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The Role of Religious Affiliation and Attitudes in Marriage Maintenance Strategies

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THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND ATTITUDES IN MARRIAGE

MAINTENANCE STRATEGIES

by

Chenika Fowler

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ABSTRACT

The Role of Religious Affiliation and Attitudes in Marriage Maintenance Strategies

by

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Utah State University, 2014

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This study was designed to explore maintenance strategies used by religiously affiliated married couples, links between religion and marital quality, and whether maintenance strategies serve a mediating pathway between religion and marital quality. The study included 80 married participants recruited from university courses. Most participants were Caucasian and identified as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). Fetzer's religiosity survey assessed various dimensions of religious activity and belief. Marital quality was assessed via measures of commitment and conflict, and marital maintenance strategies included both cognitive and behavioral efforts to remain connected and positive with the spouse. Overall, the sample was highly religious and reported high levels of commitment to their marriages. Strong relationships were observed between religious variables and marital quality, and both religious variables and marital quality demonstrated some relationships with marital maintenance

strategies. However, links between religiosity and martial quality were not mediated by the use of specific marital maintenance strategies.

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PUBLIC ABSTRACT

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This study was conducted to explore associations among marital maintenance strategies, religious experiences, and marital quality in a sample of 80 married college students. Maintenance strategies are tactics used by couple members to sustain healthy relationships/marriages, and include both cognitive (e.g., choosing to focus on the positive aspects of the partner) and behavioral (e.g., engaging in shared activites) strategies. Specific patterns of association among religious practices and beliefs, particular maintenance strategies, and marital-quality outcomes were assessed in order to better understand pathways to optimal marital functioning for religiously affiliated individuals.

Most participants were affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), and indicated very high levels of felt importance of their religious beliefs and participation in religious practices. Within this highly religious sample, greater investment in religion was related to less conflict and more commitment to marriage. Maintenance strategies, such as enhancing positivity in the relationship and providing assurance to the partner, were related to commitment also, but their relation was not as pronounced as religious involvement. The results of this study have clincial and developmental implications for understanding marital functioning among highly religious individuals. Exploring specific doctrinal beliefs and religious values that link to marital commitment can inform interventions with religious couples.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Marriage, faith, commitment, religion, and happiness. These simple words have proven complex in our society. What do these words have in common? Often society has questioned the correlation between committed marriages and religion. Many believe that religion is a powerful, positive force behind a healthy relationship and marriage. Studies do show that people believe that religion and religious beliefs are very important in American life today (Gallup & Lindsay, 1999; Sherkat & Ellison, 1999; Sigalow, Shain, & Bergey, 2012). Several researchers have observed positive relationships between religious participation and marital longevity, suggesting that religious values may support marriage maintenance (e.g., Allgood, Harris, Skogrand, & Lee, 2009; Espinosa, 2008).

Another element that is believed to support marriage/relationship maintenance is relationship maintenance strategies. Relationship maintenance strategies, which are also known as successful characteristics in a relationship, are techniques that people use in order to uphold a healthy relationship (Miller & Perlman, 2009). People who use these different strategies (e.g., positivity, assurances, sharing tasks) want their committed relationships to be long term (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999), since maintenance strategies have been known to help people sustain their relationships with their partners through different viewpoints (Miller & Perlman, 2009).

The present research sought to directly examine the potential link between religious affiliation and marriage maintenance. Studying religious factors in maintaining relationships could be important to understand the complexity of relationship

development in the U.S. Having a better understanding on how religious factors are related to relationship outcomes could provide a fuller picture of risk and resilience in romantic relationships and suggest some potential areas for intervention.

This study explored whether a person's religious affiliation and religious attitudes correlated with the beliefs of how important different relationship maintenance strategies are in the context of marital relationships. Further, links between marital quality and both religious values and maintenance strategies were assessed in order to determine possible pathways of association between religious participation and marital quality. Specifically the following questions were addressed.

1. What maintenance strategies are used by religiously affiliated married couples, and how are maintenance strategies related to specific religiosity variables (e.g., religious affiliation, religious practices)?

2. What are the associations between religious experiences and general marital quality (e.g., commitment, satisfaction), and are those relationships mediated through maintenance strategies?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although studies have shown that religion affects negotiations in intimate relationships (Ellison, Burdette, & Wilcox, 2010), limited research has explored how religious variables are related to marital relationship outcomes. In addition, the current literature has limited information on how religious people take into account relationship maintenance strategies when they are trying to maintain a successful relationship. The purpose of this literature review is to critique and synthesize the previous research on religiosity and maintenance strategies in marriages. The objectives for this review were as follows.

1. To explain and define what maintenance strategies are and their correlation with successful relationship outcomes.

2. To review definition and measurement of relevant aspects of religion.

3. To define links between religious experiences and attitudes and beliefs about marriage.

4. To draw conclusions that identify the research objectives and questions in order to formulate a study design.

Relationship Maintenance Strategies

Relationship maintenance strategies, which are also known as relationship maintenance mechanisms, are behaviors that people use in order to maintain a healthy relationship (Miller & Perlman, 2009). They are known to help people stay committed

and content in their relationships. Miller and Perlman stated that people who want their committed relationships to last tend to use maintenance strategies because it helps them to "perceive themselves, their partners, and their relationship in ways that helps them to sustain their partnership" (p. 423). Miller and Perlman also stated that the people that use maintenance strategies in their relationships have a tendency "to act in ways that avoid or defuse conflict and that enrich the relationship" (p. 423).

Because most people tend to experience change in the way they think and feel about their relationships along with experiencing change in how they react in their relationships, there tends to be two types of maintenance mechanisms. The first type of mechanism is the cognitive maintenance mechanisms, which has to do with the way a person either judges or thinks about the relationship (Miller & Perlman, 2009). The second type of mechanism is the behavioral maintenance mechanisms, which have to do with how a person is willing to either act in the relationship or react to certain things.

Cognitive Maintenance Mechanisms

Cognitive maintenance mechanisms are when a person's perceptions start to change in a relationship and they start to think about themselves and their partners as one and not as separate individuals. There were four cognitive mechanisms that were identified by Miller and Perlman (2009): cognitive interdependence, positive illusions, inattention to alternatives, and derogation of tempting alternatives. The common characteristic of the cognitive mechanisms is that they work to maintain positive thoughts about their relationships and their partners.

A perfect example of a type of cognitive maintenance strategy would be cognitive

interdependence. Cognitive interdependence is when people experience "greater overlap between their partners lives and their own, and they use more plural pronouns, with we, us and ours, replacing I, me, and mine" (Miller & Perlman, 2009, p. 423).

Another good example of a cognitive maintenance mechanism would be when couple members view each other in positive illusions. Positive illusions are when people think of themselves in a highly favorable way and try to imagine a great future for their relationships. Neff and Karney (2003) said that positive illusion is where "a partner's faults are judged to be relatively trivial, the relationship's deficiencies are considered to be relatively unimportant, and a partner's misbehavior is dismissed as an unintentional or temporary aberration" (Miller & Perlman, 2009, p. 423). Positive illusions are known to help people solve their "problems of survival" in a relationship and help them to down play some of the most frustrating aspects that take place in relationships (Davies, 2010). Rusbult, Van Lange, Wildschut, Yovetich, and Verette (2000) stated that positive illusions really tend to help relationships last because people tend to think very highly of their relationships and visualize that they are better off than others.

Another cognitive maintenance mechanism that is known to keep couples committed to one another is inattention to alternatives (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Inattention to alternatives is a mechanism that some individuals use in relationships that helps them to not think about how much better they could be doing in another relationship with someone else. Committed people do not take notice of the fact that there are other people in the world from which they can choose and they maintain that the person they are with is the best for them. This particular mechanism goes hand in hand

with the last cognitive maintenance mechanism that will be discussed, which is

derogation of tempting alternatives.

Derogation of tempting alternatives is when individuals reduce the value of a very

attractive person. It is where people in committed relationships tend to believe that a

person who is extremely attractive to others is not as attractive as their significant other.

This mechanism helps couples to stay committed because it helps the committed partners

in the relationship to not see other people that are considered to be attractive as a threat to

their relationship and it helps each partner in the relationship to appreciate their lover

more. As Lydon, Fitzsimons, and Naidoo (2003) stated, this mechanism helps those that

are in committed relationships to belittle people that could tempt them to leave their

current relationship. These mechanisms might seem unrealistic but Miller and Perlman

(2009) argued that in order for people to maintain their relationships, they have to

disparage how a relationship could be better with someone else. While these cognitive

maintenance mechanisms deal with how a couple sees their relationship relative to others,

behavioral maintenance mechanisms deal with how couple-members interact with one

another.

Behavioral Maintenance Mechanisms

Behavioral maintenance mechanisms are changes that occur in what people do in

order to sustain a relationship instead of changing how they observe and evaluate others

(Miller & Perlman, 2009). Five behavioral mechanisms have been identified: willingness

to sacrifice, Michelangelo phenomenon, accommodation, playing, and forgiveness.

Behavioral mechanisms all entail intentional acts intended to sustain and increase

connection and positivity in the relationship.

One of the most common behavioral maintenance mechanisms is the willingness to sacrifice. Willingness to sacrifice, as Van Lange and colleagues (1997) and Whitton, Stanley, and Markman (2007) defined it, is having the capability to do things that one does not want to do or to not do things that one wants to do on behalf of preserving their relationship and preventing termination.

Another behavioral maintenance mechanism is the Michelangelo phenomenon, which is a situation in which each partner helps the other to become the best that he or she can be. Drigotas (2002) and Miller and Perlman (2009) noted that partners can encourage their significant others to be the best they can be, or the person that they imagine themselves to be, by supporting them, endorsing acceptance of their new role, and by promoting the fact that they are enjoying the person their significant other is becoming. When partners support one another in this way, it tends to strengthen the committed relationship that they share.

