

*Religion, Coping, and Marital Satisfaction*

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## Abstract

The aim of this study was to unpack the relationship between religious discrepancies among spouses and marital satisfaction. Specifically, we focused on ways in which coping- both adaptive and maladaptive- affected that marital relationship. Vignettes were used as analogs to real life stressor situations and questions were asked to assess appraisal, coping, and emotions in response to these situations. Along with demographic and religious background information, we assessed intrinsic versus extrinsic religious orientation, perceived stress, depressive symptoms, as well as life and marital satisfaction questionnaires and a few other religious measures. We hypothesized that those with greater religious discrepancies would exhibit more maladaptive coping and in turn, lower marital satisfaction. Our results supported this hypothesis in that the religious discrepancy was strongly correlated with both maladaptive coping and lower marital satisfaction, and path analyses indicated that the data were consistent with a mediational model in which the maladaptive coping, prompted by the discrepancy, was at least partially responsible for the lower marital satisfaction.

## Introduction

Religion and spirituality are some of the most powerful forces present in human nature. Though they are subjective and difficult to convey verbally, the experiences and ways in which religion and spirituality shape who we are can be fascinating to observe. Religion inspires tremendous emotionality, both in those who are religious and in those who are not. It largely affects public and private life, by providing a community of believers to fellowship with, as well as a foundation for private reflection, meditation, and personal growth. The role that religion plays in family relationships is also paramount, in that it provides a common framework from which to operate and order lives around. Particularly, religion is an important aspect for many in emotion-focused coping – the ability to adjust mentally to help deal with the consequences of stressful events. However, little research focuses on the actual process of coping as opposed to the outcomes of coping. Equally important to the outcome of a coping situation is how effective or ineffective specific coping strategies are for the well-being of the person (and the person's relationships). If effective, the likelihood increases that these coping strategies will be drawn upon again in subsequent stressful events.

In regards to psychological experimentation, many aspects of religion and spirituality are discussed in the present literature. Several of the commonly studied topics are intrinsic versus extrinsic religiosity, individual differences and positive versus negative religious coping, and the involvement of religion in health. These are a few of the ways to investigate the role of religion in humans that relate to the broader issue of religion and coping, which is the basis for my honors project.

Those who consider themselves religious can be classified into two very broadly stated categories. That is, some are intrinsically religious and some are extrinsically religious. The distinction between the two can be boiled down to religious motivation. Intrinsic religious motivation suggests that a person participates in religion in order to strengthen their faith, gain a deeper understanding of and relationship with God and seek to serve others through their beliefs. Those who are extrinsically religious focus more on the tangible aspects of religious participation, such as status, social support, and social interaction. These two differing motivations may play a large role in how one does or does not use religion as a coping mechanism. If someone participates in religious activities primarily as a means of meeting and interacting with others, it is likely that they will not be inclined to draw on the help of God or a higher power in times of need. In contrast, those who are intrinsically motivated will presumably seek God's help, comfort, and power in times of need. This is an important factor to consider in analyzing someone's coping style as it relates to religious involvement.

Another factor that shapes one's coping style is simply individual differences. Aspinwall and Taylor (1992) suggest that important resources for individual coping are self-esteem, optimism, and a sense of psychological control. When people naturally view situations in a positive light and also assess their own abilities as efficient for dealing with various situations, they will naturally be in a better position for coping. Those who are negative and maintain a poorer self-esteem might feel as if they have fewer personal resources for coping and therefore will not adjust well to difficult situations.

Perhaps the most widely researched area of religion is the involvement of religion and spirituality in one's health, which is in essence a physical measurement of one's

ability to cope. Because of the subjective nature of religion and the differences in the ways in which people experience religion, there can be both positive religious coping and negative religious coping. The way in which one views God (or a higher power) is the baseline for determining whether one's coping style is positive or negative. Positive religious coping is characterized by faith in God and believing that God is faithful in loving and caring, as well as actively working with one to strengthen and overcome hard times or illnesses. Negative religious coping, on the other hand, is characterized by feeling that negative events or illnesses are a result of God's punishment or abandonment and hinge upon the person's sinful behavior or disbelief. Positive religious coping, naturally, has been associated with more positive health outcomes and illness course, whereas negative religious coping has the opposite effect and may increase depression and anxiety (George, Ellison, & Larson, 2002).

### *Appraisal Theory*

The way in which I aim to conceptualize coping within my study is based on the emotions theory known as Appraisal Theory. This theory claims that evaluations, or appraisals, of situations or events elicit a particular emotional reaction. According to the theory, there are two basic types of appraisal: primary and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal has two fundamental questions: 1) is this relevant to me?, and 2) is this congruent with my goals and desires? The question of relevance is particularly important in determining the resulting emotion because naturally, if the event is not important it will not elicit an emotional response. Congruence is a way of assessing very basically whether the situation is in line with a person's goals, or an obstacle to those goals. Following primary appraisal is secondary appraisal, which is an assessment of resources

and ability to cope. Several questions are asked at this stage, namely, 1) who is responsible for the event or situation (i.e., accountability, which tells a person where they need to direct their coping efforts), 2) availability of resources (both tangible and psychological), and 3) future expectancy. This stage of secondary appraisal is where I feel it will be interesting to analyze how and if people insert religious resources as a mechanism for coping.

Within secondary appraisal, two types of coping can be distinguished: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is aimed at acting to change the situation in order to bring it more in line with the individual's goals. Emotion-focused coping is aimed at managing or reducing the emotional reaction or distress that results from the particular stressor. In other words, problem-focused coping deals with how one can change or alter the situation, whereas emotion-focused coping deals with changing one's own mentality in order to adjust to a situation even if the situation itself cannot be changed. It is my inclination that those who draw on religion and/or spirituality may implement their beliefs in the process of emotion-focused coping by using God (or a higher power) as a resource for aiding in emotional distress.

### *Religious Coping and Relationships*

Relationships, particularly romantic relationships, are a great source of stress and tension at times. Within these contexts, you share your most intimate and personal self with another person, and a certain trust is necessary. When you choose to enter a relationship of this sort, there are typically specific things you are looking for in a partner, such as compatible personality traits, ambitions, values and often spiritual alignment. Whether or not a couple matches up in their spiritual beliefs can be a potential

source of major contention because of its deeply personal nature. This is often the framework from which people operate and when fundamental spiritual beliefs differ between two people who are trying to live a life together, it can create a number of problems.

Within the coping literature, most of the articles direct their attention to the outcome of coping processes rather than the actual process itself. The very definition that Pargament supplies for the concept of religion suggests that it is a process: “a *search* for significance in ways related to the sacred” (Pargament, 1997, pg. 32). The Process Evaluation Model of Religious Coping discussed in his literature, then, proposes that meaningful coping can still occur even if there is a negative outcome. In evaluating the process, one can see that coping is either well or poorly integrated, where ‘integration’ addresses whether coping elements are in balance as they work together or are working against each other and out of balance. The particular elements that are either balanced or unbalanced are things like whether or not the coping strategy fits the situation, that the goals of coping do not contradict themselves, and that the social resources are supportive. In looking at these principles within relationships, it is important that integration for a person involves their social setting. A well integrated coping process is noted when there is a match between the type of support that is needed and the type of support that the provider is comfortable and willing to offer. When someone’s beliefs do not cohere with their social setting, problems are likely to arise. Thus, it is presumably most beneficial when a person enters a relationship in which the partner is able to comfortably provide the appropriate spiritual support and the beliefs of the two are in alignment.

Other research that addresses the relationship between marriage and religious coping looks at the outcome measure of marital satisfaction. Some studies show that denominational homogamy, where each person in the relationship practices their religion in the same denomination, was a more important factor for marital satisfaction than being homogamous in things like church attendance or belief in the Bible (Heaton & Pratt, 1990). In contrast, other studies have shown that couples in which doctrinally based beliefs differed among spouses reported lower marital satisfaction than couples who acknowledged the same or similar doctrinal beliefs. (Ortega et al., 1988). One particular study, by Williams and Lawler (2003), compared interchurch couples (being a part of a different denomination than spouse), same-church couples, and those who were interchurch but shifted to same-church. The study found no difference in marital satisfaction among the three groups of couples interviewed. The differences emerged from the exploration of relationship variables of a religious nature, though. For example, interchurch couples reported more religious differences with their spouses as opposed to the other two groups, and were also less likely to report participating in religious activities together. They did not report religion as a strength in their marriage, as it was seen as having a negative affect on ability to respect how the partner used religion in communication skills. It seems, then, that religion is an important variable within a relationship for reasons other than marital satisfaction, perhaps, as it does affect interactions of communication and respect between spouses.

