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“IT’S NONE OF YOUR DAMN BUSINESS”: COMMUNICATION AMONG
NEWLYWEDS REGARDING FAMILY EXPANSION PREFERENCES

BY

KIERSTEN KOEHLER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Arts

Major in Communication and Media Studies

South Dakota State University

2020

THESIS ACCEPTANCE PAGE

Kiersten Koehler

This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the master's degree and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree.

Acceptance of this does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

Kelli J. Chromey

Advisor

Date

Lyle Olson

Department Head

Date

Dean, Graduate School

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, thank you to my wonderful advisor, Dr. Kelli J. Chromey. I am extremely grateful for your help and advice throughout this process. From my journey to finding a topic to the defense, you have offered your wisdom and always made me feel like a priority. In addition, I want to thank my thesis committee, Dr. Joshua Westwick and Dr. Marco Ciarcia. I appreciate the time you both took to read my thesis and give me feedback to enhance my work. I felt so welcomed in my defense and truly enjoyed presenting my findings and answering questions posed during the presentation.

Next, I want to thank the faculty that offered support, taught me in the classroom, and provided mentorship throughout my two years in the School of Communication and Journalism. A special thank you to the faculty in communication, Dr. Karla Hunter for fostering a welcoming environment my first semester in the program, Dr. Kelli Chromey for heightening my interest in communication theory, Dr. Joshua Westwick for the pep talks to believe in myself, and Dr. Jenn Anderson for opening my eyes to explore qualitative research. Additionally, thank you to Dr. Rocky Dailey for the opportunity to enhance my skills for going into the industry, Dr. Marina Hendricks for making me fall in love with media law, and finally to Roxanne Lucchesi for your mentorship in research. I truly appreciate all of the listed faculty for their part in enhancing my degree and making my experience at SDSU memorable.

Lastly, thank you to my friends and family for supporting me through this journey. Specifically, thank you to Trevor who has been my rock and always kept me grounded. I also owe a huge thank you to my parents for the lifelong encouragement to follow my dreams and for supporting me in all of my adventures.

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ABSTRACT

“IT’S NONE OF YOUR DAMN BUSINESS”:

COMMUNICATION AMONG NEWLYWEDS REGARDING

FAMILY EXPANSION PREFERENCES

KIERSTEN KOEHLER

2020

As newlyweds begin their new adventure as a married couple, the discussion of family expansion is inevitable. This thesis seeks to understand how newlyweds discuss their plans for family expansion among each other and to others by applying the theory of communication privacy management. Ten newlywed couples were interviewed regarding their experiences navigating the topic of family expansion and reproduction. Specifically, the couples were asked about preferences for privacy and control, and what expectations the couples have when disclosing information about their preferences for family expansion. The data demonstrated that communication privacy management may not look the same among each newlywed couple. However, communication privacy management strategies are used among couples to own, control, and manage information regarding family expansion. In addition to these findings, implications and directions for future research are discussed.

Communication privacy management, family expansion, newlyweds

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Since 1970, the average age of first-time mothers has increased significantly. In 1970, the average age of a first-time mother was 21 years old (Matthews & Hamilton, 2002). From 2000 to 2014, the average age of a first-time mother increased from 24.9 to 26.3 years old (Matthews & Hamilton, 2016). However, between 2009 and 2014 the increase was more pronounced. Specifically, in that time, the average age ballooned from 25.2 to 26.3 years old (Matthews & Hamilton, 2016). Matching the upward trend of later in life, first-time motherhood, the average age of marriage has also increased. Namely, the average age of marriage for a woman in 2003 was 25.3 years old and 27.8 years old in 2018 (United States Census Bureau, 2018). These facts underscore compelling upward trends in both the age of motherhood and marriage.

The change in the age of marriage and motherhood can be attributed to any number of factors such as finances, delay in finding a partner, fertility, social norms, and a societal shift in gender roles (Holton, Fischer, & Rowe, 2009). As Matthews and Hamilton (2002) noted, the age of first-time marriage has increased dramatically. One change over the past several decades is that many more women are attending college (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006). The increase in women attending college contributes to the delay of finding a spouse and the consequential delay of motherhood. Women are spending more time in their late teens and early twenties focusing on their career, rather than finding a partner (Holton et al., 2009). Career prioritization was not always the norm for previous generations; to the contrary, it was often non-existent. Additionally, an uncontrolled factor is the desire of a couple to bear children. Based on societal norms,

people may find it only natural to assume a heterosexual couple plans on reproducing. While family expansion may be desired by many newlywed couples, it is not the plan for all. Furthermore, even though couples may want children, health issues such as infertility, career aspirations, or a changed mind may alter the ability or desire to have children. These factors and several others are discussed throughout the literature review in chapter two.

These recent and significant delays in marriage and having children may have family members, friends, or others wondering about newlywed couples' plans for the potential expansion of their family. This study aims to critically examine the communication preferences among newlyweds' answers to questions regarding family expansion plans. Determining and analyzing these preferences is valuable as they enable us to see how people discuss a potentially impactful aspect of life, reproduction. This chapter provides a review of the purpose of the study, terms and phrases, and a background of the problem.

Purpose of the Study

This research attempts to augment the conversation about reproduction and family expansion, and whether, and to what extent, these conversations are a private topic. Do newlywed couples mind being asked about plans for reproduction? Can it be damaging to ask newlyweds when they plan on having a baby? Do the well-intentioned friends and family consider they might be improperly pressuring a couple to reproduce? By answering these questions and providing ideas for future research, members of society may be more aware of the impact that publicly discussing this often private topic can

have on newlyweds. The study also provides stimulation for future studies to develop messaging and awareness around the topic of family expansion.

Little research has been completed to understand the perspective and attitudes of newlywed couples concerning pregnancy pressure. Studies have been completed to gather information from newlyweds such as navigating their newly formed relationship (Campbell, 2012; Hall & Adams, 2011). Moreover, there are numerous studies regarding pregnancy coercion (Miller, McCauley, Tancredi, Decker, Anderson, & Silverman, 2014; Park, Nordstrom, Weber, & Irwin 2016). However, the two distinct ideas of newlyweds taking a new step in their relationship and pressure to have children from outside sources have not been studied together. Most specifically, they have not been studied under the theory of communication privacy management.

This study has great potential to open the doors for future research and to open dialogue surrounding the personal and private question, “when are you getting pregnant?” The study may also shed light on the damaging effects of being subject to personal and private questions, especially when newlyweds are in the process of strengthening their new marital bond. Additionally, this study provides further research on communication privacy management theory. Specifically, it examines how newlywed couples manage and regulate private information in relation to their preferences on family expansion.

Definitions

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a newlywed as “a person recently married” (para. 2). However, the term ‘recently’ can be ambiguous regarding its meaning. Typically, studies have used a range of years to define newlyweds, ranging from one year to six years (Kurdek, 1993; Lavner, Lamkin, Miller, Campbell, & Karney, 2016;

McGinley, 2009). In support, Kurdek (1998) discussed that the first few years of marriage have a significant impact on the overall longevity of the marriage based on navigating individual differences and the level of each spouse's dependence on each other. Therefore, in order for the study to have its maximum impact, great care must be taken in how it defines "newlyweds." As a result, for the purpose of this study, a newlywed is defined as a person who has been married within the past five years. In addition, it is imperative to utilize a consistent and ascertainable definition of marriage. Wimalasena (2016) defined marriage in several ways through previous scholarship. For example, marriage has a legal definition, economic definition, social definition, and various religious definitions. Marriage can have different meanings and personal values among people. For example, marriage can be seen as a sacrament within certain religious organizations. However, there is legality in order to be recognized as a married couple within each state. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the legal definition is used; marriage will be defined as a legal, state-sanctioned union between two partners (Wimalasena, 2016).

Throughout this study, the term "family expansion" will be used to describe the addition of biological children to a married couple. However, this definition does not imply that couples should or ought to be married in order to expand their family, and it does not intend to exclude other types of family expansion. Rather, the definition is used to provide a clear and consistent definition. "Family expansion" is used instead of "starting a family" because a family can be formed through bonds other than reproduction. A study by Havigerová, Haviger, and Loudvá (2015) demonstrated that the term family is fluid and has changed over time. A definition of family was constructed

through the study by primary school students and teachers, and they defined family as “a community of people” (Havigerová et al., 2015, p. 430). The constructed definition was not limited to immediate family, but also to boyfriends, girlfriends, friends, or even pets. Moreover, Blackstone (2019) dedicated an entire chapter discussing the assumptions of others’ definition of a family and what it means to start a family. Family can be formed through relationships and is not exclusively established through a legally recognized unit.

Another area within family expansion and reproduction that may be discussed revolves around those who do not want to have children. Studies in literature and stigma have shown that the terms “childfree” and “voluntary childlessness” are adequate terms to describe the person or couple who chooses not to have children (Moore, 2014; Morison, Macleod, Lynch, Mijas, & Shivakumar, 2015). The terms are necessary in order to distinguish the couples that affirmatively choose not to have children from those couples that want children, but are unable to naturally conceive, due to issues such as infertility.

For some couples, the pressure to have children becomes a chronic topic within their relationship and outside of their relationship. The pressure put on newlyweds to reproduce can have adverse effects on the couple. Simon (2016) said,

It’s one of those loaded questions that makes us feel uncomfortable; because no matter how we respond, internally, we know our response will be analyzed; and could potentially have repercussions in other areas of our lives. Will I lose them as a client if I say ‘soon’? Will they think of me different if I say, ‘not planning on it’? (para. 12).

Pregnancy pressure falls under the category of reproductive coercion, according to Park et al. (2015). Reproductive coercion occurs in the form of pregnancy pressure by the partner or others, such as family members. Pregnancy pressure among family members is more common among family members of different generations, such as parents, as opposed to members of the same generation, such as siblings (Park et al., 2015). The familial pregnancy pressure is not always noticed, and it is even more rarely studied (Park et al., 2015). This study will explore how couples manage their privacy when asked or pressured about having children.