Some additional behavioral maintenance mechanisms used in maintaining a relationship are accommodation, playing, and forgiveness (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Accommodation is when people are willing to ignore how their significant other mistreats them during certain situations. For instance, when one partner is lashing out and criticizing the other because they are having a bad day, accommodation would be for the partner getting criticized to not react to how the other person is acting in a negative way and try to help calm down the upset person, or get to the bottom of the problem. Rusbult , Olsen, Davis, and Hannon (2001) stated that partners who know how to accommodate, or

handle things under these circumstances, tend to have happier, long lasting relationships. Due to the fact that accommodation can take a lot of hard work, some people try to follow up this technique with playing because it is a simpler maintenance mechanism and it can ease the tension being experienced between the couple (Miller & Perlman, 2009).

Playing is one of the behavioral maintenance mechanisms that each couple should use because when couples engage in stimulating activities that they both enjoy with one another, it helps them to appreciate their relationship more so that they want to remain together (Strong & Aron, 2006). Couples who find time to have fun together in productive and inspiring ways have a propensity to benefit a lot from it because it retains the stimulation and the contentment in the relationship (Miller & Perlman, 2009; Strong & Aaron, 2006).

Forgiveness is considered to be a behavioral maintenance mechanism because in order to succeed in relationship, one has to realize that no one is perfect and that everyone makes mistakes. Couples that learn to forgive when one of them makes a mistake tend to last longer than other couples because they learn how to deal with situations in a more positive way. Forgiveness also has the ability to quicken the healing of not only the individuals but the relationship because it helps people to learn how to handle situations that are not always pleasant in a responsible way and as those situations are being resolved the process will create a stronger bond between the couple (Miller & Perlman, 2009).

Specific Techniques of Relationship Maintenance

Canary and Stafford (2001) and Stafford (2003) completed multiple studies in order to figure out what people did to not only maintain their relationships, but to keep them successful and happy. Ten major maintenance strategies emerged that individuals use in their relationships with their significant others in order to maintain them. The ten major strategies were to have positivity in the relationship, be open with their significant other, give assurances to one another, share a social network, share tasks, share interest in different activities, support one another, share conflict management in the relationship, have avoidance in their relationship, and share humor (see Table 1).

Both Canary and Stafford (2001) and Stafford (2003) concluded that being positive in a relationship (i.e., trying to be cheerful, act nice, or attempt to increase their interactions with one another) relates to maintaining it. In addition, if one partner encourages the other to disclose thoughts and feelings, along with trying to see the quality of their relationship, it could create a strong bond between the two individuals. It has been stated that if couple members provide assurances in their relationship, that the individuals in it will "announce their love, commitment, and regard for each other," share a social network by "having friends in common and spending time with their partner's family," and "share tasks around the home" to where they share a "fair share of household responsibilities" (Miller & Perlman, 2009, p. 427) it can help preserve the relationship.

Table 1

Canary and Stafford's Relational Maintenance Strategies

Strategy	Examples
Positivity	Appear pleasant and try to be optimistic Make an attempt to make interactions entertaining
Openness	Encourage their partner to divulge their thoughts and feelings Discuss the importance/significance of the relationship
Assurances	Stress commitment to each other Entail that the relationship has a future
Sharing a social network	Emphasize on shared affiliations and friends Be willing to spend time with each other's family members and friends
Sharing tasks	Help regularly with task that need to be completed Do your fair share of the work that has to be done
Sharing activities	Share time with each other Share special routines with each other
Support	Pursue advice Comfort each other in time of need
Conflict management	Apologize when one is offended Be merciful and patient with your partner
Avoidance	Prevent conversing about certain topics Respect each other's space and privacy when they need to be alone
Humor	Call each other funny nicknames Joke around with each other

Source. Miller & Perlman, 2009, p. 427; and Stafford, 2003.

Links Between Relationship Maintenance Strategies and Relationship Quality/Outcomes

In previous studies it has been suggested that maintenance strategies tend to correlate with the quality and longevity of a relationship. For example, a longitudinal study with 108 individuals (76 women and 32 men) in dating relationships (Guerrero, Eloy, & Wabnik, 1993) "indicated that maintenance behaviors affect relational outcomes" (Noller & Feeney, 2006, p. 311) because couple members who had reported that their

relationships were stable and happy were the ones who practiced positivity, sharing tasks, and assurance in their relationships. The relationships of those who didn't practice those strategies in their relationships were either starting to fall apart or ended a few weeks later.

Weigel and Ballard-Reisch (1999) surveyed 129 married couples and discovered that wives' use of maintenance strategies were guided by their husbands' reaction/desires while husbands were guided more by their internal decision-making. For instance, Weigel and Ballard-Reisch pointed out that men do not react to maintenance strategies the way women do in a relationship/marriage. Women tend to be more positive, remain open, reaffirm the importance of their marriage, try to do things together with their partner, and perform tasks that both the individuals agree on, while men lean towards just using the "being positive" technique in their marriages (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). The reason that this is believed to be true is because previous research (Acitelli, 1992; Ragsdale, 1996) supported that women have a tendency to be more "relationship oriented" than men by attending to issues/relationship problems that are taking place in the relationship or marriage because they are more sensitive to them.

It has been stated that "couples use maintenance behaviors to ensure the continuation of valued relationships" (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999, p. 263). Maintenance mechanisms tend to promote and encourage intimacy between friends and lovers. It has also been mentioned that knowledge, caring, interdependence, mutuality, trust, and commitment are all likely to be enhanced by maintenance strategies that involve openness, assurances of one's love and commitment, reliable support, and plenty

of shared friends and activities.

Guerrero and colleagues (1993) explored whether maintenance behaviors linked to relational outcomes of stability, termination, escalation, or de-escalation. Guerrero and colleagues surveyed 76 females and 32 male undergraduates about the relationship maintenance behaviors they used in their relationships. Frequent use of maintenance strategies were connected with a more stable and progressive relationship, whereas infrequent use was associated with decreased stability in a relationship. It was observed that assurances and openness in relationships enlarged in escalating relationships, while sharing tasks, positivity, and assurance diminished in de-escalating relationships. These discoveries reinforced that maintenance strategies function to either change relationships or stabilize them.

Bell, Daly, and Gonzalez (1987) designed a study that defined different maintenance strategies that couples used to preserve the bonds that they shared. They established a typology of maintenance strategies and evaluated 109 married women ages 22-55 regarding satisfaction in their marriages when they use maintenance activities. Each woman completed a marital relationship inventory that asked how frequently she and her spouse used each strategy and how important it was to her that both individuals used the strategy in their marriage. Specifically, women were questioned on how important it was that they used the strategy and how important they thought it was to their spouses that they used the strategy in their marriages. There was a relationship between strategy valuation and marital satisfaction, which illustrated that satisfaction, was correlated with how frequently the strategies (spirituality, honesty, sensitivity, physical

affection, and self-inclusion) were used.

While Bell and colleagues (1987) used wives' perceptions/views in order to see how maintenance strategies were viewed in a marriage, Baxter and Dindia (1990) examined marital partners' perceptions by assessing similarities among marital maintenance strategies' from both men and women. Their study consisted of 91 married participants who were evaluated on how they sorted the importance of maintenance strategies used throughout their marriage. The results revealed that both men and women felt similar about maintenance strategies and ranked them alongside three alternative dimensions, which were "Constructive vs. Destructive Communication style, Ambivalence-based vs. Satiation-based Conditional Use, and Proactivity vs. Passivity" (Baxter & Dindia, 1990, p. 204).

Those who work harder in order to maintain their partnership by practicing maintenance strategy techniques have a bigger commitment and a stronger attachment than those who work less hard (Stafford, 2003). Based on the different perceptions that people have towards satisfaction and commitment to a relationship and a marriage, men and women tend to communicate to maintain their present relationship dynamics, as boyfriend and girlfriend or husband and wife (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). Since the

> perspectives individuals have about their relationships influence how hard they work at maintaining their relationships with their partners, married individuals are likely to be more positive, remain open, reaffirm the importance of their relationship, do things together, and perform agreed upon tasks when they feel positive about their relationships. (pp. 263-264)

Weigel and Ballard-Reisch (1999) addressed that the way one focuses on his or her relationship stimulates how and when maintenance strategies are used in the

relationship. For instance, wives, more so than husbands, girlfriends, and boyfriends, tend to be more likely to use maintenance behaviors as a way to sustain their marriages and make them successful. The gender differences in the use of maintenance strategies may be related to gender roles in society. For example, wives might use them in their marriages because they are influenced by the dynamics in their marriages, but a husband might use maintenance strategies based on his aspects outside of a relationship since a husband may use maintenance strategies as a way to show he is fulfilling the social and cultural expectations of him when it comes to his marriage (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). However, Weigel and Ballard-Reisch declared that maintenance strategies such as positivity, openness, assurances, networking, and sharing tasks tend to correlate with successful marriages when they are used by either spouse.

Religion and Religiosity

Religiosity has been identified as a "complex construct, both in terms of its composition and its psychological impact" (Ekas, Whitman, & Shivers 2009, p. 714). Religiosity has been known to shape one's identity in a more conceptual way progressively (Norrander & Wilcox, 2008). In addition, religiosity has been acknowledged as a factor that has positive influence on adolescence development (King & Boyatzis, 2004). King and Boyatzis' study found that a youth's involvement in religious activities increases their awareness of themselves, their world and universe around them. King and Boyatzis also stated that religious involvement as a youth sets a foundation of what qualities one looks for in a partner, which illustrates the maintenance

strategy "sharing social networks" because it correlates with sharing religious affiliations.

It has also been stated that aspects of religiosity have been found to relate closely to physical health, mental health, relationship outcomes, and behavioral outcomes. It was revealed in Musgrave, Allen, and Allen's (2002) article that religiosity associates with better health conditions such as, a decrease in depression symptoms, an improvement in one's immune system and having lower blood pressure. Religiosity has been revealed to make a difference in women of color's health experiences by promoting a healthier outcome for them. Religiosity has also been acknowledged as a provider of framework to cope with life and make sense of the world as well (Musgrave et al., 2002).