So, if it is not an issue of marital satisfaction, what is it about the nature and function of religion in relationships that produces relational strengths? Mahoney et al. (2003) suggest that it is 'sanctification' of marital and familial relationships that produces



the positive outcomes and functioning. 'Sanctification' here refers to the psychological process in which life events are perceived as having some type of spiritual significance or meaning. This definition, as opposed to the theological one, focuses on the perceptions of what is sacred and it is studied with social science. The bonds of a familial or marital relationship are strengthened by sanctification, where participation in these relationships allows individuals to experience God or nurture their sense of spirituality. The Christian view of marriage proposes marriage as a sacred relationship in which God is an intimately related third party, and in which love and grace are transcendent. This quality of religion in marriage affects aspects of sexual relations, gender roles, self-sacrifice, and conflict resolution. Sanctification also encourages religious coping and personal spiritual growth. Mahoney et al. (2003) used scales of Sacred Qualities and Manifestation of God to measure the extent of sanctification. Sacred Qualities refers to attributions of transcendence, ultimate value and purpose, and timelessness, whereas the Manifestation of God scale looks at perceptions of objects as manifestations of God or sacred qualities. Empirical findings show that higher scores on both measures predicted higher investment in marriage, as well as less conflict and greater efforts to resolve disagreements together. This study suggests that identifying a marital relationship as being saturated with sacred significance is tied to more adaptive marital functioning.

As an extension of these research efforts to integrate religious coping and marital satisfaction measures, we chose to investigate the process of religious coping and the differences in that process as it relates to married persons and their particular religious orientation in relation to their spouses' religious orientation. We were primarily interested in whether or not there is a difference in the effectiveness of coping and what that

difference is characterized by among married persons who do not share similar commitments and beliefs regarding their religion with their spouse and how this relates to their overall marital satisfaction.

Our first step in answering this question was to develop a pilot study in which we sought to validate several established religious scales and generally gain a better understanding for how participants might write about their religious experiences and beliefs. This was a brief survey assessing religious attitudes and commitments, but particularly the intrinsic versus extrinsic religious motivation. This was also a valuable test run to see that participants would write openly about their religious experiences and that these text samples could provide a rich source of data for various correlations.

Our primary study was a survey structured around one of several vignettes, which was intended to function as our stressor and prompt participants to write about their coping styles with their spouse as if this situation actually happened to them. Then they were asked a number of questions related to this initial stressor, evaluating their appraisals, emotions, and coping styles. Other questions assessed religious orientation, marital satisfaction, life satisfaction, perceived stress, depression, and many other religious aspects of the participants' lives. We expected to find a number of different correlations between the religious differences among spouses, coping styles, and marital satisfaction that would provide insight into these complex relationships.

### Pilot Study

#### *Participants and Design*

The participants in this study were 52 Vanderbilt University students, 21 males and 31 females. The design of the study was a brief survey on religious attitudes

containing several scales and 18 open-ended questions intended to both validate religious scales measuring intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation characteristics, and to better understand how participants would write about their religious beliefs and practices. The open-ended questions were intended to prompt participants to discuss and elaborate on their religious views and experiences. These questions asked things such as “When are you most likely to pray?” and “What do you gain or enjoy about being a part of a church/mosque/synagogue/temple?” The scales incorporated were the Age Universal Religious Orientation Scale (Gorsuch & Venable, 1983), the Religious Emphasis Scale (Altemeyer, 1988), and the Religious Experience Questionnaire (Edwards, 1976).

### *Results*

The open-ended questions were assessed using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) program. The LIWC (Pennebaker, Booth, & Francis, 2001) analysis counts the frequency of certain words and groups of words to see how often they occur in writing samples. For this particular analysis, we created our own religious words dictionary (i.e., creator, faith, believe, church) for the program to count. All of the open-ended texts were assessed for each participant and these frequencies were correlated with the ratings participants gave in the other scaled questionnaires within the survey. The variables from both the LIWC frequencies and the developed questions for the survey correlated well with the intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation ratings that participants completed in the survey. The more intrinsically religious a participant was, the higher he or she was on such variables as frequency of prayer, attending religious services, using religious words in their survey writing samples, and use of deity names in their writing samples. In contrast, those who were more extrinsically religious seemed to

exhibit an absence of certain attitudes and practices; that is, they tended to use fewer deity names or religious words in their writing, spent less time reading sacred texts, and were less likely to attend religious services. See Figure 1 and Figure 2 for these results. The pilot study allowed us to validate the scales that we used and provided us with a clearer picture of what types of beliefs and behaviors pertain to each religious motivation.

**Figure 1:**

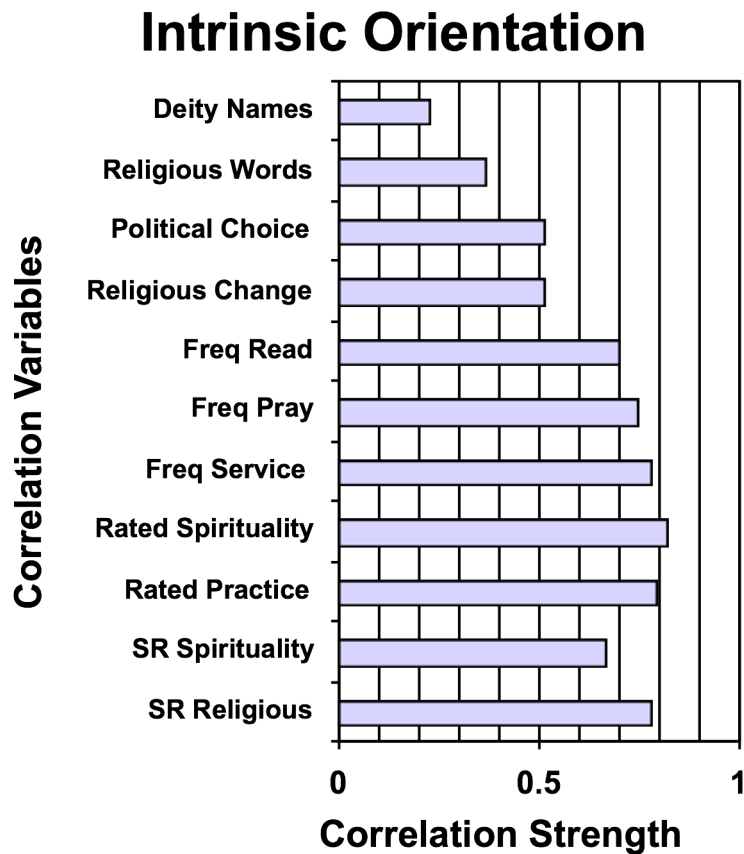
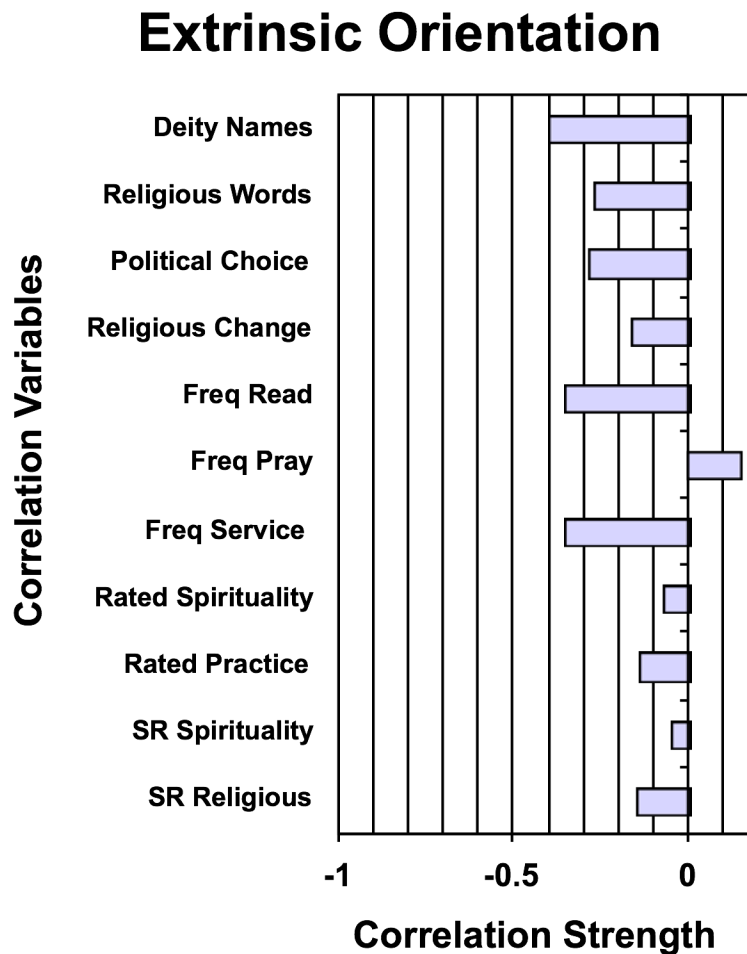