Background of the Problem

“...First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes baby in a baby carriage” (The kissing song, para. 3). The K-i-s-s-i-n-g Song is commonly heard on playgrounds for years. The “formula” is heard by children and is a song that is remembered by people for years. The song gives the impression to the audience that one must be in love in order to get married, and once marriage occurs, having a child ought to occur shortly thereafter. In addition, the song implies that children arrive after love and marriage are present, which is not always the order of events. More than just a child’s rhyme, this song is just one example of how the combination of marriage and family expansion tend to go hand-in-hand and are cemented as societal norms. However, despite this oft-repeated notion, it turns out that family expansion is not something all newlyweds, or more specifically, women, have the desire to discuss with others.

Several bloggers, as well as other websites that discuss family education and family expansion, address a question that many newlyweds constantly hear from close family members and friends, and even those they do not know: “When are you getting

pregnant?” (Cicurel, 2019; Jannese, 2016; Simon, 2016; Stewart, 2019). Specifically, these resources originate from the point of view of women discussing the uncomfortable pressure planning a pregnancy puts on them. In support, Cicurel (2019) specifically states in her article, “there seems to be a distant lack of sensitivity around the topic, as well as little understanding that even if you are trying, there’s no guarantee you will conceive” (para. 17). The author discusses not only her own personal struggles but her friends’ struggles with facing questions regarding reproduction, indicating that she is not alone in feeling the pressure to conceive.

The reasons women in the blogs wrote about feeling discomfort when asked when they will be expanding their family are diverse and expansive. They range from the couple not wanting children, body insecurity, desire to keep their family expansion private, fear of judgment, and a delay in reproduction to focus on their careers (Jannese, 2016; Simon, 2016; Stewart, 2019). The statements made by women regarding the issue of inappropriate questions regarding family expansion have not been explored through a communication lens. More specifically, the issue has not been studied from a communication privacy management standpoint.

In order to address potential pressures women have regarding their decision to reproduce, it is important to value the perspectives women and their partners have on the topic. The study provides an opportunity for voices to be heard from a population that has not always been listened to. From the findings of this study, the family members, friends, co-workers, and even general acquaintances of newlywed couples may recognize that the topic of family expansion is not always welcomed, and great care should be taken regarding how, and even whether, this topic should be broached. The theory of

communication privacy management, which guides this study, can help people understand what is private and what is permissible to discuss.

In conclusion, this chapter highlighted the importance of the study by defining the problem. The study aims to increase the discussion surrounding the topic of reproduction in hopes that members of society can recognize the potential harm of asking newlyweds about their reproduction plans. To dive further into the issue, chapter two includes a review of the literature regarding communication privacy management theory and how it applies to newlywed norms and family formation. Chapter three contains the methodology of the study. Chapters four and five present the results and discussion, respectively.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This literature review outlines communication privacy management, which is the theory that drives the focus of the study. Next, an in-depth review of the literature on studies about the value and history of newlywed norms is provided. Then, family formation preferences and expectations are addressed, along with exogenous influences and factors that affect decisions regarding family expansion. The literature provides the direction and focus of the study that ultimately drives the six research questions posed at the end of this chapter.

Communication Privacy Management

The theory of communication privacy management (CPM) has been studied by Petronio since 1986 (Petronio & Child, 2020). However, the concept of privacy has been around for centuries. The emerging theory of communication privacy management is fairly new, relative to the human desire for privacy. The framework for CPM started with Irwin Altman's idea of privacy regulation and social behavior studies (Petronio & Child, 2020). The goal of pairing Altman's research with CPM was to provide scholars with an evidence-based, applied guide on how to understand the context of privacy, and ultimately, how to manage it (Petronio & Child, 2020). However, as it will be explored more in-depth herein, privacy management is difficult for some people.

Motto (2018) described privacy as "a learned behavior central to communication practices" (p. 4). The ways people manage privacy varies significantly, and what people decide to share with others makes them who they are in their eyes. In support of this concept, Petronio (2010) discussed important family communication findings regarding

communication privacy management. For example, there is an exterior privacy boundary outside of family members' information, and family members may have rules and expectations put upon those outside of the household, such as other family members or nonfamily members (Petronio, 2010). CPM has been studied in several formats across a wide spectrum of events, including disclosures of medical staff, family crises, disclosure of diagnoses such as HIV/AIDS, physical abuse/domestic violence, and more (Petronio, 2007). The four main areas CPM is studied include parental privacy intrusion, social media, health, and relationships (Petronio, 2013). Through continuing research, tools are starting to be tested in order to effectively measure the five principles of CPM (Petronio, 2013).

CPM theory provides the framework for theorizing both individual and collective group privacy. In Petronio's (2010) article, the researcher relates CPM to family boundaries, which include disclosure and confidentiality. Every person is entitled to privacy regarding disclosure (Petronio, 2002). The holder of the information ought to be able to manage their information by choosing whether to disclose information or to keep the information private (Petronio, 2010). The holder can disclose private information to select individuals, anyone they meet, or to no one. Petronio (2010) discusses five principles regarding CPM. These principles are private information ownership, private information control, private information rules, shared ownership rules, and the violation of rules.

The first principle is private information ownership, which is rooted in the theory that some information is not easy to hide or keep private, while some information is easily concealed (Petronio, 2010). The distinction between types of information is not

based on any individual preferences, but, rather, on the inherent nature of the particular type of information. Quite simply, some information, by its nature, is easier to keep private than other information. An example of information that is not easy to hide is if someone has a medical appointment and the person did not want to disclose to anyone that he or she was visiting the hospital. However, if a friend saw the person at the hospital, the friend might tell others. By comparison, if the person knows a medical staff member working the day they visit, due to HIPAA regulations, the staff member cannot legally inform anyone of his or her hospital visit. Private information ownership has been studied in medical contexts, including how couples communicate about miscarriages and how medical staff disclose errors to their patients.

Bute and Brann (2015) studied ownership of information through the lens of miscarriages among couples. The researchers interviewed couples who experienced miscarriages and the couples shared their narratives explaining how and what information they disclosed and to whom. Many couples seriously contemplated how they would inform people they had a miscarriage. The concept of having to think before you speak is critical in this principle because there could be consequences associated with disseminating private information to people. Another example of private information ownership was studied by Petronio, Helft, and Child (2013), who described a case study that demonstrated the difficulty when medical staff might need to disclose an error. The authors' analysis determined that medical staff might be conflicted about protecting themselves versus their ethical responsibility to disclose mistakes (Petronio et al., 2013). Overall, principle one focuses on the owner's right to do what they want with their own information.

The second principle is private information control, which deals with the boundaries associated with information control (Petronio, 2010). Specifically, people choose to withhold or disclose information based on many factors. Moreover, there is a greater sense of perceived control when the boundaries are strong and barrier-like and lower perceived control when boundaries are fluid and open (Petronio, 2010). For example, a person may feel more confident disclosing information to someone with the trust that the person will not disclose to others.

Interestingly, these patterns can follow gender lines. For example, men tend to consult their partners for advice on how and when to disclose information, more often than women do (Bute & Brann, 2015). Consulting a person or people who possess shared experiences on how to communicate the experience can be beneficial to maintain control of the information. If people keep private information private, there is less chance for violation of expectations. Additionally, Smith and Brunner (2017) studied the disclosure of personal information in the workplace. Some participants had concerns that disclosing personal information would affect how they are viewed at work with one participant expressing their fear of information spreading. The comment by the participant reinforces the fear some people may have about disclosing information because the discloser no longer has absolute control of the information.

The third principle is private information rules. Whether people are aware of it or not, there are rules regarding private information. The rules can vary among cultures, societies, and even genders (Petronio, 2010). When a person chooses to disclose information, the discloser may expect the receiver to maintain privacy. The rules are

similar to the spread of gossip; a receiver of information may spread information to others without consultation or approval from the owner of the information.

Petronio (2010) notes that privacy management occurs in marriage and rules are developed regarding the couple's expectations and preferences concerning private information. An individual's rules and expectations for privacy management can first be learned through family at a very young age (Petronio, 2002). Specifically, children may observe and follow their parents' privacy management patterns. The rules are not always easy to follow or learn because expectations differ from person to person. The example of miscarriages is again instructive. When communicating about miscarriages, couples often said they had an instinctual feeling when it came to whom to disclose information and when to make such disclosures (Bute & Brann, 2015). These instinctual or gut feelings about whom to disclose information could be related to previous experience with the potential recipient. For example, if the discloser of the information has developed significant trust with the potential recipient, it is more likely that the privacy of the information will be maintained.

Principle number four involves the ownership of information once it is shared. This principle places value on the person who receives the information because the receiver is now considered a part-owner of the information (Petronio, 2010). Principle four is significant in family communication because private information is frequently shared within the family. The part-owner or owners of the information may have their own boundaries or expectations for deciding with whom to share the information, and those may differ from the boundaries or expectations possessed by the original owner of the information. An appropriate analogy for this principle is sharing a picture online on a

social media platform. Once the picture is on the platform, the picture falls into the hands of others, and people may look at the picture and move on and not share it, or people may share the photo on their own platform or another venue. The importance of principle four is that once information is disseminated, it is no longer just in the owner's control; once the toothpaste is out of the tube, it cannot be put back in.

Ownership rules can be coordinated, and this is common within marriages, as discussed in principle three (Petronio, 2010). Bute and Brann (2015) echo the co-ownership of privacy in their study where it is recognized that both partners are co-owners of the information regarding miscarriage. Most couples discussed with each other what details they want to share with others, and which details they wanted to keep private (Bute & Brann, 2015). In some cases, receivers of information may not feel that they own any part of the information. For example, Breshears and DiVerniero (2015) studied CPM within families where parents are same-sex couples. When adult children of same-sex couples were asked about their disclosure to others about their parents' sexual preferences, many participants felt they did not own the information, and it was not theirs to share with others. When it comes to private information sharing and ownership, the topic may influence if people consider themselves co-owners and feel it is their information to now share with others if they desire.

Principle five highlights a compelling fear many information holders maintain regarding the sharing of personal information: the violation of rules, expectations, or boundaries set in place. Although rules may be in place, the rules may be misunderstood or violated for various reasons (Petronio, 2010). Once the expectations are violated, the trust, or willingness to disclose confidential information again, may be compromised. For

example, if you disclose private information to someone you trust to not disclose to others, and the person disseminates your information to others, you may be less likely to confide in that person again. Inconsistencies in expectations among people regarding their privacy can make it challenging to manage the information (Petronio, 2010).