Defining Religion

Religion has been defined by previous authors as a term that refers to an association with "definable practices" (Ellor & McGregor, 2011). As stated by Dowling and Scarlett (2006) religion is the manner in which one identifies oneself with a particular religious tradition and its practices and beliefs.

Zinnbauer and colleagues (1997) conducted an empirical study in which they tried to assess how the public measured and defined religiousness and spirituality. The authors drew three main conclusions. First, religiousness and spirituality do indeed describe different terms, hence the notion of being spiritual but not religious or both religious and spiritual. Secondly, while religiousness and spirituality were defined as two different terms, they are not mutually exclusive. For example, people who found religion to be sacred defined themselves as religious because they were spiritual. Third, religiousness was commonly defined as participating in religious activities. Over the course of the

study, Zinnbauer and colleagues found that most of the 346 participants defined religion as having "personal beliefs/faiths in God or a higher power" (p. 13). Derezotes' (1995) participants were asked to acknowledge the concepts of religion and they believed, along with Hodge and McGrew's (2006) participants, that religion was where one has systems of shared beliefs/doctrines, shared rituals, and an institutionalized form of worship.

However, Hodge and McGrew (2006) did note that defining religion was a very complex task. Even though some of their participants defined religion as "a way for humankind to believe in God, a belief in a higher power, and a method people use to come together to share commonality of views," overall religion is an organized set of beliefs/doctrine that is used as a "method to practice" one's spirituality (2006, p. 646).

How to Assess Religiosity

In some articles religiosity has been assessed by using questionnaires that obtain information about a person's religious beliefs, the activities that they participate in that are religious, and how spiritual a person is (Ekas et al., 2009). One of the main questionnaires used in previous studies is the questionnaire that was established by the Fetzer Institute in 1999. Ekas and colleagues, for example, used the Fetzer Institute questionnaire to assess the religiosity level of participants for their study.

In order to measure different unique aspects of religiosity, Ekas and colleagues (2009) used three different subscales, including the religious beliefs, religious activities, and spirituality subscales. The religious beliefs subscale was formed to measure the degree of the participants' connection with religious affiliated societies and God, by asking questions about whether the participant worked with God as a team, and if they

carried their religious beliefs over into dealing with things occurring in everyday life

(Ekas et al., 2009). This is significant because it allowed Ekas and colleagues to measure

the practical application of religion in their participants' lives. Religious activities were

measured by how frequent the participants would engage in different religious practices;

by asking how often a participant prayed in private places other than church, how often

did they attend their religious services, and how often they read their doctrine or their

religious literature (Ekas et al., 2009). The last subscale, which was the spirituality

subscale, evaluated general feelings of closeness and harmony with ''God'' and his

creation. This was done by examining whether participants felt God's presence on a

regular basis, if they felt they were touched by the beauty of his creation spiritually, and if

they felt a deeper inner peace with him (Ekas et al., 2009).

      Dyslin and Thomsen (2005) used the Religious Life Inventory (RLI; Batson &

Schoenrade, 1991) to assess different aspects of religiosity. The RLI was created to

evaluate religious doubts in an optimistic way, to accept that religious orientation can

change, and to acknowledge that one's religious beliefs can shape from a personal crisis

that one experiences in life. The RLI was fundamentally designed to measure the

intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest orientations of religiosity (Hills, Francis, Argyle, &

Jackson, 2004). Due to an evaluation that was created based on the performance of the

scale, seeking more of an intellectual approach to assessing religion instead of an

authoritarian one, suspicions had been expressed about its psychometric traits/properties

(Hills et al., 2004). Dyslin and Thomsen used the RLI to allow participants to rate how

often they participated in religious activities such as prayer, how often they attended

church, and other religious behaviors on a 6-point scale for never, once a year, once a month, once a week, once a day, and more than once a day (Dyslin & Thomsen, 2005). The RLI included scales that assessed extrinsic and intrinsic religiosity, along with Christian Orthodoxy, by using a 9-point Likert scale to allow participants to rate their agreements with the scale, where 1 is expressing that they strongly disagree with a statement and 9 is expressing that they strongly agree with a statement (Dyslin & Thomsen, 2005).

While in most articles, religiosity has been measured by church attendance, prayer, and beliefs, some religiosity researchers have argued that these are not the only ways to measure religious variables relevant to marriage. For example, Mackey and O'Brien (2005) interviewed participants by asking if they were affiliated with a religion, if they considered themselves to be religious, if religion played a role in their marriage, and how religion played a role in their marriage. Mackey and O'Brien used open-ended questions so that participants could clarify what they felt was being religious and what was not. In contrast, Chinitz and Brown (2001) used questionnaires that asked questions such as whether people attended their religious community home regularly or just on major holidays, whether they attended schools based on their religion or a secular school, whether they volunteered for charities that supported their religion, and other behavioral indicators. In sum, most contemporary research has assessed religiosity using multidimensional measurement of religious affiliation, behaviors, and subjective experiences of religious connections. This multidimensional strategy will be utilized in the current study.

Religious Doctrine Related to Relationships

Christian Doctrine

Hertel and Hughes (1987) reported that conservative Christians were "the most homogenous in their values, and beliefs about social relations, personal honesty and virtue, sexuality morality, sanctity of family life, and conformity to conventional social norms" because they have a greater level of intensity when it comes to religious participation (Medoff & Skov, 1992). They revealed that conservative Christians tend to attend church on a regular basis because it fulfills there "sense of purpose" and because their doctrine dominates their lives (Ammerman, 1987; Medoff & Skov, 1992). It has been stated that many religions, including the conservative Christians, tend to see the *Bible* as a direct command from God and respect its assertions as instructions on how to live one's life (Medoff & Skov, 1992). It has been revealed that fundamentalists tend to believe in moral principles and follow strict ethical rules and that they are willing to accept all rules/regulations that are identified because they believe that salvation will be rewarded to those who live a righteous life while those who don't will be destined to Hell for an eternity (Medoff & Skov, 1992).

Because conservative Christians live according to the *Bible,* they have a tendency to have solid standards when it comes to divorce because the *Bible* expresses that husbands and wives must remain together until death do they part (Medoff & Skov, 1992). Medoff and Skov noted that Christian fundamentalists believe if they do not follow this rule they will be likely to suffer from hostile consequences both spiritually and emotionally.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (or LDS church) is a U.S.-based Christian denomination founded in 1830, claiming over 15 million members worldwide (LDS, 2014). One core LDS church teaching is that marriage between a man and a woman is "…ordained of God, and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" (LDS, 1995). Another core LDS belief is that marriages cannot only persist throughout a couple's mortal lifetime, but can also persist into the afterlife as well (Nelson, 2008). These LDS marriages are often referred to within LDS culture as "eternal marriages," "celestial marriages," or "sealings," and such marriages can only be performed in an LDS temple by an LDS church leader who has been given the proper authority (i.e., the "priesthood") by the LDS church (LDS, n.d.). After an LDS couple obtains a celestial marriage, the couple is expected to spend the rest of their lives following church teachings in earnest. Some of these teachings include faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities (LDS, 1995). If the couple remains "faithful" to each other, and to the church, they are promised that their marriage and family will endure for eternity (Nelson, 2008).

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Religiosity and Relationship Quality/Outcomes

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**Importance of Religion and Relationship
Outcomes**

Although religion is not the most important factor in many American marriages, religion is known to be "the single most important influence" in life for a considerable number of Americans (Miller & Thoresen, 2003, p. 25; see also Marks, 2005). The Pew

Forum on Religion and Public Life (2008) stated that 83% of Americans believe in God, or a higher power. In addition, 60% of Americans say religion is so "important" or "very important" to them that it should be included into their everyday life (Marks, 2005; McCullough, Hoyt, Larson, Koenig, & Thoresen, 2000). Religion is so important to some Americans that they feel it should determine/effect the context of their marriages (Marks, 2005).

The Marks (2005) study consisted of 76 male and female participants who were interviewed on how religion influences marriages. They responded to questions about the challenging and beneficial aspects of their religious practices, spiritual beliefs, and faith communities that have had effect on their marriages. Through qualitative analyses, Marks was able to identify eight surfacing themes that conjoined marriage and religion, which were "(1) the influence of clergy, (2) the mixed blessing of faith community service and involvement, (3) the importance of prayer, (4) the connecting influence of family ritual, (5) practicing marital fidelity, (6) pro-marriage/anti-divorce beliefs, (7) homogamy of religious beliefs, and (8) faith in God as a marital support" (Marks, 2005, p. 85). It was presented that "their religious communities, practices, and beliefs were of central importance in maintaining, supporting, and stabilizing their marriages in the face of time, stress, and other challenges" (Marks, 2005, p.108). Marks findings stated that a couple's involvement within a religion may provide a purpose to serve a higher power in the relationship. A shared religious identity may also allow the couple to find a sense of belonging among their peers and subsequently an increased and invested interest in working on their relationship. In essence, a couple's religious faith extends beyond

religion and into their relationship.

Larson and Goltz (1989) analyzed the relationship between religion and marriage by obtaining a random sample of 179 married couples. The study was structured to grasp the links among being affiliated with a religion, attending church, having a religious marriage, and marital commitment (Larson & Goltz, 1989, p.387). Religious homogamy had no relationship to marital commitment, nor did religious affiliation relate to marital commitment. As for religious participation, such as church attendance, a relationship was seen with marital commitment, which illustrated that any active participation in the church seemed "to be an apparent source of increasing the level of martial commitment, whatever its form" (Larson & Goltz, 1989, p. 392). In sum, Larson and Goltz demonstrated that involvement in the spiritual/religious range can correlate with greater commitment in their marriage.

