addition, during the second semester, the class was scheduled at the end of the day, which somewhat impaired attendance. Two of the units were presented to the entire tenth-grade (four times the size of the intervention group) in a very different framework than that of the intervention group itself. Thus, implementation took place under real, rather than ideal, conditions. Of the topics listed above, the current intervention did not include Unit 5 (What is Sexuality), Unit 7 (What is *Kedushah*) and Unit 10 (*Tzniut* (Modesty): Beyond Elbows).

Post-Intervention Interviews

In the post-intervention interview, the questions presented to the participants were:

1. How was the course? Can you identify ways in which it was different from other courses that you have in school?

2. Can you talk a little bit about the experience of being in this kind of course in school and the ways you were affected by the course?
3. Did you feel that it was a safe space? What might have made it more comfortable?
4. Do you wish that the program had included anything else?
5. What did you feel that you learned?
6. You watched two movies, “Campfire” and “*B’nogetiyab Eleinu*”. Let’s talk about each of them separately (alternate movies and ask about both):
 - What did you think about the movie?
 - a. In what ways did it accurately reflect your reality?
 - b. If girls had made this film, would it have been different?
7. Do you feel that your knowledge or attitudes changed as a result of this course?
8. Can you give me an example of how your understanding of the issues discussed during the classes changed as a result of the class?
9. Were conversations sparked outside of the classroom as a result of the course? Can you offer an example?
10. Do you think your own comfort level talking about these topics changed at all? Can you explain?
11. Looking back over the past year, can you identify ways in which you have changed with regard to any of the issues discussed in the class?
12. Some of the issues discussed in class are based on Jewish law. There is a lot of discussion among educators about Jewish law and Modern Orthodox teenagers. How would you describe your relationship to Jewish law?
 - a. Would you say that that is true for all Jewish law or is it different in different areas? (Prompt with individual examples: The category of commandments between man and man, such as charity, or the category of commandments between man and God, such as prayer)
 - b. Can you recommend an approach to teaching Jewish law in the area of male-female relations?
13. Was there anything else that you think should have been included in the class that could be useful to you or for other girls your age?
14. Would you recommend that we continue this course? What changes would you suggest?
15. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Post-intervention interviews were about thirty to forty-five minutes long. Interviews took place in a private room in the school. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to provide a

data source that could be reviewed and analyzed repeatedly (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Four of the twenty-two participants attended only a few of the intervention classes, and their post intervention interviews were therefore not included in the study.

Research Tools

1. Semi-structured in-depth interviews

The main research tool for gathering data in this research was the semi-structured in-depth interview (Ely et al, 1991; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In-depth interviews allow the participant to present her experience from her perspective and are an important tool in developing an understanding of her perspective. This method enables the researcher to develop insight into the subjects' interpretation of their experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Yosifon, 2001). As opposed to the structured interview, the advantage of the semi-structured interview is that while participants are initially asked to respond to particular questions prepared in advance, the interviewer retains the freedom to adjust the interview to each individual. While the structure helped to focus the interview, the goal of the interviews was always to understand the participants' perspectives (Seidman, 1991; Mason, 1996). Indeed, there were a number of occasions in which I followed the lead of a particular participant and the issues she chose to address (Yin, 1994; Yosifon, 2001).

There are disadvantages to a semi-structured interview. Since I began the interviews with a series of prepared questions, I may have directed the information-gathering such that interviews did not fully reflect the inner experiences of each individual participant. While the interview framework served an important function in engaging participants in conversation on a topic about which they usually had information to share but difficulty sharing in an unstructured way, the structure may have influenced the content to an unknown degree. In analyzing data, I tried to be sensitive to the influence that my initiative and direction might have had on the nature and content of the information I gathered (Bilu, 1986).

On a number of occasions, the interview veered from the original questions as I explored a particular experience, question, or idea shared by the participant. For example, as I explored participants' relationship to the Jewish laws of modesty and *shemirat negiyah*, I realized that the broader question that needed to be explored centered around participants relationship to Jewish law in general. I proceeded to explore this area with participants. There were a few occasions in which I attempted to explore a comment or suggestion made by a participant, but realized that she was uncomfortable with the topic (for example, relationships with boys), and I therefore moved on to other topics. In general, the participants came willingly and shared a broad range of

opinions and experiences openly and honestly. Many participants said they would welcome a framework for conversations on these topics and expressed frustration at the lack of opportunity to do so.

Rosenthal (1993) describes each interview as a one-time meeting and exchange between two individuals that cannot be reconstructed. It is therefore particularly important to be flexible and navigate the questions and discussion within the interview to follow the lead of each individual participant and thus maximize the unique quality of information provided by each participant. In the Modern Orthodox community in general, there is little open intergenerational discussion of sexuality or exploration of teenage relationships between the sexes. Any discussion that does occur is usually in private conversations among friends. At least a quarter of the participants had little or no previous relationships with boys and therefore nothing to say in those areas of exploration. I was well aware of the fact that the interviewees perceived me as an adult stranger, a religious woman, initiating a recorded conversation on personal topics. It was clear that I had to be extremely sensitive to each individual student and her responses to my questions (Ely et al, 1991; Lofland & Lofland, 1995).

2. Direct and Participant Observation

Direct observation of some intervention classes provided important data. Classes were audio-recorded to provide an additional data source that was reviewed. Additional sources of data included observation of participants and teachers in the general school setting (Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), for example in the library, during recess, as well as in other classes which were not part of the intervention.

3. Interviews of Significant Educational Figures

In addition to the interviews with the participants, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with other important people in the participants' world: teachers, the school principal, the school rabbi, and youth group leaders. Participants were consulted to help identify the people whom they viewed as having significant educational impact on them. I also interviewed a number of mothers of tenth-grade girls, but only of those who had not participated in the study. While not the actual subjects of the study, information gathered from those who are significant influences on the participants can provide a more complete perspective on participants' experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 1994; Ely et al, 1998).

Validation

The use of multiple data collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of the data. In addition, one method recommended to improve validity in qualitative research is the practice of triangulation of the data, a method in which multiple sources of evidence are aimed at corroborating the same findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 1994; Berg, 1998; Yosifon, 2001). In this study, I triangulated interview data, observational data, and data provided by significant others in the participants' community. With triangulation, problems of validity are reduced because these multiple sources of evidence provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed based in grounded theory using an inductive method. This requires approaching the research topic without a defined set of assumptions or hypotheses to be proven. Instead, I came prepared to listen attentively to the participants and learn from them about their knowledge in the areas of sexuality, relationships and modesty as well as how they navigate the various approaches they encounter relating to issues of relationships and sexuality; the Jewish law as they understand it, the norms of modern secular society, and the norms of their own communities. In post-intervention interviews I explored the experience of the intervention with them, the impact they felt it had on their knowledge and attitudes as well as their suggestions for further implementation. The study progressed as an interplay between the data emerging from the research and the theoretical background from the pertinent literature. This approach offers an opportunity for the theory to be developed based on the exploration in the field, allowing the materials offered by the participants to guide the direction of the research while still maintaining structure and consistency. This is described by Strauss & Corbin:

Grounded theory is a *general methodology* for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed. Theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection. (1994, p. 273)

During the interviews, themes and issues emerged that I had not originally considered relevant to my research topic. For example the need to provide participants with rationales when educating to issues of Jewish law. Gradually, I incorporated questions about these issues into interviews with all participants and then explored relevant theoretical literature. Thus, there was a “back and forth” between theory and field-work as experiences in the field opened new avenues

for exploration. This is a key characteristic of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shaked, 2003).

Qualitative researchers have developed a variety of methods for systematic data analysis. Alexander (1988) recommends two approaches that I found helpful in analyzing the interviews. The first method is “letting the data reveal itself,” which narrows a text down to its most significant information by using “identifiers of salience.” He offers nine possible identifiers, including primacy, frequency, emphasis, uniqueness, and negation, to aid in sifting through interview transcripts and finding the most significant information. His focus in this approach is not necessarily on content, but rather on the manner in which the information is conveyed. The second method, called “asking the data a question,” allows the researcher to approach a text with a question, one that the participant did not necessarily consciously address but may emerge from the content of the interview, and search the text to identify the parts of the interview that would provide answers to the questions. For example, I analyzed the data from the question of “How do participants become normed?” and tried to see if it could provide me with answers to that question.

All interviews were taped, transcribed and analyzed in several stages. Initially, I read all the pre-interviews closely, simply to immerse myself in the material and become familiar with it. A reading of this sort helps the researcher begin to notice and identify emerging themes and questions that perhaps had not been fully addressed in pre-interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). For example, the question of the authority of Jewish law and student autonomy emerged from the interviews. The question had to do with both the particular area of sexuality but also involved a more generalized wish for more autonomy. These issues were subsequently incorporated in the post-intervention interview.

The second stage involved a mapping of themes. At this level of analysis, I attempted to combine categories and find the central themes that emerged across interviews, for example, the challenge of *shemirat negiyab* for the Modern Orthodox teenagers. As a result of this analysis, I was able to begin to identify the central themes that emerged. When themes that seemed significant but were not well developed emerged in the pre-intervention interviews, I was able to explore them anew with participants in the post-intervention interviews, for example, whether it was only *shemirat negiyab* that provided a religious challenge or whether the challenge was more broadly related to Jewish law in general. While pre-intervention interviews were read before the post-intervention interviews, they were not fully analyzed. It was only when all the data was complete that it was analyzed repeatedly. Thus, the data analysis took place with all the materials from both sets of interviews, yielding more comprehensive findings.

Throughout the process of data analysis, themes were re-examined and sometimes adapted as new categories emerged. Often, these changes emerged only after repeated readings of the interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Sometimes, they brought me back to the theoretical literature to investigate themes I had not previously identified. For example, after reading the interviews, I sought out a fuller understanding of normation.

In the final stage, content analysis was conducted across the themes and categories that had already been identified in order to ensure that the themes and categories identified, represented a fair representation of participants' input. I drew up a list of coded categories and cut and pasted each segment of transcribed data into one of these categories. In this way, I was able to compare and contrast the statements made by participants on various significant themes and identify those which were prominent across interviews and those which seemed less significant. At this stage, there was also a pendulum motion between field and theory, as unexpected themes emerged that necessitated a return to the literature for a more in depth exploration, a common aspect of qualitative research (Geertz, 1973). An example of this is the issue of autonomy and authority for educators in a school which transmits traditions.

Methodological Concerns

As mentioned earlier, in qualitative research, the central research tool is the researcher (Ely et al, 1998). There are advantages when the researcher is a member of the society being studied or has a close and deep familiarity with the culture and norms being researched (Patton, 1990). I was a "complete member researcher" in terms of community and the culture being investigated, as I am religiously identified with the school and its approach to education and a resident in one of the local communities (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). However, there were clear differences between me and the research population, as I am not a teenager. Most significantly, I am not a native Israeli nor had I ever taught in an Israeli high school. While I have broad experience as an educator in Modern Orthodox schools outside of Israel, I am an outsider to Modern Orthodox teen culture in Israel. There were times when I found this lack of cultural knowledge a disadvantage, while recognizing that it also served to provide me with the necessary distance to allow for a more objective stance to the population I was studying (Tzabar ben Yehoshua, 1995; Ely et al, 1998). However, I was not always able to comprehend some of the slang in the participants' dialogue, and on occasion did not identify a need for clarification until reviewing the interview transcripts, at which point I consulted with colleagues more familiar with current Modern Orthodox teen culture and language usage. In addition, while the school has a high percentage of students from English speaking backgrounds, I wondered if my accented

Hebrew might have caused some discomfort or distance between myself and the participants. This accented Hebrew did serve, I think, as a source for connecting with the English speaking students I interviewed. There were a number of interviews that began in Hebrew but switched to English when I determined that the participant was as comfortable speaking in English as Hebrew. I wondered if this nurtured greater comfort and an ability to connect more fully during interviews than was true for the Hebrew speaking participants. Interviews conducted in English lasted considerably longer than those conducted in Hebrew. The potential distance my accent may have generated might have served the study positively, fulfilling the need to maintain distance and not to over-identify with the participants while still being familiar enough to elicit comfort and understanding (Tzabar Ben Yehoshua, 1995; Ely et al, 1998).

Recognizing the central role the researcher herself plays in qualitative research, I had to be attuned to my own biases and attitudes in order to carry out the research in a credible manner (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Ely et al, 1998; Peshkin, 2000). I was concerned that I would influence participants by presenting questions in a biased manner. There were occasions during an interview when a participant demonstrated such strength of character and willpower that I had difficulty remaining neutral and could not always contain my admiration. I worked to maintain an awareness of my body language and internal responses to participants and I made efforts to neutralize my standards so as not to be hampered from seeing the participants I was studying clearly (El-Or, 1998). This has been shown to be a particular challenge for religiously committed qualitative researchers investigating religious topics (Court, 2008).

In any study based primarily on self-reporting of the participants, the question of the reliability of the reporting is central. In an interview about attitudes and experiences in areas of sexuality in which the interviewer is herself a religious Jew, participants may choose to answer what they perceive to be expected (“demand characteristic”). There is evidence showing young non-religious adolescent girls as highly reliable in reporting their sexual experiences (Hearn, Sullivan & Dudley, 2003), but that finding is untested among religious girls. Since the intervention took place in the second year of my involvement in the school after an intensive pilot program in the previous year, I had become a familiar figure to many of the students who had heard about the intervention and were curious and interested in participating in it. For many, I was a frequent visitor at the school, even if participants were not sure what exactly my role in the school was. I introduced myself to the class and explained the research to them before inviting them to be interviewed. This took place after the idea of the research had been introduced to participants by the school counselor. In addition, in order to minimize the

problem of demand characteristic, the process of interviewing proceeded slowly, exploring introductory family related questions as well as questions about early educational experiences to build rapport and trust with the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Yin, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Elbiz-Loobish, 2001).

There is no question that the cultural context, as it is explicated by Geertz (1973), must be considered when dealing with a topic as charged as sexuality. In most religious schools in Israel, conversations on topics of intimacy or sexuality happen infrequently, at best. Additionally, parents tend to avoid conversing with their children on these subjects (Kirby & Miller, 2002). Thus, participants were not accustomed to talking about these topics with anyone other than their friends. With some introductory explanation, I asked them to speak openly with a stranger about topics generally considered taboo by the community. While I found that most participants spoke openly and honestly, often expressing support for the need to have a forum for conversations on these topics, about a quarter of the participants were noticeably reticent. However, this reticence itself was an important part of the information I was gathering, reflecting the discomfort that some of the participants felt about the topic.

Participants were not fully committed to attending the intervention classes. There were no consequences from the school administration for those who chose not to attend and only minimal effort on the part of the administration to encourage participation. However, this was no different from other elective, non-matriculation classes.

A school that agrees to participate in this study and incorporate a series of classes in Life Values and Intimacy Education indicates openness about educating to the topic. While this willingness to participate must be noted and taken into consideration when analyzing the results of this study, in my recent experience I have found that Orthodox girls' high schools are becoming increasingly aware that issues of sexuality must be addressed because they are a source of tremendous struggle for students. This is true in State religious schools as well as some private girls high schools usually considered more conservative religiously. Still, openness to the course may not indicate an unusual openness in the school culture generally, so much as sensitivity to the needs of the students and a willingness to address important issues even when they are complex.

Chapter 3: Results

Introduction and Overview

In the first phase of the research, interviews were conducted with Modern Orthodox tenth-grade Israeli girls, in order to acquire baseline information regarding their knowledge and attitudes in areas of sexuality. In phase two, a school-based educational intervention in “Life Values and Intimacy Education” was taught to participants over the course of a semester. It addressed issues of sexuality, relationships, modesty and human development, as well as their parallels in Jewish law. In the final phase of the research, follow-up interviews were conducted to assess the impact of the intervention on participants’ knowledge and attitudes.

There were twenty-two participants in phase one of the study. Four of the participants did not attend a sufficient number of intervention sessions to be included in the final phase of the study, and their post intervention interviews were not included in the results.

I was impressed by the openness and passion that characterized many of the participants. They were, for the most part, deeply committed to traditional Jewish observance as well as highly involved in contemporary culture. They were thoughtful about the issues and questions we discussed together, reflecting carefully on their own experiences as well as those of their peers. A number of participants were concerned about what they perceived to be a lack of observance of Jewish law in areas of sexuality among their peers, and among their male peers in particular. At the beginning of the pre-interviews some participants were hesitant to be interviewed and uncertain about the topic, they nevertheless shared their knowledge and spoke willingly about their experiences. Ultimately, the majority of participants was pleased to participate in the study, felt the topic was important for them, and spoke openly about their frustrations and questions, as well as their experiences. They looked forward to the intervention and hoped it would provide them with information and answers to their questions. Less than a quarter of the participants were uncomfortable during the pre-interviews, offering little information and giving a clear impression that they were ill at ease with the topics being discussed.

Post-intervention interviews indicated an overall positive response to the intervention, although it had not fully satisfied many of the participants. Participants appreciated the efforts to create a positive class environment; the comfortable atmosphere in the classroom was noticeably different from other classes. While the intervention fulfilled expectations in some areas, it did not address as broad a range of issues as fully as participants had hoped. In addition, the class did not meet often enough in its original small group framework to develop the optimal group dynamic for the course. This was largely due to the strike that interrupted the school year and

lead to changes in the planned structure. Close to half of the intervention took place at the full grade level instead of with the small group.

The pre- and post-intervention interviews provide a rich body of information for analysis. In general, I bring only one example to represent the opinions of many participants who could not all be included due to lack of space. I will indicate which opinions are widely held and which represent only a small number, or an individual participant.

Pre-Interviews:

Knowledge and Attitudes

What Had Been Taught Previously?

A significant goal of the research was to establish base-line information about prior education offered to participants in areas of sexuality and relationships. I wanted to document what had been learned about what Jewish law has to say about sexuality, male-female relationships and modesty and within which frameworks this education took place.

On the one hand, many participants feel there was a lack of education, particularly a lack of any serious exploration of the laws relating to the issues. On the other hand, some participants feel that these topics had been discussed ad nauseam and did not need to be addressed further. Many feel that while they could not recall any formal education in the schools, Modern Orthodox teenagers know what they needed to know in these areas through conversations with parents, or programs in their youth groups. The question of how they acquired that knowledge was not fully answered.

There was not a clear consensus among the group about the education they have received, as well as about their own interest in education in these topics. Below, I present the range of experiences participants shared.

“Quickly, Erase the Board”

All participants remember the one or two classes in fifth or sixth grade to discuss puberty and menstruation. These were usually presented by the school nurse or a guest speaker in an atmosphere that participants described as varying levels of embarrassed discomfort. The classes offered basic information but generally nothing more. Beyond these few classes, classes on sexuality and relationships were rare. Even when talked about, the manner in which these classes were presented sometimes conveyed a more powerful impression than the content because of the association with shame and discomfort. Amit remembers the atmosphere surrounding the class on puberty in her elementary school. The fact that sexuality and relationships was not

something students should be comfortable discussing was clearly communicated without being explicitly stated.

Amit: They really ought to be talking about it more. Once, in sixth grade, they talked to us about periods, [and then] they immediately closed up the topic and did not leave us any time for questions. It was a 45 minute class and then finished, [with a clear message that] no one should think and no one should ask questions. I really remember the teacher saying: “Now quickly erase the board, so that no one can see.” They didn’t give us a chance to ask. They should come and talk about this subject properly and not look at it as something for which there is just one class set aside with someone who comes to talk to us about it. Rather, they should talk to us normally and let us ask questions and talk about it too.

Amit’s experience reflects the approach taken by many schools to the most basic topics of puberty and menstruation. Topics that are more complex, such as boy-girl relationships, touching between the sexes, and modesty are even less likely to be addressed in a serious manner when there is an avoidance at the most basic level of education about puberty and menstruation.

“There Were No Classes”

Participants identified modesty as an area addressed in schools and this will be presented separately in the section that discusses transmitting traditions. Most participants did not recall any classes on *shemirat negiyah* at all. A few participants think that there had been some classes, although they could not specifically recall them. Whether this sense was based in a real memory or on a feeling that they must have had some classes on the topic was unclear. Almost all participants could not recall classes about *shemirat negiyah*, boy-girl relationships, or the laws that pertain to them, although these were topics often discussed among friends.

Researcher: Did they talk about modesty and *shemirat negiyah*?

Rotem: There were no classes on it. I don’t remember there being any.

Ironically, the reason often given for not teaching about these topics is that they have been addressed too many times already.

Researcher: Do these topics come up in high school?

Tali: No. Everyone says that they have been beaten to death and discussed way too much and there is no reason to go over them. They don’t always answer questions about *shemirat negiyah*. We do it [*shemirat negiyah*] because we have to.

Participants could not recall classes initiated by teachers to address topics related to sexuality. However, some participants reported that classes on other topics sometimes evolved into a discussion relating to *shemirat negiyah* and boy-girl relationships, especially when students were offered the opportunity by their teacher to choose a topic for discussion.

Topics Incorporated into Bible Class

Although, by and large, students could not recall specific classes on these topics, an exception was described by about a quarter of the participants. In ninth grade, the Bible curriculum is the book of Leviticus. This book focuses significant attention on issues of purity and impurity. Some of these issues relate to women and the changes of status in purity dependent on their menstrual cycle, as well as on giving birth. The Bible teacher did not feel comfortable discussing these issues with her students, but recognized the need for them to have a clearer understanding of basic biology of the female body, as well as the issues of purity that relate to it. She therefore invited the school counselor, who was known to approach these topics openly and thoroughly and who also had training in Bible, to present and discuss these issues with the students. The counselor presented a unit on the topic. Participants remember these classes as being all they had received to date about women, menstruation, and purity.

Researcher: Is it [*shemirat negiyah*, sexuality, relationships] discussed in high school?

Maya: I'll tell you what we had last year in one of our Bible classes. The teacher invited the school counselor when we learned in the Bible about purity in Leviticus. She spoke to us about the woman's cycle and the state of impurity for a woman and that was it. That's what we have been taught in school. We have not had any kind of regular class, or regular meeting.

Participants associate this Bible class with modesty and male-female interactions. Even though the classes did not deal directly with these topics, they were closely enough related to be evoked in this context. The most detailed report comes from Gila and sheds light on participants' associating the class with issues of touching between the sexes. It seems that the information provided by the visiting teacher offered the first opportunity to learn of the details of the restrictions of Jewish law between husbands and wives during the period of time when the woman menstruates until she purifies herself in a *mikvah* (ritual bath). This includes restrictions on physical touching between husband and wife. Participants were surprised to discover that these practices are still observed today by communities committed to the practice of Jewish law.

Gila: No. But, there was a whole thing in ninth grade in Bible class. We were learning about a woman when she's married she can't touch her husband, and we were like, "wow we thought when you get married you can do whatever you want and now we know that we can't." It's really weird. And then we called the counselor and she gave us a whole presentation and she told us what we can and we can't [within marriage].

The forum identified by participants where topics of this nature had been discussed in the ninth-grade, was in Bible class. This offers a positive association – that these issues relate to Bible studies and that at least some teachers in the school are not afraid to discuss them. In addition, they are not outside of the realm of religious studies but actually are intrinsically related to them. In addition, the knowledge that there are restrictions on sexual activity within marriage helped participants to view restrictions of sexual behaviors in Jewish law from within a lifespan context rather than as an imposition conceived specifically for teenagers.

“Everybody Knows What They Want to Know”

Despite the one experience mentioned above, school and classes are not the central source of information on topics of modesty and boy-girl relationships. While most participants did not remember classes or conversations with parents on these topics, they were all familiar with the concept of *shemirat negiyah*, as well as with basic behavioral expectations in these areas. Channa is clear that knowledge in these areas is widespread.

Researcher: Do people know, or do they learn the expectations of Jewish law in these areas?

Channa: I don't know if it is taught, but in reality – everybody knows it.

Researcher: Help me understand how.

Channa: I don't know. They pick up something here... something there...

Researcher: Do you think they really know?

Channa: They know what they want to know. What they don't want to know- nobody tries to find out.

In answer to the question about participant's knowledge, Channa offers an ambiguous response “everybody knows it.” – “They know what they want to know.” From the context of her interview it seems that everybody knows of a basic *shemirat negiyah* requirement that so permeates the culture that it need not be explicitly taught to enter participant's cultural vocabulary. Still, the details of such a requirement, with whom and where it applies remains ambiguous in the culture

itself. Channa suggests that Modern Orthodox teenagers benefit from the expanded range of behavior this ambiguity allows and are not motivated to clarify through learning of halakhic literature. They opt for greater freedom in ambiguity rather than knowledge that would allow for consistency with Jewish law, but perhaps also require commitment to it. No clear cultural norm seems to impose this consistency in and of itself.

Researcher: Do you learn about the expectations of Jewish law in boy-girl relationships?

Maya: I think we must have learned about it once. If we didn't learn it, every girl knows. She knows that the Jewish law wants you to wait until after the wedding [for sexual relations].

Perhaps there is no formal learning, but the topic of sexuality and male-female relationships is one that is discussed so often among the participants themselves that they assume they have learned about it somewhere. This sense of knowing may reflect the ways in which an underlying assumption within a culture can be so self-evident that it does not need to be taught.

Why Are These Jewish Laws Different?

Noting the lack of formal education in areas of sexuality and relationships, I wondered if perhaps the school chose not to educate about Jewish law in general. That was not the experience of the participants, however. Daily short units on topics in Jewish law such as gossiping, visiting the sick, laws of keeping the Sabbatical year is presented, and classes are dedicated to the study of Jewish law. In addition, there are independent study units that all students complete on various topics of practical Jewish law such as observing laws of Shabbat, kosher. However, Jewish laws relating to sexuality and relationships were not formally presented. Other areas of inter-personal Jewish law were addressed such as gossiping, helping others, charity.

Researcher: Have they taught you about being *shomer negiyah* in this school?

Ariella: It's possible. It's important. But I don't know if anyone spoke to us. It's possible.

Researcher: Did they talk about modesty?

Ariella: They talk about how someone is supposed to be [in terms of modest dress], and they make comments [when we are not]. But I don't know if they really talked to us.

Researcher: Do they teach you about the laws of Shabbat and the laws of keeping kosher?

Ariella: We are learning laws of Shabbat at the moment. Perhaps we will learn the laws of keeping kosher one day.

Most participants confirm Ariella's experience. Jewish law is taught in the school, but the related laws of sexuality were not.

One noteworthy exception to this occurs regarding dress code. As part of a teacher initiated, student driven group effort to improve the level of modesty in one of the tenth-grade classes, the home-room educator invited the Jewish law teacher into the class, and he delivered a source-based lecture on the laws of modesty. I was told that this was the first occurrence of this kind in the school. It seems that, despite the fact that adolescents are generally most curious about sexuality and relationships and Jewish law offers guidelines and opinions, these are not addressed from the perspective of Jewish law.

“No One Explains How Important It Is”

Even participants who remember the school addressing modesty or boy-girl relationships do not feel that they were offered satisfying explanations. At best, a basic explanation of behavioral expectations was provided without any effort at helping students understand the underlying reasons for these behaviors. Ariella finds herself wanting between the elementary and high school approaches.

Researcher: Did they speak about modesty in school?

Ariella: They told you what you had to wear, but they didn't explain. Maybe a little. Not really. Because we were young, now we are in high school. But also not much. Maybe here in high school they think we already know.

A number of participants attribute behavior between boys and girls that are not in line with Jewish law as resulting from lack of education. Even for those who assume a basic knowledge of Jewish law in these areas, the lack of explanation and understanding often leads to a lack of practice. In addition, the fact that it is not taught indicates to some that it is not really important. Important Jewish laws would be addressed in school.

Researcher: How do you understand the fact that this happens [touching between boys and girls] in religious youth group summer camp?

Ariella: Maybe because no one explains how important it is, to keep or not to keep. They don't give us an opportunity to understand it. I don't know whether it would really help us. Perhaps for those who will come next. Maybe they'll explain

it to them. Maybe it'll be considered more important, perhaps they will understand why. Meanwhile they do not explain it to anyone.

Some participants, while confirming that no initiative was taken on the part of the school to educate about boy-girl relationships and *shemirat negiyah*, noted that individual educators, usually the home-room educator, would respond to student questions. On those occasions when conversations did occur, however, teachers did not always offer explanations which satisfied the girls.

Researcher: Well, I guess part of what I am trying to understand is did they explain things to you: Why? Or just, this is what you have to do? How did they approach the topic?

Ayelet: We were just talking about how they don't explain to us at all. Maybe if we ask our home room teacher, maybe we'll have a discussion about it. But they don't explain to us, like why, so that's one of the reasons the girls are not so careful about these things because they just don't know why.

“They Do Explain How Important It Is”

While many participants complain of lack of information and education, a couple of participants felt it was dishonest to lay blame on others. Ariella actually offers both sides. At first suggesting that lax behavior was a result of lack of education, she later corrected herself:

Ariella: I don't want to just say that they don't tell us anything and they don't explain [to] us everything like with the ultra-Orthodox. That's just not true – they do explain [to] us. Perhaps the problem is not with them, but with us...I think it's a societal problem.

Ariella suggests that the lack of commitment to *shemirat negiyah* does not stem from a lack of education but rather from something within the Modern Orthodox society, perhaps as a result of what Modern Orthodox teenagers are willing to accept and absorb. This idea is similar to one presented earlier by Channa (p. 85), who is certain that whether teenagers had been taught or not, they had the knowledge and resources needed to make informed decisions.

Summary

It is difficult to draw general conclusions from the information provided by participants about their experiences of education on these topics. Despite the fact that the participants are all

students in the same school, their reports are often contradictory with some reporting that little has been taught and others reporting that too much has been taught. Whether formally taught in classes or not, participants' cultural vocabulary included an awareness of the issue of *shemirat negiyah* although they did not possess clear knowledge of its applications.

The range of maturity among participants, as well as regular interactions with boys, was also a factor influencing participants' perceptions about their needs in these areas. Those who have little contact with boys on a regular basis are not yet interested in too much discussion about relationships. Participants, who are involved in frameworks with boys, and especially those with boyfriends, are generally more interested in learning the Jewish laws regarding interactions between the sexes.

Pre-Interviews: Parents as a Source of Information

Research with the general population indicates that parents hesitate to talk to their children about sexuality and related topics (Kaiser Family Foundation Report, 2001; Kirby & Miller, 2002). They often find themselves uncomfortable with the topic and unsure how to address it, as it was generally not addressed appropriately when they themselves were growing up. They are therefore more likely to talk about topics relating to sexuality in response to their children's questions and not initiate conversations themselves. However, children are also hesitant to approach their parents about these topics as a result of which conversations within families are generally uncommon. Our research explored these issues in a Modern Orthodox population.

The information I obtained was based only on participants' reports and did not include input from parents. Aware of the confusion regarding education in these areas within the school, I wondered if similar confusion existed within families as well. I discovered a similar lack of conversations with parents on these topics. Conversations that did take place were generally with mothers.

Most participants did not have conversations with their mothers on these topics. A few had been introduced to the topic of puberty and menstruation by their mothers and a few chose to turn to their mothers with their questions on most topics. There was almost no talk about relationships between boys and girls among mothers and daughters. Nevertheless, most participants could delineate their parents' expectations of them in this area.

Participants' Conversations with Mothers

Generally, even the few participants who had been offered some information by their mothers about puberty had not been given a complete picture. They knew enough, however, that they were not surprised by the information acquired in school.

Nomi: Actually, my mother told me about them earlier. Then I learnt about it. So it wasn't completely new she taught me some stuff but I knew some.

A few participants chose to initiate conversations with their mothers as a result of the class. It is noteworthy that a number of mothers were willing to explain and converse on the topic once they were aware that their daughters had been introduced to it. The initiative however, did not come from the mothers themselves. Perhaps they were not sure how to address the topic in an appropriate fashion, and it was the knowledge that the topic had been introduced which offered the necessary comfort to talk about puberty with their daughters. For some mothers and their daughters, conversations did not take place at all.

Maayan: Yes, [it was the first time I heard about menstruation].

Researcher: At home, did they talk to you about it?

Maayan: I and my mother are now very good friends, but then I did not feel so comfortable with it. Even though if I had stomach pains she would say that maybe it was because of it, but we did not really talk about it.

A few participants attribute the source of their knowledge to their mothers, even though they could not recall a single conversation with them. It may be that participants imagine a greater openness with their mothers than they actually experienced.

Nitzan: No, I knew maybe from my mother.

Researcher: Do you remember having conversations with your mother?

Nitzan: No.

The majority of interviews indicate that families rarely discuss topics relating to relationships between the sexes and intimacy. Parents seldom initiate conversations on the topic and children absorb a sense that these topics are not to be talked about. Many participants therefore reported that they would not consider consulting with their parents about these issues.

Nevertheless, most participants are able to express their own understanding of their parents' wishes even without ever specifically having them delineated. Ayelet is a good example

of a participant who has grown up in a home with norms established in implicit ways. Even without an explicit conversation on the subject, she is clear about her parents' views.

Researcher: Tell me a little more as to how you know what your parents want. How do conversations happen in the family? Or do you just know what they want?

Ayelet: I know they trust me and I've learned. They taught me that there are things you do and you don't do.

Researcher: Have they ever sat down and discussed whether you can or cannot have a boyfriend? Is that a conversation you've had with them?

Ayelet: No, I just know they don't want me to have one!

Talking about sexuality both inside the home and inside the classroom within a Modern Orthodox framework clearly presents a challenge. Families and schools develop strategies for communicating norms about sexuality and relationships without actually conversing. This avoidance is in and of itself a form of education. Participants come to understand that these topics will rarely be addressed directly at home or at school. With this in mind, I wondered who participants would turn to for advice and information on sexuality and relationships.

Pre-Interviews: Where to Look for Advice

Personal issues are often not easy to talk about. A certain level of comfort must be established before questions, particularly in areas considered personal or private, can be asked. Participants were asked to think about who they present their questions to and who they turn to for information and advice on sexuality and relationships. The fact that teenagers view their peers as a significant influence in their lives has been well documented (Maxwell, 2002). My research explored whether teenagers would choose to turn to peers rather than to parents or other significant adult figures in their lives when faced with a need for information regarding sexuality and male-female relationships. In addition, I explored whether participants would turn to those same figures when seeking advice, rather than information, or whether they would seek advice from other sources.

I found that mothers and friends were the central resources for participants both for information and advice. Participants were more willing to turn to mothers for information than for advice. While about half the participants turned to their mothers for information, they were less likely to seek advice from their mothers particularly with regards to boy-girl relationships. In fact relationships in general were considered to be worthy of discussion primarily with peers.

About a quarter of the participants always consulted with their mothers while a few participants looked for neither information nor advice from their mothers. Only one participant identified her father as an important resource for information and advice. Many participants talked to friends about these issues, seeking both information and advice. Advice was most commonly sought from friends, although almost half the participants often took advice from multiple sources before coming to their own conclusions. Not many participants turned to youth group counselors for information or advice. In addition, a few participants sought information and sometimes even advice (asking questions of rabbis for example) from books and the internet, rather than consulting with people.

Information

Friends

More than half the participants consider friends their first stop and their primary source when seeking information. When asked, “If you have questions about boys, or *shomer negiyah*, boyfriends, girlfriends, modesty – who do you turn to?” many participants answered:

Nomi: I would ask my friends, if it was about like boyfriends, girlfriends.

Two participants chose to consult with their youth group counselors when looking for information, because the counselors are close in age to them and likely to be more knowledgeable, but not so much older that they are likely to be judgmental.

Researcher: OK... who would you ask if you had a question?

Maayan: I already have plenty of information in my head. I have spoken to my [male youth group] counselor, friends.

Mothers

Almost half the participants turn to their mothers for information about these topics. Many of those identify information as the only area about which they would ask their mothers. Topics such as boyfriend-girlfriend issues were reserved for friends.

Tal: My mother. I talk to her about everything. I am not embarrassed to ask questions. She is my good friend...I go to my mother. She helps me with everything.

Tal is a teenager with very close ties to her mother. She can turn to her to talk about everything. However, Tal's willingness to share all topics with her mother was the exception, rather than the rule.

Tali prefaced her answer about mothers, by explaining why she would not turn to a rabbi for information.

Tali: I don't turn to rabbis about these topics because it's not comfortable. I would turn to my mother or my sisters.

This formulation may indicate Tali's underlying assumption of an expectation that rabbis ought to serve as an appropriate resource. Tali rejects this as a comfortable option, but the question of the source of her assumption remains.

Multiple Sources

Some discerning participants separate information into categories. While information about body is a comfortable topic for mothers, discussion of boyfriends and girlfriends is reserved for friends, sisters, or other relatives close in age.

Researcher: If you had a question about your body, about modesty?

Nomi: About my body I would probably ask my mother. About modesty I would ask my cousin...She's like a big sister.

Researcher: And about boyfriends or girlfriends?

Nomi: I would ask my friends, if it was about like boyfriends, girlfriends.

Only a couple of participants turn to a teacher for information.

Ayelet: My sister, my teacher sometimes. If we feel like it's a whole class thing like *shomer negiyah*, we all went to talk to the teacher and ask for a discussion.

While the school provides home-room educators accompanied by a concomitant expectation of closeness between students and teachers and opportunities for one on one conversations, the process of developing a close relationship between teachers and students takes time. Most participants were not yet willing to open themselves up to conversations of this nature with their teachers.

Advice

I thought participants might differentiate between resources for information as different from advice. This, in fact, proved to be correct, with fewer girls turning to their mothers for advice than for information. This confirms findings in the general population, in which

adolescents generally turn to friends as their primary source of advice and emotional support (Bandura, 2000; Maxwell, 2002).

Friends

Indeed, more participants turn to friends for advice than to their mothers. While they have good relationships with their mothers, for the most part participants felt that talking about *shemirat negiyah* and issues of relationship with boyfriends or girlfriends is not a part of their lives that they are interested in sharing with their mothers. They respond to the question, “What about when you need advice? Who do you turn to?”

Sarah: I would talk to my friends.

A few participants are explicit about not turning to their mothers for advice, particularly regarding relationships.

Researcher: What about your parents?

Nomi: If I needed advice because I didn’t know what to do about a guy, probably a friend. I wouldn’t go to my mother.

Mothers

Nevertheless, about a quarter of the participants feel comfortable and close enough to their mothers that they identify them as their first choice for advice.

Shai: My mother.

Tal in particular sees her mother as the central figure to whom she turns for everything and who offers unconditional support, which she finds tremendously empowering.

Tal: I go to my mother, she helps me with everything. My mother also encourages me. I don’t know how to explain to you...if she thinks that I don’t really want something, she says, “It’s your decision.”

As we have seen previously, there are participants who identify their mothers as sources they would turn to, even though further questioning shows inability to identify any occasions on which they actually had consulted. This phenomenon suggests that some participants would like to believe they would or should turn to their mothers even though they may not actually have done so.

Shirel: Also my mother.

Researcher: Have you ever had the opportunity to take advice from your mother?

Shirel: I don't actually really talk to her about it. I don't think I have had the opportunity to talk to her about it. Really infrequently.

While participants sometimes want advice from their parents, they do not always want them to be aware of the issues that they are struggling with. Judy has a strategy for consulting with her mother without being explicit or providing too much information.

Researcher: What about advice?

Judy: Advice? I'd probably say something and try and get it out of my mother without telling her that it's for me even though she would probably know that it's me.

Researcher: You mean like I have this friend...

Judy: Yeah, or like, "I told her this and this. What do you think I should have done?"

Researcher: Why that way?

Judy: 'Cause, two things. One, because I might not be as comfortable telling her about it or telling my sisters. Or maybe because I would like to hear how she would deal with it for someone else and not necessarily for me.

Researcher: Sometimes her advice for somebody else is different than her advice for you?

Judy: Yeah.

Judy wants her mother's unbiased opinion, and not one that is geared towards her. She has already shared how her parents know their children well and sometimes have differing expectations for different children. Judy has identified herself as the good girl who always does what is right. Perhaps this method of acquiring information demonstrates an attempt to step out of that expectation.

Fathers

Only one participant identifies her father as the resource person she would turn to.

Researcher: If you have questions, who do you turn to?

Yael: Usually my father. He's a really good friend of mine! I consult with him. But also with friends who are experienced.

Researcher: And if you need advice?

Yael: The same people.

Communication among Peers

All participants are clear that issues of sexuality and relationships were a frequent topic of conversation among friends. While some identify boyfriends as being all they talked about, even those who engaged in other conversations agreed that boyfriends are a central topic of discussion among religious teenagers in their culture.

Researcher: Is there lots of talking among friends about these issues [relationships]?

Gila: Yes...that's all we talk about. Almost!

It is clear that for many participants, issues of dress and body image, as well as relationships with boys, is a focus of much attention. These topics are worked and reworked throughout the day in conversations among participants, both in school during breaks and at night on the phone, on Facebook, and in emails. In contrast to information, it is unclear whether they would attribute relevance to anything adults would offer in these particular areas.

“I Don't Turn to Anyone”

Not everyone chooses to consult with others when looking for information or advice. Some want to retain privacy and have discovered the ease of accessing answers through modern technology. While this has not yet become the common way of finding information in our sample, a couple of participants access information themselves from the resources around them, thus avoiding any exposure and the concomitant questions that would naturally follow.

Channa: Books, or the internet.

Maayan: Books.

Others prefer to think for themselves, sometimes gathering information anonymously and then processing it. Rather than take advice from one resource, they turn to the various resources at their disposal, gather suggestions and then make choices.

Researcher: If you have questions on these topics who do you turn to for information?

Shir: I think with myself, I don't ask anyone else.

Researcher: Who do you turn to for information?

Sarah: I don't know...I would ask anyone around me. Just to listen to what people say, but not to me. I don't know...I wouldn't search. I know what I need to know. These are things I have to solve myself. Perhaps with my friends...but I don't think I would plan to.

Arielle has become disenfranchised as a result of advice she heard at a workshop she was invited to by the school. She found the young, male presenter to have approached boy-girl relationships from a strict and uncompromising position, suggesting that they should not be mixing at all.

Arielle: I don't turn to anyone. Last year we had a workshop and we spent time talking to the counselor. His opinion was that it is forbidden to do anything. In his opinion you couldn't even meet boys at all. I don't ask questions, I don't go and ask people questions.

This strict approach was not relevant to Arielle's reality, or to that of her friends participating in the program, since the majority of them are strongly affiliated with mixed youth groups. Consequently, she is not interested in taking advice from anyone on the subject. Her negative experience has led her to trust herself for advice and not turn to others, at least not those in authority.

In summary, participants do spend considerable time involved in conversations about modesty, relationships and *shemirat negiyab*. The main sources of information and advice for participants are mothers and friends. While some participants find other resources to assist them, the most significant conversations take place among peers.

Pre-Interviews: Sources of Knowledge & Attitudes Regarding Sexuality

I asked participants whom they consider to be the most significant influences on their knowledge and attitudes regarding sexuality and relationships. I was interested in determining whether they differentiate between knowledge and attitudes, viewing each as influenced by different factors, or if there is one central figure influential in both.

All participants considered parents and friends to be the most central influences on them, giving differing weights to family and friends depending on whether it was knowledge or attitudes being discussed. While about half the participants considered friends to offer the most significant resource in both areas, almost as many put family first. Also contributing were school, media, occasionally a youth group counselor, or a particular teacher, but their influence was far less significant than that of parents and peers.

Friends

Over half of the participants express the deepest connection to their friends and consistently consider them to be the central influence upon them, in all areas. While discerning in choosing which friends they would allow to influence them, once they belong to a social circle, participants bow to the dictates of their peer group.

Researcher: What influences your knowledge most in these [modesty, *shemirat negiyah*, boy-girl relationships] areas?

Channa: Friends and the internet. Friends more. Now everybody knows, [but] once I heard about *shemirat negiyah* and I didn't know what it was, so my friends explained it to me. In seventh grade they explained it to me.

Researcher: What influences your attitudes most in these areas?

Channa: What they would say about me – my friends and my family. Actually my family doesn't know everything.

Researcher: What influences your behaviors most?

Channa: My friends. What my closest friends dictate. After that – friends from school.

Arielle: The social group decides, not whoever is above you and wants to educate you.

Researcher: When you say “the social group,” who do you mean?

Arielle: I mean the social group here, around us. One behaves according to the group. I don't know what someone who is supposed to educate us would do to really touch us. I don't know.

The participants quoted above highlight the significant impact their friends and their friends' opinions have on their own behaviors. Arielle, in fact, finds herself so deeply entrenched in her social group that she cannot imagine an approach educators or other adults could possibly offer that would serve to override the influence of her peers.

Family

Intense involvement with friends characterizes many participants, but close to half of the participants chose family over friends as the central influence in all areas. They define themselves as being deeply rooted in the family unit. They identify varying degrees of other influences. For some, friends are considered an insignificant influence, while others view them as being a close second to their families.

Tal: In my opinion what influences most is the home, because that's how you are going to behave outside. And then school and friends, and then Western culture.

Researcher: Who are you more likely to listen to: parents, friends, the school?

Ayelet: Parents.

These participants identify family as providing the most significant influence over them in these areas. The majority of participants differentiate between categories, choosing parents or other influences over friends in some areas while choosing friends as a central influence in others. Most often, friends are less likely to be a source of information and were more likely to be a significant influence over attitudes and behaviors. School and media play secondary roles for almost all participants.

Researcher: What influences your knowledge most in these areas?

Nitzan: Movies.

Researcher: What influences your attitudes most in these areas?

Nitzan: My family, all the discussions we have.

Researcher: Are there lots of discussions at home?

Nitzan: Not lots. But there are...

Researcher: What influences your behaviors most?

Nitzan: Friends, family.

Nitzan, whose hobby is to make movies, finds herself learning most from the movies she watches. Arielle identifies her friends as being the more significant influence over her, but her family also has a role. They are responsible for much of what she does not do.

Researcher: What influences your knowledge most in these areas?

Arielle: Beyond school, general culture, that's what I think.

Researcher: What influences your attitudes most in these areas?

Arielle: My friends.

Researcher: What influences your behaviors most?

Arielle: My friends.

Researcher: What about your family?

Arielle: What I don't do comes from them, they also have influence.

Other Influences

The question of participants' perception of the school's influence over them was also examined. While some disparage school, explicitly placing it at the bottom of each list because of the lack of conversation on these topics, others find school to have significant impact on them. However, on closer analysis, those who give weight to the influence of school seem to refer to the girls in the school and not to the school itself.

Amit: ...And school is the least influential, because they do not talk about it.

Judy: School doesn't, they don't explain well enough – I guess you have to see it to understand it. It's not here, it's not happening.

Nomi: Friends and school I think is who I become. School introduces me to Judaism and friends push me in what direction I'm going to become.

Most participants belong to local youth movements, but few identify counselors as being significant figures for them, in this regard. I found this puzzling since counselors seem perfectly positioned between youth and adulthood to be able to offer appropriate guidance and to be sought out by participants. In an interview with the head counselor of the youth group attended by the majority of participants, he suggested that many of the counselors themselves are often still struggling with issues of male-female relationship, usually even more intensely than the children to whom they are counselors. Barely a couple of years older than their protégés, they have difficulty addressing the issues in an effective manner and therefore cannot provide sufficient support and advice.

In summary, participants are heavily rooted in their families and communities. They consider themselves most significantly impacted by those with whom they interact on a daily basis, both family and friends. While school has some impact, it is mitigated by the fact that these topics are hardly addressed in the school setting.

Pre-Interviews: The Influence of Secular Culture

In defining the balancing act that is an intrinsic part of being Modern Orthodox, Rabbi Saul Berman states:

Modern Orthodoxy is a difficult path that requires constant attentiveness to the maintenance of Jewish wholeness in the face of the distraction of material excess and pure self gratification. It is a path that requires filtering out the degraded

values of the low culture while welcoming the advances in knowledge and understanding being achieved in the high culture. (Berman, 2001)

Defining which components of the majority culture ought to be filtered is a question of much debate. The participants in this study struggle with these questions as they consider the impact that exposure to sexuality and sexual imagery has on their attitudes and desires. In this section, we will see their understanding of the effects that exposure to some of the ideas of secular culture has on them and their relationship to Jewish law and tradition. While a few participants feel that they are able to compartmentalize for themselves, enjoying a secular movie while recognizing that it presents a values system foreign to their traditions, most participants recognize the negative impact of exposure. They find that it normalizes behaviors that are not considered appropriate according to Jewish law, exposing participants to possibilities they might not otherwise have considered. Most participants experience conflict at the interface of their traditional values with those of the majority culture. There were a few participants who actually were able to draw strength from their “otherness.”

“It’s an Illusion”

Participants offer a spectrum of responses to the question of the effects of exposure to secular movies in general, and the sexually explicit scenes that are a part of almost all movies in particular. Many of the participants find these scenes unnecessary distractions from the story, which they avoid either by fast-forwarding the scene or by turning away from the screen. Some participants find them interesting and even informative, as long as they are not too explicit. There are individuals who have, on occasion, chosen to leave a movie theater rather than endure exposure to inappropriate images.

Ayelet: I’m pretty careful about what I watch. If it comes up – I might walk out, or I wouldn’t look.

A couple of participants were troubled by the illusion they felt movies presented that romance was the simple solution to life’s sorrows. Gila finds these ideas particularly problematic for members of her community because they contradict values she is striving to uphold.

Researcher: What do you do? Do you think it affects you in any way?

Gila: For sure, in a bad way, because it’s an illusion, because you think that life is like that and it’s like really not, because especially when we are religious and suddenly we’re being romantic and I’m going to kiss because it’s going to be so

meaningful and everything is going to be just perfect. And this is especially not true for the religious community.

Researcher: Why? Why especially not for religious people?

Gila: Because it's not our way, it's not the principles by which we live. Before getting married, it's just not what we do.

Researcher: Any other ways it might affect you?

Gila:...Like the clothes, you think, "oh they are so pretty" and it's just not relevant. You try to look like it but it's just not relevant.

Gila's frustration focuses on the negative effect these movies and their ideas have on Modern Orthodox teenagers. They paint an attractive reality which is an illusion, and one which, in her opinion, should not be a relevant consideration for her Modern Orthodox peers. The script is attractive and enticing, however. In addition, Gila demonstrates an awareness of the possibility that exposure affects her on multiple levels, even in ways that she cannot consciously identify. She brings the example of clothing as a subtle example of an image she would like to imitate but realizes cannot be relevant in her community.

A number of participants confirm Gila's approach that movies present a world which, from their vantage point, looks attractive and yet portrays only what is unavailable and forbidden.

"We See What We Are Missing"

While some participants do not feel affected by exposure to television and are able to experience movies as light entertainment that has no ramifications for their own lives, the majority of participants sometimes find the experience challenging. Some participants emphasize the wish to experience the types of relationships they view in movies, despite their understanding that such relationships were in conflict with their religion.

Researcher: Do you think it affects you?

Maya: Yes, it's obvious. You see a movie and then you also want it [the intimate touching between a boyfriend and girlfriend]. It's peer pressure. When you see that someone else has something, you want it too.

Researcher: Are they messages which really influence you or can you see it as just television?

Maya: It definitely has its influence.

Researcher: What do you think is hard?

Judy: You know, like everybody sees all the movies, and everybody is with their guys doing everything and you can't. Why not? You just can't! *Kedushah, tabarah* [holiness, purity], you're not supposed to do that ta, ta, ta, and so the whole world is... What's wrong with me, why can't I do that? It's hard dealing with that.

Maya recognizes that exposure to models of male-female relationships in movies that are different from those permitted in her community can be challenging, as it makes possibilities that are not permitted appear more attractive. Judy offers a theme that she repeats on a number of different occasions about areas that are attractive but forbidden: What's wrong with me? Why is it that the rest of the world is able to do these fun things which are forbidden to me? Despite being able to produce formulaic answers as to why they are forbidden (holiness, purity), her frustration was palpable.

Dana lives in a mixed religious-secular village and finds herself gradually having less in common with her secular counterparts as differences in interest and approaches to male-female relationships became more pronounced. She attests to actively working on herself to overcome the secular influences she has encountered in some movies. Her efforts at repression, at least in her opinion, have met with success and she continues to work on herself.

Researcher: Does it arouse your interest?

Dana: Yes. My friend told me that she sees movies and it really affects her.

Researcher: In what way?

Dana: She thinks about it... she suddenly also wants to have a boyfriend, just simple things like that.

Researcher: And does it affect you?

Dana: Not really.

Researcher: Why?

Dana: I try to repress it.

Researcher: So that's not exactly not influencing.

Dana: That's true! I don't allow it to influence me. It influences every individual badly. But if you manage to overcome, then you have succeeded...

Dana has taken initiative, investing effort to counterbalance the disequilibrium generated by movies in order not to be overwhelmed by their subtle influence. She identifies the need for active effort and commitment in order to overcome the pervasive influence of movies. Participants who are involved with a boyfriend appear to be most challenged by movies, seeing

images of possibilities that they wish for but consider forbidden. Maayan watches movies and the physical relationships in them and is left to imagine the nature of her own relationship under similar circumstances.

Researcher: Do you think it affects you?

Maayan: Yes, it definitely affects me.

Researcher: In what ways?

Maayan: I have all sorts of thoughts and I have to tell myself that I must work on myself and not watch these things because it makes my emotions want to take over.

Researcher: You have a boyfriend and you are working hard to be *shomeret negiyah*. Do you think it makes it more of an issue for you when you are watching (a physical relationship) in a movie?

Maayan: Yes, of course. Because you see what you are missing, so to speak. No question that movies influence. I have no choice. I have to learn to live with it. The fact that I saw a movie, doesn't mean that next time I see him – I will jump all over him.

The effort to remain committed to her own value of *shemirat negiyah* is sorely challenged.

“Now It Is Normal”

Ayelet offers a perceptive analysis of the effects of exposure to secular culture. The Modern Orthodox community in which she lives offers a particular way of life, with guidelines based in Jewish law for most behaviors. These guidelines provide norms and expectations of behaviors between the sexes that are basically respected within the community and which exist as a standard. Deviations from the standard may be common but are recognized as deviations. Secular culture offers a completely different model, and exposure to it has led to acceptance of a standard that ought to be rejected out of hand. Ayelet is troubled by her own acceptance of sexual behaviors that were once shocking.

Researcher: How does it [seeing sexually explicit scenes in movies] make you feel?

Ayelet: I hate it.

Researcher: Why do you hate it?

Ayelet: I hate it because now it's normal. I remember when it used to be, “Oh my God they're kissing” and now it's just normal in every movie – it's really bad...

Researcher: Do you think it affects you?

Ayelet: It affected me that it got normal, it became something not weird but normal. I mean every show has some sexuality in it. And that's normal.

While what is considered acceptable is perceived differently in different societies, particularly in these areas of interpersonal relationships, Judy thinks the exposure offered by Western media serves her and her fellow classmates well. Fully aware of the potential problems that may emerge from too much information; she is also troubled by excess innocence.

Researcher: So how do you think that [exposure to intimate scenes in movies] affects people?

Judy: People see things and they want to do it too. I guess or people see things that they never knew about and it makes them start wondering and thinking, "Oh, I didn't know that," and it opens all kinds of possibilities for them even for bad. I think it is important for people to know what is going on in the world and I think it is important for girls to know what is sex and to know basic things – I think it is important for somebody to know that. I'm not saying to do it or to follow but to know what it is. It is important so when you go into the world – like I have a friend whose parents up until last year only allowed her rated PG or G. Like they wouldn't let PG-13 and we'd be like, "there's nothing wrong, maybe one kiss" and she's like, "PG-13 I can't watch." And her parents are really strict, I guess they didn't want her to be exposed...I understand because once you are exposed you start to be interested, but I think it is important for somebody to know what is going on out there so you won't be like, "what, what." Like we were in English class and we got onto the topic of homosexuality 'cause we were reading a poem and she was like, "what does that mean" and the teacher is like, "when two guys like each other" and she was like "well, why would they do that" and she just didn't know anything and we were like, "I think it's good to be innocent but you should know basics." We might be religious but it is only a small part of the world and there is a whole world out there that we don't know about and I think it is important to get a little taste.