In a study done by Bute and Brann (2015), couples assumed that the information they shared was private, and, as a result, they felt their message was clear to not disclose to others. The way couples say disclose their information or who they disclose it to could impact their comfortability with the assumptions that the message should not be delivered to others. The five principles are interdependent and frequently overlap when discussing communication privacy management. To add, Kennedy-Lightsey, Martin, Thompson, Himes, and Clingerman (2012) found that ownership and rights to private disclosures are risky, and the risk of disclosure had a negative correlation with perceived co-ownership. Additionally, the length of friendship had an impact on the disclosure of information. Therefore, communication regarding disclosure is necessary to determine what outcomes are expected regarding sharing information. Scholars have noted that more research is needed surrounding the perception of privacy management within the family (Petronio, 2010).

The five principles of CPM can be used as a guide to further understand factors for disclosing, not disclosing, and managing private information. For this study, communication privacy management is used to gain a deeper understanding of CPM within newlyweds and expectations the newlyweds place upon their family and friends. This study will seek to answer questions related to disclosure of information about whether to choose to reproduce and what communication styles newlyweds utilize to

tackle questions related to reproduction and family expansion. To utilize CPM in this study, further analysis of newlywed norms, family formation, and factors influencing newlyweds to reproduce need to be explored.

Newlywed Norms

The first year of marriage is a time for couples to develop their norms. Couples' norms can be developed through their social and physical environments (Chadiha, Veroff, & Leber, 1998). A couple's social norms might derive from household living, such as domestic chores, the type, and quality of the interactions they have with their spouse, and the interactions couples have with their family and friends. Khalifian and Barry (2016) note that married couples communicate through interactions based on their environment. The researchers measured trust, attachment, intimacy, engagement, and values and found significant interactions between the variables measured, such as avoidant attachment and trust. Additionally, the physical location of jobs and activities or the setting of the couple's home (whether in an urban, suburban, or rural area) impacts the environment of a couple, and consequently, the quality and quantity of the interactions that impact their communication preferences.

Culture also has a demonstrable impact on newlywed couples and how they interact with each other and others in their lives (Chadiha et al., 1998). Culture can stem from more than family traditions, including where holidays are spent and the traditions that impact daily life. Culture can also be influenced by relatives. Newlyweds may base their readiness and willingness for reproduction based on family history and cultural norms within their family. Kadir, Fikree, Khan, and Sajan (2003) discussed the impact

mothers-in-law have on family planning. In the study, most mothers-in-laws wanted to have grandchildren and expressed their desire for grandchildren to the couple.

Additionally, relationship negotiation, which is similar to compromise in the sense that each person may benefit from an exchange of giving or taking something, occurs within the couple regarding the merger of their families, including parents, siblings, and other relatives (Chadiha et al., 1998). Relationship negotiation can be evident in CPM within principle five. As new people come into a person's circle, fear of disclosure, and misunderstanding of expectations regarding personal information can be experienced. Therefore, rules or expectations may be discussed or presented to mitigate the fear of wrongful disclosure. The willingness to disclose information can depend upon the characteristics of the people involved in the interaction.

Couples' norms are also influenced by individual roles within the relationship. Chavez (2015) discussed the findings that affect marital satisfaction, and how the roles each spouse undertakes influences the experiences of the marriage. Couples' roles can include work, household chores, and other commitments the individual partner considers a priority. Roles in the relationship can also affect the trust and intimacy in the marriage. Intimacy is essential for a healthy relationship (Khalifian & Barry, 2016). The responsibilities each spouse undertakes can affect the balance of the norms. Therefore, it may take a while for couples to develop their "norm" and strategies for living that work for their marriage, and these norms may change as variables within the relationship change. For example, if one member of the couple switches jobs, or takes on significantly more responsibility in an existing job, this change could alter the norms experienced by the couple collectively.

Also, many newlywed couples are living together on their own for the first time. Through the experience of living with another person, not only are relationship roles emerging, conflict negotiation becomes a necessity within the relationship. Kurdek (1991) says that conflict negotiation can include compromising on differences. Davis (2006) echoed that conflict negotiation occurs in the newlywed relationship and expands through the study signifying that verbal communication is used most often when making decisions. Couples develop routines and discover their “normal” as a newly formed family. Through family dynamics and information exchange, communication privacy management theory can be applied to learn about how the conflict negotiation occurs and what information is exchanged.

An important aspect of a successful marriage is healthy communication (Khalifan & Barry, 2016). Healthy communication is fluid and looks different from relationship to relationship. Despite these differences, open communication tends to be the preferred method (Goldsmith & Domann-Scholz, 2013). Studies have shown that open communication is vital to a happy, long-lasting relationship (Caughlin, 2003; Goldsmith & Domann-Scholz, 2013; Katriel & Philipsen, 1981). Specifically, Goldsmith and Domann-Scholz (2013) found that open communication can have a great impact in difficult times that could affect the couple. The study found that in events of urgency, such as cardiac events in the hospital, transparency and openness lead to greater relationship satisfaction. Open communication can include refraining from keeping secrets from others (Afifi, Caughlin, & Afifi, 2007). However, based on norms developed before marriage, these preferences are often influenced by our families. Thus, individuals

may consciously (or subconsciously) take on similar roles that their parents undertook in the household.

Between finding norms, negotiating norms, learning adequate communication strategies, and many other challenges, couples have a lot on their plate. The norms within the relationship have shifted and are no longer always the stereotypical roles of a homemaker wife and a working husband. The roles continue to change, and every couple has different roles. Given all of these changes and potential adaptations, it is easy to see that expanding the couples' new family might not be the top priority after marriage.

Family Formation

Family formation is a topic studied under the umbrella of reproduction. Within studies regarding family formation, couples were asked what gender they prefer their child to be, and the gender preferences of a child are explored (Sensibaugh & Yarab, 1997). It is worth noting that little exploration has occurred surrounding family formation preferences, and the communication surrounding perceived and desired preferences for the couple. Starrels and Holm (2000), studied family formation regarding expectations adolescents have regarding marriage and children, and the expectations mothers have for their children. The study found that parents and their children had similar attitudes regarding the expected age of marriage and the desirability of having a child by the age of 24 years old. However, there is a lack of research surrounding the preferences couples possess regarding when to reproduce after marriage.

The assumption regarding couples having and wanting children begins at an early age, according to Ashburn-Nardo (2016). The societal and familial culture of childbearing can stem from parents socializing their children to want to become parents,

and this socialization can occur at any age and is not always a conscious effort. Exposure of the desire to have children and the desire of parenthood can be seen when children play “house” and take on adult, parent roles through play. The societal norms continue throughout life resulting in negative perceived effects of delaying having children or deciding against having children.

Duvander, Fahlén, Brandén, and Ohlsson-Wijk (2019) explored and discussed how women becoming financially independent has created a shift in roles and expectations regarding marriage and childbirth. The increase in gender equality has driven a push toward the delay of children and even voluntary childlessness. Also, Ashburn-Nardo (2016) examined the morality of parenthood and how adults are stigmatized regarding their voluntary childfree decision.

Moreover, their decision to forgo parenthood, arguably individuals’ most personal choice, evoked moral outrage—anger, disgust, and disapproval.... they [women and men participants] were perceived as leading less fulfilling lives than do people who had chosen to have children (p. 398).

The study shows that societal stigmatization can put pressure on couples to reproduce. The findings, based on the perception of voluntary childless couples, solidify the importance of this study. In turn, couples who chose not to have children are stigmatized, and there are assumptions that those who choose not to reproduce will lead unsatisfying lives (Ashburn-Nardo, 2016). The stigma may be conveyed by close family, friends, co-workers, relatives, and even people the couple does not know, such as the community at large. The people stigmatizing those without children, assume children bring joy into

others' lives. The stigmatization can lead to greater impacts, such as reproductive coercion.

One particular study looked at the effects reproductive coercion has on young couples' parenting behaviors and how it affects child development. The results showed that reproductive coercion could negatively impact the behavior of parents. Specifically, parental capability was negatively affected once the child was born. (Willie, Alexander, Amutah-Onukagha, & Kershaw, 2019). The study showed no indication of reproductive coercion adversely affecting child development. However, reproductive coercion can put a strain on the behaviors and relationships of the adults.

Morgan and King (2001) discuss an important factor related to marriage and family formation. The researchers note that marriage, in general, and the decision of whom to marry, is no longer as frequently subjected to the heavy influence of family members and friends. In the past, marriage was considered more permanent. Now, marriage has transitioned into a free relationship where each partner has the autonomy to enter or leave the relationship. However, the parent-child relationship has not shifted from the heavy influence of the family. On the contrary, the relationship and desires expressed regarding whether and when to have children are still heavily influenced by family and societal norms. To supplement that discussion, Morgan and King (2001) also connected the social coercion of parenthood to the lack of privacy and intimacy the couple has regarding reproduction. Reproduction has become a social act instead of a private act (Morgan & King, 2001). While sexual health and sexual wellbeing are topics that are no longer taboo, the desire to reproduce has also become a social topic. The question of, "when are you going to have kids?" has now become commonplace.

Managing and disclosing sensitive information can be difficult to balance and discussing private information can pose risks. Motto (2018) noted the difficulties in teaching children and young adults about privacy management. The topic of sexual reproduction is a difficult one. Niess (2014) found that most parents preferred an open communication style when talking with their adolescent children about sex. Afifi et al. (2007) discussed that family members prefer when secrets are not kept, especially if the secrets involve personal health because the lack of disclosure of this critical information can be detrimental and could, in certain circumstances, pose serious health issues. Sex is still considered a private act. However, society may be intruding on the lack of privacy surrounding reproduction. The private values, ideologies, or secrets people hold on to can be difficult to disclose. The topic of disclosure circles back to communication privacy management theory.

Reproductive coercion of any kind can be harmful. According to Grace and Anderson (2016), reproductive coercion affects a woman's ability to make sound decisions about reproduction. Reproductive coercion is an umbrella term that includes tampering of birth control, pregnancy coercion, or performing other acts to attempt to control a pregnancy outcome (Park et al., 2015). Grace and Anderson's (2016) review found that no studies had a primary focus specifically on pregnancy coercion. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if the societal pressure regarding reproduction on newlyweds falls under the reproductive coercion umbrella. Reproductive coercion has been widely studied from a partner violence perspective, rather than the societal and familial influence of pressuring newlyweds to have children (Park et al., 2016).