Figure 2:



From this pilot study, we were able to also see that writing samples from the participants were very useful in that they allowed us to understand further how participants used and incorporated religious views, beliefs, and experiences into their life circumstances and how this can vary from person to person. The value that the writing samples added to this initial study helped us decide to use vignettes to prompt written responses for the primary study. The pilot study also provided insights into the specific

day-to-day practice differences and overarching beliefs between people with intrinsic versus extrinsic religious motivation. We wanted to further examine how these different motivations affected coping styles and the use of religious beliefs of practices as coping strategies. These initial findings led us to the primary study in which we were interested in seeing how these religious differences played out in marital relationships when spouses were either similar or different in their religious beliefs and orientations and how this affected their coping styles and strategies, as well as their overall marital satisfaction.

## Primary Study

### Method

#### *Participants*

A total of 174 married persons participated in this study. Participants were recruited via direct email solicitation (see Appendix D) or online experimental sites.<sup>1</sup> Of the 174 total participants, 109 participants completed the entire survey (a 62.6% completion rate<sup>2</sup>), which took 30-45 minutes to complete. There were no exclusion criteria for this study – although the survey was intended for currently married individuals, participants were allowed to complete the survey whether they were currently married or not. However, data from divorced (n=10), widowed (n=1) and unmarried (n=4) persons were excluded from analysis.

#### *Vignettes*

Several different indices were used within the survey to capture the data of interest. Six vignettes were written for the purposes of this study to address a variety of potential relational stressors. The following is an example of one of the vignettes:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://psych.hanover.edu/research/exponnet.html>; <http://onlinepsychresearch.co.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> Incomplete data was retained for analysis to the extent possible.

It is nearing the Christmas holiday season and decisions need to be made about where your family will celebrate Christmas this year- either at your parents' house or your spouse's parents' house. You feel that this year your family should go to your parents' house for the Christmas holiday because last year you went to his/her parents' house. However, this is the first year in awhile that your spouse's entire family will be gathering at his/her parents' house and he/she does not want to miss the opportunity to have everyone together, especially because everyone lives so far apart these days and the cost of travel is outrageous even before you factor in the inconveniences of delays and cancelled flights. Even though it isn't even Thanksgiving yet, the decision about where to spend Christmas this year needs to be made soon so tickets can be purchased early enough to avoid the rise in price and availability of flights as it gets closer to Christmas. How do you and your spouse resolve this problem?

This vignette addressed the stress associated with major holidays. The other vignette situations were: 1) work stress, where each spouse has particular demands, but a compromise must be reached about which parent will attend the child's sports function; 2) small things, where minor conflicts escalate into a large fight over essentially meaningless things; 3) house renovation, which focuses on the stressor of money; 4) discipline of children, where each spouse disagrees about the appropriate method of discipline; and 5) positive stress, where the couple is moving to a new house and must deal with the stressors involved in a positive situation. The purpose of choosing vignettes as the main manipulation was that these situations lay out typical life experiences that married persons experience, without having to actually induce a stressful situation to assess responses or rely on retrospective self-reports. These situations were designed to induce particular stresses and reactions in a manner that allowed us to evaluate how subjects respond to those stressors and at what level subjects incorporated religious coping strategies.

### *Measures*

As a response to the vignette given in the survey, participants answered a number of open- and close-ended questions that composed the outcome measures for this survey. Among those items were the Situated Appraisal Components Scale (Smith et al., 1993), the Emotion Rating Form (Smith et al., 1993), and the abbreviated 42-item COPE (Carver et al., 1989). Also included as an outcome measure were the Comprehensive Marital Satisfaction Scale (Blum & Mehrabian, 1999), The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), and the CESD (Center for Epidemiological Studies- Depression Scale) (Radloff, 1977).

Other measures included were various dispositional and demographic measures. Questions adapted from the Hollingshead Index of Social Position were added, as well as age, sex, race and general religious background information for both the participant and the participant's spouse. The Age Universal Religious Orientation Scale (Gorsuch & Venable, 1983) was included to assess the particular religious orientation (intrinsic or extrinsic) of the participants. The Joint Religious Activities Questionnaire and Manifestation of God (Mahoney et al. 2003) scales assessed frequency of participation in religious activities as a couple and the level at which the couple perceived God to be an aspect of or significant within the relationship. The Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) evaluated the current level of stress of the participants as they took the survey.

The survey concluded with several open-ended questions assessing particular religious interactions and responses to stressors as they occurred among the participants and their spouses. The text from these open-ended questions, as well as the open-ended



initial response to the vignette were assessed using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count program to examine particular word frequencies within the writing samples.

Religious discrepancy variables were also created for analysis purposes. Each participant rated his or her own personal levels of religiosity and spirituality, as well as those they perceived in their spouse. Religiosity and spirituality were added together for the participant, then the sum for the spouse was subtracted, and the absolute value of the difference indicates a perceived discrepancy score. Additionally, discrepancy scores were computed for religious practices and change in religiosity since marriage; however, the key variable of interest was the overall religious discrepancy scale.

Lastly, a general coping strategy assessment was done on the open-ended question that asked participants, “When you and your spouse have disagreements or arguments, how do you handle them?” The responses were rated on whether or not they were adaptive, mixed, or maladaptive responses. Adaptive responses were those in which the participant described positive ways of handling the dispute, such as talking it out, agreeing to pray about it, and be honest about their true feelings. Mixed ratings were given to those responses in which participants described both negative and positive ways of dealing with the issue. For example, perhaps they argued about it and ignored each other for a day or so, but within a few days realized they were being irrational and discussed it with one another to come up with a solution. The important factor in the mixed rating was noting that the participant specifically said they dealt with the situation and did not just let it go unresolved, even if they had some initial negative strategies. The maladaptive responses were those in which participants stated that they ignored the problem, did not discuss it with one another, argued, pretended nothing had happened, or

just gave in to their spouse despite having contradictory feelings about the situation. This rating allowed us to examine coping strategies and patterns that were specific to the participant and perhaps a more accurate depiction than the vignette may have provided since it was based on real experiences for the participants. These ratings were made by four independent raters, all of whom were blind to other data about the subject, and the internal consistency was exceptionally high ( $\alpha=.93$ ).

### *Design*

This study utilized a between-subjects design. Each participant was presented with one of six vignettes (see Appendix E). Subjects were directed to their particular vignette by indicating the month in which they were born. Two months were randomly assigned to each vignette so that participants were roughly equally distributed among all six of the vignette conditions ( $n$  for each condition ranged from 15 to 35). The purpose of the between-subjects design was mainly to increase variability in terms of the types of stressors, to strengthen the generalizability of the study.

### *Procedure*

Participants were directed to the survey either through an email link (See Appendix D) or an online experiment site that participants navigated to through their own interests. The survey began with a number of demographic questions, ending with a question about what the month of their birth was, which directed them to one vignette situation. The participants were given one vignette in which a potential marital stressor was outlined. The participant was prompted to respond based on how he or she would alleviate the given stressful situation with their spouse. The participants were then instructed to respond to scales designed to assess coping style, appraisals, and emotional

response to the given vignette. Following the vignette responses participants responded to more general life and marital satisfaction scales, perceived stress, religious activities and beliefs about sanctification of marriage, religious background questions for both the participant and the participant's spouse (as rated by the participant), the religious orientation measures, and questions assessing level of depressive symptoms. The survey concluded with several open-ended questions examining the level of incorporation of religious beliefs or practices into one's life situations.