Judy eloquently offers both sides of the debate. While exposure can provide ideas and suggestions "even for bad," it is important to be an informed member of society. Judy identifies fully with being religious, but recognizes that her community represents a narrow segment of the population. She sees value in being aware of the norms of society different from her own, and

suggests that despite the fact that exposure may provide a challenge, (“I understand because once you are exposed you start to be interested,”) it is a challenge she considers worth facing. Her approach is supported by Amit, who also feels she has managed to learn a considerable amount from her exposure to secular culture.

Researcher: What influences you most in these areas?

Amit:...also the Western world – all the movies and media, are very influential. There are things I could not possibly be exposed to if there was no media or movies.

As noted earlier, a central challenge to Modern Orthodoxy is the decision regarding which parts of secular culture to admit and which to reject. Shirel has decided that movies have negative qualities and also waste her time.

Researcher: Do you see movies?

Shirel: I used to watch – now much less.

Researcher: Why?

Shirel: It’s uncomfortable, it’s not modest. We don’t need to see these things all the time.

Researcher: You decided to stop watching because...

Shirel: Because I don’t think it’s good for me, it just wastes time unnecessarily, it’s unnecessary...it’s just not good to expose myself to these kinds of things...

Researcher: Do you have friends who support you in that decision?

Shirel: I made the decision together with a friend.

Researcher: How did you come to this decision?

Shirel: I don’t know...we decided we wanted to strengthen ourselves religiously.

Shirel and her friend have chosen to intensify their religious commitment by rejecting this part of secular culture. They choose to counter its influence on two fronts: By rejecting it and choosing to avoid its influence as much as possible and simultaneously by strengthening themselves religiously.

For almost all participants, rejecting secular culture was not an option. Even Shirel, who presented the most far-reaching rejection, has not stopped watching movies altogether; instead, she is now more discerning regarding content. She actively avoids movies that present possibilities for behavior in conflict with her understanding of Jewish law.

Clash of Cultures

Participants' struggle emerges at precisely the points of contact with secular culture, when the voice of tradition and the voice of the modern culture speak in a diametric opposition that cannot possibly be reconciled. In these situations, participants find themselves in real conflict.

Many participants experience a distinct clash between the two cultures they inhabit. While committed to their tradition or harboring the wish or hope for commitment to their tradition, they often feel the strong pull of the majority culture away from that commitment.

Researcher: Where does Western culture come into the picture?

Rivka: Movies, clothing, whatever is in fashion – it all affects me in some way.

Researcher: How does it affect you?

Rivka: It pretty much contradicts the Jewish law, so there is some clash, which has its influence.

Researcher: Do you have anything else you would like to say about the two worlds you inhabit?

Rivka: I think my world is much more focused on the modern world. On a certain level the Jewish law in our community has lost its place, is less. I don't really know how much weight it carries for me.

Researcher: How do you understand this?

Rivka: There are always the things that the secular community is able to do. And perhaps that encourages the religious youth to do the same, just because of that. Jewish law constricts more. There are more new things around and we feel more constricted. And the secular community does not have that, because they do not have the Jewish law.

Researcher: The connection between youth and Jewish law – do you think it has changed?

Rivka: In my opinion – definitely. Because Western culture is much more dominant nowadays. Jewish law has lost its place a little.

Rivka attests to a weakening of the influence of Jewish law over her, as well as over her community in general. She attributes this change to an overall increase in exposure to Western culture and its dominant voice of freedom from strictures, which attracts religious teenagers.

Participants are of the opinion that the challenges are much greater now than they used to be. The question of why something is forbidden when it appears so attractive and hard to resist has become more compelling.

Maayan: I think it has become much more difficult because of the culture in which we live. When we see movies, read books and see non-religious people having fun. I think our needs have become much stronger as a result of this. It is much more annoying to keep it.

Researcher: Do you feel that it affects you – does all this surrounding culture have an influence on you?

Maayan: Of course! You look around and you ask yourself: “Why can’t I?” You don’t think about the problems that will be in the long term. You think about now. “Why can’t I now?”

Researcher: So it’s a real struggle.

Maayan: Correct. I don’t know but it’s much harder for me today because of the technology and the culture around which totally contradicts what we think. Like, you have a desire – fulfill it, people have dreams – realize them, just do it – life is short and you have to do what you want. And it really contradicts our views and you are really stuck in the middle.

Maayan highlights the ways in which modern culture encourages immediate gratification as a source of tension for her. Amit clearly articulates the divergent demands of the two cultures.

Researcher: What’s it like to grow up in two worlds?

Amit: It’s complicated. Because each society that you belong to has a different expectation. School expects you to be the good, religious girl. On the other hand is the Western world, with advertisements that expect you to be a maturing teenager, who does whatever she feels like, and who attracts everyone’s attention and flirts with everyone. And these are very difficult expectations. And I can say for myself that I don’t know where I stand. I don’t know who I want to be, with regards clothing and boy-girl relationships. I am caught between these two conflicting messages which know much better than you, and you just do not know who to choose. I really don’t know where I stand.

Researcher: How do you think you will choose?

Amit: Right now I choose what is good for me now. What’s coolest is to be on the Western side. I have no idea right now how my life will be. At the end of the

day, I do want to be religious. To educate my children to religious values and send them to a religious school. I hope that in the end of the day I will choose the more religious and less Western way. For right now I am choosing the more Western side.

Amit, while hoping to remain committed to religion for the long term, cannot resist the attraction of the Western model. The choice between being “the good, religious girl” or “a maturing teenager, who does whatever she feels like, and who attracts everyone’s attention and flirts with everyone” is a difficult choice because the latter is so attractive. It is difficult for tradition, with its rigid strictures, to compete with the alternative offered by Western society.

Maayan also lives in the struggle to remain within the halakhic camp coupled with uncertainty as to her own personal strength to live up to this commitment.

Researcher: Do you think that things have changed for religious teenagers nowadays from how it used to be?

Maayan: The Western world emphasizes sexuality, boys and girls. It is in almost every movie. And then there is the Jewish law, and there is a clash between them. You try and place yourself on the side of the Jewish law, even though I find myself in the middle. My aspiration is to place myself on the side of Jewish law. And when I am older – I will have to struggle with it. As religious people it is very difficult. This country is also very Western. There are non-religious couples and you feel strange and stuck from within Jewish law. There are very few people who really keep these laws.

Maayan states the issue most explicitly. While she is struggling to preserve her relationship within the bounds of Jewish law, movies broadcast praise of sexuality and sexual pleasure. It is the strength of her beliefs and values with regards these topics that allow her to remain conflicted and not succumb totally to the pull of secular culture.

Being “Other”

Judy spoke of religious people being a very small percentage of the world. This fact seems to play a significant role in the sense of alienation experienced by many participants as they confront their surroundings and see how very different their norms are from those of everyone else around them. Some manage to find strength in this otherness. For some, it is precisely the experience of living among people who hold a standard different from their own that strengthens their resolve to remain true to their own path.

Researcher: Are there particular difficulties for modern religious teenagers?

Sarah: Let's say you see movies, and you see things that you cannot do. Fashion, for example, it's difficult – you cannot wear so much of it. It depends what kind of person you are. If someone lives in a mixed religious – non-religious community, it's more difficult, because you are with them and there is a certain peer pressure. There are always those people who will come out of that kind of situation stronger for it. Who will look at it all and say: "I am so not interested in any of this."

Tal also expresses this rejectionist approach as a possibility.

Researcher: What do you think influences you most?

Tal: ... Western culture is a culture. You can also behave differently. It depends how you behave.

Although perhaps simplistic, Tal's words express an important idea. In the end, people have to make choices for themselves and they do have the capacity, if they are committed enough, to reject what they see around them. Contrary to Dana (p. 103) who thinks the influence of outside culture is inevitable unless active efforts are invested in rejecting it, Tal thinks that outside culture does not have to overwhelm or necessarily be a source of conflict if one chooses to ignore it. Most participants, however, feel the conflict acutely. Perhaps the most poignant statement was offered by Shir, who sees the struggle as an inevitable part of her reality. She has no solutions to offer, and it is perhaps this sense of being stuck, which needs to be considered in thinking about ways to educate towards integration with less conflict.

Researcher: How can we make this easier?

Shir: You can't!

Researcher: Why not?

Shir: Because there is nothing to do...

The Coherent Stand of Religious Culture

Participants have a clear sense of how different the sexual values system of the world around them is from that of their tradition. I explored how participants perceived their friends' sexual values systems. I also explored whether the participants experienced the sexual value systems presented to them from within the religious culture (home, school, youth movement) as

being univocal, or divided. Most participants did not differentiate between school and home, considering the approach offered by both entities to be almost identical.

Researcher: What are the different messages [about sexuality, boy-girl relationships] you experience?

Shai: In all the places I go to – the expectations are the same. It's not that at home I behave one way and outside I behave differently.

Researcher: The messages from home are similar to the messages from school and friends?

Shai: Yes.

Perhaps this response was offered as a result of the way the question was formulated. The question simultaneously contrasted home, school, friends, and Western culture. The contrast between Western culture and the entities from within their traditional culture was so clear that participants did not address the nuances of difference within their culture, which may nevertheless exist.

While the approach of the school supports that of the home and vice versa, for many of the participants, friends offer a broader spectrum of options. These friends are divided into those who are *shomerot negiyah* and those who are not. Friends make suggestions, give advice, and encourage behaviors based on their own commitments.

Researcher: What are the different messages you experience?

Shir: It's approximately the same. Just that not everyone is so careful about it.

Researcher: Does school give messages about these topics?

Shir: Sometimes.

Researcher: What messages do they give in school?

Shir: What they give everywhere.

Researcher: What messages?

Shir: According to the Jewish law.

Researcher: Are these also the messages at home?

Shir: Yes.

Researcher: And from friends?

Shir: Some are like that and others are not. Whoever is *shomeret negiyah* goes according to the Jewish law and whoever doesn't says that in her opinion it is not important.

Lior has grown up in a home that allows her the space to make decisions. While she knows what her parents think she ought to do, she also has a strong sense of independence and freedom to decide. Her experience of school is not quite as open. School encourages friendship with boys but not relationships. Friends offer support without judgment and the complete freedom to make independent choices.

Lior: I come from an open house, where my parents tell me what is right. I can bring a boyfriend home. If they discover that they do not agree with the nature of my relationship with him, they will talk to me about it. They are not against. They prefer not. They think that there ought not to be interactions between boys and girls until they are ready to get married. They say not to be in a relationship. In school I get the expectation that one ought to be in a mixed society, to talk to boys but not to be too close. Friends say – whatever you want. Friends don't tell you what to do. You do what you want.

There were a few participants who report that the sexual value system offered by the home was not the same as that espoused by the school.

Amit: I see a big difference between school and home...The house in which I grew up has really different opinions [from school]. I had no idea that there was *shemirat negiyah*. School instructs me in a particular way, about *shemirat negiyah* and modesty, and at home it is something else entirely, there is no *shemirat negiyah*. I also receive messages from friends which influence me, which is different from what I get from school. School is much more rigid, and all the others are more open.

In summary, most participants were influenced by the majority culture. They found themselves impacted by this exposure on various fronts. Perhaps the most pervasive effect of this exposure was in the offering alternative modes of behavior. While participants for the most part did not actually engage in these behaviors, the act of rejection often came only at the end of a personal struggle, which varied in intensity for different participants. Against the backdrop of the majority culture with its radically different approach to sexuality and relationships from that of Jewish law, participants for the most part reported no conflict between the approaches they encountered within their culture. While a few reported that the home required a different standard than that of the school, most identified school and home as being mutually supportive and found strength in the support that these two institutions provided.

Pre-Interviews: Participants' Perceptions of Boys

The participant population spans a spectrum of norms with regards to interactions with boys. Elementary school options for participants were mostly separate-sex schools, although some came from a mixed-sex school. Even those students who studied in mixed classes in the early grades studied in separate classes beginning in fourth or fifth grade. Most girls describe themselves as belonging to a mixed social group and are often active participants in local youth movements and groups which include boys. Some are just beginning leadership roles in these groups, which entails intensive shared leadership with boys. Others describe themselves as being part of a mixed social circle (boys and girls), getting together over the weekend and occasionally during the week to hang out, chat, occasionally venture into the nearby city, and generally be in each others' company. While a number of participants currently have or at one point had boyfriends, they were not the majority. Some of the participants are not involved in the local youth groups, have always attended separate-sex schools, and have minimal casual interactions with boys.

The research explored participants' ideas about their male counterparts' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in areas of sexuality and relationships. While a number of girls offered no information, claiming complete ignorance, many had ideas and perceptions about their male counterparts.

I found that many participants have only vague ideas about the difficulties boys face in holding themselves back from physical contact. A number of participants suggest that boys generally become less emotionally involved in relationships than girls, generally focusing more attention and energy intensively on the physical aspect of the relationship. They feel that boys lack understanding of girls in general and of sexuality and relationships in particular and they recommend that courses be implemented in boys' schools to help address this lack of sensitivity and knowledge.

What Do Boys Learn?

Participants were asked what they thought boys know or have learned about these topics. Basing themselves on various sources of information, the girls identified a number of areas in which boys were educated.

Researcher: What do boys learn in these areas?

Yael: In eighth grade we learned about the female and male body. We were cool with the teacher. She said that she had an uncomfortable situation and she was

not comfortable teaching boys about the female body. So I know that they learn about it. They know about periods and stuff like that.

Boys are perceived to have knowledge about basic female anatomy and physiology. There was a sense that boys were provided with information but education for boys is not seen to go beyond that provision of facts. Ariella, for example, knows that boys learn Jewish law in the classroom but do not focus on the inter-personal aspects of relationship.

Ariella: Jewish laws [about having girlfriends, *shemirat negiyah*], not things like “how do you feel?”

While Ariella thinks boys learn Jewish law in these areas at the very least, Ayelet was much more skeptical.

Researcher: Do you know anything about boys and what they are taught in high school about these topics?

Ayelet: I don't think they are taught anything.

Researcher: Based on what do you think that?

Ayelet: Based on what they act, based on that they act like they don't know. Most boys I know aren't *shomer* because they don't really know. They won't do anything, but they don't know. Most girls have [been taught about] modesty and learn these things in school that they're not allowed to do. But boys don't have that, like they tell them not to wear shorts, not because it's Jewish law, so they don't have any obligations. So they don't have anything that their obligated to, so it's different.

Ayelet's skepticism is rooted in the observable behavior of the boys around her. She attributes their lack of commitment to being *shomer negiyah* to a lack of education. In addition, she identifies the laws of modesty and obligations they impose on women as requiring educational attention, while boys are considered exempt.

“It's Easier for Them Emotionally”

Boys are perceived as being less emotionally involved in a relationship. While girls become emotionally involved immediately, boys are seen to enjoy a relationship without becoming too deeply emotional.

Researcher: Do you know how they cope?

Ariella: It's easier for them emotionally; it goes less deep even though you cannot say anything about all boys. They get really annoyed when we talk like that about them.

Participants, and especially those who had been involved in a relationship with a boy, emphasize the different ways in which boys and girls react to physical touch. They are unequivocally of the opinion that while girls became deeply connected emotionally to anyone with whom they are involved physically, boys are much less prone to feel the same. Boys are able to enjoy a physical relationship and, when it's over, move on to the next, while girls continue to maintain a sense of loss and desire for emotional connection to the person with whom they had a relationship. Maayan tries to explain her understanding of this difference.

Maayan: In my opinion, it is less important to them. For girls it is much more important, because for them it is emotional. For boys if they touch someone, they enjoy it, and then they break up, it's sad. And then someone else comes, from the point of view of touching, so it feels good again. For girls, he's still in my head, I think about him. For me, it needs to be one particular person. Boys can more easily come to terms with a new girl and a new situation. For boys it is harder that it is [touching] forbidden, and the question is how does each person deal with it....

Researcher: In your opinion who is responsible for teaching these topics?

Maayan: Girls need to be taught a lot, because they really want this kind of relationship. Girls need to hug and express their emotions and emotional issues, and boys – for them it's more of a game, of: "She's worth it – and she's not." At least until they become more mature. Girls are really in need of touch, and warmth and it's harder for them because they need that model. You need to talk about it with boys from when it starts, in seventh and eighth grade.

Girls Covering Up for the Sake of the Boys

Girls from a young age are expected to cover their bodies according to the Jewish laws of modesty as practiced by the community. Participants, educated in a Modern Orthodox environment, had often been taught that their need to cover up is in order to protect males who have difficulty controlling their desire.

Maya: In school we talked about the idea that it's worthwhile dressing modestly near boys.

Researcher: Can you explain why?

Maya: Because if I show everything... how I see it is different from how a guy sees it. When I show more, he gets something... he likes it. Perhaps you do not want to be giving this at this stage... if you know what they feel, then you know that if you take your skirt off, what it does to them. It's very important.

Yael: They [male teachers] said that they cannot teach girls when they are so exposed. Especially religious studies cannot be taught normally. So then they decided to make a uniform shirt.

At least half of the participants had learned to view males as being strongly affected by seeing even slightly exposed female flesh and that women have the responsibility to be sexual gatekeepers. This is consistent with the approach to modesty presented by many traditionalist religions (Hartman, 2007).

Participants are also aware that hormonal development peaks during adolescence and is responsible for the strong physical attraction between the sexes. While Gila identifies hormones as being responsible for struggle in both sexes, most participants identified hormones as being an issue for boys rather than for girls.

Gila: It's the thing that has the strongest draw, especially at our age, that's why it's so hard 'cause all our hormones are developing and the girls want a boyfriend and the boys like want to have a girl.

Rotem: Once a friend of mine explained to me that like, it's not good to touch boys, because they are adolescents and they have hormones and all that stuff.

Researcher: Is there a difference between boys and girls at this age?

Rotem: I don't know. I think there is a difference, because their drive is stronger.

Participants have been well socialized to an understanding of boys as being pre-occupied by their hormonal activity. Participants understood that teenage years were therefore a struggle particularly for boys and as such they should behave in a way which would not be arousing.

Boys Only Care About the Body

Boys are perceived to focus heavily on the physical. They are less likely to be *shomer negiyah* and altogether are considered to be interested in a relationship mostly for the physical enjoyment it provided. A few participants find themselves or their friends to be negotiating how far they are willing to go in a physical relationship. Their experience is that boys in a relationship

are always pushing towards a more intense physicality. Gila has had many conversations with friends about this phenomenon.

Gila: ...like she told me about this boy she went out with last night, and too much touching and like she couldn't really stop 'cause like he just told her how much like he cares about her, like it's really annoying how boys only care about body. Afterwards he like he just really didn't care about her.

Researcher: He didn't care about her?

Gila: No not at all, just too much touching.

As a result of the pressures that sometimes emerge from this male dynamic, a few participants find themselves questioning how much physical contact they are willing to offer. Part of their deliberation centers around whether they would continue to be respected by the boys pushing them to a physical relationship. This double standard in which boys encourage girls to be physical, but then lose respect for them when they do, puts young teenage girls in a difficult position. Judy describes the dilemma of a close friend and Shai confirms the double standard. While most boys are not *shomer*, they respect girls who are.

Judy: I think like sometimes also it's hard let's say with my friend so she's like wondering now, "should I maybe have done more for him?" 'cause she like really, really liked him. So maybe I should have done something, maybe like a small thing.

Researcher: You mean gone a little further than she wanted to?

Judy: Yeah, but like since she really, really liked him so maybe it would be fine and he would still respect her – you know sometimes it's hard, it is hard.

Shai: Most of the boys I know- I don't think they are *shomer negiyah*, but they respect the girls who are *shomer negiyah*. Some do and some don't.

Quite a few participants seem confused and unsure of how to conduct themselves in male-female relationships. Drawn to considering physical relationships and encouraged by the boys around them to become physically involved, they recognize the negative impact that such a relationship could have for them. The participants find themselves involved in a push and pull that can be difficult to navigate.

Gila has a close and open relationship with her father, whom she respects highly as an accomplished educator. She describes her home as one that educates towards deep commitment

to Modern Orthodox practice without compromising tradition, something she considers unusual. They speak openly in the family about issues that are difficult, and Gila often consults with her father. On the issue of boyfriends, Gila's father has a clear, negative view of teenage boys and their motivations for relationships with their female counterparts, which he has expressed to her and which she has come to accept.

Gila: When I had a boyfriend he [my father] told me. He sat down and said, "It is your decision and everything but let me tell you what I know." And then he went into a whole thing like "boys...there is no love at this age – like you don't know what you are talking about!" And he also said that boys at this age really like girls and everything but when they grow up and look for marriage they don't look at these girls. 'Cause boys they go on with life and they don't want girls who are like used, but girls often are left stuck there.

Gila's father is not the only one who expresses concern about teenage boys in areas of sexuality and relationship. Other participants also had similar ideas about teenage boys and their interest and fascination with sexuality.

Researcher: Are boys different from girls?

Sarah: Of course, boys see more sex movies. Because I think about them that way, that's how I perceive whatever it is they are doing. Perhaps it's not right, but I think it's good to look at things that way.

Participants do not have appropriate forums for discussing teenage sexuality about both boys and girls. For example no one discusses what might be appropriate expectations to have of each other in friendly or romantic interactions with each other. Therefore participants often formulate their opinions based on misinformation and stereotypes that are not necessarily accurate. The image of boys they present is a skewed view of males.

Holding Back

Participants in general express awareness of the difficulty to control sexual desire. Participants were sensitive to the possibility that their male counterparts would often be struggling to contend with themselves in this area. They are, for the most part, sympathetic, expressing understanding of the difficulty boys may experience in maintaining full commitment to Jewish law, which they understand as providing a challenge for them.

Tali: It is really hard to be *shomer*. For boys – every touch arouses them. At first you don't realize what it's doing, you only realize later.

Tali assumes a correlation between boys who choose to learn extra Torah independent of any school requirements, and others. She places the Torah learners in a different category from those who are not. She assumes that those who choose to learn Torah independently are also more committed to caring about being *shomer negiyah*.

Researcher: How do you think religious boys who are your age struggle with the expectations of Jewish law?

Tali: If it is serious boys who learn Torah, they are more likely to be *shomer*. There are some boys who are not serious at all, they are less likely to be *shomer* and they are not particularly interested. They do what they want. Each person struggles according to who they are. In general – boys are not so careful to be *shomer*. Usually, the boys are more careless with their commitment to the commandments. They become more attached to girls and the Jewish law does not interest them so much.

Tali feels that when boys commit to being *shomer negiyah*, a commitment which participants view as being more difficult for males than for females, they draw on their girlfriends' support in maintaining this commitment.

Tali: It depends. If the boy is really strong religiously and wants to be *shomer negiyah* himself, and for boys it is harder, so then it will influence more. He says, "You must keep [the laws of *shemirat negiyah*] because if you keep them, that will help me keep them." But if the boy is less religious and learns less from it, he doesn't keep, and then I also don't keep.

She sees this shared model as the most likely model for success. In her perception, it is the male stance regarding *shemirat negiyah* that bears more significant weight in this area of relationship, and will usually determine the level of commitment in the relationship. The girl tends to follow her boyfriend's lead.

Summary

The pre-interviews provided a rich array of information about Israeli Modern Orthodox teenage girls' knowledge and attitudes towards issues of sexuality. They reported few classes on

topics of sexuality or relationships and expressed interest in being offered more. They felt that while many Modern Orthodox teenagers do have some knowledge of Jewish laws relating to these issues such as *shemirat negiyah* for example, they did not remember formal classes on the topic and were interested in learning more. The two central sources of information and advice were mothers and friends. Participants were more likely to consult with mothers when seeking information. The domain of relationships between the sexes was generally reserved for friends. Participants struggled to balance their exposure to secular culture with their traditional values, finding themselves influenced by movies and the ways relationships and lifestyles were portrayed in them. Participants perceived their male peers to be struggling with issues of sexuality and less in need of an emotional connection than girls. They perceived them as being not so knowledgeable about girls and their sexuality or about Jewish laws relating to sexuality and relationships such as *shemirat negiyah*.

Participants were also offered the opportunity to suggest topics in the areas of “Life Values and Intimacy” they would be interested in learning. This was in line with the approach championed by Fine & McLelland (2006) to view participants in a qualitative study as the true experts and partners in identifying their needs in this area. The most popular topics requested by students were sexual harassment and self -help, *shemirat negiyah* and modesty.

The Challenge of Transmitting Tradition

A number of issues emerged in the pre-interviews as being a source of conflict for the participants, who want to maintain commitment to their traditions at the same time as they are drawn to the possibilities presented by the modern, majority culture. In this section, the central areas which emerged as being a source of challenge to participants will be discussed. These include modesty, as well as relationships between boys and girls in general and the physical aspects of a relationship in particular. Through exploration of these topics, questions also arose regarding participants’ relationship to Jewish law in general.

Tzniut

Religious education for females emphasizes *Tzniut*, the Jewish term for modesty. Modesty is a religious concept that encourages a respect of one’s innate spirituality through the covering of the body. With the progressive erosion of the most basic standards of modesty in mainstream secular culture, there is an effort to intensify education to modesty from within the tradition. While the concept theoretically addresses issues much broader than clothing, it finds expression in practice in most Orthodox girls’ schools in a dress code. Modern Orthodox Jews

value the demands of modesty, yet are wary of being too repressive. Participants in this study live in this tension.

Often a source of friction between administration and students, standards of modesty based on Jewish law set an expectation entirely different from those of modern dress. These standards, implemented in most religious girl's schools, require skirts to the knees, no pants unless under skirts, and shirts with sleeves to the elbow. Students often do not identify, or want to comply, with the standards schools require and do not view them as reflecting the range of possibilities that Jewish law permits in this area. At Ulpanat Bina, a recent development was the introduction of a uniform shirt. Many students mention this new addition to school policy as being an irksome imposition which simply increased tensions without addressing the underlying issue of modesty.

“Stuck on the Small Things”

I asked participants what they remembered being taught about modesty in their elementary schools. I was particularly interested in the response of those who attended a school known to focus heavily on issues of modesty, like Rivka.

Researcher: Did they talk about modesty [in elementary school]?

Rivka: Yes, all the time. It was in order to tell girls to dress modestly, it was more in order to preach to them about their clothing...They would talk to us a lot about it. I don't exactly remember. There were plenty of rules relating to modesty: No nail polish, no short skirts, no flip flops, they would talk to us a lot.

Researcher: Did they explain why it's forbidden?

Rivka: We looked at the halakhic side of it. Then they said that these were the rules of school and students must follow them. They bring us Jewish law sheets every morning, when we learn morning Jewish law. For a few months we learned about this topic and they explained us the laws and when a girl came immodestly dressed, they didn't explain her anything but simply told her that she had to go and change because that's the school policy and that's how students are supposed to dress.

Researcher: How did girls react to these rules?

Rivka: Everyone was pretty annoyed about them. There are various types of girls: There are those who simply accept the rules, because that is what they have been educated to do from home. There are those who were not expected to dress according to those rules at home and they were much more opposed to it all.

Rivka experienced education regarding modesty to be a form of preaching, aimed at persuading girls to dress in compliance with school policies. She was the only participant to identify formal learning of Jewish law as a component of education towards modesty. However, she implies that the laws learned do not always support the expectations of the school, whose rules extended beyond areas usually covered by Jewish law such as flip flops and nail polish for example. The learning of sources did not seem to include rationale and ultimately Rivka feels that teachers instructed students to change based on standards not necessarily delineated in Jewish law.

A common theme emerging from participants who attended this day school was anger at the amount of teacher attention dedicated to the topic.

Sarah: In general with this whole issue of modesty, I don't really agree with their approach [the elementary school administration]. They get extremely stuck on the small things...it ends up making everyone anti...as soon as you leave school, you take off your skirt. As soon as you leave school – you take off your sweater. And it's really all in rebellion. If they weren't so involved with it and just gave flexible boundaries, then...

The ongoing chorus of educators and administrators on the topic does not seem to be successful. Sarah suggests that the over-involvement in the details on the part of the school she attended simply elicited a reactionary response. Under duress, students succumb to teacher demands during school hours but rush to free themselves of the burdensome extra layers as soon as they are off campus. This educational approach does not sufficiently nurture an understanding or acceptance of the deeper concepts that illuminate modesty. To the contrary, modesty becomes oppressive and is rejected.

“Even Seventeen Thousand Lectures Will Not Help”

Participants offered various responses concerning the role of the school in educating to modesty. There are those who feel that it is not possible to address the topic in a manner that could satisfy students. Tali suggests a status quo approach.

Tali: From the student's perspective it's: I'm doing what I'm doing and no comments please. If they start teaching the topic, all sorts of questions will arise. No one wants to change what they are doing. Girls are happy with where they are at.

Students are not looking to change their practices and are not interested in school involvement in these areas. She therefore recommends that modesty should not be addressed because she cannot conceive of any possible positive outcome. Yael, on the other hand, thinks that modesty should be broached in a carefully measured way:

Yael: Yes, perhaps they are even obligated, at the stage when it starts to occupy our thinking. But there should not be a weekly class about it. They should not make a big deal of it. Girls will start asking – what do they want of me, and will want to switch out of the school because the framework is too restrictive. It's your choice – what you can and cannot do, that's also how it was with sleeve length. Whoever chooses to be more careful – is more careful, and whoever isn't – even seventeen thousand lectures will not help.

Yael offers a number of insights. School should provide classes about modesty and sexuality and relationships because students are currently curious about them and therefore open to being educated. However, not too many classes should be offered as it might be counterproductive and intimidate students to the extent that they may consider the school framework too stifling. While this prediction seems extreme, it offers insight into the premium Yael places on independent decision making. She is unequivocal in supporting the notion that students must take the knowledge they are offered and make decisions for themselves. She implies the lack of a binding standard and exhibits a philosophy echoed by many participants: some education about modesty should be offered but, ultimately, students must be free to make choices for themselves, even while in school.

Males Teaching Modesty to Girls

Modesty is generally a topic taught by female teachers to females, as it is viewed as a woman's domain. An unusual approach to modesty education was taken by one elementary school, wherein a rabbi presented a series of sessions for its graduating eighth grade students. The motivation for the school's approach seems to have stemmed from a wish to introduce preteens to a male perspective on how males are affected by females. Judy is not troubled by having had a male teacher teach about modesty.

Judy: Actually, I think it was smart, in a way very smart because a woman can always say you can't do that and you can't do that but they don't really know what goes through the head. Here he was also a teacher for younger boys and he talked to them so he knew exactly what was going through their heads, so of

course it's going to bring us to an uncomfortable situation but I do think it is smart to know what the other side is feeling.

Judy maturely analyzes the approach, seeing the advantages of learning from a male perspective. In contrast to Judy, a number of participants described sessions on retreats about the topic of modesty that were delivered by male teachers or rabbis as a source of discomfort. For others, the opinions offered in some sessions were extreme and uncompromising, particularly in areas of male-female interactions, and participants tended to withdraw and reject the opinions presented as being irrelevant to their lifestyles.

Arielle: I don't turn to anyone. Last year we had a workshop and we spent time talking to the counselor. His opinion was that it is forbidden to do anything. In his opinion you couldn't even meet boys at all. I don't ask questions, I don't go and ask people questions.

When girls in Ulpanat Bina questioned the practice of men teaching about modesty to teenage girls, administrators explained that since modesty is based in Jewish law, a domain traditionally taught by men to both sexes, men could, in fact, teach females about modesty. For some participants, this approach seemed intrinsically immodest.⁸

“The Whole World Wears It One Way and We Have to Do It the Other Way”

Participants expressed modesty to be a particular challenge when shopping for clothes. When membership in both communities is mutually exclusive, for example when current fashions are such that one cannot wear them and observe Jewish law, participants have difficulty shopping:

Researcher: What's the nature of the difficulty?

Ariella: One can't find clothes and it's impossible to be fashionable.

Ariella expresses the frustration of the shopping experience. She cannot find clothing and being fashionable is a challenge. For many teenagers, being placed outside the realm of being fashionable is untenable, constricting a highly significant expression of self as defined by the majority culture. Judy speaks for many of her peers.

⁸ A story regarding modesty is related about Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, the philosophical leader of Modern Orthodoxy. A rabbi working for a religious organization under Rabbi Soloveitchik's supervision consulted with Rav Soloveitchik because he and his fellow colleagues were concerned that the length of skirts his secretary wore were far shorter than appropriate. Rabbi Soloveitchik responded that there was nothing less modest than the two rabbis talking about whether the length of this particular woman's skirts was modest or not.

Judy: It's a struggle. The winter is fine, but the summer – I go shopping so many times with my mother and there is nothing to do. I hate wearing two shirts [because one is too tight or has sleeves that are too short], it bothers me so much it's hot and it's just a big struggle. And my mother is like, "maybe we could sew something on," but it's a really big struggle. The whole world wears it one way, and we have to do it the other way.

Judy articulates issues of identity that arise when dealing with issues of modesty. While "the whole world" is able to express itself in a particular way, Modern Orthodox teenagers cannot. This struggle of being concurrently same and different is a core issue that surfaces throughout the interviews in response to different questions and places the Modern Orthodox teenage community in line with other traditional minority groups, which report similar frustrations (Halstead, 1997; Aida, 2003).

Teenagers generally care deeply about their outward appearance. They are hypersensitive to the changes in their bodies and deeply aware of the nuances of dress and the image they project. Even those committed to the system of Jewish law struggle:

Arielle: It's hard. Particularly boy-girl issues. And modesty. You see alternatives. And you don't want to remain in the religious bubble. I like being religious because I believe in it. But perhaps we could step out a little, expand a little more...

Despite her strong commitment to religion, Arielle feels stifled. Being part of a traditional community within a majority culture that offers a much broader range of norms can engender this sense of being restricted, or even trapped. For some, however, there is a pride in this difference that can serve to strengthen a teenager's resolve.

Judy: In a way, actually, when I go to America with all those girls with the mini-skirts and so open [necklines], I feel good about myself, like, "Wow look at me, I'm like in a whole room everybody with short, short skirts or pants at least I feel like OK, I'm protecting myself" – it's a good feeling!

Judy's sense of satisfaction reflects the triumph of successful minority education to a true sense of conviction to its own standards. Judy, despite her personal struggle with modesty, feels confirmed in the standards of her tradition when she finds herself in the world of the majority culture. While the majority culture appears attractive from within the constraints imposed by her

tradition, entering a space filled by the norms of the majority culture changes Judy's perspective and enables her to take pride in her appearance.

Being "Shomer"

Another challenge that Modern Orthodox teenagers face as partners in boyfriend-girlfriend relationships relates to the physical interactions between the sexes. In the Modern Orthodox world, in which boys and girls grow up together and are comfortable in each others' company, adhering to norms permissible by Jewish law concerning contact between the sexes can be difficult.

Many of the participants interviewed struggle with the issue of *shemirat negiyah*. *Shemirat negiyah*, or "being *shomer*," is the term used to describe the observance of the Jewish laws forbidding physical touching between the sexes. This terminology, which does not appear in the halakhic literature, seems to have originated from American teenagers and has been adopted by the Israeli teen population as well⁹.

According to Jewish law, men and women who are not married must refrain from any physical contact. Living in the modern world in which touch between the sexes is commonplace (as in shaking hands), the manner in which participants deal with this conflict of standards underscores the challenge of being both modern and Orthodox.

Participants' Definitions of Being "Shomer"

All participants express some awareness of *shemirat negiyah* however definitions of the concept varied among participants. Some define *shemirat negiyah* as having no physical contact whatsoever with boys. They identify themselves as "not *shomer*" if they permit themselves casual, physical interaction with the opposite sex like handshakes and high-fives. Even though they identified themselves as "not *shomer*", many of these participants would not consider being involved in an intimate relationship with a boy.

Researcher: Do you believe in it [*shemirat negiyah*], do you think it is right?

Rotem: I am not *shomeret negiyah*...I do not come over to a guy and touch him purposely. Sometimes we just high-five...I don't come over to a guy and fall all over him, just high-fives.

⁹ In a search of responsa literature through the 20th century the term does not appear at all. It has no halakhic significance whatsoever, but appears to have developed among American Jewish teenagers, probably sometime in the 70's or early 80's. (Response to Lookjed search – <http://www.lookstein.org/lookjed/list>). Recently, it began to appear in print in books of general Jewish interest (for example *The Magic Touch* by Manolson, 1992), but not yet in actual halakhic literature. Today, it appears in some informal halakhic sources such as internet responsa literature (see for example <http://www.kipa.co.il/ask/>)

Others, while committed to *shemirat negiyah*, will receive high-fives and handshakes even though they may not initiate them.

Researcher: What is *shomer negiyah* for you?

Ariella: If someone high-fives me, or touches me I'm not going to make a big deal out of that because I am *shomer negiyah* but in a relationship it's a little different...I read the book *The Magic Touch*¹⁰ and that is the basis for my approach.

Judy complains that information from school or parents about *shemirat negiyah*, and its parameters were not at all clear. They had heard of the concept and knew that it governed physical interactions between males and females, but they had little knowledge of the details. Few participants remember having any formal lessons on the topic. Their knowledge, they said, stems from passing mention of the issue, or alternatively from friends. Generally the concept of *shemirat negiyah* was known, although observed at varying levels.

Judy: Yeah, the whole *shomer negiyah* thing is really complicated, it's hard. Like, "I'm *shomer negiyah*, Oh, now I'm not." OK next week, "Oh I'm *shomer negiyah*, Oh now I'm not." I had a friend whose father said you don't have to be *shomer negiyah* and then this other friend is like, "what are you talking about, it's in the Jewish law!" There are so many things going around nowadays with *shomer negiyah*, nobody knows exactly what it is and what's really true about it.

Judy explains that because no explicit education is offered about this topic, multiple opinions abound. Confusion is commonplace. Other participants echo her complaint.

Researcher: Do you learn about the expectations of Jewish law in areas of male-female interactions?

Tali: No.

Researcher: How do you understand the expectations of Jewish law in these areas?

Tali: I don't know what they are.

¹⁰ *The Magic Touch* by Manolson (1992) has become the popular Orthodox text explicating the value of saving physical contact for marriage. It has been translated into Hebrew (1997) and was referred to by a number of participants.

Tali has no recollection of learning about these Jewish laws and therefore no knowledge to share. While she has not been provided with classes on the topic, Ayelet has found a way to acquire some information.

Ayelet: We were just talking about how they don't explain to us at all. Maybe if we ask our home room teacher maybe we'll have a conversation about it. But they don't explain to us, like why, so that's one of the reasons the girls are not so careful about these things because they just don't know why.

Ayelet's experience is that teachers will at best respond to a students' request for a discussion of the subject, but will rarely offer an explanation. Perhaps as a result of this lack of attention to the topic, participants are left to formulate decisions and conclusions for themselves.

Nomi: But like *shomer negiyah*? I think it's up to the girl. It's her beliefs.

Nomi's response reflects the attitude a number of participants offer with regards to *shemirat negiyah* and some aspects of modesty. Her conclusion seems to emerge from her experience that the school educates about relevant, practical Jewish law and if it is not taught, it must be of an optional nature.

Are You "Shomer"?

Participants described a range of sexual activity for themselves and their peers. About half of the participants were fully *shomer negiyah*, defined as having no physical contact with boys other than perhaps the occasional handshake. A quarter of the participants was comfortable with high fiving and hugging their male friends but would not consider any sexual intimacy in a relationship with boys. The remaining quarter of the participants allowed themselves varying degrees of casual intimacy and sexual intimacy with their friends and boyfriends. They chose to define sexual boundaries for themselves independent of *shemirat negiyah*, but generally remained within the range of intimate touching that did not go beyond heavy petting. However, a couple of participants alluded to friends they were concerned about.

Ariella: Just if we held hands it felt wrong. There's no point. We decided that if we can't manage then we won't be together 'cause it's stupid. I don't want to be like so many of my friends who do not such good stuff.

It was unclear what "not such good stuff" entailed.

“I Think They Are Afraid”

About half the participants express a deep frustration about the lack of explanations for *shemirat negiyah*.

Ariella: It's like any set of rules. Nobody explains why. It is simply forbidden, forbidden, forbidden. And there is no explanation as to why. It is important to explain to people – they need to know why!

Ariella expresses the dissatisfaction manifest in many interviews. Participants and, in their opinion, modern teenagers in general, are not satisfied by simply being informed that something is forbidden. They expect a more sophisticated approach to complex topics. Despite *shemirat negiyah* being perhaps one of the most significant religious struggles in young peoples' lives, teachers often avoid addressing the topic seriously, neither initiating discussion themselves nor responding sufficiently to student requests. Gila, a thoughtful, and impassioned young lady identifies teachers' hesitations as stemming from fear:

Gila: Yeah, the teachers like, I don't know why but every time we get to *shemirat negiyah* they are like: “This is a different story.” Why? But if you don't talk about it how are we supposed to know?...Girls don't think it is a ***halakhah*** [Gila's emphasis]. They think *shemirat negiyah*, OK, they know that they can't have sex but that's the only thing that holds them back... so why shouldn't they do it? But if they thought there were other things [they couldn't do] then maybe they wouldn't come so close to it. But they are only holding back from that because that's the only thing they think is forbidden. If they thought they had to be *shomer negiyah* so they would go a little further maybe, but if they think the only thing forbidden is that [sex], then they'll come very close to it... I think they [the teachers] are afraid from it 'cause girls react really strongly and say “What, what do you mean, we can't do this, it is part of our lives.” So it's easier to skip the story.

Gila is troubled by the lack of forthright education on the topic. Her perception of her teacher as hesitant to teach *shemirat negiyah* for fear of imposing Jewish law on students in areas they recognize as being a source of religious conflict can be cause for concern. Most religious high schools view Jewish law as the backbone of religious practice and its transmission as a central component of their educational responsibility. This is explicitly stated in the mission statement of Ulpanat Bina. Yet Gila's assessment is confirmed by some teachers in Samet's (2005) study of Family Life educators in the Israeli Modern Orthodox community. The kind of perceived fear

Gila identifies must inevitably raise questions for the students themselves as to the necessity of commitment to laws that teachers are afraid to teach.

Why Be “Shomer?”

Despite the lack of formal education and the apparent confusion surrounding the details of *shemirat negiyah* reported above, many participants were able to offer reasons for the prohibition. A few have formulated hypotheses and conclusions in these areas without adult input. Others have absorbed ideas in an informal manner. While some reasons offered are fear based, others reflect the viewpoint that being *shomer* empowers women to make thoughtful choices and enables them to defer sexual relations until marriage.

A Source of Self Respect as Well as Respect from Others

Participants offered a range of motivations for being *shomer*. The simplest, biologically based understanding of the prohibition is offered by Yael:

Yael: It's not good to touch boys because they are teenagers and they have hormones and all those kinds of things.

Yael explains that the impact of hormonal development on teenage boys makes *shemirat negiyah* a challenge as well as a wise law. This is confirmed by Shirel:

Shirel: *Shemirat negiyah* is so that you don't end up doing more things.

These participants are aware that teenagers can easily be drawn into being more sexually active than they themselves consider appropriate. *Shemirat negiyah*, protects them. In fact, a number of participants understand *shemirat negiyah* as bringing them respect as well as protection.

Shai: Most boys I know are not *shomer negiyah*, but they do respect girls who are.

Ayelet extends the respect beyond the opposite sex to being an expression of self respect as well:

Ayelet: They respect you a lot more if you are *shomer* – you respect yourself, they respect you. I think all the Jewish law, most things that the Jewish law says are true... You don't want to just randomly make out with every person you see and do whatever you want, then like regret it after. You know, like you also get a bad name and then no one is going to want to marry you after.

Ayelet incorporates prudence in her analysis as well as a sense of pride in being strongly normed. Prudence occurs in the responses of about a quarter of the participants as a motivating factor for *shemirat negiyah*. Not being *shomer negiyah* can easily lead to personal regret as well as being blacklisted as a potential marriage partner. A few participants offer a sense of being tarnished or spoiled for the future as an understanding of the need for *shemirat negiyah*.

Save It for the Wedding

Some participants had accepted the norm that the first kiss, indeed, the first touch, should be with the man one marries on one's wedding day. This was the most common reason offered for *shemirat negiyah*:

Channa: I am taking care of myself. I don't let anyone and everyone to do what he wants. I am saved for my husband.

Maayan has a boyfriend and candidly presents the complex struggle of a teenager committed to Jewish law but torn by her natural desire for a physical relationship.

Maayan: I am one of those people who know that if I touch him, I will be plagued by a guilty conscience. I will go home and I will not stop thinking about it, not because it was something good, but because it's not right for it to be right now. It ought to be after I get married, with whoever is the right one. If it's with him, that would be Thank God— great! If it's not with him, I will only be pleased that I did not touch him. Because the moment it happens with my real husband, I will also be thinking about him, he will be in my head. I don't need that. That is in principle what keeps me strong.

It takes significant strength to be involved in a long-term romantic relationship with no physical component. Maayan describes the source of her strength as anticipated guilt as well as pride in the commitment to marry someone without carrying the image of a previous physical relationship with her. A number of participants offer similar sentiments. About half the participants maintain, sometimes with embarrassment, a romantic vision of a first kiss with the person they marry. This vision, a common notion in fairy tales, reflects adherence to traditional values despite the contrary approach adopted by most of the movies participants watch which promote sexual activity early in a relationship. This idea was best expressed by Judy, the third daughter in a family of girls, the oldest of whom, was marrying her high-school sweetheart the week of our interview. Judy's parents hold their daughters to a high religious standard. They

expect them to be fully committed to their own level of religious practice, which they transmit uncompromisingly, but with warmth and understanding.

Judy: I think it's really beautiful to have your kiss, your first kiss, the real thing to be with your husband – the person you want to be with your whole life. I think that's so beautiful [slightly embarrassed laugh]. Saving yourself for the person you love not like a fling or a person you like now, who knows what's going to be later. Oh back then we were in love. This is the person I want to be with for the rest of my life, this is the person I want to share my first wonderful moment with – so it helps me to listen to the “don't do that, don't do that.”

“First of All, It's Jewish Law”

In summary, participants were able to offer a number of reasons for *shemirat negiyah*. While some of them were based in the present in the form of greater respect and self-respect, most reasons spoke to the future. Only one participant offered the following:

Shai: I think *shemirat negiyah* is important. First of all, it's the *Halakhab*. Second of all – it's not for no reason, it makes sense. Save it for the wedding, it is better that way.

The idea that Jewish law is a guiding principle and was the primary reason for keeping these rules was offered only by Shai, although that sentiment can be interpreted from the words of Gila and Ayelet. As the interviews proceeded, a broader question emerged from participants' responses with regards the centrality of Jewish law in general and commitment to it among the participant population.

“We Should Never Have Gotten Involved in a Relationship”

Maayan is a sincere teenager, committed to Jewish law. She speaks admiringly of the Rabbis¹¹ and their wisdom in establishing these laws. She expresses understanding of the need for such laws, despite her struggle with them. She started dating a boy who lived in her village in the ninth grade. At first, the couple had kept their relationship secret from their parents for fear they would insist on separating them. The relationship became intense and Maayan's parents became aware of it. While they encouraged the couple to break up, they did not insist on it.

¹¹ The Rabbis, refers to the sages of the Talmud who established Rabbinic law. Authority to adapt Rabbinic law when there are new developments and changes in society is placed in the hands of the Rabbinic leaders of each generation.

Despite the fact that they saw each other infrequently (Maayan's boyfriend lived in a school dormitory and only came home every few weeks), the issue of being *shomer* was a difficult one.

Maayan: It comes up a lot [the question of *shemirat negiyah*]. It usually comes up when one of us is feeling weak and saying that we don't have to bother with *shemirat negiyah*. Sometimes it's him and sometimes it's me. I know that I talk a lot and I don't have the strength, I know it's forbidden. I know that it has to be the real thing in order to do it. I know that the whole *shemirat negiyah* issue is so hard for me, sometimes you just want it so badly, but it is forbidden. We talk about it quite a bit together. He also has moments of weakness in these areas. He says: "OK, we will only hold hands." It's fun to think about just being able to do this. But it's running away from the issue and we both said we know that we are fooling ourselves. It will start here and end there. Better not to get to that. We have often told each other that it's a shame we did not just become involved with each other later, when we're older. It would have saved a lot of difficulties.

Maayan is torn between her desires and a commitment to Jewish law. She does not relieve this tension by creating arguments that question her obligation to Jewish law as did other participants. She expresses no anger, demonstrates no spirit of rebellion. Her convictions support the standard of Jewish law and she is in agreement for the need for those standards "...we know that we are fooling ourselves. It will start here and end there. Better not to get to that." They adhere to the standards because they believe it will protect them against sexual activity that is "there," going too far. Maayan and her boyfriend "own" the struggle. Maayan does not frame the struggle in the passive whereby outside forces "sometimes our passions overwhelm us" but rather in an active voice "one of us is feeling weak." Although her recommendation is that they should not have become involved with each other, she is not considering breaking up but hopes to continue to strengthen each other's resolve.

Maayan provides further insight into her teenage struggle with *shemirat negiyah* in the post-intervention interview. From the outset she seemed to have something she wanted to share.

Researcher: How do you understand the expectations of Jewish law regarding behavior between the sexes?

Maayan: I know the Jewish law is right, I can tell you that I have pretty much stopped with this. But I know that it is really smart, and that brilliant people are behind these laws. The restrictions are really wise.

Researcher: What do you mean you have stopped?

Maayan: I, well, I told you that I have a boyfriend and we stopped [being shomer] two weeks ago.

Researcher: So you really understand?

Maayan: That's what I was saying about the movie [*B'nogeyah Eleinu*]. It was as if they decided and that was it! It is so not like that. You come to a conclusion and then you change your mind because it is just too hard and you discuss it all the time. It is really not the way it was shown in the movie that you just decide and that is it...There are those who from the outset don't get involved [in a relationship]. In my opinion, that is the best solution. I told my friends that one doesn't need a boyfriend. I personally do not have the right to say anything. If I tell someone that it is not a good idea to have a boyfriend, she'll say, "you yourself have a boyfriend." I still think it would have been better if I would have a boyfriend at a much later stage.

Maayan and her boyfriend provide an important test case of a young Modern Orthodox couple, strongly committed to Jewish law but unable to live up to the commitment. She makes no attempt to justify her actions but rather in fact confirms the wisdom of the Rabbis. "But I know that it is really smart, and that brilliant people are behind these laws. The restrictions are really wise." It is exactly this attitude which sets her apart from many other Modern Orthodox teenagers who reject the premise of *shemirat negiyah*. The fact that despite full commitment to Jewish law, Maayan and her boyfriend are unable to adhere to it in this area, indicates the difficulty of the struggle and confirms the approach of some Modern Orthodox Rabbis who recommend that romantic relationships should, if at all possible, be avoided until close to marriage (For example Ariel, 2004; Sherlow, 2003.)

In the pre-interview, while Maayan is still *shomeret negiyah*, she expresses frustration from the lack of support she experiences from some of her classmates. She finds the attitudes she encounters disturbing and a source of unnecessary distress, particularly because she invests such effort in maintaining a standard that she considers basic.

Maayan: We talk a lot among friends about *shemirat negiyah*. Many of the girls in our grade see it as something weird. "Nowadays, nobody is *shomer negiyah*. What do you think you are doing? You are really weird." I had an interaction with a friend who completely disrespected the fact that I was *shomer negiyah* and I was really hurt by her...As it is I have a hard enough time with it, without being

scorned by my friends. Why do they have to make it so much more difficult for me?

Maayan is confused as to why a classmate feels impelled to attack her for her commitment to tradition. She would like to find support from her peers, rather than an undermining of her commitment.

“You Can’t Have that Relationship Without Touching”

Gila, also involved with a boyfriend, experiences the struggle as well. She describes a community that has developed in her neighborhood composed mostly of families educated in the United States. They identify as Modern Orthodox but are, in her opinion, lax in areas of *shmirat negiyah* and modesty. Her disappointment with the lax behavior she sees or hears about from her friends, has led her to adopt an alternative solution to the problem.

Gila: Yeah, that’s exactly why it’s over [our relationship – Gila has ended it] because it’s not right, like you simply don’t connect as deeply. Because I think that you can’t have that relationship without like not touching at all, ‘cause yeah it is part of it. I think it is part of it. With all due respect that you are supposed to relate to the person, it’s sort of how we express everything, and I think, so, so if we can’t do that [have a physical relationship] then I don’t think you should be boyfriends and girlfriends ‘cause it just simply makes no sense... there’s just no point. I mean I’m sure it’s an amazing thing at the right time, but not at our age...Because I have so many friends who have boyfriends and they do so many bad stuff and they regret it afterwards and they know it’s bad for them and they get so upset with themselves and then they do it again “‘cause we were together and we couldn’t help it.”

Gila has come to an understanding that being in a relationship without the possibility of physical contact is untenable since a physical relationship is a necessary component of any serious romantic relationship. She derives further support for her decision by considering the experiences of her friends that she has witnessed. Watching many of them often break personal boundaries within a relationship and behave in a manner they later regret, Gila has decided to break up with her boyfriend. She is unequivocally of the opinion that at her age, it is impossible to be seriously involved romantically and stay committed to Jewish law.

Marching to My Own Drum

Many teenagers in the Modern Orthodox community understand *shemirat negiyah* to be optional, similar to a *minhag*, a custom or practice that some people keep and others do not. About a quarter of the participants fit into this category, developing a personal set of standards for physical contact in their relationships, independent of the Jewish law.

Yael: In my opinion, it is your choice as to whether you want to touch or not. It is not your choice whether you want to keep Shabbat, because you are part of a certain framework. But *shemirat negiyah* – that is more up to you than keeping Shabbat or praying three times a day. There are plenty of people who understand it as being my personal choice.

This idea was expressed by various participants in slightly different ways. For example,

Nomi: But like *shomer negiyah* I think it's up to the girl, it's her beliefs.

Yael differentiates between keeping Shabbat and praying three times a day on the one hand and the Jewish laws of touching on the other. The latter are placed outside the parameters of obligation and within the area of personal choice, perhaps because they are in the personal, not public sphere, a secular, modern, Western notion. Yael seems to be describing a community standard.

Maya thinks that a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship is unnecessary in younger grades and is often simply a status symbol. Asked about tenth grade, Maya suggests that it is a good age for being in a relationship, although she recommends that students be careful “not to go too far.” In this context, she recommends that while *shemirat negiyah* was not necessary, a clear boundary for physical interactions should be established.

Maya: Each person has to define his own personal boundaries. Someone who is not *shomeret negiyah* should delineate the boundaries for herself. She needs to decide ahead of time. Because if you do not think ahead, you will end up letting a boy hug you, if that's what you want. Each girl with her own boundaries.

Amit is a passionate, independent thinker who has strong, clearly conceived opinions which have led her to develop her own approach to Jewish law. While identifying herself as religious, she is offended by some of the religious communal structures, which she finds to be oppressive. For example, Amit left the more popular local religious youth group because she found the atmosphere stifling. She felt that the over-involvement in supervising participation in

prayer services, skirt length, and the uniform was too rigid. Amit joined an alternative youth group whose focus is on developing a deeper love of the land of Israel and on getting to know and appreciate nature. While it is also a religious framework, it is an open and non-judgmental one, accepting of many different levels of religious commitment and practice, and in which religious practice is less intense. Amit has re-evaluated some of her religious practice as a result of belonging to this group.