The pressure family members put on couples to reproduce can be very influential on the couples' decision. Kadir et al. (2003) studied mothers-in-law and their influence on family formation and pregnancy decisions in Pakistan. The researchers found that husbands and their mothers tend to oppose family planning more often than the wife. Specifically, the research found that mothers-in-law expressed more desire for grandchildren than the son's wife (her daughter-in-law). The communicated desire of mothers-in-law wanting more children can affect the woman and the couple's decision regarding family expansion. This desire of family wanting couples to reproduce can lead to the couple giving in to the pressure, rebelling against the pressure, or it can result in conflict within the relationship. This study will explore the communication surrounding the influence immediate family members have on the newlywed couple.

Factors Influencing the Decision to Have Children

Marriages and relationships were heavily influenced by external factors such as family decisions in the past (Duvander et al., 2019; Morgan & King, 2001). In past generations, parents were involved in the process of selecting partners for their children to court and wed (Morgan & King, 2001). The influence of parents and relatives helping decide their children's spouse has declined greatly in industrialized countries, due in large part to changes in family dynamics (Duvander et al., 2019). The influence parents have on their children is strengthened through societal norms (Morgan & King, 2001). Through the influence parents exert on children, even as adults, children can feel like they should seek approval of their parents, even well into adulthood. However, there is little research to connect the influence parents have on newlyweds to reproduce.

Another topic to critically examine as a factor influencing newlyweds to have children is the assumption of reproduction among newlyweds. Sormunen, Aanesen, Fossum, Karlgren, and Westerbotn (2017) said, “Reproduction and childbirth are central parts of human life. Women and men look forward to parenthood and many take it for granted” (p. e335). The quote sheds light on the stereotype people have regarding people of childbearing age. For some people, parenthood is not desired, and for others, it may not even be possible. It can be easily assumed through social norms that people want and should have children.

One such barrier to reproduction is infertility. Infertility can occur in men or women, and it affects natural conception, and, in some cases, makes biological children an impossibility. When couples communicate about family expansion to others, infertility may be a difficult fact to discuss. Sormunen et al. (2017) found that most women did not explicitly discuss infertility results with people not in their immediate family. Some women did not even want to discuss the fact that they were having difficulty conceiving with others. When discussing infertility with their partner, Bevilacqua, Barad, Youchah, & Witt (2000) found that quality communication within the couple was the most helpful to maintain hope and to feel supported. The communication boundaries set between family and friends as opposed to a person’s spouse are important, especially when considering communication privacy management.

In addition to infertility, women can also suffer miscarriages. Within the context of miscarriage, couples may suffer grief, women suffer from unpleasant physical experiences, and other psychological effects may arise within both members of the couple (Bute & Brann, 2015). When discussing miscarriage with others, the topic may

feel taboo or uncomfortable to share details, and, consequently, managing privacy is imperative during this time (Bute & Brann, 2015). Couples may also have a difficult time navigating the experience because of shared grief. However, the fact that the physical experience of having a miscarriage cannot be shared can adversely affect how the couple shares the emotions surrounding the miscarriage. Some men indicated they did not know if they should discuss their miscarriage with others because they did not physically experience it (Bute & Brann, 2015). In general, couples may or may not disclose miscarriages and infertility to those that are not close to them.

The communication surrounding infertility and miscarriages can be theorized through CPM. Additionally, the influence family, friends, and relatives exert on couples can influence a couple's decision on expanding their family. Moreover, culture, environment, norms, and expectations play roles in the decision of family expansion. To communicate about these factors, the theory of communication privacy management creates a way to theorize and analyze how and why couples communicate about family expansion the way they do.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do newlyweds discuss, as a couple, and to others, their plans on family expansion?

RQ2: How do newlyweds use private information ownership when discussing family expansion?

RQ3: How do newlyweds use private information control when discussing family expansion?

RQ4: What kind of private information rules or expectations do newlyweds have when discussing family expansion?

RQ5: What value do newlyweds place on sharing private information?

RQ6: How do newlyweds manage the violation of private information sharing?

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Through the investigation of previous research, the six research questions provide a guide to the study. This chapter will discuss the qualitative methods used to collect and analyze the research questions that arose from the review of literature. The research questions are set up to be answered through in-depth interviews.

Additionally, the sample, instrumentation, and procedures for analysis are discussed.

Procedure

Naturalistic research focuses on data that examines reality based on societal expectations (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). This type of research can be beneficial to gather and interpret data regarding family expansion preferences among newlyweds. Additionally, this research aids in the examination of communication styles experienced among newlyweds discussing family expansion. A majority of the literature review consists of the social culture, norms, and expectations placed upon newlyweds with respect to family formation.

Interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the newlyweds' socially constructed view of reality regarding the issue presented in order to gather insight from newlywed couples on their experiences with family formation and expansion. The interviews were conducted through a semi-structured interview, guided with posed questions and optional probing questions, depending on the direction of the conversation. The interview guide, located in Appendix B, contained questions asked of newlyweds that could answer the six research questions posed in chapter two. The interview questions followed a critical incident technique where

participants were asked to recall instances where they were asked about family expansion. The critical incident technique allows for narratives about specific social contexts (Frey et al., 2000). This technique permitted the researcher to gain an in-depth and rich understanding of the experiences newlyweds encounter while discussing family expansion and reproduction. Additionally, hypothetical questions were posed to gain an insight as to what the participants might do in a certain situation if they had not been presented with the situation already.

The interviews were conducted via Zoom, which is a face-to-face online video conferencing service. The capabilities of Zoom allowed for recording and transcribing of interviews. However, it should be noted that the researcher had to transcribe interviews on occasion due to technical difficulties. Additionally, through the use of this technology, couples from across the United States were able to participate. Using a platform that allowed video conferencing, the researcher was able to view and assess non-verbal cues. By using Zoom instead of in-person face-to-face interviews, participants could remain in the comfort of their home. The importance of privacy is discussed throughout the interview, reassuring the participants that they were in a comfortable and private environment, which led to a more honest dialogue, as participants were able to disclose information that they might not want to disclose in a public setting.

Sample

The sample consisted of 10 newlywed couples, for a total of 20 participants. The 20 participants all identified as heterosexual couples. Therefore, the participants consisted of 10 females and 10 males. The ages of each participant ranged from 22

years old to 50 years old, with a mean age of 26.4 years old. All couples had been married for five years or less, which was a necessary control to maintain the integrity of the “newlywed” label. The length of marriage among the participants varied from the most recent marriage of three months to the longest marriage of 45 months. The mean length of marriage was 18 months. Each couple was interviewed simultaneously, as opposed to separately. This was important to ensure consistency of responses. Each couple also had no biological, step, adopted, or other children. Table 1 contains the 10 couples’ pseudonyms, ages, and the number of months they were married at the time of the interview. Interviews were conducted between March 5, 2020 and March 29, 2020.

Table 1

Research Participant’s Demographics

Couple	Age (in years)	Months Married
Alan & Betty	Alan – 24	8
	Betty – 23	
Ned & Evelyn	Ned – 50	18
	Evelyn – 29	
Mark & Emily	Mark – 24	3
	Emily – 23	
Travis & Annie	Travis – 26	8
	Annie – 24	
Phil & Kayla	Phil – 25	36
	Kayla – 24	
Dick & Jane	Dick – 26	45
	Jane – 27	
Liam & Carrie	Liam – 27	8
	Carrie – 25	

Kevin & Catie	Kevin – 24	7
	Catie – 24	
Jim & Pam	Jim – 28	42
	Pam – 29	
Joe & Carole	Joe – 23	5
	Carole – 22	

The sample participants were obtained through social media with the specific qualifications of couples being able to interview together, having no children, and being married in the past five years. The researcher sought participants via social media, specifically Facebook, with posts on the researcher's personal page as well as several Facebook groups. In order to maintain participants' privacy regarding reproduction and family expansion, the researcher did not personally contact individuals who were assumed to meet these qualifications. This procedure ensured people did not feel obligated to share why they could not or would not participate (i.e., not revealing pregnancy to the public). The Facebook posts asked prospective participants to email the researcher regarding interest in participating. The researcher sent an email with a demographic survey for each participant to complete as well as the informed consent document. Once the demographic surveys were returned, to ensure requirements of newlywed status, email correspondence was used to determine a date and time to conduct the interview.

Instrumentation

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured protocol to collect data. Frey et al. (2000) describe how semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in the interview, which encourages follow-up or probing questions not posed in the interview

guide. The interviews ranged from 11 minutes to 37 minutes in duration. The use of probing and the semi-structured interview questions permitted the participants to expand on certain topics that might not have arisen in interviews with other participants. As stated previously, the semi-structured interview consisted of questions that can be found in Appendix B. The answers participants gave to the interview questions allowed the researcher to gather and compile answers to respond to the research questions posed in this study. For example, one interview question and probing question was: “Do you believe that family expansion/reproduction is a private topic?” and “Do you feel it is important to disclose information regarding reproduction?”

The researcher conducted the interviews without the assistance of another interviewer. This allowed the researcher to be fully knowledgeable about events within the interview and allowed for more seamless analysis of the data. Additionally, the harmony between the interviewer and the interviewee is critical (Frey et al., 2000). Therefore, the interaction between the participants and the researcher allowed for more personal conversation and comprehension of the study. Although the researcher did not know all of the participants, the participants that had personal knowledge of the researcher provided more detailed answers than others, which yielded more detailed and comprehensive answers to the questions.

Analysis

The interviews were recorded using the platform Zoom. The majority of recorded interviews were also transcribed via Zoom, with the researcher editing the text. The researcher transcribed three of the ten interviews in order to analyze data in a timely manner. The first step in the analysis was to read through the transcriptions until the

researcher was familiar with the data. Because the researcher did all interviewing and transcribing, the immersion into the data was a smooth process. To code the data, the researcher cross-listed the interview questions with the research questions. The questions were also correlated with a CPM principle to demonstrate how the research questions and interview questions corresponded to the five CPM principles. Then, a thematic analysis was performed to the point of saturation. Throughout this process, themes that surfaced among the responses were recorded until the categories were extensive and comprehensive (Frey et al., 2000).