## Results

### *Overview of Hypotheses*

There were three main results that we expected to find from this study. First, we expected that those with greater religious discrepancies would exhibit less adaptive coping strategies and experience both lower marital and life satisfaction. In addition, it was expected that higher discrepancies would correlate with higher levels of depressive symptoms and perceived stress. Second, we expected to see a similar profile for those with an extrinsic religious orientation in that they would also show generally less adaptive coping strategies, such as less use of positive reappraisal or religious coping mechanisms, as well as experience lower marital satisfaction. In contrast, those who were intrinsically religious would exhibit more adaptive coping strategies and higher marital satisfaction, with religious activities and marriage sanctification being highly correlated to their religious orientation. Lastly, we expected to find that marital satisfaction was related to higher levels of emotion and problem-focused coping potentials, more adaptive coping strategies, as well as higher life satisfaction and lower levels of depressive symptoms and perceived stress.

### *Religious Discrepancy*

For the final analyses, only one of the three discrepancy variables was used. We chose to only use the religious discrepancy variable, which indicated how religiously and spiritually different the participant was from their spouse, because this was our primary interest in the study. The religious practice and the religious change discrepancies can be viewed as factors that would have been considered within the more general religious discrepancy variable<sup>3</sup>. One of the hypotheses of our study was that couples with higher discrepancies in their religiosity would have less adaptive responses to the specific stressor (i.e. the vignette situation given) as well as less adaptive coping strategies overall. Our results support this hypothesis with a number of statistically significant correlations. Those couples with higher religiosity discrepancies reported lower levels of emotion-focused coping, as well as higher levels of overload, sadness, and fear in response to the stressful situation. In terms of coping outcomes, those couple with higher discrepancies reported lower positive reappraisal, and increased use of maladaptive coping strategies such as increased use of alcohol, venting, and distraction. Couples with higher religiosity discrepancies were also more likely to be rated as maladaptive in their general approach, show higher levels of depressive symptoms, higher perceived stress, as well as lower levels of both marital satisfaction and life satisfaction. Higher religiosity discrepancy is also negatively correlated with joint religious activities and marriage sanctification. See Table 1 for the specific data patterns.

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<sup>3</sup> All 3 variables were included in initial analyses. Discrepancy in change since marriage showed very similar patterns as religious discrepancy, and discrepancy in practice did not show significant effects. Since the religious discrepancy was the primary variable of interest, we used this as our key predictor, and all analyses reported here use this variable.

**Table 1.**

	<b>Discrepancy</b>	<b>Extrinsic</b>	<b>Intrinsic</b>
emotion-focused coping	<b>r = -0.23, p&lt;0.05</b>	<b>r = -0.19, p&lt;0.05</b>	r = 0.12, NS
problem-focused coping	r = -0.17, NS	r = 0.08, NS	r = -0.08, NS
overload	<b>r = 0.19, p&lt;0.05</b>	r = 0.12, NS	r = 0.02, NS
sadness	<b>r = 0.28, p&lt;0.01</b>	r = -0.05, NS	r = -0.00, NS
fear	<b>r = 0.24, p&lt;0.05</b>	<b>r = 0.20, p&lt;0.05</b>	r = 0.02, NS
pride	r = -0.05, NS	<b>r = 0.24, p&lt;0.05</b>	r = 0.17, NS
joy	r = -0.13, NS	<b>r = 0.20, p&lt;0.05</b>	r = 0.09, NS
excitement	r = -0.11, NS	r = 0.18, NS	r = -0.01, NS
positive reappraisal	r = -0.16, NS	r = 0.02, NS	<b>r = 0.28, p&lt;0.01</b>
social support	<b>r = 0.19, p&lt;0.05</b>	r = 0.18, NS	r = 0.15, NS
religious cope	r = -0.16, NS	r = -0.13, NS	<b>r = 0.75, p&lt;0.01</b>
planning	r = -0.04, NS	r = -0.16, NS	r = -0.08, NS
alcohol	r = -0.02, NS	r = -0.05, NS	r = -0.08, NS
behavioral disengagement	r = 0.13, NS	r = 0.02, NS	r = 0.08, NS
denial	r = 0.13, NS	<b>r = 0.21, p&lt;0.05</b>	r = -0.02, NS
venting	<b>r = 0.23, p&lt;0.05</b>	r = 0.17, NS	r = -0.04, NS
distraction	<b>r = 0.21, p&lt;0.05</b>	r = 0.16, NS	r = -0.02, NS
coping approach*	<b>r = 0.38, p&lt;0.01</b>	<b>r = 0.22, p&lt;0.05</b>	r = 0.07, NS
CESD (depressive symptoms)	<b>r = 0.26, p&lt;0.01</b>	<b>r = 0.23, p&lt;0.05</b>	<b>r = -0.21, p&lt;0.05</b>
PSS (perceived stress)	<b>r = 0.35, p&lt;0.01</b>	r = -0.15, NS	r = 0.18, NS
marital satisfaction	<b>r = -0.52, p&lt;0.01</b>	<b>r = -0.24, p&lt;0.05</b>	r = 0.10, NS
life satisfaction	<b>r = -0.37, p&lt;0.01</b>	r = 0.15, NS	r = -0.10, NS
Joint Religious Activities	<b>r = -0.49, p&lt;0.01</b>	r = -0.14, NS	<b>r = 0.75, p&lt;0.01</b>
Manifestation of God	<b>r = -0.36, p&lt;0.01</b>	r = -0.02, NS	<b>r = 0.79, p&lt;0.01</b>

\*Coping approach (general coping strategy assessment) was rated in such a way that adaptive responses received lower scores and maladaptive responses received higher scores.

### *Religious Orientation*

Our second hypothesis was that subjects exhibiting an extrinsically religious orientation rather than an intrinsic religious orientation would show similar patterns as those subjects having higher religious discrepancies; namely, less adaptive coping responses to the specific stressor and less adaptive coping strategies overall. Our results support this hypothesis in a number of ways. Extrinsic religiosity is negatively correlated with emotion-focused coping potential, as well as fear in response to the stressful situation. However, it is also associated with increased feelings of positive emotions

(pride, joy) in response to the stressor. More specific to coping strategies, extrinsic religiosity was associated with decreased use of planning, as well as increased use of denial, venting, and distraction. Not surprisingly, extrinsic religiosity was also correlated with increased use of social support. Intrinsic religiosity, also as expected, was associated with increased use of positive reappraisal and use of religion as a coping strategy. As for the more broad outcome measures, those who were more extrinsically religious were more likely to be rated as maladaptive in their general coping approach. They showed higher levels of depressive symptoms, but not perceived stress. They also exhibited lower levels of marital satisfaction, but not life satisfaction. In terms of the correlation between religious orientation and the discrepancy variable, intrinsic religiosity was not related to the discrepancy variable and extrinsic religiosity was only marginally correlated with the discrepancy variable. Though extrinsic religiosity was not related to the joint religious activities measure or the marriage sanctification, intrinsic religiosity was positively associated with both joint religious activities and marriage sanctification. These results are largely in line with our initial predictions.

### *Mediational Analysis*

A mediational analysis was done to assess the relationship between the religious discrepancy variable, coping style, and marital satisfaction. It was predicted that the discrepancy variable would lead to poor coping strategies, which would then lend itself to factors such as depression, stress, and lower marital satisfaction. We were able to show that the discrepancy does correlate with marital satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.47$ ). The discrepancy also correlated with coping in several ways. It predicted the maladaptive coping approach ( $\beta = 0.39$ ) that was gathered from the general coping strategy assessment, as well as

avoidant coping ( $\beta = 0.22$ ). These were two types of coping in our study that strongly predicted lower marital satisfaction. So, in light of these analyses we were able to show evidence for partial mediation. In both regression analyses, when both discrepancy and the coping variables were used to predict satisfaction, the coping variable remained a strong predictor of satisfaction. Although in both cases the religious discrepancy also remained a strong predictor, its coefficient in one case was  $-0.32$  and in the other it was  $-0.37$  which was notably smaller than when it alone predicted. These results clearly do not support a model of specifying total mediation of the relation of religious discrepancy to marital satisfaction through coping, but they are consistent with a partial mediation scenario. Therefore, from this particular analysis we were able to conclude two things: 1) the religious discrepancy predicted lower marital satisfaction relatively strongly, and 2) though coping (as we have assessed it) did not explain everything, the relation between the discrepancy and marital satisfaction could be partially accounted for by the fact that the religious discrepancy seemed to promote maladaptive coping.