Amit: Once there was actually a period when I was *shomer negiyah* and then I understood that I don't really need it. It doesn't bother me, but when my whole group of friends, in pictures, put their arms around each other and I'm the only one standing on the side looking, I don't need it [*shemirat negiyah*] because I have my own boundaries. I told myself that I do not have to be but I wouldn't do anything sexual at the moment. It does not interest me and I will not reach those kinds of places. I have boundaries even though I am not *shomeret negiyah*. Hugs in pictures yes, but not more than that. They [my friends] also know that. I have boundaries even though I am not *shomeret negiyah*. I have told them and it is already quite clear, Thank God.

It is noteworthy that Amit's intuitive personal decisions have led her to allow social touching but draw the line at any form of sexual touching. This reflects a distinction also delineated within Jewish law.

Although some participants formulated boundaries for themselves, most were aware of the important function Jewish law plays in helping maintain commitment to standards of sexual abstinence.

Judy: I guess it's complicated. Like let's say for me I wouldn't want to do anything with a guy. Like I understand you're with a guy, you really like him, like "what's wrong with just a kiss?" Then, "oh hey let's just shake hands you know how are you doing?" I guess if you are strong and you know yourself really well, then maybe shaking hands but before you know it you're just hugging and then like just a peck on the cheek and – it just gets more and more.

Her position is confirmed by participants who have been in a relationship with boys. For example:

Researcher: Where is the boundary in boy-girl interactions?

Channa: I don't know. You say to yourself – now I'm going to keep the Jewish law. But OK, so at first you keep everything, and then gradually you say: This and this – I won't bother with.

Researcher: And then how do you define your boundaries?

Channa: Then there are no boundaries. Because as soon as you give up on one thing, you are giving up on everything else too!

Researcher: Do you really think so?

Channa: There are boundaries in order that we protect ourselves and don't get to... But if you give up on one thing, within a day, you are giving up on something else and then something else...

While there are those confident in their ability to establish boundaries, there are many who have been involved in a relationship and whose experience has shown that maintaining a personal standard is a difficult challenge. Tali suggests that the best way to maintain personal boundaries, perhaps halakhic boundaries as well, is in partnership.

Tali: It depends. If the boy is really strong religiously and he himself also wants to be *shomer negiyah*, which is harder for boys, then you [your commitment] will be more effective. It's like saying: "Stay strong, because if you are strong then it will help me stay strong too." But if the boy is less religious and is less interested, and he is not keeping – then I will not keep it [*shemirat negiyah*] either.

Not all participants identify Jewish law as their chosen standard but they do all establish their boundaries relative to it. While many Israeli 15 year olds in the majority culture are thinking about losing their virginity (Shtarkshall et al, 2008), the struggles in the Modern Orthodox community revolve around much less intense levels of sexual intimacy. The above research regarding the transmission of modesty and *shemirat negiyah* highlights a broader question, that of the role of Jewish law in general and its transmission. We will explore this question in the next section.

The Role of Jewish Law

The traditional community seeks continuity by producing a new generation of members who accept upon themselves the norms of the tradition and convey them forward. In previous generations, traditions were transmitted in a mimetic manner, passed on from parents and friends based on conduct regularly observed in the home, on the street, in the synagogue and in the school (Soloveitchik, 1994). However, as Orthodox communities began to feel the influence

of modernity the transmission of tradition became more complex and included an increased role for halakhic texts and formal instruction. The question of how norms are transmitted among the participants was explored.

Commitment to Jewish Law

Ariella offers the position of a participant who uncompromisingly accepts the norms of her tradition:

Ariella: I don't do things... because I am **religious** [emphasis added, Y.D.] and I cannot do it. Because Jewish law says that I must not do it.

Ariella does not search for interpretations of Jewish law because she has accepted it upon herself as a total system. Knowing that it is the Jewish law is reason enough for her to accept the boundaries that come as a consequence of her acceptance. Shai also accepts the system of Jewish law as binding, but differs from Ariella in her approach to acceptance.

Shai: I think *shemirat negiyah* is important. First of all, it's the Jewish law. Second of all – it's not for no reason, it makes sense. Save it for the wedding, it's better that way.

Shai views *shemirat negiyah* as intrinsically important because it is the Jewish law. However, she does not conclude her statement there, but offers additional justification for the practice – “it makes sense.” Shai does not indicate that lack of a satisfactory explication would preclude her practice, and yet she offers a rationale that justifies in her mind the requirements of Jewish law. She expresses awareness that reasons are a valuable component of understanding leading to acceptance.

For some participants, an awareness of the demands of Jewish law did not affect any change in the observance of the laws. This was particularly true in areas of *shemirat negiyah*. In these cases, compliance to Jewish law was not purposeful but occurred because their personal practice for reasons of prudence happened to accord with Jewish law.

Yael: I asked my friend, are you *shomer negiyah* because it is the Jewish law or because you want to save yourself for your wedding? She said – because of her wedding. It's not because of the Jewish law. She didn't really feel connected to the Jewish law.

“Most Just Don’t Contend With It”

The aforementioned participants felt that Jewish law simply was not a central consideration in decisions people made about their behaviors. There were participants who thought this to be true in all areas of halakhic practice, but the more common notion was that boy-girl relations posed a particular challenge.

Researcher: How do religious teenagers your age deal with the Jewish law in these areas?

Yael: Most of them usually don’t take it too seriously, at least from what I see among my friends.

Researcher: How do you understand that?

Yael: They cannot be bothered with it.

Rivka: There are many who do not struggle [with the Jewish law]. They do whatever they feel like. And afterwards they neglect Jewish law, or afterwards they return and try and ignore what they did. But it seems to me that most just don’t struggle with it.

Researcher: How about you?

Rivka: Once I was more connected to Jewish law, I think. In the last few years it has started to become weaker. Once I was much more committed in my decisions.

Researcher: How do you understand the changes?

Rivka: High school...I chose this place [high school] because I thought it would suit me. But, there are plenty of girls here who do things differently and behave differently [from Jewish law]. It affects your behavior in some way.

Emphasizing the “I”

Youth in general, and particularly those of the current generation, are often characterized as self centered and “I” focused, having little regard for an external system of boundaries (Twenge et al, 2008). Maayan identifies this as hampering Modern Orthodox teenagers from observance of Jewish law.

Maayan: In my opinion, I will make a generalization, they [Modern Orthodox teenagers] don’t take it too seriously. The Western world emphasizes the “I”. If I like it and it feels good to me – then it ought to be that way. There is no long term thinking. Often I have caught myself saying: OK, so let me do something

now, and what happens after that really isn't so important. But I know what will happen. I am lying to myself. I am trying to run away from the problem. I am sure plenty of people do that. Right now what I am doing makes me happy, and what happens later doesn't matter. They are aware of what will be, but they just ignore it. It would also be much easier for me to just ignore it, and to just keep going.

The emphasis in the majority culture to choose what feels good has impacted on participants. For some, it encourages a rejection of commitment to any externally imposed standard of religious behavior.

“I Am Not Sure That I Believe”

The Modern Orthodox community views Jewish law as the system that guides the details of daily living. Children growing up within this community gradually develop a relationship with the system, which ideally should evolve into acceptance of its authority. However, this is a complex process with schools playing a partial role (Goldmintz, 1996). A number of participants described a conflicted relationship to Jewish law.

Researcher: How would you define your relationship to Jewish law?

Channa: It is not the best of relationships. If I look at the Jewish law, I am not sure that I believe that everything that is written there is really necessary.

Researcher: So how do you decide what to do and what not to do?

Channa: I do what I feel like doing. I try and make sure to stop myself from going beyond the boundaries. So that I can feel that I have not completely lost my place, but I am not the most....

Researcher: How do you create boundaries for yourself?

Channa: Maybe based on what I see most people that I know doing.

Channa describes the process of making choices as influenced by her preferences, which she limits by observing the norms of the community around her. This finding confirms Green's contention that normation takes place in the community. Channa views her relationship with Jewish law as less than ideal.

Nomi, an outspoken young woman who offers quick judgment on behaviors she deems unacceptable or foolish, expresses a student's version of what is lacking.

Researcher: What would you say about Jewish law? What's your relationship with Jewish law? When you learn Jewish law – that's what you do. Or do you make your own decision?

Nomi: I base it on that, but if I have a problem believing in what I'm learning, I would ask questions about it to see if it's really totally forbidden, or if there are other ways and what not. I usually listen to it, but if I have a problem with it, which I often do, because I see things differently from everyone else and I'm always arguing in Jewish philosophy class because if something is a particular way just because Maimonides [a 12th century scholar] says it, I feel you need a proof, a fact.

Nomi will not accept even Maimonides, a leading authority in Jewish law, unless she understands or is convinced unequivocally that what he says is “fact”. It is not clear what might constitute a fact for Nomi, but she seems to be seeking a rationale that is personally convincing. Barring that, Nomi will hesitate to accept a practice simply because she is told that she must.

Sarah considers herself a family rebel from a young age who finds the impositions of Jewish law to be more oppressive than she is willing to accept. Unsure whether she will remain within the Orthodox community, the interview allows her to introspect and she gradually comes to a realization of her intrinsic commitment, at least at the present time.

Sarah: In general, Jewish law leads me... I don't know... It doesn't mean that I am a non-religious person if I am not *shomeret negiyah*. I simply have not yet found the great, bright light in the Jewish law. There are plenty of things that are really annoying to me and I don't agree with them. I don't break Shabbat, and that is not only out of habit. But I don't take everything so seriously.

Sarah's commitment is partial and guarded. She identifies as a religious person even though she is not fully committed to every practice of Jewish law. She does not view her less punctilious observance of *shemirat negiyah* as a religious statement. It rather reflects the level of commitment she is prepared to assume in areas that she views as either less obligatory or more difficult to accept. Many participants expressed this sentiment.

An important question that emerged was whether this partial acceptance of Jewish law was limited to interactions between the sexes or was a more widespread approach to Jewish law and its practice.

“It’s the Thing That Has the Strongest Pull”

Ariella did not want to be interviewed at first but she agreed to share her experiences on condition that the interview be short. Ariella is a strongly independent, thoughtful young lady who found many of the questions in the interview to be issues she herself was thinking about and her interview was one of the longest. She is active socially, involved in her local youth group, and ideologically committed to the religious way of life. She recognizes that there are difficulties which come with being Modern Orthodox but considers the challenge important for individuals to face and overcome. The daughter of an educator, she has been exposed to discussions on a number of the topics explored.

Researcher: Help me understand how it works: That it’s written about by the rabbis as Jewish law, and lots of people don’t do that – and yet they still are religious?

Ariella: Well, there’s a strong attraction to the opposite sex. With non-religious people it’s much more... they can do everything in a fun way... And we are forbidden to do it. It’s a natural attraction. There are those who are really careful about it. Even the smallest things they think are forbidden. It’s natural that a boy and girl are going to want to touch each other.

Ariella suggests that the difficulty in keeping *shemirat negiyah* stems from a basic natural attraction. Gila concurs.

Researcher: I’m wondering is the area in which people aren’t so serious about keeping Jewish law only boy-girl relationships or they just don’t care about Jewish law at all?

Gila: No. It’s boy-girl relationships.

Researcher: So why is that?

Gila: It’s the thing that has the strongest pull, especially at our age. All our hormones are developing and the girls want a boyfriend and the boys want to have a girl.

Amit also recognizes the pull of desire but views Jewish law as unnecessarily restrictive and considers herself able to set her own boundaries, interacting with boys physically on a minimal level without going any further than that.

Researcher: How do you understand the halakhot [about boy-girl interactions]?

Amit: I see it as something very constricting. One cannot do the most basic things, things which are very good. When there is touch with a boyfriend, basic touch, for example holding hands, it brings you close together and it certainly adds. But Jewish law forbids it totally. On the one hand it allows for getting to know each other better, on a deeper, more internal level, but I think that if we hold hands – nothing will happen. We will still continue to talk and to get to know each other. And as long as our desire does not rule over us, so thank God, it is OK. But Jewish law forbids all touch. I view it as something very constricted, closed and not open, which makes things quite difficult.

While she appreciates the value of a system which emphasizes the non-physical and encourages substantive communication, she considers the boundaries of Jewish law to be too narrow. Amit believes that she can create boundaries and is confident in her ability to maintain a personally defined standard.

Maya has an alternative understanding for the lack of commitment to *shemirat negiyah*. Reflecting a particular understanding of self-esteem issues which play a central role in teenage years, she sees a gender component playing a key role.

Researcher: Why do you think this lack of keeping Jewish law is particularly with male-female relations and not, let's say, keeping kosher or Shabbat?

Maya: If there is a girl who does not have friends or she has friends but she feels rejected, she looks for someone who will tell her that she is beautiful. With other commandments it is not like this. It is not as if you keep kosher, and feel that it is a choice. ...With *shemirat negiyah* you feel like it is your decision. You decide no hugging and no touching, but then at some point it stops being within your control. Later you find yourself in bed with a guy. It is also your own personal feeling of being swept away and playing. You just casually want to flirt a little with a boy.

Maya expresses the idea that females sometimes look to a relationship with males to help them feel better about themselves. She suggests that those who are not popular and lonely are most likely to flirt and seek male attention in order to feel better about themselves. While the relationship may stem from a legitimate psychological need (“she looks for someone who will tell her that she is beautiful”), Maya sees it easily evolving into a physical relationship and even a sexual encounter. This approach differentiates sharply between halakhic issues of sexuality such

as *shemirat negiyah* and other commandments, the practice of which or lack thereof may impact on their religious self-concept but not on their sense of self.

Things Have Changed

A significant factor that complicates transmitting tradition in the areas of sexuality and relationships stems from their being based in an ancient tradition, from a time when the norms of society, particularly with regards to male and female interactions, were markedly different from those of the contemporary world.

Researcher: How do you manage to be religious in these areas?

Channa: Sometimes it's really irritating... When they established the Jewish law, relationships were different. Things have changed. You can't understand nowadays how it's possible to do it. There are some things in which the Jewish law is really not appropriate for nowadays. Sometimes you say to yourself – now I am going to keep the Jewish law. And OK, at the beginning you keep everything, but gradually you say: Well, I won't do this or this.

Channa expresses the frustration that she experiences because the world she inhabits is different from the world in which Jewish law was formed. The norms of behavior between the sexes in the world in general have changed so substantially, that basing behavioral norms in these areas on ancient laws seems outdated. On the other hand, Channa is cognizant of the slippery slope that easily results from a mode of picking and choosing some laws and ignoring others.

Maayan cites the proliferation of explicit talk about sexuality and sexual pleasure on TV, movies, and the internet as adding to the difficulty. Research has shown that movies and television shows are more sexually explicit than they used to be (Kaiser Family Foundation Report, 2005). In addition, public expressions of affection and intimacy are prevalent in society. Modern Orthodox teenagers, exposed to all of this, wonder about possibilities for themselves too.

Maayan: The Western world emphasizes sexuality, boys and girls. It is in almost every movie. And then there's the Jewish law, and there's a clash between them. You try and place yourself on the side of Jewish law, even though I tend to find myself in the middle. It is my aspiration to be on the side of Jewish law. And when I am older, I will have to deal with it. As religious people it is very difficult. This country is also very Western. There are plenty of secular couples and you

feel weird and stuck within Jewish law. There are very few who really keep these laws. In practice, many don't really keep it.

Maayan seems to bracket her adolescent experience and allows herself the freedom to confront the strictures of *shemirat negiyah* "when I am older." Both Maayan and Channa viewed Jewish law as out of step with modernity or the Western world.

Principled Rebellion

Other participants express a more acute frustration with halakhic practice, a rejection completely of community norms or, at the very least, behavioral explorations that test the boundaries of these norms. Some participants described their thoughts about rebellion as reflecting a much broader rejection of those rules and regulations that they found overly constricting.

Amit: I think that the vast majority are rebelling against it [Jewish law]. They do it on purpose, just to try out. There is a small group of individuals who manage to keep everything, but most rebel...it's like a principled rebellion – it's forbidden and I am purposefully going to do it.

Channa: Sometimes it's really irritating... you can get to a point sometimes where you just want to say to heck with it all, I don't care about it anymore, let's just do what we want. Because you want to show that you are not listening to it, and that you are doing whatever you want.

Channa describes her frustrations and the wish to be free of the many rules. Her understanding of her own responses to these strictures reflects a desire to express independence. Amit broadens this understanding to a substantial community of rebels. If, indeed, a percentage of Modern Orthodox teenagers will rebel against strictures imposed on them, perhaps educating to these strictures is counterproductive. Yael advises schools to be circumspect.

Yael: Those who are not *shomer negiyah* is because the more they are told not to do it, the more they feel they have to do it!

Researcher: So should we teach or not teach?

Yael: It is not worth forcing it. There are some people who try and impose it on people. And then they end up doing it on purpose just to show them.

Yael uses the word “forcing.” Participants are unequivocal that any attempt at imposing Jewish law on them would be ineffective. While Modern Orthodox educators are not interested in forcing any behaviors, they are looking to transmit traditions. Teaching to acceptance and commitment in areas of Jewish law in general, and particularly in areas which have potential for rebellion, has become a significant challenge for Modern Orthodox schools. In the next section, we will explore how this challenge expresses itself in our research sample.

Pre-Interviews – Summary

The pre-interviews provided a rich source of information about Modern Orthodox teenage girls and their knowledge and attitudes in areas of sexuality. I found that participants had been given little formal or informal education, either at home or at school on topics of sexuality and relationships. Participants described themselves as being most likely to turn to friends for knowledge and advice, although many did feel that mothers could be turned to for knowledge and information. The peer group was the most significant place to whom participants turned when dealing with issues of relationship, particularly concerning boys. Mothers were rarely confided in about relationships. Participants found that the majority culture, to which they are exposed through TV, movies, internet, Facebook, newspapers as well as billboards on the streets, has a powerful affect on them. Exposure normalized behaviors for them which were not considered appropriate according to Jewish law. In addition they became more conscious of what Jewish law expected them to forego in areas of relationship between the sexes, which sometimes made the stringent expectations of the religion in these areas more contentious. Participants reported knowing little about the way their male counterparts experience the challenge of being Modern Orthodox. They sensed that boys were less emotional and had more difficulty being *shomer negiyah* because it was more difficult for them to give up on the physical component of a relationship.

The pre-interviews also provided information regarding the transmission of traditions to Modern Orthodox teenagers. Participants identified modesty and *shemirat negiyah* as particular areas of conflict for those who cared about the secular, majority culture as well as their traditions. Even participants who identified themselves as firmly entrenched in tradition still found the ideas they were exposed to in the secular world to have an impact on their thinking and commitment. It seems that Jewish law in general, with its stringent expectations with regards to interactions between the sexes in particular, presents a challenge. Many participants are still negotiating their relationship with Jewish law and the expectations of behavior it sets for them.

Post-Interviews: The Experience of the Course

Another main goal of this research was to explore the impact of a course in “Life Values and Intimacy Education” on students. This course had never previously been offered in an Israeli school at the tenth-grade level. I was interested in participants’ reaction to the course as well as in assessing the effect the course had on participants’ knowledge and attitudes in areas of sexuality.

The majority of participants found the course had provided a worthwhile opportunity, offering information and a forum for discussion in areas that required clarification. About a quarter of the participants felt the focus of the course was disappointing, giving them little insight or information. Only one participant felt that the course was unnecessary. All others, whether they participated fully or only partially, actively or passively, had boyfriends or did not have boyfriends, agreed that the course was a worthwhile endeavor and recommended offering it to the incoming tenth-grade class. About half offered suggestions for improvement, while about a quarter of the participants said they were fully satisfied. The range of responses reflected the range of participants, their backgrounds, and their needs in areas of sexuality and intimacy education.

In this section, we will discuss the overall response and impact of the course on participants. In the next section we will focus on two units which many participants highlighted as being particularly significant for them.

Overall Atmosphere

Courses in “Life Values and Intimacy” education are by definition different than most courses offered in a school framework and a different kind of atmosphere than that of a regular classroom is recommended. Participants were asked to comment on the overall atmosphere of the course and their sense of comfort in sharing personal sides of themselves in the classroom.

“I Think It Was Really Important”

The majority of participants responded positively to the course. While not a peak experience for most, it still constituted a welcome new development in the school. The course offered the possibility of addressing significant religious, interpersonal issues within a formal framework that had not existed before. Participants are cognizant and appreciative of that.

Lior is enthusiastic about all aspects of the course. She found the atmosphere conducive to honest discussion, the small class an intimate setting, and the topics addressed to have had a significant impact on her. She feels the impact needs to be absorbed and processed beyond the classroom on an individual level so that she can incorporate the information, experience, and

ideas the class provided into her lifestyle. While not setting her expectations excessively high, she feels that the opportunities for learning and thinking were most useful.

Researcher: How was the course?

Lior: Honestly, it was really fun. At first there were topics which were uncomfortable for the girls to talk about. There were some girls who were not affected. It was fun when there were discussions. When we talked about *shemirat negiyah* it was possible to see it as something quite personal, if it was part of her life or if someone has a boyfriend. And then there were some girls who did not know what we were talking about.

Researcher: The girls who could relate to it – was it a positive experience?

Lior: I think so. There were discussions and questions.

Researcher: Were there girls who were not comfortable?

Lior: When they talked about body parts and explained about boys. I did not see it so much but I think some were uncomfortable.

Researcher: Was it appropriate or was it too much information?

Lior: No, I think it was really important.

Researcher: Was the atmosphere different from other classes in school?

Lior: Yes, we sat in a circle. It was more like a retreat class than a regular school class.

Researcher: Had you hoped that the course would give you more than it did?

Lior: Possibly. I had hoped that the course would give me an ability to know more, to be more certain about what I do... I enjoyed it.

Researcher: Was it a missed opportunity a little?

Lior: It was good, these classes. One can talk about these issues so much. It's never enough, you can talk about it more and more. It was really just an appetizer.

As a result of the unit on sexual abuse one of the participants came to realize that an experience she had a year earlier was actually more serious than she had originally assumed. The course offered her the opportunity to revisit the experience and address it more fully.

Tali: These are topics that we are starting to talk about. All the issues of rape, how to prevent and what to prevent, they gave us tips on how to prevent. I had one experience... My parents didn't know until we talked with the teacher [of the

course]. She said that there were all sorts of ways and types of [sexual abuse] and then I realized that I had been abused.

Among the participants who offered positive feedback, a common theme expressed was appreciation for opening a framework in which issues of this nature were formally addressed. Beyond the content and atmosphere of the class, its very existence for some confirmed their need to converse about these topics.

Shirel: It made me think about things. It was interesting. There were some things I already knew. There were some things that it refreshed for me. And there were some new things. It was very interesting.

Researcher: Was it different than other classes?

Shirel: Yes. It gave me much food for thought.

Researcher: Were you happy to participate?

Shirel: Yes, I enjoyed it.

Researcher: Do you feel like you gained from the class?

Shirel: Yes.

Amit: It was not about things that are usually part of the curriculum in school. It was different. The atmosphere was different. They gave us cake and chocolate milk. There was joking. There was a different atmosphere. It was not something we had learned about up until now.

The course provided a comfortable framework for conducting conversations about sexuality, modesty and relationships. The provision of muffins and chocolate milk added to the caring atmosphere and warm dynamic that the course instructor worked to engender and established a non-school like environment that participants appreciated. Most significantly, the topics addressed were considered relevant and, for the most part, not formally addressed in the school previously.

The Course Was Much More Open

Some participants remember previous classes about anatomy and physiology. They articulate the difference between the approach this course offered and their earlier experiences.

Researcher: What did you think of the class?

Maayan: It brought up questions. One of the girls asked whether we were actually causing them [the boys] to sin. It explained lots of stuff which I did not know,

about female anatomy and development for example. We learned it in sixth grade. Now it was much more open, much more...with details and an opportunity to ask questions and think about it all.

Researcher: Was it different from classes you have had in the past?

Maayan: Yes, they gave us the opportunity to think about it without telling us how to think.

Researcher: Would you do anything differently [in the course?]

Maayan: No, it was really good.

Researcher: Was it different from other classes that you have?

Judy: Yes, we talked about different things. Like nobody ever talks about that. It's always modesty, modesty, modesty – nobody ever talks about guys and girls and the problems... I think that maybe just doing the course earlier would be much better. Like if I hear the course now and I was touching my boyfriend and now I am going to stop touching, like what...I think the education should already start earlier, because the problem already starts, especially since we live in a mixed society.

Participants were pleasantly surprised by the spectrum of answers offered, which did not always attempt to force thinking in a single “correct” direction, but rather encouraged thoughtful deliberation and weighing options as an educational approach. While Jewish law was presented in areas in which it was applicable, it was usually presented after extensive class discussions which were open and non-judgmental. The class provided a different experience from most other classes previously offered in these areas.

The Question Box

Participants who were not comfortable talking or asking questions were pleased with the option offered by the anonymous question box. At the end of every class, all students were handed a slip of paper on which they were invited to ask a question. In order to prevent those with pressing questions from feeling uncomfortable, all students were instructed to write something on their slip of paper. If they had no questions, they were encouraged to offer feedback about how the class was progressing, to draw a picture or to write “no comment.” Since everyone wrote something, those who were genuinely writing questions did not feel uncomfortable or exposed. While there were many participants who did not take advantage of the question box, it provided an additional avenue for asking questions in a safe manner.

Researcher: Did you feel like it was a safe space in which you could be open and honest?

Judy: Yeah, I like how she had us write on pages and that way we could ask what we wanted and she doesn't know who it is and then she would refer to it and respond to it in class.

The following selection of questions and comments from the question box demonstrates a range of issues and expectations which provide insight into their concerns and interests. These questions were received in the first classes and indicate participants' anticipation of the course.

- Thank you!
- I am pleased that a class like this is beginning because they almost do not talk about these issues at all and there are many question marks...
- I am really interested in hearing about modesty and *shemirat negiyah*...
- I am so pleased there is a class like this. I think the topics are very important and I hope they will answer all my questions.
- I am very pleased to have this class...
- I am curious to see how it will be...
- I am really interested in learning about *shemirat negiyah* and modesty.
- It's a good thing you are opening up this topic and not just avoiding it altogether. This is the first class so I don't really have that much to say. But one thing I do want to say: To make a request not to hide anything even if it seems to be really forbidden.

The last statement, phrased as a request, provided information about the education that has been received up until this point. The few classes which had taken place have not been satisfactory in approach and had not offered what was requested here – the suggestion of full, honest answers to questions even when the issues being discussed are complex and address behaviors that might go against Jewish law. The question reflects a real interest in honest conversation on the topic, a hunger for facts which heretofore have been unavailable.

On the other hand, there were a few participants who felt that the course was unnecessary for them. They were satisfied with their knowledge on the topics and saw no value in learning more.

- I feel that I know everything...

- This class seems really, really unnecessary.

The selection of questions provided below which were placed in the question box throughout the course, reflect a range of issues of concern to Modern Orthodox teenage girls. Some are purely physiological, but for the most part they relate to underlying issues of male-female relationships and their ramifications in Jewish law. Many are questions that participants would only consider asking in an anonymous forum.

- What are the views as to advantages/disadvantages according to the Jewish law and not according to the Jewish law regarding boyfriends and girlfriends?
- What exactly are the physical ramifications of sexual hormones on men (mainly) and on women, too?
- I don't understand what the issue is in having a relationship without having to worry about *shemirat negiyah* as long as you just make sure that you don't go too far.
- In principle, I don't believe in having a boyfriend but I am still pleased that we will have this class because there have been plenty of situations when I have not known what to do and I have tons of questions – I hope it will really be helpful.
- I was pleased to hear that the class was less focused on biology because I think we basically all know that...
- What is the relationship between periods and pregnancy – can one always become pregnant?
- What happens to boys emotionally?
- What is the girl's responsibility with regards boys sinning?

The most telling comment was offered in one of the early classes. After this particular class, the teacher left feeling uncertain as to how the course and course materials had been received.

I am not coming to this class with much will, although I am coming with interest even though written clearly across my forehead is “not interested,” and my face reflects indifference and disinterest – it cannot be helped. I have all sorts of rules and regulations when dealing with these areas which feel a little foolish. I know that I will be interested and I will find it important to listen. I hope you will not be insulted by my external indifference – I will be listening from within.

This describes perfectly the internal dialogue that takes place for the student who has been conditioned for so long to be intensely uncomfortable about these topics and openly express disinterest, and yet who is actually also deeply curious and interested in the conversation. It gave the course instructor exactly the encouragement she needed to continue.

Creating a Safe Space

Almost all participants express the feeling that the teacher succeeded in creating an environment that was safe and inviting. Participants felt comfortable asking questions and participating in discussion without fear that they would be judged or condemned. In addition, they are appreciative of the approach offered by the teacher.

Researcher: What could have improved the level of feeling comfortable and safe?

Amit: I was very comfortable.

Researcher: Is there anything that would have made it more comfortable?

Ayelet: No. It was good.

In general, participants found the information to be presented openly and the teacher to be willing to answer questions, either directly or through the question box. Some participants feel that opportunities for discussion were not always provided and that the teacher erred on the side of presenting information rather than allowing discussion, at least in earlier classes. Others feel that there were plenty of opportunities for discussion.

Building Up to Talking About Personal Matters

A number of participants feel that the topics are uncomfortable by definition. With all the good intentions and effort on the part of the teacher, they do not feel it would be possible to create a completely comfortable space. The nature of the topics discussed and the fact that this was the first formal framework in which they were presented left students with a certain unavoidable discomfort.

Tali: I don't like talking about these topics. But, yes, I did talk, but not too much.

Researcher: Is there a way that the class can be presented so that you would be more comfortable talking?

Tali: Actually I was comfortable talking. There was a small circle of girls and nothing was passed on outside of there. And it was comfortable to speak. But the subject is embarrassing by definition, unconnected to the group.

Researcher: Was it different from other classes?

Tali: Yes, it was much more open. Also a small group and we felt as comfortable as it is possible to feel considering the topics.

Researcher: Were you comfortable talking there, was it an open environment?

Yael: Yes, these are my friends.

Researcher: Is there something that would have improved the level of intimacy in the class?

Yael: The topics of male and female anatomy are intimate and a little gross, no matter how they are presented. In the most perfect way, most clean, best possible, it is still a subject that's a little disturbing.

Researcher: Do you think changing the order of the units would make a difference?

Yael: If things are presented gradually, it's certainly better if it's gradual.

Yael agrees that had the unit on male anatomy and physiology, the source of the most discomfort, been offered later in the course, it might have been less uncomfortable. There was a lack of process and build-up before addressing a topic that many girls felt required preparation and adjustment. Reordering the classes might offer a solution, particularly as Lior confirms that time did serve to create more comfort.

Researcher: Did it take time to get comfortable?

Lior: We met every week. There were some topics which were easy to talk about and some that needed time before we could talk about them.

A few participants expressed discomfort at being in the presence of their classmates. Hesitant to share personal issues or ask certain questions in front of their peers, they were happy to participate but chose not to share too much of themselves.

Shai: I could not really open up in front of all the other girls.

Talking With the School Counselor

Although participants generally felt the environment created had been safe and comfortable and that the teacher had done an excellent job of presenting information and discussions in an appropriate and engaging manner despite the inevitable discomfort, a couple of participants expressed discomfort because of the multiple roles the course instructor played in the school. As she was also the school guidance counselor, she encountered students with

learning difficulties, as well as emotional troubles, on an individual basis. For some, this made it impossible to feel comfortable participating actively.

Researcher: Do you usually participate in class?

Ariella: Yeah, but not with those kind of stuff. I'm not going to talk about personal stuff like that with the school counselor.

Researcher: Do you feel that the teacher was totally the wrong person (because she serves as school counselor in the school in addition)?

Ariella: Not totally the wrong person. But she takes people for individual conversations, before that, so girls don't want to speak or anything, so it was weird. If I say something, I wonder if I'm going to be called for a personal conversation about it later.

Researcher: So you didn't feel like it is such a safe place?

Ariella: I didn't say anything.

Researcher: As I said – you did not feel safe.

Ariella: Yeah.

Researcher: Do you think it's better to have a stranger come in and teach it?

Ariella: Yeah, 'cause then you have nothing to do with them; then you can also talk to her about it afterwards.

The suggestion that an outsider be brought in to teach these personal topics deserves consideration. However, while some participants suggest using a stranger to teach this course, there are a number of advantages to having the course taught by an on-staff member. Arielle's experience of male educators talking about relationships between boys and girls in a manner totally irrelevant to her life comes to mind. Having an instructor from within the system serves to avoid situations in which the instructor is not sufficiently aware of the norms of the community within which he is educating. More significantly, it is important to transmit to students that there are people in the school, ideally religious educators, who are comfortable and willing to talk about these subjects. They are not topics which specialists from outside need to address, but rather are normal aspects of life which teachers from within the school are capable of discussing.

“What Does She Know About My Life?”

The harshest criticism comes from Gila, who offers it on two levels. First, she feels that the course was not taken seriously by the administration and teachers and, as a result, was not

taken seriously by the participants. She participated in only a few of the classes, claiming to have been unaware of their existence. She feels that the manner in which the course was scheduled reflected a lack of commitment on the part of the school.

Gila: I think it was too superficial, in my opinion. Like look, for a fact I didn't even know about it properly. And [when it takes place] at the end of the day – it's just not serious.

In addition, her impression from some of her friends (since she had participated partially in the course) was that they had difficulty learning these particular topics from the teacher assigned to the course because they viewed her as an older, religious woman who could not possibly relate to their real struggles in these areas. Gila feels that the course was relatively ineffective because participants simply did not consider the teacher's experiences in these areas to be sufficiently similar to their own to allow her to offer a plausible approach to their reality. Gila suggests finding a different teacher for the course.

Gila: "She was cute" [said the participants]... it means they didn't agree with her at all. It means they didn't take it seriously at all. Like wow! Like tell me another story ...a lot of the girls felt that the teacher – what does she know, what does she understand about my life? And that was a very striking part of their reaction. Like how can she talk about this when in her life she has never stood up and faced these challenges? She just has no idea, I mean of course she understands somewhat, she is a counselor, but like...in that area of keeping Jewish law and life, what does she understand about this all?

Researcher: Is there someone else in the school more appropriate from that point of view?

Gila: For me personally I find it easy to talk to my home room teacher because she used to be different [religiously] and she understands.

“Now We Talk About It Much More Easily”

I expected that participants would become more comfortable both addressing these topics themselves as well as participating in frameworks that presented and discussed them. A few participants found that topics that had previously been taboo and too uncomfortable to address had now become more approachable.

Researcher: Do you feel like you became more comfortable talking about these topics?

Yael: Yes, something changed for the better. Now we talk about it much more easily. Now that you know more you don't say stupid stuff.

The most significant change is identified by Tali. While still experiencing difficulty in discussing topics that she views as uncomfortable, Tali came to realize from participating in the course that the topics discussed definitely needed to be addressed. With time, she hoped that the embarrassment would decrease.

Tali: What changed for me is that I think it is important. By the end of the classes I was convinced that we really need this and it is important. But it's still embarrassing, even though it's important.

About a third of participants did not report any real change increase in comfort level.

Post-Interviews: Course Content

In addition to questions about comfort and attitudes, participants were asked about course content. I wondered whether they felt they had learned new information, a new approach, or a new understanding of the issues that were presented to them.

The First Formal Class in Sexuality and Relationships

Most participants were able to identify new information acquired in the course. Overall, participants indicate that the course offered a number of firsts. It was the first opportunity to be thoughtful and gain information about the challenges of *shemirat negiyah* and sexuality for males, and it was the first formal, regularized opportunity to address issues of sexuality and relationship in a classroom setting in a proactive manner. Most participants had never had a framework in which they could think honestly about differences between males and females and how those differences might impact on the ways in which they interacted.

There were two units most frequently considered to have provided new information, one about teenage boys and their development and one about sexual harassment and abuse. Many participants feel that they developed a better understanding of religious teenage boys and the challenges of their emerging sexuality. While not all are fully comfortable with some of this newly acquired knowledge, and a few do not agree with some of it, all acknowledge that it was new. Participants also highlight the unit on sexual abuse as providing important information about the ways in which girls can and should protect themselves.

Below is a selection of responses participants offered to the question of what they felt they had learned from the course.

Shirel: I had never heard a presentation about boys. Now I understand boys. I was never offered a presentation about sexual abuse and now I have. They explained us about all sorts of things that happen to everyone sometime in their lives.

Shai: All sorts of things about relationships between men and women.

Tali: I had never thought about these things. About female anatomy and male anatomy. In principle I knew these things. In relationship to boys it evokes all sorts of thoughts concerning the nature of relationships I want to have with them... There were interesting discussions...[I learned] about male and female anatomy. Also we saw a movie made by boys in a Yeshiva high school which showed how they feel [about *shomer negiyah*]. The movie helped to really understand. I learned a lot about boys from it. How they view girls, what girls do to them and what I ought to do. From that point of view it was more than just a conversation with a friend.

Yael: I knew nothing about male anatomy, so I learned everything. About female anatomy – I already knew. There were situations that I hadn't ever discussed with friends. So it offered a few pointers for consideration and thought.

Dina: First of all, that boys are not girls. They have other issues. We need to be careful with regards modesty and *shemirat negiyah*. We need to protect our bodies. Being modest and *shemirat negiyah* are both for me and for them [the boys]. We keep it so as to not get into more complicated situations...

Participants were able to be thoughtful about a variety of often complicated situations between boys and girls and consider the wisdom of some of the expectations of the Jewish law in these areas from within these new perspectives.

“We’ve Had That Talk Before”

A number of participants felt that while the course had opened with potential, it became over-involved in the topic of *shemirat negiyah*, offering an approach they had heard before too frequently. Many had hoped that a broader range of topics would be addressed and their interest

waned with time. Nevertheless they recognized the potential of the framework for encouraging conversations in areas that are significant and interesting, yet generally not taught in schools. Still, there was a feeling that too much time was dedicated to the issue of *shemirat negiyah* and the course lost some of its momentum.

Some participants feel that they learned very little new in the course.

Ayelet: Yeah, I feel like it was OK. Maybe it was better for other people but it wasn't so important for me. I feel like we had that talk so many times. Every teacher talks about it like three times. And we have this woman who also gave us a talk on it and it's like how much can we talk about it – it's getting a little annoying. It was a little boring... I didn't like it so much. The first few lessons were good...the teacher talked about our bodies...But then I felt like they kept on talking about *shomer negiyah* so much and I didn't like it and our whole retreat was about that and it was just too much. I kept on going in and out...

Researcher: Did you feel like she talked too much and didn't let you talk or just that there was too much of the same topic?

Ayelet: Too much of the same subject. I learned from the parts that were interesting and maybe I just wasn't in the classes enough, but that was my feeling.

Ayelet's comments were representative of close to half of the participants, who felt that too much emphasis was placed on the topic of *shemirat negiyah*. That emphasis is not found in the proposed content in the Life Values and Intimacy Curriculum prepared for the course, but was considered by Adina to have been a significant issue of concern to participants who focused more attention on *shemirat negiyah* than had been originally suggested.

Sexual Abuse

Almost all participants mention the unit as one that was significant and valuable for them. They emphasize the importance of offering it to all teenage girls.

Ayelet: ...The class on sexual abuse...that was very important. Everyone was like talking about that. That was very, very important. You should definitely do more of that...

This topic generated the most excitement inside and outside the classroom. Participants engaged actively in the class, and while some were disturbed by the images they saw in the movie "Campfire", all recognized the importance of being prepared for various types of abuse

situations. Some participants shared experiences inside the classroom and many who did not shared with their friends, in small groups and informal conversations, afterwards. Many had personal stories, some of which had been previously hidden but emerged as a result of the unit.

Tali: I had not forgotten about the incident. OK, I moved on. At first I was just talking to him [on the bus] and I did not consider that problematic. But after we had the class [in the course] I realized that I had not agreed to anything he did, and perhaps because I spoke with him he interpreted it as being OK [to touch me]. But it was, it was sexual abuse. He touched me in places that I did not want him to touch. He asked me if I was OK with it and I said no and he still kept doing it.

A few participants carried a sense of shame around with them as a result of incidents they had experienced. The unit helped to normalize their feelings and reactions. Discussion that took place in the class brought relief and provided opportunities for important conversations to take place for these participants.

“Why Do I Need to Learn about It?”

A couple of the participants express discomfort with some of the information offered in the course. The unit on male anatomy and physiology was the prime source of unease. Participants had never been offered detailed lessons on this subject before, and some found the experience overwhelming and inappropriate. While many participants appreciated the honesty and detail with which lessons were presented, there were those who felt they were being offered too much information that was not relevant to them currently and actually embarrassed them.

Yael: On the one hand it is taught, on the other hand I need to know it, but why now? I am still young, why do I need to be dealing with this now? It's a little weird.

Researcher: You're not sure it's relevant?

Yael: I'm sure one day I will need to know it in depth. But right now it seems unnecessary to know about it...They immediately showed male anatomy and development and then gradually connected everything together...I felt really strange...especially when she taught about male anatomy and development. What connection do I have to this? Why do I need to learn about it at all?...I didn't know anything about the male body, I didn't need to know anything about it and I didn't gain anything from it.

Her reaction, representative of several participants, underscores the dilemma that faces many sexuality educators, but is perhaps more acute among the Modern Orthodox population. In a class of students spanning a spectrum of knowledge and experience with regards sexuality, knowing how to speak so that all students are appropriately educated and none are overwhelmed by information is a difficult challenge (Samet, 2005).

Give Me Some Answers to These Difficult Questions

A couple of participants criticize what they experienced as a lack of closure in many areas. Judy expresses the frustration she felt when numerous topics were opened up to discussion but not even partially closed.

Judy: She opened like a lot of subjects and like they didn't really give answers 'cause it's like she said this is a problem, this is a problem, this is a problem...OK, so we all know this is a problem, what's the answer. She just kept opening more doors and doors and like she didn't close them – that's what I felt.

Researcher: So it's frustrating?

Judy: Yeah, like it happens a lot that people keep asking questions and questions and like – what's the answer?...here with boys and girls, in principle, it's the Jewish law – it's supposed to have an answer! And she never gave like an answer...You need an answer, so it was frustrating... 'cause I felt like the whole issue with boys and girls comes out looking like it's our choice. It's not like Jewish law, it's our choice. It's just like, you could do it if you want – it's not like actually black and white. You can do it if you want.

Researcher: Because they don't give a clear cut answer?

Judy: 'Cause like nobody talks about it. And I feel like if they do talk about it then they say it's not OK to do this, this and this. But they never tell you like an answer. They never gave us clear halakhot... They just say it's nananananana. They don't show us, they don't...

Researcher: Is that what you would feel is good closure – with a source sheet is that good closure?

Judy: Also, or they just need to close it. I don't feel like she closed it at all, just questions and questions... and opening more things but she never closed it.

As the only formal framework in which issues of relationship between boys and girls could be addressed, Judy finds the lack of clarity to be frustrating. She is particularly troubled due

to the lack of alternative reliable resources and a propensity among contemporaries to offer solutions with no explanation. It seems that the instructor, in her attempt to offer multiple points of view and not one specific approach, left some participants still searching for answers. While it may be important to offer participants a broader perspective than they are used to, some closure does seem to be a necessary component of the course.

“Maybe Some Boys, But Certainly Not All Are Like That”

Only one participant expressed criticism of some of the ideas presented in the course. She feels that the image of teenage boys offered was inaccurate and derogatory. After talking with her male friend, she confirmed that the image of boys she thought had been presented by the course is not a fair representation of all religious teenage boys.

Researcher: Do you feel the course was useful to you at all?

Ariella: A little but I felt that some of the stuff they told us was totally wrong. Like about boys. They told us that all boys, most boys are totally perverted and every time they see a girl they get all whatever, and I spoke to my friend and he was like, “What is this nonsense they are teaching you? Maybe some boys but certainly not all.” And I think he knows better because he’s a boy.

Researcher: So you felt that it was a bit of an extreme picture?

Ariella: Yeah... He always gets mad, you think boys are just a whole bunch of...
– it’s so not true.

Many of the comments offered by participants and quoted above confirmed a more realistic perception of teenage boys as a result of the course. Some of this can be attributed to the movie participants viewed produced by teenage boys about *shemirat negiyah* and some to the image the teacher sought to project. While some ideas were explicitly presented by the teacher, others changed as a result of participants’ interpretation of the differences between males and females expressed in the course.

Post-Interviews: Attitudes

The overall experience of the course was generally positive, with over half of the participants reporting some change in understanding, attitudes or opinions. A couple of participants identified changes in behavior. Most of the participants affected feel that it was as a result of specific units, in particular the unit on boys and *shemirat negiyah*, as well as the unit on sexual abuse. A number of participants changed their attitudes and behaviors in areas of sexuality

over the course of the year but were not sure how much they could attribute these changes to the course, as opposed to other influences they had experienced.

Fewer than half of the participants feel they experienced no change in attitudes and that the course had not affected them in thinking and understanding the topics presented in the course in any substantive way. A typical response of these participants is offered by Dana.

Researcher: Did your understandings change?

Dana: No.

Researcher: Did your attitudes change?

Dana: No.

Researcher: Did your opinions change?

Dana: No.

It is important to note, however, that different answers were sometimes offered when the question was presented in a less direct fashion. While some participants have an overall sense that they had not changed, in exploring the details, they were able to note slight changes in attitude and understanding as a result of the course. In a different part of the post-intervention interview, Dana offers the following response:

Researcher: Did it [the course] affect you at all?

Dana: Perhaps yes. She explained the difficulties boys have.

Researcher: Did that affect the ways you felt about yourself?

Dana: Perhaps a little, I'm not sure. These are things that I know. Perhaps when I saw it, it showed it to me more.

For many, the effects of the course were subtle. It was expressed for example in a slightly different sensitivity, a minor change in understanding, a more positive attitude, or more openness to other opinions. While a number of participants could not identify clear cut changes, they could be found in the nuances of understanding and approach that participants presented, for example towards considering *shemirat negiyah*, being more self-aware and sensitive to sexual harassment.

Seeing Things Differently

For those who reported a change in attitude, a number of units were highlighted as having the most substantive impact. The most striking change in attitudes for participants evolved as a result of being offered insight into the experience of being male, for example

through units which discussed male anatomy and physiology and the ways in which sexual arousal evolves. Together with a movie produced by teenage boys about the struggle surrounding a failure in *shemirat negiyah* within a high school male-female relationship in a Modern Orthodox setting, participants were exposed to a perspective completely new to them. Having always processed issues of male-female relationships and *shemirat negiyah* from a female perspective, the impact of an alternative perspective was substantial and noted by many participants. It proved to be the impetus for discussion outside of class too.

Maayan was pleased with the new knowledge she and her friends had acquired as a result of the intervention.

Researcher: Were there any conversations outside of the classroom, among friends, as a result of things you learned in the course?

Maayan: Yes, with regards new understandings. I spoke with girls who said for example: “Is it really like that? Up until now I always thought that it was this way, now I know differently.” It renews and enriches. It opened a little more thought.

About a quarter of the participants emphasize changes in their approach to boys. These changes varied in their scope.

Researcher: Your understandings of the issues – did it help you understand better?

Judy: It opened like more of the problems from the boys’ part and what he feels so you saw both sides, not only your side. Like you could see the problems from both sides. Like you could mean one thing and he sees it as a totally different thing that you wouldn’t even know. Like I didn’t even show that or mean that. It’s important to know both sides.

Researcher: Do you think that changed your attitudes at all?

Judy: Amm, yeah, it distances you from doing different things you might have wanted to do. Like I don’t even want to put that option down on the table ‘cause I know what he is thinking and I don’t want to do that.

Researcher: So that also affects behaviors a little?

Judy: Yeah.

Researcher: What’s changed?

Judy: I watch myself more. Like now you know and you don’t want to get to those difficult positions so you watch yourself, you are more careful...

Judy does not want her words to be read and received differently from what she intends. Her new found knowledge that boys and girls often interpret the same statement differently leads her to be more cautious in her interactions with boys.

Ayelet found the course encouraging, confirming that sometimes the difficult choices she has made have been wise.

Researcher: OK, tell me do you feel differently about yourself at all as a result of the classes?

Ayelet: The movie, it made me feel like I won't do it, and it made me feel like good that like my boundaries are good and like that it's good that I won't go out late to town at night, it made me feel good about what my boundaries are. Because I do think sometimes – do I have to do all this? And it made me feel like these are good decisions. I do need to do it!

Researcher: Anything you understood differently as a result of the classes?

Ayelet: Yeah, the boys.

Researcher: Do you think your attitudes changed at all?

Ayelet: Maybe a little.

Researcher: Did your attitudes change at all?

Ariella: That you should be more careful whatever you do.

Ayelet and Ariella's responses represent about a quarter of the participants who decided that it was important to be cautious in their interactions with boys. Ayelet felt confirmed that the strict boundaries she maintains are justified.

An important development emerged in one family as a result of the course. Judy reported initiating conversation with her parents on the topic.

Researcher: Were there any conversations outside the classroom about issues discussed inside the classroom?

Judy: Amm, yeah, like among each other and like I asked my mother like did you touch daddy before you were married.

Researcher: Did you really?

Judy: Yeah, like I was just thinking about it, like was it an issue back then, a problem in those days too like it is now, and like modesty wasn't such an issue then? Like my mother used to wear short shorts and she was like, well that's

cause of where I lived – that’s what we wore... And I asked my Dad ‘cause he never talks about this kind of stuff...

The course provided an opening for Judy to engage her parents and question their experiences with the same issues of relationships and Jewish law that she faces today. While ideally, offering opportunities for a mother-daughter program during the course could engage more families in conversations, Judy demonstrates how providing opportunities for conversations about sexuality and relationships in the school, can lead to increased parent-child communication on these topics.

Stimulating Change

A few participants feel that the course impacted them significantly. They found the content interesting and enlightening and were sufficiently affected by the experience to change their behavior. These behavioral changes relate to the core halakhic issues of *shemirat negiyah*. While these may be short term changes, they nevertheless reflect the potential impact that education in these areas can have.

Researcher: Did the course have an impact on you?

Tali: Yes. It affected me... Also with regards how I dress. I don’t know if it changed right away. Also from appearances – not to draw too much towards me. I dress differently. I am trying to change slowly but surely. Not to do things that will be prominent.

Researcher: Did this course affect the way you feel about yourself?

Tali: It changed the way I behave.

Researcher: Did your opinions change?

Tali: *Shemirat negiyah* – no. With regards boys...it’s a little shocking that they are not able to control their desires... all sorts of their behaviors around girls, they do it on purpose to get attention. Obviously there are boys who are not like that... I don’t want to get to know too many boys right now. I have my friends and those who I talk to. I don’t think it’s worth developing too many relationships with boys right now. Because at this age all the boys are very...all this togetherness of boys and girls arouses sexuality and can lead us to all sorts of things which I do not want to be a part of.

Researcher: Does this understanding come from your experiences or from the class?

Tali: Also from the experiences, but I did not interpret it that way, and then there was the course and I saw all these things – and what they can lead to.

Researcher: Do you behave differently as a result of the classes?

Tali: Yes. Our relationships are not about touching...

Some participants feel they had changed regarding issues addressed in the class over the course of the year, but they emphasize the multiplicity of influences that had impacted them and are unwilling to credit the course alone for these changes. Nevertheless, they recognize that the experience of the course was one of the forces that impacted change.

Lior: I can't really say that changes happened as a result of the course because many things happened. It's quite possible that the course had an effect, and it's possible that it did not.

Researcher: Did you change this year?

Lior: It's a result of many different things. Firstly I have matured and then also all sorts of important things that I did. Anything that happens has an effect.

Researcher: Did the course affect the way you feel about your body?

Shirel: Yes, we always think about it, but when we discuss the importance of it and what could happen, it arouses thoughts...

Post Interviews: Suggestions

Participants were asked to offer suggestions for a course in Life Values and Intimacy. Their input was invited on all levels: course content, educational approaches and staffing. While a few participants made no suggestions, most participants had recommendations both based on the way they experienced the course and as a result of coming to be more aware of their own needs.

“Do It Exactly the Way It Was”

The majority of participants view the course as a positive development in the school. They were pleased with the topics addressed and the fact that a space had been created for open discussion. While there were some suggestions for improvement, most participants recommended continuing the same basic model.

Researcher: What would you recommend that we do in a similar course next year?

Shirel: I would do it exactly the way it was. I would in addition add lessons dealing with rabbinic responsa on the reasons for Jewish law... it's important to do that also.

Tali: I think it's very important. Now I have all sorts of associations. Just as it invoked for me all sorts of thoughts about different issues, it invoked thoughts for other girls too. I'm not sure that things changed, but it certainly opens up thinking...

Researcher: What would you recommend for next year?

Tali: Just as the teacher did. It was not heavy, there was food. There was discussion. She spoke about it and shared. It was light and she did not say, "You have to do this and this." Girls shared stories. It was comfortable and light. Participating was comfortable.

Yael: I think once a week is just the right amount. I think the topics discussed were important.

Participants find that the impact of the course extended beyond the class sessions as it inspired personal reflection and group conversation on many of the topics addressed. They indicate that the course met a real need for most Modern Orthodox teenagers to have conversations on these topics. This was confirmed by the fact that although the course was offered to only one class in the grade, participants broadcast enough enthusiasm that a slightly condensed parallel course was opened for other students in the grade who had clamored for it. In addition, the course has been incorporated into the school curriculum for the 2008-09 school year and is being implemented for the incoming tenth-grade at a time of day that reflects the schools increased commitment to the course.

More Time

One suggestion was to begin the classes in earlier grades, as students would be more receptive to the ideas offered if they had not yet formulated their thoughts and approaches and before they were involved in relationships with boys. However, recommendations were contingent on making efforts to ensure that a course of this sort would not be repetitive.

Researcher: Would you recommend that we continue – next year?

Judy: I think you should even start in ninth grade. Because people already start exploring and trying to find themselves and if you tell them early in ninth grade

maybe it will have more of an effect before it's conflicted. Now you've already found yourself and found your social group – you are less likely to change.

These participants intuit the ideal approach to Life Values and Intimacy education, which proposes starting from an early age. This notion is confirmed by policymakers, parents, and educators who recognize that sexuality education should be provided during children's formative years, before they become adolescents (Landry et al, 2000).

“It Did No Harm”

Only two participants offer an explicit “no” to the question of whether the course should be offered next year. This was based on opposition to the content of the course being offered in school.

Researcher: Would you recommend this course for next year's tenth grade?

Rivka: No.

Researcher: It was unnecessary?

Rivka: Yes... all girls discover [these topics] alone, or in elementary school, or from friends or family. They are well known issues.

Rivka's assertion that these topics are discovered alone and known to participants, does not obviate the need for Life Values and Intimacy education. The instructor takes these active questions and processes them together with the students providing deeper understanding and possible resolutions to the inherent tensions the students face. A few others were cautious with their recommendation. Those who themselves did not find the course to be so useful were able to recognize its value for most of their contemporaries. It was within these parameters that they were willing to recommend it.

Researcher: Was the course a positive experience for you?

Tal: I don't know, it was good, it did no harm, it didn't give that much. It's important, but I do not know if it will give to everyone. Perhaps there are girls for whom it is important. I did not find it so useful.