Bahr and Chadwick (1985), along with Larson and Goltz (1989), also perceived active involvement in the religious range to be correlated with family life and marital life. In their report they deliberated the connection between religiosity and numerous forms of family behavior by comparing values of religious practices and family life in Muncie, Indiana (Middletown). Their study consisted of data derived from multiple surveys done by the residents in Middletown during the year 1977 and 1980. Seventy percent of the people that attended church services monthly, at least, were still in their first marriage, compared with the 60% of those who attended church less often. It was demonstrated that "having a religious preference and attending church are related to the disposition to marry and to stay married; or perhaps being divorced and/or separated is associated with low

church attendance" (Bahr & Chadwick, 1985, p. 59). Bahr and Chadwick revealed that religiosity tends to give a greater value to family and marriage values, which reduces divorce, while those who go through a divorce might find less excitement in attending church. Additional findings, indicated that being affiliated in any religion, and attending church, is positively correlated with marital satisfaction, since two thirds to three fourths of the people that were "satisfied" and "very satisfied" in their marriage were religiously affiliated, whereas the non-religious affiliated participates were more prone to saying they were "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied." Although there is more to Bahr and Chadwick's findings, overall the message that they disclosed is clear: "more religious residents of Middletown were more likely to be married, to remain married, to be highly satisfied with their marriages, and to have more children" (Bahr & Chadwick, 1985, p. 63).

Kaslow and Robison (1996) surveyed 57 White American couples married for 25-46 years in an effort to understand factors associated with longevity and long-term relationship quality. While the primary focus of the study was demographic and communication variables that link to greater satisfaction in long-term relationships, Kaslow and Robison did note that 95% of couples reported a shared religious affiliation, 65% endorsed corresponding religious beliefs as essential for marital satisfaction, and roughly one third of couples described religious convictions about the sacredness of marriage as a source of motivation for staying together.

Mackey and O'Brien (2005) interviewed 144 ethnically and religiously diverse husbands and wives in couples who had been married over 20 years, in part to assess for

partners' subjective sense of the importance of religion in their marriages. Roughly two thirds of participants described the importance of religion as a positive influence on their marriage, 10% or less indicated that the influence of religion over the marriage had been negative, and around 25% noted that religion had no correlation with their marriage over time. One African American Christian interviewee noted that shared religion helped her and her husband to get along and understand each other better. She stated that "religion has played a lot in our marriage" and that due to the fact that she and her husband are able to worship together they have conquered a big step in their marriage. Another interviewee, who was Catholic, revealed that all religious doctrines teach people one basic principle and that is to treat others the way one wants to be treated. Similarly, a Baptist interviewee stated that most of the things in the doctrine that he is very sensitive to are the things that seem morally correct. He revealed that, although he is Baptist, he had the opportunity to experience other religions, such as Protestant and Methodist, and he believes they all teach similar principles regarding fair and compassionate treatment of others.

Likewise, Brimhall and Butler (2007) discussed how it has been shown that religion tends to have positive links with a couple's marital satisfaction. Their study analyzed 74 couples, assessing how religiosity correlated to satisfaction within their marriages and the correlation between religious motivation and marital satisfaction. Greater satisfaction for both the husband and the wife was based on how high the husband's intrinsic quality of being religious was. Wives were seen to be more focused on their relationship and may not be influenced by intrinsic religiosity motivating their

maintenance behaviors. However, wives' satisfaction enhanced when they become religiously motivated extrinsically.

Duba and Watts (2009) evaluated couple relationships from a religious perspective and proposed a number of psychotherapy principles for working with religious couples. Within this review, Duba and Watts unveiled how couples rely on their religion to outline/construct their relationship, by evaluating how several beliefs entail specific guidelines that influence how the couple recognizes relational and domestic challenges, such as sexuality, child-rearing, and authority. Although, the relationship between religion and marriage was not the main topic of interest for the article, it alerts others about how religion tends to inform couples about their "expected gender-related roles in their marriages, how and when to forgive a spouse for his or her wrongdoing, and how to deal with parenting," which relates some religious values to specific maintenance strategies (Duba & Watts, 2009, p. 211).

Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, and Swank (2001) revealed that in different studies it was shown that the control for demographic factors relates to divorces. Mahoney and his colleagues decided to reevaluate 94 previous studies, which have been published since 1980, on how religion correlates with martial functioning/parental functioning. They decided to reevaluate these studies in order to inform others about the topic and to inspire them to do more research on different theoretical mechanisms that might stimulate religion to relate to family processes. Even though the correlation that religion has with marriages was not the only focus of the study throughout the process, Mahoney and colleagues discovered that higher marital satisfaction, stronger

commitment to the marriage, and lesser divorce rates have constantly remained associated with individuals /couples who are strongly active in religiosity and religious homogamy.

It has also been stated that "satisfaction with one's marriage was shaped by the significance of religious values in one's personal life" (Mackey & O'Brien, 2005, p. 38). Amato and Rogers (1997) also noted that regular church attendance appeared to lessen the likelihood of divorce, because it displayed the internalization of behavioral norms that reduced martial conflict and because couples did not want to lose support from their religious communities by getting a divorce (Amato & Rogers, 1997). Armato and Rogers used this study to suggest that many of the foundations of psychology and relationships are also ingrained in many religious communities like faith, trust, love, honor, support and forgiveness.

In summary, it has been discussed in multiple studies that religious beliefs correlate with increased commitment and fidelity, which are also maintenance strategies in a relationship, along with a longer satisfied stable marriage (Bahr & Chadwick, 1985; Marks, 2005). It has also been mentioned that some pastors are trying to get people to practice sexual expression within their marriages more so that they do not create affairs/conflicts on the outside of their marriage (Marks, 2005). It was discovered that religious beliefs serve as one form of foundation upon which people commit to practice the maintenance strategy conflict management, since it helps manage anger and conflicts in relationships, which tends to be one of the top reasons for separating (Marsh & Dallos, 2001).

**Cross-Religion Relationships and
Relationship Outcomes**

Several researchers have stated that the key factors for a long-term marriage,

along with maintenance strategies, which was mentioned above, are similarity in

religious orientation, religious faith, and religious beliefs (Kaslow & Robinson, 1996;

Marks, 2005; Robinson, 1994; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). Sherkat (2004) stated that

religious intermarriages tend to influence spousal conflicts, domestic violence, divorce,

and fertility in marriages. This is due to internal pressure to gain a common religious

ground and identity and external pressure from family and friends to gain a better

understanding of how a religious outsider can enhance their loved one's life. He stated

that he discovered "intermarriages to have important effects on people's family life,

which lead to lower fertility, higher rates of female employment, lower levels of martial

satisfaction, higher rates of divorce, and greater spousal conflict" (p. 607). Sherkat's

findings concluded with the notion that interfaith marriages can only thrive if there are

basic principles that are present in both religions that each partner values, as well as a

common ground and understanding that one, or both parties, will need to surrender some

of their religious identify to coexist as a couple.

Summary about Religion and Marriage

The previous research has identified thought-provoking patterns of association

between maintenance strategies, religious variables, and relationship/marriage quality.

Several studies reported that specific aspects of religious belief and practice are positively

related with forgiveness, conflict management, support, shared networks, assurance, and

openness ,which are all maintenance strategies, in close relationships and in successful marriages (Allgood et al., 2009; Jose & Alfons, 2007; King & Boyatzis, 2004; Levitt & Ware, 2006; Marks, 2005). An additional point that the previous studies presented was that the importance of religion in a person's life, rather than religious affiliation, is a predictor of satisfaction and communication in that person's marriage/relationship (Snow & Compton, 1996). While some psychologists, like Butter and Pargament (2003), feel that religious involvement does not allow an individual to go deeper into their problems, it has been shown in many studies that religion plays an important role in the longevity and satisfaction in one's relationships and life.

Unfortunately, it has also been noticed that the current literature has little research specifically on which maintenance strategies are used by religiously affiliated married couples, which maintenance strategies are related to specific religiosity variables, and what relations occur between religious experiences, general marital quality, and maintenance strategies? Clearly, to understand whether the majority of religions promote practicing maintenance strategies in their marriage and what associations exist between maintenance strategies, religious experiences, and martial quality, more work needs to be done.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The current study evaluated the relationship between religious beliefs/attitudes and maintenance strategies related to successful marriages.

Participants

The study consisted of 80 married participants, 31 men and 49 women from Utah State University. Most participants were White American and identified as members of the LDS religion. The participant's age ranged from 18 to 50, with a mean age of 29. Most of the participants were heterosexual, and had some college education. Participants were eligible to participate only if they were married. The participants' length of marriage ranged from 1 month to 31 years, with a mean of 5.6 years. Table 2 presents a summary of demographic information for participants. This study helped assess different beliefs on marriages based on the different participants' religious beliefs and attitudes. At Utah State University, students in online and distance education courses were specifically targeted to increase variability in age, SES, and relationship status. The participants were recruited from and through the undergraduate courses that were offered during spring, 2013. The student participants received extra credit for their participation and the nonstudent participants were entered in a drawing for a chance to win ten $15 gift cards from Amazon. If a student wanted to be able to receive extra credit in the course, but did not fit the marriage requirement, the student had to seek out a married couple whom they were closely acquainted with to take the survey on their behalf.

Table 2

Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	*n*	%
Sex		
Male	31	38.8
Female	49	61.2
Ethnic background		
Asian, Asian American	1	1.2
Hispanic or Latino	4	5
White, Caucasian, European,	75	93.8
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	79	98.8
No answer	1	1.2
Religious affiliation		
Catholic	2	2.5
Latter Day Saints (LDS)	65	81.2
Evangelical Christian	2	2.5
Atheist	2	2.5
Missing	9	11.3
Highest Level of Education		
High school	1	1.2
Some College	37	46.2
2 yr. College Degree	27	33.8
4 yr. College Degree	13	16.2
Master's Degree	2	2.5

Procedures

The participants completed an online questionnaire focused on religion, maintenance strategies used in marriage, marital quality, and demographic information. Announcements were sent out to the students, through their teachers and online course management systems, in order to receive a link to the questionnaire. As the participants

begin the survey they were presented with more information about the questionnaire, such as the purpose of the study, the procedures, and more information on the experimenters, along with an informed consent stating their rights (see Appendix A). If the participant chose not to participate after reviewing the information it was possible for the participant to discontinue the questionnaire at that moment and any other moment throughout the rest of the questionnaire. If the participant chose to complete the survey they had the option to be entered in a drawing for a $15 gift card from Amazon. The multiple measures that were presented throughout the questionnaire are described below.

Measures

Measures used in this study are described below and copies can be found in Appendix B.

Demographic Information

Demographic information included participant's gender, age, race/ethnicity educational classification, current marital status, sexual orientation, and religious affiliation.

Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction was calculated by using the satisfaction scale, which consisted of four items, from the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; Busby, Crane, Larson, & Christensen, 1995). The Relationship Satisfaction Scale consisted of four questions evaluating the level of conflict and dissatisfaction in relationships and

marriages. Sample items include "How often do you and your partner quarrel?" and "Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?" Responses range from 0 = *All the Time* to 5 = *Never*, and scores are reverse scored so that higher scores indicate more conflict or less satisfaction. Total scores are calculated as the mean across the four items. Busby et al. found that the RDAS had a Cronbach alpha of .90. For this study, the Satisfaction Scale had the Cronbach alpha of .82.

Relationship Maintenance Mechanisms

Relationship maintenance mechanisms were assessed using the Stafford (2011) Relational Maintenance Behavior Measure (RMBM) and the Stafford Relational Maintenance Strategies Measure (RMSM; Canary & Stafford, 1992). The full RMBM (28 items) was administered, along with seven items from the RMSM, to evaluate what tactics people abided by in order to maintain their relationships. Only scales derived from the RMBM were used in the current analyses. The Stafford RMBM is a measure of the initial maintenance strategies that were identified in earlier research by Canary and Stafford. It expanded on the main seven maintenance strategies: positivity (6 items; e.g., For your spouse to act positively with you), understanding (4 items; e.g., For your spouse to be understanding), assurances (5 items; e.g., For you and your spouse to talk about future events), self-disclosure (3 items; e.g., For your spouse to discuss his/her fears), relationship talk (3 items; e.g., For you and your spouse to discuss the quality of your relationship), sharing tasks (4 items; e.g., For you and your spouse to share joint responsibilities in whatever problems you face), and involvement with social networks (3 items; e.g., For you and your spouse to turn to family members for help; Stafford, 2011).

The RMBM demonstrated alpha coefficients of .95 for positivity, .93 for understanding, .91 for self-disclosure, .92 for relationship talk, .93 for assurances, .93 for tasks, and .85 for networks (Stafford, 2011). In this study Cronbach's alphas were .75 for positivity, .74 for understanding, .73 for self-disclosure, .66 for relationship talk, .74 for assurance, .63 for tasks, and .46 for networks. Due to the reliability coefficients being low on the relationship talk, tasks, and networks scale, they were not included in subsequent analyses.

Commitment

The 45-item Dimensions of Commitment Inventory (DCI; Adams & Jones, 1997) was developed to assess the degree to which an individual intends to maintain his or her marriage. Initial development of the DCI yielded three independent aspects of marital commitment: a) devotion to and satisfaction with the partner (Commitment to the Partner Scale), (b) belief in the sanctity of marriage and a personal sense of obligation to honor the marriage (Commitment to the Marriage Scale), and (c) a desire to avoid financial or social penalties that might result from divorce (Feelings of Entrapment Scale). Adams and Jones found that commitment scores were associated with relationship satisfaction and with other previously established measures of relationship commitment in expected ways. Reliability coefficients reported by Adams and Jones ranged from .86 to .91. In this study, Cronbach's alpha ranged from .83 to .86.

Religion

Religion was evaluated by using the Multidimensional Measure of Religiosity/

Spirituality and items from multiple measures that were presented in a report by Fetzer

(2003). For this study, 56 items were selected from the larger measure to assess what

persons did and tactics that they followed, in order to consider level of religiosity. Six

subscales from the larger measure were selected: daily spiritual experiences (16 items),

values/beliefs (7 items), forgiveness (10 items), private religious practices (4 items),

religious support (12 items), and religious/spiritual history (7 items). Reliability

coefficients reported by Fetzer ranged from .91 to .95 across samples but from .54 to .91

across subscales. In the study Cronbach's alpha ranged from .68 to .96. The individual

reliability coefficients were .68 for forgiveness, .70 for values/beliefs, .89 for private

religious practices, .91 for religious support, and .96 for daily spiritual experiences.

Religious/spiritual history items simply assess the individual's religious affiliation and

childhood religious context, so estimation of internal consistency was not relevant.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results section is divided into three primary sections that include, (a) descriptive analyses of marriage satisfaction, maintenance strategies, commitment, and religion, (b) bivariate correlations between all variables, and (c) mediation analyses.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 provides a summary of descriptive statistics for each variable measured. It includes the means, standard deviations, and skewness statistics for the whole sample size used in the study. On average, participants reported high levels of commitment and satisfaction in their relationships. Religion variables indicated that the sample was highly connected to their religious beliefs and communities. Finally, average scores on the maintenance strategies variables indicated that participants made frequent use of the measured maintenance strategies. Tests of skewness statistics suggested that several variables were in violation of the assumption of normality, due to the skewness statistic being greater than twice the standard error. However, as the correlation and regression analyses used in this study are robust to relatively minor violations of the assumption of normality, no additional data transformation was undertaken.

Bivariate Relationships Among Variables

Pearson's *r* correlations were conducted to assess the relationships among all the variables. There were significant associations between marital quality and religion. In

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Skewness for All Variables

Variables	Possible range	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*	Skewness (*SE* = .27)
Satisfaction	(1 – 6)	1.33	5.33	2.36	.70	1.75
Commitment to spouse	(1 – 5)	2.79	5.00	4.31	.46	-1.09
Commitment to marriage	(1 – 5)	1.62	4.77	3.30	.60	-.16
Feelings of entrapment	(1 – 5)	1.23	4.08	2.76	.65	-.30
Daily spirituals	(1 – 5.75)	1.56	5.69	4.22	1.05	-.55
Values/beliefs	(1 – 4.43)	2.29	4.14	3.78	.45	-1.75
Forgiveness	(1 – 4)	2.00	3.90	3.04	.35	-.45
Private religious practice	(1 – 7.25)	1.00	7.25	4.61	1.86	-.58
Religious support	(1 – 4)	1.00	4.00	3.04	.64	-1.06
Self-disclosure	(1 – 5)	3.00	5.00	4.41	.54	-.64
Assurance	(1 – 5)	3.20	5.00	4.41	.52	-.63
Positivity	(1 – 5)	3.17	5.00	4.28	.46	-.21
Understanding	(1 – 5)	3.00	5.00	4.52	.49	-1.05

addition, some of the religion variables positively related to maintenance strategies, but maintenance strategies more weakly correlated with marital quality.

Links Between Religion and Marital Quality

Pearson's *r* correlations were conducted to assess the relationship between religion and maintenance satisfaction (see Table 4). All religion variables were significantly related to marriage satisfaction, with higher religiosity in all forms related to lower conflict in the marriage. Higher scores on the religious variables also linked to greater commitment to the spouse and marriage (with the exception of Forgiveness). However, the religious variables private religious practice and religious support were the

Table 4

Correlations for Religion and Marriage Satisfaction

Marital quality variables	Religious variables				
	Daily spirituals	Values/beliefs	Forgiveness	Private religious practices	Religious support
Satisfaction	-.253*	-.220*	-.385**	-.229*	-.265*
Commitment to spouse	.505**	.517**	.373**	.416**	.390**
Commitment to marriage	.423**	.467**	.167	.388**	.474**
Feelings of entrapment	.110	.194	-.053	.288**	.281*

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

only two variables that related to the Feelings of Entrapment scale. All significant

correlations were medium to large in size.

**Links Between Religion and Maintenance
Strategies**

Pearson's *r* correlations were conducted to assess the relationship between

religion and marriage strategies (see Table 5). Religion was significantly related to

maintenance strategies. As seen in Table 5, daily spiritual behaviors most consistently

correlated to maintenance strategies. Nevertheless, values/beliefs positively associated

with assurance, positivity, and understanding, while religious support interconnected with

self-disclosure, assurance, and understanding. Finally, forgiveness connected to positivity

and understanding. As for the private religious practice variable, there was no significant

correlation with maintenance strategies.

Table 5

Correlations for Religion and Maintenance Strategies

	Maintenance strategies			
Religious variables	Self-disclosure	Assurance	Positivity	Understanding
Daily spirituals	.238*	.234*	.334**	.326**
Values/beliefs	.194	.264*	.227*	.313**
Forgiveness	.149	.155	.233*	.244*
Private religious practices	.153	.066	.057	.185
Religious support	.267*	.248*	.173	.338**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Links Between Maintenance Strategies and
Martial Quality**

Pearson's *r* correlations were conducted to assess the relationship between
maintenance strategies and satisfaction (see Table 6). Maintenance strategies were
significantly related to commitment to spouse. As seen in Table 6, commitment to spouse
most consistently correlated to all the maintenance strategies. Nevertheless, positivity and
understanding related to commitment to marriage. As for the actual satisfaction variable
and the feelings of entrapment, there was no significant correlation detected with
maintenance strategies.

**Mediation Test: Maintenance Strategies as a Passageway Between
Religion and Marital Quality**

The mediation tests followed guidelines by Frazier, Tix, and Baron (2004).
According to Frazier and colleagues the first step in completing a mediation test is to

Table 6

Correlations for Martial Quality and Maintenance Strategies

Maintenance strategies	Satisfaction	Commitment to spouse	Commitment to marriage	Feelings of entrapment
		Marital quality variables		
Self-disclosure	-.165	.293**	.171	.001
Assurance	-.118	.367**	.172	.061
Positivity	-.194	.330**	.278*	.076
Understanding	-.188	.388**	.247*	.148

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

demonstrate that the independent variable associates with the dependent variable or outcome measures. The next step in completing a mediation test is to regress the mediator on the independent variable, and then regress the dependent variable on both the independent variable and the mediator. In order to verify that a particular variable mediates the relationship between two other variables, three requirements have to be met. The first requirement is that there has to be a direct association between the independent variable, which is religion, and the dependent variable, which is martial quality. Many of the bivariate correlations between religion and martial quality were significant, particularly for satisfaction and commitment to the spouse (see Table 4). The second requirement that needs to be fulfilled is a direct association between the independent variable, which is still religion, and the meditator, which are maintenance strategies. Religious variables—daily spirituals, values/beliefs, and religious support—correlated with maintenance strategies (see Table 5). Thus, the second requirement was met. The third and final requirement is that the relationship between the independent variable,

religion, and the dependent variable, martial quality, must be reduced to non-significant when the mediator, maintenance strategies, is added into the equation.

Analytic Plan

All five measures of religious beliefs and practices were significantly related to satisfaction and commitment to spouse. Further, four of five religious variables were related to commitment to marriage, and two were significantly correlated to feelings of entrapment. However, correlations among daily spirituals, values/beliefs, private religious practices, and religious support ranged from .63 to .80, indicating considerable conceptual overlap and problems with multicollinearity. Forgiveness was only modestly correlated to the other four religion variables (*r* ranging from .24 to .33), and was significantly correlated with only satisfaction and commitment to spouse. Thus, for the purposes of mediation tests, the four highly intercorrelated religious variables were averaged into one overarching religiosity variable, used as the independent variable in subsequent analyses. Significant correlations between all four maintenance strategies and commitment to spouse suggested that all four could potentially serve as mediators in the relationship between religion and commitment to spouse. However, only positivity and understanding were significantly related to commitment to marriage, so only those two maintenance strategies were potential mediators. There were no significant correlations between maintenance strategies and satisfaction or feelings of entrapment so no mediation analyses were conducted with those dependent variables.

Table 7 presents the results of regression analyses testing mediation of maintenance strategies on the prediction of the composite religion variable. For both

Table 7

Hierarchical Regressions Assessing Mediating Effects of Maintenance Strategies (N = 80)

Step	Predictor	Adj. R^2	F change	p	Beta	t	p
Commitment to spouse							
1	Religion	.241	26.153	<.001	.501	5.114	<.001
2	Religion	.299	2.586	.044	.427	4.322	<.001
	Self-disclosure				-.040	-0.282	.779
	Assurance				.192	1.243	.218
	Positivity				.077	0.598	.551
	Understanding				.116	0.791	.432
Commitment to marriage							
1	Religion	.213	22.40	<.001	.472	4.733	<.001
2	Religion	.230	1.868	.161	.433	4.199	<.001
	Positivity				.189	1.547	.126
	Understanding				.009	0.073	.942

commitment to marriage and commitment to spouse, the first step of the regression yielded a large and significant relationship with the religion variable. In the second step of the regression predicting commitment to marriage, maintenance strategies did not account for significant additional variance. Thus, no mediation of the relationship of religion with commitment to marriage was observed. In the second step of the regression predicting commitment to spouse, the *F* change statistic was significant, indicating that the maintenance strategies collectively accounted for significant additional variance in the commitment to spouse variable. However, none of the individual *t* tests yielded significant univariate results, and the relationship with the religion variable was not substantially diminished in the second step of the regression. Thus, no mediation effect was demonstrated for the relationship between religion and commitment to spouse was observed.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The goal of the present study was to assess links between religious attitudes and beliefs and marital quality, examining patterns of marital maintenance strategies as potential mediators. In our predominately LDS sample, individuals who embraced more frequent participation in religious activities and more deeply held religious beliefs reported more commitment and greater satisfaction in their marriages. While marital maintenance strategies were also linked to some forms of marital commitment, there was no evidence that maintenance strategies mediated the relationship between religious practices and beliefs.

Reported Religious Beliefs and Marital Quality

As noted previously, the majority of participants in this study identified as members of the LDS faith. Within Utah particularly, the very high scores obtained on average for religious participation and religious investment are consistent with cultural expectations. Very high levels of marital commitment are also consistent with doctrinal statements that "solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God" and that "husband and wife have a solemn responsibly to love and care for each other and for their children" (LDS, 1995). Marriages in LDS culture, according to statements from the leadership, aspire toward nine principles: "faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities" (LDS, 1995). Of the nine principles, three of them (forgiveness, prayer, and

faith) were items that were focused in the assessment of religious participation used in this study. The focus on these specific principles is often shared not just by the couple, but taught to their children as well; thus, living in accordance with faith principles grows both the couple's dedication to the faith and commitment to the marriage.

On average, participants in this study were highly satisfied and committed in their marriages. The religious variables confirmed that the LDS sample was exceptionally connected to their religious beliefs and communities. The importance of building a community based on solid religious beliefs could also attribute to the low levels of conflict and high commitment to their marriages. The strong direct correlations between devoutness to the LDS church values and greater marital commitment are consistent with other research (Kaslow & Robinson, 1996; Marks, 2005; Robinson, 1994; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). This is also evident by the willingness of LDS participant's frequent use of relationship maintenance strategies. However, it should be noted that use of these maintenance strategies are not necessarily the key to commitment to marriage, or to their partner, since they are rather used as an extra tool. The results show that participants' commitment to the LDS religious doctrine may be sufficient to ensure commitment to marriages and partners because there religious values are so strong. One reason for this is the view that marriage goes beyond physical life and crosses over to the afterlife. Another view is that when marrying, many LDS members believe that marriage is building a direct bond between the couple and God. However, it should be noted that while LDS members use relationship maintenance strategies there was not a strong correlation to conflict management only to one's commitment to marriage.

Links Between Religion and Marital Quality

Perhaps one of the most interesting results of the present study pertains to the association between religiosity variables and general marital quality. Relatively consistent moderate to large correlations were observed between religious variables and relationship quality, with the largest and most consistent correlations between religion and commitment. Thus, in this highly religious sample, more frequent religious practice and more internalized religious beliefs were associated with a stronger commitment in their marriage (Larson & Goltz, 1989). For example, how often a person experienced a daily spiritual routine linked to how committed they were to their spouse. This could be because of closely held religious beliefs by at least one if not both spouses; their actions are sanctioned by the promise of rewards in the afterlife. The study also illustrated how the higher a person scored on a religious variable linked to a more powerful commitment to marriage. For instance, the more religious support that a person/couple received tended to contribute to a deeper commitment in their marriage.

Mediating Role of Maintenance Strategies

The pattern of correlations between maintenance strategies and other study variables was mixed; use of maintenance strategies in marriages correlated with some aspects of religious practice, but had less consistent relationships with marital quality. Specifically, the maintenance strategies of "understanding," "positivity," and "assurance" were modestly correlated with several forms of religious practice and belief. Since a number of the specific forms of maintenance strategies did not achieve sufficient

reliability to be included in primary analyses with this sample, these results do not allow

for a nuanced evaluation of religious values and doctrines that link to specific forms of

marital maintenance. In addition, maintenance strategies were primarily only associated

with commitment to spouse. No significant correlations were observed between

maintenance strategies and satisfaction or feelings of entrapment. Due to the fact that

previous research has disclosed that maintenance behaviors affect marital satisfaction

(Bell et al., 1987), along with the fact that using maintenance strategies in a relationship

tends to correlate with good relationship quality (Miller & Perlman, 2009), it was

surprising that maintenance strategies were not seen to be fully associated with those

variables within this study.

Specifically, the results suggest that religious people tend to use maintenance

strategies in their marriages, but maintenance strategies are not the main source for

martial quality. This may be especially true for the LDS culture, since they believe when

they get married they are supposed to stay committed to a person both in this life and in

the afterlife (LDS, 2012). As such, the present results add to body of literature

investigating whether there is an association between religion and martial quality, along

with what type of association there is. Specifically, the present results suggest that

maintenance strategies tend to be used by religiously affiliated married couples, but the

relationship between the religious affiliations and the high satisfaction level in the

marriages is not mediated through maintenance strategies. The clinical implications of

these findings are that efforts with regard to intervention with religious couples may not

be best focused on maintenance strategies. Future research might further explore the link

between religion and general martial quality by examining the ways specific religious beliefs/doctrines support marital commitment.

Limitations and Conclusions

Clearly, to understand on the role of religion in marriages for all religions and ethnicities, more work needs to be done. This small sample predominately recruited from one conservative Christian denomination represents one context in which to examine our research questions. Larger, more diverse samples will allow for specific comparisons across religious subgroups. Larger samples with sufficient representation of male and female participants will also allow for assessment of gender differences in the role of religion. Given that this study took place in a semi-rural area where the majority was LDS, different religions were not really taken into an account. This also includes the 10% of participants in the study that chose not to religiously identify or who claimed to be religious affiliated outside of the LDS culture.

In addition, use of other reliable and valid measures of a range of religious attitudes/characteristics, along with maintenance strategies and satisfaction, would aid generalizability across studies. Since there is a lack of studies using methods to assess when people use different maintenance strategies in their marriages, this is a need for any research that is done in the future. For future studies, validity issues like selection bias and instrumentation need to be addressed for accurate reliability. While difficult, this will allow the reader and researcher to gain a broader view of how religiosity affects one's views on building content and committed marriage coven.

In summary, the current study reported strong relationships between religious practices and marital outcomes in a small sample of highly religious individuals within one faith community. While this study is consistent with other research examining the role of religious beliefs in marital functioning (Snow & Compton, 1996), future research might benefit from samples with greater diversity with regard to religious affiliation and level of investment in religion. Further, as the maintenance strategies assessed in this study were minimally related to marital quality, future studies examining the pathways by which religious variables are related to marital outcomes might benefit from both further measurement adjustment and additional theoretical or conceptual development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Letter of Information (Consent Form)

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USU IRB Approval: Jan. 24, 2013
Amend#1 Approved: Feb. 26, 2013
Approval Terminates: 01/23/2014
IRB Password Protected per IRB Administrator

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LETTER OF INFORMATION
THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS AFFLIATION AND ATTITUDES IN MARRIAGE
MAINTENANCE STRATEGIES

Introduction/ Purpose Dr. Renee Galliher, a faculty member, and Chenika Fowler, a graduate student, in the Department of Psychology at Utah State University are conducting a research study to find out more about the relationship between religious beliefs/attitudes and maintenance strategies related to marital quality. You have been asked to take part because you are married and over 18 years of age. There will be approximately 150 participants at this site. There will be approximately 300 total participants in this research. Dr. Steven Seidel in the Department of Psychology at Texas A & M University – Corpus Christi will also be collecting data on that campus.

Procedures If you agree to be in this research study, you will be asked to complete an online survey. This study will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Survey questions address religious experiences and marital attitudes and quality.

Risks This study is considered minimal risk. However, participation in this research study may involve some psychological discomfort as a result of completing personal and sensitive questions on the survey.

Benefits It is unlikely that you directly benefit from participating in this study. However, your participation may provide you with an opportunity to review your values and experiences in your marriage. The results will also help inform intervention efforts with distressed couples, as well as serve as a foundation for research with other martial outcomes.

Explanation & offer to answer questions If you have additional questions after reading this document, you may contact Chenika Fowler at cfowler@aggiemail.usu.edu. You may also reach Dr. Galliher at Renee.Galliher@usu.edu or (435) 797- 3391 or Dr. Seidel at steven.seidel@tamucc.edu or (361) 825 - 2619.

Payment/Compensation Upon completion of the survey, you will have the opportunity to submit your name for a random drawing of one of ten $15 online Amazon gift cards, or

receive course extra credit, for your participation in this study. Gift cards will be delivered electronically via email. If you receive the gift card for participating in this research, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has determined that the amount you get from this study, plus any prior amounts you have received from participating in research studies at USU since January of this year, total $600 or more, USU must report this income to the federal government. If you are a USU employee, any payment you receive from this study will be included in your regular payroll.

Voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw without consequence
Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence or loss of benefits.

You agree to participate in the study by completing the following survey. Participants must be 18 years of age or older. Please do not complete the survey if you do not wish to participate in this study.

Confidentiality Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Only the researchers will have access to the data, which will be kept on a password protected computer in a locked room. You will only submit your email address if you would like to be entered in the gift card drawing and/or submit your A# if you are interested in receiving course credit for participation. If you choose to submit information for the gift card drawing or course credit, it will be kept in a separate file and not connected with your survey responses in any way. Identifying information will be destroyed upon completion of data collection and dissemination of incentives.

IRB Approval Statement The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at Utah State University has approved this research study. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights or a research-related injury and would like to contact someone other than the research team, you may contact the IRB Administrator at (435) 797-0567 or email irb@usu.edu to obtain information or to offer input.

Copy of consent Please print a copy of this informed consent for your records.

Investigator Statement "I certify that the research study has been explained to the individual, by me or my research staff, and that the individual understands the nature and purpose, the possible risks and benefits associated with taking part in this research study. Any questions that have been raised have been answered."

Appendix B

Measures

Demographic Information

1. What is your gender?
   _Male
   _Female

2. What is your age?
   _Years

3. What is your race?
   _Asian, Asian American or Oriental
   _Black or African American
   _Hispanic or Latino
   _White, Caucasian, European, not Hispanic
   _American Indian
   _Other _____
   (Please Specify)_

4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   _Some High School
   _High School
   _Some College
   _2 yr. College Degree (Associates)
   _4 yr. College Degree (BA, BS)
   _Master's Degree
   _Doctoral Degree
   _Professional Degree (MD, JD)

5. What is your sexual orientation?
   _Bisexual
   _Homosexual
   _Heterosexual
   _Not Sure
   _No Answer

6. What is your religious affiliation?
   _Protestant Christian
   _LDS
   _Roman Catholic
   _Evangelical Christian
   _Baptist
   _Jewish
   _Muslim
   _Hindu
   _Buddhist
   _Episcopalian
   _Atheist
   _Other Please Specify

7. How long have you been married to your spouse/significant other?
   _Years

Satisfaction Scale

	All the Time (0)	Most of the time (1)	More often than not (2)	Occasionally (3)	Rarely (4)	Never (5)
7. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?						
8. How often do you and your partner quarrel?						
9. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?						
10. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves"?						

Maintenance Mechanism Scale

For the following questions I will list a few characteristic traits that I would like you to read over and tell me how important you believe them to be in your marriage.

   1 = Not Important to you

   2 = Mildly Important to you

   3 = Moderately Important to you

   4 = Very Important to you

   5 = Extremely Important to you

1. An attempt to make you and your spouse's interactions enjoyable.
2. For your spouse to disclose their thoughts and feelings to you and vice versa.
3. Imply that you and your spouse's relationship have a future.
4. Show each other that you are willing to do things with each other's friends and family.
5. Help each other equally with tasks that need to be done.
6. For you and your spouse to share specific routine activities with each other.
7. Seek advice from one another.
8. Comfort each other when the other is in the time of need.
9. Apologize to one another when one is wrong.
10. Be patient and forgiving with each other.
11. Avoid discussing certain topics with each other.
12. Calling each other by funny nicknames.
13. Teasing each other.
14. For you and your spouse to have a strong friendship.
15. To have a negotiation between you and your spouse to make sure no one feels neglected by the other.
16. For you and your spouse to hug, kiss, and hold hands in our relationship
17. For you and your spouse not to criticize, or be contempt, and defensive towards one another.
18. For you and your spouse to maintain separate friendships.
19. For you and your spouse to do what you say to one another and say what you do to one another.
20. For you and your spouse to create a relationship vision or future for you and your partners relationship.

21. _For your spouse to act positively with you.

22. _For your spouse to be understanding.

23. _For your spouse to discuss his/her fears.

24. _For you and your spouse to discuss the quality of y'all relationship.

25. _For you and your spouse to talk about future events (e.g., having children, or anniversaries, or retirement, etc.).

26. _For you and your spouse to share joint responsibilities in whatever problems y'all face.

27. _For you to be upbeat with each other.

28. _For you and your spouse to perform each of your household responsibilities

29. _For you and your spouse to act cheerful with each other.

30. _For you and your spouse to tell each other how much each of you means to the other.

31. _For you and your spouse not to judge the other.

32. _To encourage each other to tell one another how both of you really feel.

33. _Show each other how much you mean to one another.

34. _For you and your spouse to_act optimistic with each other.

35. _For you and your spouse to turn to family members for help.

Commitment Scale

Listed underneath are a few statements that deal with the focus on some marriages. In order to complete this survey you should think of how you feel when it comes to your marriage. Please examine the statements below closely in order to decide which one best describes a characteristic of you. Please keep in mind that in order to answer the questions you need to think of how you are with your spouse.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I'm dedicated to making my marriage as fulfilling as it can be.					
A divorce would ruin my reputation.					
It is morally wrong to divorce your spouse.					
No matter what, my spouse knows that I'll always be there for him or her.					
I have to stay married to my spouse or else my family will think badly of me.					
I was raised to believe that once one gets married, one doesn't get divorced, no matter how unsatisfying the marriage may be.					
It would be humiliating if my spouse and I divorced.					
I am completely devoted to my spouse.					
Marriages are supposed to last forever.					
Even if I wanted to, it would be impossible for me to leave my spouse.					
When things go wrong in my marriage, I consider getting a divorce.					
I would not be embarrassed to get a divorce.					
I truly believe that spouses should remain devoted to one another "for better or for worse."					
There is nothing that I wouldn't sacrifice for my spouse.					
My family would strongly disapprove if I divorced my spouse.					
I don't feel obligated to remain married to my spouse.					
I've spent so much money on my relationship with my spouse that I could never divorce him or her.					
I want to grow old with my spouse.					

I would be shattered if my spouse and I divorced.					
My friends would disapprove if I ended my marriage.					
I could never leave my spouse because it would go against everything I believe in.					
I believe in the sanctity, of marriage.					
A marriage should be protected at all costs.					
If there are too many problems in a marriage, it's okay to get a divorce.					
I like knowing that my spouse and I form an inseparable unit.					
When I image what my life will be like in the future, I always see my spouse standing next to me.					
Under no circumstances should the marriage bond be broken.					
I frequently daydream about what it would be like to be married to someone other than my spouse.					
I'm not very devoted to my spouse.					
I feel free to divorce my spouse if I so desire.					
1 can imagine several situations in which the marriage bond should be broken.					
When my spouse and I promised "to have and to hold," we knew that it meant forever.					
I often think that my spouse and I have too many irreconcilable differences.					
I don't think I could handle the shame of being divorced.					
I don't think it's morally wrong to divorce your spouse.					
I don't believe that marriages should last forever.					
I am not confident that my marriage will last forever.					
My spouse and I remain married because we value the institution of marriage.					
I often think about what it would be like to be romantically involved with someone other than my spouse.					
It would be shameful if my spouse and					

I divorced or separated.					
I could never leave my spouse; I have too much invested in him or her.					
I believe that marriage is for life regardless of what happens.					
I'm afraid that if I were to leave my spouse, God would punish me.					
It would be particularly hard on my family and friends if my spouse and I divorced.					
My future plans do not include my spouse.					

Religion

Religious/Spiritual History

1. What was your <u>childhood</u> religious affiliation?
   _Protestant Christian
   _LDS
   _Roman Catholic
   _Evangelical Christian
   _Baptist
   _Jewish
   _Muslim
   _Hindu
   _Buddhist
   _Episcopalian
   _Atheist
   _Other Please Specify

2. When you were a young child, how often did you attend religious services?

3. When you were a young child, how often did you participate in religious practices at home, either by yourself or with your family?

4. Are you a born again Christian?
   Yes
   No

5. What is your <u>current</u> religious affiliation?
   _Protestant Christian
   _LDS
   _Roman Catholic
   _Evangelical Christian
   _Baptist
   _Jewish
   _Muslim
   _Hindu
   _Buddhist
   _Episcopalian
   _Atheist
   _Other Please Specify

6. How often do you go to religious services?
   1 - More than once a week
   2 - Every week or more often
   3 - Once or twice a month
   4 - Every month or so
   5 - Once or twice a year
   6 - Never

7. Besides religious services, how often do you take part in other activities at a place of worship?
   1 - More than once a week
   2 - Every week or more often
   3 - Once or twice a month
   4 - Every month or so
   5 - Once or twice a year
   6 - Never

Daily Spiritual Experiences

The following questions deal with possible spiritual experiences. To what extent can you say you experience the following:

8. I feel God's presence.
   1 - Many times a day
   2 - Every day
   3 - Most days
   4 - Some days
   5 - Once in a while
   6 - Never or almost never

9. I experience a connection to all of life.
   1 - Many times a day
   2 - Every day
   3 - Most days
   4 - Some days
   5 - Once in a while
   6 - Never or almost never

10. During worship, or at other times when connecting with God, I feel joy which lifts me out of my daily concerns.
    1 - Many times a day
    2 - Every day
    3 - Most days
    4 - Some days
    5 - Once in a while
    6- Never or almost never

11. I find strength in my religion or spirituality.
    1 - Many times a day
    2 – Every day
    3 – Most days
    4 – Some days
    5 – Once in a while
    6 – Never or almost never

12. I find comfort in my religion or spirituality.
    1 - More than once a day
    2 - Once a day
    3 - A few times a week
    4 - Once a week
    5 - A few times a month
    6 - Once a month

13. I feel deep inner peace or harmony.
    1 - Many times a day
    2 - Every day
    3 - Most days
    4 - Some days
    5 - Once in a while
    6 - Never or almost never

14. I ask for God's help in the midst of daily activities.
    1 - Many times a day
    2 - Every day
    3 - Most days
    4 - Some days
    5 - Once in a while
    6 - Never or almost never

15. I feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities.
    1 - Many times a day
    2 - Every day
    3 - Most days
    4 - Some days
    5 - Once in a while
    6- Never or almost never

16. I feel God's love for me, directly.
    1 - Many times a day
    2 - Every day
    3 - Most days
    4 - Some days
    5 - Once in a while
    6 - Never or almost never

17. I feel God's love for me, through others.
    1 - Many times a day
    2 - Every day
    3 - Most days
    4 - Some days
    5 - Once in a while
    6 - Never or almost never

18. I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation.
    1- Many times a day
    2- Every day
    3- Most days
    4- Some days
    5- Once in a while
    6- Never or almost never

19. I feel thankful for my blessings.
    1 - Many times a day
    2 - Every day
    3 - Most days
    4 - Some days
    5 - Once in a while
    6 - Never or almost never

20. I feel a selfless caring for others.
    1 - Many times a day
    2 - Every day
    3 - Most days
    4 - Some days
    5 - Once in a while
    6 - Never or almost never

21. I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong.
    1 - Many times a day
    2 - Every day
    3 - Most days
    4 - Some days
    5 - Once in a while
    6 - Never or almost never

22. I desire to be closer to God or in union with Him.
    1 – Not at all close
    2 – Somewhat close
    3 – Very close
    4 – As close as possible

23. In general, how close do you feel to God?
    1 – Not at all close
    2 – Somewhat close
    3 – Very close
    4 – As close as possible

Values/Beliefs

24. How much is religion a source of strength and comfort to you? (Yale Health and Aging Project)
    1 - None
    2 – A little
    3 – A great deal

25. Do you believe there is a life after death? (General Social Survey)
    1 - Yes
    2 - No
    3 - Undecided

26. God's goodness and love are greater than we can possibly imagine.
    1 – Agree Strongly
    2 – Agree somewhat
    3 – Can't decide
    4 – Disagree somewhat
    5 – Disagree strongly

27. Despite all the things that go wrong, the world is still moved by love.
    1 – Agree Strongly
    2 – Agree somewhat
    3 – Can't decide
    4 – Disagree somewhat
    5 – Disagree strongly

28. When faced with a tragic event I try to remember that God still loves me and that there is hope for the future.
    1 – Agree Strongly
    2 – Agree somewhat
    3 – Can't decide
    4 – Disagree somewhat
    5 – Disagree strongly

29. I feel that it is important for my children to believe in God.
    1 – Agree Strongly
    2 – Agree somewhat
    3 – Can't decide
    4 – Disagree somewhat
    5 – Disagree strongly

30. I think that everything that happens has a purpose.
    1 – Agree Strongly
    2 – Agree somewhat
    3 – Can't decide
    4 – Disagree somewhat
    5 – Disagree strongly

Forgiveness *Because of my religious or spiritual beliefs:*

Confession

31. It is easy for me to admit that I am wrong. (Mauger et al)
    1 - Always or almost always
    2 - Often
    3 - Seldom
    4 - Never

32. If I hear a sermon, I usually think about things that I have done wrong. (Mauger et al)
    1 - Always or almost always
    2 - Often
    3 - Seldom
    4 - Never

Forgiveness by God

33. I believe that God has forgiven me for things that I have done wrong.
    1 - Always or almost always
    2 - Often
    3 - Seldom
    4 – Never

34. I believe that there are times when God has punished me.
    1 - Always or almost always
    2 - Often
    3 - Seldom
    4 - Never

Forgiveness by Others

35. I believe that when people say they forgive me for something I did they really mean it. (Mauger et al)
    1 - Always or almost always
    2 - Often
    3 - Seldom
    4 – Never

36. I often feel that no matter what I do now I will never make up for the mistakes I have made in the past. (Mauger et al)
    1 - Always or almost always
    2 - Often
    3 - Seldom
    4 - Never

Forgiveness of Others

37. I am able to make pretty easily with friends who have hurt me in some way. (Mauger et al)
    1 - Always or almost always
    2 - Often
    3 - Seldom
    4 - Never

38. I have grudges which I have held onto for months or years. (Mauger et al)
    1 - Always or almost always
    2 - Often
    3 - Seldom
    4 - Never

Forgiveness of Oneself

39. I find it hard to forgive myself for some things that I have done. (Mauger et al)
    1 - Always or almost always
    2 - Often
    3 - Seldom
    4 - Never

40. I often feel like I have failed to live the right kind of life. (Mauger et al)
    1 - Always or almost always
    2 - Often
    3 - Seldom
    4 - Never

Private Religious Practices

41. How often do you pray privately in places other than at church or synagogue?
    1 - More than once a day
    2 - Once a day
    3 - A few times a week
    4 - Once a week
    5 - A few times a month
    6 - Once a month
    7 - Less than once a month
    8 - Never

42. How often do you watch or listen to religious programs on TV or radio?
   1 - More than once a day
   2 - Once a day
   3 - A few times a week
   4 - Once a week
   5 - A few times a month
   6 - Once a month
   7 - Less than once a month
   8 - Never

43. How often do you read the Bible or other religious literature?
   1 - More than once a day
   2 - Once a day
   3 - A few times a week
   4 - Once a week
   5 - A few times a month
   6 - Once a month
   7 - Less than once a month
   8 - Never

44. How often are prayers or grace said before or after meals in your home?
   1 - At all meals
   2 - Once a day
   3 - At least once a week
   4 - Only on special occasions
   5 - Never

Religious Support

Emotional Support Received from Others

45. How often do the people in your congregation make you feel loved and cared for?
   1 - Very often
   2 - Fairly often
   3 - Once in a while
   4 – Never

46. How often do the people in your congregation listen to you talk about your private problems and concerns?
   1 - Very often
   2 - Fairly often
   3 - Once in a while
   4 – Never

47. How often do the people in your congregation express interest and concern in your well-being?
    1 - Very often
    2 - Fairly often
    3 - Once in a while
    4 – Never

Emotional Support Provided to Others

48. How often do the people in your congregation feel loved and cared for?
    1 - Very often
    2 - Fairly often
    3 - Once in a while
    4 – Never

49. How often do you listen to the people in your congregation talk about their private problems and concerns?
    1 - Very often
    2 - Fairly often
    3 - Once in a while
    4 – Never

50. How often do you express interest and concern in the well-being of people you worship with?
    1 - Very often
    2 - Fairly often
    3 - Once in a while
    4 – Never

Negative Interaction

51. How often do the people in your congregation make too many demands on you?
    1 - Very often
    2 - Fairly often
    3 - Once in a while
    4 – Never

52. How often are the people in your congregation critical of you and the things you do?
    1 - Very often
    2 - Fairly often
    3 - Once in a while
    4 – Never

53. How often do the people in your congregation try to take advantage of you?
    1 - Very often
    2 - Fairly often
    3 - Once in a while
    4 – Never

Anticipated Support

54. If you were ill, how much would the people in your congregation help you out?
1 - A great deal
2 - Some
3 - A little
4 - None

55. If you had a problem or were faced with a difficult situation, how much comfort would the people in your congregation be willing to give you?
1 - A great deal
2 - Some
3 - A little
4 – None

56. If you needed to know where to go to get help with a problem you were having, how much would the people in your congregation be willing to help out?
1 - A great deal
2 - Some
3 - A little
4 - None