### *Marital Satisfaction*

In drawing all of our results together, a general profile of a “happy” marriage can be established. Our results show that marital satisfaction was related to lower levels of negative feelings and greater levels of positive feelings in response to the specific stressor, as well as higher levels of both problem-focused coping potential and emotion-focused coping potential. Marital satisfaction was also positively correlated with greater use of planning and positive reappraisal coping strategies, as well as lower levels of denial, behavioral disengagement, venting, and distraction. However, marital satisfaction was not related to the use of religion as a coping strategy. More general outcomes

indicated that marital satisfaction was associated with more adaptive coping approach, and higher levels of life satisfaction. It was also associated with lower levels of both depressive symptoms and perceived stress, but higher levels of joint religious activities and feelings of a sanctified marriage. Marital satisfaction was not related to age, gender, or education level of respondent, or whether or not the couple had children. It was only marginally associated with income and spouse's level of education. See Table 2 for specific data patterns.

**Table 2.**

	<b><u>Marital Satisfaction</u></b>
negative feelings	<b><math>r = -0.21, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
positive feelings	<b><math>r = 0.26, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
problem-focused coping	<b><math>r = 0.26, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
emotion-focused coping	<b><math>r = 0.44, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
planning	<b><math>r = 0.27, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
positive reappraisal	<b><math>r = 0.42, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
denial	<b><math>r = -0.46, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
behavioral disengagement	<b><math>r = -0.29, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
venting	<b><math>r = -0.48, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
distraction	<b><math>r = -0.50, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
coping approach*	<b><math>r = -0.60, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
life satisfaction	<b><math>r = 0.63, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
CESD (depressive symptoms)	<b><math>r = -0.55, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
PSS (perceived stress)	<b><math>r = -0.56, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
Joint Religious Activities	<b><math>r = 0.43, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
Manifestation of God	<b><math>r = 0.39, p &lt; 0.01</math></b>
age	$r = -0.03, NS$
gender	$r = -0.08, NS$
participant education level	$r = 0.12, NS$
spouse education level	$r = 0.17, NS$
children	$r = 0.13, NS$
income	$r = 0.22, NS$

\* Coping approach (general coping strategy assessment) was rated in such a way that adaptive responses received lower scores and maladaptive responses received higher scores.



We intended to use the LIWC results in our correlational analyses, but the average word count for the vignette responses was only 60.4 words and 14.33 words on average for the open-ended coping question that was used for the general coping strategy assessment. We had hoped that the participants would write more for each response so that those samples would contribute to our correlations. We were able to find, though, some pronoun effects from these writing samples. Participants with higher marital satisfaction were more likely to use “we” pronouns, whereas participants with lower marital satisfaction were more likely to use “he/she” pronouns in response to the vignette situation. In response to the coping approach question, participants with lower marital satisfaction were more likely to use “I” pronouns.

#### Discussion

The results of our study indicate several important factors with regard to discrepancies in religiosity among spouses, religious orientation, and marital satisfaction. We focused on the religious discrepancy variable in our analyses, but the religious change discrepancy showed similar patterns as the religious discrepancy variable. The religious practice discrepancy variable did not show large differences. Religious discrepancies, a variable determined by analyzing the difference in various religiously associated ratings among the participant and their spouse, provide valuable information pertaining to coping styles. Those couples with higher discrepancies in their religiosity had less adaptive responses to the specific stressor, and less adaptive coping strategies overall. Such maladaptive coping strategies as lower positive reappraisal, increased use of alcohol, venting, and distraction were associated with increased religious differences among spouses. This difference also affected both marital and life satisfaction ratings,

and suggested that spouses who were more religiously different did not view their marriage as being sanctified or encompassing sacred qualities, and simply did not enjoy participating in religiously associated activities together. The results supported our hypothesis that being religiously different in commitment and practice from your spouse has negative implications for the marriage and general coping style.

This first hypothesis was strengthened by the results of the mediational analysis, which was based on correlations between the discrepancy variable and marital satisfaction, as well as correlations between the discrepancy variable and coping. The two types of coping- the maladaptive coping strategy obtained from the general coping strategy assessment and the avoidant coping style- were strong predictors of lower marital satisfaction. The partial mediation suggested that the relationship between the religious discrepancy variable, which again was evaluating how different the participant was from their spouse in terms of religious commitment and beliefs, and lower marital satisfaction can be partially accounted for by the finding that the discrepancy seemed to promote maladaptive coping. Therefore, our results were able to show that being more religiously different from your spouse leads to lower marital satisfaction at least partially due to maladaptive coping tendencies. It would seem that we were correct in our assumption that those who might normally draw on religious mediators for coping are less prone to do so when they are in a relationship in which the spouse does not agree with or support that particular aspect (religious involvement) of the participant's life.

It is important to note that the results we obtained in this study by and large do not reflect interfaith marriages. Rather, they reflect differences in commitment to religious and spiritual pursuits. The vast majority of the respondents were Christian and the

participants most often reported that they and their spouse subscribed to the same denomination as well (i.e., both Catholic, Presbyterian, etc.).

Our results also provide evidence that having an extrinsic religious orientation, or being motivated to participate in religious activities for primarily social reasons or personal gains, can also have negative implications for marital satisfaction. Those with extrinsically religious orientations had less adaptive responses to the specific stressor and general maladaptive coping patterns similarly to those with higher religious discrepancies. The extrinsic motivation was associated with maladaptive coping strategies such as decreased use of planning and increased use of denial, venting, distraction and social support. It was also associated with low emotion-focused coping potential and fear in response to the stressful situation. However, an extrinsically religious orientation, though associated with lower marital satisfaction and higher occurrence of depressive symptoms, was not associated with lower life satisfaction or perceived stress. The positive outcomes associated with the extrinsic motivation may be due to the social circle from which one seeks social support and encouragement. In contrast to the extrinsic motivation is the intrinsic religious motivation, characterized by a desire to grow closer to God and seek spiritual growth, which was associated with increased use of positive reappraisal and the use of religion as a coping strategy. Positive reappraisal is useful in negative life events or stressful times in a person's life in that it allows a person to reframe a situation in such a way that flavors it with positive outcomes and seizes the opportunity for growth, which is a very adaptive means of coping. The intrinsic motivation was also positively associated with both joint religious activities and marriage sanctification. Perhaps it was qualities such as these- enjoying religious

activities with one's spouse and viewing one's marriage as having sacred qualities- that were missing from those who were extrinsically motivated and may broaden the explanation of why they would have lower marital satisfaction. This suggestion is somewhat strengthened by the result that intrinsic religiosity was not related to the religious discrepancy variable, but extrinsic religiosity was marginally correlated with the discrepancy.

In bringing all of the results together, a broader profile of marital satisfaction can be drawn. It has been shown in this study that with higher marital satisfaction come lower levels of negative feelings and greater levels of positive feelings in response to stressors, as well as higher levels of both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping potentials. It seems that greater marital satisfaction lends itself to more adaptive coping, such as greater use of planning and positive reappraisal, as well as lower levels of stress and depressive symptoms. Those couples experiencing greater marital satisfaction also enjoyed participating in religious activities together and viewed their marriage as being sanctified, where sanctification refers to viewing God as integral to their marriage and that their relationship with their spouse was a manifestation of their beliefs about God and his purposes for their life. In other words, their relationship with their spouse complimented or enhanced their relationship with God and vice versa. Though our writing samples were not large enough to be as informative as we originally hoped, some general observances can be made. Those with higher marital satisfaction exhibited a tendency to use more team or partner-type language and those with lower marital satisfaction had a tendency to use more selfish or blaming language. These results

provide a greater understanding to the nature of religious affiliation and the importance it can hold in the most important relationship we experience, that of marriage.

The implications of these results are many. Our results statistically support the importance of considering the role of various religious factors and how they influence one's marriage. If a person marries someone who has a different level of commitment to religious pursuits, it seems that this weakens the bond that they have with their spouse because such religious matters are so integral to a person's life. However, if a person marries someone with a comparable level of commitment to religious pursuits and holds their faith as a supreme value, they are more likely to be able to use religious coping in an adaptive manner. Also, sharing similar views on such an important value allows spouses to enjoy participating in religious activities together that are often very personal and strengthen the level of intimacy between them. Viewing one's marriage as sanctified or a manifestation of God's role and purposes in their life encourages maintaining a higher level of respect and care for one's spouse because it is intimately tied to his or her faith.