Conclusion

This research represented the first attempt to provide a course in Life Values and Intimacy education to Modern Orthodox tenth grade Israeli girls. The course, based on materials written for an American Modern Orthodox day school population, was adapted to meet the

needs of the participant group. The results indicate that despite some technical difficulties, participants found the course to be a positive experience. The class instructor was able to establish an atmosphere conducive to openness and respectful dialogue while maintaining privacy and respect of all participants. Topics were addressed in a thoughtful and engaging manner and provided new perspectives and insights in areas of relationships and sexuality. There are improvements to be made and the balance of course content should be re-evaluated, but overall, participants appreciated the forum created by the course to address topics that were rarely taught and generally not given the kind of attention provided by the course. Participants for the most part responded positively to the course, recommending that it be offered, with some adjustments, in future years.

In the next section, we will take a closer look at the ways the course impacted on participants. By focusing on a few of the units which elicited the strongest responses from participants, we can draw insight into the needs of the participant population in areas of sexuality and relationships.

Post-Interviews: Broadening Perspectives

Post-course interviews highlighted specific units as making an impact, in particular the unit on sexual abuse as well as a combination of units addressing male perspective that included a male anatomy and physiology unit, the viewing of a movie made by teenage boys about *shemirat negiyah*, and the discussions as a result of these two classes. In the following section, I will take a closer look at the thoughts and impressions participants share regarding two movies that were viewed, one about *shemirat negiyah* and one that dealt with issues of sexual abuse in the Israeli Modern Orthodox community.

Understanding Boys' Perspective

The Life Values and Intimacy education course included a detailed unit on males. Religious girls generally learn very little about male sexuality, and it seemed appropriate to start an introductory course with basic male anatomy and physiology, as well as an introductory understanding of male sexuality. In order to stimulate further insight into male perspectives, a movie produced and directed by religious teenagers from a parallel boys' high school was presented to the participants. The movie revolves around a failure to observe *shemirat negiyah* by a young religious teenage high-school couple. The boy reacts strongly to this failure, totally rejecting his girlfriend and trying to find solace by becoming more fervent in religious learning and commitment. The girl, completely taken aback and gradually overwhelmed by this sudden intense reaction from her boyfriend, tries to appease him but is completely ignored.

The movie offers an unusual perspective on teenage relationships in a Modern Orthodox setting. It provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the topic from multiple perspectives. Beyond the regular discussion of the topic that had been offered previously by some teachers in the school, the movie presented an opportunity to broaden perspectives and change mindsets by showing the issues from a male point of view. Most participants found the experience enlightening. While many disagreed with some of the movie's underlying suggestions, the experience generated lively discussion and provoked significant thought.

Participants are quick to admit that they had little knowledge or understanding of the male perspective. Watching the movie, they came to realize that boys similarly had little understanding of the female perspective and participants recognize the importance of learning about each other. They were surprised by the strong, negative reaction of the boy in the movie and were particularly disturbed by the way he shut himself off from his girlfriend.

Lior: I don't think that girls really understand boy's conflicts. Because girls have no idea how hard it is for boys and how much it affects them. Boys also do not understand girls. This movie is about how the boy feels.

Ayelet: It showed the side of the boys a little bit more. Like I always thought it wasn't fair that we had a period and they don't but then it showed the way that boys are not allowed to...act on it at all... And that's the only thing that like I realized in this course is really different for them.

The movie helped Ayelet realize that boys have physiological challenges with which they struggle. The portrayal of the boy in the movie helped her develop more empathy to the teenage male struggle. Yael reacted differently.

Researcher: Did it give you insight into boys?

Yael: Not really. I tried to understand them. It annoyed me... It really annoyed me that he just ignored her completely, why are you running away from it and leaving her to deal alone... Why don't you face it with her?

Researcher: Is it an accurate reflection of reality?

Yael: I don't know...I have a few friends who have kissed. They did not run away from each other, they simply accepted responsibility...

Despite her effort to understand the boy in the movie and his motivations, she found his behavior difficult to accept. She would like to have seen him join with his girlfriend, rather than

run away from her. The frustration Yael expresses perhaps reflects her lack of understanding of the struggle a boy might experience. This confirms the importance of educating girls to a better understanding of boys and their experiences and vice versa.

“I Don’t Think All Boys React Like That”

Many participants are active members of mixed social groups and spend time in the company of boys. A significant number also currently have or have had boyfriends, and they have developed a sense, based on interactions and experiences, of how their male friends would react in the situation depicted in the movie. Most feel that the reaction offered by the movie was exaggerated and uncommon. While they may have encountered the occasional boy who would be overcome by guilt, the more common experience they report was with boys who sought to further a physical relationship, rather than feel tremendous guilt as a result of it.

Ayelet: They seemed to show that it was completely overwhelming for boys...It was like I feel like there are not a lot of boys our age who would be upset. I feel like they would just be happy. Like I personally am *shomer* but I feel like they don’t want. Most of the boys I know aren’t *shomer*. I can think of maybe one or two who are.

Participants have assumptions about the norms of male behavior. They used their experiences to judge the movie and found the responses in the movie unfamiliar. It offered an alternative script, different from that in their own social circles, which presented them with an alternative model from their experience. Broadening the range of ways that relationships between boys and girls can take place in Modern Orthodox communities can be a positive development for participants.

Girls’ Perspective

The movie was clearly presented from a male perspective, without fully developing the female character in the story. Participants were asked whether the movie would have been different if produced and directed by females. In particular, they were asked to think how, given the opportunity, they would make a movie about *shemirat negiyah* and how it might differ from the one they viewed. Answers offered by participants shed light and insight onto their perceptions of males and females and the differences between them.

All participants are in agreement that a movie made by girls would look very different. Perhaps because they were appreciative of the opportunity to see “the other side,” they became

aware of the value in sharing their own understanding with their male counterparts. Yael's comment represents most participants.

Yael: For sure girls would do it differently. Girls see things differently, and it is important to see the other side. That's obvious.

A number of participants suggest that a movie on this topic ought to communicate a different educational message. Ayelet had an unambiguous lesson she feels would be important for girls to offer regarding *shemirat negiyah*. While recognizing that it was more applicable to girls, she saw it as a valuable message to be shared with everyone.

Researcher: If you were making a movie, how would you show it from the girl's perspective?

Ayelet: That it's your body. And you want to have, like, you want to have boundaries and like I don't know. I feel like why I am *shomer* is because I respect myself and my body and that's it – I don't know.

Ayelet speaks from a place of personal strength. She wants to encourage all girls to recognize that their boundaries should evolve out of respect for themselves and their bodies.

A number of participants feel that the movie did not present any process or development of relationship between the young couple. They suggest an alternative approach to educating religious youth concerning the topic of *shemirat negiyah*. They would like to have seen a presentation which demonstrated the ease with which minimal physical contact can evolve quickly into something much more serious.

Arielle: I would show how from the smallest things: He high-fives her, meets her, hugs her and then kisses her on the cheek and then they sit together and end up all over each other, and then more and more. That is a better way to show how far one can end up going, just from the little things.

Dina: I would make it about someone who is really going downhill quickly. So that you see how they came to make a mistake which ended up in a really bad place in which she was hurt.

Arielle and Dina would like to see an awareness of the challenges highlighted with regards male-female relationships more fully presented. In particular, they would like to emphasize the quick progression, the slippery slope approach that presents the ease with which people find

themselves moving from one level of physical involvement to another despite their commitment to do otherwise.

Judy responds differently to the movie. She offers an analysis of the sequence of events in the movie reflecting her understanding of differences between males and females and the various ways they cope with challenges.

Researcher: What do you think would have been different if girls had made it?

Judy: After what he did, girls call their best friends and help them come through it. And I don't think it would be so terrible. Like you get through it. Like he tried to get over it through his Talmud and Torah. Girls wouldn't, at least I know if something like that would happen to me I wouldn't look for answers in the Torah. Maybe I would like speak to a rabbi or something, I wouldn't try and find it myself, because if it was so horrible then I wouldn't be able to find the answer myself, like you need somebody else. By him telling his friend and his friend not even like caring or like whatever it's like even he doesn't know what to do with the problem, it's kind of like the boy feels totally alone. But a girl always has somebody and once you tell somebody then you are not alone. I don't know like her sister if she has a sister like they'll find a way, a different way but I don't think it would be that horrible.

A few participants were concerned that the topic of *shemirat negiyah* was multifaceted by definition and did not lend itself to being presented in a satisfying manner in a movie. They suggested not even trying.

Researcher: What would you do for a movie?

Sarah: I wouldn't make a movie about *shemirat negiyah*. It is too complex...

Not Exactly the Way Things Happen

About half of the participants are either currently involved with a boyfriend or have been so previously. They are the ones most critical of the movie. Clearly, their experiences have taught them about the nature of struggle in *shemirat negiyah*, and many of them feel that the movie presented an unrealistic picture of how events unfold in a relationship between religious youth.

A number of girls with experience in relationships are adamant that the boys involved in the production of the movie could not have had much experience in boyfriend-girlfriend relationships. They consider the movie's presentation to be based more on theory than in what truly transpires in a complex, dynamic relationship. They feel that the movie failed to present the

complicated back and forth dynamic that accompanies a relationship between two religious teenagers in which the couple is working to stay within the boundaries of Jewish law and be *shomer negiyah*. This dynamic is best explained by Maayan, who has, together with her boyfriend, struggled and overcome and failed and overcome and continues to be involved in this difficult cycle.

Maayan: They showed certain things not really exactly the way they occur. The general idea is correct, but the details themselves are not so accurate. It's not that simple to decide: OK, we did what we did and now we will go dip in a *mikvah* [ritual bath] and we will become purified and keep going as normal. Because the drive that pushed her to do what she did was desire. And the fact that he goes and dips in a *mikvah* doesn't mean that that desire is gone. I understand that there is a process that he is trying to hopefully make sure it doesn't happen to him again, but that is not a simple process. They presented it as if to say: I have decided that from now on I will be shomer. I don't think it is that simple.

Researcher: In your opinion people sin and then say, OK, I'm going to do this and this. But it is not like that, the desire will be there in the future too.

Maayan: The second I have dipped in a *mikvah* – it doesn't mean that it's gone away. It's still there.

Researcher: The movie was supposed to put things honestly on the table and discuss them. Do you think this movie was interesting and appropriate for the class?

Maayan: It opened up all sorts of questions. Because it is not such a good movie, it opened questions or lead to some kind of discussion. I told you that my boyfriend and I stopped two weeks ago [being *shomer*].

Researcher: So you really understand it!

Maayan: That's what I said about the movie. It was like they decided and that was it! It is so not like that. You come to a conclusion and then you stop because it is just too hard and you discuss it all the time. It's really not the way it's portrayed in the movie where they decide and that's it!

Maayan's honest portrayal of her personal struggle offers an alternative model to the movie, one that those involved in serious relationships describe as a complex, never ending struggle. All participants who have been or are currently involved in a serious relationship attested to a constant, long term struggle which added a heavy component of tension to the

relationship that was sometimes insurmountable, especially when the two partners were not in agreement with regards to being *shomer negiyah*. This is unquestionably a difficult struggle for religious teenagers committed to the Jewish law, and while the movie may not have portrayed it in the way that participants identified the struggle, it offered enough to generate intense discussion on the topic.

Sexual Abuse

An important component of the curriculum was a unit on sexual abuse. The school expressed interest in ensuring the topic was presented to students at this grade level, and the unit was opened up to the entire grade and presented on two separate occasions to the two different classes. It was the only unit offered to the entire tenth-grade. The unit utilized the movie “Campfire,” a movie about the Israeli Modern Orthodox community set in the 1980’s. A number of scenes were excerpted for the unit. One scene showed sexual harassment, another depicted developing sexual awakening and interest between a young, innocent teenage girl and one of the boys in her youth group, and there was one scene of sexual abuse of this young teenage girl by a group of boys that takes place around a youth group campfire on *Lag Ba-Omer* night, a night when campfires take place traditionally. Participants viewed short scenes from the movie, which were used to trigger discussion and offer information about sexual abuse and harassment. The class included heated discussion on the topic and offered participants an opportunity to share their experiences.

All participants mention the unit as being significant and important for them. Even those who had participated in other classes on the topic (usually in elementary school) found the unit to have had a powerful impact. In post-intervention interviews, participants were asked what they thought about the unit on sexual abuse in general and the movie “Campfire” in particular.

Can Abuse Happen in Our Communities?

Participants were asked whether they thought the movie was realistic and offered a true picture of Modern Orthodox society. While most participants are somewhat skeptical about the particular scenario in the movie, they are clear that sexual harassment and abuse could and does occur in Modern Orthodox society and even within their own communities. Many participants live in settlements and often find themselves riding buses or hitchhiking. Between their experiences and those of their friends, they are well aware that they need to be on guard and that potential threats lurk in the most unexpected places.

Researcher: Do you have friends who have been harassed?

Dina: Yes, I have friends who I know were touched.

Researcher: It sounds like it happens frequently from what you are saying.

Yael: Tons.

Many participants have stories to share, if not their own then those of friends who had been harassed, or abused, in both public and private situations. Others were only vaguely aware of issues which they had heard about. They were surprised by the proliferation of incidents, even if often minor, reported by classmates. Hearing about these many incidences served to caution them. Arielle and Ariella both confirm the existence of these behaviors but marginalize those who exhibit them.

Researcher: Could these things happen in your social group?

Arielle: Of course. It could happen plenty. Religious kids who want to escape – they are always the most extreme. I'm not saying that extreme is to go straight to raping. These things can happen in every society, including religious.

Researcher: Did it represent the religious community?

Ariella: Not everything that was there. I do think it exists everywhere, especially among those teenagers who do not go to youth groups, and at risk teens. And there are certainly characters like the oldest daughter – all those kids who find boyfriends in eighth grade, and who just want to be touching each other, and that's what happens.

The above participants wish to identify those in their circles who might be involved in sexual harassment as being on the periphery of the social circle. Perpetrators of these behaviors would have to be religious children who are looking to escape, or the at risk teenagers. Perhaps this is the only tenable way that they can admit to the existence of these people in their own circles.

Important to Know

Participants recognize that information is a key to protection. The class on sexual harassment and abuse gave them a language to use to define some of the inappropriate behaviors they have sometimes experienced. They appreciate the chance to be more thoughtful and more aware of themselves in various situations. They are willing to develop a heightened sensitivity in these areas and open themselves up to perceiving certain actions differently from how they had previously.

Amit: Even someone who throws out a comment at you is harassing you in some sense. I never thought about it that way...

Judy: I think it's important to know that rape is not only if someone rapes you but also it is other things.

Amit and Judy both recognize the importance of being aware, in particular being aware of the spectrum of more minor harassments and not only thinking about sexual abuse in the context of rape. While Judy is wrong to think that rape is anything but rape, her statement is a response to the fact that rape is often the only issue talked about in the context of sexual abuse. Judy is appreciative of Adina's approach which addressed all types of sexual harassment and identified them as being inappropriate harassment too. With harassment a much more common occurrence, becoming more aware of its existence and various forms is an important accomplishment.

Judy offers a personal and honest assessment, providing insight into how events are often processed by women, particularly young women. She describes the conflicted response to a male comment tossed in a female's direction as she walks by on the street. She suggests that a female often instinctively feels good about a compliment rather than annoyed at the intrusion and disrespect.

Judy: The teacher said something like once that happens you just freeze and you don't know what to do. But once you hear all the sides – you know what to do. Or like you are walking down the street and someone says a comment to you. Like for sure, so the problem is that us women, we see it as a compliment. "Oh, you're hot stuff." Oh, that means I look good. In a way it like gives you a good feeling, but sometimes it gets too far and you don't know what to do. So then it's really important in terms of age and like development – it's important to know what to do.

Judy's comments reflect an awareness of how important it is to be alert. She understands how being thoughtful about potential situations of danger can be helpful in an actual situation, when a person has a tendency to be overwhelmed and freeze. Preparing in advance is a key to self-defense. This was the underlying message of the unit and one of the reasons for its presentation.

The Movie Was Like a Mirror

“Campfire” includes an explicit scene of sexual abuse. Most participants had never been exposed to something like it before. The course instructor gradually built up to the scene by first presenting and analyzing various less overwhelming harassment scenes from the movie. She warned participants of the content before viewing the scene, and those who did not want to watch were free to leave. It was through viewing this scene that participants felt most powerfully affected.

Researcher: Do you think it was useful to have that class? Do you feel like you learned stuff from it?

Dana: I know this stuff. But when I saw it, it gave me the feeling that I need to be more careful.

Shirel: They always talk about it, and now I saw it with my own eyes.

Judy: And let’s say with the movie she showed so it’s like you are looking at her and saying, “Why is she doing that? Why is she going and sitting there by herself?” and then you say, “Well did I ever do that? Or something like that? Did I ever cause something like that to happen but it hasn’t happened yet? It might happen” And then I decide, “OK, I’m not going to do this and this and this ‘cause then that might happen.” Like when we saw the movie with the rape so then I was like “I’m not going to do that,” ‘cause once you see it happening, you’re like, “Oh my gosh, I’m not doing that.” ‘Cause when you see it in a movie, it’s like a mirror, really like a mirror. You can see it happening and you can see yourself in exactly that position and then you are like – “I’m not letting this happen.” But just a list of you can’t do this and this and this – really doesn’t work so well.

Judy describes “Campfire” as “the movie with the rape” even though there is no actual rape in the movie. The movie portrays an intense scene of sexual abuse in which a group of older teenage boys force a young teenage girl named Tami to kiss them, they fondle her and lie on top of her but there is no intercourse. Judy’s terming the scene a rape may reflect a lack of nuanced language in processing sexual abuse. The intensity of the scene as it was portrayed in “Campfire” and the severity of Tami’s experience explains Judy’s use of the term “rape.”

Campfire exposes its viewers to the deep pain and trauma of sexual abuse. Individuals were able to assess whether they had ever placed themselves unwittingly in parallel situations and

what more they could do to protect themselves. It is clear that the opportunity offered by the movie to actually view a situation made the potential dangers, as well as possible strategies for protection, more concrete. Participants' responses also illuminate the potential impact of movies when used effectively as an educational tool.

“It Made Me Shudder!”

In every class of young women, there are inevitably some who have themselves experienced some form of sexual harassment or abuse. This proved true in our participant group. One participant in particular had put an incident from the previous year to rest. As a result of the unit on sexual abuse, she realized that she had experienced something much more significant than she had thought. She clearly struggles with a sense that she bears some responsibility for the incident, which she was able to address somewhat as a result of the program. Another participant also had flashbacks to an incident she had experienced when she watched the abuse scene from “Campfire.” Both girls had only dealt minimally with their experiences, and the class provided opportunity to process and work through their experience more fully. It seems clear that they would not have taken this initiative alone without the added impetus provided by this unit.

Researcher: What did the unit about the movie “Campfire” do for you?

Tali: It made me shudder! That was the class that identified for me that I had also gone through something similar. Because she was talking about rape, that was less so. But there are also things along the way, and you can file a report. It was a little embarrassing and scary. Like – what am I doing hanging out with boys. Because the movie was about boys who are our age.

Researcher: Could this kind of thing happen in your social group?

Tali: Yes. However embarrassing and scary it is, it helps [to talk about it]. I can actually feel the changes that I am trying to make for myself. It affects how I am talking.

Researcher: Had you forgotten what happened to you?

Tali: No, I had not forgotten. OK, it was over. I wasn't considering it something serious like rape. And after the teacher spoke about it [sexual harassment and abuse] I realized that I had not agreed to any of the things he did, and perhaps because I spoke to him he interpreted it as something permissible. But yes, it was sexual harassment. He touched me in places that I did not want to be touched and he still continued... I think that the fact that I talked to him made it happen.

Because if I had not spoken to him in the first place, it would not have come to this. And so at some point I joined in with him.

Researcher: But as soon as he started touching you, you said no.

Tali: Correct.

Researcher: I do think it is important to think about how you want to address this.

While the experience of facing their traumas again could not have been easy, it did offer opportunity for important emotional work, work which at least one participant had completely avoided. While this is not the purpose of the unit, assisting participants who have undergone traumatic experiences come to terms with them is certainly a worthwhile outcome. Lior offers a troubling commentary on the issue.

Lior: I have decided that it is an important topic, and it's true and it happens quite a bit and it's important to talk about it.

Researcher: Do you know girls who have been sexually harassed?

Lior: It seems that all girls have been through something...

Lior's comment is perhaps the most accurate assessment of the reality for females in the modern world. Sexual harassment is pervasive and exists in all communities. Preventative education in these areas begins with developing awareness.

They Don't Talk to the Boys Enough

Participants were asked to make further suggestions for learning in these areas. A number of participants share concerns about their male contemporaries. Their deepest concern is that while they themselves had some knowledge, they know that boys learning in parallel frameworks are not educated at all in these areas. They recognize that this lack of learning often leads to uneducated understandings of situations, including inappropriate behaviors. Participants clearly encourage efforts to provide education, information, and discussions about these topics to boys. They feel that this is an essential step in rectifying the current situation.

Researcher: Is it important to talk about these topics?

Dina: It's very important. I once spoke to someone and he said that it is often the girls' fault. I really could not accept that. We really cannot agree to that.

Researcher: What do you think we should be doing?

Ayelet: Umm... I feel like they don't talk to the boys enough ever, about anything. They don't know...and also why they are not *shomer*, is also because they never explain to them the importance of it. Things like that... I feel like it is all problems with like people don't understand about it. The people who do the things. I feel like, "What should we do?" Well, I think we should be careful, I mean I'm careful. I certainly wouldn't go to a bonfire with a bunch of guys and let my friend leave me and go into the car – I'm not going to do that!

Most participants are troubled by the behaviors they witnessed or experienced personally from the boys who are their contemporaries. They find them to be less knowledgeable and sensitive about issues of *shemirat negiyah*, as well as other Jewish laws relating to behavior between the sexes. It is their impression that they have not been offered any classes on sexual abuse, which is equally important for them. Participants who have explored these issues with their male friends have found them to be wholly uneducated in these areas. They urge Modern Orthodox boys' schools to encourage parallel Life Values and Intimacy courses for boys because it is only in partnership that changes in community norms could be gradually implemented.

Conclusion – Impact of Course Content on Participants

The Life Values and Intimacy course implemented in the research was carefully crafted to address the needs of the participant population in areas of sexuality, relationships and modesty. While there was too much emphasis on *shemirat negiyah*, topics that were addressed were of interest and concern to participants. In this section, we have explored participants' responses to the two units which they identified as having the greatest impact on them. The use of media enhanced the impact of the units in which it was incorporated. The fact that the movie shown was produced about the very community being addressed but from a different perspective offered participants the opportunity to look inwards and consider whether they identified with what they viewed on the screen. In both instances, participants disagreed with the way their community and individuals in it, particularly the females, were represented. By responding to the images on the screen, they highlighted for themselves norms, expectations, and approaches to these issues. Inviting students to respond to the movies they viewed by creating their own film might offer an important additional component to education in areas of sexuality and relationships.

Transmitting Traditions – Impact of the Course

The interviews that took place before the course intervention offered the opportunity to better comprehend issues in areas of sexuality and relationships that participants experienced as being challenging. As presented earlier in the results, it became apparent that there were a number of areas of challenge for participants, particularly when tradition and modernity offer conflicting values. Beyond the difficulties with *shemirat negiyah* and modesty, a broader question of commitment emerged. Many participants describe a complicated relationship with Jewish law and practice, manifested in the ways in which they incorporated Jewish law within their daily living.

The fundamental approach of the course reflected an acceptance of Jewish law as a norm. I was interested in identifying ways in which the intervention affected students' comprehension of and attitudes towards approaches of Jewish law in the areas which had emerged as areas of challenge: Jewish law in general as well as *shemirat negiyah* and modesty in particular. Of the eighteen participants, more than half identified significant change for themselves in these areas, both in attitude and in understanding. Their responses are presented below.

Accepting and Understanding Jewish Law

The clearest statement participants made concerned their need for explanations that would help them identify with the norms of their tradition in areas of sexuality and relationships. While most participants are committed to a halakhic way of life, they find themselves challenged to live up to this commitment in areas of sexuality, *shemirat negiyah* and modesty. Explanations and access to underlying reasons for Jewish laws are described as being helpful in guiding them towards more meticulous practice. Everyone was looking to understand better.

Researcher: Many of the topics talked about in the course had a Jewish law component to them. How would you define your relationship with Jewish law?

Dina: I know about sleeve lengths and about all the expectations of Jewish law. There are some halakhot, which I do, even though I have a hard time with it, because I know the Jewish law. It's important to me to understand the Jewish law. I know it's important and you have to do it...if you understand the Jewish law, it is easier to keep.

Dina speaks for all participants who find it easier to maintain commitment when they understand the reasons for what they are doing. Nevertheless, she represents only about half of the group in

that she is committed to keeping Jewish laws even when she finds them difficult. Others sought explanations of Jewish law as a pathway to practice.

Awakening and Developing Awareness

About half the participants are not fully committed to *shemirat negiyah*. They choose their boundaries for physical interaction with the opposite sex for themselves based on their personal standards and conclusions. Many participants struggle with issues of modesty. For some, not much thought has been invested in these decisions, while for others decisions were made years earlier and have become a status quo. The course put the issues squarely back on the table for these participants, offering them opportunity to reflect on their practices.

Amit describes the course as presenting an ideal to which she might strive, but one that does not fit her current reality. Nevertheless, as a thoughtful religious teenager, she found the course valuable in offering her a different perspective than her own, one that she views herself as aspiring to. Whether it will lead to any long term changes remains to be seen, but it certainly served to sow the seeds of new possibilities in the minds of some participants.

Researcher: Did it affect you with regards Jewish law?

Amit: It awakened an awareness.

Researcher: Did your understandings change?

Amit: I believe I know more now. But I did not discover something completely new... I have a long way to go and it is difficult. There is life outside of this classroom and I have to struggle with that. And there is what we learn in the classroom which was a kind of an ideal. It is very hard work, like anything in Jewish law which needs to be integrated into real life. This is another aspect of Jewish law which I need to integrate in life itself and come to terms with it...

Researcher: How would you define your relationship to Jewish law?

Amit: I believe that as a religious girl, the Jewish law is an important aspect of my life. It does not dictate my lifestyle to me. I integrate the Jewish law into it [my lifestyle] and not the opposite.

Researcher: How does that work?

Amit: I know Jewish law. In this school they give us the opportunity to learn Jewish law in a really clear, good way. And I am trying to live a religious life and not to diverge from the path that I believe in. I will not allow the Jewish law to take over my life and change things in which I believe. But what I can do, I can

take from the Jewish law and implement it in my life in a manner that works for me, in a manner which I believe is right, and I will do so with pleasure.

Researcher: When you learn a Jewish law which doesn't suit you, what do you do with it?

Amit: It depends. If I would learn theoretically speaking that Shabbat didn't suit me, so I believe that because it is something so important, that I would still keep it, even if I do not believe in it. But small things which I am not so careful about, for example – washing clothing on Shabbat or showering on Shabbat, I will shower on Shabbat, those kinds of small things. I am committed. I am not a secular person. I believe that it is right for me. I am not going to sit around searching for ways to be more stringent. I will look to live a life that is true, but not too rigid.

Amit is committed to a halakhic practice which allows room for some personal choices. She separates between what she defines as central Jewish laws and others, or perhaps some of their details. Identifying herself as a religious girl, she expresses commitment to the system as a whole, but allows herself the freedom to ignore some of the finer details of practice. Along with this, she views the ideas presented by the course to be an ideal towards which she is willing to strive, but which she is not yet ready to adopt. Thus, the course encouraged Amit, and other participants who share her approach, to contemplate a path and chart aspirations for the future as well as alternatives for the present.

A Class Initiative regarding Tzniut

Clothing represents one of the central areas of challenge for Modern Orthodox teenage girls. Living with one foot in each of two worlds, or perhaps both feet in both worlds, makes the clash of cultures in this area a nexus point hard to negotiate. In response to the anger and frustration expressed by students regarding the uniform shirt, one of the tenth-grade home room teachers initiated a class effort to improve the level of modesty and commit to an agreed upon standard of dress. She suggested that establishing a commitment of this nature in the class would relieve those who participate in the need for a uniform shirt. Commenting on the discussion that took place in the classroom prior to this decision, Yael noted.

Yael: The class vote was not about whether to dress modestly or not. It's clear to everyone that they have to do that. How exactly you do that – that's your choice...

For many participants, the difficulty is in the nuances of permitted and forbidden. None of the participants are looking to be totally free of modesty and its implications – it is a value they by and large accept. However, as standards change in the world around them, they are looking to broaden the category of what is accepted as modest within the Modern Orthodox community. They seek a standard of modesty that offers more personal leeway than that which has been accepted to date.

There were a range of reactions to this class initiative in modesty. Since it was implemented based on a majority vote, the minority in the class was not pleased. On the other hand, others felt encouraged and supported by membership in the group and felt more comfortable being committed to dressing within the range of standards of Jewish law.

Tali: About modesty, as soon as we changed the way people dressed in class, there were lots of girls who complained, because it bothered them. “Why do you suddenly care what I look like?” “Why do I have to care about it being like this or that?” And there were girls who were really supported by the initiative, like me, girls who changed their outward appearance. The fact that there was a class-wide change really helped, because everyone is changing together and not just one.

The peer pressure factor, which encourages many of the participants to push the boundaries beyond what is considered acceptable practice in the school, is mitigated by a class initiative to develop peer pressure in the opposite direction – towards modest dress. Tali finds herself able to commit to a new standard of dress much more comfortably as part of a group effort. She feels that while one short intervention is not going to dramatically change the ways people behave and think about modesty, it does have an impact.

Tali: Also with regards how I dress. I don’t know if it changes immediately...I am trying to change gradually...just like it raised all sorts of thoughts and associations for me, it also raised thoughts for other girls. I’m not sure that things changed. But it certainly raises the issue...

There are students who feel that the class had no right to impose standards of dress on them. Despite the fact that this was a minority, with only a few students opposing the vote, their opinion is also noteworthy.

Researcher: What do you think of the idea of a whole class deciding to do something of this sort together?

Rotem: Chances are that it can be good. Let them do it as a group. Let them organize a group by themselves, but they shouldn't force the whole class.....

The question of group decisions, which, by definition, are going to result in impositions on some individuals, is raised in this class effort to take on a commitment as a group. While true of any class decision, it highlights an issue that emerged repeatedly as a result of a variety of questions in the research: Modern Orthodox teenagers today have difficulty accepting what is imposed upon them. They are seeking justifications and an understanding of the issues so that they can make decisions intelligently. This can make transmitting traditions all the more challenging.

Not Like "Them"

While some participants draw strength from peers, joining with them to support their shared commitment to Jewish law, a few are fortified by watching the behaviors of those around them and rejecting those behaviors. Observing how some young women use their bodies to attract male attention leads these participants to set standards for themselves precluding behaviors of this nature.

Researcher: Were there topics which came up outside of the class [intervention]?

Arielle: I don't know whether it had to do with the course, but when we see girls walking around in a particular way, and we say that that is not how we want to be, to get boys to chase after us, that's just really superficial.

Researcher: So what are your own personal boundaries?

Arielle: Not to change just to impress boys. When I see other girls I say, "I'm not going to do that!" When I see a girl dressed [with a neckline] as open as possible, and the boys are just staring at her because of her appearance, I don't want to be like her, I don't want to damage myself and my appearance. So I won't!

For some participants, it is in the "not going to do that", in the rejection of certain observed behaviors, that they decide on the ways they present themselves and the ways they interact with the boys around them.

Modesty Is Because of the Boys

Despite the attempts made by the *mechanechet* to offer a new understanding of modesty as being something that relates to women and their internal selves, Modern Orthodox girls seem unable to escape the traditional explanations for female modesty. Yael says it clearly.

Yael: It's well known that boys are tempted much more quickly. They have to have a girlfriend...It's true of all teenage boys, not just religious ones. With regards the Jewish law – girls don't dance mixed so that boys won't be tempted to look. Modesty is because of the boys. They are killing us just to have pity on the boys.

This explanation is a source of tremendous resentment on the part of Modern Orthodox teenage girls. The risk of educating to this type of understanding needs to be considered.

Being “Shomer”

“I Was Always Shomer Negiyah”

The question of how much participants wanted to learn about *shemirat negiyah* was hard to clarify. While in pre-interviews almost all participants chose *shemirat negiyah* as a topic that they were interested in addressing, in actuality, many expressed frustration at discussion on the topic. The frustration stemmed from two ends of the spectrum, those who had no involvement with boys as well as those who were already committed to *shemirat negiyah* despite their involvement with boys. Less than a quarter of the participants had no involvement with boys, and were therefore not particularly interested in issues relating to interactions with them. Maya, who does not interact with boys socially at all, was frustrated by the amount of time and attention dedicated to the topic.

Researcher: Did the course offer you a variety of topics of interest?

Maya: There were important topics. It bothered me that we spoke so much about *shemirat negiyah*.

Many of the participants in the course are already committed to *shemirat negiyah*. They had arrived at conclusions on the matter. Of this group, a few feel they have already moved beyond the discussion because it is no longer an issue of struggle for them, but a good number were still interested in learning more.

Researcher: Do you feel differently about Jewish law discussed in the class?

Ayelet: No, I feel like we said that already, 'cause I feel like the only ones that spoke were the ones who aren't *shomer* and they were trying to find out like why should they be. Like the girls who are [*shomer*] were just like, “Yeah we know that, and we know that too.”

The heterogeneous nature of the class made decisions about topics and the level at which they should be addressed difficult. The spectrum of knowledge and experience across the class, particularly when dealing with issues of sexuality and relationships, is broad.

“I Was Strengthened a Little”

Most participants in the group are willing to concede that the course offered valuable lessons. Even those already committed to *shemirat negiyah*, find that the discussions, the movies viewed, and the fresh exposure to ideas about these topics bolstered their commitment.

Researcher: Did it strengthen you in any way? You are pretty clear about your values.

Judy: Yeah, it made me feel that I am doing the right thing, and that it is saving me from all these other problems that are opened and not yet closed!!

Researcher: Do you feel differently at all about yourself as a result of the course?

Judy: Uhm, I feel good about myself – I feel like what I am doing is right.

Shai: It made me think and deliberate over all sorts of things.

Researcher: Did your understandings change?

Shai: Not really. I was always careful about *shemirat negiyah*. It strengthened it for me.

For some, simply opening up the conversation in a supervised framework with reliable resources available from the teacher was a novel experience, and confirmed that they had made wise choices for themselves. This was experienced positively. It triggered a deeper sense of caring about these issues than they had felt previously.

Ariella: Maybe I care a little more. I care much more – you could say that, yes.

“It Made Me Want to Understand More”

For some, exposure to ideas offered by the course regarding sexuality and Jewish law aroused their curiosity. While discussions within the course were not always comprehensive or deep enough for all participants, they succeeded, at the very least, in provoking enough interest among participants that those not satisfied explored their questions further elsewhere.

Researcher: What about your attitude to modesty and *shemirat negiyah*?

Lior: It made me want to understand more....it is clear that *shemirat negiyah* is important. And modesty? At first in class I didn't think that these classes were so

interesting, but then when I spoke about it more with others, it's really good that it was introduced now. We need to know it.

Researcher: Did your understandings change?

Lior: At first I did not agree with everything that was said...there were things that I did identify with... That made me think a lot...It was fun when we had discussions. When we talked about *shemirat negiyah* we were able to think about ourselves personally, if it is part of your life, if someone has a boyfriend.

Researcher: Did you get something out of the course?

Lior: In the class itself it is hard to receive. There are discussions in the class and then afterwards you come to [an understanding] with yourself, alone...

Lior does not stop at the information and discussions offered by the course. Inspired by the course but not always satisfied, she actively seeks answers to her remaining questions from other educators and learned people around her. She searches until she finds satisfactory explanations.

Researcher: How do you come to the high spiritual levels you seek?

Lior: You simply have to talk to the right people.

Researcher: How did you know that you needed to keep searching for these people?

Lior: I simply found them. I did not know ahead of time....

Almost all participants are looking for reasons to be committed, but not everyone is willing to search as diligently as Lior. An additional perspective on why understanding is important is offered by Ayelet, who is fully committed to *shemirat negiyah* but is always looking for explanations she can utilize in helping her friends, especially her male friends, understand this commitment.

Researcher: Why do you think you need to understand in this area?

Ayelet: Because it is something that you do that's hard and challenging and if you don't like, don't understand why, you'll just be like, "I don't care anymore 'cause no one explains to me." I think it's like really about your relationship [with God], and like making tea on a Shabbat in a second cup or wearing *tzitzit* for boys, you just wear it, but so it's not something that bothers you very much, so it's not so important to know why... And also like telling, like telling someone I'm not going to hug you, like my good friend and I'm not going to hug you – you need

something to hold you up. I wouldn't do that to my friend and it's like embarrassing to him and I wouldn't do that to him if I didn't have something that I could stand on, a basis ...

Ayelet differentiates here between various kinds of commandments with regards the need for rationales. When commandments are not too demanding and do not require particular effort or sacrifice, rationales are less necessary. The examples she offers of making tea on Shabbat (which requires using an extra cup to cool off water so as not to consider the act one of cooking) and wearing *tzitzit* (a four cornered garment which males wear under their clothing) are examples of commandments which she considers to require little effort. They are not interpersonal commandments but rather are between man and God. However, *shomer negiyah* can mean instructing friends not to greet you in ways that they are used to (a hand shake, a hug, a high five). In this case therefore, Ayelet seeks substantive reasons to strengthen her resolve and maintain confidence in her convictions in order to be able to ask this of a friend.

Strengthening Commitment

The clearest statement from a participant about the positive impact engendered by the intervention was offered by Tali. While she has not yet chosen a full commitment to *shemirat negiyah*, she has altered some of her behaviors. In addition, she found that the course offered her the opportunity to think independently for herself about *shemirat negiyah* and formulate her conclusions rather than simply follow rules unquestioningly.

Researcher: How have you changed with regards the various course topics?

Tali: First of all I have changed in the way that I dress. And also *shemirat negiyah*. That is the way to learn – from the Jewish law. I know why we have to be *shomer negiyah*. But when it emerges from learning about boys and girls, it is much more genuine. There are those who are *shomer negiyah* because their mom and dad told them. My parents did not force me. The fact that I am learning about it myself and I want to be *shomer negiyah* is much more genuine. And whenever it is that I commit to it, it won't be one minute on, one minute off. I will always be *shomer*. I know that if I suddenly start now to be *shomer negiyah*, as soon as there is a situation where I will want to touch, then I won't be careful. So I think it is not genuine. We need to search deeper in order to be able to be *shomer*.

Tali attests to having gained from the intervention. She has found herself exposed to ideas and a deeper understanding of the underlying principles which inform *shemirat negiyah*. These ideas need

to percolate as she uses her newfound understanding to decide for herself what her personal commitments will be.

Echoes of her sentiment are found in the words of a number of other participants, who were also able to identify changes over the year. Lior has made a dramatic change recently by deciding to be *shomeret negiyah* within an existing relationship. While she did not give full credit for this change to the course, she did feel that it was one factor influencing her decision.

Researcher: Were you always *shomeret negiyah*?

Lior: No.

Researcher: Is it a big change for you?

Lior: Yes.

Researcher: How did you come to it?

Lior: I was in a relationship. It's [touching] is something amazing and fantastic and a huge part of the relationship. Sometimes, there's a bad feeling that I am not observing the Jewish law. I don't think I could have come to this conclusion if I did not think that it would all fall apart. The relationship would not survive if I would not make a change right now...

Researcher: You managed to change from within a relationship with someone?

Lior: Yes.

Ariella represents a number of the participants who feel that they had reached a deeper connection to these Jewish laws than they had felt previously.

Researcher: Looking back over the past year, can you identify ways you've changed with regards some of these issues?

Ariella: Kind of. Maybe I care a little more. I care much more – you could say that, yes.

While most participants could not attest to dramatic changes as a result of the intervention, they find themselves more thoughtful, more aware, and sometimes even a little more committed. While only a beginning, this certainly confirmed the potential positive impact of interventions of this nature.

Finding Balance

The course highlighted the challenge teenage boys often face in controlling their desires. Maayan is searching for balance in her relationship with her boyfriend and does not want to feel

that she is responsible for his failures. Her experiences in the course helped her to recognize that a healthy balance is possible.

Researcher: Did your understandings of Jewish law change as a result of the course?

Maayan: The question which troubled me was, “Do we cause the boys to sin?” It makes me feel – where am I in this whole story? The halakhot I more or less knew beforehand. She [Adina – the course teacher] said that we have some responsibility and on the other hand we do not have to be responsible for them. Where do you find yourself in the balance? If a girl is beautiful, it’s not her fault. There is a balance: girls have to be modest and on the other hand boys have to control themselves. It is important to find a balance here.

The course offered Maayan a model of shared responsibility, freeing her from the belief she was harboring that females bear responsibility for males’ sexual struggles. This placing of responsibility on females via expectations of dress and of “gate-keeping,” seems to be broadly held by many participants, and can be the source of tension and frustration towards the system of Jewish law. The balance of responsibility that emerged as an approach for Maayan is much more palatable.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the intervention had an impact on the majority of the participants by providing opportunities for new perspectives both on Jewish law and human sexuality, and most importantly of the interface between them. A few participants were able to identify a commitment to positive behavioral changes emerging as a result of a deeper comprehension of the underlying motivations for Jewish law in areas of sexuality and relationships. Whereas most participants did not change their behaviors, they did attest to having become more aware and more thoughtful about issues of *shemirat negiyah*, modesty and relationships.

The complex issues relating to sexuality, which often play a significant role in the formation of Modern Orthodox teenagers’ religious identity, need to be addressed. As Lior said wisely, this intervention offered “just a taste.” A multiple year model of education in areas of sexuality, modesty and relationships by teachers within the school who receive training to do so, would make these topics part of the natural conversation between teacher and student in Modern Orthodox school settings.

Becoming “Normed”

In his book, *Voices*, Green (1999) develops a model for moral education that was presented at length in the theoretical background of this research. In this section, I will utilize Green’s theory to explicate the ways in which some participants were normed to observance of Jewish law.

Green proposes that commitment to norms can often be difficult to identify based on external behaviors alone as someone may be adhering to a particular norm for merely extrinsic reasons. He suggests that identifying normation is best accomplished in the breach, by observing people’s reactions to failures of moral behavior. The emotions that accompany this failure identify whether normation has taken place. In the following section, I will analyze a number of instances in which participants are normed, and some in which participants change their norms from those they held earlier.

Being Modern Orthodox is Not “Lite”

Gila, who speaks passionately about true commitment to Jewish law while engaging modernity presents the complex nature of being Modern Orthodox from her perspective.

Gila:...[People] misunderstand what it means to be Modern Orthodox like very easily, in my opinion... Because they think we’re “lite.” We are not lite we simply observe Jewish law totally together with being part of the Western world. And that is something totally different. It’s as if people have accepted the authority on themselves to say that something is not right. How do you think this way? Like it’s a very thin boundary and in a second people don’t understand it and can cross it and it really needs to be taught more clearly that it’s not like what people think....

Researcher: Do you think it’s possible to be truly Modern Orthodox?

Gila: Look, it’s the hardest. More than not religious, more than ultra-Orthodox, more than Breslav, the hardest is Modern Orthodox. Because it’s to know how to take both worlds and to create something else from them. It’s not that I am closed in my own world and that’s it without any contact. It means knowing how to integrate the fun, depends what you call fun, and think which fun things you are allowed to and which you have to leave behind. What is right to do and what is not. It’s hard.

Researcher: Do you feel like you struggle with it a lot?

Gila: Yes of course... Sometimes you have to say, wait hold on a minute. It's not so easy to do that. Like, every so often there's a ping, OK, that means stop a second. It's hard to do that. I feel like sometimes I have to say: Stop a minute!

Gila describes the constant self-questioning regarding behaviors and activities as she seeks to develop a model of modern religious living for herself. She argues against those who do not take their religious commitments seriously and who easily fall into the trap of considering the commitment to Jewish law "lite." Gila observes that many lack the determination to incorporate both worlds without sacrificing at least some of their commitment to traditional values. The model she proposes incorporates both worlds, while not diluting the level of commitment to tradition and Jewish law, and it is one she would like to see more broadly contemplated and implemented by the Modern Orthodox community. Currently, it does not reflect most Modern Orthodox community norms.

Faith and Membership

Nomi is struggling. She describes herself as simultaneously having difficulty believing while feeling in her heart that she believes. She describes how the nature of her prayer is uneven; sometimes she feels connected to God and sometimes she finds a connection elusive.

Researcher: What do you think it's like for teenagers in general? How do you think teenagers struggle with the issues?

Nomi: It's hard for some of them. Sometimes the only reason they're doing things is because it's the way they grew up, it's what their parents want. Their parents wouldn't approve if they weren't. I personally think you should be true to yourself. If you don't believe it – you don't believe it. Sometimes I find Judaism hard to believe. I still continue it and I still do it 'cause it's in my heart, I know I believe in it. Sometimes I find it hard to pray, and sometimes I feel like I am really connecting [to God]. It might be harder for some girls and it might be easier for other girls.

Nomi's description of her internal conflicts can provide insight into the process of normation. Nomi may represent the experience of many Modern Orthodox teenagers, who have a deeply rooted sense of faith but are not always able to access it in the daily details of practice. She chooses to continue to practice despite the fact that she sometimes finds Judaism hard to believe. Her faith, "I still continue it and I still do it 'cause it's in my heart, I know I believe it," gives her the strength to continue even in uncertainty, and it is through this continuing that she

feels able to sometimes connect to God. She uses prayer to help her with this connection, and through her continued practice despite her own uncertainties she expresses strong identification with Judaism and normation to the regular practice of prayer.

While Nomi is strongly normed, praying out of personal conviction, she identifies many Modern Orthodox teenagers as simply complying with Jewish law to satisfy their parents. She describes them as fulfilling the requirements of Jewish law but not out of any commitment or identification with the laws themselves. In Green's terminology, they have acquired a norm of membership, choosing to comply with behaviors because of their loyalty to family. But they are acting out of compliance and are not observant (accepting of the standards intrinsically for themselves) of the Jewish laws themselves.

Sarah is deciding where she stands in relation to tradition. Recently, she has been a little less careful about practice, imagining the possibility of a less intense commitment. Yet, as she talks about herself and Jewish law, she finds herself articulating a deeper commitment than she expected.

Sarah: ...suddenly there are glimmers, sparks where I find myself defending it, defending religion and Judaism. Because I don't like to define myself as...I don't want to not be religious, I don't know.

In Sarah's case, Green's emphasis on multiple voices is evidenced. Her internal dialogue triggers a level of reflexive judgment that enables her to identify her own desire to be closer to tradition than the image of herself she has carried in her mind. Her words imply that she is looking to belong to the group of people who are religious and that she is strongly normed to membership in that group.

While Nomi and Sarah represent a commitment to membership despite uncertainty, Shirel offered the other extreme, a striking sense of confidence in the system.

Shirel: The truth is, I hardly have questions, because I believe in it [Judaism], because it is true.

Offering a simple statement of, from her perspective, fact, she is able to ward off questions with a sense that the Jewish law represents a truth. Shirel's belief in Jewish law "because it is true" may carry within it a sense of what Green describes as "the sacred" in Judaism. Her words demonstrate a sense of certainty about Jewish law that she views as true.

I sought to explore how commitment to norms helped participants practically in their daily lives as they made decisions and choices. Gila explained that despite sometimes being

drawn to fashionable clothing or a potentially exciting activity, her deeply rooted commitment and belief in God enables her to reject the activity as inappropriate despite its attraction.

Researcher: You see all these things that look cool, that look attractive, that look like they are fun. how are you able to say, “This is not relevant to me?” What gives you that strength as opposed to saying, “Well maybe let’s try it, maybe it is cool?”

Gila: Because I know it’s not true.

Researcher: Where do you know that from?

Gila: ‘Cause I believe in God and I believe in what I’m doing...

Researcher: Is it a temptation?

Gila: Yeah, of course, it’s a real pain, it’s ...

Researcher: It’s not simple?

Gila: No, not at all.

Gila casts her conversation in religious terms. She pits temptation against God and the expectations He sets for her and opts to believe in God and accept upon herself the concomitant behaviors. Gila provides the model of a participant who is strongly normed to Jewish law but also confirms that living up to that commitment can be difficult.

A number of other participants, particularly those who expressed exceptional commitment and strength of will, also found that commitment to norms inspired them and guided their behaviors.

Researcher: How do you think religious teenagers your age struggle with the expectations of Jewish law in relationships between boys and girls?

Maayan: I can certainly say that considering how powerful the desire to touch is, what holds you back is the fact that you are religious...I truly believe that it is the correct thing.

Echoing Gila’s approach, Maayan finds that in the struggle to avoid temptation, it is the belief that Jewish law provides a path that is correct for her that enables her to behave according to these convictions. She, too, is strongly normed to Jewish law through the call of duty, a voice in Green’s conception which emanates from a sense of sacrifice, of the duty to transcend oneself. It offers an understanding of what it means to be committed to a standard outside of herself. Green recognizes that turning away from one’s own self-interest to serve a higher end does not

take place without struggle but is a significant aspect of strong normation for a community of text and tradition.

Participants present different ways in which they engage their tradition. The foundations of their strong normation to Jewish laws differ considerably. For some commitment is based in a voice of membership – a sense of loyalty to the family or community. Others arrive at commitment through a voice of duty and sacrifice, a movement away from self interest and towards a sense of something sacred, transcendent for which they are willing to act.

“I Am the Jewish Law”

While some participants are conflicted over Jewish law and its demands, a number are unequivocal in their identification with halakhic practice. Tali understands the purpose of Jewish law as being to live in God’s way and is fully identified with it.

Tali: ... I accept Jewish law. I think Jewish law helps us to live in God’s way and correctly... I respect Jewish law and try to keep it as well as I can.

Tali’s following of God’s rules connects her to that which is sacred. She is strongly normed to follow the requirements of Jewish law. Ayelet also identifies with a way of life based in Jewish law. While she is eager to explore Jewish law and acquire a more sophisticated understanding of it, it is not in an effort to replace a religious commitment with a rational one. Rather she seeks to connect more fully to a system that she cannot imagine herself without.

Ayelet: Jewish law – it’s very important to me. I always ask questions about Jewish law. I always feel like maybe, I just can’t imagine myself without the Jewish law – it’s so part of my life and I believe in God, so it’s just a part of me.

Tal has been brought up to view Jewish law as binding and she does so without conflict, proud to identify with it as a guide to her life. She does not view the strictures as an imposition, but has accepted them wholeheartedly.

Researcher: Do you feel obligated by the Jewish law?

Tal: No! I do it of my own free will. I do it with pleasure.

Researcher: If it is the Jewish law – then you do it?

Tal: Yes, that is my way of life, and that is how I have been educated.

Researcher: Where were you educated?

Tal: From home.

Tal emphasizes the autonomous nature of her relationship to Jewish law. She emphasizes that while it is a way of life to which she has been educated from home, she accepts Jewish law upon herself independently. Her home is the source of this strong normation, but she has actively chosen herself to be normed not just out of a conscience of membership to her home and family but as an autonomously accepted way of life.

Tali, Ayelet, and Tal all offer strong statements of commitment to Jewish law and an independent desire to live their lives from within the system. Green (1999) describes moral education as occurring when there is “a conscience cultivated by attachment, not merely presence to a social group” (p. 78). In these terms, the above participants can be viewed as morally educated.

The strongest statement of identification with the system comes from Gila. Discussing the pressures often placed on girls by their male friends and boyfriends to ignore the stricture of *shemirat negiyah*, Gila described the incessant arguments they offer in an effort to persuade their female counterparts.

Gila: There’s a lot of pressure from the boys.

Researcher: Who try and persuade you not to be *shomer*?

Gila: Yeah...it’s really hard and you know how guys ... they always have another argument and sometimes it’s really hard to maintain your opinion and stand up for yourself. And they say, “OK, even more so, if you’re not his girlfriend so what do you care, why do you care if you hug when you say hallo and goodbye, like what do you care, just like when you hug your girlfriends?” And then I say the whole bit that I am doing something based in Jewish law and I do it because the Jewish law says it that way and then they have nothing to say.”

These boys demonstrate deep respect for the Jewish law even though they themselves are not committed to its practice in this specific area. They argued until they were convinced that Gila’s motivations were based in Jewish law and then retreated: “they have nothing to say.” Green (1999, p. 96) identifies the statement “because it is your duty” as being an argument stopper and indeed this seems true here. The interchange offers insight into the respect that these teenage boys have for commitment to a standard of Jewish Law, to someone else’s sense of duty even when they are not committed to that same standard for themselves.

In trying to clarify more specifically the interchange between Gila and her male friends, she interrupted me mid-sentence with an impassioned description of her relationship with Jewish law.

Researcher: Are you saying that the fact that Jewish law defines what you can and cannot do helps you to create your boundaries? The fact that you can say that it isn't coming from you, it's the Jewish law, it's coming from something outside of you...

Gila: The Jewish law comes from me, I believe in it, don't you understand? It's not the Jewish law and me. It's my life, I live it and I'm always thinking, like always in my subconscious. I'm always thinking is this yes, or no, is it allowed or not allowed, right away, this is the way I've been educated. It's not separate from me... I connect to it, I believe in it, I respect it... whether I connect to it or not, you have to go with things all the way.

Gila's description reflects the image of a fully committed Modern Orthodox Jew, in constant conversation with herself as she processes her actions through a halakhic lens. She considers Jewish law as intrinsic to herself, not something emanating from a separate entity that she can choose to identify with or not. It is an inseparable part of her, intrinsic to her identity. The various voices of which Green speaks such as membership, duty, sacrifice and memory all direct her to strong normation in this area. Despite her absolute and unquestioning commitment to the standard of Jewish law, she still speaks of the challenge and the struggle that accompanies this deep commitment. Her passionate commitment coupled with her admission of struggle confirms the complexity of religious life even for the Jew determined to maintain full commitment to Jewish law.

No Regrets

Participants attribute their strength and commitment to a variety of sources. Some derive strength from their past education, others find their current peers to be a source of support, and still others look to the future for support. Dana feels that her sense of what she ought and ought not to do is her source of strength. In particular, she cannot imagine herself choosing to behave in a manner that she might later regret. Maintaining awareness of behaviors that she herself considers "not right" serves as a powerful preventative motivation for her.

Researcher: What influences you?

Dana: I think your own behavior influences... if you think it is not right, you are not going to do anything that you will later regret. If you think it is wrong, you may end up regretting later.

Maayan attests to “the thought of the consequences” as keeping her strong. The central struggle that Maayan faces is a concrete one, as she tries to commit to *shemirat negiyah* while involved in a serious relationship with her boyfriend. She is searching for an anchor that will help her to stay rooted to the Jewish laws she aspires to keep but finds so challenging.

Researcher: From what you have read and learned, what persuades you most and what gives you the most strength?

Maayan: I am one of those people who know that if I touch my boyfriend, I will have tremendous guilt feelings. I will come home and I will not stop thinking about it, not necessarily because it was something good but because we should not be doing this now. It should only take place after the wedding, with whoever is supposed to be. If it ends up being with him [current boyfriend], that would be thank God, fantastic. If it does not end up being him, I will simply be happy that I did not touch him. Because the moment it happens with my real husband, I will be thinking about him, he will be on my mind. I don't need that. That is in principle the factor which most forcefully gives me strength...I know that I would come home and regret what I would do. If I kiss him, I will come home and be full of regret, and perhaps I would even break up with him because I will be so confused. I will just be in a state which one should not be in. That would be it...In my opinion it is important to teach the consequences of touching, where it takes a couple to in the end, particularly if you are religious and it is much more traumatic. In principle, [the thought of] the consequences is what keeps me strong. When I think about what could evolve, that keeps me strong.