To ensure reliability, the researcher used inter-coder reliability. A volunteer in the communication discipline analyzed the researcher's codes by completing a thematic analysis of data from interviews to ensure responses were coded similarly. The number of times the researcher and volunteer agreed on the placement of data in the codebook was determined by a percentage ($[\text{agreement}/\text{total}] * 100$). The coders consistently coded data at 93%. Discrepancies were discussed and were noted that more context was needed to describe the situation.

The themes that emerged during analysis guided the results and discussion. The methodology allowed the researcher to gather responses that directly answer the research questions, which correlate directly with the five principles of communication privacy management theory. The next chapter presents the results of the study, including examples of data and findings that emerged throughout the interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This chapter presents the findings from the ten conducted interviews using thematic analysis. The participants were asked if they would prefer a pseudonym or if the researcher should assign a random name to their answers from the interview to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. The thematic analysis was guided by six research questions, which included:

RQ1: How do newlyweds discuss, as a couple, and to others, their plans on family expansion?

RQ2: How do newlyweds use private information ownership when discussing family expansion?

RQ3: How do newlyweds use private information control when discussing family expansion?

RQ4: What kind of private information rules or expectations do newlyweds have when discussing family expansion?

RQ5: What value do newlyweds place on sharing private information?

RQ6: How do newlyweds manage the violation of private information sharing?

Through the interview process, data was collected to answer each of the research questions. The overall theme of the research questions was to ascertain how newlyweds use communication privacy management when discussing family expansion. The first question establishes the immediate conversation of family expansion. The remaining questions address the five communication privacy management principles. Additionally, throughout the interviews, participants discussed factors that were not directly included in

the research questions, but are still germane to the topic of newlywed family formation and expansion. The themes are presented in the results below with respect to each research question as well as additional themes that arose throughout the interviews. All participants' names have been changed to maintain confidentiality. The demographic information of the participants can be found in Table 1 in Chapter 3.

Newlywed Discussion on Family Expansion

In order to answer RQ1, participants disclosed their preferences for expanding their family. Of the ten couples interviewed, two couples indicated they had no desire to have children. Of the two couples not wanting children, one of the couples indicated the male partner, Ned, was involuntarily sterile due to cancer treatments. However, the sterilization of Ned was not a deterrent to having children. Specifically, Evelyn (Ned's wife) described her affinity to his sterilization saying, "It's nice that he's sterile." Evelyn mentioned that she did not want kids before she met Ned and that it worked out for the better that he was unable to reproduce naturally. The male partner, Phil, of the other couple that did not desire children voluntarily, underwent a vasectomy. When specifically asked about their conversation surrounding family expansion, Phil's wife, Kayla, said:

Yeah, we talked about it and we felt that there is just too much mental illness on both sides of our family. So, while he was still in the army, he got a vasectomy, so it's completely off the table.

To describe why the two couples were choosing not to have children, Evelyn and Kayla used phrases such as "not very maternal," and "we are contributing more to society by not having children." They further discussed variables such as having a double income and being a good aunt and uncle to their nieces and nephews. On the other hand, eight of

the couples indicated a preference and a desire to have children. When asked about plans for family expansion, seven couples used phrases such as: “at some point,” “eventually we will start trying,” “maybe in another year or so,” and “there’s no rush.” Of the eight couples, one couple disclosed that they had been trying to get pregnant and were pregnant in January 2019, but ultimately suffered a miscarriage early in the pregnancy.

Discussion of family expansion between the couple When couples were asked about their conversations with each other regarding family expansion, all ten couples indicated that they discussed plans regarding family expansion with each other prior to marriage. When asked when the family expansion conversation began, three couples mentioned their marriage preparation counseling/classes through their Catholic religion. Other participants indicated that family expansion was brought up during their time dating or through knowing siblings or friends that were expecting children. A few couples discussed a specific range of time when family expansion was first brought up in their relationship. The family expansion discussion ranged anywhere from six months to one year into dating. One common topic referenced in the discussion of family expansion by some participants was the number of children the couple desired and the fact that the amount was not always agreed upon by both members of the couple. Specifically, three couples indicated that they differed on the number of children they wanted. However, all individuals within each couple expressed their mutual desire for expanding their family or not expanding their family; there were no examples of one spouse wanting children, while the other wished to remain childfree.

Discussion of family expansion to others During the interview, couples were asked if they shared their plans for family expansion with others. When couples indicated

they shared with others, most stated that they did not disclose to many others. For example, three couples said they have only talked about family expansion a little bit with their parents and not at all with friends. One couple, Phil and Kayla, mentioned that they had not discussed with his family what their plans are at all. When the researcher asked why the couple did not communicate their desires, Phil said, “because of how unaccepting they will be. It would be the fact of not having grandkids. I make the last of my name.” Another couple said that both of their families bring up family expansion and children more often than the couple does. Other couples said they do not discuss it in depth or at length, but their families are aware of the couples’ plan. Finally, one couple said they only joke about it with friends saying, “among friends we kind of joke like when will someone be pregnant because then we have a guaranteed DD (designated driver), as silly as that sounds.” The couples’ thoughts about sharing and disclosing information to family and friends were discussed later in the interview and is addressed in RQ2 and RQ3.

Private Information Ownership

RQ2 connects with CPM principle 1: whether or not to disclose information. All ten couples internally discussed family expansion and reproduction before marriage. Additionally, when couples were asked, “have you been asked about your plans for family expansion or reproduction by family, friends, coworkers, or other people?” All ten females answered that they had been asked questions or received comments regarding their decision to have children. Nine of the males said that they had received questions or comments about their plans on having children. When the couples were asked what kind of responses they give to people who ask about their plans for reproducing, three of the

male participants said they answer with a joking response. For example, Travis said, “I like to respond with Thursday. Oh, when are you going to have a kid? Thursday. When are you going to start trying? Thursday. I like to stutter step them a little.” In another response, Jim stated, “I like to divert a little bit and I’ll say we got a new Roomba vacuum. So, we are starting there and then maybe we will get a dog, and then maybe we will get a kid. Other than my parents or close friends, I don’t need to share with anybody.” A few female participants indicated that they will discuss and reveal information to their own mother, but they give everyone else that asks the same answer. For example, Pam said, “oh when it happens, it happens.” Annie indicated that she does not want to share information about her plans for reproduction with others. Other participants said they like to give a general answer such as “no, we aren’t going to do that,” “we are just waiting to get settled,” or “we don’t know yet.”

Private Information Control

When couples responded to questions about revealing information regarding family expansion to others and boundaries, answers varied widely. However, six couples indicated a preference to disclose information to family members. Of those six couples, three of the females indicated that they would be hesitant to reveal information, mainly regarding attempts to conceive, because of the fear of a “surprise” being ruined when announcing pregnancy. To that end, Ned said, “even if I get mildly offended, I throw the cancer survivor card in there, on the table as a hey, shut up.” In contrast, his wife Evelyn said, “I’m not shy about it, I’m not maternal.” In addition, Kayla, who does not plan on having children, said, “I just tell everyone he’s snipped already and they just drop it.” However, Kayla’s mother-in-law is unaware of their desire to not have children. Phil

mentioned that he and Kayla are not ready to tell Phil's mother because she will attempt to influence the decision by imparting "super southern, Christian, and traditional values."

Travis indicated that he would have to really think about how he answered the question, even indicating that he preferred to say, "it's none of your damn business." Pam, who suffered through the grief of a miscarriage, added, "We're not comfortable sharing that information with a whole lot of people." While concealing a miscarriage early in the pregnancy may be easier to hide from others, Annie and Carole mention the difficulty in concealing whether they are pregnant or not when it comes to drinking cocktails. Carole said that family members noticed her drinking at Christmas and commented that she must not be pregnant. Annie and Carole are concerned about maintaining their privacy when they do not drink alcohol because they are pregnant and people will find out.

Private Information Rules

Petronio (2010) noted that the influence of rules and expectations vary among individuals and factors such as culture and family. In regard to rules about shared private information within communication about reproduction, several participants indicated that they did not mind if family or friends disclosed their current situation. Four couples indicated that they would expect boundaries and privacy if they had trouble getting pregnant. Three participants among the four couples specifically mentioned they would not feel comfortable with using social media as a method of letting others know about troubles conceiving or infertility because of the wide audience that necessarily is included. Some participants said they would expressly let others know they did not want information to be shared. To that end, one participant, Betty, said, "I would tell them if it

was something I didn't want them to share, I would let them know, just keep it between us." Carole and Joe simply assumed that discussion with family members would not be shared. In contrast, Emily and Mark said they would not tell anyone anything about their plans for reproduction until they are at least three months pregnant, in order to avoid any violation of their privacy.

Value of Sharing Private Information

When couples were asked if they believed that family expansion/reproduction is a private topic, answers were not clear cut for some participants. Three couples said they prefer the topic to be private. Four couples indicated that it varies from person to person and there is no right or wrong answer to if the topic is private. For example, Jim said,

There's not an all-encompassing answer to that. That has to come down to you and what your experience has been. Some people are very open about it, or they're comfortable telling them, "oh yeah I had three miscarriages, and that sucked," or whatever and it's where we're at. Where we are not comfortable sharing a lot of information with a whole lot of people. So, it just comes down to each person and couple and how they feel about that stuff.

Jim's wife, Pam, said, "I'm open about the miscarriage but private about the details of what happened and what we have been through." Dick, a 26-year-old male said, he does not think family expansion has to be a private topic but added that it is important to "tread lightly" with those that may be struggling to get pregnant. Phil, a 25-year old participant that does not want kids, said that he wishes more people talked about family expansion because they might take an objective look at it and there would be a lot less families. He also discusses with others how the cons of having kids outweigh the pros.

The remaining three couples said that they are open with sharing their journey of family expansion with family and close friends and it does not have to be entirely private.

Managing the Violation of Private Information Sharing

Couples were asked about what their reaction might be if others shared their private information. Three couples said they would directly address the issue and ask the people revealing their information to stop. One of the three couples said they would trace the path of disclosure to end the chain in order to maintain as much privacy as possible. Another participant said, “I’d fill them with a bunch of bullshit and see how far it spreads.” The participant said this to make the gossiper feel embarrassed about spreading information. Three other couples said that they do not mind sharing information, so they would not feel that any of rules would be violated. Two couples said they would just not disclose any information at all; therefore, no expectations could be violated. Finally, the remaining two couples said they would establish more clear guidelines.