### *Limitations*

A limitation with our study was that participants simply did not write enough in response to both the vignette and the open-ended questions that were intended to further assess coping styles. The writing samples from the vignette responses were only 60.4 words on average and the coping question responses were only 14.33 words on average, which did not provide enough text to merit using the LIWC analysis program. This unfortunately kept us from being able to use the writing samples as part of our correlational analyses, other than the use of the general coping strategy assessment

(adaptive/maladaptive rating) that was done on the coping question and associations between pronoun use and marital satisfaction.

The use of vignettes instead of retrospective reports may have also been a limitation to this study. Because participants were randomly assigned to only one of the vignettes, it is likely that some found these scenarios to be irrelevant to their marriage. For example, some participants whose vignette discussed disciplining their children may not have had children and thus could not give an accurate response to how they would handle this with their spouse. If the vignette had depicted an actual problem they had experienced in their marriage, the ratings on appraisal, coping, and emotional responses would have been more reliable instead of based on hypothetical feelings and circumstances. It is also possible that participants filled out the ratings unsure of how they would respond to the vignette situation. For example, if their decision about the particular issue was contingent upon multiple factors and they were unsure which way to answer, they may not have been able to effectively rate how they would feel about or appraise the situation. Thus, the use of vignettes and self-report measures may not have produced reliable ratings on several of the scales.

Another limitation to this study was relying on a sample of convenience. The individuals who participated either found the survey on one of the two websites or were simply friends and acquaintances whose participation was solicited via email. Because the majority of our respondents indicated that they married someone within their faith, we were unable to draw conclusions regarding denominational differences, which had hoped would be another factor to investigate. The sample cannot necessarily be construed as

representing a specific population and thus, the results do not necessarily generalize to all married persons.

### *Further Research*

Several suggestions for further research in this area can be made. Investigating the specific denominational differences among participants and their spouses may provide relevant information for understanding coping differences and adaptive/maladaptive tendencies. The sample of participants in our study was largely same-church couples, so we were unable to draw any conclusions specific to denominational differences. Another adjustment that could be made to enhance this study would be to structure it in such a way that participants had to write extensively in response to the posed stressor or other open-ended questions. Instructing participants to write about specific things and elaborate on their responses and feelings would provide text samples that would be more useful in the analyses. Also, instead of using vignettes, it might be useful to execute a retrospective study in which participants are allowed to write about and discuss a recent stressful situation that they endured with their spouse and prompt them to write extensively about how they handled it together. Analyzing the language and asking subsequent questions regarding appraisal, emotions, and coping strategies may lend a greater, more realistic understanding to the role of religious coping in real life situations. Another useful inquiry might be that of why couples who are religiously different chose to marry one another and how dealing with that before marrying either enhanced or weakened their marriage as a result.

### Conclusion

This study was intended to show that religious differences among spouses led to lower marital satisfaction, as well as higher levels of depressive symptoms and perceived stress. We were able to show that the relationship between these religious differences and lower marital satisfaction may be in part due to maladaptive coping strategies. Our study is significant because the results we derived are applicable in day-to-day living and provide insight into the complicated relationship between religiosity and marital satisfaction.



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\* The scales in this article were adapted for the purposes of this survey.

## Appendix

### *A. Religious Emphasis Scale*

Please respond to the following items, on a 0-5 basis, to indicate “how much [your] parents emphasized practicing the family religion while [you] were growing up.” (Altemeyer, 1988, p.205).

- 0 = no emphasis was placed on the behavior
- 1 = a slight emphasis was placed on the behavior
- 2 = a mild emphasis was placed on the behavior
- 3 = a moderate emphasis was placed on the behavior
- 4 = a strong emphasis was placed on the behavior
- 5 = a very strong emphasis was placed on the behavior

1. Going to church; attending religious service.
2. Attending “Sunday school”; getting systematic religious instruction regularly.
3. Reviewing the teachings of the religion at home.
4. Praying before meals.
5. Reading Scripture or other religious material.
6. Praying before bedtime.
7. Discussing moral “do’s” and “don’t’s” in religious terms.
8. Observing religious holidays; celebrating events like Christmas in a religious way.
9. Being a good representative of the faith; acting the way a devout member of your religion would be expected to act.
10. Taking part in religious youth groups.

### B. Religious Experience Questionnaire

Below are listed a number of descriptive statements concerning religious experience. We would like you to use these statements to describe *YOUR* religious experience as accurately as possible. That is, we would like you to indicate, on a scale from 1 to 7, how true of **YOUR** religious experience these various statements are. Please respond to each item using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes but Infrequently	Occasionally	Often the time	Almost all	Always

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I experience an awareness of God's love.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I pray privately in places other than church.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I experience feelings of anger or resentment toward God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I ask God to forgive my sins.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I am afraid that God is going to punish me in some way.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. When I have decisions to make in my everyday life, I try to find out what God wants me to do.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I experience the feeling that God is so big and important He doesn't have time for my personal problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I feel very close to God in prayer, during public worship, or at important moments in my life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I experience awareness of God's influence in my daily life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. When I pray to God, I feel like I'm having a conversation with a close friend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. My relationship to God is characterized by close fellowship.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I find myself doubting that God really exists.

*C. Open-ended Pilot Survey Questions*

Open ended questions:

1. Do you consider yourself a religious person? If yes, please specify denomination.
2. Do you consider yourself a spiritual person?
3. How often do you do the following:
  - a. Attend a religious service? \_\_\_\_\_ per week
  - b. Pray? \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Read a sacred text, such as the Bible or Torah?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. When are you most likely to pray?
5. Have you had a time when you felt like God was punishing you or someone you know?
6. What do you gain or what do you enjoy about being a part of a church/mosque/synagogue/temple?
7. Is your spirituality/religiousness just one aspect of your life or something that is a part of everything you do?
8. Have you had an experience that was undeniably the result of a higher power (i.e. God)?
9. When you go through a trial or hard time, do you draw on the help of a higher power or trust in yourself mostly to get through it?
10. What do you feel is the purpose of trials in your life?

*D. Email Text*

In our research laboratory, we are investigating the impact of marital relationships on coping styles. The purpose of this study is to examine married people's feelings and thoughts about their relationships, as well as their behaviors within their relationships. We are hoping you will be willing to help us out!

As a participant in this study, you will be asked about several aspects of your marital relationship. You will be asked to imagine yourself in a hypothetical situation that many couples find themselves in, and answer questions about the way in which you would respond to this situation. Additionally, you will be asked to provide some background information. The entire survey should take less than half an hour.

The survey is administered online and is completely anonymous. Your name or other identifying information is not collected at any time. Your participation is voluntary.

If you would be interested in participating in the study, click on the link below, or type the url into the web browser of your choice: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=bs4LaPWQ\\_2bnHkPS3cHCzpzA\\_3d\\_3d](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=bs4LaPWQ_2bnHkPS3cHCzpzA_3d_3d).

If you have questions about this study, feel free to contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Leslie D. Kirby, at [leslie.kirby@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:leslie.kirby@vanderbilt.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

### *E. Vignette Text*

#### *Vignette Situation 1- Holidays*

It is nearing the Christmas holiday season and decisions need to be made about where your family will celebrate Christmas this year- either at your parents' house or your spouse's parents' house. You feel that this year your family should go to your parents' house for the Christmas holiday because last year you went to his/her parents' house. However, this is the first year in awhile that your spouse's entire family will be gathering at his/her parents' house and he/she does not want to miss the opportunity to have everyone together, especially because everyone lives so far apart these days and the cost of travel is outrageous even before you factor in the inconveniences of delays and cancelled flights. Even though it isn't even Thanksgiving yet, the decision about where to spend Christmas this year needs to be made soon so tickets can be purchased early enough to avoid the rise in price and availability of flights as it gets closer to Christmas. How do you and your spouse resolve this problem?

#### *Vignette Situation 2- Work Stress*

Things are really busy for you at work this week and you have a big presentation to give on Thursday that might lead to a possible promotion. Your spouse has been stressed out because the kids just started back to school and have multiple extra curricular activities that require ride coordination after school and Wednesday night is your son's first baseball game of the school year and he would love for you to be there. Your spouse also needs to take your daughter to dance class and cannot stay at the game the whole time, so he/she asks you to please go to his game instead. However, you really are behind at work and had planned on working late Wednesday night in order to catch up and prepare for your big presentation on Thursday. How do you and your spouse decide what will take priority in this situation?