Maayan has developed a tangible image of the behaviors she would regret and the ways in which that regret would impact on her mental health as a strategy for inspiration. She has developed a full, detailed scenario of consequences, perhaps because she needs to be able to picture the negative consequences clearly, in order to maintain her strength. In this sense, both Maayan and Dana have developed an anticipatory conscience which they are able to draw on for support. In addition they focus on prudential reasons for *shemirat negiyah*, which Green views as a necessary step in the process of becoming moral beings.

Along with their deep-felt connection to Jewish law, the argument for prudence serves best in helping these girls maintain commitment. Maayan and Dana provide perfect examples of Green's definition of strongly normed participants. It is precisely the existence of the feelings

they describe, (“I will have tremendous guilt feelings”) or (“doing things you may end up regretting later”) which defines strong norm acquisition for Green.

“Not Because of the Jewish Law!”

A few participants confirm commitment to *shemirat negiyah* but are quick to emphasize that their commitment is not based on the Jewish law at all. Sarah distances herself from Jewish law and emphasizes the intrinsic good that she recognizes in the practice of *shemirat negiyah* as being the impetus for her commitment.

Sarah: If I am *shomeret negiyah* it is not because of the Jewish law, it’s because I feel that that is what is good for me. Not because I need to do it, it’s not coming from feeling obligated to it. It could be that one day I won’t care and I’ll do whatever I feel like...

Researcher: Can you suggest a good way for teaching halakhot in these areas [of *shemirat negiyah*]?

Sarah: I think that if you teach the class not from within the Jewish law, that’s the right way to go about it and then one can see how it connects to the Jewish law and that leads to believing the Jewish law.

Sarah’s approach confirms Green’s analysis that observance of a certain norm is not sufficient evidence of normation. Sarah chooses to practice *shemirat negiyah* for personal reasons, because she sees it as a prudent thing to do. She goes so far as to recommend that education to observance of Jewish law should emanate from prudence outside of Jewish law. She needs to see intrinsic value to *shemirat negiyah* and only then will accept it, but not because it is the Jewish law. While she may be observing the norm, normation to the group has not occurred since her motivations do not stem from a sense of loyalty or belonging. Moreover, Sarah’s suggestion that basic compliance is more likely to occur if education focuses on the intrinsic good of these Jewish laws for secular reasons implies a perception of intrinsic negativity to Jewish law among some Modern Orthodox youth. It seems that many youth in the Modern Orthodox community are seeking normation to Jewish law qua Jewish law.

Prudence is Helpful

Judy is normed to Jewish law and plans to keep it in the future as well as in the present. When explaining her commitments, she utilizes reasons that are meaningful to her and helpful in accepting Jewish law.

Judy: I think it's really beautiful to have your kiss, your first kiss, the real thing to be with your husband – the person you want to be with your whole life. I think that's so beautiful [slightly embarrassed laugh]. Saving yourself for the person you love not like a fling or a person you like now, who knows what's going to be later. Oh back then we were in love. This is the person I want to be with for the rest of my life, this is the person I want to share my first wonderful moment with – so it helps me to listen to the “don't do that, don't do that.”

Judy's words indicate a commitment that is observant of the norm. She utilizes support mechanisms to strengthen her resolve. Her arguments are prudent, focusing on the beauty of a first kiss at marriage as well as the importance of a long term commitment. Shai is similarly observant of the norm of *shemirat negiyah* both because it is the Jewish law and because it makes sense to her.

Shai: I think *shemirat negiyah* is important. First of all, it's the Jewish law. Second of all – it's not for no reason, it makes sense. Save it for the wedding, it is better that way.

These participants confirm the need for justifications and prudential reasons to explain Jewish law. Even when committed to Jewish law and observant of its requirements, reasons and justifications serve a central role in fortifying commitment.

Respecting Those Who are Normed

While not all Modern Orthodox teenagers are committed to follow the standards of Jewish law in all areas, they are generally respectful of those who are. Gila (cited above) observes that her male friends accepted her refusal to hug them when they were convinced that it was based in a commitment to Jewish law. Leah was also impressed by the sensitivity her friend displayed towards her.

Leah: There are some who are more religious and some who are less. There are many of all the types. For example: Once we went to a movie, a bunch of friends, in my opinion it was really nice, because one of the girls called us up and asked if we would be comfortable if she would come in jeans. I was really happy that she asked us if we would be comfortable. I was totally comfortable. It didn't bother me. And it didn't bother anyone else, or if it did – they didn't say.

Researcher: What does this show?

Leah: That there are many types of girls. In my opinion, it is good that we are not closed off, we know what is out there.

While the girl in question does not feel the need to dress in line with her friends, she is sensitive enough to those around her to ensure that they would not be offended by being accompanied in public by someone dressed in jeans. While she herself is not normed to the standards the majority of the group has adopted in this area (wearing skirts), she has acquired a norm of membership to those around her, offering to be compliant to rules with which she does not identify for the sake of her friends. Green (1999) identifies this kind of consideration for members of the group, particularly in friendship, as significant in developing a capacity for moral education and demonstrates strong normation to membership.

“We Felt Like Idiots!”

Many participants indicate feelings of shame or embarrassment either at the thought of or in response to an actual failure in *shemirat negiyah*. Tali, who was deeply influenced by the experience of the course, is committed to observing the Jewish law and is troubled when she does not manage to live up to this commitment.

Researcher: How would you define your relationship to Jewish law?

Tali: I try to follow the path of Jewish law, and if I am not successful, I feel bad about it. I make an effort and try to keep the Jewish law, but sometimes it is hard. I accept the Jewish law. I think they help us to live in the ways of God as we are supposed to. But there are things that are very difficult, especially at our age. Modesty and *shemirat negiyah*, these are things that are hard to keep, especially nowadays. I respect the Jewish law and try to keep it.

Tali describes the pull of conflicting values that attract her as she seeks to live a strongly normed life. She is able to identify the areas of struggle and continues to be committed to the system.

Lior has also changed over the course of the year, both as a result of the course and her personal spiritual quest. These changes have brought her to a need for greater consistency between her newly strengthened beliefs and her actions. Her self-governance is well enough developed that she envisions deep remorse emanating from any failure to practice based on these beliefs.

Lior: If I feel that *shemirat negiyah* is something that has to be done, then I will not ever be OK with myself not being *shomer negiyah*. ...What can you do, life is hard.

You have to work on it or ignore it. But that is not really an option. Because in the end it will kill you! If you do something that you do not believe in – you won't be a human being. In the end you will not feel like a human. You have to do what you believe in.

It is precisely in the consistency of belief and practice that Lior sees the expression of the unique nature of being human. Ariella shares a similar philosophy and has already had to face her own remorse in this regard. Having started their relationship with a physical component to it, she and her boyfriend have decided that being *shomer negiyah* is worthwhile, rather than suffer the emotional price of not being *shomer negiyah*. They have chosen to strengthen themselves and their commitment to *shemirat negiyah*.

Researcher: Have you always been shomer? Have you been in a relationship where you weren't shomer?

Ariella: At first we weren't so careful and then we felt like idiots after, even just like hugging, and so we decided, "No this is retarded, we're just going to be *shomer*."

Researcher: And why did you feel that?

Ariella: Just if we held hands it felt wrong. There's no point. We decided that if we can't manage then we won't be together 'cause it's stupid. I don't want to be like so many of my friends who do not such good stuff.

Ariella's description of her and her boyfriend's feelings in response to a failure in *shemirat negiyah* matches perfectly the reaction Green identifies with strong normation.

The existence or failure of norm acquisition is displayed in the presence or absence of certain reflexive judgments and accompanying *feelings* associated with *departure* from what the norm requires. These are typically the feelings of guilt, shame, anxiety, embarrassment-the emotions of self assessment-and sometimes fear, sorrow and even pain. (p. 76)

Their response to their own departure from what they understand to be a requirement of Jewish law is a sense of folly as well as a sense that they were doing something wrong, guilt in Green's terms. They are willing to sacrifice their relationship if necessary rather than allow themselves to live with this sense of foolishness they were experiencing when they were not fully

successful in observing Jewish law. They have successfully quieted the other voices drawing them away from normation to Jewish law and find strength in the commitment itself.

Persuading Others

Participants attribute significant importance to the influence of their friends on their attitudes. I found participants to be quite clearly divided on the issue of peers persuading each other with regards Jewish law. Very few participants describe friends who were committed to convincing those around them of the significance of *shemirat negiyah*.

Researcher: Do friends try and persuade each other?

Ayelet: Sometimes. I have a friend who like reads us books every day...she wasn't *shomer* and then she read these books and she started to be *shomer*.

Having become recently convinced herself, this friend is eager to share her new found wisdom with her peers and will perhaps continue to do so until she is successful in her mission, "reads us books every day." Others would address issues only if they were a source of serious concern. In these cases, Lior recommends simply initiating a conversation.

Lior: If she's a really good friend, and I think what she is doing is not good for her, I will talk to her about it. Friends can have more of an influence than parents.

Yael represents those who believe unequivocally in autonomy. While she herself is fully committed to *shemirat negiyah* and modest dress, she feels any attempt on her part to convince others is inappropriate.

Yael: I don't like it when girls comment to other girls. That's their way. What? Are you going to tell them – how to speak, what to look like and how to dress? Who are you to tell her? Take care of yourself and that's it! Are you her friend? – Fantastic! But you want to force her to be modest? I do dress modestly. But no one forced me to. I don't like when girls impose it on other girls.

Yael describes conversations about modesty or *shemirat negiyah* with a friend as being an effort to "force" or to "impose". Neither of these are necessary products of a conversation between friends on the topic of *shemirat negiyah*, or modesty. Lior has just described an alternative approach. On another occasion, Yael offered:

Yael: Anyone who is not being *shomer negiyab* – who am I to comment? You know the Jewish law and you choose not to keep it. I'm not going to come and change that!

Yael's approach is representative of many participants and their peers. Whatever choices they had made for themselves, they did not consider it appropriate to approach their peers and convince them to behave in any particular way. Some did not see it as an effective strategy, but for the most part the hesitation lay in the sense that they had no right to intrude on choices and practices of their friends and peers. While Green (2003) contends that a norm can only be defined as such when the status of governance it acquires is regarded as pertaining to other people beyond the self, he acknowledges that this does not mean one must choose to actively impose it on others, even though that is sometimes viewed as an indication of strong normation.

Changing Norms

A number of participants describe changes in behavior representing movement away from norms with which they had previously identified. They share the emotional experiences accompanying these changes, which provide insight into normation through a movement from being normed to one standard to being normed to another.

Judy: Like I feel like let's say today I took my skirt out of the laundry and I put it on and I was like "my skirt is really short" and like I would notice that and my sister was like, "your skirt's really short," and I was like "no it's not!" [We both laugh]. And it's like totally opposite [of what usually happens between us]. So then I was looking at it and my mother was like, "Oh that's a little short" and I'm like, "I'll pull it down a little bit." And I'm in school now and I'm looking at myself saying, "Wow, your skirt is really short like wow! You see everything like wow it's so short!" And like I never get anything over the internet and I was so excited and this time I wanted to order something and I ordered a shirt and I get it and it's like, "wow, this shirt is really see-through." I'm like fine whatever – I'll wear a tank top. And then my mother is like, "don't you think that's a little see-through" and I'm like, "no, it's fine – not at all, I don't think it's see-through." And I walked around with it. And then even my sister, my sister ...she looks at me and she's like, "why are you wearing that – it's really see-through" and I'm like, "What? It's that see-through, no it's not." And I'm thinking, "oh my gosh, what is wrong with me." And my mother's like, "you don't think it's really see-

through?” And my mother saying that made me feel like, “oh my gosh, I really am changing.” Also that I didn’t listen to my mother and I didn’t go change. I was like, “who cares, what the heck.” Nobody looked at me any different! And like when we went out nobody looked at me and said “What is she wearing” and like whatever! They just said like, “oh, it’s really a nice shirt.” And I felt really good about myself. And it used to be whenever I would try anything on and let’s say it would be a really nice shirt and my mother would say, “the sleeves are a little short” and I would be like, “no” and she’d be like, “It’s fine, it’s just a little short” and I’d be like, “no mom, if you said it’s short – it’s short! I won’t get it. I don’t want you to be looking at me saying it’s short”... And here she says, “Isn’t it a little see-through” and I say, “no” and I wear it! I’m like, wait it doesn’t bother me anymore, I don’t know – it’s weird.

Judy surprises herself with her responses to the comments about her new shirt. She has chosen not to be compliant with a family norm that she no longer has the commitment to uphold in favor of a peer norm. The movement from the family norm stems from a stronger need for autonomy, buttressed by the peer group which allows, perhaps even expects, a conflicting standard of dress that has become significantly more attractive. Judy’s ability to feel “really good about herself” speaks to a rejection of her family norms, although the step away was not simple. Along with her good feelings, she expressed uncertainty, “Oh my gosh, what is wrong with me?” as well as feeling “weird” at not being bothered by her mother’s criticism. She struggled to identify how she felt and was experiencing both good and bad feelings, a reflection of the fact that she may still be observant of a norm even as she is moving away from being compliant to it. It seems she is seeking to move outside the realm of family governance and function from within her personal norms, which are deemed acceptable because they are reinforced by her peers.

Gila has concluded that it is the strength of the conflicting voice of membership that leads to revising norms.

Researcher: I’m wondering is the area in which people aren’t so serious about keeping Jewish law only boy-girl relationships or they just don’t care about Jewish law at all?

Gila: No. It’s boy-girl relationships.

Researcher: So why is that?

Gila: It's the thing that has the strongest pull, especially at our age. All our hormones are developing and the girls want a boyfriend and the boys want to have a girl.

In this case, it is the desire for a male-female relationship, or the desire for a physical relationship itself, which conflicts with a commitment to the norms of Jewish law.

A few participants, when being self-reflective, came to the conclusion that they had recently become less concerned about their halakhic practice than they used to be. Rivka attributes the changes in her behavior primarily to the influence of peers.

Researcher: How about your relationship to Jewish law?

Rivka: Once I was more connected to Jewish law, I think. In the last few years it has started to become weaker. Once I was much more committed in my decisions.

Researcher: How do you understand the changes?

Rivka: High school...I chose this place [high school] because I thought it would suit me. There are plenty of girls here who do things differently and behave differently [from Jewish law]. It affects your behavior in some way.

A pattern begins to evolve in the various experiences participants offered. The pattern follows Green's model of conflicting voices. It seems to be the relative strength of the various voices at play that changes, affecting changes in normation and commitment. Many participants reject the possibility of what might be termed "partial-normation." Accepting a particular norm leads to observance of behaviors consistent with the norm. But while those who gave up norms of Jewish law did so hesitantly and not without internal conflict, they were almost all in agreement that it was hard to be "partially-normed" to *shemirat negiyah*.

Researcher: Where is the boundary in boy-girl interactions?

Channa: I don't know. You say to yourself – now I'm going to keep the Jewish law. But OK, so at first you keep everything, and then gradually you say: This and this – I won't bother with.

Researcher: And then how do you define your boundaries?

Channa: Then there are no boundaries. Because as soon as you give up on one thing, you are giving up on everything else too!

Researcher: Do you really think so?

Channa: There are boundaries in order that we protect ourselves and don't get to... But if you give up on one thing, within a day, you are giving up on something else and then something else...

Channa has difficulty identifying a state of partial-normation, particularly when thinking about *shemirat negiyab* within couples. Autonomous boundaries are more difficult to maintain than those that come in an authoritative, perhaps even a sacred, voice of membership. While decisions can be reversed and normation can change over time, once a personal standard becomes a source of behavior, commitment to maintaining this particular standard is challenging. While a few participants identify themselves as being able to maintain their autonomously established standard, many others confirm it as a source of struggle.

Maayan and her boyfriend are trying hard to prove this statement wrong. Wholly committed to Jewish law, they are finding it simply too difficult to live up to their own expectations of themselves. This is a source of tremendous distress.

Maayan: I know that the words of Jewish law are true. I can say that I have pretty much stopped in this matter [*shemirat negiyab*] but I know that it is really wise and that brilliant people stand behind this thing. The fences are very wise.

Researcher: What do you mean you have stopped?

Maayan: I, well, I told you that I have a boyfriend and we stopped two weeks ago [being *shomer negiyab*].

Researcher: So you really understand the issue!

Maayan: That's what I was saying about the movie [*B'nogeyab Eleinu*]. They like decided and that was it! It is so not like that. You come to a conclusion and then you stop because it is too hard and you discuss it all the time... and I can tell you that with all the desire that touch evokes, what holds you back is that you are religious. I currently have a real sense of guilt, especially since I grew up in a religious home. I truly believe that it is the right thing [*shemirat negiyab*], and not because they brainwashed me at home, but I truly believe in it. Which leaves me pretty much in the middle of two things...

Researcher: You said that you are no longer *shomer*. Did that happen because you became closer and you are older and your connection is deeper and with time it has become more difficult?

Maayan: I think that with time it became harder and harder. When we are not *shomer*, the relationship becomes a little shallower. Which is why we are in a

dilemma all the time... it's because of the time factor, not because something changed [in our relationship]... I think it is much harder today because of the technology and culture around us which completely contradict what we [our tradition] thinks. 'Cause like, "If you have a wish – fulfill it", "You've got dreams – realize them", "Just do it", "Life is short so, do what you want". And that really contradicts our approach, and then you are really stuck in the middle.

While Maayan is strongly normed to the laws of *shemirat negiyah* in thought and belief, she is struggling to live up to this norm. In her case, her observable behavior does not reflect her normation because she identifies so strongly with the Jewish law in this area but is not able to follow her conviction through in practice. She is seeking, as she and her boyfriend continue to struggle, to strengthen the voices of duty and sacrifice so that she can be supported in her quest for observance.

Conclusion

Exploring the process of the breakdown of norms, how and why that happens, can serve to shed light on how participants ultimately come to be strongly normed and de-normed, something which has not been explored before. The insights from this section provide educators with concepts to look beneath the surface of participants' words and offer a deeper understanding of their meanings, which should inform educational approaches to Life Values and Intimacy education. This will be addressed in the discussion.

The Politics of Setting Religious Policy

Integral to the research were regular visits to Ulpanat Bina, providing an opportunity to observe a Modern Orthodox school on a regular basis. The intensive research conducted throughout a two year period and across two separate grades, gave ample time to become familiar with the institution both through teachers and students as well as from my experiences in the school.

While not originally part of the research agenda, a critical question which emerged related to the dynamics of power in the school, particularly between the students and their teachers and administrators, which impacted the research on multiple levels. The question surfaced as a result of poor attendance on the part of participants in the pilot study. I wondered what consequences there were for students who did not attend class and what policies the school had in place to require participation in the research intervention course. I discovered that the school was dealing with larger issues of administrative authority and student autonomy. This was particularly evident

regarding the question of modesty, a topic addressed minimally within the course itself but which, perhaps more significantly, was addressed by many of the participants during both pre- and post-intervention interviews.

The school, recognizing that modesty and modest clothing had become a major issue of contention between students and administration, instituted a uniform shirt, the wearing of which was mandatory. Almost all participants responded negatively to this new school rule. They adamantly refused to wear the shirt, which they considered an unfair and unnecessary imposition. In response to the strong negative reactions from students, the requirement for a uniform shirt was never actually enforced, although it remained official school policy. A few teachers, who themselves felt the need for a more stringent level of modesty in the school, predicated attendance on the shirt being worn. Students wore the shirts only for these classes, otherwise carrying it in their bags throughout the day.

The conflict between administration and students drew attention to the difficulty of educating towards modesty. It seemed that while school administration expected a specific level of modesty, it had not yet become a norm for students in the school. In Green's terms, the question was whether a school could educate to a norm in which the expectation of the institution differs from that of its constituent population.

The approach taken by the school was criticized by some participants, who felt that rules needed to be more appropriately enforced at the school. Their comments expressed their frustration at the system.

Judy: There are a lot of parents now who do not want to send their children here because of the problem with modesty – too open, too short. I know I'm not perfect I wear short and open but there was someone here and I turned around and she had no sleeve. Like, "Come on, respect this place a little....you can wear what you want at home, but how dare you wear something like that to school? Why would you even think about that? OK, it's hot; you don't want to wear such long sleeves. OK, fine, wear here [points to location on her arm], but hallo! Even here maybe [points to another higher location on her arm], OK, its school – why don't you just wear an undershirt while you are about it? Do whatever you want at home, but have a little respect for your school. School has rules – do it"!

Researcher: How does the school respond?

Judy: Very superficially. They have the uniform shirts which are not helping. What is the teacher supposed to do? She can say "Change your skirt," "Change your shirt," OK. Then the next day the same thing happens again the teacher

says: “Change your skirt, change your shirt.” And she just keeps coming like that, so the teacher just gives up and the girl ends up being the one with the power. They don’t want to do, so they don’t do it. They want to wear short skirts, so they’ll be short skirts. The school isn’t strong enough. So what’s the solution? They try a uniform shirt. Which in a way is a good solution but nobody wants to wear it.

Researcher: And it seems like nobody wants to enforce it

Judy: Before Passover the twelfth graders made a movie, like a joke about the school so they had a skit:

“From today we are wearing uniform shirts.”

Then two days later:

“From today we are wearing uniform shirts.”

Then two weeks later:

“From today we are wearing uniform shirts.”

Then two months later:

“From today we are wearing uniform shirts.”

Then six months later:

“From today we are wearing uniform shirts.”

That’s like the joke here – it never happens...which isn’t the best. The school’s fine but I don’t know, it doesn’t push. Like when you come into school – you have to be modest... Also prayer – you have to pray in the morning. Girls are outside, [during prayer, instead of praying] nobody says anything or does anything. You don’t pray – nobody responds. Girls want to wear short sleeves – they don’t tell us anything, no discussion, just one day – uniform shirt. They could warn girls when you come in from eighth grade [to visit] you wear three quarter sleeves. No they don’t do that, they say you have to dress modestly. But they don’t have any definitions, what modesty is which I think is really a problem. They don’t put their foot down.

They want to please everybody but I feel like they should say that people who don’t want to do things like the Jewish law shouldn’t come here. If that’s not what they want – they shouldn’t come here. And they should tell them when they come to visit in eighth grade – this is what’s going to happen – you are going to wear this and this and this. You don’t want to – don’t come here, don’t try out. There are enough girls who want to come here so I don’t think they have a

problem. But, they want to be everybody's friend, they want to be nice – so that's what happens and everybody just does less and less.

There were other participants however, who rejected the idea of a uniform shirt and sought the freedom to make their own choices.

Rotem: School needs to let people dress however they want to. Because there is no point coming and imposing on them how to dress in school and outside of school you see everyone in tank tops. And there is no modesty. That makes no sense. School is just fooling itself. Let's all go with three quarter sleeves in school and the second after we leave school everyone switches into short sleeve shirts.

Rotem feels that any imposition of a dress code simply creates an illusion that students are committed to school standards of modesty when in fact they would simply be compliant while on school grounds. Sarah confirms this from her elementary school education.

Sarah: In general with this whole issue of modesty, I don't really agree with the schools approach [talking about a different school Y.D.]. They get extremely stuck on the small things...it ends up making everyone anti...as soon as you leave school, you take off your skirt. As soon as you leave school – you take off your sweater. And it's really all in rebellion. If they weren't so involved with it and just gave flexible boundaries, then...

Sarah in fact feels that it is the imposition itself that causes a rejection of the school standard of modesty, especially when students feel that too much attention is directed towards issues of modesty. The question of school religious policy in areas which are personal but manifest publicly is a difficult one. In an interview with the school rabbi as well as the school principal they shared their educational approach as one which establishes expectations but then fosters autonomous commitment to these expectations by minimizing enforcement. This issue will be explored further in the discussion section.

In the next section, we will look more comprehensively at students understanding of educating about sexuality and relationships. We will survey suggestions offered by participants for effective instruction.

Teaching to Commitment

Participants were asked to offer recommendations for effective Life Values and Intimacy education. Consulting with students themselves occurs rarely in school settings but was an explicit goal of the research and has been shown to identify effective practices (Allen, 2005). They offered suggestions both before and after the intervention. These suggestions relate to method and approach, content, and the instructor. Their recommendations are presented below.

Who Should Teach?

A question often debated among religious Family Life educators is whether classes should be taught by instructors who know their students well or, alternatively, by unfamiliar instructors. Proponents of the approach for educators from within the school emphasize the importance of modeling that religious studies teachers are able to discuss issues of sexuality and relationships. Others emphasize the natural discomfort that often surrounds these topics and suggest that students would be more open and comfortable with adults they will not need to later meet in their environment. Gila is a proponent of the latter approach.

Gila: The retreat was really good. Sometimes it's easier when someone you don't know talks about it 'cause it's just easier...

Since topics of this nature are rarely addressed in schools and even many parents have not conversed with their children about them, classes represent the first experience for most students to discuss these issues with an adult. The importance of who teaches and how they teach became all the more significant.

A number of participants recommend that education take place within the framework of youth groups since they felt comfortable with their counselors and close enough in age to relate to them well.

Rotem: Because if the teacher is talking to you – you don't really listen to her. And your youth group counselor is someone who you listen to, and you rely on. Because counselors in youth groups are almost their age and you are their friend and you listen to them. I think kids listen more to them.

As mentioned earlier, the head-counselor of one of the popular local youth groups did not support this recommendation. He explained that the counselors, who are usually only a few years older than the children for whom they are counselors, are often still struggling themselves with

these issues, sometimes at heightened levels, and are at least as uncomfortable with these topics and therefore are not yet ready to educate about sexuality or relationships.

While school ensures that all students are educated in areas of sexuality and relationships, a few participants were not comfortable with their classroom teachers addressing such personal topics. In addition, about a quarter of the participants are hesitant to learn about sexuality and relationships in school because they are uncomfortable with male teacher involvement. The possibility of a female teacher might, however, have altered that discomfort.

Tali: I don't think school is such a comfortable place [for teaching these topics] because the people who talk about it are the rabbis in the school and on these topics – we need to talk with a female. It is more comfortable with a female.

In Modern Orthodox schools, men are usually responsible for educating about Jewish law and are therefore often asked to teach topics such as *shemirat negiyah* and modesty since their definitions are based in Jewish law. Participants are not always comfortable learning about such personal matters from men.

There are some students who are not comfortable in any face-to-face setting. They feel that modern technology offers an alternative forum for information and education without the burden of being identified.

Channa: I prefer to ask questions along these lines on the internet, where they don't know who I am and I am not with friends with whom I am not totally comfortable, and then I won't be embarrassed to ask the question. If I ask the home room teacher I am going to wonder, "What is she thinking about me asking that kind of a question?"

Talking to the Class

Participants are highly sensitive to the ways in which teachers relate to them. They are wary of educators who come to class armed with all the information they plan to impart and offer no opportunity for dialogue, particularly in areas that require more than information. In addition, they are disdainful of teachers who give participants the feeling that their input is not valued. Maya thinks sexuality and relationships should be taught in schools, preferably by the home room teacher but she cautions against teaching in ways that alienate students.

Maya: ...they should talk to the class and not from above the class. Not to say, you have to do this and this. But to talk with them. For example, "Why do we

want to be touching [boys]?” And from that discussion [students] will understand the message. They shouldn’t tell us what we have to do. Talk to youth: “What do you get out of touching?”... Last year, for example, our teacher spoke about whether it is a good idea or not to have a boyfriend. That is a topic which has been processed a lot! I felt that she was not listening to the girls. It’s important to listen to the girls and to know exactly what they want and what to tell the girls. If a home room teacher is going to do it, she should ask each of the girl’s questions before. To get to know all of the girls before she presents in front of the whole class. She told stories and then the girls said what they thought and we waited. There was a feeling maybe of shock, that what we were saying was not significant. The feeling that only what she said was correct. I’m sure she did not mean it.

Maya’s experience represents participants who do not feel respected in the environment many teachers establish in their classrooms. Participants emphasize their need to have their input valued and validated, particularly in these personal areas. They seek opportunities to be active contributors to the class and expect their contributions to be respected. Amit for example, still remembers the frustration of having a teacher so anxious about the material she was teaching that she allowed no discussion and transmitted a clear message that once she finished her talk, the subject would return to its taboo status.

Amit: ... Schools do need to teach and pass this on. It will be more interesting for us if someone who is not a teacher teaches it. Yes, schools do need to teach us this...it needs to be talked about more. Once in sixth grade they talked about periods and then immediately closed the topic and did not allow any questions. ...I remember the teacher saying, “Quick erase the board so that no one will see.” They did not let us ask anything ... they need to talk to us and let us ask questions and talk about it.

Almost all participants are in agreement that these topics need to be addressed in school. While there is a spectrum of opinions regarding frequency and recommended number of classes, with some suggesting that too much emphasis and involvement might backfire, talking about the topics is regarded as a positive innovation. Participants do not want lectures or absolutes, but rather a clear delineation of the issues and the ability to make decisions for themselves. In addition, there is a need to create a safe space and allow genuine conversations to develop.

Sarah: Bring up a topic, and open it up properly in the class. Don't decide exactly what to teach. Be careful not to bring...not to talk in absolutes, because then they will simply close their ears and not listen any more.

Tali: There should be an intimate conversation just in the classroom, not with the whole school. By someone who understand these kinds of things and who can help us ask questions without being embarrassed.

“Don't Just Tell Me It's the Jewish Law”

Participants emphasize the need to address issues from a social-emotional perspective rather than focus on Jewish law. While interested in knowing Jewish law's views on these topics, participants seek teachers willing to learn and seek understanding of Jewish law together with them rather than present rules with no explanations.

Channa: I don't know if it would be helpful to someone who does not keep the Jewish law, who has a certain anti-stance, because even if we teach him [the Jewish laws], he'll say: “I'm doing what I want.” But in general, it is the role of the school...they should not teach what the Jewish laws are. It's best to learn things together and come to an understanding. Not to just lecture and say what's yes and what's no.

Ariella: It should be taught in school but not as a class, more as a social skills class like so they shouldn't talk about the perspective of Jewish law so much but rather from an **experiential life perspective**. For example we had an activity which presented situations and we had to say what to do...it was more of a discussion... [emphasis added, Y.D.]

They therefore recommend that the emphasis be placed on the more experiential aspects of the issues. They recognize that in most situations many important factors must be weighed in arriving at a decision, even when it is based in Jewish law. This educational approach can be highly effective for some, but its weakness lies in the nature of commitment it produces. In Green's terminology, it can only lead to weak normation because a student becomes normed to the behaviors only but does not necessarily accept any of the underlying commitments of membership to the community.

Lior is able to articulate why this approach would not be sufficiently satisfying to most Modern Orthodox teenagers. She believes that most people and certainly most participants are open to being persuaded if approached wisely.

Lior: If someone is not interested, there's no way to persuade her. But if someone has something inside of them, one simply needs to know how to approach them. You cannot just come up to her and say, "This is what the Torah says; this is what you have to do." Because it is really not right to teach things that way. It is not convincing. It is not the basis of practice. "Because that's what people once said and we are not at a level to understand. There are deep reasons underlying all of these issues. Not everyone understands them." I am sure plenty of rabbis understand them.

Lior has confidence in Jewish law and tradition. She speaks with certainty of the underlying deeper reasons which she knows exist, although she has not yet fully accessed them. Taught by the right people, using the right approach even for those who have a sense of duty, reasons must serve to explicate the laws. Lior is confident most participants will identify with the approach of Jewish law.

"Explain It"

The clearest statement repeated by all participants on multiple occasions and from various angles is the need for compelling explanations. Almost all participants address this issue, begging for a serious effort at explanation of issues like boy-girl relationships and modesty. They indicate that the most common form of education is a simple recitation of a list of "forbiddens," with no offer of interpretation or understanding.

Researcher: Is the school a place to talk about it?

Dana: Yes, very much so. They must talk about it in school...less saying, "Forbidden, forbidden, forbidden" and more explanation. Maybe that could have an impact.

Many participants suggest that a more serious effort at explanation would lead to a more serious commitment to halakhic practice. Judy suggests that along with offering explanations, Life Values and Intimacy education should start from a young age. She implies that early intervention may lead to less internal conflict since students will have encountered the ideas before they themselves struggle with the issues. In addition, Judy helps us to understand the ways

in which explanation can serve as a valuable tool in developing a sense of what is and is not appropriate behavior among students.

Judy: Maybe they should take some topics, let's say like drugs and say it's going around in our world now a lot of people are doing it and you should sit down with us and then explain to us what is and then we'll know about it and when we come across it we'll know already about it and we'll know it's not good for us and we just won't do it. Because if we don't hear about it then we're going to be interested, we're going to start seeing what they're doing – we're going to get stuck doing it and then we're stuck doing it.

In Judy's analysis, forewarned is forearmed. Addressing issues before they become a potential attraction can serve to neutralize their attraction.

I was surprised by the number of participants who believed that explanation leads to greater acceptance. They demonstrate tremendous faith in the power of understanding while demonstrating instinctive responses that reflect a deep commitment to the system. The question of why this is their opinion and why they were willing to express it to me, will be considered in the discussion.

Shai: To explain it, I think the best is a presentation with a discussion; a discussion is the best because each person expresses themselves and says what they feel and just explaining why you should be *shomer*. Explaining, and letting people answer. Not just talking and talking and talking and then people will get bored and play with their cell-phones and stuff. That's not so good.

Shai emphasizes the need for participants to be actively involved in discussion in the class as a worthwhile strategy for sexuality and relationships education. Ayelet asks for much more.

Ayelet: ... That's like at my age, we don't really know what we are doing in our lives yet, we're thinking about what's going on and so the second you **prove it to us, explain it to us**, maybe **convince us of it**...You have to like **make it interesting** and think of a thing that would **make us want to be shomer**...Just make it interesting,...You start with a story – it adds a lot. It's really like that [emphasis added, Y.D.]

Ayelet explained that she and her peers are in a state of flux, still trying to make sense of all the information they are absorbing from the world around them with regards to *shemirat negiyah*. She

signified a willingness to be taught about *shemirat negiyah*, not just to be taught, but to be convinced through proof. She wants to be well fortified in her commitment and understanding of the commitment so that she will be able to maintain it and expects that unequivocal proof to be handed to her by her teachers, “The second you prove it to us...and make us want to be shomer – [we will act accordingly].” She has high expectations for the immediacy of change such teaching will engender:

Ayelet has good reason to seek convincing. Beyond her personal need, she is looking for justifications, particularly to strengthen her when her behavioral norms are different from those of her male friends. And she is looking for ways to convince them.

Ayelet: Because it is something that you do that’s hard and challenging and if you don’t like, don’t understand why, you’ll just be like, “I don’t care anymore ‘cause no one explains to me”. And also like telling, like telling someone I’m not going to hug you, like my good friend and I’m not going to hug you – you need something to hold you up. I wouldn’t do that to my friend and it’s like embarrassing to him and I wouldn’t do that to him if I didn’t have something that I could stand on, a basis ...

While the majority of participants see explanation as the key to change, a few are willing to concede that explanation would not necessarily be enough to lead to stronger commitment. Despite this, explanation is still viewed as an approach to be valued in its own right.

Arielle: Maybe because they do not explain how important it is, to be *shomer* or not to be *shomer*. They don’t help us understand it. I don’t know whether it would help us, maybe those who come after us [the next generation of students]. Maybe they’ll explain to them, maybe they’ll understand why. Meanwhile, they do not explain it to anyone.

Ayelet: I feel like you have to find the connection to you with the Jewish law. It’s not only about knowledge, it’s also about connection.

Ultimately, as Ayelet says, commitment emerges from a combination of knowledge and connection. The need for connection was mentioned often by participants when discussing Jewish law. Many have come to feel that they are only willing to practice laws which are intrinsically meaningful to them which they feel connect them to God. While knowledge is

relatively easy to provide, developing a sense of being connected to Jewish law presents a much more complicated challenge.

Personal Stories

A frequently utilized method for bolstering loyalty to group norms in areas in which students may be conflicted is to invite people who have faced the struggle and overcome it to address the student body. Many participants find themselves deeply moved by these stories.

Maya: I am influenced by personal stories and like what happened to them as a result of not being *shomer negiyah*. That's what I think.

Tali: Or the way the course instructor did it, she did more story-telling and examples so that it was easier to relate to it. She incorporated stories which made it easier for us to understand.

Whether talking about drugs or abusive relationships, eating disorders or religious uncertainty, the nature of a personal narrative engages students and offers a helpful instructive example. Participants suggest that these encounters help them be more accepting of the expectations that have been delineated.

“Give Me the Facts”

For some, the personal stories approach is not satisfying unless accompanied by a detailed explanation of the rules. Rotem is frustrated that teachers avoid presenting the central issues with regards *shemirat negiyah*, modesty, and male-female interactions as well as specific Jewish laws.

Rotem: They should explain more fully why it is good or not good and then each person can decide for themselves. They always tell stories and talk around the subject. Let them explain honestly and practically. For *shemirat negiyah* – let them explain the rules and why it is not good to walk around immodestly. Or with regards touching – explain why it is problematic. They should give us the bottom line of what is forbidden and what is permitted.

No Forcing

All participants emphasize the importance of letting them make choices for themselves and avoid telling them what to do.

Shirel: The best way is to explain; not by forcing in any way...it's a process everyone has to go through...to talk about it as much as possible.

Rotem: School needs to let people dress however they want to. Because there is no point coming and imposing on them how to dress in school and outside of school you see everyone in tank tops. And there is no modesty. That makes no sense. School is just fooling itself. Let's all go with three quarter sleeves in school and the second after we leave school everyone switches into short sleeve shirts.

In Green's terms forcing would, at best, lead to compliance. Normation cannot be fostered in an education that forces students to behave according to a set of rules.

Spiritual Education

Gila is scathing in her criticism of the school's approach to addressing modesty. She is troubled that the school addresses the issue by imposing a technical solution upon students, a uniform shirt, instead of dealing with the underlying issues of modesty. She would like to see an approach that delves deeper into Judaism.

Gila: It should be an atmosphere that is more ... spiritual. Like, perhaps if there were more heart-to-heart inspirational talks...If you take the example of the shirts. Really, of course it would be wonderful if everyone would be modest but seriously is that all you can do about the issues, to make such a technical change and think that that is going to be effective. Is that all you have to offer? ... The school doesn't give a clear message what it actually wants from its students. Like why, why on earth are you looking at uniform shirts when there are girls here whose status is completely terrible, who are completely unconnected and don't care at all. What's the point? Why are you investing any effort at all? Why are you looking at that? Start to work with the root of the issues first before you do other things. Who cares about a uniform shirt?...I know they say it is because there is no modesty here. I accept. I agree totally that there are problems [with modesty] but this is not the way to solve it. That would solve itself if you dealt more fully with the underlying issues.

Gila's frustration stems from the lack of an approach that addresses participants' underlying questions. Gila finds the quick-fix approach to be ineffective in really educating to commitment

to Jewish law. She is looking for spirituality and inspiration, something she identifies as being a necessary component of education to commitment.

“What Could Happen...”

Some participants recommend presenting various possible negative outcomes for those who choose to get involved in physical relationships at a young age. They emphasize that telling teenage girls what to do would be completely ineffective and counterproductive. They suggest simply presenting the most dire possible consequences and then leaving students to make choices. They feel that, ultimately, students would make the right decisions because they will not have felt forced to do so.

Maayan: They should be shown shocking things. And then told: “You can do whatever you want in the end.” At this age girls hate being told what to do. When they are given freedom to make choices, they’ll say to themselves, look what happened to her, really bad things. This will lead to various directions in thought. Even if they end up doing stuff, they will be more aware of what’s happening.

The use of scare tactics as an educational strategy in drug education has been found to be generally ineffective although it is most effective when presentations are made by peers (Swadi & Zeitlin, 1987; Beck, 1998). Research indicates that years of drug education using scare tactics has had little success in lowering teen drug abuse.

No Great Expectations

I wondered if those entering the classroom with a negative attitude would affect a negative approach throughout the class. I asked, “Some people are opposed to teaching these topics. Do you think when it is taught it leads to more negativity?” Lior’s response offers confirmation of the complexity of the issues.

Lior: It could lead to negativity, but it will still be in our heads. What we say, we could decide based on what we know and not just on what we think. That’s important.

Despite the possible negative attitudes which could emerge as a result of conversations in the classroom, Lior contends that it is still better to be knowledgeable and make judgments and decisions from knowledge and not from conjecture. She views providing this as a valuable contribution.

However, Arielle is quick to warn educators not to set hopes too high. Offering somewhat of a mixed message, she confirms the importance of the task and the potential contribution the school can make while simultaneously lowering expectations.

Arielle: Yes. But there shouldn't be any great expectations that it is going to help. There is a lot that school can do. It's important... I am thinking about it now. I don't know what to do. The social circle really defines things, not those above you who want to educate you. You simply go with the flow...We behave according to their norms. I don't know what someone who would want to educate us could say that would affect us. I don't know.

Arielle's assessment of the situation encapsulates Green's approach. While school can serve an important function, perhaps in helping to transmit reasons and explanations for practices in Jewish law, the central domain of influence in establishing norms is the community, in Arielle's case her social circle.

Participants offer valuable insight into their needs for being educated about sexuality, modesty and relationships. They are self-aware and identify ways they think would help them experience a deeper sense of comfort in the classroom, interest in the materials, and possible commitment to traditions. In the next chapter, we will consider how participant's advice and suggestions can be incorporated into further development and implementation of Life Values and Intimacy education in Modern Orthodox schools.

Summary of Results

Pre-Interviews

The pre-interviews provided information about Modern Orthodox teenage girls and their knowledge and attitudes in areas of sexuality. Participants had received little formal or informal education, either at home or at school on topics of sexuality and relationships. Participants reported that their mothers rarely initiated conversations even on topics such as puberty. They were most likely to turn to friends for knowledge and advice, although many did feel that mothers could be turned to for information. Participants rarely confided in their mothers about relationships. While they reported few explicit conversations with parents about sexuality and relationships, they reported knowing their parents' standards for behavior in areas of sexuality, modesty and relationships. Despite the lack of explicit communication, parents evidently succeeded in transmitting their standards in subtle and indirect ways.

Participants were most likely to turn to their peers when dealing with issues of relationships with boys. Despite the significant influence of peers on each other, participants expressed unwillingness to correct their friends' behavior when they acted at variance with Jewish law in areas of sexuality and relationships. Many participants considered these areas to be in the realm of personal choice and therefore comment or critique about behaviors was viewed as inappropriate.

Participants felt that the majority culture has a powerful impact on them, normalizing behaviors in areas of sexuality and relationships not consistent with Jewish law. The exposure to a majority culture with permissive norms in areas of sexuality and relationships made participants more conscious of how restrictive the expectations of Jewish law were in relationships between the sexes. This knowledge sometimes made the stringent expectations of Jewish law challenging.

Participants reported knowing little about the way their male counterparts experience the challenge of maintaining commitment to Jewish law. They related that boys were less likely to be normed to *shemirat negiyah* and suggested that boys had more difficulty observing this area of Jewish law. They explained this discrepancy in difficulty as a result of more active hormones, particularly during teenage years. Participants were convinced that boys received even less sexuality education than they had.

The pre-interviews also provided information regarding commitment to Jewish law in the areas of sexuality, modesty and relationships. Participants, even those who identified themselves as firmly committed to tradition, nonetheless identified modesty and *shemirat negiyah* as areas that presented a challenge. This was more acute for those participants who are still negotiating their relationship with Jewish law and the behavioral standards it sets for them.

Post-Interviews

The post-interviews indicated that participants generally found the course to be educationally beneficial, opening new perspectives on the interface between Jewish law and human sexuality. Whereas most participants did not change their behaviors, they did report having become more aware and more thoughtful about issues of *shemirat negiyah*, modesty and relationships. About half the participants expressed enthusiasm for the course while two found it to be irrelevant. Others found it worthwhile but suggested improvement in the nature of the content.

Participants acknowledged that the class instructor established an atmosphere conducive to safe, open, and respectful dialogue. Pitfalls identified in other studies as negative approaches to sexuality education were, by and large, avoided. For example, the instructor did not demonize boys, objectify women or present a negative picture of sexuality in order to encourage restraint.

Instead, topics were addressed in a thoughtful and engaging manner. Participants found of particular interest the units on sexual abuse as well as *shmirat negiyah* as seen through a male perspective. The use of media enhanced the impact of several units. Some participants offered suggestions for improvement, while others claimed to be fully satisfied. Administrators at the school in which the intervention was conducted confirmed the success of the intervention and have chosen to include the course into its regular schedule.

The research confirmed that Modern Orthodox students in the turbulent adolescence years seek Jewish conceptions of sexuality and relationships based in classic sources. Therefore, both parents and Modern Orthodox schools could better serve the needs of their teenagers by developing and providing educational tools to help them face the challenges of sexuality in their lives.

Chapter 4: Discussion

The Need for Life Values and Intimacy Education

Ulpanat Bina's mission statement includes the "creation of a platform for love of Torah and fear of Heaven for the religious young woman and later in life for the religious adult woman, in a changing world." The school dedicates significant resources to this end, in an effort to explicate Jewish law and tradition striving to make it meaningful and relevant. Ulpanat Bina broadly speaking serves students from a Modern Orthodox background. The school draws students from a variety of communities and therefore exhibits a broad range of religious practice. Ulpanat Bina views the education they provide as formative, seeking to prepare them for full involvement in Israeli society despite the admitted religious struggles this invites. It embraces a dual mission of educating to "clear obligation to Torah" and "broad open vistas of thought." The school recognizes the complexity of this message for students who are not all able to maintain commitment in such an open environment and continually re-evaluates its educational approach in this regard. The school views its courses in Jewish thought and in Family Life education as central components to the success of this mission.

Despite the mission statement emphasizing the importance of Family Life education, courses are only given in eleventh and twelfth grade. This study found that participants, tenth-grade Israeli Modern Orthodox teenage girls, had been provided with sporadic Family Life education. Beyond a basic class on puberty in fifth or sixth grade, no frameworks exist within elementary schools or within Ulpanat Bina to address issues of sexuality and relationships. Participants confirmed that they have only partial information and many unanswered questions about sexuality and how tradition relates to it. Some participants shared how they seek out opportunities to be educated, co-opting classes in other subjects and persuading teachers with no experience in teaching these topics to provide them with at least some forum for questions and discussion. In the pre-interviews, almost all participants expressed enthusiastic interest in a course that would address issues of sexuality and relationships in an honest and open way.

In post-intervention interviews, the majority of participants in the Life Values and Intimacy course intervention, which was at the core of this research, found the course provided information as well as a safe forum for discussion about topics of sexuality and relationships that were rarely addressed previously. Almost all participants agreed that the course was a worthwhile endeavor and recommended offering it to each tenth-grade class. The students enjoyed the atmosphere established in the group and felt comfortable participating actively and asking

questions, if not directly then through the anonymous question box. Most participants reported a change in knowledge, attitudes, and perspectives, and a few reported changes in behavior. While they felt that they had acquired significant knowledge in the important areas of *shemirat negiyah* and boy-girl relationships, many participants requested that the course address a broader range of issues and spend less time on *shemirat negiyah* and relationships with boyfriends. Their suggestions accurately reflect the content of the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum as it was originally developed for the course, rather than as it was actually presented. Despite this, the course treated issues of sexuality and relationships previously ignored in an open and honest manner.

The research confirms that students in Ulpanat Bina seek Jewish conceptions of sexuality and relationships based on classic sources. Modern Orthodox schools could better serve the needs of their students by developing and providing tools to help them face the challenges in areas of sexuality that are a significant component of many Modern Orthodox teenagers' lives.

A number of issues emerge from the research, some of which confirm findings in studies conducted in the general population, while others seem unique to the Modern Orthodox community. The issues that warrant further discussion include the lack of education about sexuality and relationships, the impact of the majority culture, the lack of discussion with parents in these areas despite the centrality of the home, and the significance of peers. All of these issues highlight the need for more effective communication in the areas of sexuality and relationships, in which the school can provide both a forum and initial training.

Minimal Education: Only Addressing Puberty

Participants in this study reported that they were aware even though not told explicitly, that sexuality, and even puberty, are not topics for discussion in school. All participants were able to remember the one or two classes presented to them, usually by the school nurse, about puberty. In those classes, subtle and sometimes not so subtle messages were transmitted about discussing these topics. These experiences confirm those of other studies critical of the manner and content of education about menstruation (Dioro & Munro, 2000). In a sixth grade class about puberty which participants recalled as offering the strongest implicit lesson for them, the teacher presented a bare minimum of information in a short period of time, allowed no questions, and ended with, "Now, quickly erase the board, so that no one can see." Participants reported that more than the information provided, the lesson they left the class with was that these were not topics to be discussed; questions were not acceptable and would not be addressed. Other participants reported that the class they had had on puberty was uncomfortable, both for the educator as well as for the students, and no attempts were made to create a comfortable space for the conversation. This was despite the fact, and perhaps also

because of the fact, that it constituted the only occasion on which these topics were addressed in school.

The Null Curriculum

Sexuality education does not take place only in the context of the formal curriculum taught by teachers in the classroom. Rather, context and factors beyond the actual educational materials of the class have significance and impact. Sapon-Shevin and Goodman (1992) discuss the implicit ways in which sexual identity is formed during adolescence. They suggest that teenagers construct “sexual scripts” of what they consider appropriate sexual behavior based on information they gather from their surroundings. This may include what can be discussed with whom, which activities are appropriate in which contexts, and what sexual attitudes and behaviors should be adopted. Goodman describes how he surmised that learning about sex was only for girls and was not to be discussed by boys when the girls in his sixth grade class were sent to watch a special “sex movie” while the boys were offered nothing. He describes the lesson he learned from the very absence of a lesson. As a male, he understood that, “When it comes to sexuality, it is better to keep silent and not disclose my feelings or ideas, especially as part of a public forum.”

These experiences reflect the concept of “the null curriculum” developed by Eisner (1994). The null curriculum refers to subjects that are not taught in schools but that students know exist. Students often infer from the null curriculum that what is left out is not valued. Eisner explains:

It is my thesis that what schools do not teach may be as important as what they do teach. I argue this position because ignorance is not simply a neutral void; it has important effects on the kinds of options one is able to consider, the alternatives that one can examine, and the perspectives from which one can view a situation or problem. (p. 97)

Assuming that students in Modern Orthodox schools are aware of sexuality and relationships, silence on these topics in schools creates negative consequences. When educators and parents avoid talking about sexuality, students may conclude that it is a bad and shameful topic. These negative associations are difficult to free oneself from later in life and they can haunt a person’s sexuality within marriage for years to come. Such an outcome is not only unfortunate but is also antithetical to classical Jewish values which view sexuality as a positive, important component of a marriage relationship. However, the idea that sexuality has innate holiness and is a source of

pleasure within marriage is rarely transmitted to Modern Orthodox students. This positive approach to sexuality is a central tenet in the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum and is addressed in a number of units (see appendix for curriculum, Units 5, 7, and 9).

The Impact of the Majority Culture

Most participants confirmed that exposure to the majority culture influences them.

Maya: You see a movie and then you also want it [the kind of relationship often portrayed]. It's peer pressure. When you see that someone else has something, you want it too.

Participants found that majority culture normalizes behaviors considered inappropriate according to Jewish law, exposing them to possibilities that they might not otherwise have considered.

Ayelet: I hate it because now it's normal. I remember when it used to be, "Oh my God they're kissing" and now it's just normal in every movie – it's really bad.

Most of the participants experience conflict at the interface of their traditional values with those of the majority culture.

Maayan: ... it's much harder for me today because of the technology and the culture around which totally contradicts what we think. Like, "you have a desire – fulfill it," "people have dreams – realize them," "just do it – life is short" and you have to do what you want. And it really contradicts our views and you are really stuck in the middle.

Rivka: Because Western culture is much more dominant nowadays, Jewish law has lost its place a little.

Ziegler (2000) studied the collision of the values of what she termed popular culture and Judaism in the lives of post-high school Modern Orthodox American teenage girls. She determined that despite their expressed commitment to Judaism, the students she interviewed were entirely immersed in popular American culture, showing familiarity with all the contemporary television shows, movies, and music groups that they were asked about. She suggests, based on her findings, that Modern Orthodox American teenagers are heavily involved in popular culture and that while they are thoughtful about the boundaries that they create for themselves, their identity is strongly tied to the popular culture.

Participants in the current study fall into two groups: those who come from a North American background and those who do not. Participants with North American roots were more likely to identify with and be immersed in popular Western culture, while native Israelis generally did not identify with the majority culture, viewing it as a secular culture different from their own. A more comprehensive understanding of the issue of cultural identity and the ways in which students identify with the majority culture could prove helpful in developing an approach for schools that wish to tailor their educational approaches to suit the needs of their students. If schools take a counter-cultural stance and consider their role to be that of preserving pristine Orthodox culture of their students while, at the same time, these very students actually view themselves as members of the majority culture, effective communication and education cannot ensue.

According to the school's principal, both native Israeli and students from Anglo-Saxon backgrounds spend considerable time on TV shows, Facebook, movies, and MTV. This provides more opportunities for exposure to the secular host culture and its approach to sexuality. In his study of American teenagers, sex, and religion, Regnerus (2007) describes the experience of the evangelical Christian facing modern, secular culture:

...Two powerful cultures meet most evidently there [in the home of many evangelical Christians]: the culture of traditionalist, evangelical religion, with its family centered ideals and norms, and the culture of post-modern, consumption-oriented, media-saturated, self-focused, individualist capitalism. This is not a value judgment – it is simply an observation. As they engage with the surrounding consumer culture, evangelicals are clearly drinking deeply from some of the river's tributaries. And like when a warm and a cold front meet, producing a thunderstorm, so, too, does the confluence of these two potent cultural forces result in dissonance and conflict. (p. 157)

The struggle for many of our participants is similar. The complex question of personal identity, social belonging and fidelity to tradition for Modern Orthodox youth is one shared with non-Jewish traditional communities that seek some accommodation with modernity. Some of the issues and struggles that emerge from the research parallel those reported by religious Christian and Moslem communities (Halstead, 1997; Aida, 2003; Orgocka, 2004; Regnerus, 2007).

Communicating with Parents

The literature regarding the general non-Orthodox population indicates that parents hesitate to talk about sexuality and intimacy with their children (Santrok, 1998; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2000; Kirby, 2002), despite the fact that most adolescents tend to prefer a parent to a peer as a source of information (Hutchison & Cooney, 1998; Whitaker & Miller, 2000). This research confirms this finding in a Modern Orthodox participant population. According to the participants, most parents had not initiated conversations with them about sexuality or relationships. Participants inferred that these topics are not to be talked about, and many participants would therefore not consider consulting with their parents about these issues. When participants initiated conversations themselves, it was more often for information than for advice.

A few participants reported that their mothers had initiated conversations with them about puberty and menstruation, but most had not addressed issues of sexuality and relationships. Mothers who did talk to their daughters tended to transmit a sense of discomfort and hesitation with the topic, even when discussing basic puberty with their daughters. Participants felt that puberty was addressed only because it had to be; girls need to be prepared for menstruation. The discomfort mothers displayed was a script absorbed by participants that impacted on their approach to these topics. The majority of participants indicated that sexuality and relationships are rarely discussed within families. While participants attributed the source of their knowledge to their mothers, they could not recall a single conversation with them. To explain the inability of participants to recall any explicit conversation while still attributing influence to their mothers, I suggest that participants gained this knowledge through implicit means, as discussed below.

The Centrality of the Home

Despite the lack of significant communication about sexuality and relationships within families, about half of the participants considered their home to be the most significant influence on them in these areas. These participants most commonly attributed their commitment to maintaining traditions in all areas as stemming from the education they received from home. They claimed that the level of commitment modeled at home supports their ability to maintain commitment.

Many participants report knowing their parents' wishes even as they say those wishes were not explicitly stated. It seems that expectations can be established in implicit ways. We can understand the impact of the home despite the lack of explicit communication about sexuality

via a mimetic model. A mother's raised eyebrow or a comment on the behaviors and dress of others at a public event can serve to communicate expectations and standards without explicitly defining them.

Judy: And like I never get anything over the internet and I was so excited and this time I wanted to order something and I ordered a shirt and I get it and it's like, "Wow, this shirt is really see-through." I'm like fine whatever – I'll wear a tank top [underneath]. And then my mother is like, "Don't you think that's a little see-through?" and I'm like, "No, it's fine – not at all, I don't think it's see-through." And I walked around with it. And then even my sister, my sister ...she looks at me and she's like, "Why are you wearing that – it's really see-through" and I'm like, "What? It's that see-through, no it's not." And I'm thinking, "Oh my gosh, what is wrong with me." And my mother's like, "You don't think it's really see-through?" And my mother saying that made me feel like, "Oh my gosh, I really am changing." Also that I didn't listen to my mother and I didn't go change.

The conversation illustrates the subtle ways in which a mother can communicate a norm to her daughter without explicitly stating it. Judy's mother simply asked her a number of times whether she thought the shirt was see-through. Judy experienced her mother's question as an instruction to change: "I didn't listen to my mother and I didn't go change." Judy had a sense of her mother's expectations even though they were not stated as a directive.

The centrality of the home cannot be underestimated. Green considers norms to be fostered in communities and at home. The diverse standards of modesty to be found in Ulpanat Bina confirm the significant role the home plays in normation to modesty. Initiating opportunities to partner with parents could develop effective avenues for shared education to commitment in areas of modesty, sexuality, and relationships.

Peer Norms

Peer Influence

At least half of the participants viewed friends as the central influence upon them in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. For many participants, issues of dress, body image, and relationships with boys are topics of constant attention. These issues are worked and reworked throughout the day in conversation at school, at night on the phone, on Facebook, and in emails. While discerning in choosing which friends they allow to influence them, once they belong to a particular social circle, participants are strongly influenced by their peer group.

These findings confirm others in the field. Research on sexual decision-making among adolescents indicates that it is heavily influenced by social context, as well as accepted norms usually established by the school peer group (Bearman & Bruckner, 2001; Teitler & Weiss, 2000). Regnerus (2007) found that the degree to which a teenager is embedded in a network of friends who reinforce his or her goal of delaying sex is a significant factor in influencing ultimate behavior. When the network of friends lacks commitment to tradition, more permissive norms are often advanced. This dynamic was seen among our participants.

Judy: The thing about Ulpanat Bina is that they take all kinds of girls. It's not like other religious high schools which takes mostly the same kind of girls. Because it takes a variety of girls you come here knowing that it's going to be like this [varied levels of religious commitment among the student body] but then, in the end you are influenced by the people around you. Who you want to be with, it's definitely true that slowly, slowly 'cause it's also the social group.

The peer group played a central role in most participants' decisions, and participants tended to surround themselves with peers who shared common values. Participants committed to Jewish law generally identified with a peer group that supported its members in maintaining their commitment. Those who were more lax in their observance usually had friends with similar views. Arielle perceived peers as playing a primary role. In talking about whether Life Values and Intimacy education should be offered in the school, she said:

Arielle: Yes. But there shouldn't be any great expectations that it is going to help. There is a lot that school can do. It's important... I am thinking about it now. I don't know what to do. The social circle really defines things, not those above you who want to educate you. You simply go with the flow...I don't know what someone who would want to educate us could say that would affect us. I don't know.

Any attempt at education must be cognizant of peer group pressure and consider ways to marshal it in support of the educational goals.

Persuading Peers

One issue that emerged from the data was the unwillingness of participants to correct their friends' behavior when they acted at variance with Jewish law. Participants reported talking to friends about modesty and relationships endlessly, but most were reluctant to address errant

behaviors. Only a few participants expressed a willingness to approach their friends about these kinds of issues, and then only with close friends and only if their behavior was a source of concern to the extent that it was dangerous.

Lior: If she's a really good friend, and I think what she is doing is not good for her, I will talk to her about it. Friends can have more of an influence than parents.

Researcher: Do girls criticize each other in these areas?

Lior:...If I hear something really personal, I would not judge her...it's not my business.

Researcher: If you heard about someone doing drugs, would you also not judge her?

Lior: I would not judge people. If she is a good friend, I would talk to her about it.

Lior's comment, "if what she is doing is not good for her," implies that issues of a religious nature would not merit comment, while issues of health and safety ("good for her") would. Lior would get involved in order to protect a friend's physical welfare, but her friend's spiritual welfare is something else entirely. Adherence to Jewish law, as opposed to health and safety, is construed as a personal choice, where wayward decisions hold no imminent risks. This approach is in stark contrast to that of students in a Catholic school described by Feinberg (2006). Peer involvement in socialization to religious standards is the norm for many students. When one of the students questions the pro-life position being discussed by mentioning her concern about the dangers of illegal abortion, her dissent is silenced by students. This is a community whose commitment to doctrinal conformity takes precedence over the more democratic approach that allows for individual, autonomous expression. Peshkin's (1986) description of students in the fundamentalist Christian School Bethany Baptist Academy (BBA) similarly contrasts with Lior's stance.

Peer involvement in the socialization of their peers for spiritual ends is BBA's norm, albeit not one that all students uniformly accept or even that its adherents invariably practice. The picture I mean to convey is one in which students intrude quite naturally in the lives of their classmates. **They do so not as vigilantes or as agents of adult authority, but, rather in the name of standards that by high school years are an ingrained dimension of their lives.** That Bethany

students strive to influence their peers to get right with the Lord is one of the schools most distinctive qualities. (Peshkin, p. 160, emphasis added, Y.D.)

Green explains that the adoption of a critical attitude, not only towards oneself but to others as well, is a basic requirement of normation. “The acquisition of norms includes the acquisition of critical standards for judgment.” (p. 39) He later makes a distinction between the need for a critical attitude which he views as a necessary requirement of norm acquisition, and the need to take an active stance and rebuke someone based on that standard, which is not necessary (Green, 2003).

Lior’s stance points to a peer group norm of autonomy, which undercuts traditional community norms. Despite Lior’s own commitment to the traditions and her belief expressed elsewhere that these traditions also apply to her peers, her more modern sensibility of autonomy wins over any consideration of intrusion onto the standards peers have accepted upon themselves. This unwillingness to comment or offer rebuke reflects a fundamental separation between these participants and their counterparts in Ultra-Orthodox (*Hareidi*) schools and reflects a significant finding. The lack of a critical stance towards peers on the part of many participants indicates that *shemirat negiyah* was not a norm for them.

Experiencing Adolescence Differently

About half of the participants in the study had no interest in learning about boys. While a few of these participants described themselves as somewhat involved with boys through their youth movements, their interactions did not go beyond those meetings. Of this group, at least a quarter did not belong to mixed youth groups and were not involved or interested in being involved with boys their age. These were the participants most critical of what they felt was the intervention’s unnecessary focus on relationships with boys and *shemirat negiyah*. Their interviews and general deportment reflected a lack of sexual awareness. Erikson and those who continue his work view the middle adolescent years as being a time of emerging identity and sexual identity (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980). While this is important developmental work, Western society, with its over-emphasis on sexuality, pushes young females into romantic and even sexual involvement with boys at increasingly young ages causing them to stifle their creative spirit and natural impulses in order to appear attractive to boys (Pipher, 1994). Levine (2003) in her study of Lubavitch teenage girls, who she finds to be less self-conscious than their average secular counterpart, considers the destructive nature of early sexual involvement with boys, particularly in the central role that male attention plays in females gauging of their own self-worth. She suggests that many girls may actually gain from being freed of the social and sexual pressures that

are a source of tremendous angst for teenage girls. Freeing religious teenagers from the pressures of intimate relationships with the opposite sex may in fact provide opportunities for development in other areas. She found that a single sex space, rather than being repressive as she had expected, was empowering. It offers girls the opportunity to be free of the barometer of male attention and sexuality and focus instead on their hobbies and interests, explore ethical issues, study ideas, and develop themselves without worrying about the impression their behaviors are making on the opposite sex.

In a recent study which compared identity and intimacy among religious and non-religious Israelis, Fisherman (2008) found significant differences between religious and non-religious adolescent girls. Non-religious adolescent girls view intimate relationships with the opposite sex as one of the acceptable and expected experiences of adolescence as part of identity development. Religious adolescent girls, however, often conform to the expectations of their religious environment, which does not encourage becoming involved intimately at “too early” an age. They choose to be involved in intimate relationships at later ages than many of their secular counterparts.

Participants in the current study who choose not to be involved with their male counterparts, also report being able to focus on their internal development without being distracted. Shirel, for example, together with a friend, has been working on strengthening herself religiously.

Researcher: You decided to stop watching [movies] because...

Shirel: Because I don't think it's good for me, it just wastes time unnecessarily, it's unnecessary...it's just not good to expose myself to these kinds of things...

Researcher: Do you have friends who support you in that decision?

Shirel: I made the decision together with a friend.

Researcher: How did you come to this decision?

Shirel: I don't know...we decided we wanted to strengthen ourselves religiously.

Choosing to become involved with the opposite sex at later ages may offer an important counterbalance to Western culture and its hyper-sexualization of the female in general and female adolescents in particular (APA, 2007). In addition, delaying involvement in relationships with boys may provide an opportunity to educate students about sexuality and relationships and the Jewish approach to them before these issues are a source of conflict for them. They could then be prepared with the tools to handle conflicts between religion and sexuality before they have to face them. Given the realities of a pervasive majority culture as well as the strong

influence of peers and the limited conversations in families about issues of sexuality, comprehensive Life Values and Intimacy education could fill an important vacuum in educating proactively in areas of sexuality and relationships. At the very least, this education can help students expand the range of factors to be considered when formulating attitudes and behaviors regarding sexuality, modesty, and relationships (Resnick, 2008). In the next section, I will discuss some of the fundamental principles guiding the development of the Life Values and Intimacy Curriculum and its implementation in Modern Orthodox schools.

The Life Values and Intimacy Approach

School-based Life Values and Intimacy education is designed to help Modern Orthodox adolescents build a foundation of beliefs and norms regarding sexuality rooted in Jewish law. The fundamental goal is to develop a strong, halakhically-aligned voice of conscience about intimacy and sexuality in students. This research is based on The Life Values and Intimacy education curriculum which is proactive and views sexuality education as an essential part of Modern Orthodox high-school education. It views sexuality education not as merely post-facto (*be-dianad*), an unwanted but necessary response to the needs of adolescents and their exposure to modern ideas about sexuality. Rather, sexuality education is seen as an important component of adolescent education in an area about which they are developing natural curiosity and which educators must address from within a religious framework (Samet, 2005). This approach sees avoiding discussion about sexuality as repressive and unhealthy, stifling students' natural curiosity. Speaking honestly and explicitly to students empowers them to better understand their bodies and themselves, rather than leaving them alone to sift through the information offered by the media. The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum adapts the knowledge, insights, and teaching strategies recommended by sexual health educators in the secular world and presents them through the prism of Jewish tradition. The result is a curriculum that addresses a full range of issues from a Modern Orthodox perspective.

This research was the first opportunity to test the curriculum in an Israeli context and it confirmed the fundamental principles on which the curriculum is based. In the following section, I analyze several facets of the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum. I will discuss the school setting as a venue for education about sexuality, present an approach to transmitting Jewish law in these areas, and recommend a form of appropriate discourse for this curriculum.

The School Setting

The Life Values and Intimacy approach views the school as an important place for sexuality education to occur, although it is not meant to replace the role of parents and bears in

mind that other powerful factors are at work, such as peers. Modern Orthodox schools teach the details of and the philosophies behind ritual law (*Shabbat*, holidays, dietary laws), as well as social and ethical commands (visiting the sick, helping the needy, not gossiping), despite the fact that these topics are also addressed in the home. With research indicating that sexuality and relationships are rarely addressed satisfactorily in the home (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2000) and the current study confirms that, schools are well placed to teach topics of sexuality, rather than rely exclusively on the home. Many participants recommended that classes take place in the school setting. For example, Nitzan, who identifies herself as comfortable talking with her parents about these topics, still recommended school-based education because, “In school it reaches everyone. And not all parents are able to.”

Ulpanat Bina is an excellent venue for educating about sexuality, modesty, and relationships. The school prides itself on the close relationships nurtured between teachers and students, particularly between the *mechanechet*, (the home-room educator), and the students. Ulpanat Bina presents one of its four fundamental educational principles as rooted in the development and nurturing of these teacher-student connections. The home-room educator is responsible for the “whole” student and for nurturing their spiritual and religious development, as well as monitoring and supporting academic growth and success. Thus, the groundwork for Life Values and Intimacy education already exists in the structure of this school’s culture. Life Values and Intimacy education requires trust and open dialogue between teacher and student, the kind of relationship that already exists in many Modern Orthodox schools for both boys and girls.

In this intervention, all participants felt that the environment created by the class instructor was safe and comfortable and conducive to honest dialogue in areas of sexuality. While varying levels of comfort were reported by participants, these often resulted from an individual’s comfort level with specific topics, rather than with the atmosphere in the classroom as a whole.

Tali: Actually, I was comfortable talking. There was a small circle of girls and nothing was passed on outside of there. And it was comfortable to speak. But the subject is embarrassing by definition, unconnected to the group.

A number of improvements would contribute to the approach used in this research, such as presenting a broader range of topics as well as ensuring that the course takes place during an optimum time slot. While better teacher selection criteria, more training, and closer supervision are needed, the intervention was welcomed overall both by the students and the administration.

The research also confirms that participants enjoyed an interactive educational approach incorporating role playing and discussion, and making space for questions. This interactive approach helps Modern Orthodox teenagers become thoughtful about the multiple issues involved in developing attitudes and behaviors in areas of sexuality and relationships.

A Variety of Approaches to Jewish Law

Ulpanat Bina aims to create a religious education relevant to the lives of its students. It claims a dual mission to both inculcate a “clear obligation to Torah” and “broad open vistas of thought.” The tension between these two missions becomes particularly acute around the teaching of Jewish law. On the one hand the educator seeks to generate autonomous commitment through the appreciation of the relevance and importance of Jewish law but concurrently transmits standards of Jewish law which are binding upon each student. The Life Values and Intimacy education curriculum attempts to function within this tension. The curriculum presents a range of legitimate halakhic positions along with a careful discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of each. The outer limits of that range represent the binding standards. Students discuss the options and are taught that they must come to a decision about their practice from within this range. The philosophic basis for this approach will be elaborated further in the section discussing autonomy. This approach benefits from the integrity of open dialogue and does not seek to conceal options within accepted standards of Jewish law in order to direct students towards a particular, preferred choice.

In this study, participants represented a range of commitments to halakhic practice. Almost all participants in the current study identified themselves as being committed to Jewish law in general, but many qualified that commitment for behaviors they considered too detailed or outside the realm of Jewish law.

Sarah: In general, Jewish law leads me... I don't know... It doesn't mean that I am a non-religious person if I am not *shomeret negiyah*. I simply have not yet found the great, bright light in the Jewish law. There are plenty of things that are really annoying to me and I don't agree with them. I don't break Shabbat, and that is not only out of habit. But I don't take everything so seriously.

Two central approaches to Jewish law within Orthodoxy can be outlined. A conservative approach represented by Moses Sofer in the early nineteenth century, views innovation in Jewish law as unacceptable. Once a written consolidated work of Jewish law exists, (like the *Shulchan Aruch*, the comprehensive compendium of Jewish law, in the sixteenth century) it represents the

will of God and cannot be changed even if circumstances do (Waxman, 1992; Sperber, 2006). The religious Jew should adapt himself or herself to the dictates of this absolute, unchanging law. In this view, Jewish law follows a clear path based on a defined process and comes to an unequivocal conclusion.

A more liberal approach to Jewish law stresses that Jewish law responds to sociological realities of particular communities, in particular places, and at particular times. This approach is acutely aware of subjective judgments in Jewish law that may change over time and takes them into account when making halakhic decisions (Waxman, 1992; Sperber, 2007).

These two approaches play out very differently in a Family Life education classroom. In designing the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum, I included the fuller range of options and rationales, following the more liberal approach. Educational materials could be adapted to a classroom operating under the more conservative philosophic assumption. However the centrality of open dialogue and autonomous thinking in the Life Values and Intimacy education curriculum may make such an adaptation difficult.

An example of the liberal approach can be found in an article on the laws of modesty written by Henkin (2003). Dealing with possible sleeve lengths, he presents the full range of approaches, ranging from those that he understands to be minimally acceptable to those that are most stringent. Henkin also clearly specifies the sleeve length he considers unacceptable. The list is presented to the reader, who can then make an informed decision as to what level of stringency she would like to adopt from the range of acceptable positions in Jewish law. Henkin's approach is unusual. Most halakhic works in this area, especially those written in English, tend to narrow the range of options regarding appropriate halakhic behavior, seeking to present stringencies as the only acceptable option (Fuchs, 1985; Falk, 1998; Aviner, 1985, 2000).

Issues of Jewish law presented in the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum follow Rabbi Henkin's approach, presenting a range of halakhic options where they exist, as well as the underlying rationales for the various conclusions. Educators may choose to guide their students in a particular direction, or they may choose to offer more autonomy to the student from within the acceptable options in Jewish law. This study, and its analysis of Green, clarifies the importance of encouraging the voices of parents and trusted religious advisors to weigh in on this complicated process. The curriculum will be adapted to emphasize this point.

The unit on relationships between teenage boys and girls in the Life Values and Intimacy Education curriculum similarly presents a range of acceptable options (see appendix for full curriculum, Unit 6). After a general introduction about friendships and the ways in which they change during high school, relationships between boys and girls specifically are discussed. The

unit focuses on the central question of whether having a boyfriend or girlfriend is acceptable practice, even just a platonic relationship. The class discusses various challenges, particularly religious ones that are likely to present themselves to a high school aged couple who seek to be involved in a romantic relationship and follow standards of Jewish law. Various text-based sources are presented for discussion. The instructor guides the discussion to an understanding that while most of the behaviors that evolve naturally in a romantic relationship are forbidden, the actual relationship itself is not. In addition, they are reminded of the important role that self-control plays in Jewish religious life. Ultimately, participants in consultation with parents and religious advisors are expected to formulate decisions from the range of possibilities presented in Jewish law.

While the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum fully accepts Jewish law, it is also sensitive to the frailties of human nature and the possibility of failing to live up to a standard of Jewish law, particularly in areas of sexuality. Teachers encourage students who struggle not to view themselves as outside Jewish law by emphasizing the power of repentance and the opportunity it presents to start afresh. The overarching approach seeks to be inclusive rather than exclusive and encourage students to feel a sense of belonging within their Modern Orthodox community. This approach also seeks to nurture an honest realization of the complexities of living a life committed to Jewish law, which requires frequent decision-making, responsibility, and self-control. These are vital components of an informed Modern Orthodox life within a secular, majority culture but can be the source of deep personal struggle for teenagers who have to deny their normal sexual feelings within their romantic relationships.

Open Discourse in the Life Values and Intimacy Classroom

Some Modern Orthodox educators in Israel criticize Family Life education programs in State religious schools that consistently avoid addressing the topics of most interest and importance to students (Sherlow, 2004; Samet, 2005). The results of this study indicate that topics are sometimes addressed, but so superficially that it is clear they are only being taught to fulfill some extrinsic requirement. Alternatively, they are addressed in a manner so incongruous with student norms in these areas that the instructor is dismissed as being out of touch with student realities. Arielle reports on her experience from a school-supported retreat.

Arielle: I don't turn to anyone. Last year, we had a workshop and we spent time talking to the counselor. His opinion was that it is forbidden to do anything. In his opinion you couldn't even meet boys at all. I don't ask questions, I don't go and ask people questions.

While schools may say they provide Family Life education, the form and content of these courses is often insufficient. Rosenak (1986) speaks of the need for authenticity and relevance when educating to Jewish values. He describes an educational approach of “business as usual” in a school in which the student body does not feel obligated by the tradition and “the teacher is aligned with the subject-matter against the pupils and their environment, though the confrontation is not admitted” (p. 29). While participants at Ulpanat Bina are aligned with the tradition, Arielle’s experience demonstrates the lack of relevance that can be present even in a Modern Orthodox school in which students do feel obligated by the tradition but are not always in agreement with the way it is interpreted and presented. This is especially true during off-campus retreats and workshops, when unfamiliar educators are not sufficiently made aware of students’ norms. In developing the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum, I sought an educational approach appropriate for sexuality education for the Modern Orthodox community. An analysis of the problematic nature of some current approaches in Family Life education can facilitate the development of alternative, positive formulations to be used in Life Values and Intimacy education. Below are a number of examples of pitfalls gathered from this research, which are also confirmed by the literature (Samet, 2005; Hartman, 2007; Hartman & Samet, 2007). In these examples, I will focus on issues that have emerged as problematic when educating Modern Orthodox women about sexuality, including an approach towards men, sexuality, and modesty (*tzniut*). In each case, an alternative approach, as presented in the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum, is offered.

Demonization

Research among teachers in Modern Orthodox girls’ schools reveals that religious teenage girls are taught unequivocally that it is up to them to ensure that the boys they meet in youth group activities will not sin (Rapoport, 1999; Hartman & Samet, 2007). Pre-intervention interviews in this research confirm that this was indeed what participants had been taught. Participants expressed concerns about these issues both in person, and through the question box, confirming the importance of providing a forum for anonymous questions. Questions posed included, “What exactly are the physical ramifications of sexual hormones on men (mainly) and on women, too?” and “What is the girl’s responsibility with regards boys sinning?”

The most common explanation offered by participants for modesty was that it served to protect boys, who, struggling under the influence of their active teenage hormones, would have sexual thoughts if they viewed females inappropriately exposed. Participants indicated underlying resentment of this explanation as Yael states, “They kill us for the sake of the boys.”

Controlling female behavior because of male desire is not unique to the Modern Orthodox world. Whatley (1987, 1988), in her studies of sexuality education curricula, identifies how biological determinism is used to perpetuate perceptions about male and female sexuality within society.

The recurring theme in [sexuality education] texts and curricular materials is that it [the sex drive] is a powerful innate, hormonally determined sex drive in men, with very little indication that there might be some equivalent in women. The message is that women, having little trouble overcoming their weak libidos, are responsible for saying “no” to men, who ideally should learn “proper control” but are often too strongly hormonally driven to be able to stop on their own. The responsibility for men’s sexuality clearly falls on the woman as she must be careful never to “lead him on,” to always resist his advances, and if unsuccessful, to ensure that contraception is used. Many teenage men and women readily support this view of women’s responsibility for men’s sexual behavior: If he is sexually aggressive, it is her fault for dressing, walking, speaking, or acting in a way that triggered his uncontrollable drive. (1988, p. 104)

The role of sexual gatekeeper has been given to women in Western society, as well as in the Modern Orthodox community, but it is a role that most women reject (Fine & McLelland, 2006; Hartman, 2007). That role is based on an animalistic image of males as hostage to their hormones while imposing unequal responsibility on women. This image may be detrimental to the attitudes of teenage girls towards male family members, as well as future partners (Samet, 2005).

A negative image of men is perpetuated by those religious Family Life educators who emphasize sexual harassment and abuse (Samet, 2005) because it enables them to preach against sexual activity from a stance of protector, looking to save their students from dangerous men. This frees them from presenting the more difficult religious stance of, “This is Jewish law and therefore you must do this” (Hartman & Samet, 2007). While this message is not effective and may also need to be buttressed with rational explanations, the issue can be approached in a manner that does not characterize all men as likely sexual abusers.

While men are demonized as being slaves to their hormones, young women are often demonized in a subtler way. Viewed as the root cause of their male counterparts’ sinning, they are expected to control their behaviors in order to protect the men.

Yael: It's true of all youth. In terms of Jewish law – girls don't dance mixed so that boys won't be tempted to watch. Modesty is all because of the boys. They are killing us just to have mercy on the boys.

Females' very being, even if they control their behaviors and are careful about modesty and *shemirat negiyah*, is a danger to young men. This approach which places the onus for control of sexuality on the woman by imposing multiple guidelines for being covered can also be viewed as a demonization of women.

Boys in many Yeshiva high schools are educated that girls are a danger to their spirituality; their only security against girls' pernicious influence is to avoid them. This approach is initially reflected in the movie, *B'Nogeiya Eleinu* in which the young boy, overcome and distraught by the couples' failure in *shemirat negiyah* chooses to ignore his girlfriend and does not respond to her many phone calls and letters. This initial response in which she is shut out from conversing with him places on her full culpability for what transpired between them. His only recourse therefore is to cut ties with her completely and dramatically. Only towards the end of the movie does he realize the need for reconciliation as well as shared responsibility for their mutual failure. This sense of female culpability was an idea familiar to many participants who had been taught the need for controlling their dress and behavior in order to protect against stimulating males.

Maya: In school they have spoken about us having to dress modestly in front of boys. You know that you have to dress modestly in front of boys because if they see everything, if a boy sees it, it is different for a boy seeing it [exposed body] than for a girl. When I show off more of myself, he gets a feeling from it....

More troubling was Tali's reaction to her own experience of being sexually harassed. Educated in a system which places responsibility for most sexual impropriety on the female, she had been burdened for a number of years with an incident for which she felt, at least partially, responsible.

Tali: I think that it was because I talked to him that led to it happening [sexual harassment]. At first I just talked to him and I did not see it as anything inappropriate. But after hearing Adina talking about it [sexual harassment and abuse, in the Life Values class] I realized that I actually had not agreed to anything that he had done, and perhaps he interpreted my talking to him as it being OK [to touch me]. But yes, it certainly was sexual abuse. He touched me in

places where I did not want to be touched. He asked me if I was OK with it and I said no and he still continued...Because if I had not started talking to him, it would never have happened. So on some level, I joined in with him.

Tali's experience demonstrates the insidious impact that the demonizing of women can have on females. While her report of the incident in which she suffered sexual harassment indicates no culpability on her part, she has been educated to feel responsible. Tali re-interprets the events so as to accept upon herself some responsibility and seems unable to recognize unequivocally that she was attacked despite her complete innocence. Hartman (2007) presents the type of education that provokes this type of thinking.

A young male teacher, before giving an evening lecture, placed a bowl of pastry in the center of the table. As the girls reached for the pastry, he stopped them explaining that they had to wait until the end of the lecture. He left the pastry in the middle of the table and taught the class. At the end, as the girls finally began to eat, he said dramatically: "Remember how you were distracted by those pastries? That is exactly how I feel when you don't dress modestly." (p.55)

Man's sexual weakness is addressed by constricting woman. Rather than accept strictures upon himself to strengthen his weak will, he transfers responsibility to the female. This demonization of women and concurrent restrictions upon them deserves to be revisited.

Avoiding Demonization

The Life Values and Intimacy curricular intervention offers a different approach to understanding male and female roles in maintain fidelity to Jewish law. The curriculum teaches that males and females share responsibility in navigating relationships and Jewish law. This approach was presented through a movie produced by a group of Modern Orthodox high-school boys, which deals with the complexities of being in a romantic relationship and being *shomer negiyah* primarily from a male perspective. The class discussed the nature of males and females and the ways in which they are both challenged by *shemirat negiyah* through an analysis of the movie. The movie encouraged sensitivity to the male perspective by presenting the inner world of a religious young man struggling to control his sexual desires while in a relationship and taking an active, responsible role in the endeavor. Participants expressed surprise at many of the movie's suppositions and representations and offered critical commentary on the assumptions

and conclusions it offered based on their own perspectives. For example, they were surprised by the degree to which the boy in the movie was troubled by a failure in *shemirat negiyah*, since many of the boys in their social circles are not concerned with *shemirat negiyah*. They were also troubled by the way the boy completely rejected his girlfriend and struggled alone with his guilt instead of dealing with the issue together with her. The movie provided an enriching experience for most participants by offering access to a male lens, and it broadened perspectives and empathic understandings of the experience of Modern Orthodox teenage boys. Participants found that the movie confirmed just how different boys and girls are from each other, and many commented on the different ways in which they are affected by each other. Participants came to the realization that they had not thought about boys' conflicts, and they requested more opportunities that would offer insight into the religious male teenage experience.

Lior: I don't think that girls really understand boy's conflicts. Because girls have no idea how hard it is for boys and how much it affects them. Boys also do not understand girls. This movie is about how the boy feels.

While the movie presented a male as struggling to control his sexual desire, the difference between this approach and that which demonizes men lies in the fact that the boy in the movie took full responsibility for his struggle. While he initially distances himself from his girlfriend, ultimately he recognizes the importance of their relationship. In consultation with her they put certain precautions in place to help them stay committed to *shemirat negiyah*. The movie helped participants be more cognizant of boys' struggles as well as the possibility of overcoming them as demonstrated by the couple in *B'nogeiyah Eleinu*. The movie also challenged assumptions that females were responsible for males sinning by showing the gradual acceptance on the part of the male of his girlfriend as a full partner in addressing their shared failure. The movie implies that they come to work together to build strategies for future success. Another topic that participants found interesting was the question of gender differences in relatedness and they found themselves thinking about similarities and differences in the ways males and females experience relationships. For a few participants, the experience lowered the resentment that they had harbored against boys stemming from the fact that girls suffer from menstruation while boys do not. The portrayal of boys' very real struggle for sexual self-control engendered empathy towards boys that the girls had not previously felt. Based on the portrayal of the female character and her reactions in the movie, participants also concluded that boys do not understand girls and the ways in which they process experiences. The movie and subsequent discussion confirmed for participants the possibility of males and females experiencing the same events quite differently

and the importance of sensitizing each to the other. Maayan emerged from the intervention feeling less burdened than when she had entered. While she had been taught previously that she carried the responsibility of making sure that her boyfriend did not sin, she had acquired a new sense of shared responsibility which she found more satisfactory: “Maayan: There is a balance: girls have to be modest and on the other hand boys have to control themselves,” adopting a perspective similar to Hartman’s (2007):

How about we give equal responsibility to both men and women, placing limitations upon an encompassing male gaze and allowing a place for the female gaze to do more than simply respond to male needs. (p. 61)

Participants in general expressed appreciation for being offered the opportunity to explore issues from a male perspective, something they rarely do. They felt that they acquired insight into males, their experiences, and their perspectives from the units on male anatomy and physiology, as well as the movie produced by teenage boys. However, a few participants reported that the course also demonized boys and they were critical of those ideas which were not in line with the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum approach.

Ariella: ...I felt that some of the stuff they told us was totally wrong. Like about boys. They told us that all boys, most boys are totally perverted and every time they see a girl they get all whatever, and I spoke to my friend and he was like, “What is this nonsense they are teaching you? Maybe some boys but certainly not all.” And I think he knows better because he’s a boy.

Tali also shares information that had surprised her, though not necessarily from the course, based in a traditional essentialist view of boys.

Tali: ... With regards boys... it’s a little shocking that they are not able to control their desires... all sorts of their behaviors around girls, they do it on purpose to get attention. Obviously, there are boys who are not like that... I don’t want to get to know too many boys right now.

The fact that these ideas may be transmitted by a curriculum that seeks to offer a very different perspective on boys speaks to the importance of intensive teacher training. Alternatively, the curriculum content can sometimes be distorted in the transmission, especially when seeking to communicate a new approach. While the course instructor was well versed and

experienced in teaching Family Life education and we had worked together for well over a year, people have a tendency to fall back on long-held beliefs.

Research indicates that the instructor in a sexuality education classroom plays a significant role in the success or failure of the class (Milton et al, 2001; Bowden et al, 2003). A number of factors are influential in this regard, including teacher characteristics, attitudes, and conception of self. In addition, how the teacher presents the educational materials is significant. The same curriculum can lead to radically different ideas and conclusions when presented by teachers with differing attitudes and beliefs (Milton et al, 2001; Kehily, 2002). Curricular materials may be taught, but not always in a way that fully conveys the underlying assumptions and specific educational goals of the unit.

In light of these findings, a teacher training seminar even for experienced teachers should be a necessary prerequisite for those who want to teach the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum.¹² A component of that training should include a unit on educational approaches that highlights the typical problematic approaches and encourages teachers to be vigilant in avoiding them.

Sexuality is Bad

In a study of gender differences in messages about sexuality in Modern Orthodox education, Marmon Grumet (2008) describes how women often reported that they were presented throughout their schooling with many negative ideas about sexuality. For example, they were taught that physical closeness is not appropriate for religious girls, that it would “defile” them, and that it is immodest to think or speak of such matters. These negative conceptions of sexuality were received both implicitly from the culture of the school and explicitly from teachers themselves. On the other hand, these same women reported how pre-marriage classes discussed the sanctity and beauty of the sexual relationship, a new perspective that they found shocking, requiring an often jarring transition from the prior negative approach. They described how the deeply negative stance from high school made it difficult for them to accept such completely conflicting perceptions; some attributed trauma that remained with them for many years as stemming from this educational approach. For a small number, the dissonance led to difficulties in engaging in and enjoying the marital sexual relationship.

This problem is not unique to the Modern Orthodox community and has been discussed by religious Christians as well. Winner (2005) states,

¹² A two day teacher training workshop has already been developed and implemented in all schools in the United States that are using the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum. Teachers who have participated (about 25 altogether) have found it to be an invaluable component of their preparation for addressing issues of sexuality and relationships with their students.

We spend years guarding our virginity, but find, upon getting married, that we cannot just flip a switch. When in marriage sex is finally OK, even encouraged, many young women are stuck with years of work (and sometimes therapy) to unlearn the habits of sexual denial... What was very wrong a day before is not easily understood to be very right a day later. (p. 95-96)

Samet (2005) confirms these findings, offering various examples of young women who were completely overwhelmed by the dramatic movement from “modesty, modesty, modesty” to the Jewish law that in marriage sexual relations are expected to be carried out unclothed. She describes how the problems that evolve from the current educational approach have repercussions both in the present and the future. In addition, those with boyfriends exert significant effort to silence their sexual desires in an attempt to protect themselves from slipping into a physical relationship. For those who were unsuccessful in their efforts, as well as for many of those who chose to have a physical relationship, physical touch between the sexes was often associated with feelings of sin and guilt. This guilt associated with sexual feelings is hard to undo later on in life.

Avoidance of a positive approach to sexuality leads many teenagers, whether involved in relationships or not, to lack awareness not only of their physicality but of their capacity for sensuality as well. Winner (2005) describes the problem in the religious Christian community. In her book, *Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity*, she writes,

Rather than spending our unmarried years stewarding and disciplining our desires, we have become ashamed of them. We persuade ourselves that the desires themselves are horrible. This can have real consequences if we do get married. Teenagers and single adults are told over and over not to have sex, but no one ever encourages them to be bodily or sensual in some appropriate way – getting to know and appreciate what their bodies can do through sports, especially for girls, or even thinking sensually about something like food... The church ought to cultivate ways of teaching Christians to live in their bodies well – so that unmarried folks can still be bodily people, even though they’re not having sex, and so that married people can give themselves to sex freely. (p. 95-96)

Like the approach described by Winner, the usual approach in Modern Orthodox schools depicts desire as a negative, inappropriate feeling that needs to be battled and overcome. While this approach to sexuality education may serve to maintain modesty and *shemirat negiyah* during teenage years, it represses sexuality in a way that cannot easily be undone. In addition,

because Modern Orthodox teenagers absorb an approach of silence, avoidance, and repression when it comes to sexuality, they are unequipped to have conversations on these topics with their partners, conversations that could potentially address and rectify many of the difficult issues (Samet, 2005).

Repression of women's sexuality can be found in the broader Western culture as well. Fine (1988) explores the ways in which schools teach young people about sexuality. She found that curricula on sexuality avoid any discussion of female desire and sexual pleasure. Rather, they choose to portray young women primarily as potential victims of male sexual aggression. This lack of discourse about a positive female sexuality distorts females' sense of their own sexuality. In Fine's opinion, there is a missing discourse of female desire:

A genuine discourse of desire would invite adolescents to explore what feels good and bad, desirable and undesirable... such a discourse would release females from a position of receptivity. (p. 35)

In a recent publication in which Fine revisits questions of education about female sexuality almost twenty-years after her original study (focusing in particular on the plethora of abstinence curricula), she is still troubled by the continued absence of positive discourse about female sexuality (Fine & McClelland, 2006). The pervasive effort to avoid educating women honestly about their sexuality and capacity for pleasure has left teenage girls viewing themselves as passive receptacles for male sexuality rather than empowering them to appreciate and acknowledge their sexuality.

It is noteworthy that Modern Orthodox men do not experience the same negative associations with sexuality as do women. Males do not report being exposed to the same kinds of powerful, guilt inducing messages as females (Marmon Grumet, 2008). It seems that the social stigma and deep guilt for having desires and wanting to engage in sexual activity is primarily expressed by females in the Modern Orthodox community. Ironically, the Modern Orthodox community reinforces secular Western culture in perpetuating a negative portrayal of female sexuality.

The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum addresses the issue of sexuality in several different ways. Unit five begins with a discussion of the concept of pleasure. Different approaches to pleasure are presented and discussed, and together the class develops a positive approach to pleasure rooted in Jewish philosophy and law. The ascetic trend in Judaism encourages minimal sexual relations and is explored briefly, although it is an approach that normative Jewish tradition does not espouse. Modern secular society encourages people to see

pleasure, and especially sexuality, as a central focus of life. While Judaism views pleasure as an important way of enjoying God's world and sexuality as beautiful and good in the context of marriage, it is not viewed as an end in itself. Students are led to view sexuality in the broader context of Judaism's approach to the physical, which seeks to elevate the physical by incorporating a spiritual component into the experience (as in the cases of blessings recited before eating, keeping kosher, and laws of family purity). Unit nine opens by considering the need that humans have for touch through studies that identify the unconscious influence of even casual physical contact on people's reactions to each other. Once this has been established, it becomes easier to understand why Jewish law preserves a sensitivity and appreciation of human physical contact through its approach to relationships between the sexes. The group explores Jewish laws of *shemirat negiyab* through text-based study. This discussion introduces the importance of self-control as a central tenet in Judaism, expressed in many aspects of religious life (for example, not working on the Sabbath, blessing before eating, no marital relations for a portion of every month). The Life Values and Intimacy approach educates to the idea that while pleasures are to be enjoyed, not every desire is meant to be fulfilled at every time. It is in a disciplined life that religious Jews become free to fulfill their main goal, knowledge and service of God.

The curriculum educates to the need for self-control as a central component of the lives of religious individuals, both male and female. It advocates presenting these materials to both boys and girls so that the traditional gender gap in approaching issues of sexuality regarding responsibility and pleasure can gradually be narrowed.

The message offered by the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum is, of necessity, complex because the reality of living life to the standards of tradition, particularly in areas of sexuality and relationships, can be challenging. This challenge is compounded by the non-stop urgings of popular culture that are antithetical to the norms of tradition. As noted above, teachers of Jewish law struggle with teaching the laws relevant to sexuality – which are absolute and stringent in their expectations of limited physical contact – while facing the reality in which students live. The difficulty lies in stressing acceptance of the student despite their behaviors while not broadcasting an acceptance of behaviors that are completely outside of the range of Jewish law. Students should feel accepted even under circumstances in which their behavior may not coincide with the minimum letter of the law since rejecting them is usually counter-productive. Rather, they can be encouraged by the knowledge that not all forms of physical contact are considered equally serious, and that they are not placing themselves outside of the realm of the religious world if they sometimes falter in the observance of these laws. For

example, shaking hands and “high-fives” may not fall under the category of touching in friendship, one possible definition of forbidden touch. Even within a relationship, while the Rabbis established an absolute standard of no touching, hand-holding is not the same as more intimate forms of touch. Viewing the path towards a life of holiness as having twists and turns, even moments of weakness for which they may have to repent, can be helpful to those who struggle. The curriculum encourages students to commit to the system of Jewish law as a whole with the understanding that this involves a process of development and the nurturing of a desire to keep striving for commitment.

In some communities, Jewish laws in this area need to be set up as an ideal towards which students should be striving, although they may not yet have committed themselves fully to observance. In others, the laws will be considered absolutes to be accepted unequivocally. There may be students, who are not even interested in the struggle, but the lessons offered in the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum may lead them to be more thoughtful and introspective about their relationships with the opposite sex and may restrain them from some behaviors. In some cases, the overall philosophy of Jewish law on sexuality and relationships can be presented, and educators can approach students on an individual or small group basis for specific guidance and discussion.

Feinberg (2006) identifies this strategy as one taken by the religion instructor in a Catholic school he observed. Father D. presented an uncompromising position on issues of divorce, homosexuality, birth control, and abortion in the classroom, defining them as sin, while presenting himself as approachable enough that students came to consult with him individually of their own volition to discuss issues of sexuality. The nature of his discourse, and even his positions, sometimes softened when dealing with particular individuals.

While this approach to the observance of the laws of *shemirat negiyah* may appear to be excessively liberal, it emerges from the sense that presenting the Jewish laws as absolute expectations that students must meet will, in many circles, constitute an expectation so far removed from the students’ reality that the approach will be counter-productive. If a student allows herself to hold hands with her boyfriend but does no more than that and is made to feel that this is so terrible that she comes to view herself as a sinner in God’s eyes, she may define herself as an irreligious Jew and therefore outside the community. As a result, she may allow herself to go further in her sexual explorations, since she views herself as outside the community norms already. She may even consider rejecting a lifestyle based in Jewish law because “I am bad anyway” or “I am a sinner.” Fisherman (2000), in his study of girls who had chosen to leave religion, finds that in a number of cases the impetus for leaving had to do with failures in

keeping the standards of Jewish law in romantic relationships. Students can learn that sexual sin comes in levels and gradations, and that not all infractions are Biblical prohibitions. Modern Orthodox education provides for familiarity with levels and gradations within Jewish law (Biblical prohibitions, Rabbinic prohibitions, customs etc.), which would be useful in this context and are available as a text based study session for those schools who choose to adopt this approach.

Tzniut as Objectification of Women

An area of sexuality education that emerges in this research as being a source of conflict was *tzniut* education, education to modesty. While modesty encompasses a broad range of behaviors it is most commonly used to refer to clothing and the expectations of Jewish law with regards appropriate dress. This is a noteworthy phenomenon in its own right.

Many participants identified modesty as a source of personal conflict, as well as a source of conflict with the school and sometimes with their mothers. Participants indicated that following the Jewish laws of modesty was not held in high regard by those identified as being “cool” in the school. For those participants who sought membership and acceptance by that group, the pressure to wear clothing outside the bounds of accepted modest practice was intense.

Judy: ...When I came to the school, I used to wear Zara shirts [short sleeved shirt that girls wear under their shirts so that their neckline is not too low] under my shirt also, but now I never wear Zara shirts, they are too closed for me. I hate Zara shirts. I don't think it's pretty any more, my whole thinking changed. And my friends all wear really open so I guess...

Researcher: Do you feel that that [change in dress] has come from being at Ulpanat Bina? Do you feel like you've changed your religiosity as a result of being here?

Judy: I think maybe modesty wise, but I don't think everything else. The thing about Ulpanat Bina is that they take all kinds of girls. It's not like other Ulpanot which take mostly the same kind of girls. Because it takes a variety of girls, you come here knowing that it's going to be like this but then, in the end you are influenced by the people around you who you want to be with. It's definitely true that slowly, slowly 'cause it's also the social group.

While Ulpanat Bina is struggling to chart an appropriate path for itself in this area of education, participants who had been educated in other schools, particularly those schools which emphasized modesty and provided regular classes about its importance, were highly critical of

what they describe as an over-involvement with dress. Some participants, rather than identifying themselves as having absorbed an underlying commitment to modesty, expressed a stronger desire to rebel against it.

Sarah: In general with this whole issue of modesty, I don't really agree with their approach [the elementary school administration]. They get extremely stuck on the small things...it ends up making everyone anti...as soon as you leave school, you take off your skirt...As soon as you leave school – you take off your sweater. And it's really all in rebellion. If they weren't so involved with it and just gave flexible boundaries...

Modesty for young Modern Orthodox women is often presented as an alternative to the majority culture's obsession with women's bodies. Instead, modesty focuses on the inner self, on the whole person, rather than on her external appearance (Manolson, 1997; Ariel, 2000). A recent report by the American Psychological Association (APA) (2007) on the sexualization of girls provides ample evidence that modern secular culture sexualizes women in general and teenage girls in particular. Virtually every media form studied displays sexualization of women, including television, music videos, music lyrics, movies, magazines, sports media, video games, the internet, and advertising. Study after study has demonstrated that women are more often than men portrayed in a sexual manner (as defined by being dressed in revealing clothes, for example) and are objectified (as when used as a decorative object) (APA, 2007). It is this reality that has triggered a counterbalancing emphasis on the "inner self."

Nonetheless, in a critical analysis of education towards modesty, Hartman (2007) examines many of the current practices in the teaching of modesty, as well as the accompanying rhetoric. While there is much talk of focus on the inner-self and of modesty offering the opportunity for "profound spiritual self-actualization" (p. 47), Hartman demonstrates how, in fact, quite the opposite occurs. Orthodox women are constantly watched and chastised for their dress, and this scrutiny of the female body and the parts of it that need to be covered is the primary form of "education" to modesty for Modern Orthodox teenage girls.

Under the bright, surgical light of Halakhic scrutiny of their bodies... and the inescapable spotlight of a gaze that is at turns domineering and fearful but never less than severe, women are encouraged both overtly and implicitly to think of themselves not in terms of their ineffable spirit, of the whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, but of the parts themselves. This dismembering (in every

sense of the word) is what has emerged, within contemporary Orthodox discourse, as a working definition of *tzniut*. (p. 54)

Gross (2006) describes the demeaning experience for teenage girls in a religious girls' high school whose male principal stood daily at the entrance to the school and approved entry to the school based on their clothing. Girls found it not only offensive but also antithetical to their conception of modesty and education towards it. In similar fashion, Barack Fishman (2000) bemoans the extreme emphasis on female modesty and constriction of female voices, interpreting it as an attempt to give the illusion of having successfully resisted the incursions of modernity, while in reality it shows no such thing. The idea of covering the female body as expressed in Jewish law can be presented in a positive manner without transmitting a sense of being objectified. My research indicates that most participants were accepting of and in agreement with the concept of modesty.

Yael: The class vote [about all agreeing to come to school dressed modestly] was not about whether to dress modestly or not. It's clear to everyone that they have to do that. How exactly you do that – that's your choice...

Participants' resistance to Ulpanat Bina's standard of dress arose from the details of practice as well as from a presentation that framed the need for modesty as emanating from male needs and desires. When presented appropriately, with a reasonable level of expectations for behaviors from both men and women, an approach to modesty that focuses on the inner self can be empowering (Shalit, 1999).

Hartman highlights the fact that in a book published for the Modern Orthodox community dedicated to topics of modesty, a book directed at women, twenty-seven of the thirty-one articles included in it were written by men (Schwartzbaum & Sadan, 2000). A publication of this sort perpetuates the notion among women, and particularly among teenage girls, that these laws have been established by men and, in Yael's words, "are killing the girls for the sake of the boys." This notion is compounded by the fact that while there are numerous articles for women on the importance of their inner selves and inner beauty, no parallel message is offered to boys.

In the comprehensive article "Contemporary *Tzniut*" (2003), Henkin is adamantly against the over-involvement in modesty that has become prevalent in Orthodox circles (see, for example, Falk, 1998). By presenting modesty as one of many commandments that women observe in fulfilling their relationship with God, which bears no more weight than any others, the significance of modesty is tempered and less contention surrounds it. The relative weight

attributed to modesty influences the degree to which people may be offended by its emphasis. In a review of Rabbi Henkin's recently published book, in which the above essay is reprinted, Berger (2008) states:

I find the heightened concern, awareness, and publicity regarding issues of dress and "appropriate behavior" that are discussed in books and articles invariably written by men about women's deportment to be the epitome of a lack of *tzniut*. I assume that this topic is becoming more and more a central concern to the Jewish community and is, at least partially, a response to a change in values in general society, which have become less in tune with traditional Jewish values. At the same time, constant harping on a person's appearance and how a person dresses puts a tremendous emphasis on superficial issues, drawing more attention to them. If the purported reason for raising these issues is to lessen focus on sensual and sexual visual triggers, pointing them out may not be the best way to do it.

Male Educators in a Female World

In concluding this section, it is important to address the role of men in educating young women towards modesty. There are many rabbis involved in educating females, and as educators and heads of girls' educational institutions they may sometimes feel that it is their responsibility to talk to girls about modesty. Rabbis who seek to educate their students in all aspects of Jewish law assume that this topic also falls under their jurisdiction. Most participants in this study, however, felt that education in this area should be provided by females. Tali speaks for them.

Tali: I don't think school is such a comfortable place [for talking about modesty] because the people who talk about it are the rabbis in the school and on these topics – we need to talk with a female. It is more comfortable with a female.

This study suggests that even the best intentioned, most sincere rabbi is generally perceived by teenage girls as sanctimonious, self-righteous, and condescending when addressing women about modesty. Being male, he has never had to deal personally with these issues and, in their eyes, cannot possibly be empathic to the struggle these strictures represent for them. Issues of modesty should be addressed by female educators.

Exploring the Contours of Normation among Participants

In this section, I explore how the approach to moral education propounded by Green (1999) serves as an innovative framework to interpret the experiences of participants in this study. (A more detailed presentation of Green's approach is found in the theoretical background, Chapter 1, p. 26) Green's central concern is the governance of conduct. By using the term governance, Green wishes to broaden the focus of moral education to include "the exercise of every craft and profession and in the maintenance of every civilizing practice" (p. 3). Through stress of "governance," Green also avoids exclusive focus on the rational analysis of what constitutes proper behavior.

The effective governance of conduct – the central aim of moral education – is not simply comprehension, that is, the capacity to talk the talk of ethics and set out in argument the proper path of conduct. Moral education has to do with an acquired temper of the self by which the talk is brought to actually govern conduct and can be discerned to do so, even when the conduct itself falls short of all we think it ought to be. (p. 3)

The mechanism by which an individual exercises self-governance is the development of conscience. "Conscience is reflexive judgment on things that matter and is formed by the acquisition of norms, norms that take on the role of governance" (p. 23).

Conscience is formed through the development of internal voices, each of which emphasizes a different aspect of morality. These voices exhort us to excellence in craft, loyalty in membership, and sacrifice for duty. Other voices include the voice of memory and imagination. These voices "argue" amongst themselves and thus form conscience. Green chooses the term "normation" to describe the state in which one is governed by a norm. The goal of moral education is to bring people to a state of "strong normation."

His analysis of motivation for behavior makes a clear distinction between accordance, obedience, compliance, and observance. Most important for this research is Green's distinction between compliance and observance. Behavior that merely complies with a norm or a rule does not indicate strong normation. A person can be defined as "normed" only if they are cognizant of a rule and accept it as a norm, even if they do not always act in accordance with that rule. Normed behavior is actually more easily identified in the breach of a rule, when conduct is disobedient, because normation is not only defined in behavior but also in the accompanying feelings associated with that behavior. In the violation of a norm, a person's feelings of guilt and remorse identify whether they are truly accepting of the norm or not. Normation ranges from

strong to weak. Normation which invokes moral emotions of self-assessment like guilt or pride is defined as strong normation. When norms are construed as technical directives, or viewed as weak rules of prudence, the result is weak normation characterized by governance of a functional and prudential nature. Green views moral education as striving to foster strong normation.

The Uneven Nature of Normation among Participants

A complex picture of normation to *shemirat negiyah* and modesty emerges from the Modern Orthodox participants in this study.

Strong Normation to Jewish Law

Gila described a delicate balancing act as she presents her struggle with the majority culture, but continues to be committed to Jewish law.

Researcher: You see all these things that look cool, that look attractive, that look like they are fun; how are you able to say, “This is not relevant to me?” What gives you that strength?

Gila: Because I know it’s not true.

Researcher: Where do you know that from?

Gila: ‘Cause I believe in God and I believe in what I’m doing...

Researcher: Is it a temptation?

Gila: Yeah, of course...

Researcher: It’s not simple?

Gila: No, not at all.

Gila was able to reject fashionable clothing or a potentially exciting activity as inappropriate despite its attraction because of her conviction that the standards she is committed to emanate from God, a description which evokes Green’s idea of the sacred. Green contends that moral education is only possible in a world which admits of the sacred. The sacred is not necessarily rooted in religion, but in the recognition of a boundary which provokes awe or reverence. Gila’s description reflects the image of a strongly normed Modern Orthodox Jew who processes her actions through a lens based in the sacred. She identified the source of her strong normation as her home.

Gila: I have a home which believes in what we are doing...like there are no tricks.

We really keep everything, we keep that thin boundary [between that which is permitted to incorporate from the secular culture and that which is forbidden]

very carefully... It means knowing how to integrate the fun, depends what you call fun, and think which fun things you are allowed to and which you have to leave behind. What is right to do and what is not. It's hard. Sometimes you have to say, wait hold on a minute. It's not so easy to do that... sometimes I reach a point where I just want to say: "Who cares about all of this?" But then, I always try and strengthen myself, and say, "you know that it will pass and in a minute you'll be OK again", and I strengthen myself.

Gila is strongly normed. Her internal dialogue accompanies her in her daily life throughout the choices she makes and keeps her from engaging in activities that are against the norms of her home which are based in Jewish law. While she gives credit to her home, Gila's internal dialogue expresses self-governance. Her behavior is not merely compliant to Jewish norms, but observant of them. As such, she identifies with Jewish norms, willingly accepts their authority upon her to the extent that she is deeply distressed by the lack of commitment to Jewish law around her. Her observance is most clearly demonstrated by her ability to say in explaining her feelings "Don't you understand, I am the Jewish law."

Gila's expressed self-governance is in an internal dialogue, not imposed from without, which seems to mirror the voices Green considers necessary for a moral life. Despite her commitment to the standard of Jewish law, Gila still spoke of challenge and struggle. This confirms the complexity of religious life for the strongly-normed member of the Modern Orthodox community.

Navigating Among the Voices

Judy also experienced conflict, but unlike Gila, she is moving away from accepted norms. Her story offers a rich description of a participant mediating the various voices of conscience.

Judy: ...And like I never get anything over the internet and I was so excited and this time I wanted to order something and I ordered a shirt and I get it and it's like, "Wow, this shirt is really see-through." I'm like, fine, whatever – I'll wear a tank top. And then my mother is like, "Don't you think that's a little see-through?" and I'm like, "No, it's fine – not at all, I don't think it's see-through." And I walked around with it. And then even my sister, my sister ... she looks at me and she's like, "Why are you wearing that – it's really see-through" and I'm like, "What? – It's not that see-through, no it's not." And I'm thinking, "Oh my gosh, what is wrong with me?" And my mother's like, "You don't think it's really see-through?" And my mother saying that made me feel like, "Oh my gosh, I

really am changing!” Also that I didn’t listen to my mother and I didn’t go change. I was like, “Who cares, what the heck.” Nobody looked at me any different! And like when we went out nobody looked at me and said “What is she wearing” and like whatever! They just said like, “Oh, it’s really a nice shirt.” And I felt really good about myself. And it used to be whenever I would try anything on and let’s say it would be a really nice shirt and my mother would say, “the sleeves are a little short” and I would be like, “no” and she’d be like, “It’s fine, it’s just a little short” and I’d be like, “no mom, if you said it’s short – it’s short! I won’t get it. I don’t want you to be looking at me saying it’s short”...And here she says, “Isn’t it a little see-through?” and I say, “no” and I wear it! I’m like, “wait it doesn’t bother me anymore”, I don’t know – it’s weird.