Pregnancy Pressure

Participants were asked about pressure from outside influences in the interview. Pregnancy pressure has been studied from viewpoints of societal influence, reproductive coercion, and family influence (Ashburn-Nardo, 2016; Grace & Anderson 2016; Kadir et al., 2003). Two couples expressed they felt impacted by societal pressure because according to Mark, “society expects you to have kids after you are married.” Four couples said they experienced pressure through family influence via jokes or comments. Kayla said,

Oh yes, especially when he was deployed. He just came back from deployment and I went to see his family alone for Christmas, and it was pretty frequent that they would drop hints about having a baby or when we are going to have a baby. Three couples expressed they did not feel pressure, but they noticed comments or felt a step behind from their friends who were married and already had children. Two couples indicated that family members, specifically a parent, made comments that they did not wish for grandchild right away and it would be beneficial for the couple to wait. Kevin, whose mother-in-law expressed her desire for the couple to wait, indicated that he wished his mother-in-law did not feel that way and hoped she would be excited for grandchildren. Lastly, Ned commented that his age had reduced the pressure to have children. He said,

No, not between Evelyn and I. I think it's a benefit of being a little older. People realize that if I were a father to a child right now – the age I would be when the child actually became a man or a woman, I would be too old to have input when it's most important and I think people understand that. The first time I got married earlier when I was 35 and without [kids] there was a little bit more pressure – people asking, sticking their nose where it didn't belong.

Ned and Evelyn noticed a generational mindset among people where older generations care more about asking questions related to reproduction. Ned said he understands their investment into the topic to continue the family heritage. Kayla added that older women in their 70s questioned their preference to not have children based on the comfort of children taking care of their parents when they are older. Kayla disagreed saying her and Ned prefer trained professionals to take care of them and would not have put the task of

caretaking on their kids. Kayla also noted her observation of the millennial generation being more open to career-driven couples.

Factors Influencing Reproduction

Factors outside of pregnancy pressure also influenced couples' decisions to have children. For five of the couples, one preference to wait to have children was based on finances and a desire to be in a more financially stable situation. One participant, Claire struggled with self-conflict of prioritizing her career first over being a mom. Betty and Alan discussed how Alan is still in school and Betty mentioned, "don't want to put the baby on the student loan." Betty and Alan also mentioned their preference to be in a more desirable geographic location before being in a position to raise children, specifically they wanted to reside in a preferred school district by the time the children are school-aged. Another factor for the couple was that they did not live together before marriage and they are enjoying time living together and figuring out their new lifestyle. A choice for four of the couples was to enjoy their time as a married couple. Specifically, Betty and Annie expressed plans they were involved in for the near future, for which they did not want to be pregnant for, such as involvement in weddings. In addition to those four couples, two couples mentioned their desire to travel without children as a newlywed couple. Though some couples desired to wait, two participants pointed out that they want their kids to be friends with their friends' kids and most of their friends have already had their first child. Carrie specifically mentioned a friend suggesting her and Liam should "wait for the next wave of children."

One couple, married for 3.5 years, felt they were ready for the next step in their family. However, difficulty in conception was the biggest factor affecting their plans for

reproduction. Although plans of how couples will have kids was never discussed, half of the couples expressed they were open to options such as adoption and in-vitro-fertilization (IVF), if unable to conceive naturally. Conversely, one couple that did not want children indicated that the physical aspect of being pregnant did not appeal to her, saying, “it’s just like this little parasite and I don’t like it.” Both couples that preferred to not have kids mentioned their awareness of not wanting family genetics to be passed on. Additionally, couple Phil and Kayla said they have seen marriages crumble through the addition of children. Although marriage is looked to before having children, Travis mentioned, “a marriage certificate means nothing in regard to having kids.” Pam mentioned that getting married was more of a technicality and the next step in their relationship, after dating for 13-14 years was to have children.

Questions About Family Expansion

Several couples discussed examples of questions or comments they received throughout their time dating or married to their partner. Six couples mentioned that they expect questions regarding family expansion because of their age and newly married status. For example, Jane said, “everyone gives you that year and then begins to ask... they want to know the next thing.” When Phil and Kayla are asked questions about their desire to not have children, people infer that the couple will change their mind when they get older. Evelyn had a similar experience where husband Ned questioned her for a few years before they got married to ensure she would not change her mind to have children. Annie has had a few different experiences when comments are made about her and Travis’ plan for family expansion. Annie mentioned that she has felt flattered by comments from her dad when he displayed his excitement about future grandchildren.

However, in her workplace, a co-worker expressed discontent for Annie to get pregnant during their busy season at work. Specifically, the co-worker said, “keep your damn legs closed.” Claire experienced similar negativity from others in regard to requesting she wait to have children. Her mother expressed her desire to wait to have children. Her mother also assumes that Claire and Kevin will have a lot of children based on their religion.

When participants were asked their feelings toward others asking about their plans for reproduction, Pam mentioned the awkwardness surrounding the directness of the question, “hey, are you guys having sex?” Annie also felt awkward and added, “what do people think they’re going to get as a response when they ask? We’re hoping it will stick!” Phil and Kayla recalled their first experience of being asked about plans for reproducing. It came from Phil’s family after the announcement of Phil and Kayla’s elopement. Phil’s family assumed that Kayla was “knocked up” because they eloped.

Overall, the data from the 10 interviews provided quality content to gain a further understanding of how newlyweds use communication privacy management when discussing family expansion. Using the theory of CPM in this study provides a lens to further research communication about family expansion preferences. Other themes such as pregnancy pressure, factors influencing reproduction, and questions about family expansion emerged, which was anticipated based on the literature review in Chapter Two. The next section, Chapter Five, contains the discussion to link the literature review and results to connect the data to previous research and findings. Additionally, the limitations of this study and suggestions for the future direction of research will be discussed.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Without the candid and in-depth discussion participants provided during the course of their interviews, answers to the six research questions would have been impossible. Although it is not contained in the audio recording, many participants posed follow up questions about the study after the interview, and all expressed gratitude to the researcher for shining light on a topic that can be difficult for newlyweds to navigate. The following discussion uses the results from the data demonstrated in Chapter Four to further connect the link between communication privacy management theory and how newlyweds communicate about family expansion preferences.

Throughout the analysis of the data, the researcher discovered that all couples are unique when they discuss family expansion preferences, and no two couples are the same when it comes to how they communicate about family expansion. However, through the use of the theory of communication privacy management, this study provides a lens to further research communication about family expansion preferences. The following discussion will focus on the six research questions, how they relate to CPM, and how participants' responses provide answers to the research questions. Additionally, the limitations of this study and suggestions for the future direction of research are discussed.

RQ1: Newlywed Discussion on Family Expansion

The overarching question guiding the study is how do newlyweds communicate about their preferences for family expansion? Several studies have attempted to answer questions about communicating with respect to miscarriage, family relationships, disclosure of illness, and many other studies within CPM (Bute & Brann, 2015; Petronio,

2007; Petronio, 2010). However, the combination of newly formed marriages, along with the couple's preferences for reproduction and accompanying disclosure has not been studied. Therefore, in order to answer research questions that pertain to CPM, an understanding of the communication preferences and process must be critically examined

Discussion of family expansion between the couple As Goldsmith & Domann-Scholz (2013) noted, healthy, open communication may not look the same in every relationship. However, this study showed that all ten couples communicated desires for family expansion preferences prior to getting married. The significance of 100% of the couples communicating these desires demonstrates the value they place on open communication and potentially the value family expansion has on their future.

Specifically, participant Emily said, "I think there needs to be communication between the husband and wife, whether they themselves want to have kids or not because I think that is a very big conversation, especially in a marriage." Emily's quote underscores the importance that she and Mark had shared beliefs pertaining to family expansion.

Additionally, all couples agreed on their mutual decisions whether or not to even have children. Specifically, eight of the 10 couples interviewed wanted children and the remaining wanted to remain childfree.

The two couples that preferred to have a childfree family disclosed several reasons why they did not want children. Morison et al. (2013) found that the choice to be childfree by some women can be described as a right and a wise lifestyle choice. The two couples in this study disclosed that they enjoyed dual incomes and traveling. Kayla said, "I could blame it on a bunch of different things, like climate change and the economy." In addition, Kayla and Evelyn, the two female participants who did not want children,

discussed that they did not want to pass on genetics to prospective children. One illness that can be passed through genetics is mental illnesses. Depending on the type of illness, the diagnosis can depend on a combination of genetics and environment (Genetics Work Group, 1997). Additionally, according to the World Health Organization (2001), at some point in their lifetime, one in four people will be affected by a mental or neurological disorder. Factors like these have Kayla and Phil concerned about reproducing and mentioned their fear of passing on mental illness to children.

Lee & Zvonkovic (2014) studied the decision-making process in voluntarily childfree couples. The authors noted that while interviewing 20 couples, when one partner declared his or her preference or desire to not have children, the message was received positively by the partner, and the decision-making process was short. Evelyn indicated that she actually preferred her husband was sterile, "It's nice that he's sterile." Since she did not want kids, it became an easier conversation for her and Ned because reproducing naturally was not an option. In addition to preferring a childfree family, Phil and Kayla discussed the topic of children repeatedly throughout their relationship to reaffirm that neither couple had the desire to reproduce. Based on Ned, Evelyn, Kayla, and Phil's responses, the findings from Lee & Zvonkovic (2014) indicate similarity.

While two couples wanted to forego family expansion through children, eight couples wanted to expand their family through the addition of children. Seven of the eight couples that want children made no indication that they had already started trying to get pregnant. The preference to wait to have children could be due to several factors such as body insecurity or focusing on careers (Jannese, 2016; Simon, 2016). Accordingly, Carole mentioned that their pregnancy prevention plan was natural family planning. She

admitted that this plan, while not the most reliable form of pregnancy prevention, was what they were using. The only couple that disclosed to the interviewer that they were trying to conceive was Jim and Pam. As the examples clearly demonstrate, the couples approach the decision about when and how to conceive children differently.

Discussion of family expansion to others Disclosure of information regarding family expansion was not a common trend among the newlyweds. Petronio (2002) stated that everyone has a right to their own privacy regarding disclosure. When the participants were asked about discussing family expansion to others, only three couples indicated that they had spoken about it with their parents. One couple, Liam and Carrie, disclosed to the interviewer that their families bring up the topic of reproduction more often than the couple does. The influence Carrie and Liam's family have on their family expansion values and ideas could bring influence onto Carrie and Liam. Another couple, Phil and Kayla, said Phil's mom discusses their plans for family expansion, but they have delayed discussing their preferences with her because of her anticipated disapproval of the couple's desire to not expand their family. Kadir et al. (2003) studied the influence mothers-in-law have on couples' preferences for family expansion and how it affects the desire to have children among the couple. This study demonstrates the influence family has on reproduction and explains Phil and Kayla's reasoning for choosing not to discuss family expansion with Phil's mother.

Through the responses from participants, it is evident that couples use open and honest communication when discussing family expansion as a couple. The couples discussed family expansion preferences before marriage and continued to discuss their preferences even after getting married. No participants indicated any disagreement about

specific preferences for having children or not having children after marriage. As it related to discussing family expansion with others, most couples stated that they did not mind discussing with close family or friends, but it was not a topic they preferred to discuss at length. Through the implementation of CPM's five principles, the following five research questions critically examine the fundamental blocks of information management and privacy.

Private Information Ownership

To answer research question two, principle one of communication privacy management theory, involving private information ownership, is used to guide the findings. The topic of family expansion and reproduction is inherently shared due to the consensual activity that must occur during the process of natural conception. All ten participants disclosed and shared their preferences for family expansion before marriage and agreed on plans for family expansion after marriage. Petronio (2010) emphasizes that private information is personal and does not have to be shared. By sharing preferences for family expansion throughout the relationship, newlyweds value shared ownership concerning family expansion preferences.

When family expansion preferences are discussed and asked by others outside the marriage, determining what information to disclose was difficult for some participants. When couples were asked about their experiences with disclosing to others, every female participant indicated that they had been asked questions or received comments about reproducing or expanding their family. The questions and comments came from many people in their lives including family members, friends, and even strangers. Corroborating the narratives shared by women on websites and social media platforms,

the female participants in this study were also commonly asked about their plans for family expansion (Cicurel, 2019; Jannese, 2016; Simon, 2016; Stewart, 2019).

Couples had received questions and comments about their plans for reproduction. The interviewer asked participants what kind of questions or comments they were subjected to, and how they managed their ownership of the information. In response to how participants felt about the questions or comments they received, some said they used humor to answer the questions or to play off the comments. According to Wanzer (2009), the use of humor can be used in several situations such as coping, relationship building, and entertainment. Additionally, through coping, people may use humor in stressful or uncomfortable situations to provide relief and positive energy (Wanzer, 2009). In this study, Travis, a male participant who used humor as a response would imply his own sterilization or the couple's lack of intimacy as a response of "I don't know, whenever Annie cheats on me." By contrast, most women did not use humor to address comments and questions. Steuber and Solomon (2011) found women preferred a version of concealment, such as limited information sharing when discussing reproduction. Several female participants preferred to give canned answers that did not give direct answers to the questions, in order to not reveal details about the couple's plans. For example, Annie said, "I just kind of smile, I go, I don't know. We will see when it happens."

Through the data compiled to answer RQ2, private information ownership regarding family expansion preferences was important to the newlywed couples. Through exchange of values and preferences among the couple, shared information amongst each other remained private. The desire and preference to keep private information private came through the use of humor, avoidance, and general answers to disclose very little

information. This allowed participants the option to avoid or ignore the questions or comments directed toward them.

Private Information Control

RQ3 aims to answer how newlyweds control their private information regarding family expansion. Petronio (2010) mentioned that boundaries are erected by the information owners to protect and control their private information. The boundaries can be determined through deciding whom to disclose information, and to whom to not disclose. When it comes to newlyweds' preferences as to whom they choose to disclose information to, six couples felt they could disclose plans for family expansion to family members. During the interviews, after the participants mentioned their preference to disclose to family members, three participants re-thought their answer by indicating that they would not want to ruin a surprise of pregnancy if they disclosed that they were trying to conceive.

Petronio (2010) enforces the idea that information owners have control over whom they disseminate information. However, when people ask newlyweds what their plans are for family expansion, some couples felt pressure to answer the questions and did not know how to respond. For example, Travis' attitude toward receiving questions about family expansion provides a raw interpretation of the internal conflict faced with answering these questions:

It's such an inappropriate question, you know, if it's not in a jokingly way, if it's in a serious way. I don't know. As we get into it, I just keep thinking that, like what if I'm blowing blanks and you guys keep asking when are you going to have kids.

To add to Travis' frustration about being asked questions about family expansion as well as a fear of being unable to reproduce naturally, Pam suffers grief every time she is asked about her plans for family expansion. "I can't help but think I should have a kid and I don't. It's kind of a blow every time." Most couples indicated some sort of uneasiness about how to answer the question without revealing too much information.

However, some couples indicated that they did not mind being asked, nor did they mind disclosing their plans for family expansion. Specifically, the two couples that preferred to remain childfree did not mind sharing their preferences with those that asked. After indicating that they did not mind disclosing, two of the couples that planned on expanding their family recognized that they might feel differently about disclosing if they were experiencing struggles with infertility. Of all the couples that discussed the possibility of infertility, the topic seemed to be very private and they preferred not to disclose their hypothetical infertility struggles with others. When it came to disclosing pregnancy, two female participants expressed concern about how they would keep their pregnancy private due to obvious declining alcoholic beverages at public events and physical changes to their bodies.

To summarize the findings for RQ3, there was not a direct or common way for couples to control their information. The preference to control information regarding family expansion preferences to those that asked was split with five couples feeling unsure about how to navigate the questions to not reveal too much and five couples that were open to disclosing information about their current situations or plans to those who asked. Newlyweds may base their readiness or willingness to disclose based on factors

such as cultural norms, trust, and their preferences for open communication (Chadiha et al., 1998; Goldsmith & Domann-Scholz, 2013).

Private Information Rules

Petronio (2010) described principle three having an emphasis on rules and boundaries. Participants were asked if they would set rules or boundaries when disclosing information to others. This interview question provided insight to RQ4: what kind of private information rules or expectations do newlyweds have when discussing family expansion? Much like participants' responses to controlling information in RQ3, answers were not consistent or similar among all of the participants.

Of the ten couples that participated in the interviews, four couples discussed that they would expect rules to be in place to those they disclose to regarding any difficulty in getting pregnant. Steuber and Solomon (2011) found that those who spoke about infertility preferred to keep the information within their social network and the reaction of others would impact their willingness to share more information. In this study, three of the participants among the four couples mentioned their unwillingness to post their struggles on social media. One participant mentioned that she wouldn't utilize social media, even though it could provide good resources. The couples' fears were based on the widespread of information with no rules in regard to who can see or continue sharing their information.

In contrast, some couples indicated that they did not have a preference for others sharing their current plans for expansion if they chose to disclose the information. Tamir and Mitchell (2012) discussed the enjoyment people might have from disclosing information. Dick added, "we're pretty open," as it related to their willingness to have

their information shared. However, one couple, Carole and Joe, mentioned that they believed there would be implied rules among their family and, that as a result, they would not feel the need to set verbal rules or expectations. On the contrary, Betty did not feel the same. She stated that she would add a comment such as, “just keep it between us.” Lastly, only one couple said they would prefer not to tell anyone about their plans for reproduction until they were pregnant, so no rules regarding their privacy would be violated. The conversation of responses to violation of privacy rules continues in principle five of CPM theory and is discussed in RQ6.

Similar to RQ3, couples were not all in agreement on their preferences for rules and expectations when sharing their information about reproduction. In contrast to participants having a gut feeling on who they can share information with, in Bute and Brann’s (2015) study examining the five CPM principles through communicating about miscarriage, no participants indicated any instinctual feelings to disclose to anyone regarding their plans. The two couples that prefer to not expand their family were open to disclosing their intentions to not have children and were open to others sharing their plans. Phil added that he wished someone else would tell his mother that they were not planning on having kids because it would make the conversation easier on him and Kayla.

Value of Sharing Private Information

Petronio (2010) explained principle four of CPM through the lens of privacy. In the interview, the researcher asked if the couples believed that family expansion/reproduction is a private topic. Four couples expressed that they have a

conflicting opinion on the privacy of reproduction. Jim's answer described what other couples were also faced with:

There's not an all-encompassing answer to that. That has to come down to you and what your experience has been and some people are very open about it, or they're comfortable telling them, "oh yeah I had three miscarriages, and that sucked" or whatever, and it's where we're at. Where we are not comfortable like that sharing a lot of information with a whole lot of people. So, it just comes down to each person and couple and how they feel about that stuff.

The other couples expressed uncertainty about their preference to keep the conversation private and emphasized that it depended on the specific topic (such as infertility) and to whom they were disclosing the information. Sormunen et al (2017) discussed the privacy some preferred when discussing infertility, especially when it came to disclosing to others outside of their family. For example, Dick's response echoed Jim's by saying that you have to "tread lightly" in some cases.

In Phil's experience, he preferred to not keep the information private, but instead, use the opportunity to educate and express his beliefs on not having children. To that end, he discusses with others that there are not many benefits to having children and would recommend that people should really consider the pros and cons before reproducing. To reinforce Phil's comments, Morison et al. (2015) said that for many, remaining childfree is a lifestyle choice. In this case, Phil may believe his lifestyle choice is better than others. The other couples fell somewhere in the middle between having a conflicting opinion or declaring their beliefs. The couples were open sharing their plans and permitting anyone possessing their information to share it as well.

Managing the Violation of Private Information Sharing

When it comes to the participants' feelings regarding others sharing their information and violating any rules or expectations, there were a few similarities among the couples. Bute and Brann (2015) found that the couples that shared information about miscarriage assumed their information would remain private. When participants in this study were asked about violation of private information sharing, two couples said they would prefer to disclose no information, which would result in no violation of expectations about sharing the private information.

Petronio (2010) said that when rules are violated, people may be less apt to disclose information again. In the study by Bute and Brann (2015), couples who experienced miscarriage assumed their message was obvious enough to not disclose with others. However, two couples mentioned that they would establish clear guidelines for next time they shared information, indicating that they would place trust in the receiver of information again. Three couples preferred to reach out to those violating their rules by asking them to stop disseminating the information to others. In contrast to these couples, three couples were open about their experiences and did not mind disclosing, so the couples said they have no rules or expectations in place to be violated.

In regard to managing the violation of sharing private information, newlyweds were not all in agreeance with their expectations. When the researcher asked questions about how the participants would navigate others violating their rules or expectations, no couples disclosed that they had experienced this – so all answers appeared to be situational rather than based on previous events. If couples all couples experienced a

violation of private information sharing, answers may continue to look the same or participants may have a different viewpoint.

Pregnancy Pressure

During interviews, participants were asked if they experienced pressure to have children. Ashburn-Nardo (2016) discuss the assumption people that all couples to want to have children and the assumption can stigmatize those who do not want to have children or who are not ready. For those who are choosing to not bring children into their family, they felt the pressure from society wanting them to have children. The findings from Ashburn-Nardo (2016) relate to the couples' experience of people assuming they will not be as fulfilled in their lives without children. Specifically, participants indicated there were many comments from saying they will change their mind, and no one will take care of them when they are older. Ned and Evelyn told the interviewer that they noticed the judgment and pressure coming from older generations. Their observation may be connected to the difference in ideals and values placed on young people several decades ago (Buchmann & DiPrete, 2006). Choosing to attend college and focus on a career is more prevalent in current trends (Holton et al., 2009). Kayla felt similarly and added that the millennial generation seems more accepting.

With regard to couples that are choosing to reproduce, three couples did not experience external pressure. Rather the pressure on the couple was frequently internal, specifically the pressure to be like their friends who are married and have children. Atkins (2004) found that social comparison was prevalent among intimate relationships. This can support the mentality of "keeping up with the Joneses." The couples felt they were putting more pressure on themselves to reproduce and were unsure about if their

plans to wait to have children is the right choice. Reproductive coercion is a serious topic that affects people in many situations, and it can occur in the form of pregnancy coercion. However, it is important to spin this topic in the other direction and understand that some people might face pressure or disapproval to not have children (Kadir et al. (2003). couples that are waiting to have kids said they felt pressure to not reproduce right away because of remarks from their parents.

Pregnancy pressure was prevalent in this study in several ways. Couples who did not want children were stigmatized and assumed they would change their mind, reinforcing the assumption that the desire to have children is prevalent for everyone (Ashburn-Nardo, 2016). Additionally, Morgan and King discuss the influence others have on reproduction because of the shift from reproduction being a private act to a social act through the increase in discussion about sexual health and wellness. Throughout the interviews, the topic of pregnancy pressure was frustrating to some, with nonverbal behavior such as eye rolling.

Factors Influencing Reproduction

During the interviews, several reasons for deciding to not have children, to delay reproduction, or barriers to reproduction were discussed. One barrier to reproduction is infertility. Infertility was discussed in several interviews. One couple indicated the male partner was sterile, another couple revealed their struggles with a miscarriage, and another couple expressed their fear of infertility by revealing that the female partner has an autoimmune disorder that could affect her chances of getting pregnant.

Five couples discussed their plans to wait for a while to have children. The couples indicated that financial stability was a priority, with one participant, Betty,

wanting to ensure the baby wasn't financed through student loans. Betty's statement reinforces Holton et al. (2009) once more by the shift in priority of young people to attend college and work toward a career. The concern of finances could also depend on the cost to deliver and raise a child.

Discovering Newlywed Norms Chadiha et al. (1998) discussed social norms, domestic responsibilities, location of jobs, figuring out normal among newlyweds. These findings are synonymous with newlywed couples feeling like they are trying to establish their lifestyle with their partner before reproducing. While several couples lived together before marriage, many indicated that they want to enjoy the adjustment period of being married to their spouse and discovering their normal. Some examples included the desire to travel without children, enjoying upcoming events such as weddings and vacations. The participants did not want to be pregnant during these life events.

Barriers to reproduction For Jim and Pam, their biggest barrier to reproduction was their struggles with a miscarriage. Other couples expressed a fear of infertility when they decide to begin trying through potential health issues. As Bute & Brann (2015) discussed, many psychological or physical effects and potential grief. For Eveyln, she said she did not have a desire to feel the physical changes of pregnancy and related a fetus in the womb to a parasite. Her response to pregnancy negates Sormunen et al. (2017) quote regarding "reproduction and childbirth are central parts of human life," implying that reproduction is a pivotal part of everyone's life.

Questions About Family Expansion

A frequent topic within the interviews was the type of questions and comments couples received about family expansion. As Cicurel (2019) demonstrated in her article

about women being asked to have a baby, she described several examples of questions she received, such as, “Do you want me to come into your bedroom and show you how to make a baby?” (para. 10). In addition to Cicurel’s experience, six couples expressed that they expect questions to be asked of them regarding their plans to expand their family. Three participants mentioned a timeline of one year until people expect a child or they will start asking about your plans. People can be largely influenced by others, especially by their families in order to seek approval (Morgan & King, 2001). When faced with questions about family expansion, couples may not want to answer due to disapproval from others or feel pressured.

A few couples experienced situations where pregnancy was viewed as a negative. Specifically, Annie received a comment at her workplace where a co-worker insisted “keep your damn legs closed.” In addition, Claire’s mother and Joe’s father expressed their desire for the couple to not have children right away. Myrskylä and Margolis (2014) found that parents who have a child later in life, mid-30s to early 40s, were happier parents. The desire for others to tell young people when to and when not to reproduce, could be influenced on their own experiences.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the participants were recruited via social media and volunteered to participate in the interview. Voluntary response sampling can be biased, especially if it is about a topic the participant is extremely opinionated on (Frey et al., 2000). Some participants also had relationships with the researcher. The participants that knew the researcher could have been more apt to disclose information, or more hesitant to disclose information. To gather

unbiased data, the researcher recommends interviewing newlywed couples that are not known to the researcher. Second, through interviews and the participants' narratives, recall bias can be present. As Ottenstein and Lischetzke (2019) stated in their article, participants may be biased when recalling information due to emotions. In this study, emotions may have been present due to any sensitivity to the topic. To help eliminate bias regarding opinions on privacy and disclosure, the recruitment post did not contain information suggesting disclosure of private information would be discussed.

A third, important limitation is the sample size itself. There are over 130 million married couples in the United States today (United States Census Bureau, 2018). Therefore, the small sample size could not represent all newlyweds without children. However, for the purposes of qualitative research, 20 participants is a sufficient number to gather in-depth data. In addition, demographic information such as race and socio-economic status was not collected. To conduct a similar study again, it could have been helpful to gather this data and compare demographic information regarding factors influencing reproduction and family expansion. As discussed in Chadiha et al. (1998), culture, environment, and family influences can impact reproduction. Additionally, because half of the participants discussed finances being a factor, it would be interesting to factor their socio-economic status in as a comparison with other adults who believe they may be financially ready.

Finally, the study did not have a pilot study or interview before the start of data collection. In order to provide the most accurate and detailed answers to the research questions guided by CPM, a further analysis of interview questions should have been conducted. In regard to how the interviews were conducted, the researcher did not have

experience with interviewing participants for qualitative data, which left holes in answers where the researcher could have asked follow-up questions not posed on the interview guide. Additionally, the researcher could have asked for more explanation or examples to support what participants said, in order to gain more depth.

Direction for Future Research

The first recommendation for future research is to gather more participants and have several researchers, or trained individuals, to conduct interviews and code the data. This would allow for results that could be broadened and perhaps generalized to people of the same status. To mitigate time, a quantitative study could be set up to gather results and could provide equally interesting data. A quantitative study using pre-determined responses with a Likert-type scale could be set up to quantify agreeance in disclosure.

Another recommendation for future research is to gather participants of different religions, ethnicities, race, and sexual preferences. For example, future studies could gather participants by recruiting specific groups, such as same-sex couples to compare and contrast results and experiences with those of heterosexual marriages. Future studies could conduct interviews of one individual of a couple at a time and compare results of disclosure by gender. From the interviews conducted in this study, some men and women answered similarly to questions and an in-depth look and differences in gender could be interesting.

Lastly, data could be analyzed in future studies regarding differences in familial pressure to have children if grandchildren are already present in the immediate family. Also, a follow-up study could be done with participants if they decided to expand their family. The study could ask questions regarding how much of an impact the pressure had

on having children and if the couple feels pressure to have more children. More research is needed, in general, regarding the topic of family expansion, pregnancy pressure, and communication privacy management in order to add to the conversation women are having online.

Conclusion

The discussion of family expansion and reproduction is a topic that many newlyweds have as a couple when determining their future together. However, the conversation is not limited to just the couple and their preferences. When couples are faced with questions regarding family expansion, some are faced with uncertainty of what to disclose and to whom to disclose the information. Findings from this study suggest that couples use communication privacy management theory to disclose information or withhold information based on the nature of the topic and personal experiences and preferences.

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Appendix A

Demographic Survey

Please answer the following open-ended questions.

1. What is your age?

2. What is your biological sex?

3. What gender do you identify with?

4. Where do you currently reside?

5. How long have you been married?

6. Do you have children?

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Tell me about your relationship.

How long have you been married?

Using this definition of a couple, two people who are closely associated romantically or sexually, how long have you been a couple?

Did you live together before you were married?

Do you plan on expanding your family?

If yes, how so?

Have you and your spouse discussed family expansion?

How do you individually communicate your desires with your spouse?

How do you individually communicate your desires with your family?

Do you feel pressured to have children?

Who has put pressure on your decision?

If no, do you feel supported by your family if you were to have a childless family?

Have you been asked questions pertaining to reproducing?

When did the questions first start?

What questions have people asked?

Have you been asked often?

Who has asked?

Regardless of your plans on expanding your family, are you comfortable discussing your plans and intentions with those that ask?

Do you answer differently to different people in your life? Example – do you give the same answer to your parents, grandparents, siblings, or friends?

How does it make you feel when people ask about your plans on expanding your family or how would you feel if people asked?

What emotion do you feel?

How do you respond?

Do you believe that family expansion/reproduction is a private topic?

Do you feel it is important to disclose information regarding reproduction?

If you chose to reveal this information, would you expect them to not disclose to others?

How would you react to people sharing your information with others?

Do you communicate your preferences with others to disclose or not disclose your private information with their circle of family or friends?