#### *Vignette Situation 3- Small Things*

You and your spouse have been at odds with one another all week on small issues and just haven't been getting along well, but there is no one particular reason for the friction between the two of you. You seem to disagree about really unimportant matters, but it still bothers you because you typically don't have this type of dynamic in your relationship. One evening it finally turns into a huge fight over how to sort the clothes for laundry- this is something you typically do but your spouse wants to help out to possibly relieve some of the tension between the two of you. However, you have a set way of doing things and your spouse's method is completely different. It aggravates you because your spouse can't just do it your way, but it is also thoughtful that he/she wanted to help. Once you both calm down, you realize that a lot of small things have just been building up and finally reached a threshold over the silly laundry issue. How do you and your spouse talk through all of the things that have been building up to cause such an unnecessary fight?

*Vignette Situation 4- Discipline*

You and your spouse are having a disagreement about how to appropriately discipline your son. In the past, he has always been a good student and stayed out of trouble for the most part. However, recently he has been more disruptive at school and he is beginning get into disagreements and fights with the other students. Implementing previous methods of discipline have not yet resolved this behavior problem, so now you and your spouse must decide what adjustments to make and how to handle this situation. One of you feels that a swift, harsh, and sure punishment should take care of it, whereas the other feels that explaining why these behaviors are inappropriate and discussing better ways to handle these frustrations at school is the right solution. How do you and your spouse resolve your disagreement in a way that also provides the most effective solution for your son's behavior problems?

*Vignette Situation 5- House Renovation*

You and your spouse have lived in your same house for a long time now. It is starting to look run down and out-dated. You would really like to spend some time and invest some money into renovations so that the house stays in good shape for several more years or is in a condition where it would sell easily if you had to move for some reason. You also think it would be a fun thing for you and your spouse to do together. However, your spouse is stressed about the family's financial status and doesn't think that now is the time to renovate the house- it's in a fine, livable condition and besides, trying to keep up with the latest decorating trends and styles is just frivolous. How do you and your spouse negotiate your desire to spruce things up and enjoy a bonding activity with his/her financial stress?

*Vignette Situation 6- (Positive) Moving*

You and your spouse have been married for a few years and are living in an apartment. Lately, you and your spouse have decided it is time to move into a new house and you have done a little house shopping, too. You have both decided on the perfect house for you both, one that will be especially fitting once you decide to start having children. It has a great backyard that has enough room for a dog one day, plus it is located in a safe neighborhood and associated with a great school district. The next few weeks will involve packing, dealing with a lot of paperwork and financial adjustments, and just the physical labor of the actual move. Though this is a very exciting change, it doesn't come without its own amount of stress. How do you and your spouse handle this kind of change and the stress that comes along with it?



### *F. Situated Appraisal Components Scale*

Below are a number of questions about your thoughts in the situation you are imagining. For each question please answer with a number from 1 to 7 to indicate what you are thinking in this situation as you are imagining it. For some of the questions specific endpoints are provided in parentheses to help you define the scale for that question. If there are no endpoints provided you should base your answers on the following scale.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7  
 not at all moderately extremely

- 1) How much do you care about what is happening in this situation?
- 2) To what extent are there negative aspects to the situation-- things that you don't want, or are displeased about?
- 3) To what extent are there positive aspects to the situation -- things that you do want, or are pleased about?
- 4) How serious is what is happening in this situation?
- 4) To what extent do you consider yourself to be responsible for this situation?
- 5) To what extent do you consider someone or something else to be responsible for this situation?
- 7) How consistent is what is happening in this situation with what you want to happen?
- 8) How certain are you that you will be able to do something to make (or keep) the situation the way you want it to be? (1 = completely certain that I WILL NOT be able; 4 = completely uncertain; 7 = completely certain that I WILL be able)
- 9) How certain are you that you will be able to deal emotionally with what is happening, however it turns out? (1 = completely certain I WILL NOT be able; 4 = completely uncertain; 7 = completely certain I WILL be able)
- 10) How, if at all, do you expect this situation to change in the future? (1 = to get much worse; 4 = to stay the same; 7 = to get much better)

*G. COPE*

Please respond to each of the following statements to indicate what you would do in response to the situation you just read.

1 = I usually don't do this at all

2 = I usually do this a little bit

3 = I usually do this a medium amount

4 = I usually do this a lot

1. I try to grow as a person as a result of the experience.
2. I turn to work or other substitute activities to take my mind off things.
3. I get upset and let my emotions out.
4. I try to get advice from someone about what to do.
5. I say to myself "this isn't real."
6. I put my trust in God.
7. I laugh about the situation.
8. I admit to myself that I can't deal with it, and quit trying.
9. I discuss my feelings with someone else.
10. I use alcohol to make myself feel better.
11. I get used to the idea that it happened.
12. I get upset, and am really aware of it.
13. I seek God's help.
14. I make a plan of action.
15. I make jokes about it.
16. I accept that this has happened and can't be changed.
17. I just give up trying to reach my goal.
18. I take additional action to try to get rid of the problem.
19. I try to lose myself for a while by drinking alcohol.
20. I refuse to believe that it has happened.

21. I let out my feelings.
22. I try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.
23. I try to come up with a strategy about what to do.
24. I drink alcohol, in order to think about it less.
25. I kid around about it.
26. I give up the attempt to get what I want.
27. I look for something good in what's happening.
28. I pretend that it hasn't really happened.
29. I go to the movies or watch TV, to think about it less.
30. I accept the reality of the fact that it happened.
31. I ask people who have had similar experiences what they did.
32. I feel a lot of emotional distress and I find myself expressing those feelings a lot.
33. I take direct action to get around the problem.
34. I try to find comfort in my religion.
35. I make fun of the situation.
36. I reduce the amount of effort I'm putting into solving the problem.
37. I talk to someone about how I feel.
38. I use alcohol to help me get through it.
39. I learn to live with it.
40. I act as though it hasn't even happened.
41. I learn something from the experience.
42. I pray more than usual.

### H. Emotion Rating Form

Below are a number of clusters of adjectives that describe different emotions or feelings. Each group of adjectives is meant to get at a single basic feeling or emotion. Please indicate the extent to which each cluster of adjectives characterizes your feelings and emotions within the situation you just described, at the particular time you described. Please use the nine-point scale depicted below. Indicate your ratings by writing the appropriate number (1 to 9) in the space provided next to EACH cluster of adjectives.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7	
1	7
did not characterize my feelings at all	characterized my feelings somewhat
characterized my feelings extremely well	
Rating	
1) _____ surprised amazed astonished	10) _____ grateful appreciative thankful
2) _____ guilty culpable	11) _____ interested engaged
3) _____ defeated resigned beaten	12) _____ mad angry irate
4) _____ relieved unburdened	13) _____ hopeful optimistic
5) _____ tranquil calm serene	14) _____ bored detached uninterested
6) _____ frustrated thwarted exasperated	15) _____ nervous anxious apprehensive
7) _____ regretful remorseful sorry	16) _____ overwhelmed overloaded
8) _____ determined challenged motivated	17) _____ proud triumphant
9) _____ shy timid bashful	18) _____ afraid frightened scared

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7  
 did not characterized characterized  
 characterize my my feelings my feelings  
 feelings at all somewhat extremely well

## Rating

19) \_\_\_\_\_ sad  
 downhearted  
 blue

23) \_\_\_\_\_ joyful  
 happy  
 glad

20) \_\_\_\_\_ ashamed  
 disgraced

24) \_\_\_\_\_ eager  
 enthused  
 excited

21) \_\_\_\_\_ disgusted  
 repulsed  
 revolted

25) \_\_\_\_\_ embarrassed  
 humiliated

22) \_\_\_\_\_ irritated  
 annoyed

26) \_\_\_\_\_ disappointed  
 let down

*I. The Satisfaction with Life Scale*

Indicate how much you agree/disagree with the statement using a seven point scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)

1. In most ways my life is close to ideal.
2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
3. I am satisfied with my life.
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

*J. Comprehensive Marital Satisfaction Scale*

Please use the following scale to indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each of the statements below. Record your numerical answer to each statement in the space provided preceding the statement.