Her detailed description of her decision to wear a shirt that she previously would have considered unacceptable affords us access to the various internal voices at play in a moment of significant change. By persisting in wearing the “really see-through shirt,” Judy moved away from her family’s expectations of her regarding dress and explored how this independence felt. She had chosen not to be compliant with a family norm in favor of her own personal taste, which was later confirmed as a peer norm. As she worked to convince those around her that what she was wearing was acceptable, she reflected about the changes she was undergoing. She had already come to the conclusion that the shirt was not up to par, but she was determined to wear it. In fact, her own expressed assessment of the shirt changed when confronted by her mother. She surprised herself with her ability to resist her mothers’ disapproval, something she had always sought when purchasing clothing. In so doing, she discovered that, outside of the family context, no one “looked at me any different.” The community norm had not been violated; it was more tolerant than she had expected, and she was able to feel “really good about myself.” Her feeling good may stem from the realization that she need not be as stringent as she had been – the community would still accept her. In addition, it may stem from her sense of independence, the fact that her mother’s voice was no longer going to control her decisions about clothing as long as her practice was close enough to her mothers’ expectations and maintains the community norm.

Judy’s ability to feel “really good about herself” speaks to a rejection of her family norms, although the step away was not simple. Along with her good feelings, she expressed uncertainty, “Oh my gosh, what is wrong with me?” as well as feeling “weird” at not being bothered by her mother’s criticism. She struggled to identify how she felt and experienced both good and bad feelings, a reflection of the fact that she may still be observant of a norm even as she is moving

away from it. It seems that she is seeking to move outside the realm of family governance and function from within her personal norms, which are deemed acceptable because they are reinforced by her peers. Judy, like many Modern Orthodox teenagers, is in flux and unsure which voice to heed.

The Voice of Membership

Tali's experience provides an example of the dynamics that often play important roles in normation within a school community. The class effort to commit together to accept a new norm upon themselves demonstrates how the voice of membership can support a voice of duty.

Tali: We know that the school has a bad name because girls do not dress modestly. For those who care, we do not want to see our school looked at like that. So we all want to change it together...and there are girls who found it really helpful, like me for example, who changed the way they dress. The fact that it was a class effort really helped, because everyone took it on together and not just one person alone.

It seems that up until that point, membership of her peer group encouraged rejection of the level of modesty required by the school. The power of a group that chose to be normed to the school's expectation of modesty assisted Tali to accept the norm herself, something she would have found hard to do alone because she did not want to stand out alone against her peers. This example highlights how normation can take place and be re-negotiated within a school community. In this case, the community was defined by the class. This incident allows us to consider the possibility that one of the units to which participants seek membership is defined at the class, rather than the school, level. It may even be defined by particular peer groups within the classes as demonstrated by the small group of participants who were opposed to this class effort. This complexity is noteworthy because it refines definitions of communities within Ulpanat Bina in which normation may take place. By viewing Ulpanat Bina not as a monolithic community which does or does not possess a norm to a particular standard of dress, but rather as a composite of students from various communities some of which are normed to Ulpanat Bina's standard of modesty, we may consider new avenues for fostering normation. These will be discussed in the section on educational implications.

Seeking Moral Willfulness

Maayan and her boyfriend's struggle to be *shomer negiyah* provides an example of people who experience the feelings that indicate strong normation, even while not being compliant of

the norm. Committed to Jewish law, they have found it too difficult to live up to their expectations of themselves. This is a source of deep distress, a sure sign of strong normation.

Maayan: You come to a conclusion [to be *shomer*] and then you stop because it is too hard and you discuss it all the time... and I can tell you that with all the desire that touch evokes, what holds you back is that you are religious. I currently have a real sense of guilt, especially since I grew up in a religious home. I truly believe that it is the right thing [*shemirat negiyah*], and not because they brainwashed me at home, but I truly believe in it... I think it is much harder today because of the technology and culture around us, which completely contradict what we [religious Jews] think. 'Cause like, "If you have a wish – fulfill it," "You've got dreams – realize them," "Just do it," "Life is short, so do what you want." And that really contradicts our approach, and then you are really stuck in the middle [my emphasis, Y.D.].

This example is representative of a substantial group of Modern Orthodox teenagers who are observant of the norms of *shemirat negiyah* but have difficulty upholding the standards. They experience this lack of ability as a failure and seek to strengthen themselves to behavioral observance. Maayan identified the "voices" of secular culture as exacerbating the struggle by providing strong support for the approach she wishes to reject.

In Green's terms, Maayan is strongly normed because she "invokes the moral emotions of self-assessment" (p. 50) despite the fact that her behavior does not accord with the norm. Maayan appears strongly normed but lacks the motivation to act according to her convictions. James (1982) describes the concept of moral willfulness as that which enables people to live in the vision to which they adhere. Maayan's struggle challenges Modern Orthodox educators to develop strategies for strengthening moral willfulness. In light of this, The Life Values and Intimacy Curriculum will seek to develop and provide such strategies.

The Absence of Community Normation to Shemirat Negiyah

Amit developed a personal autonomous standard for *shemirat negiyah*, different from Jewish law. Her approach is representative of a number of participants and is reported by the participants as being true for many of their peers as well.

Amit: I have no internal conflicts. I am happy with the path I have chosen. I am quite comfortable with my choices, mainly those [Jewish laws] that I do not do. I am not *shomeret negiyah*. I have relationships with boys. I have good male friends. I

think it is the most normal and healthy thing in the world. I have very, very clear boundaries I set for myself. I do not feel that I need to be *shomer negiyah*, I have my own boundaries and they protect me... There was a period of time once when I was *shomeret negiyah* and then I came to understand that I do not really need it. It doesn't bother me, but when my whole group of friends put their arms around each other for pictures and only I was standing on the side and looking, [I realized] I do not need it because I have my own boundaries. I told myself that I do not need to be *shomeret negiyah*, but I would not do anything sexual at the moment. I am not interested and I will not involve myself in these areas. I have boundaries even if I am not *shomeret negiyah*. Hugs for pictures – that, yes. But not more than that. They also [my friends who are not concerned at all with *shemirat negiyah*] know it [my boundaries]. I have told them and it is quite clear, Thank God.

Amit considers herself a full member of the Modern Orthodox community. While accepting the norms of Shabbat and keeping kosher unequivocally, she sees *shemirat negiyah* as falling in the realm of personal choice. This placing of *shemirat negiyah* in the realm of personal choice is a new development for Amit, re-evaluated as a result of becoming a member of a group in which *shemirat negiyah* was not a group norm and instead became an imposition that separated her from her peers. She negotiates her boundaries differentiating between casual interactions of friendship (“hugs for pictures”) and anything more intimate (“I would not do anything sexual”). Her intuitive personal decisions about practice actually reflect categories of Jewish law within *shemirat negiyah* – that of social touching as opposed to intimate touching (Shakh commentary to Code of Jewish Law, *Yoreh Deah* 157:10). A broader concept of Jewish law’s approach to the interaction between males and females as provided by the Life Values and Intimacy education curriculum may help Amit identify her will as more closely aligned with that of Jewish law, as opposed to her present assessment of its irrelevance: “I came to understand that I do not really need it.” Amit is neither defiant nor guilty, but allows herself to make autonomous choice in matters of *shemirat negiyah*. While Amit’s autonomous choice is not far from the standards of Jewish law, her self-definition as someone flouting Jewish law “I told myself that I do not need to be *shomeret negiyah*” is problematic. The Life Values and Intimacy education curriculum supports autonomous decision making balanced against deference to the authority of Jewish law. Amit acknowledges this tension as expressed in her wish to ultimately be religious.

Amit: Ultimately, I do want to be religious. To educate my children to religious values and send them to a religious school. I hope that in the end I will choose the more religious option and not the Western one. For now, I choose the more Western option because it is the coolest.

This tension will be explored further in dealing with the issue of authority and autonomy. Amit was not alone. Sarah also considered herself a member of the community and understood the definition to include those who are not fully committed to all of Jewish law.

Sarah: In general, Jewish law leads me... I don't know... It doesn't mean that I am a non-religious person if I am not *shomeret negiyah*. I simply have not yet found the great, bright light in the Jewish law. There are plenty of things that are really annoying to me and I don't agree with them. I don't break Shabbat, and that is not only out of habit. But I don't take everything so seriously.

She does not view her less punctilious observance of *shemirat negiyah* as defining her religiosity. Her vision of religiosity is not dependent on observance of the details of Jewish law. Still it is not a mere unthinking, formulaic behavior "I don't break Shabbat, and that is not only out of habit," but something more. A number of other participants offered similar sentiments. It seems that while keeping Shabbat is strongly normed among participants, adherence to some laws or to the entirety of Jewish law as a system is not a normed standard. Thus participants were comfortable with partial observance of certain laws, recognizing that this did not place them outside of the community to which they were pleased to belong. "I am not a non-religious person if I am not *shomeret negiyah*."

Shemirat Negiyah as a Live Issue for Participants

Issues of modesty and *shemirat negiyah* were live issues for participants, occupying much of their thought and attention. In a survey of fifteen possible topics that students might be interested in addressing in the Life Values and Intimacy education course, the second and third most popular topics requested by participants were *shemirat negiyah* and modesty. Participants reported that students in the school often tried to have teachers discuss issues relating to *shemirat negiyah* and relationships. In addition, monthly "Ask the Rabbi" classes, which were open to questions in all areas of Jewish law and philosophy, often centered on these topics.

This intense interest in these topics seems to indicate that these were borderline issues for participants, behaviors to which they were not yet normed but in the realm of the possible. The very fact that participants were troubled by these issues indicates a state of flux regarding

normation. Green identifies “being troubled” as an important pre-requisite for the possibility of a “teachable moment.”

First and most apparent ... is this condition of being genuinely troubled, that is, confronted with a real conflict between duty and interest or desire, and thus confronted not as some abstract possibility, but in some quite specific case. This combination of (a) being confronted by a special case and (b) being genuinely troubled – this combination is what creates the “teachable moment” in which the command of duty can be heard. (p. 96)

This prerequisite of “being genuinely troubled” indicates that normation is an incremental process; change in normation happens only at the border between the states wherein participants are already normed and where they are not yet troubled. It does not occur all at once, as a general transformation or conversion. Many participants also indicated that *shemirat negiyah* and modesty are issues about which they are “genuinely troubled.” For some, there is a norm to *shemirat negiyah* and modesty which is challenged by interest and desire. Amit represents those in Ulpanat Bina who have comfortably rejected the norm and are therefore not troubled. These findings confirm the educational focus on these areas as a primary concern for revising norms.

Establishing the Boundaries of Normation to Shemirat Negiyah

Although participants expressed a broad range of commitment with respect to adopting a norm of touching based in Jewish law (*shemirat negiyah*), they were all committed to setting boundaries which eschewed sexual intercourse. This finding is significant in that it sets teenagers in Ulpanat Bina apart from the majority culture. In the United States, Regnerus (2007) reports (based on the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health) that 33% of teenagers aged 15, and 57% of teenagers aged 17 have engaged in sexual intercourse. A study of sexual practices in the Israeli State school system (Shtarkshall et al, 2008) found 22% of 15 year olds and 45% of 17 year olds engage in sexual intercourse. There are no statistics to date on sexual activity in the Modern Orthodox teenage population. This study gathered data on sexuality among tenth grade girls in Ulpanat Bina exploring the question of their sexual activity. Participants described sexual activity ranging from full commitment to *shemirat negiyah* to heavy petting. A couple of participants expressed concern about their friends who were “doing bad stuff.” Based on the interviews in this study we can infer a level of sexual activity that eschews oral sex and sexual intercourse and is far below that of participants’ secular counterparts.

A comparison of the language employed by religious Christians versus religious Jews to encourage restraint in sexual activity reveals sharp differences in the location of the struggle confirming the findings above. Religious Christians speak in terms of “chastity” and “virginity pledges,” while religious Jews speak in terms of “*shemirat negiyah*” which is far removed from sexual intercourse. This distinction in language profoundly affects the way the struggle is conceived. A pledge of virginity makes sexual intercourse the act of contention. Whereas the self-concept of whether I am “*shomer*” still leaves sexual intercourse, I would contend, a much less considered act. The existence of *shemirat negiyah* has succeeded in marginalizing sexual activity among Modern Orthodox teenagers so that conflicts revolve around the level of touching rather than sexual activity. In that sense *shemirat negiyah*, even for those participants who are establishing boundaries for themselves, has accomplished the Rabbi’s goal of minimizing premarital sexual intimacy. While this study focuses attention on the area of struggle, this major distinction between teenagers in Ulpanat Bina and their secular counterparts is noteworthy.

Restricting romantic relationships during high school or permitting them but expecting a standard of *shemirat negiyah* can exact a price. Physical expression of affection is an important component of a romantic relationship.

Gila: Yeah, that’s exactly why it’s not, why it’s over [my relationship with my boyfriend] because it’s not right, like you simply don’t connect as deeply...Because I think that you really can’t connect properly, have that relationship without like not touching at all. ‘Cause yeah it [a physical relationship] is part of it. I think it is part of it. With all due respect that you are supposed to relate to the person, it [a physical relationship] is how you express everything, and I think, so, so if we can’t do that then I don’t think you should be boyfriends and girlfriends, ‘cause there’s just no point.

For many Modern Orthodox teenagers, like Maayan and her boyfriend mentioned earlier, who have been romantically involved since ninth grade, maintaining *shemirat negiyah* becomes untenable. They have recently stopped being *shomer negiyah* despite their intended commitment to it. Their struggle and the associated guilt they carry as a result of their failure in *shemirat negiyah* add to the price. Some educators recommend that Modern Orthodox teenagers be involved in mixed social groups without dating until they are ready for marriage. Gila finds this solution problematic.

Gila: The principal said that it’s really good [to be in a mixed boy-girl society] but you have to keep Jewish law, and you have to be *shomer negiyah*, and to know the

rules of boys and girls not being alone together, and not to have a boyfriend. But I don't understand how he expects us to, and I asked him a lot of times and he just like he didn't answer ... I have asked him a lot of times like what do you mean? It can't be that boys and girls are going to be together and nobody is going to love someone and – it just can't be...

Denying involvement between the sexes requires repression of natural urges, which is often done through education that represents these urges in a negative light. Repression, particularly through negative messages about sexual feelings, makes it hard to accept and even take pleasure in these feelings when they are permitted. It limits the ability to transition smoothly into married life which healthy teenage relationships often facilitate. Alternatively, lessening the force and diluting the standards of *shemirat negiyah* in order to allow for the type of relationship that Maayan and her boyfriend engage without the struggle would likely bring the level of sexual activity among Modern Orthodox youth more in line with their secular counterparts. While the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum remains committed to *shemirat negiyah*, being cognizant of the associated price encourages sympathy and sensitivity to the plight of some Modern Orthodox students.

In conclusion, the uneven commitment to *shemirat negiyah* coupled with the absence of a need to conceal breaches of conduct on the part of many participants indicates that *shemirat negiyah* cannot be defined as a communal norm. However, this absence is bounded by strong normation to restrained sexual behavior which eschews sexual intercourse and other forms of casual sexual intimacy.

Shemirat Negiyah and Modesty: My Personal Choice?

Ulpanat Bina was described by its students as a school that accepts students from a range of Modern Orthodox communities.

Judy: The thing about Ulpanat Bina is that they take all kinds of girls. It's not like other Ulpanot which takes mostly the same kind of girls. Because it takes a variety of girls you come here knowing that it's going to be like this...

Despite the expressed disparity in normation to *shemirat negiyah* and, to a lesser extent, modesty, many aspects of Jewish law are normed for all members of the school community. For example, participants were in agreement that observing Shabbat or keeping the dietary laws were non-negotiable commandments.

Yael: In my opinion, it is your choice as to whether you want to touch or not. It is not your choice whether you want to keep Shabbat, because you are part of a certain framework. But *shemirat negiyah* – that is more up to you than keeping Shabbat or praying three times a day. There are plenty of people who understand it as being my personal choice.

Yael's differentiation between *shemirat negiyah* as being "my personal choice" and Shabbat, which is "part of a certain framework," requires further analysis. How do participants perceive and categorize this area of Jewish law? Yael grants the authority of Jewish law to shape behavior in general but places *shemirat negiyah* outside that category. The most likely reason for Yael's differentiation lies in the pervasive lack of commitment to *shemirat negiyah* in the Modern Orthodox community, which speaks louder than the rare educator who chooses to present it as Jewish law. In this conception, Yael is committed to observance of Jewish law as "part of a certain framework," but makes an exception with respect to *shemirat negiyah* reflecting her communities practice. Since *shemirat negiyah* is not a community norm that is present in her home or in her community, she does not feel obligated by it. In contrast, Gila who is fully normed to *shemirat negiyah* as reflected in her breaking up with her boyfriend because of her commitment to it, identifies the source of her strong normation to be her home. Both Yael and Gila base their practice on the norms of their home and community.

Yael's lack of adherence to *shemirat negiyah* may bespeak a deeper rejection of the authority of Jewish law. Her rejection is evident prominently in the case of *shemirat negiyah* because it is the point at which local convention diverges from Jewish law, but she may lack a more fundamental commitment to Jewish law. Yael constrains her behavior in other areas in deference to family custom or local convention, but once those come under pressure, they too may go the way of *shemirat negiyah*.

The different ways of explicating the lack of commitment to *shemirat negiyah* lead in different educational directions. The first set of explanations, which assumes general commitment to Jewish law, invites an educational program that takes existing commitments and extends them to the area of *shemirat negiyah*, whereas the second explanation would lead to a program that seeks to foster a commitment to Jewish law in general.

The Dialectic of Autonomy and Authority

The question of educating to a positive and accepting relationship with Jewish law has been a source of concern for Modern Orthodox educators, who, while viewing education in this

area as a cornerstone of religion, admit scant success and note the minimal curricula in the area. Eliach, a prominent Orthodox American day school educator has said:

We teach our students the importance of authority in that we have to accept the rulings of the Sages and of the *poskim* (codifiers). Whatever is written in the Torah cannot be questioned.... but we also teach literature, history and science in which any authority may be challenged. (Eliach, 1972)

Eliach highlights one of the central dilemmas intrinsic to Modern Orthodox education. Exposing students to academic rigor that demands uncompromising questioning of text in their general studies must carry over as an approach to all learning. However, in areas of Jewish law, students are expected to accept the logic of a tradition based on norms that often no longer seem applicable to students' current realities.

A similar description of Modern Orthodox students in North American day schools is provided by Berman:

...the basis of their commitment is a mixture of rational thinking and considerations of conscience. If it makes sense and is not terribly troublesome, there is a chance they will accept the *din* (the rule). Otherwise, the authority implicit in the traditional acceptance of Jewish law carries little or no weight. (Berman, 1990)

This need for a personal sense of meaning or understanding is a modern development also expressed by participants in Ulpanat Bina. In the following sections, we will explore this issue for Life Values and Intimacy education.

“Not Because It’s the Jewish Law”

Yael’s emphasis on personal choice as described earlier was mirrored by almost half of the participants. Participants are choosing to assert their right to make autonomous decisions rather than be subject to an imposed authority.

Rivka: There are many who do not struggle [with Jewish law]. They do whatever they feel like. And afterwards they neglect Jewish law, or afterwards they return and try and ignore what they did. But it seems to me that most just don’t struggle with it.

Participants expressed the lack of weight of tradition for them in various ways, particularly in areas of sexuality and relationships. As members of a traditional community within a secular majority culture, they are exposed to possibilities and expectations of behavior and relationships different from those of their tradition. They seek to circumvent the norms of their traditions, whose expectations and standards of behavior seem outdated.

Maayan: The Western world emphasizes sexuality, boys and girls. It is in almost every movie. And then there's the Jewish law, and there's a clash between them...As religious people it is very difficult... This country is also very Western. There are plenty of secular couples and you feel weird and stuck within Jewish law. There are very few who really keep these halakhot. In practice, many don't really keep it.

Participants were asked to offer suggestions regarding how they would teach issues of sexuality, modesty, and relationships. Only one participant suggested using the argument that "it's the *Halakhab*" as a justification for being *shomer negiyah*. In fact, almost all participants felt that telling them that they need to behave a certain way because it is Jewish law would not be effective.

Lior: You cannot just come up to her and say, "This is what the Torah says; this is what you have to do." Because it is really not right to teach things that way. It is not convincing. It is not the basis of practice.

Lior expresses a lack of *a priori* commitment to Torah and Jewish law, seeking something more convincing. Her response is evidence that for her, and many peers who share her sentiment, Jewish law does not elicit the voice of duty. Green describes this voice of duty as that with the capacity to transcend one's needs in service of an external, sacred standard.

A few participants were of the opinion that knowing something is based in Jewish law could impact negatively on some students at Ulpanat Bina and should be avoided as an argument. They suggested that educators approach topics such as *shemirat negiyah* and modesty from a secular perspective, identifying universal reasons why following these precepts is worthwhile. Eventually, once educators have helped their students recognize the wisdom of these notions, they can demonstrate how these ideas are also rooted in Jewish law.

Sarah: If I am *shomeret negiyah*, it is not because of the Jewish law, it's because I feel that that is what is good for me. Not because I need to do it, it's not coming

from feeling obligated to it. It could be that one day I won't care and I'll do whatever I feel like... I think that if you teach the class not from within the Jewish law, that's the right way to go about it and then one can see how it connects to the Jewish law and that leads to believing the Jewish law.

Adina, the school instructor who implemented the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum, confirmed this preference to approach topics through secular texts and universal reasons. In our preparatory meetings for the course, she rejected some of the materials from the original curriculum as being too heavily based on sources from Jewish law. She adopted an approach in which she introduced topics such as *shemirat negiyah* and modesty with a newspaper article, poem, or discussion emanating from a psychological study. Having laid the groundwork from these resources, she closed the unit with a presentation of a rationale based in Jewish law. She confirmed that in her experience, a sizable number of students would lose interest and categorically reject a lesson if presented only with text-based, religious sources. As a veteran educator at Ulpanat Bina, Adina has concluded that the authority of Jewish law *per se* is not sufficient to engender commitment. This confirms that the prescriptive approach to Jewish education which was once sufficient does not work in a school which encourages "broad vistas of thought" along with "obligation to Torah." Adina contends that from her experience more modern sensibilities of autonomy override the authority of Jewish law.

Educational Dilemmas

The educational struggle with the place of autonomy within a traditional education was manifest in several phenomena in the life of Ulpanat Bina. I found paralysis on the part of some educators, a sense of weakness as viewed by students, and a complex educational message from the administration in pursuit of a discipline policy in the area of modesty that still allowed for student autonomy.

Teacher Paralysis

While this research confirmed the need to address issues of sexuality in the schools, the opposite actually takes place, and participants reported that many teachers in Ulpanat Bina avoid any discussion of these topics. One of the home-room educators in the school who did initiate a series of classes on modesty corroborated that she was uncomfortable addressing the topic and generally tried to avoid it. Her initiative only came about because blatant violation of dress code had become pronounced enough among her students that she did not feel she was fulfilling her responsibility as a religious role model and not address the issue of dress. Her initiative was unusual. Gila suggested that teachers actively avoid addressing the topics of modesty and *shemirat*

negiyah, and even when explicitly asked to discuss them often continue to evade discussion. She identified fear as the motivating factor behind this avoidance.

Gila: ... I think they [the teachers] are afraid from it 'cause girls react really strongly and say "What, what do you mean, we can't do this, it is part of our lives." So it's easier to skip the story.

One of the male teachers of Jewish law in the school also identified avoidance of the topic on the part of the school administration and teachers as being based in fear. He contended that authority figures in Ulpanat Bina often fear that imposing behaviors relating to issues of modesty may lead to a backlash against religion among students. In defense of the avoidance approach, some cite a teaching from the Babylonian Talmud, (Shabbat 148b) "better a person sin unintentionally by not knowing what they are doing wrong, than sin intentionally, having been taught the laws." While this sentiment does have its roots in tradition, it is not applicable here. Participants are aware enough of the demands of *shemirat negiyah* such that teaching or not teaching will not change their level of culpability. Teacher avoidance of educating about issues of modesty and *shemirat negiyah* parallels what we saw earlier among peers, who hesitate to call their peers to task for laxity in modesty or *shemirat negiyah*. Whereas this hesitation is understandable among peers, when expressed by teachers it represents a serious lapse in their charge to pass on these expectations of the tradition.

Expectations without Enforcement

While some participants as well as a few teachers at Ulpanat Bina explain the lack of education in areas of modesty, sexuality, and relationships based on a fear of confrontation, administrators at Ulpanat Bina offered an alternative explanation. Ulpanat Bina had recently decided to implement a uniform shirt as a solution to a lack of modest clothing in the student population. This uniform shirt was the source of much contention between students and administration, and while it remained official school policy, there were no consequences for students who chose to come to school without their uniform shirt. The administration grappled with the question of how to set and implement expectations.

Judy viewed the school as being entirely unsuccessful in this endeavor. She was critical of what she considered a non-committal stance on the part of the administration in implementing standards of dress and prayer.

Judy: The school's fine but I don't know, it doesn't push... Like when you come into school – you have to be modest... Also prayer – you have to pray in the

morning. Girls are outside [during prayers, not praying] nobody says anything or does anything. You don't pray – nobody responds. Girls want to wear short sleeves – they don't tell us anything, no discussion...

She highlighted both modesty and prayer as areas in which mixed messages are offered, with expectations set in a general way (“be modest,” “pray”), but not clearly defined and subsequently not consistently enforced. She held the school responsible because she thought that the lack of response to what she perceived as repeated breaches of rules empowers students to continue to ignore the policies they dislike. This strengthens the impression that it is the students who set policy in the school and not the administration.

In an interview with the school principal, he offered an educational explanation in defense of its lack of enforcement. The school administration believes in an approach that presents expectations but also allows a large degree of autonomy for student implementation. Fully aware that this flexibility sometimes comes at a price in terms of compliance, especially in the short-term, the administration is willing to make the sacrifice of compliance to the rules for the sake of what they view as a greater long-term gain, self-governance. This stems from a belief that teenage students must develop a sense of responsibility and commitment alongside a belief that this would be hampered by enforcement on the part of teachers. Rather, the sense of personal responsibility is formed by creating the basic parameters of expectation and then stepping back to enable students to meet the standards on their own. While the process sometimes takes time, the administration feels that, ultimately, a stronger commitment evolves when developed independently.

Defining the Dialectic of Authority and Autonomy

The various issues outlined above, including participants asserting their right to choose, the range of commitments to *shmirat negiyah* and modesty, the use of universal justifications for expectations of Jewish law rather than a justification from within the system itself, and the setting of standards without enforcement – all seem to point to a single phenomenon. Participants and teachers alike place autonomy ahead of authority. Educators struggle to find a sense of religious authority (as expressed in Jewish law) as counterbalance to a modern sensibility which champions individual autonomy. Hand (2006), in his critique of autonomy as an educational aim, grapples with a definition for this muddled concept. He terms “dispositional autonomy” as one possibility which accords with common usage.

To possess this trait is to have a preference for relying on one's own judgment, to be independent-minded, free-spirited, disposed to do things one's own way. (p. 537)

Participants, immersed in majority culture suffused with the aspiration towards autonomy of this sort, found it difficult to accept Jewish law.

Bailey (2003) proposes a model of the "Just Community," an adaptation of the Kohlbergian model, for a Modern Orthodox community. Bailey attempts to resolve the inherent tension between authority and autonomy in his Just Community by carving out a realm for choice and a realm for command. Students are not free to choose either religious expectations or the curriculum of the school, but they can exercise meaningful choice in the governance of the school community. However, Bailey's approach seems to sidestep the issue by dividing realms. It does not offer a solution to the student who doesn't agree to the religious or curricular demands placed upon him. How then should Ulpanat Bina teach when command confronts autonomy?

Many teachers, unable to resolve the tension between authority and autonomy, either avoid educating in areas of command that they recognize as being too challenging for their students or seek to elicit autonomous assent to the commandments through rational and universal reasons. They thereby transform commandments into moral and reasonable recommended practices. The articulation of a formula that accommodates this conflict for the religious educator will be important in overcoming the ambiguity which complicates instruction and confounds moral education.

The necessary elements of any moral education may be discoverable only in the context of sectarian education... where adults are able to say to youth with confidence, with clarity and for a very long time, "This is who we are and this is why we do these things." Any awkward hesitation or apology in this presentation... on the grounds that there are alternatives among which an eventual choice must be made... will spell disaster for attempts at moral education. (Green, 1999, p.xii)

Green does not view the offering of reasons as complicating moral education. Adults can and should explain "this is why we do these things." It is the implication that reason giving necessarily leads to "alternatives among which an eventual choice must be made" to which Green objects.

In delineating these two concepts, the offering of reasons and the limiting of choice, Resnick (2008) states:

In trying to make a place for reason in traditional education, my strategy is to qualify the presumed necessary link between reason and rationality. In traditional societies (including religious ones) that nurture reason as well as loyalty, reasoned conclusions will not translate automatically to autonomous action, especially where such action is non-normative. Rather, reasoned conclusions must be vetted with leadership and communal tradition to see how far and in what form they can be incorporated into current practice. (p. 113)

Earlier, Resnick defined the difference between reason and rationality.

Reason is usually taken to mean developing the ability to reason well while rationality is the disposition actually to be guided by the outcome of one's reason. (p. 108)

Thus understood, the educational dilemma becomes how to encourage critical thinking among students, to offer sound reasons that help them identify with Jewish law but still tell a student who has made a reasoned conclusion against the tradition that she should defer acting in accordance with that conclusion until religious authorities have been consulted to identify possible ways of incorporating it into current practice. If no such permission can be secured, then the authority of Jewish law must take precedence. Cultivating the personality of a student to willingly embrace the tradition necessarily advances the possibility that they might also reject it. Rosenak (2005) presents the dilemma of the religious educator in this regard.

If he aspires for autonomy for his students, he undermines the religious authority of his leaders. But if he does not aspire to autonomy, no intelligent, moral person in our day can possibly justify his approach or accede to it. (p. 78)

Rosenak here articulates the dilemma in terms of a tension between religious authority and the disposition of an "intelligent, moral person in our day" – someone grounded in a modern liberal sensibility. In this formulation, being Modern Orthodox means to live in tension, where Modern means the promotion of autonomy and Orthodox requires deference to tradition. But this tension can be reduced by reassessing our understanding of both "Modern" and "Orthodox."

Apart from a few extreme cases, all choices in Modern Western societies are curtailed through laws or social pressures. On the modern educational front, autonomy as an educational goal has been criticized. Hand (2006) contrasts a disposition to autonomy – the tendency of a student to be skeptical of information or be independently-minded – with a disposition to

heteronomy – accepting of information from reliable sources and of legitimate authority to impose demands. Hand sees advantages to both dispositions depending on the circumstances. Resnick (2008) suggests that it would be difficult to show that autonomous decisions are consistently more effective than those made under the guidance of experts or based in a particular set of norms. Thus, there is no *a priori* reason to favor an educational approach that prioritizes a disposition to autonomy.

With respect to the term “Orthodox,” we find that tradition itself ultimately advocates autonomy. Sokol (1992) treats this issue in his article on Religious Authority and Personal Autonomy. After rigorous philosophical analysis exploring three areas in which autonomy is expressed- law, knowledge, and choice – he affirms that the rational strand of traditional halakhic Judaism allows for what he terms “soft autonomy.”

This notion of soft autonomy stands in contrast to hard autonomy which contends that

A law is no law at all if not autonomously imposed (Hard Nomic Autonomy); a belief cannot be counted knowledge unless one proves it for oneself (Hard Epistemic Autonomy); a choice is no real choice at all unless chosen autonomously (Hard Haeritic Autonomy). (p. 181)

Of course, hard autonomy admits that people are not free to choose anything they want. Such a position would preclude all civilized society because choice is necessarily constrained by the rules of society. Rather, hard autonomy understands that people lend their implicit consent to the rules of society which can therefore be considered self-imposed. These examples of hard autonomy are indeed difficult to reconcile with halakhic Judaism. But Sokol rejects this all or nothing position vis-à-vis autonomy and demonstrates the validity of soft autonomy which contributes to the value of knowledge, choice or a law observed but does not deem the lack of complete autonomy as fatal.

Applying this distinction to the Life Values and Intimacy Education curriculum, advocates of hard autonomy would say that Henkin’s approach which presents students with a range of halakhic options regarding sleeve lengths is not a real choice at all because he disallows the choices outside the range. But advocates of soft autonomy would counter that promoting choice within an acceptable range contributes to the value of the choice even when those choices are circumscribed. Similarly, advocates of hard nomic autonomy would say that until a student self-imposes *shemirat negiyab*, the observance of such laws lacks value. However, advocates of soft autonomy recognize the value gained when a student self-imposes the laws but still grant that observing the laws of *shemirat negiyab* simply out of deference to tradition is not without merit.

Sokol adduces support for soft autonomy from the Biblical story of Abraham's advocacy on behalf of the potential innocents of Sodom. Abraham autonomously challenges God with the charge "shall not the Judge of all of the earth deal justly?" (Genesis 18:25)

This demonstrates all three forms of soft autonomy. Abraham reasoned independently that God ought not to kill every Sodomite, and he chose to challenge God and His decree on that basis, presumably out of the deepest of his convictions. Nevertheless, in the end, he abided by God's will. There is thus evidence for at least some forms of soft autonomy, and perhaps even all, but not for hard autonomy. (Sokol, 1992, p. 199)

Further support for soft autonomy from tradition comes from a classic Talmudic source (Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 88a). A sage of the Talmud lodges a complaint against the covenant at Mount Sinai claiming that the Jews accepted the Torah under duress. While accepting the premise of the complaint and the implicit assumption that the lack of autonomy is indeed problematic, the Talmud counters that a later acceptance of the covenant was indeed offered free of compulsion. In essence, we have in midrashic form an educational program encouraging soft haeretic autonomy. The demand of Mount Sinai expressed in Jewish law is a given, our educational goal is to engender freely-willed assent to the imposed authority. The idea that autonomy is expressed in choosing to align one's will with the demands of a religion accords with what Resnick (2008) terms identification.

Yet that is precisely the feeling of identification with a tradition, its values and directives that communitarian education strives for. Such identification does not preclude autonomy. To the contrary, to be able to feel deeply that 'this is my culture' depends on a deep sense of *mine*, of self. (p. 112)

The two components – education that promotes free-willed assent to tradition and education that speaks to the idea of command and promotes obedience to religious authority – can work against each other. This tension is not between being Modern and being Orthodox – a tension from without – but rather is an intrinsic aspect of being Orthodox. Thus, living this tension is not embracing a false hybrid of Modern Orthodoxy, which could be resolved by being either wholly modern or wholly Orthodox. Rather, living this tension is what it means to live a reflective religious life.

Green allows for autonomy in the intrinsic choice an individual always makes while negotiating the various voices. But Green would take issue with an educational program

promoting “dispositional autonomy” because it would preclude the voices of membership calling for loyalty and the voice of sacrifice which defers self-interest to the voice of duty.

The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum must address the dialectical tension between autonomy and authority and provide an honest approach to this fundamental issue. Having formulated an approach that allows for the expression of autonomy within education to tradition, the implementation is not simple, particularly in the areas of *shemirat negiyah* and modesty where school-wide norms are absent, such as at Ulpanat Bina. We understand the important role that reasons can play in the overall process of normation. I therefore turn to examine the place of reasons in furthering normation to modesty and *shemirat negiyah*.

The Place of Reasons

This research proposed an educational approach to strengthen commitment to Jewish law in areas of sexuality, relationships, and modesty. Post-intervention interviews indicate that participants appreciated the Life Values and Intimacy course as a framework in which issues of this nature were discussed. Almost all participants emphasized the essential importance of giving reasons for Jewish laws in these areas. I would like to carefully explore participants’ search for reasons in order to understand what exactly it is they were seeking.

Many participants, even those who ascribed their primary motivation for *shemirat negiyah* to Jewish law itself, found reasons beneficial in strengthening their commitment.

Shai: I think *shemirat negiyah* is important. **First of all, it’s the Jewish law** [emphasis added, Y.D.]. Second of all – it’s not for no reason, it makes sense. Save it for the wedding, it’s better that way.

Other participants sought reasons because they did not feel sufficiently committed to Jewish law to accept its practices without a compelling rationale.

Rotem: They should explain more fully why it is good or not good and then each person can decide for themselves...Let them explain honestly and practically. For *shemirat negiyah* – let them explain the rules and why it is not good to walk around immodestly. Or with regards touching – explain why it is problematic.

Ayelet illustrates how participants eagerly sought reasons that would convince them that, despite the difficulty, being *shomer negiyah* is worthwhile.

Ayelet: That's like at my age, we don't really know what we are doing in our lives yet, we're thinking about what's going on and so **the second you prove it to us, explain it to us, maybe convince us of it...** You have to like **make it interesting and think of a thing that would make us want to be *shomer*...** You start with a story – it adds a lot. It's really like that... Because it is something that you do that's hard and challenging and if you don't like, don't understand why, you'll just be like I don't care anymore 'cause no one explains to me. And also like telling, like telling someone I'm not going to hug you, like my good friend and I'm not going to hug you – **you need something to hold you up.** I wouldn't do that to my friend and it's like embarrassing to him and I wouldn't do that to him if I didn't have something that I could stand on, a basis ...[emphasis added –Y.D.]

Ayelet defines herself and her peers as being caught between two moral claims. On the one hand, she implicitly acknowledged the claim of loyalty to the tradition: “It is something that you do that's hard” – it is something that ought to be done. On the other hand, there is the moral concern for embarrassing a friend. From the midst of this dilemma, Ayelet explained that she and her peers are in a state of flux, still trying to make sense of the demands of *shemirat negiyah*. They signaled a willingness to be taught about *shemirat negiyah* for example, and a high expectation for the immediate change such teaching will engender: “The second you prove it to us – [we will act accordingly].”

This statement leads us to question whether these high expectations are warranted, as well as how participants' belief in immediate change as a result of sufficient reasons affects them. It can introduce significant frustration when reasons are offered but no change takes place. Such purported failures of reasons are already inherent in Ayelet's statement because she set the bar so high. She was not looking for mere explanations, but to be “convinced” and “proven” of their truth. It is also significant that Ayelet handed the responsibility to convince to the educators: “You prove it to us...maybe even convince us of it.” The initial positive approach to *shemirat negiyah* indicated by “the second you prove it to us” is quickly undone by Ayelet's later admission that others, “you,” must bear the burden of even interesting us in the question by stories and the like.

Ayelet's statement portrays several stages in a process of self-governance, beginning in interest and ending in action. I present a schematic of the elements in order to define terms and assist in the subsequent discussion. Each of these elements linking thought to action are the subject of extensive research and philosophy spanning many disciplines, the treatment of which

lies beyond the purview of this study. Here, it will suffice to list the elements of a decision to act and the impact these elements have on each other. While the elements are listed in a particular order, the process is not strictly linear, for elements can affect each other in cyclical ways.

Interest must first be raised in a question. Individuals must become aware of the various and sometimes competing expectations of behavior. They must think about the competing expectations. Knowledge is processed, reasons considered, and reflexive judgment engaged. Conviction emerges regarding a particular path of action, and finally sufficient motivation must be mustered to act according to the decision or conviction. An example of a non-linear possibility would be when action precedes rationale and then plays a role in the retroactive development of a rationale for an action already chosen. Ayelet's words confirm that the interest has been raised. When Ayelet says "prove it to us...maybe even convince us of it" she is expressing interest in being convinced. The pitch for *shemirat negiyah* which is not participants' current norm has to be done in an interesting and compelling way.

Different schools of moral education understand how individuals process these elements in different ways. As mentioned earlier, education towards autonomy assumes rational thinking in the processing of decisions and rationality in the disposition of the individual to translate rationally arrived-at conclusions directly into action (Resnick, 2008). In the presence of norms, Green allows for reasons to subsequently explain action but questions the relationship between reasons and action. He leaves vague the process whereby several competing voices resolve into a single course of action, but does not see it as a process of rational analysis.

Judy suggested that participants are seeking not only reasons but also inspiration. Perhaps she intuited that reasons may not suffice for everyone. In the gap between conviction in a particular path of action and motivation to act accordingly, Judy calls for inspiration. She has found it in the role models provided by individuals from a similar background who have struggled successfully in areas of faith and commitment to Jewish law.

Judy: Someone who can be inspiring, like someone who could be a role model for you, like we had somebody you can connect to. We had to plan a Shabbat speaker. And we got this man from a local settlement and he came to speak to us and what he said was really inspiring... And we were all really moved. Because it's not like this extreme case of a non-religious person, or a non-Jew who became religious. No, that's like not us, we're not going to do that. And we are not going to fly to India and see amazing things and come back to Judaism. But here he was one of us, and he just started to feel empty like he has no connection

and you're like, "Wow like, that's exactly how we feel that's like us." And then you try to do what he did or try to find a way or you find a Rabbi.

These participants believe in a powerful reason that eludes them. If this reason is presented, they suppose, it would be of sufficient force to convince them of the necessity of *shemirat negiyah*, with behavior automatically following suit. Raised in modern, Western culture, which is a rational, reason-giving culture, participants have been socialized to assume that reasons lead to action. This, however, may not necessarily be accurate. When Ayelet said, "The second you prove it to us [we will act accordingly]," she shares in this supposition. She is actively seeking answers and demonstrates a willingness to listen even as her suppositions about reasons are inaccurate.

There are several difficulties with Ayelet's supposition. First, it is empirically false; many individuals hold convictions, but their behavior does not reflect these convictions. Second, this approach impacts on students' reactions when they are offered sound rational basis for a particular action but fail to act accordingly. If they are convinced that reason leads to action and find action lacking, then they must perforce implicate the weakness of the rationale. They fault the reasons rather than admit their lack of ability to act in accordance with reason. This points to a need to develop more accurate awareness in students of their decision making process and implementation. They need to understand the distinction between commitment to a certain ideal and motivation to fulfill it. While conviction and motivation are related, they are not the same thing. Hand (2006) calls for education towards certain moral virtues in order to help students act in accordance with their convictions.

They must acquire such moral virtues as temperance and fortitude, so that they are neither unduly distracted by the immediacy and potency of carnal impulses, nor too easily discouraged by difficulty and danger, from the pursuit of their more complex, demanding, long-term or large-scale goals. (p. 544)

The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum will need to incorporate units for understanding the decision making process and its implementation. Education to temperance and fortitude provides a significant challenge. This will entail adapting existing methods (for example, Lickona, 1991) or developing new ones.

The Elusive Reason

The search for the compelling, elusive reason may explain contradictions reported by participants as to the sufficiency of education in the area of sexuality, modesty, and relationships.

Two thirds of the participants requested *shemirat negiyah* as the second most important topic they wanted to discuss in the intervention course, even though in pre-interviews some had described almost no education while others felt that sexuality and relationships had been discussed ad nauseam.

The school principal identified the pervasive sense of not having been taught despite the fact that some lessons about *shemirat negiyah* and modesty were given as rooted in the lack of having been convinced. In his opinion, Modern Orthodox teenagers, both native Israelis and those whose families are from Anglo-Saxon backgrounds, have extensive exposure to secular media and its promotion of sexuality. In order to counterbalance these pervasive influences, he suggested that Modern Orthodox teenage girls seek the unassailable argument that can compete successfully in the adolescent marketplace of ideas. In the principal's assessment (which is confirmed by the literature on teenage sexual development in the Western world (Schalet, 2004)), religious teenage girls, like their secular counterparts, are overwhelmed by constant unconscious thoughts about issues of sexuality and relationships. Against the backdrop of persistent mental conversations about their image, the impression they make, their clothing, and how they wish to project themselves, reasons for modesty and *shemirat negiyah* fail to provide the necessary bulwark against these intrusions. This confirms Berger's (1967) assertion that religion can no longer take allegiance for granted but must "market" to a population considering many alternatives.

The question of how much sexuality and relationships education really did take place is perhaps explained with reference to an idea suggested by Bailey (2003).

Periodic moral exhortations or sporadic social-caring activities, at home or at school, do little to affect the internalization of values and ethical behavior. (p. 138)

It may be that participants have only received sporadic and disconnected lessons in the areas of sexuality, modesty, and relationships. Because these lessons failed to cohere into an integrated approach, some participants reported not being instructed at all while others heard only repetitive and, in their view, inconsequential lessons, which they described as being taught "ad nauseam." Bailey suggests the need for a comprehensive school-based moral education program. The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum attempts to answer that need for issues of sexuality, modesty, and relationships.

Proof and Explanation

Ayelet asked for both proof and explanation. The desire for proof was echoed by other participants.

Researcher: What would you say about Jewish law? What's your relationship with Jewish law? When you learn Jewish law – that's what you do? Or do you make your own decision?

Nomi: I base it on that, but if I have a problem believing in what I'm learning, I would ask questions about it to see if it's really totally forbidden, or if there are other ways and what not. I usually listen to it, but if I have a problem with it, which I often do, because I see things differently from everyone else and I'm always arguing in Jewish philosophy class because if something is a particular way just because Maimonides [a 12th century scholar] says it, I feel you need a proof, a fact.

The conflation between these terms on the part of participants lends insight into what they are actually seeking. Proofs and explanations are distinguished by the logical necessity of their argument. An explanation of a particular practice offers an interpretation as to the rational basis for the practice but does not recommend itself as the only possible interpretation. Proof, on the other hand, is compelling in its logic, leaving no choice but to believe or act.

This has direct educational implications for how reasons may affect the conviction or motivation of a student. If a student expects reasons to function as proofs, to impress their logic upon their mind with the force of logical necessity such that no other possible interpretation can stand, then students will often find reasons wanting. Educators must make the case that few decisions are based entirely on “proof.” The vast majority of significant life decisions, ranging from what car to buy and what career to engage in to whom to marry, can be rational without the compulsion of logical necessity. They are reasoned judgments. When students refrain from adopting a certain practice because they claim “you can't prove it,” they are applying an unrealistic expectation to a process which in other areas is sufficient to render important decisions.

What is missing for the participants in Ulpanat Bina is something the school cannot supply, a school-wide norm. Where the norm exists, compelling reasons are less vital. Where there is no norm and countervailing culture, reasons will not suffice. Participants find themselves searching because of the absence of this norm.

Prudence: The Beginning of Moral Education

Green provides clear direction in establishing the proper place of reasons in the development of conscience. Despite the qualifications above, the presentation of sound reasons for a particular practice is an important educational aim and advances the process of normation when properly conceived. Reasons appeal to an innate sense of prudence. When educators explain that keeping the laws of *shemirat negiyah* can enhance one's future marriage, they are making the argument that it is beneficial to the student in the long-run to abide by these strictures. Assisting students to come to prudent decisions is an important educational aim, although, as we will see, it does not directly lead to normation.

I admit, of course, that learning how to be prudent in this sense is something for which guidance is often helpful, since what is in one's own self-interest is not always perfectly evident and even when perfectly evident to some, may not be so evident to others. (Green, p. 88)

Green's innovation is in his contention that encouraging attention to self-interest furthers the goal of moral development. One might think that a moral being must be taught to sacrifice self-interest. Green addresses the need for sacrifice, but first establishes the priority of prudence.

This observation about the priority of prudence I would now expand into the claim that if we were not first of all creatures of prudence, we could not later become moral beings. Rational attention to one's own well-being may be, in fact, the principal threshold for entry into the moral institution of life. (p. 89)

In discussing the prudential argument for truth-telling, "honesty is the best policy," Green says that,

The dictum has a certain motivational punch ...[which] can provide a good point at which to start our moral education even though it cannot provide a point at which to end it. (p. 89)

Appeals to prudence are important prerequisites to the development of conscience, but not sufficient to develop strong normation. Green explicitly cautions that rationales can never yield the development of conscience.

Is it enough for the aims of moral education, then, to find and to teach the *reasons*, even sound *moral* reasons, for such a sacrifice? No...We do not become moral by consulting the reasons that endorse our sacrifice, even though we are likely to become morally mature for having explored those reasons. (p. 91)

Reasons, says Green, can develop moral maturity, but they will not lead to moral behavior. They function retrospectively in explaining a path already chosen, but they cannot engender that commitment in and of themselves. They provide for the weak normation of prudence when our goal is strong normation.

A further argument can be made that relying on an education of reasons alone does not serve students well. Jewish law cannot always be justified and reinterpreted to fit the changing perspective of modern life. Many classical commentators make a clear distinction between rational laws and laws which defy rational explanation (Saadia Gaon, 933/1948). It is important to educate Modern Orthodox students to tolerate the lack of reason sometimes found in Jewish law and educate towards an intrinsic commitment to Jewish law *per se*. Such an approach will assist them in maintaining commitment when they encounter a Jewish law that cannot be “beautified” to fit modern sensibilities through a process of identification with the tradition. Developing commitment to the system as a whole ought to be a goal for religious educators in order to facilitate commitment when understanding proves more elusive and the law must be performed out of a sense of duty. Here, too, educators can offer reasons for the wisdom of the system as opposed to reasons for individual commands. But the limitations on reasons, even when applied to the entire system, still obtain, and we will need to appeal to the voice of sacrifice and duty in order to engender strong normation.

The Voice of Sacrifice and Duty

Green’s approach accords well with the needs of a Modern Orthodox education because he sees reasons as the beginning but not the end point of moral education. The voice of sacrifice must be heeded when a behavior works against self-interest.

We often view morality in just this way, that is, in the light of the conflict between interest and duty, between the claims of self and other. And when we do, then morality is construed as entering the picture only when we are willing to sacrifice self-interest for the interests of others...Moral reasons are ‘other regarding’; prudential reasons (non-moral) are ‘self-regarding’...According to that

perspective, morality enters only when we find the voice of conscience as sacrifice and when that voice gains its own motivational strength. (p. 91)

Despite this common conception of morality, Green does not equate the voice of duty and sacrifice alone with what it means to be moral. Other voices must also enter the conversation, for example, voices which call for loyalty in membership.

We often recoil from this call to sacrifice and try to reframe it as broader self-interest.

Perhaps I am to say, as Dewey did, that what appears to me now as self-sacrifice is not really a sacrifice of the self in me. It is merely me acting now to advance the interests of the self in me that is now being formed. But this again, it seems to me, is a disguised appeal to prudence. (p. 91)

If a goal of moral education is to move individuals from a more self-centered approach to other-centered, then reasons and prudence must give way to the voice of sacrifice and duty. This suggests a final argument for qualifying our use of reasons in an education towards commitment to *shemirat negiyah* and modesty. Reasons and prudence can eviscerate the force of a *mitzvah*, a Divine command. Modern Orthodox students need to be educated to answer the call of Sinai, to live a life of being commanded, and not only when and where those commands accord with self-interest. Members of a community must sometimes accept the answer “because it is your duty” as final. Such a stance has moral appeal because it encourages students to transcend self-interest and opens them to act on behalf of the needs of others. This is fostered in a normed community and our goal becomes the construction of such a community. It is also fostered by developing the voice of duty through hearing it expressed by role models whose voice will be later internalized.

Green states that in order for moral education to proceed, it must invoke a sense of the sacred which provokes “awe and reverence” (p. 113) and for which one is willing to sacrifice.

In a world where nothing is sacred, moral education is impossible...The aim of moral education is that beyond good reasons we have good conduct and good character, that our conduct comes to be governed by moral norms. For that to occur, it must be possible at some point to arouse moral horror, excite awe, and provoke reverence. (p. 112)

It is in the experience of the sacred, something transcendent and awesome that may be understood as God’s will, that strong normation is acquired.

Green's approach provides the theoretical underpinnings of a coherent and comprehensive Modern Orthodox education to commitment to *shemirat negiyah* and modesty. His theories provide for the accurate expression of religious idiom without the loss of meaning inherent in translating those terms into a secular language. These ideas enjoin Modern Orthodox educators to incorporate a sense of the sacred as expressed in Divine command, as well as the conscience of sacrifice, back into the classroom. The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum can speak of reasons and duties, promote critical thinking, soft autonomy and deference to authority, and invoke the idea of the sacred in service of strong normation in the areas of sexuality, modesty and relationships.

School as a Site of Normation: Strategies and Limitations

Strategies for Normation within the School

Any attempt to extrapolate a school-based approach from Green's *Voices* poses a challenge. Green himself never translated his ideas into an actionable program, school-based or otherwise. Green opines that normation takes place within the home, the community, and the peer group. Alexander (2001) also contends that school-based programs need the support of the home and community if they are to have a significant impact on the lives of students. On the other hand, because communities seek to maintain themselves they encourage normation through all the means at their disposal. Schools such as Ulpanat Bina, as central agents of the community, can play a part in fostering normation. Moral education "can only be addressed to members of an already formed moral community concerned with the task of improving that life and preserving it in the next generation" (Green, p. 30). Ulpanat Bina (and schools like it) seeks to nurture a religious ethos among its student body. Through extended school hours, a partial dormitory arrangement, as well as multiple opportunities for informal education, the school functions in part as a community in order to educate to religious beliefs and norms. Additionally, home-room educators serve as religious role models who are responsible for the development of the "whole" student and who nurture close relationships with their students, furthering the process of normation. The strength of Modern Orthodox schools is that, together with homes, neighborhoods, summer camps and youth movements, they aspire to constitute a coherent, comprehensive community.

Though Green does not specify a program for normation, several activities that further the process can be culled from his work. Green explains how the fostering of meaningful friendships, the performance of acts of kindness and community service all provide the natural ground for the development of strong normation. These activities can fit into school life and are

a clearly delineated aspect of the educational program at Ulpanat Bina. When schools actively formulate rules of conduct through democratic processes (as in a Just Community approach) they build community and can utilize this opportunity towards the development of conscience. When a school culture encourages acts of kindness without appeal to obligations and requirements, students learn to be less motivated by self-interest and are willing to be other-focused. These activities suggest places for the building of community which in turn can foster normation. Although these activities do not relate directly to modesty and *shemirat negiyah*, they do advance the formation of conscience and self-governance which is necessary in order to advance normation to Jewish law. Green identifies on-going life in a community as the source of normation. I suggest that the many hours a day a teenager spends in a high school setting and the intensity the encompassing experience holds for most high school students qualifies as “on-going life in a community.”

The Classroom as Community

The issue of modesty and dress code generated much contention at Ulpanat Bina. In response to the anger and frustration expressed by students regarding the uniform shirt, one of the tenth-grade home-room educators initiated a class effort to work on modesty and commit to an agreed-upon standard of dress. She suggested that establishing a group commitment to a modest standard of dress in the class would relieve those who participate of the need for the uniform shirt. Tali found that this class effort enabled her to commit to a standard of dress that she would have liked to accept upon herself independently but had lacked the moral will to do alone.

Tali: We know that the school has a bad name because girls do not dress modestly. For those who care, we do not want to see our school looked at like that. So we all want to change it together...and there are girls who found it really helpful, like me for example, who changed the way they dress. The fact that it was a class effort really helped, because everyone took it on together and not just one person alone.

Tali found that this collective acceptance of a religious norm transferred outside of the school to “change the way they dress.” This example shows how normation can be re-negotiated within a school community, at least within one class.

In an interview with one of the male teachers of Jewish law, I learned that while the administration chose not to insist on students wearing the uniform shirt, there were two

educators who decided that they would. The teacher described how he had successfully facilitated full implementation of the contested uniform shirt in his classroom with minor resistance. By predicating attendance to his class on the wearing of the uniform shirt, the class moved from two students in attendance on the first day to a full class of students by the end of the week, all wearing the uniform shirt. Students carried their uniform shirt in their bag throughout the day, putting it on for the two classes for which the teachers insisted on it being worn. The teacher reported that when a spontaneous change in the school schedule occurred, leaving students unequipped with the necessary shirt, the students were genuinely apologetic. He felt that interactions over this issue reflected a sense of mutual respect and acceptance by students of his expectation to wear the uniform shirt.

This vignette illustrates an effort to normation which resulted in compliance. Students chose compliance to the request of the teacher in order to be able to attend class. Their behavior was compliant but not more, since students continued to carry the uniform shirt around in their bags rather than wear it outside this class. There was no transfer of behavior beyond the Jewish law classroom and even though the teacher was pleased with his ability to have implemented the uniform shirt, students did not seem to change their personal modesty as a result of the effort. This does not represent a case of strong normation, but rather compliance to a standard of modesty for the duration of the class.

The data indicated that Ulpanat Bina as a school community did not possess a norm of modesty consonant with the expressed standard of the school. Students felt free to disregard official standards of modesty in the school. This fact makes us sober about the possibilities of fostering normation in a school like Ulpanat Bina absent these norms. However, other data presents possibilities for fostering normation. Although only one incident was identified during the research, the model of the home-room educator who was able to foster a change in modesty beyond the classroom for certain groups of girls can serve as a possible model. Perhaps rather than view Ulpanat Bina as one community, it can be seen to comprise many sub-communities, sometimes identified by classes and sometimes even in smaller peer-based groups. The school can play a role in encouraging membership in the sub-communities which possess the norms represented by the school standard. Methods available to the school in encouraging shifts in membership between sub-groups include clubs, and activities which gather students of similar levels of normation around a particular activity (such as for example, extra learning, social action, community service) with the added agenda of religious fortification to a level of normation more consonant with the school standards. In addition, various opportunities exist for the school to select student role-models who exemplify norms they wish to encourage.

School-wide efforts could also be considered for fostering normation to modesty through the adoption of a particular dress code. While the effort to implement a uniform shirt had not proved successful at Ulpanat Bina, it is possible that this lack of success had to do with the method of implementation. A number of factors in implementation such as for example, including students in the decision making process, in the design of the shirts and in implementation could change students' attitudes towards the effort. In some schools, offering a broad range of acceptable dress-code, rather than a specific uniform shirt has proven successful (White, 2000).

Limitations for Normation within the School

While normation to issues of modesty may be a school-based issue which is straightforwardly addressed within the school setting, *shemirat negiyah* presents more of a challenge. However, Family Life education classes must perforce treat issues which occur outside of the school setting such as for example the discussion of safe-sex practices without them being a specific school issue. So too the Life Values and Intimacy education curriculum covers a broad range of topics, including boy-girl relationships even though these issues do not occur in a single-sex school setting. The use of media in the intervention itself is one educational strategy to help bring the issues into the classroom for consideration.

Judy: Like when we saw the movie with the rape so then I was like "I'm not going to do that," 'cause once you see it happening, you're like, "Oh my gosh, I'm not doing that." 'Cause when you see it in a movie, it's like a mirror, really like a mirror. You can see it happening and you can see yourself in exactly that position and then you are like – "I'm not letting this happen." But just a list of you can't do this and this and this – really doesn't work so well.

Movies and other media infuse issues that otherwise do not transpire in school with a life-like reality. Role-playing can also elicit similar results. Thus education in the school can address many issues beyond those that actually occur in the school.

Joining with Parents

In a survey of secular Israeli teenage boys and girls, participants were asked to name the preferred source of sexuality education out of four possible sites: home, school, clinics and youth movements. The most popular venue for sexuality education across boys and girls was school. One quarter of the teenagers surveyed wanted parents to be their primary source of information

(Shtarkshall, Santelli & Hirsch, 2007). A British study found that a third of participants wanted parents to talk to them about sexuality in addition to the education they were receiving in schools (MacDowall et al, 2006). Many teenagers would like to be able to turn to parents for information and advice; almost half the participants in this study already do, but more for information than advice. Parents, who often feel unprepared for the task, would like to be able to comfortably talk to their children about these important topics. As previously noted, Green feels strongly that it is specifically in the home environment that normation occurs most prominently. Life Values and Intimacy education is most successful when conceived as a joint endeavor, involving parents, school, and community. Ulpanat Bina (and schools like it) should be encouraged to take a leadership role in facilitating this joint effort as it represents an approach most likely to successfully foster normation in issues of modesty, sexuality and relationships.

Implications for Life Values and Intimacy Education in Schools

In pre-interviews, many participants were of the opinion that the lack of communication in the school regarding sexuality and relationships indicates that these were topics of little importance to the school. This led them to conclude that Ulpanat Bina must have nothing relevant to say about sexuality and relationships, and participants therefore turned to alternative sources for information. The secular majority culture around them provides ideas and approaches diametrically opposed to those of their tradition in areas of sexuality and relationships. Participants in this research confirmed that they would like their school to offer on-going classes and conversations on these topics. Schools communicate a strong message about the seriousness and value of these topics when they dedicate resources by way of time and space for their treatment. The research identified a number of improvements for the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum. These conclusions are presented below.

Educating to Self Control

Self-governance, which Green views as the central component of moral education, requires self-control. Samet (2005) notes how teachers are hesitant to treat self-control as a life-long issue and tend to present struggles with sexuality as temporary teenage issues. She argues against this approach, as it fails to prepare students for the many temptations in areas of sexuality, modesty and relationships that may cross their paths throughout their lives. Encouraging self-control should be a fundamental goal of Life Values and Intimacy education in the Modern Orthodox community. Life Values and Intimacy educators serve their students well when they are able to tell them, “There is a tension between what the Jewish law asks of you and what you’re going to want to do. And that tension is real. Together we will seek strategies for

facing and dealing with this tension, because you will experience similar tensions throughout your lives.” Educators should frame the tension as part of a broader religious struggle with sexuality which includes being thoughtful about which movies and internet sites one views, as well as refraining from sexual relations at regular intervals during marriage because of the laws of family purity. Self-control needs to be a norm to which Modern Orthodox youth are educated from an early age as part of the development of a Modern Orthodox religious personality. This is a central part of the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum and is discussed in a number of units (see curriculum in appendix, Units 5, 6, 7 & 9). In addition, more effective strategies for education to fortitude and temperance must be developed.

Educating from Within a Dialectic

Having explored the struggle between authority and autonomy and the need to educate from within this dialectic, a number of adaptations will be made to the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum.

The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum is committed to the ideal that it is morally and religiously preferable to fulfill religious commandments from an autonomous inner conviction of their truth. Life Values and Intimacy educators will try and foster such inner conviction through the use of reasons. However, lack of commitment on the part of the individual does not suspend the obligation to fulfill the commandments. Therefore, the language of commandment and duty will be used. Participants expressed the importance of reasoned justification for religious rules and the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum will therefore present justifications for commands wherever possible as well as explanations of how adherence to the dictates of the commands benefits the individual.

There is a tension between educating toward religious commitment to an external standard and promoting autonomous conviction to that standard. The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum can acknowledge this dialectic and help students struggle with the inherent tension. While unable to provide a solution to the difficulties of living in this tension, identifying the tension as normal and common to many Modern Orthodox Jews and discussing ways of coming to terms with the tension is still a worthwhile endeavor. Thus, Life Values and Intimacy education would assert that living the tension is not a compromise but is rather, what it means to live an active religious life.

Understanding Decision-Making

Through an analysis of the current findings I have come to appreciate the complex role played by rational arguments in the acquisition of norms. In particular I have noted the central

role participants attribute to reasons in fostering commitment to Jewish norms. While the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum continues to offer justifications to support *shemirat negiyah* and modesty, students should be educated to become more cognizant of their decision making processes in general as well as how they implement decisions. A more realistic understanding of reasons and the ways in which they actually impact on decisions would be an important component of this analysis.

Putting the Struggle in Context

The work of acquiring strong normation comes from the development of a reflexive voice from within, not an instructive voice from without. Confirming that many Modern Orthodox teenagers are in conflict about these issues can be a crucial aspect of Life Values and Intimacy education, helping students to feel less alone or ashamed. Discussing the challenges of living an Orthodox life while engaging the modern world, can provide students with new perspectives on their internal debates. Offering empathy and admitting that simple solutions are not always available supports students as they navigate the complex territory of sexuality and Jewish law and come to be normed, to varying degrees, to Jewish law in these areas.

Contributions of the Current Study

Educational Contributions

The current research offers a significant educational contribution to the field of sexuality education. The curriculum developed for the current intervention is unique and innovative in that it adapts internationally accepted guidelines for sexuality education to accord with Jewish tradition. The research indicated that the curriculum can serve the Modern Orthodox community well by offering an approach to sexuality education sensitive to the needs and beliefs of the community.

Recognizing the centrality of culture in constructing meanings about sexuality reiterates the necessity of producing sexuality education materials tailored specifically to the norms of the Modern Orthodox School. The Modern Orthodox community embraces the majority culture yet negotiates a complex dynamic of excluding certain aspects of it (Berman, 2001). The tensions that a Modern Orthodox sexuality curriculum must navigate have increased given the heightened sexualization of the majority culture. Transmitting traditional norms in areas of sexuality and relationships requires an approach that engages modernity while remaining deeply rooted in the tradition. The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum adapts the knowledge, insights, and teaching strategies recommended by sexual health educators in the secular world and presents them

through the prism of Jewish tradition. The result is a curriculum that addresses a full range of issues from a Modern Orthodox perspective.

Research Contributions

The current study contributes to the field of sexuality education for the Modern Orthodox community in two significant ways, providing both baseline knowledge and assessing the impact of an innovative intervention. Furthermore, the research is unique in its application of Green's theories of moral education.

Baseline Data

Interviews with participants provide baseline knowledge in the areas of sexuality, relationships and modesty, a largely undocumented area in this cultural subgroup. The information this study provides can serve as an important resource for Modern Orthodox schools to assess the educational needs of female teenage students in areas of sexuality, relationships and modesty.

Empirical Verification of the Process of Normation

The current study provided an opportunity to explore Green's theories as presented in his book "Voices" in an empirical setting. By utilizing Green's theories to explicate the ways in which some participants were normed to observance of Jewish law I have been able to present empirical verification of these theories. This is a first attempt to apply Green's concept of normation to actual data and this bridging of theory and research provides an important contribution to the field of educational research. Examples of some of the conclusions of this exploration are presented below.

Normation in the School

Green believes that normation occurs inside communities, not schools. However, I found several instances of the school and classroom acting as communities that support normation. Furthermore, the strength of Modern Orthodox schools is that, together with homes, neighborhoods, and youth movements, they create a coherent community. Several aspects of the school in this study (its involvement in informal frameworks, the role of home-room educators who act as whole-student educators; partial dormitory and extended hours) recommend this school model as a school community capable of promoting normation. There were also instances when the school could be seen as being comprised of sub-communities, sometimes individual classes and sometimes small, peer-based groups. Schools can encourage membership in sub-

communities which provide a forum for religious fortification to a level of normation consonant with the school standards.

Despite a few sub-communities in which change was observed, our findings suggest that broadly speaking, in-school tensions surrounding issues of modesty reflect the out-of-school tensions regarding *shemirat negiyah* and modesty. Both are accurate reflections of the uneven nature of normation in the Modern Orthodox community on many religious issues.

Educating to Self-Control

Self-governance, which Green views as the central component of moral education, requires self-control. Some Modern Orthodox educators tend to deny teenage sexuality and the tensions it produces rather than address them. Even when addressed, they tend to present struggles with sexuality as temporary teenage issues rather than as one of the many temptations in areas of sexuality, modesty and relationships likely to recur throughout life. Encouraging strong normation and self-governance should be a fundamental goal of Life Values and Intimacy education in the Modern Orthodox community as a central component of the modern religious personality.

The Dialectic of Authority and Autonomy

Negotiating the dialectic of authority and autonomy presented a challenge to both participants and teachers. The ethos of the school placed autonomy ahead of authority. That leaves educators struggling to find a place for religious authority as expressed in Jewish law. Unable to resolve the tension between authority and autonomy, teachers either avoid educating where they sense student resistance (e.g. modesty, *shemirat negiyah*) or seek to elicit student assent to the tradition with rational (rather than traditional) justifications.

There is a tension between educating toward religious commitment to an external standard and promoting autonomous conviction to that standard. Certain classes encourage a mode of giving and analyzing reasons for Jewish law. This encourages autonomy and the possible student response of “well I just don’t agree.” Other presentations encourage a mode of obedience to Jewish law regardless of what students may think. These modes of presentation represent dialectic with the one mode challenging [the other. The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum can acknowledge this dialectic and help students struggle with the inherent tension which is viewed as intrinsic to being a rational religious person. Thus, Life Values and Intimacy education asserts that living the tension is not a compromise but is, rather, what it means to live an active religious life.

The Place of Reasons in Life Values and Intimacy Education

Raised in modern, Western culture, which is a rational, reason-giving culture, participants believe that compelling reasons lead to assent and then to action. Reasons are often employed when teaching Jewish law, particularly issues like *shemirat negiyah* which participants find challenging. The presentation of sound reasons for a particular practice is an important educational aim and serves the goal of normation. However, Green maintains that while reasons are initial steps to strong normation by promoting prudence, reasons in and of themselves do not lead to moral behavior. Moreover, it is important to educate Modern Orthodox students to tolerate the lack of reason sometimes found in Jewish law and educate towards an intrinsic commitment to Jewish law *per se*. Such an approach will assist them in maintaining commitment when they encounter a Jewish law that cannot be “beautified” to fit modern sensibilities. Green’s formulation of the voice of sacrifice as being necessary in order to engender strong normation is applicable for Modern Orthodox educators. It is this voice that is most significant for a community of text and tradition, as it offers an understanding of what it means to be commanded. This conscience of sacrifice, of the duty to transcend one’s needs, aptly describes what would be necessary to view Jewish law as a norm: an external, sacred standard.

A Coherent and Comprehensive Approach

Green’s work provides the basis for a coherent and comprehensive education to commitment to traditional norms, including *shemirat negiyah* and modesty. It allows an authentic expression of religious idiom without the loss of meaning inherent in translating that idiom into secular language. Green’s approach presents the Modern Orthodox educator with a model for reintroducing into the curriculum a sense of the sacred as expressed in Divine command, along with the conscience of sacrifice. The Life Values and Intimacy curriculum, based in ideas propounded by Green, can speak of reasons and duties, promote critical thinking, autonomy *and* obedience to authority, and invoke the idea of the sacred in service of strong normation in the areas of sexuality, modesty and relationships.

Further Research

The field of Life Values and Intimacy education for the Modern Orthodox School is a new one. Most Modern Orthodox girls’ high schools are only just beginning to recognize the necessity of providing education in areas of sexuality and relationships for their students. While much can be learned from educational materials in the secular world and from other traditional communities it is essential to develop materials specifically for the Modern Orthodox

community, with its unique set of issues and challenges. Long-term studies of the impact of Life Values and Intimacy education must be conducted in schools that incorporate a Life Values and Intimacy education program across grades. Following participants through their dating and early marriage years could provide important insight into the ways that Life Values and Intimacy education can support Modern Orthodox youth and young adults in areas of sexuality and relationships over the course of their lives.

No research about sexuality education has been conducted in Modern Orthodox teenage boys' schools, even as research in the general population indicates that boys have more difficulty with sexuality education than girls (Hilton, 2001, 2003). In addition, the boys' high schools offer significantly less education in the areas of sexuality and relationships than most Modern Orthodox girls' schools (Samet, 2005). Boys' home-room educators are usually Rabbis who have been trained in Rabbinic subject matter. While they may consider their rabbinical training to be sufficient preparation to educate about sexuality, they are generally not comfortable approaching explicit issues. A study similar to the current one examining the experience of boys is needed. In light of the results, the Life Values and Intimacy curriculum could be broadened to more successfully educate boys in the Modern Orthodox community.

The issue of modesty as expressed in a dress code, and the ways in which Ulpanat Bina defined norms for the school and then upheld them, created significant tension between the participants in this study and the staff at Ulpanat Bina. Further research into the ways in which other Modern Orthodox schools create a positive school climate around issues of modesty would provide insight for educators in the field.

I would like to pursue further the question of whether enforced compliance hinders or advances norm acquisition. A school that sets clear expectations regarding appropriate dress and enforces compliance may lead more directly to students' becoming "observant" of a dress code (in Green's understanding of the word), and becoming normed to the standards set by the school so that they adhere to them even when off the school campus. Alternatively, students may simply adopt a strategy of compliance while in school but have no commitment to observance. Worse, students may come to reject the desired behavior categorically because the rules were imposed, emanating from without and therefore inevitably rendering them unable to develop from within.

According to Green, moral growth proceeds by developing strong voices of conscience which argue with one another and a person comes to be governed by those voices. However, Green does not answer the question of which voice should take precedence in a given situation. Further research with teenagers to understand how voices of conscience develop, which ones take precedence over the others, as well as exploring the forces at work that weaken or

strengthen the voices would provide further insight promoting the establishment of strongly normed Modern Orthodox communities.

Intimacy and relationships form the cornerstone of Jewish family life and provide for continuity. These issues occupy the hearts and minds of our youth. It behooves the Modern Orthodox community of parents and educators to give Life Values and Intimacy Education high priority in Modern Orthodox adolescent education.

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תקציר

האורתודוקסיה המודרנית בישראל שואפת לשלב מחויבות להלכה עם נטילת חלק בחברה החילונית. שאיפה זו יוצרת מתח אצל אנשי הקהילה כאשר היא מנסה להנחיל דרכי חיים מסורתיות העומדות בסתירה לנורמות התנהגות עכשוויות. המתח מחריף במיוחד בתחום המיניות, מכיון שהקהילה מאפשרת פעילות מעורבת בין המינים במסגרות פורמליות ולא-פורמליות ובד בבד אוסרת על כל צורה של פעילות מינית טרם הנישואין.

המחקר בוחן כיצד נערות בנות עשרה ישראליות בחברה האורתודוקסית-מודרנית תופסות את מושג המיניות הן מבחינת המסורת שעליה התחנכו והן מבחינת התרבות הישראלית החילונית, תוך בחינת הסתירות בין השתיים. באמצעות ראיונות עומק אספתי מידע בסיסי מבנות כהן' הנוגע בעמדותיהם, בנורמות האישיות שלהן, ובידע שלהן בתחום. המראיינות השתתפו בקורס בת חמשה עשר שיעורים בנושא "ערכי חיים ואינטימיות", במסגרת כיתתית. עם תום הסדרה, נערכו ראיונות מסכמים והוערכה השפעת השיעורים על הנורמות של התלמידות, הידע שלהן ועמדותיהן.

קווים מנחים תיאורטיים עקרוניים

מיניות וחברה

הגישה האובייקטיביסטית המסורתית למיניות האדם משתמשת בתיאורים פיזיולוגיים כדי להעריך את התופעה של ההתנהגות המינית האנושית, ולנתח אותה. גישה זו ממקמת את המיניות בעיקר בגוף. לעומתה, הגישה הקונסטרוקטיבית למיניות האדם מגדירה מין ומיניות כתוצר של כוחות חברתיים חיצוניים כמו מעמד חברתי וכח פוליטי. התיאוריה של פוקו ראתה את המוגבלות שבגישה האובייקטיביסטית ובחרה להגדיר את המיניות כתחום טבעי, הנשלט על ידי כוחות חברתיים. חוקרות פמיניסטיות מרחיבות את רעיונותיו של פוקו, ובעיניהן מיניות האדם היא מושג חברתי ופוליטי, המתמקד בשימור גישות פטריארכליות והבדלים מגדריים. ההכרה בכך, שמיניות האדם הינה הבניה תרבותית מושרשת, מדגישה את הצורך שביצירת חומרי לימוד לחינוך המיני, המותאמים במיוחד לאורתודוקסיה המודרנית. הצורך שביצירת חומרי לימוד דוגמת אלה נעשה דוחק במיוחד לנוכח הסקסואליזציה הגוברת בתרבות הרוב. הנחלה זו של נורמות מסורתיות בתחומי הצניעות, המיניות ומערכות היחסים בין בנים לבנות דורשת גישה, הנטועה מחד גיסא עמוק במסורת הדתית, ומאידך גיסא יש בה מן המודרניות.

חינוך מיני דורש מסגרת מוסרית

חלוצי התומכים בתוכניות לחינוך מיני טענו, שניתן להציע חינוך מיני ללא זיקה לערכים. אף על פי כן, אט אט החלה מתגבשת הסכמה כללית, כי עצם הרעיון שחינוך מיני ללא זיקה לערכים הינו משולל יסוד. לא ניתן ללמד על מיניות, אפילו בצורה העובדתית ביותר, מבלי להביע דיעה אודות המוסריות שבפעילות מינית. כאשר יוצאים מנקודת הנחה שחינוך מיני אינו יכול להתקיים בריק מוסרי, הופכת סוגיית המסגרת המוסרית ההולמת לשאלה חשובה הדורש התייחסות בעיניהם של המורים לחינוך מיני. הדיון העקרוני בשאלת החינוך המוסרי נע בין שתי עמדות: גישת ההתפתחות המוסרית כפי שהיא מיוצגת בשיטתו של קוהלברג והגישה המגמתית בחינוך האישיות העולה משיטתו של ליקונה. שיטתו של קוהלברג רואה בעקרונות הצדק וההגינות את פסגתה של הברורות המוסריות. התלמידים משתתפים בדיונים פתוחים על דילמות מוסריות, מלבנים אותן ובונים מסקנות מוסריות המושתתות על עקרונות של

צדק והגינות. קוהלנברג רואה חשיבות גדולה הן בתהליך החשיבה המוסרית והן בחוויה ממשית של דימויות מוסריות כדי לקדם התפתחות מוסרית. לעומתו טוענת הגישה לחינוך האישי כי ילדים נדרשים לחינוך המבדיל בין טוב לרע, מחשש שבלא הכוונה ישירה לא יצליחו בהכרח כבוגרים להגיע לרגישויות מוסריות. קטבים אלה משתקפים במגוון גישות יהודיות לחינוך מוסרי: הגישה האוטונומית המעודדת נטילת החלטות עצמאיות חושבות, הגישה הנורמטיבית שבה ערכים מסורתיים מועברים על ידי מחנכים בעלי סמכות והגישה הדליברטיבית, שבה נוטל התלמיד חלק פעיל בעיצובן של מסקנות התנהגותיות. גישה יחודית לחינוך מוסרי נהגתה על ידי תומס גרין בספרו 'קולות': ההבניה החינוכית של המצפון'. הוא מתאר את גישתו עבור 'בניה של קהילה המעוצבת מבחינה ערכית, העסוקים בשאלת שיפור דרך חייהם ושימורה עבור הדור הבא'. שיטתו הולמת היטב את הקהילה האורתודוכסית – מודרנית ולכן תשמם למטרות מחקרנו.

התיאוריה של תומס גרין לגבי חינוך מוסרי כפי שהיא מובאת בספרו מציעה גישה לחינוך מוסרי, המתאימה במיוחד לקהילות של טקסט ומסורת, דוגמת הקהילה האורתודוכסית המודרנית. גרין מגדיר מצפון כ"דעה רפלקסיבית אודות דברים בעלי חשיבות". הרעיון המרכזי בתיזה של גרין הוא, שעיקר מטרתו של חינוך מוסרי הוא לפתח יכולת ל"שליטה עצמית", המבוססת על רכישת נורמות חברתיות. במילותיו של גרין, נורמות הינן כללי התנהגות פרדיגמטיים, המגדירות כיצד אנשים חושבים שעליהם להתנהג, אפילו אם אינם מתנהגים כך בפועל. גרין מתאר רמות מחויבות לנורמה מסוימת בסדר עולה: התאמה, ציות, כניעה והקפדה. הוא רואה בפיתוח של תודעת שיקול הדעת, קרי: בחירת הדבר הנכון שישרת את התועלת האישית, כשלב מהותי בדרך למצפון בוגר. כמו כן, מרחיב גרין גם את הגדרת הפעילות המוסרית מעבר לתפיסה המקובלת על מנת לכלול בה את רצונו של היחיד להגיע למצוינות במימוש מימונות מסוימת והוצאתה מן הכח אל הפועל. באמצעות שימוש בתבונות והשראה מקולות מצפון שונים, אנו מצפים מהאדם להיות אחראי על חיי המוסר הפרטיים שלו. קולות אלה אינם תמיד הרמוניים לעיתים הם סותרים דווקא, ודוחקים את היחיד לקצוות שונים, הכוללים מצוינות במימונויות, נאמנות בחברות בקבוצה והקרבה למען החובה. השתמשתי בגישתו של גרין לחינוך מוסרי על מנת לנתח ולהבין את הדרכים, שבהן המשתתפות רוכשות נורמות, ובמילותיו של גרין "נורמציה" (normation). באמצעות ניתוח זה, יכולתי להציג מסקנות לגבי תהליך הנורמציה לתחומי ההלכה, הקשורים במיניות דוגמת שמירת נגיעה וצניעות. יתר על כן, השתמשתי ברעיונותיו של גרין בכדי להציע כיוונים חינוכיים לתכנית לימודים בתחומים אלה.

תולדות החינוך המיני

מתחילת המאה העשרים, היווה החינוך המיני נושא לדיון רב בארצות הברית וחלה התפתחות משמעותית בגישה לחינוך בתחום זה. גישות חדשות נבחנו כאשר התוכניות לא הצליחו לרסן את העלייה בשיעורי מחלות המין וההריונות בגיל העשרה. ניתן לזהות ארבעה דורות של חינוך מיני בארצות הברית, המשקפים פרדיגמות משתנות.

הדור הראשון של תוכניות החינוך המיני פותח בשנות השבעים. מחנכים העניקו מידע אודות התנהגות מינית, הריון ומניעת הריון, וכן לגבי התוצאות השליליות של הריונות לא רצויים. תוך זמן קצר התברר, שלא היה די באספקת המידע כדי לחולל שינוי התנהגותי. הדור השני של התוכניות לחינוך מיני פותח בתחילת שנות השמונים והתמקד בקבלת החלטות ופעילויות להבהרת ערכים, במטרה להכין תלמידים לקראת קבלת החלטות בריאות ושקולות בנוגע להתנהגות מינית. כמות ההריונות בגיל העשרה

ומקרי מחלות המין בגילאי ההתבגרות המשיכה לעלות. הדור השלישי של תוכניות לחינוך מיני שהתפתח בשנות התשעים נקרא תוכניות "הימנעות אבסולוטית", ("Abstinence-only"). תוכניות אלו לימדו שהמדיניות הבטוחה היחידה היא הינזרות ממין. בתגובה למדיניות ההימנעות האבסולוטית פותח דור רביעי של תוכניות בשם גישות "הימנעות פלוס" ("Abstinence-plus") או חינוך מיני מקיף, המציג הימנעות מפעילות מינית כאפשרות בחירה מומלצת למתבגרים אך כולל בד בבד דיון פתוח במניעת הריון, מחלות מין וסוגיות אחרות הקשורות במיניות כמו הומוסקסואליות. כחלק מהדור הרביעי, פיתח צוות משימה בקליבלנד שבאווהיו סדרת קווים מנחים בשם "תכנית לימודים לערכי חיים: חינוך לבריאות עבור בית הספר היהודי". קווים מנחים אלו מושרשים בקווים המנחים לחינוך מיני, שפותחו על ידי המועצה למידע וחינוך למיניות בארצות הברית (SIECUS). הם פעלו בהתאם להמלצות של SIECUS לגבי חינוך מיני מקיף וערכו שינויים יסודיים כדי להתאים את התוכנית לצרכי קהילת בית הספר האורתודוקסי. גם אני כחלק מיוזמה זו פיתחתי קורסים ערוכים למורה לכיתות ג' עד י"ב, המבוססים על קווים מנחים אלו. ההתערבות שבה השתמשתי במחקר זה השתמשה בתכנים, המבוססים על הקורסים שפיתחתי כתכנית לימודים מקיפה.

חינוך לחיי משפחה במערכת החינוך הממלכתית-דתית

האולפנות היו בתי הספר הדתיים הראשונים, שלימדו סוג כלשהו של חינוך לחיי משפחה. הלימוד התמקד בתפקיד האישה ובמרכזיות הבית במשפחה הדתית. השיעורים היו מבוססים על ההלכה ועל מחשבת ישראל. זמן קצר לאחר שהוקמה היחידה לחינוך מיני במערכת החינוך הממלכתית בתחילת שנות השבעים, הוקמה "היחידה לחינוך לחיי משפחה" במערכת החינוך הממלכתית-דתית (בסוף שנות השבעים). המונח "חינוך לחיי משפחה" ביטא את האמביוולנטיות שליוותה את פתיחת היחידה ואת החשיבה שעמדה מאחוריה. זו הציבה את קידום של ערכי חיים המתמקדים במשפחה במקום במיניות כמטרה המרכזית של שיעורים אלו. מחנכים דתיים זיהו את הצורך במענה דתי למתירנות, ההולכת ומתפשטת בחברה הכללית ביחס למיניות, אבל היססו עדיין ללמד על מיניות בבתי ספר דתיים. לפיכך, ההתמקדות במשפחה היותה נר לרגלי תוכנית הלימודים לחינוך לחיי משפחה בבתי ספר ממלכתיים-דתיים.

על אף שבשנות השמונים הפך חינוך לחיי משפחה באופן רשמי למקצוע הנלמד בבתי ספר ממלכתיים-דתיים בישראל, הוא מעולם לא נלמד בצורה נרחבת. אף היום בבתי ספר שבהם הוא נלמד, מתקיימים השיעורים כמעט אך ורק בבתי ספר לבנות ובדרך כלל בחטיבה העליונה בלבד. בבתי ספר רבים, הדגש בשיעורים אלו מתמקד בגיבוש אופי הנערה כהכנה לחיים כרעיה ואם. דגש זה מנציח תפקידים מגדריים ואינו מסייע לה להתמודד עם הדילמות, העומדות בפניה בנוגע למיניות, לצניעות ולמערכות יחסים עם בנים. בבתי ספר הלומדים לקראת בחינת בגרות ב"אישות ומשפחה", השיעורים מתמקדים בטקסטים מסורתיים, העוסקים בהלכות נישואין וגירושין. שיעורים אלה מציגים בדרך כלל תפקידים מגדריים מסורתיים ומתייחסים מעט לחינוך למיניות או למערכות יחסים בין המינים, אם בכלל. נסיונות להכניס שיעורים המבוססים על תכנים אלטרנטיביים לא זכו להצלחה. עם זאת, בשנת 2005 האגף לחינוך לחיי משפחה פרסם ספר מקיף המכיל, תכני לימוד לבתי הספר הממלכתיים-דתיים. הספר היווה מענה משמעותי לצורך בתכני לימוד לחינוך לחיי משפחה עבור הקהילה האורתודוקסית-מודרנית. עם זאת, הספר אינו מקיף לחלוטין, חסרים בו נושאים חשובים כמו הומוסקסואליות, פורנוגרפיה, שימוש באינטרנט ושמירת נגיעה. טרם התפרסמה הערכה כלשהי לגבי תוכנית הלימודים החדשה.

בחירת גישה לחינוך מיני

במחקר שערכה בקרב מורים לחינוך לחיי משפחה במערכת החינוך הממלכתית-דתית בישראל, הבחינה סמט בין שלוש גישות רווחות: השתקה, בדיעבד ולכתחילה. גישת ההשתקה היא הרווחת ביותר ולפיה בני עשרה דתיים אינם מודעים למיניותם. כל הפניה של תשומת הלב לנושא זה הינה גירוי חסר הצדקה. גישת הבדיעבד רואה בהוראת מיניות מענה הכרחי אך מצער למציאות העכשווית. באופן אידיאלי, יש לשמור על תומתם של התלמידים עד שיעלה הצורך במידע זה קודם נישואיהם, אולם היחשפותם של התלמידים לתרבות הרוב אינה מותרת למחנכים הדתיים ברירה ומאלצת אותם לנסח תשובת-נגד יהודית-מסורתית לידע שהתלמידים מקבלים מסביבתם. גישה זו גורסת, שהחינוך בתחום זה אמור להיות מצומצם ככל האפשר. הגישה השלישית היא גישה פרואקטיבית מבחינה חינוכית הרואה בחינוך לחיי משפחה נדבך חיוני בחינוך המתבגר. היא מעלה על נס גישה חיובית למיניות, הנובעת מתוך השקפת ההלכה היהודית, ואינה מתמקדת במה שאסור. תכנית הלימודים לערכי חיים ואינטימיות מיוסדת על הגישה הפרואקטיבית בחינוך לחיי משפחה, ומרחיבה אותה לתוכנית לימודים מקיפה, המתייחסת לנושאים קרובים כמו קבלת החלטות, דימוי עצמי ומיומנויות תקשורת.

שיטת המחקר

במחקר הנוכחי נעשה שימוש בשיטת חקר מקרה של הגישה האיכותית. במחקר השתתפו כל עשרים ושתיים בנות כתיב' (גילאים 15-16) באולפנה לבנות בישראל. תלמידות אלה מייצגות את הקהילה האורתודוקסית-מודרנית בישראל. הן נבחרו כמדגם משמעותי, המסוגל לספק מידע על נושא המחקר. המחקר הורכב משלושה שלבים. בשלב הראשון, אספתי מידע בסיסי מהמשתתפות על ידי שימוש בראיונות עומק מובנים חלקית לגבי הידע שלהן על התרבות החילונית והחברה שבה הן חיות בתחומי המיניות ועמדותיהן כלפי שני תחומים אלו. המשתתפות נתבקשו לזהות את ההשפעות המרכזיות על התפתחות הידע והעמדות שלהן בתחומי המיניות. כמו כן, הן זיהו מי היה בעיניהן מקור המידע היעיל והאינפורמטיבי כשנזקקו למידע או לעצה בתחומי המיניות. המשתתפות נתבקשו לתאר את האופנים, שבהם הבינו את המערכות השונות של הערכים המיניים אליהן נחשפו, קרי ערכי התרבות החילונית (במיוחד כפי שחוו אותה באמצעות התקשורת), "השקפתה הרשמית" של היהדות האורתודוקסית, וערכי משפחתן ובנות גילן. בנוסף, בדק המחקר האם המשתתפות משוחחות על נושאי מיניות ומערכות יחסים בין המינים עם נערים בני גילן, ומהן תפיסותיהן לגבי הידע והעמדות של נערים בני גילן בתחומי המיניות. בשלב המחקר השני, נטלו המשתתפות חלק בשיעור שבועי בחינוך לערכי חיים ואינטימיות בבית הספר, שהעובר על ידי חברה בסגל המורים בעלת נסיון רב בהוראת חינוך לחיי משפחה. השיעורים עובדו מתוך תכנית לימודים מקיפה שפותחה והותאמה לבית ספר האורתודוקסי מודרני לכיתות ג'-יב'. זוהי תוכנית ראשונית ומקיפה בתחום זה. בנוסף לכך, התכנית מהווה פריצת דרך בכך שאימצה קוים מנחים מקובלים ברמה בינלאומית בנושא חינוך מיני מחד גיסא, ועלתה בקנה אחד עם המסורת היהודית מאידך גיסא. התוכנית היא תוכנית מקפת יותר מלכתחילה מתוך תפיסה שיש לחנך מגיל צעיר למגוון רחב יותר של נושאים מן הקיים בפועל בבתי ספר דתיים בישראל. כיום, רוב בתי הספר הדתיים המלמדים חינוך לחיי משפחה עושים זאת רק בכיתות וי"ב ולפעמים גם י"א ורק לעתים רחוקות מתייחסים השיעורים באופן מפורש לנושאי מיניות. המחקר הנוכחי בכיתה י' היווה הזדמנות לשימוש ראשוני בתכנים של התוכנית ללימוד ערכי חיים ואינטימיות בסביבה ישראלית.

תוכן חומר הלימודים משלב חינוך לערכי חיים (ערכים וכישורים אישיים, התפתחות אנושית, חברה ותרבות) יחד עם חינוך לאינטימיות (מערכות יחסים, התנהגות מינית ובריאות מינית). חמש-עשרה השעות כוללות גישה כללית להתפתחות המתבגר, אנטומיה ופיזיולוגיה של הזכר והנקבה, הבנת מיניות, סוגיות של חיים בחברה מעורבת של בנים ובנות, התעללות מינית, הטרדה מינית וההלכות העוסקות בשמירת נגיעה וענייני צניעות.

בשלב המחקר האחרון, העריכו ראיונות עומק מובנים חלקית פוסט-התערבותיים את חווית התלמידות בקורס, השפעתו על הידע והעמדות שלהן והשפעת התהליך הלימודי על מוכנותן לדון בנושאי מיניות בצורה פתוחה יותר.

בנוסף לראיונות עם המשתתפות, נערכו ראיונות עומק מובנים חלקית עם מקורות אחרים: מורות, ראש האולפנה, רב האולפנה, מדריכים בתנועת הנוער ואמהות. הראיונות השלימו את המידע שנאסף מהמשתתפות והעניקו נקודת מבט מלאה יותר על חוויותיהן.

הנתונים נותחו על יסוד תיאוריה מעוגנת בשדה תוך שימוש בשיטה אינדוקטיבית. הדבר דרש גישה לנושא המחקר ללא סדרה מוגדרת של הנחות או השערות שיש להוכיח. הניתוח התקדם באמצעות השפעה הדדית בין הנתונים ופרשנותם על ידי הספרות התיאורטית הרלוונטית. הגישה מציעה הזדמנות לתיאוריה להתפתח על בסיס מחקר בשטח. כמו כן, היא מאפשרת לחוקר לבחון דרכים חדשות עם המשתתפות כאשר עולות מסקנות חדשות מהתיאוריה. לפיכך, החומר שהוצע על ידי המשתתפות איפשר לנתב את כיוון המחקר תוך כדי הקפדה על המבנה של המחקר ועקביותו.

ממצאים

ראיונות מוקדמים

הראיונות המוקדמים העניקו מידע על בנות העשרה בחברה אורתודוקסית-מודרנית, על הידע שלהן ועמדותיהן בתחומי מיניות ומערכות יחסים בין המינים. המשתתפות קיבלו מעט חינוך פורמלי או לא-פורמלי, בין בבית ובין בבית הספר בנושאי מיניות ומערכות יחסים בין המינים. המשתתפות דיווחו שאימותיהן יזמו רק לעתים רחוקות שיחות אפילו על נושאים כמו בגרות מינית. ברוב המקרים הן פנו לחברות כדי לקבל מידע ועצות, זאת על אף שרבות מהן חשו שניתן לפנות לאמהות כדי לקבל מידע. לעיתים רחוקות גילו המשתתפות את ליבן בפני אימותיהן בנוגע למערכות יחסים. על אף שדיווחו על שיחות גלויות ספורות עם ההורים אודות מיניות ומערכות יחסים, דיווחו המשתתפות על מודעות לעקרונות ההורים לגבי התנהגות בתחומי מיניות, צניעות ומערכות יחסים בין המינים. על אף העדר שיח מפורש, ההורים כנראה הצליחו להנחיל את העקרונות בדרכים סמויות ולא ישירות.

ישנה סבירות גבוהה שהמשתתפות יפנו לבנות גילן בכל הנוגע למערכות יחסים עם בנים. למרות ההשפעה המשמעותית של נערות זו על זו, המשתתפות הביעו חוסר מוכנות לתקן את התנהגות חברותיהן, כשפעלו בניגוד להלכה היהודית בתחומי המיניות ומערכות היחסים בין המינים. משתתפות רבות החשיבו תחומים אלה כעניינים הנתונים לבחירה אישית ולפיכך הערה או ביקורת על התנהגויות הצטיירה כבלתי הולמת.

המשתתפות חשו שתרבות הרוב הינה בעלת השפעה מכרעת עליהן והופכת התנהגויות בתחומי מיניות ומערכות יחסים בין המינים שלא עלו בקנה אחד עם ההלכה, לנורמליות. החשיפה לתרבות הרוב בעלת הנורמות המתירניות בתחומי המיניות ומערכות יחסים בין המינים הפכו את המשתתפות למודעות יותר להגבלה שמטילה ההלכה היהודית על מערכות יחסים בין המינים. המודעות הזו לציפיותיה

המחמירות של ההלכה היהודית בתחומי מיניות ומערכות יחסים בין המינים עוררה לעתים מורת רוח בקרב המשתתפות.

המשתתפות דיווחו שכמעט ואינן יודעות על האופן, שבו חווים נערים בני גילן את אתגר ההקפדה על מחויבות להלכה היהודית בתחום המיניות. הן אמרו שקיימת סבירות נמוכה יותר שבנים יקפידו על נורמות של שמירת נגיעה, וסברו שלבנים קשה יותר להקפיד על תחום זה בהלכה. הן הסבירו שהשוני נעוץ בקושי הנובע מהורמונים פעילים יותר, במיוחד בשנות גיל ההתבגרות. המשתתפות היו משוכנעות שהבנים קיבלו כמות פחותה עוד יותר של חינוך מיני בהשוואה אליהן.

כמו כן, סיפקו הראיונות המוקדמים מידע בנוגע למחויבות להלכה בתחומי מיניות, צניעות ומערכות יחסים בין המינים. המשתתפות, אף אלו בהן שהגדירו עצמן כמחויבות להקפדה על המסורת, הגדירו את הצניעות ושמירת הנגיעה כתחומים בעייתיים. מחויבות להלכה הציגה אתגר למשתתפות רבות שעדיין מבררות את הקשר שלהן עם ההלכה והסטנדרטים ההתנהגותיים שהיא קובעת עבורן.

ראיונות סיכום

בראיונות הסיכום העידו המשתתפות שהשיעור באופן כללי נשא פרי מבחינה חינוכית. הן דיווחו שהשיעור האיר נקודות מבט חדשות על נקודות ההשקה של ההלכה ומיניות האדם. בעוד שרוב המשתתפות לא שינו את התנהגותן, הן אישרו שהפכו למודעות לנושאי שמירת נגיעה, צניעות ומערכות יחסים בין המינים ולקחו אותן לתשומת ליבן. כחצי מהמשתתפות הביעו התלהבות מהשיעור על אף שלדעת שתיים מהן הוא לא היה רלוונטי. בעיני אחרות, היה השיעור רב ערך על אף שסברו, כי יש מקום לשיפור התוכן.

המשתתפות הודו שהמורה שהעבירה את השיעור יצרה אורה שתרמה לדו-שיח בטוח, פתוח ומכבד. באופן כללי, מכשלות שאובחנו במחקרים אחרים כגישות שליליות לחינוך מיני לא באו לידי ביטוי בשיעורים. לדוגמה המורה לא יחסה תכונות דמוניות לבנים, לא הציגה את האישה כחפץ או ציירה תמונה שלילית של מיניות במטרה לעודד איפוק, אלא התייחסה לנושאים מבחינה מתחשבת ומרתקת. המשתתפות גילו עניין מיוחד בהתעללות מינית ובשמירת נגיעה מנקודת המבט הגברית. השימוש במדיה שיפר את השפעתן של כמה יחידות לימוד. חלק מהמשתתפות העלו הצעות לשיפור, ואילו אחרות הביעו שביעות רצון מלאה. בית הספר שבו נערך המחקר אישר את הצלחת ההתערבות ואימץ את השיעור כחלק מתוכנית הלימודים.

המחקר אישר שתלמידות בחברה אורתודוקסית-מודרנית בשנות ההתבגרות הסוערות מחפשות תפיסות יהודיות של מיניות ומערכות יחסים, המעוגנות במקורות הקלאסיים. לפיכך, ההורים ובתי הספר האורתודוקסים-מודרניים יוכלו לשרת טוב יותר את צרכי המתבגרים שלהם על ידי פיתוח כלים חינוכיים. כלים אלה יסייעו למתבגרים להתמודד עם אתגרי המיניות בחייהם.

אופי נורמציית המשתתפת

מאותן משתתפות אורתודוקסיות-מודרניות עולה תמונה מורכבת של נורמציה, במיוחד ביחס לכללי הנגיעה המעוגנים בהלכה (שמירת נגיעה). על אף שהתנהגות המשתתפות ביחס לשמירת נגיעה לא היתה אחידה, כולן היו מחויבות להימנעות מקיום יחסי מין לפני הנישואין. ממצא זה משמעותי מכיון שהוא מבדיל את הנערות האורתודוקסיות-מודרניות מבנות גילן החילוניות. המחויבות הבלתי יציבה לשמירת נגיעה יחד עם העדר הצורך להסתיר אי-שמירת נגיעה אצל משתתפות רבות, מעידה ששמירת נגיעה אינה נורמה קבוצתית.

השלכות חינוכיות

גישתו של תומאס גרין לחינוך מוסרי הובאה על מנת לבאר את חוויות המשתתפות וכמו כן לנסח מודל לחינוך מיני.

נורמציה בבית הספר

גרין סבור שהנורמציה מתרחשת בתוך קהילות, ולא בתוך בתי ספר. עם זאת, גיליתי מספר מקרים שבהם בית הספר והכיתה ממלאים תפקיד של קהילות התומכות בנורמציה. יתרה מזאת, כוחם של בתי הספר האורתודוקסים-מודרניים טמון בכך, שהם יוצרים יחד עם הבתים, השכונות ותנועות הנוער, קהילה קוהרנטית. היבטים מספר של בית הספר במחקר זה (מעורבותו במסגרות לא-פורמליות, תפקיד המחנכות בנתינת יחס אישי לכל תלמידה הקשור לכלל חינוך התלמידה, לינה חלקית בפנימיה ושעות לימוד נוספות) מעידים על מודל בית הספר כקהילה המסוגלת לקדם נורמציה. יחד עם זאת, בית הספר כמעט ולא הצליח לאמץ נורמציה בתחומים שבהם התמקד המחקר כמו למשל, צניעות. המתחים בתוך בית הספר סביב נושאי צניעות מבטאים את המתחים שמחוץ לבית הספר בכל הקשור לשמירת נגיעה ולצניעות. שניהם משקפים בצורה מדויקת את אופיה הלא-עקבי של הנורמציה בקהילה האורתודוקסית-מודרנית בנושאים רבים.

הנתונים הצביעו על כך שאולפנת בינה אינה כוללת בתור קהילה בית-ספרית נורמת צניעות, העולה בקנה אחד עם תקנון בית הספר ללבוש הולם. התלמידות לא ראו בעיה בהתעלמות מן הדרישות הרשמיות בבית הספר בענין לבוש הולם, התעלמות שבא לידי ביטוי באי נכונותן ללבוש את החולצה האחידה. עובדה זו עלולה להקטין את האפשרויות לעידוד הנורמציה בבית ספר כדוגמת אולפנת בינה. עם זאת, נתונים אחרים מציגים אפשרויות לעידוד הנורמציה. אובחן במסגרת המחקר מודל אפשרי אחד, המחנכת, אשר היתה מסוגלת לעודד שינוי בתחום הצניעות בקרב קבוצת בנות מסוימת מעבר לכתלי הכיתה. מודל זה יכול לשמש כמודל אפשרי. יתכן שבמקום לראות באולפנת בינה קהילה אחת, ניתן להתייחס אליה כמקום הכולל קהילות-משנה רבות, שלעתים ניתן לאבחן ככיתות ולעתים אף כקבוצות קטנות יותר של שכבת גיל. בית הספר יכול למלא תפקיד בעידוד חברות בקהילות המשנה, המחזיקות בנורמות המיוצגות על ידי אמות המידה של בית הספר. בין השיטות הזמינות בבית הספר לעידוד מגמה שכזאת ניתן למנות אגודות ופעילויות, המאחדות סביבן תלמידות בעלות רמות דומות של נורמציה (כמו למשל תגבור לימוד תורני, פעילות חסד, תרומה לקהילה) ומעודדות התחזקות דתית ברמת הנורמציה שתעלה בקנה אחד עם עקרונות בית הספר.

חינוך לשליטה עצמית

שליטה עצמית, המהווה לפי גרין מרכיב מרכזי בחינוך המוסרי, דורשת ריסון עצמי. יש מחנכים אורתודוקסים-מודרניים, הנוטים להתכחש למיניות המתבגרים ולמתחים הנוצרים ממנה במקום להתמודד עמם. גם כאשר הם מתמודדים עמם, הם נוטים להציג התמודדות עם מיניות כנושא התבגרותי זמני ולא כפיתוי אחד מני רבים בתחומי המיניות, הצניעות ומערכות היחסים שבין המינים, שהם עלולים להיתקל בהם במהלך חייהם. עידוד נורמציה חזקה לשליטה עצמית יכולה להיות מטרת יסוד בחינוך לערכי חיים ואינטימיות בקהילה האורתודוקסית-מודרנית כחלק מרכזי מהאישיות הדתית המודרנית.

הדיאלקטיקה של סמכות ואוטונומיה

ההתמודדות עם הדיאלקטיקה שבין סמכות ואוטונומיה של הפרט היוותה אתגר למשתתפות ולמורות כאחד. רוח בית הספר הציבה את האוטונומיה של הפרט מעל הסמכות. לפיכך, התקשו המחנכות למצוא מקום לסמכות דתית כפי שהיא באה לידי ביטוי בהלכה, בד ובד עם רגישות מודרנית המעודדת אוטונומיה של הפרט. המורות, שאינן מסוגלות לישוב את המתח שבין סמכות ואוטונומיה של הפרט, מתחמקות מחינוך כאשר הן חשות התנגדות מצד התלמידות לנושאים מסוימים (כמו צניעות ושמירת נגיעה) או מבקשות להשיג את הסכמת התלמידות למסורת באמצעות נימוקים הגיוניים בעלי חזות אוניברסלית.

תוכנית הלימודים לערכי חיים ואינטימיות מחויבת לגישה, הסבורה שעדיף מבחינה מוסרית ודתית לקיים מצוות ממחויבות המשותפת על בחירה חופשית ועל הכרה פנימית מאשר לקיים מתוך ציות כפוי. תכנית הלימודים מנסה לחזק הכרה פנימית באמצעות העמקת ההנמקה וטעמי המצוות. עם זאת, היעדר מחויבות אוטונומית של התלמידה היחידה אינו שולל את אמיתת ההלכות עצמן. קיים מתח בין חינוך למחויבות דתית לעיקרון חיצוני ובין קידום הכרה אוטונומית באותו עיקרון. תכנית הלימודים לערכי חיים ואינטימיות יכולה להכיר בדיאלקטיקה זו ולסייע לתלמידות להתמודד עם המתח המורשש הנתפס כהיבט מהותי בחיי האדם הדתי הרציונלי. לפיכך, חינוך לערכי חיים ואינטימיות יטען שמתח זה אינו מבטא פשרה אלא דווקא את מהות החיים הדתיים הפעילים.

מקום להנמקה וטעמי המצוות בחינוך לערכי חיים ואינטימיות

המשתתפות, שגדלו בתרבות מערבית מודרנית, תרבות רציונלית ומטעימה, סבורות שנימוקים משכנעים להסכמה, המובילה למעשה. נימוקים לעיתים משמשים בחינוך לסוגיות הלכתיות, ובמיוחד בסוגיות כמו שמירת נגיעה, הנתפסת בעיני המשתתפות כנושא מאתגר. המשתתפות מאמינות בסיבה בעלת עוצמה הנעלמת מהן אשר בכוחה לשכנע אותן לאמץ שמירת נגיעה. ההנחה נתגלתה כבעייתית מכיון שהיא אינה משקפת את הדרכים שבהן מתקבלות החלטות בפועל. עם כל זאת, הצגת סיבות הגיונות להתנהגות מסוימת היא מטרה חינוכית חשובה המשמשת כתמיכה לנורמציה. עם זאת, גרין סבור שאף כי סיבות הן צעד ראשוני בדרך לנורמציה משמעותית על ידי קידום תודעת שיקול דעת, הסיבות לכשעצמן אינן אלו המובילות להתנהגות מוסרית. יתרה מזאת, חשוב לחנך תלמידות אורתודוקסיות-מודרניות לשאת את היעדר הסיבה שניתן למצוא לעיתים בהלכה, ולחנך אותן למחויבות פנימית להלכה כפי שהיא. גישה שכזאת תסייע להן לדבוק במחויבות כאשר יתקלו בהלכה שלא ניתן "ליפות" אותה ולהתאימה לרגישויות מודרניות. דבריו של גרין אודות קול ההקרבה (the voice of sacrifice) כעניין הכרחי במטרה להביא לנורמציה חזקה, מתאימה למחנכים אורתודוקסים-מודרנים. קול זה הוא המרכיב המשמעותי ביותר בקהילת טקסט ומסורת, מכיון שהוא מציע הבנה משמעותית למהותו של האדם המצווה. תודעת ההקרבה, החובה להתעלות מעל הצרכים האישיים, מתארת במדויק את הנדרש כדי לראות את ההלכה היהודית כנורמה: כאמת מידה חיצונית ומקודשת.

התמודדות בהקשר

נורמציה חזקה תלויה בפיתוח קול פנימי עצמי ולא קול מדריך מבחוץ. מרכיב מהותי בחינוך לערכי חיים ואינטימיות יכול לאשר למתבגרים האורתודוקסים-מודרנים שהם אינם היחידים המצויים בקונפליקט. התגלית שהקונפליקט הוא מנת חלקם של מתבגרים אורתודוקסים-מודרנים רבים אחרים יכול

לסייע לתלמידים לחוש פחות בדידות או בושה. דיון אודות האתגרים בחיים, המשלבים עולם מודרני ועולם אורתודוקסי, יכולים להעניק לתלמידים השקפות חדשות בדיוניהם הפנימיים. מתן תמיכה, אמפתיה והכרה בכך שפתרונות פשוטים אינם תמיד בנמצא יכולים לסייע לתלמידים, המנווטים את דרכם בתחומי המיניות, במערכות היחסים בין המינים וההלכה וחותרים להגיע לנורמה ברמות שונות.

גישה עקבית ומקיפה

חיבורו של גרין מספק את הבסיס לחינוך עקבי ומקיף למחויבות לנורמות מסורתיות הכוללות שמירת נגיעה וצניעות. גרין מאפשר הבעה אותנטית של האידיום הדתי מבלי לאבד את משמעותו המהותית כשהוא מתורגם לשפה החילונית. גישתו של גרין מציגה בפני המחנך האורתודוקסי-מודרני מודל לשילוב בתוכנית הלימודים של תודעת הקדושה כפי שהיא מופיעה בציווי האלוקי יחד עם תודעת ההקרבה. תוכנית הלימודים לערכי חיים ואינטימיות, המיוסדת על גישתו של גרין, יכולה לעסוק בהנמקה של המצוות משולב במחויבות, לעודד חשיבה ביקורתית, הכורכת אוטונומיה *יחד עם* כבוד לסמכות ואף לעורר את מעלת הקדושה לקידום נורמציה חזקה בתחומי המיניות, הצניעות ומערכות היחסים בין המינים.

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בישראל:

בדיקת השפעת התערבות חינוכית

כרך א'

חיבור לשם קבלת התואר "דוקטור לפילוסופיה"

מאת:

יוכבד דיבו

בית הספר לחינוך

הוגש לסנט של אוניברסיטת בר-אילן

רמת גן

אייר, תשס"ט

עבודה זו נעשתה בהדרכתו של

ד"ר דוד רזניק

מביה"ס לחינוך

של אוניברסיטת בר-אילן