- +4 = very strong agreement
- +3 = strong agreement
- +2 = moderate agreement
- +1 = slight agreement
- 0 = neither agreement nor disagreement
- 1 = slight disagreement
- 2 = moderate disagreement
- 3 = strong disagreement
- 4 = very strong disagreement

1. My spouse and I agree on how we handle our finances.
2. I prefer doing things without my spouse.
3. My spouse is very loving and affectionate.
4. I regret marrying my spouse.
5. My spouse satisfies me sexually.
6. I don't get the love and affection I want from my spouse.
7. My spouse and I agree on the friends with whom we associate.
8. My spouse and I share the same basic philosophy of life.
9. I don't approve of the way my spouse relates to my family.
10. My spouse and I have similar ambitions and goals.
11. My spouse and I have marital difficulties.
12. I always confide in my spouse.
13. If I were marrying again, I would pick my present spouse.
14. My spouse really gets on my nerves.
15. My spouse and I kiss daily.
16. My spouse and I do not communicate well with each other.
17. My marriage is not as good as most marriages.
18. My spouse and I settle our disagreements with mutual give and take.
19. I am very happy with my marriage.
20. My spouse and I seldom laugh together.
21. I am committed to my marriage.
22. My spouse and I quarrel frequently.
23. My spouse and I agree on how to spend our leisure time.
24. My spouse and I often argue about finances.
25. My spouse and I often disagree about major decisions.
26. I am pleased with my relationship with my spouse.

### *K. Perceived Stress Scale*

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them, and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer each question fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count the number of times you felt a particular way, but rather indicate what seems like a reasonable estimate. For each question choose from the following alternatives:

- |     | 0     | 1   | 2         | 3            | 4          |
|-----|-------|---|-----------|--------------|------------|
|     | never | almost never  | sometimes | fairly often | very often |
| 1.  | _____ | In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?                     |           |              |            |
| 2.  | _____ | In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?         |           |              |            |
| 3.  | _____ | In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?  |           |              |            |
| 4.  | _____ | In the last month, how often have you dealt with irritating life hassles?   |           |              |            |
| 5.  | _____ | In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?   |           |              |            |
| 6.  | _____ | In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?             |           |              |            |
| 7.  | _____ | In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?   |           |              |            |
| 8.  | _____ | In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things you had to do?                |           |              |            |
| 9.  | _____ | In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?                                  |           |              |            |
| 10. | _____ | In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?  |           |              |            |
| 11. | _____ | In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control? |           |              |            |
| 12. | _____ | In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish?               |           |              |            |
| 13. | _____ | In the last month, how often have you been able to control the way you spend your time?                               |           |              |            |
| 14. | _____ | In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?      |           |              |            |



*L. Joint Religious Activities*

Please indicate how often you and your spouse do the following:

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7  
Never Sometimes Very often

1. My spouse and I pray together.
2. My spouse and I pray for each other.
3. My spouse and I talk together about how to live out God's will.
4. My spouse and I talk about our personal moral and spiritual issues.
5. My spouse and I attend church together.
6. My spouse and I go to Bible study together.
7. My spouse and I go on spiritual or religious retreats together.
8. My spouse and I read books or articles about religious or spiritual topics.
9. My spouse and I participate in volunteer work through our religious organization.
10. My spouse and I talk about God's role in our marriage.
11. My spouse and I celebrate religious holidays together.
12. My spouse and I engage in religious rituals together (e.g., fasting, meditation).

*M. Manifestation of God*

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7  
 Strongly disagree    neutral    strongly agree

1. God played a role in the development of my marriage.
2. God is present in my marriage.
3. My marriage is a reflection of God's will.
4. My marriage is an expression of my spirituality or religiousness.
5. My marriage is symbolic of God and what I believe about God.
6. God is part of my marriage.
7. My marriage is consistent with my spiritual or religious identity.
8. I experience God through my marriage.
9. My marriage reflects my image of what God wants for me.
10. My marriage is influenced by God's actions in our lives.
11. My marriage is a holy bond.
12. My marriage represents God's presence in my life.
13. My marriage follows the Bible and what it teaches.
14. My marriage follows the teachings of my church.

*N. Religious Background Questions*

In what religion were you raised?

In what religion was your spouse raised?

What is your current religion?

What is your spouse's current religion?

Do you consider yourself a religious person?

No    Ambivalent    Somewhat religious    Yes    Very Religious

Do you consider your spouse to be religious?

No    Ambivalent    Somewhat religious    Yes    Very Religious

Do you consider yourself to be spiritual?

No    Ambivalent    Somewhat spiritual    Yes    Very Spiritual

Do you consider your spouse to be spiritual?

No    Ambivalent    Somewhat spiritual    Yes    Very Spiritual

How often do you attend a religious service?

Never	2-3 Times/Month
Holidays only	once/week
Once or twice a year	twice/week
Every 2-3 months	more than twice/week

How often does your spouse attend religious services?

Never	2-3 Times/Month
Holidays only	once/week
Once or twice a year	twice/week
Every 2-3 months	more than twice/week

How often do you pray?

Never	Weekly
Rarely	Daily
Monthly	Multiple time/day

How often do you think your spouse prays?

Not sure	
Never	Weekly
Rarely	Daily
Monthly	Multiple time/day

How often do you read a sacred text, such as the Bible, Koran, Torah?

Never	Weekly
Rarely	2-3 times/week
Monthly	Daily

How often does your spouse read a sacred text such as the Bible, Koran, Torah?

Not sure	
Never	Weekly
Rarely	2-3 times/week
Monthly	Daily

Have you become more or less religious since you got married?

More religious	less religious	the same
----------------	----------------	----------

Do you think your spouse has become more or less religious since you married?

More religious	less religious	the same
----------------	----------------	----------

When you go through a trial or a hard time, do you draw mostly on the help of a higher power (i.e. God) or mostly trust in yourself to get through it?

Self	Higher Power
------	--------------

If you rely on God/higher power, in what way do you feel like God helps you get through trials?

Do you make political choices based on your religious attitudes?

What is your political orientation?

Very liberal	liberal	moderate	conservative	very conservative
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*O. Age Universal Religious Orientation Scale*

Indicate how much you agree/disagree with the statement on a five point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)

1. I enjoy reading about my religion.
2. I go to church because it helps me to make friends.
3. It doesn't matter what I believe so long as I am good.
4. Sometimes I have to ignore my religious beliefs because of what people might think of me.
5. It is important to me to spend time in private thought and prayer.
6. I would prefer to go to religious services:  
(1- a few times a year or less, 2- once every month or two, 3- two or three times a month, 4- about once a week, 5- more than once a week)
7. I have often had a strong sense of God's presence.
8. I pray mainly to gain relief and protection.
9. I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs.
10. What religion offers me most is comfort in times of trouble and sorrow.
11. My religion is important because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.
12. I would rather join a Bible study group than a church social group.
13. Prayer is for peace and happiness.
14. Although I am religious, I don't let it affect my daily life.
15. I go to church mostly to spend time with my friends.
16. My whole approach to life is based on my religion.
17. I go to church mainly because I enjoy seeing people I know there.
18. I pray mainly because I have been taught to pray/
19. Prayers I say when I'm alone are as important to me as those I say in church.
20. Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important in life.

*P. CESD*

This section is a list of some of the ways you might have felt or behaved **during the past week**. Please indicate how often you have felt or behaved this way **during the past week** by circling the appropriate number next to each statement:

1 = **Rarely** or none of the time  
(Less than one day)

2 = **Some** or a little of the time  
(1-2 days)

3 = **Occasionally** or a moderate  
amount of time (3-4 days)

4 = **Most** or all of the time  
(5-7 days)

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I was bothered by things that don't usually bother me                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. I felt that I could not shake off the blues, even<br>with help from my family or friends. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. I felt that I was just as good as other people.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. I felt depressed.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. I felt that everything I did was an effort.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. I felt hopeful about the future.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. I thought my life had been a failure.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. I felt fearful.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. My sleep was restless.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. I was happy.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. I talked less than usual.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. I felt lonely.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. People were unfriendly.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. I enjoyed life.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. I had crying spells.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. I felt sad.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. I felt that people disliked me.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. I could not "get going".   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*Q. Open-ended questions*

Do you regularly rely on your faith to help you deal with family stressors?

Never          rarely          sometimes          most of the time          all the time

Comments:

Do you discuss spiritual matters with your spouse?

Never          rarely          sometimes          most of the time          all the time

Comments:

When you and your spouse have disagreements or arguments, how do you handle them?

Do you pray together about current disagreements or arguments that you have had?

Never          rarely          sometimes          most of the time          all the time

We pray together daily anyway

Comments:

Do you set aside a specific time outside the heat of an argument to address or deal with problems?

Never          rarely          sometimes          most of the time          all the time

Comments:

How often do you feel comfortable discussing your personal stressors with your spouse?

Never          rarely          sometimes          most of the time          all the time

Comments: