

MARITAL SATISFACTION AND RELIGIOSITY: A COMPARISON OF TWO  
MEASURES OF RELIGIOSITY

---

A Dissertation  
Submitted to  
The Temple University Graduate Board

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

---

By  
Scott Thomas Parker

May, 2009

©

By Scott Thomas Parker

May, 2009

All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

MARITAL SATISFACTION AND RELIGIOSITY: A COMPARISON OF TWO  
MEASURES OF RELIGIOSITY

By Scott Thomas Parker  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Temple University, 2009

Major Advisor: Dr. Joseph DuCette

The current study compared two measures of religiosity and compared the relationship between religiosity and marital satisfaction. Religiosity was measured using two methods: monthly church attendance and The Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981). Participants consisted of at 158 married individuals selected from four Christian churches in Burlington County, New Jersey. Results confirm that a relationship exists between Christian religious beliefs and marital satisfaction: a person who has strong, conservative Christian beliefs also has high marital satisfaction. Results also show a correlation between a single-item subjective measure of marital satisfaction and the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997). Beliefs and practices of the Christian faith did not better predict marital satisfaction than attendance at religious functions. Religious beliefs, religious behaviors, or number of times at church each month did not predict marital satisfaction when the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997) was used to assess marital satisfaction but religious behavior predicted marital satisfaction when a single-item, subjective measure of marital satisfaction was used instead. A final finding revealed that personal prayer and time spent in joint prayer are able to predict marital satisfaction regardless of the method used to assess marital satisfaction.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost I want to thank my God and my Savior Jesus Christ. He has directed my paths and without his hand this unlikely project would not have been successful. I would also like to thank my wife, Sandy. Without your patience, love, and support I never would have had the energy to complete this project. This ordeal impacted you even more than me.

I want to thank my committee for all of their help in reading, re-reading, and making useful suggestions for improving the final product. Dr. DuCette, you saved me from stagnation. When, late in the process I asked you to take over as my Chairperson, you agreed and took control of the tiller. Thank you so much for your calm guidance and support. Dr. Hart, you were instrumental in getting me back on track and I can not thank you enough for helping me produce a dissertation of which I am proud. Dr. Thurman, though we had more than a few disagreements your feedback really shaped the project into something that surpassed my expectations. I really appreciate your dedication and unfaltering commitment to me producing a worthy dissertation. Dr. Tucker, you were with me when this project came to life. When my academic advisor was on sabbatical you helped me craft my comprehensive examination question which led to this research. I am so happy that you agreed to participate in my defense. I appreciate your calm and friendly demeanor and remember well many of the lessons you taught me throughout my Ph.D. Dr. Farley, I thank you for your insights at my defense. I appreciated your humor and the experience you brought in the study of romantic relationships.

I want to thank my parents, Al and Annette. Could any son be as lucky to have supportive parents like you? You paid for my undergraduate degree then offered

financial and emotional support as I worked through my Ph.D., especially when I was unbearable.

Lynn Jones, Michele Koschin, Carmen Hodges, and Kevin Moore: I thank each of you for giving me a place to ask questions, refine my thoughts, and encouragement to continue

Finally, I want to thank my children who look into my eyes and drive me to be a better man.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	vi
LIST OF TABLES .....	xi
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Divorce and the Effects of Divorce .....	4
Christian Religiosity and Marital Satisfaction.....	5
Statement of the Purpose .....	7
Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	7
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	10
Divorce and the Effects of Divorce .....	12
Marital Satisfaction.....	14
Affective Factors.....	15
Coping Strategies .....	16
Perception .....	18
Religion and Marriage .....	19
Measuring Religiosity.....	23
3. METHOD .....	31
Participants.....	31
Inclusion Criteria .....	31
Exclusion Criteria .....	32

Screening Measures .....	32
Pre-Assessment .....	32
Predictor Variables.....	32
Criterion Variables.....	32
Mediating/Moderating Variables .....	33
Instruments- Marital Satisfaction Inventory .....	33
Instruments- Shepherd Scale.....	34
Criterion Analysis .....	35
4. RESULTS .....	38
Description of Sample.....	38
Religious Variables.....	41
Research Questions.....	42
Secondary Analysis.....	47
5. DISCUSSION .....	50
Hypothesis One: Shepherd Scale and Marital Satisfaction.....	53
Hypothesis Two: Predicting Marital Satisfaction.....	54
Agreement and Marital Satisfaction .....	56
Summary .....	56
Limitations of the Study and Future Research.....	57
Practical Implications.....	60
REFERENCES .....	62
APPENDIXES	
A. PERMISSION LETTER.....	75

B. THE SHEPHERD SCALE.....78

C. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE .....83

D. INFORMED CONSENT .....88



## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
4.1- Demographic Data.....	38
4.2- Religious Institution .....	39
4.3- Education.....	40
4.4- Annual Household Income .....	40
4.5- Religious Variables.....	41
4.6- Correlations between the Two Measures of Marital Satisfaction.....	43
4.7- Correlations between the Shepherd Scale and the Two Measures of Marital Satisfaction.....	44
4.8- Correlation between Church Attendance and Shepherd Scale .....	45
4.9- Results of Multiple Regressions.....	46
4.10- Correlations between with Marital Satisfaction .....	48

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The National Center for Health Statistics (2002) reported that between 1999 and 2001, an average of 48% of marriages ended in divorce. Divorce causes considerable turmoil among families and can have a devastating impact including extreme sense of loss, anger, depressive symptoms, social isolation, and loss of time at work (Amato, 2004). Divorce is a significant life stressor and is comparable to stressful life events such as death of loved ones and loss of employment. Divorce can also lead to alienation from friends that a couple shared when married. Divorced parents can be further isolated from social networks as the demands of single parenthood require the parent to care for children at the expense of social activities. Single parenthood can be a continual reminder of the divorce as decisions that were once shared are now made solely by the single parent. Financial difficulties are a significant stressor which accompanies divorce. Assets are divided during the divorce process, savings accounts are depleted, and the individual must meet financial needs without the benefit of a spouse's salary. Typically, individuals have arranged their life to reflect a lifestyle that can be supported by two salaries, but is strained by the loss of one salary. Divorce represents a major life stressor that impacts the lives of both adults and children.

Because divorce can have negative consequences for all parties, a considerable amount of research has been conducted to delineate those factors that decrease the probability that a couple will divorce. One of the variables that has been studied is religion. Because all of the world's major religions teach against divorce a lower divorce rate should exist among those with committed religious bodies. Couples who are married

in Christian Churches and Jewish Synagogues take public vows to remain married until “death do us part”. Typical pre-marital counseling classes teach that marriage is a life long commitment and that couples should remove divorce as an option. It would seem that a lower divorce rate would exist among couples who are actively involved in a religious organization that teaches against divorce and provides counseling, support groups, and encourages marriage conferences. However, research shows otherwise. The divorce rate within the Christian church is similar to the divorce rate outside of the Christian church (Barna, 2004) and approaches 50%.

One of the ways that researchers have investigated the antecedents of divorce is to ascertain its relationship with marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction is a concept which measures happiness, contentment, and satisfaction in marriage. It involves satisfaction with communication, finances, roles within marriage, satisfaction with the sexual relationship, child rearing, and conflict resolution. Marital satisfaction is inversely related to divorce. Couples who have high marital satisfaction are less likely to divorce than couples who have low marital satisfaction (Bugaihis, Schumn, Jurich, & Bollman, 1985-1986; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001). Couples who enjoy a fulfilling marriage and report a high degree of satisfaction with their marriage rarely, if ever, divorce. Conversely, couples with low marital satisfaction are more likely to divorce.

One possible explanation for the similarity of divorce rate among members of Christian churches and those outside of the Christian church is the way that religion is measured. Typically the issue of religiosity, how strongly a person believes and practices religion, is measured simply by church attendance. People are said to be more religious

if they attend religious services each week as opposed to those who infrequently attends religious services. Often in the published literature, no other measure of religiosity is used. Does church attendance alone correlate with the internalization of religious teachings which may encourage married couples to avoid divorce? The current research was designed to compare two methods of measuring religiosity: church attendance and the internalization of beliefs and practices. Each measure of religiosity was compared to marital satisfaction to determine if using a measure of the beliefs and practices of religion, attendance at religious services, or a combination of the two best predicts marital satisfaction.

Ideally, it would be beneficial to examine all of the world's major religions and compare attendance at religious services, the internalization of the beliefs and practices of that religion, and marital satisfaction; however, to date there are no adequate scales to measure the internalization of beliefs and practices of most of the world's major religions. King and Crowther (2004) have suggested that faith neutral measurement instruments could ask carefully worded questions about personal times of meditation or times of religious thought that would elicit responses about prayer. The authors also suggest that faith neutral measures would not obtain accurate results due to differences among the importance of religious beliefs and behaviors within religions and between religions. For example, Muslims value numerous times of personal prayer daily and may score as more highly religious than Christian faiths who pray daily but not as frequently as Muslims. Catholics generally do not promote bible reading as much as Protestant denominations and Baptists view scripture memorization as an important component of religiosity. Denominational differences between the value of prayer, scripture reading, or

memorization could provide results which are inappropriately skewed. King and Crowther (2004) suggest that research on religion might be best achieved with calibrated faith specific measures of religion, but to date no such set of measures has been created. The present research instead focused on one religious group, Christian's and utilized an instrument that has seen extensive use in research and one that is acceptable to Christian churches.

### *Divorce and the Effects of Divorce*

Nearly one of every two marriages ends in divorce. Couples report many factors contributing to their divorce, including decreased marital satisfaction, poor communication, loss of interest in the relationship, loss of affection, and falling out of love (Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001). Divorce is a pervasive stressor that contributes to increased affective distress, financial pressures, disruption among children affected by divorce, and long-term relationship difficulties for divorced individuals (Amato, 2004). The financial impact of divorce affects both spouses and includes the loss of salary, legal fees, and loss of work due to psychological stress. The causes and prevention of divorce have been a significant focus for research in the past 20 years. Efforts to examine the components of divorce have yielded numerous contributing factors including the role of marital satisfaction in the high divorce rate. Obviously, couples who enjoy a fulfilling marriage and report a high degree of satisfaction with their marriage rarely, if ever, divorce.

More than 1,000,000 children experience the divorce of their parents each year and the majority of these divorces result in the loss of the father from the home (Rosenbaum, 2000). Brown's (2000) research on the effects of divorce on children has

revealed some of the long-term difficulties that children of divorce will experience throughout their lives as a result of their parent's divorce. They have been shown to struggle in their own adult romantic relationships. When they pursue adult romantic relationships they are more deceptive in relationships, more ambivalent about marriage, and have attitudes supporting cohabitation prior to marriage. Cohabitation prior to marriage has been linked to low marital quality, low commitment, and an increased risk of later divorce (Thomson, 1992; Woods, 2002). Additional research has shown that children of divorce have an increased need for power and closeness, are at increased risk for depression, have more maladaptive behaviors (Brown, Portes, & Christensen, 1989; Fraenkel, Markmen, & Stanley, 1997), and are at increased risk of suicide (Johnson, Krug, & Potter, 2000; Yang & Lester, 1991).

The negative effects of divorce also have serious implications for adult men and women. Following a divorce, men and women have more medical problems, more mental health problems, and decreased productivity at work (Fraenkel, Markmen, & Stanley, 1997). There is less research detailing the negative effects for men; however, women become more socially isolated following divorce, are more likely to experience a decrease in social standing in contrast to pre-divorce and pre-marital social standing, and are more likely than men to experience a decrease in socio-economic status following a divorce (Miller, 1997).

### *Christian Religiosity and Marital Satisfaction*

Religiosity, a general term irrespective of any specific religion, which encompasses an individual's religious beliefs, further adherence to proscribed behavioral attributes associated with religion, and the significance that religion plays in an

individual's everyday life. Several studies have shown a significant relationship between religiosity and marital satisfaction (Fenell, 1993; Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Schumm, Bollman, & Jurich, 1982). The teachings of many of the world's major religions encourage people to work out marital problems and avoid divorce. For example, in the Christian faith the Bible is used as a source for moral advice and wisdom and teaches that couples should not divorce. (Houlden, 1995) The Bible states, "So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matthew 19:6, New International Version) and "I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel." (Malachi 2:16, New International Version). Perhaps religious organizations and worship centers develop support mechanisms for couples in ailing marriages to strengthen that marriage in an attempt to defend against divorce or perhaps other factors contribute between the correlation between religiosity and marital satisfaction. This paper intends to investigate the components of religiosity that may contribute to high marital satisfaction.

Research shows that the divorce rate within the Christian church is similar to the divorce rate outside of the Christian church (Barna, 2004). It has been suggested that one reason for this is that many non-Christian couples are avoiding divorce by choosing long-term co-habitation instead of marriage, which decreases the divorce rate in the non-Christian community. Instead, I am proposing that the similarities in divorce rates between Christians and non-Christians are the result of poorly defining Christian religiosity by church attendance rather than by beliefs. Typical literature classifies individuals as Christians based on vague criteria that fail to separate Christians on the spectrum of depth of their belief system or based on their behavioral practice of

Christianity. Individuals are simply classified as Christian if they call themselves Christian or if they attend a Christian church. Because typical research does not delineate depth of belief or adherence to religious behaviors in a religion, I would suggest that the statistic suggesting similar divorce rates among Christians as non-Christians may be misleading. More research is needed to investigate the wide range of individuals who call themselves Christians on dimensions of divorce and marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction is selected as a variable due to its high correlation with divorce and as a variable that provides more information about the causes of divorce than simply using divorce as a variable itself. Furthermore, I would speculate that more religious Christians, as measured by beliefs rather than church attendance, would have higher marital satisfaction.

#### *Statement of the Purpose*

The current research is a further attempt to expand the body of literature of the relationship between marital satisfaction and religious beliefs and assess Christian religiosity by measuring a sample of Christians using an instrument that was constructed to measure the practices and beliefs of the Christian faith. It is hypothesized that individuals who report a greater integration of Christianity in their lives will have a lower divorce rate than those who report a lower integration of Christianity in their lives. This may lead to future research to study the aspects of religious beliefs and practices that increase marital satisfaction and decrease divorce.

#### *Research Questions and Hypotheses*



The core research question for the present study was as follows: Is there a relationship between religious beliefs and practices among practicing Christian couples and general marital satisfaction?

Hypothesis 1: The degree of religious beliefs and practices will be positively correlated with marital satisfaction. Religious beliefs and practices will be measured by the Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981) and marital satisfaction will be measured by the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997).

It is predicted that those individuals who endorse a high degree of belief in Christianity combined with a high degree of adherence to Christian practices including frequent church attendance and involvement in church activities will report a higher degree of overall marital satisfaction. Literature points to a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and religion (Fenell, 1993; Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Schumm, Bollman, & Jurich, 1982). Research has shown that couples who spend time together in joint activities report greater marital satisfaction than couples who do not spend time together or couples who simply spend time together but not in any activity (Reisman, Aaron, & Bergen, 1993). There is also a positive relationship between joint participation in Christian activities and marital satisfaction (Apt & Hurlbert, 1992; Schroeder-Wallace, 1996). Though there has been some literature contradicting this correlation, it is believed that the research showing no relationship between marital satisfaction and religiosity used measures of religiosity that were easily confounded with other variables. That research failed to measure religiosity of a homogeneous sample and 80% of the previous research used frequency of church attendance as the sole measure of religiosity (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001). The current research is an attempt to

investigate the relationship between Christian beliefs, Christian practices, and marital satisfaction when using an instrument that measures facets of Christianity, including beliefs and behaviors, rather than self-reported church attendance. Christian beliefs and practices will be measured using the Beliefs and Christian Walk subscales of the Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981) and marital satisfaction will be measured by the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997).

Hypothesis 2: Beliefs and practices of the Christian faith, as measured by the Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981), will better predict marital satisfaction, as measured by the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997), than attendance at religious functions.

Church attendance is a widely used measurement device in most research that correlates marital satisfaction with religiosity. However, church attendance does not delineate Christians with strong beliefs from Christians who attend church for reasons other than strong belief. It is believed that a scale that examines the behaviors and practices of the Christian faith will be a better predictor of marital satisfaction than self-reported church attendance. The current research is designed to extend previous research and to suggest using a method of measuring religiosity that examines the practices and beliefs of the Christian faith.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Results from the National Center for Health Statistics (2002) during a two year period following 1999 show an average of 48% of marriages ended in divorce. In other words, nearly half of all of all married couples will experience divorce in their lifetime. The effects of divorce are numerous and include anger, depression, social isolation, and decreased productivity at work. Divorce involves the loss of social resources including the loss of friends, in-law support, and loss of friendships which resulted from the marriage (Amato, 2004). Single parenthood is very time consuming and demands tremendous sacrifice. This sacrifice can further isolate the divorcee from social supports. Significant expenses are involved in the process of divorce including attorney fees and division of assets. Savings accounts are typically depleted, possessions are divided, as jointly owned real estate is sold. A newly divorced individual is forced to meet financial obligations on one salary. Divorced individuals must change spending habits to accommodate living within the means of one salary, even when expenses increase such as clothing for the children, increased weekly food budget, and entertainment. Frequently, single parents are forced to obtain daycare for children which also increases the financial burden.

Marriage is a major tenant of religious institutions. Marriages are frequently conducted by religious leaders and held in churches or synagogues. Couples who are married in churches and synagogues publicly vow they will remain with their spouse until “death do us part”. Young men and young women dream of finding Mr. or Mrs. “Right” rather than expecting they will be divorced and married more than once. Many

dating rituals are focused on finding this Mr. or Mrs. “Right”. Pre-marital counseling classes teach marriage as a life long commitment. When marital discord is present religious leaders provide free marital counseling. There is no research evidence discussing the efficacy of marriage counseling conducted by members of clergy but other avenues are available if religious counseling is unsuccessful. Couples can seek secular marriage counseling, support groups, marriage conventions. Since religious institutions are so involved in marriage, it would seem obvious that a lower divorce rate would exist among marriages of couples who are involved in a church or synagogue. Research contradicts this belief and instead shows the divorce rate approaches 50% within Christian churches (Barna, 2004).

Marital satisfaction measures happiness, contentment, and satisfaction in marriage. It involves satisfaction with communication, finances, gender roles, sexual satisfaction, child rearing, and problem solving communication (Heyman, Sayers, & Bellack, 1994). Very satisfied couples are less likely to divorce than couples who have low marital satisfaction (Bugaghis, Schumn, Jurich, & Bollman, 1985-1986; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001) and low marital satisfaction is correlated with divorce.

One possible explanation for this surprising trend is the way that religion is measured. Typically the issue of religiosity or how strongly a person believes and practices his or her religion is measured simply by church attendance. Someone is said to be more religious if he or she attends religious services each week as opposed to someone who infrequently attends religious services. This person is classified as less religious. No other measure of religiosity is used. Does church attendance alone correlate with the

internalization of religious teachings which may encourage married couples to avoid divorce? The current research is an attempt to compare the two methods of measuring religiosity: church attendance versus the internalization of beliefs and practices. Each measure of religiosity will be compared to marital satisfaction to determine if using a measure of the beliefs and practices of religion, attendance at religious services, or a combination of the two best predicts marital satisfaction

Ideally, the current research would focus on all major world religions and attendance patterns would be correlated with marital satisfaction. This research could then focus on measuring religiosity of these major world religions and correlating measured religiosity with marital satisfaction. Unfortunately, a scale of religiosity has not been created which would measure religiosity across multiple religions. As such, the current research is confined to Christianity which has a scale to measure religiosity.

#### *Divorce and the Effects of Divorce*

Half of all marriages end in divorce (National Center for Health Statistics, 2002). Couples report many factors contributing to their divorce, including decreased marital satisfaction, poor communication, loss of interest in the relationship, loss of affection, and falling out of love (Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001). Divorce is a pervasive stressor that contributes to increased affective distress, financial pressures, disruption among children affected by divorce, and long-term relationship difficulties for divorced individuals (Amato, 2005; Richards, Hardy, & Wadsworth, 1997). The financial impact of divorce affects both spouses and includes the loss of salary, legal fees, and loss of work due to psychological stress. Divorce, its causes and prevention, have been a significant focus for research in the past 20 years. Efforts to examine the

components of divorce have yielded numerous contributing factors including the role of marital satisfaction in the high divorce rate. Obviously, couples who enjoy a fulfilling marriage and report a high degree of satisfaction with their marriage rarely, if ever, divorce.

More than 1,000,000 children experience the divorce of their parents each year and the majority of these divorces result in the loss of the father from the home (Rosenbaum, 2000). Brown's (2000) research on the effects of divorce on children has revealed some of the long-term difficulties that children of divorce will experience throughout their lives as a result of their parent's divorce. Children of divorce have been shown to struggle in their own adult romantic relationships. When children of divorce pursue adult romantic relationships they are more deceptive in relationships, more ambivalent about marriage, and have attitudes supporting cohabitation prior to marriage. Cohabitation prior to marriage has been linked to low marital quality, low commitment, and an increased risk of later divorce (Thomson, 1992; Woods, 2002). Additional research has shown that children of divorce have an increased need for power and closeness, are at increased risk for depression, have more maladaptive behaviors (Brown, Portes, & Christensen, 1989; Fraenkel, Markmen, & Stanley, 1997), and are at increased risk of suicide (Johnson, Krug, & Potter, 2000; Yang & Lester, 1991).

The negative effects of divorce also have serious implications for adult men and women. Following a divorce, men and women have more medical problems, more mental health problems, and decreased productivity at work (Fraenkel, Markmen, & Stanley, 1997). There is scarce research detailing the negative effects for men; however, divorced women become more socially isolated following divorce, are more likely to

experience a decrease in social standing in contrast to pre-divorce and pre-marital social standing, and are more likely than men to experience a decrease in socio-economic status following a divorce (Miller, 1997). Divorce has also been shown to have a negative impact on future romantic relationships (Fraenkel, Markmen, & Stanley, 1997; Miller, 1997).

### *Marital Satisfaction*

Marital satisfaction is an important topic that has been extensively researched over the past 20 years especially due to its relationship to divorce. Marital satisfaction is far more informative than divorce statistics as it can provide detailed information on the causes of divorce, the progress of deteriorating marriages, factors that contribute to intact marriages, and longevity of marriages. Since low marital satisfaction is correlated with divorce (Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001) and provides more detailed information about marriages, including what contributes to successful marriages, literature has focused on understanding components of marital satisfaction that explain happiness in marriage and components that marital satisfaction, or rather dissatisfaction, that lead to divorce. (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001). Marital satisfaction is a subjective expression of how content a person is in marriage (Rosen-Grandon, 1999). It is a reflection of feeling loved, being content with communication patterns in the marriage, contentment with conflict resolution, feeling secure in the marriage, and believing your spouse has made you a priority in the relationship (Heyman, Steven, & Bellack, 1994; Rosen-Grandon, 1999). It involves satisfaction with finances, agreement on parenting and child rearing issues, satisfaction with roles assumed by each spouse, and contentment with the sexual relationship (Heyman, Steven, & Bellack, 1994;

Rosen-Grandon, 1999). Researchers have attempted to investigate the many facets of marital satisfaction, including the correlation of marital satisfaction with spousal perception, expression of emotion, the impact of personality factors, and the impact of coping strategies (Campbell & Snow, 1992; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001). Additionally, significant research has examined the relationship between general religious beliefs and marital satisfaction.

### *Affective Factors*

People who frequently experience negative moods and who have high levels of anxiety express unhappiness with many aspects of their lives including their marriage (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000). Researchers have suggested this finding may be due to the fact that people who frequently experience negative moods and who have high anxiety interact with their spouse in ways that foster marital dissatisfaction. In either case, such marriages seem destined for trouble from the outset. When one partner frequently experiences these negative moods and/or high anxiety, the other partner will also begin to experience these negative moods and high anxiety (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000). This suggests that an approach that begins to work with couples prior to marriage could increase their long-term marital satisfaction. Depression also has a negative impact on marital satisfaction. When one partner of a couple is depressed, the communication pattern of the couple becomes unpredictable (Sher & Baucom, 1993) leading to decreased marital satisfaction.

Communicating with your spouse about your feelings and emotions is positively correlated with marital satisfaction (King, 1993). Other research has focused on the male gender role and asserts that men who are not emotionally expressive, and who report



difficulty between work and/or school roles and their role as husband, experience less marital satisfaction (Campbell & Snow, 1992). In addition, wives are more satisfied with their marriages when husbands are emotionally expressive (Acitelli, 1992; Campbell & Snow, 1992). This suggests areas where therapists may intervene to increase marital satisfaction. Interventions could include increasing husbands' expression of emotion, helping them manage multiple roles, and teaching them stress reduction techniques to help them adjust to inevitable role conflicts. Women who use positive verbal behavior (humor, attempts to agree with their spouse, and attempts to be more approving) and compliance (codes reflecting approval, assent, and agreement) report marital satisfaction in the short-term but marital dissatisfaction in the long-term (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989).

Gottman and Krokoff (1989) found that partner's expressions of contempt, anger, and fear correlated with marital dissatisfaction in the short term but had no correlation with marital satisfaction when measured three years later. Disengagement from an argument, avoidance, humor, and agreement when used to end conflict may lead to a decrease in future marital satisfaction because the focus is on maintaining peace rather than effective conflict resolution (Smith, Vivian, & O'Leary, 1990). Defensiveness, stubbornness, and withdrawal correlate with marital dissatisfaction in the short and long-term (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). The most satisfied couples were those who, prior to marriage, utilized communication patterns that were not quiet, sluggish, nor silent, but were energetic, and excited (Smith, Vivian, & O'Leary, 1990).

### *Coping Strategies*

Research describes an association between marital satisfaction and interactional styles in marriage. Specifically, there is a correlation between coping strategies used and

future marital satisfaction such that escaping from a conflict is predictive of future marital distress. Alternatively, problem-focused strategies, positive approach, optimistic comparisons, and negotiation are predictive of greater marital satisfaction (Bouchard, Sabourin, Lussier, Wright, & Richer, 1998). Gender differences related to coping strategies reveal that men who don't escape conflict but instead engage in conflict resolution, report greater marital satisfaction (Gottman, 1999). Coping strategies that are correlated with decreased marital satisfaction include confrontation, escape/ avoidance, disengagement, self-interest (standing up for personal rights during conflict at the expense of the rights and feelings of your spouse), resignation, and selective ignoring with women reporting greater marital dissatisfaction when using self-interest (Bouchard, Sabourin, Lussier, Wright, & Richer, 1998). Contemporary beliefs pose that men use coping strategies that are aggressive in nature including confrontation and conflict, which will inherently lead to future decreased marital satisfaction. Men are more likely to be defensive and withdrawn than women, and women are more likely to be more emotionally expressive and more confrontational than men. Furthermore, reciprocated anger, sadness, and contempt are correlated with relationship dissatisfaction (Carstensen, Gottman, & Levenson, 1995). A cycle is created where women confront men with emotional expressions and men withdraw and become more defensive, prompting women to pursue and continue to confront. If this pattern continues, both partners become dissatisfied with the relationship. However, it has been proposed that other factors may lead to better problem solving strategies, including religiosity. It has been asserted that Christian couples with high reported religiosity, who utilize shared prayer during conflict,

report greater feelings of cooperation, a softening of the conflict, and greater sharing of responsibility (Butler, Stout, & Gardner, 2002).

### *Perception*

How people perceive themselves and their spouse relates to marital satisfaction. Some theorists believe that individuals project their own virtues onto the partner or that desired qualities we wish to see in ourselves are projected onto our partner (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). In some marriages, these perceptions can be inaccurate and represent wish fulfillment rather than reality. Indeed, some individuals rather than choosing a partner who has complimentary characteristics instead chose a partner who has imagined characteristics. Research that evaluated the perceptions of newlyweds discovered that newly married couples' marital satisfaction decreased soon after marriage if their account of their dating relationship involved strong positive romantic themes (Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001). The same researchers contrasted other couples who had equally positive themes when describing their dating history with each other but did not involve the romantic themes. This research revealed that seeing the best in your partner despite imperfections results in higher marital satisfaction and longer marital durability. This finding may be related to projections of idealized characteristics or related to the self-esteem of the individuals in the relationship. Overall, it seems apparent that when one member of the relationship accepts the other member of the relationship and flaws are minimized, conflict may be lessened. A related couple's therapy technique focuses the individual's attention on the positive qualities of the other partner instead of the negative qualities, and involves having the couple discuss what attracted them to each other and reminisce about those positive qualities (Sherman &

Fredman, 1986). In contrast, marital dissatisfaction can occur when one or both members of the relationship hold unrealistic beliefs concerning how the relationship should function (Bradbury & Fincham, 1988).

### *Religion and Marriage*

Religion plays an important role in many marriages. Heaton and Pratt (1990) found that most married individuals attend religious services one or more times per month. Nearly two-thirds of American adults admit to making contributions to religious worship centers in 2003 (Barna, 2004). Couples who have deep religious Judeo-Christian beliefs typically participate in numerous activities that are related to their religious beliefs. Such couples attend religious services together, participate in work or social activities with members of their religious organization, and may attend study groups. These couples may engage in religious activities in the home such as praying together, discussing religion and religious aspects as they relate to their marriage, or watching religious television programs together. These activities alone may increase communication in the marriage as the couple discusses the importance and impact of religion on their marriage. Prayer has been linked with improved marital satisfaction (Heck, 2006). Couples that engage in activities together report greater marital satisfaction and less conflict and their participation in shared religious activities provides an opportunity for a couple to support each other through an exploration of shared religious values (Mahoney, Pargament, Jewell, Swank, Scott, Emery, & Rye 1999). Involvement in religion and religious activities, attending religious services, and other activities at their religious organization exposes the couple to a social group of people who share similar values and typically share the same convictions concerning marriage.

This group can be used in times of marital difficulties by having supportive friends to talk with and possible religious based counseling/ support. Research shows that couples who attend religious services frequently are more satisfied with their marriages than couples who do not attend church services (Sullivan, 2001). Subjective levels of religiosity correlate highly with marital happiness and increased marital satisfaction (Bugaghis, Schumm, Jurich, & Bollman, 1985-1986; Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2006; Schumm, 1982; Schumm, Bollman, & Jurich, 1982; Sullivan, 2001). Conservative religious beliefs are also correlated with greater marital satisfaction (Wilson & Filsinger, 1986). Changes in marital satisfaction are related to changes in religiosity (Booth, Johnson, Branaman, & Sica, 1995). This indicates that for some individuals, marital satisfaction is intertwined with religious beliefs such that a change in one affects the other. Some couples that are deeply committed to religious beliefs suffer a period of questioning and/ or weakening of religious beliefs when faced with marital difficulties where other couples faced with the same difficulties report high levels of marital satisfaction and increased dependence upon their religious beliefs (Mahoney et al., 1999). One possible explanation is that individuals who hold strong religious beliefs are willing to persevere in the face of marital difficulties with the belief that the difficulties will pass and the marriage will be strengthened (Sullivan, 2001). Another possible explanation is the effect of church/ synagogue membership and social network. Individuals who are involved in the most widely accepted faith and religious institution in the community report a greater sense of well being and an increased ability to cope with life's stressors (Dufton & Perlman, 1986; McClure & Loden, 1982). Membership in the most widely accepted faith and institution

in the community connects people to a large network of people who hold similar beliefs and can contribute to a willingness to reach out for help.

Irrespective of any specific religion, marital satisfaction has been correlated with level of adherence to religious beliefs and practices, the amount of time spent in joint religious activities, similarity and dissimilarity of religious beliefs within a married couple, the relationship between religious beliefs and conflict resolution strategies, and the impact of a religious social support network (Lambert & Dollahite, 2008). The current research is a further attempt to expand the body of literature of the relationship between marital satisfaction and religious beliefs and also to correct the use of an inadequate definition of Christian religiosity by measuring a sample of Christians using an instrument that was constructed to measure the practices and beliefs of the Christian faith. Though an examination of general religiosity across major world religions would be preferable to measuring Christianity, no such instrument measures the complex facets of the world's major religions. An instrument that measures the complexity of the Christian religion does exist and was selected for the current study.

Research examining Christianity (both Catholic and Protestant), Judaism, Mormonism, and those who report no religion suggests that couples who report high levels of religiosity and attend religious services report stronger communication skills and an increased willingness to resolve marital difficulties and to seek out help during times of marital distress (Sullivan, 2001). Couples who integrate religion into their marriage report less marital conflict and greater collaboration, especially verbal collaboration (Mahoney, Pargament, Jewell, Swank, Scott, Emery, & Rye 1999). Men report a greater willingness for joint decision making and greater communication when

married to someone who is religiously similar to themselves (Liao & Stevens, 1994). One study by Sullivan (2001) did not support the finding that marital satisfaction was related to religiosity. In that study, there was no direct relationship between scores on a marital satisfaction measure when correlated with religiosity. However, that result may be due to a limitation in the study. The study measured newlywed couples through the fourth year of marriage. It is possible that a couples' religiosity does not impact their marital satisfaction in the early years of marriage but the impact of shared activities and increased communication becomes more relevant over time.

Divorce rates are affected by attendance at Christian religious services and Christian religiosity such that couples with high rates of attendance and high religiosity do not divorce as frequently as couples that do not attend religious services frequently (Booth, Johnson, Branaman, & Sica, 1995; Collins, 1998; Mahoney, 2001; Mahoney, Paragament, Tarakeshwar, and Swank, 2001). It might be expected that this is related to the stigma of divorce in religious organizations or that attendance decreases following a divorce. However, attendance at religious services does not decrease following a divorce (Clydesdale, 1997), suggesting that there is not sufficient stigma following a divorce to cause individuals to stop attending religious services. If stigma following a divorce is the motivating factor for couples to remain married, it would be expected that individuals who are more religious would have greater marital dissatisfaction than individuals who are not religious, but this is not the case (Mahoney, Paragament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001). This research also revealed that couples who do not divorce when faced with marital distress report greater marital satisfaction if they also have strong religious (Judeo-Christian) beliefs. Another study found that attendance at religious services when

children are born is negatively associated with future marital separation (Fergusson, Horwood, Kershaw, & Shannon, 1984).

### *Measuring Religiosity*

Measuring religiosity across different religions is very difficult due to intrinsic differences between religions. There is no single measure of religion, religious attitudes, or religious values that has normative data on major world religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Mormonism, and Shinto. A preponderance of the research literature has focused on Christianity and measures of Christianity but research on religions other than Christianity shows promising results. Research done on interfaith Jewish marriages, where children were asked about their parent's religious beliefs and religious behaviors, show that religious agreement is correlated with higher marital satisfaction (Chintz & Brown, 2001). Parsons, Nalbone, Killmer, and Wetcher (2007) modified an existing Christian based religiosity scale for use with varying faiths. No information is provided concerning what was changed from the original measure and now sample items are presented but reliability, using a Cronbach's alpha was .74. The sample for that research was predominantly Christian (91%) with a small percentage of Buddhist, Hindu, and Jewish faiths represented. This instrument should be normed on an interfaith sample before use in future research and therefore was not included in this study. Hunler and Gencoz (2005) researched marital satisfaction and religiousness with a Turkish sample and reported a correlation between religiosity and marital satisfaction. The instrument from that research was not published and the specific religion measured was not discussed. Since the population of Turkey is



overwhelmingly Muslim, Hinler and Gencoz's research most likely measures marital satisfaction and religiosity in a Muslim sample.

One promising scale, The Religious Values Scale (Morrow, Worthington, & McCullough, 1993) measures religious attitudes, religious beliefs, and tolerance for others with different values among students from a large southeastern university. Caucasian students comprised 70% to 80% of the sample. The scale was designed to be useful across religions and avoids language that alienates members of different faiths. Preliminary reliability data suggests moderate to high reliability and good validity but this instrument has not been frequently utilized in research. More research is needed on this scale to determine generalizability to a national sample and to provide more representative data. Since the scope of the current research is to provide data on religiosity and marital satisfaction rather than expand the research on a given instrument, this scale was not utilized.

King and Crowther (2004) have suggested that faith neutral measurement instruments could be created which ask carefully worded questions about personal times of meditation or times of religious thought that would elicit responses about prayer. The same authors also suggested that despite the ability to create faith neutral instruments, faith measures would not obtain accurate results due to differences among the importance of religious beliefs and behaviors within religions and between religions. For example, Muslims value numerous times of personal prayer daily and may score as more highly religious than Christian faiths who pray once daily but not as frequently as Muslims. Daily prayer within the Christian church is indicative of a highly religious Christian. Catholics, in general, do not value personal bible reading as much as protestant

denominations. Baptists are more inclined to view scripture memorization as an important component of religiosity. Denominational differences between the value of prayer, scripture reading, or memorization could provide results which are inappropriately skewed. King and Crowther (2004) suggest that research on religion might be best achieved with calibrated faith specific measures of religion, but to date no such set of measures has been created. There is also some suggestion that research on religion has become too focused on creating new measurement instruments and should instead be focused on utilizing the many instruments already created (Hill & Hood, 1999; King & Crowther, 2004). Since there are few instruments which are potentially appropriate for interfaith use and since the few interfaith instruments require additional research, the current research focused on instruments which have been extensively used in literature; those measuring Christianity.

There are numerous methods of measuring Christian religiosity in the literature. Hill and Hood (1999) reviewed 118 measures of religion, spirituality, or related measures in one volume. While most of the instruments listed in this comprehensive text have been created since 1970, there are examples of measurement instruments that were created as early as 1935. Despite the numerous measures of religiosity in the literature, the typical method used to measure of religiosity in research is weekly, monthly, or yearly church attendance patterns (Hill & Pargament, 2008; Jenks & Christiansen, 2002; Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001; Reinke, 2006). Measuring religiosity with weekly church is not unique to the United States. Weekly church attendance is also used in research with participants from Belgium, New Zealand, and Canada (Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2006). Using this method, religiosity is quantified into number of

church services per year and those who attend church weekly are considered more religious than those who attend twice per year. Measuring church attendance is a rapid method of assessing religiosity but does not provide any information about internalized beliefs or how religious beliefs affect behavior.

Individuals attend church for many reasons, not all of which suggest religiosity. Communities may expect residents to attend church on Sundays for social reasons or church could be a reflection of status as members display their best clothing and new cars. Church could be a means of networking for new members of the community. None of the above reasons suggests that a frequent attendee at weekend religious services is more religious than someone who does not attend. Married couples could contain one highly religious spouse and another spouse with low religious beliefs who attends church to appease the spouse. It is also possible that a highly religious person does not attend weekly worship services due to a physical disability. Among individuals who attend church services on a weekly basis there could be considerable variability in beliefs and religious practices. For these reasons, church attendance is not believed to be a robust or informative measure of religiosity.

Throughout the literature, measurement of religiosity is differentiated from measurement of spirituality. There is heated debate in the literature between the differences of spirituality and religiosity, but there is a clear relationship between the two concepts and significant overlap (Hill & Pargament, 2008; Miller & Thoresen, 2003). Spirituality has been defined as a personalized adherence to moral behavior, concern about psychological well-being, and a search for the sacred which transcends formalized religion (Hill & Pargament, 2008; Ho & Ho, 2007). Religiosity is pursuit of the sacred

based upon institutionalized religion and builds upon traditional teachings, dogmatic beliefs, and ritualized behaviors of an institutionalized religion (Hill & Pargament, 2008; Ho & Ho, 2007).

Hill and Hood (1999) have categorized instruments that measure religiosity and spirituality into 17 subgroups. These subgroups are: scales of religious belief and practices, scales of religious attitudes, scales of religious orientation, scales of religious development, scales of religious commitment and involvement, scales of religious experience, scales of religious/ moral values or personal characteristics, multidimensional scales of religiousness, scales of religious coping and problem solving, scales of spirituality and mysticism, God concept scales, scales of religious fundamentalism, scales of the views of death and the afterlife, scales of divine intervention/ religious attribution, scales of forgiveness, scales of institutional religion, and scales of constructs related to religiosity. Many of these scales are very specialized and focus on a very narrow segment of Christianity such as Attitude toward Evangelism (Seyfarth et al., 1984), Attitudes toward Christian Women (Postovoit, 1990), the Student Religiosity Scale (Katz, 1988), the Salvation Opinionnaire (Wendland, 1949), Missionary Kid's Values Scale (Sharp, 1990), Attitudes toward the LDS Church scale (Hardy, 1949), Belief in Afterlife Scale (Osarchuk & Tatz, 1973), God Image Inventory (Lawrence, 1991), Forgiveness Scale (Wade, 1989). The Religious Coping Scale (Pargament et al., 1990) and the Religious Problem solving scale (Pargament et al., 1988) are focused on singular aspects of Christianity. These two instruments would be helpful in determining how individuals use religion to help when marital conflict occurs, but would not provide comprehensive information about the many ways religion impacts marital satisfaction.

The Religious Orientation Scale (Allport, 1950) is a scale that has had a substantial impact on the measurement of religiosity. The scale has been used in extensive research on religion and has fostered the development of numerous scales designed to address its shortcomings. The ROS measures extrinsic versus intrinsic religiosity and suggests that intrinsic religiosity is internalized religious beliefs which guide actions. Extrinsic religious beliefs refer to using religion for social benefits (King & Crowther, 2004). This scale is focused on Christian beliefs and not appropriate in its current form for use on other religions. Factor analysis has shown that the extrinsic factor is not a unitary construct and therefore not useful for current research in its current form. A revised form of the ROS, the Intrinsic/ Extrinsic- Revised (Gorusch & McPherson, 1989) divided the extrinsic factor of the ROS into Extrinsic-personal and Extrinsic-social scales in response to the results from factor analysis data from the ROS. Reliability data for the Intrinsic/ Extrinsic- Revised is reported as .83. Despite the reliability there remains some controversy regarding the instrument, especially the seeming lack of theoretically driven constructs (Kirkpatrick & Hood, 1990).

The Intrinsic Religious Motivation Scale (Hogue, 1972) also attempts to correct the psychometric deficiency of the ROS by using items that load on a single factor. This scale has no direct reference to Christ and is believed to be easily adaptable to a non-Christian population. The scale was normed, however, on a Christian population. This scale is not appropriate for use with non-Christians until data is obtained on various religions other than Christianity. It also may be offensive to devout Christians due to its intentional avoidance of Christian-based language.

The Spiritual Assessment Inventory (Hall & Edwards, 1996) is a promising instrument of spirituality which measures how people relate to God by using object relations theory. Relational maturity and awareness of God are examined using 54 self-report items. The instrument assesses the relationship between the participant and God by examining relationship instability, grandiosity, realistic acceptance, disappointment, and management. This inventory was not selected for the current research because clinical validity data is not available and because this inventory is geared toward assessing spirituality instead of religiosity.

Other scales such as the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religion and Spirituality (Fetzer Institute, 1999), a scale that examines the impact of religion and spirituality on health, were not used because additional research was needed on the instrument including factor analysis to determine if domains require re-grouping.

Many of the general scales of Christianity focus on either measuring belief or measuring outward behaviors of Christianity. Only 21 of Hill and Hood's (1999) scales measure a combination of religious beliefs and practices. A review of research on religiosity reported in 2 journals dedicated to the research of Christianity and psychology during the 1980's and 1990's reveals that the Shepherd Scale (Basset et al., 1981) was one of the most frequently utilized (Jones, Ripley, Kurusu, & Worthington, 1998). This time period is significant because research concerning the integration of psychology and Christianity was most prominent during the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's (Gorsuch, 1984).

Examination of the Shepherd Scale (Basset et al., 1981) reveals it is constructed in a manner uniquely different than most other measures of religiosity. The creators of the Shepherd Scale (Basset et al., 1981) reviewed statements in the Bible that reflected

Christian beliefs and Christian behaviors. These beliefs and behaviors were operationalized and then questions were developed to measure the operationalization of Christian beliefs and behaviors from the Bible. The Shepherd Scale (Basset et al., 1981) provides more information about religiosity than instruments that only measure Christian beliefs, Christian attitudes, or Christian internalization. Butman (1990) suggests the Shepherd Scale (Basset et al., 1981) is one of the best instruments created to measure Christian religiosity.

The current research is a further attempt to expand the body of literature of the relationship between marital satisfaction and religious beliefs. The study will examine religiosity by using a measure of Christian religiosity which elicits data about the importance of Christian beliefs and practices in daily life. It is hypothesized that individuals who have significant Christian beliefs and who integrate Christianity in their daily lives will have a greater marital satisfaction than individuals who have low Christian beliefs or who do not integrate Christian beliefs into their behavior. This information may lead to future research to study the aspects of religious beliefs and practices that increase marital satisfaction and decrease divorce.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

#### *Participants*

Participants consisted of 158 married individuals selected from four Christian churches in Burlington County, New Jersey. Thirteen catholic and protestant churches were randomly selected from the Verizon Yellow pages. Churches were contacted via letter sent to the pastors, elders, priest, or reverend of the church (see Appendix A) and phone call to request their participation. Names of the church leaders were obtained by internet search of the church website or by phone call when necessary. Five churches originally agreed to participate. The five churches represented 3 denominations of Protestant faith. All churches agreed to participate in the research, but one church unexpectedly withdrew from the participant pool. No explanation was given. Volunteers were obtained through announcements during weekend religious services and presentations to small groups affiliated with the churches. Participants were asked to complete the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (Snyder, 1997), The Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981) (see Appendix B), a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C), and sign an informed consent (see Appendix D). Participants were included in the study based on their willingness to participate and submission of inventories and questionnaires.

#### *Inclusion Criteria*

Participants were included in this study if they:

1. were willing to participate in the study,
2. were eighteen years of age or older,
3. were willing to sign the informed consent for participation in the study, and



4. were married.

#### *Exclusion Criteria*

Participants were excluded if they:

1. refused to consent to participate in the research study, or
2. were unmarried.

#### *Screening Measures*

Participant couples were asked the following:

1. “Are you currently married” and “How long have you been married?” to ensure that participants are currently married.
2. “What is your age?” to ensure participants were over 18 and could consent for their own participation in this research.
3. “Are you willing to participate in research studying the effect of your religious beliefs and practices on your satisfaction with your current relationship?”

#### *Pre-Assessment*

If participants met the inclusion criteria they were asked to read and sign the informed consent documents (see Appendix D). They were given an envelope containing a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C), the MSI-R, the Shepherd Scale (see Appendix B), and an instruction sheet detailing how to complete the assessment instruments and where to return the completed packet.

#### *Predictor Variables*

Religiosity

#### *Criterion Variables*

Marital Satisfaction

### *Mediating/Moderating Variables*

1. Age: to determine if there are any age related factors which contribute to marital satisfaction.
2. Gender: to determine if there are differences in results based on gender.
3. Income level: to determine if socioeconomic differences explained marital satisfaction or religiosity.
4. Years married: to determine if marital satisfaction changes over time and impacts religiosity.
5. Level of education: to determine if results differ due to the level of education of the participant.

### *Instruments*

*Marital Satisfaction Inventory.* The Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised MSI—R, is a 150-item scale designed by Snyder (1997) to identify the intensity of marital distress (Negy & Snyder, 1997). This instrument has been used in research on numerous occasions and takes approximately 25 minutes to complete (Snyder, 1997). It is composed of two validity scales, one global distress scale, and ten additional scales assessing specific dimensions of the marital relationship (Snyder, 1997). The scales are: Inconsistency (INC) which identifies random responding, Conventionalization (CNV) which identifies overly positive self-presentation, Global Distress (GDS) a scale measuring overall marital satisfaction, Affective Communication (AFC), Problem-Solving Communication (PSC), Aggression (AGG) a scale measuring verbal intimidation and physical aggression, Time Together (TTO), Disagreement About Finances (FIN), Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX), Role Orientation (ROR), Family History of Distress

(FAM), Dissatisfaction With Children (DSC), and Conflict Over Child Rearing (CCR) (Snyder, 1997). Each of the scales, excluding the validity (INC and CNV) and role orientation scales (ROR), are scored in a direction where higher scores on the scales reflect more relationship distress (Negy & Snyder, 1997). Coefficients of internal consistency for the 12 scales (excluding INC) range from .70 to .93 and test—retest stability coefficients range from .74 to .88 (Negy & Snyder, 1997).

*Shepherd Scale.* The Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981) (see appendix B) is a 38-item, Likert scale designed to separate Christians from non-Christians based on their beliefs and practices. This instrument was constructed by sampling passages of the Bible detailing qualifications, characteristics, and behavior of Christians. This instrument is unique in its use of the Bible for instrument construction. The authors felt that other instruments measuring religiosity which were developed between the period of 1927 – 1977 failed to utilize “one of the most extensive and elaborate description of a Christian available” (Bassett, et al., 1981, pg 342). The instrument is separated into two subscales: the Belief scale and Christian Walk scale. The Belief subscale seeks to measure intrinsic values and attitudes of the Christian faith and the Walk subscale seeks to measure behaviors that correspond with Christianity. Scores are interpreted by assigning four points for “true” responses, three points for “generally true”, two points for “generally not true”, and one point for “not true” with a 38-152 range of scores. Test samples displayed a significant difference between Christians and non-Christians with total scores of 131 and 91.2. The Belief subscale scores (46.6 and 25.31) and Christian Walk subscale (84.7 and 61.1) scores also displayed significant differences (Bassett et al., 1981).

This instrument has adequate reliability as determined by a test-retest reliability  $r = .82$ ,  $p < .001$  (Bassett et al., 1981). Split-half reliability after Spearman Brown procedure was  $r(61) = .91$ ,  $p < .001$  and a Cronbach's alpha of  $.86$ ,  $p < .001$  (Bassett et al., 1981). Statistical analysis also revealed that the Shepherd scale was able to differentiate between Christians and non-Christians but did not differentiate between Christianity in its different forms, instead revealing level of Christian belief and practice (Catholics and the varieties of Protestants) (Bassett et al., 1981). No validity data is presented for Shepherd Scale Walk or Belief (Bassett et al., 1981) scales. The Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981) has been described as comparable to the Dogmatism Scale (Rokeach, 1956) though no statistical analysis is presented (Mangis, 1995) and has correlated significantly with the Dimensions of Religious Commitment Instrument ( $r = .41$ ) (Glock & Stark, 1965) and an instrument created by King and Hunt (1975) ( $r = .65$ ) (Pecnik & Epperson, 1985). The Shepherd Scale total score (Bassett et al., 1981) was significantly correlated with Importance of Religious Beliefs ( $r = .71$ ) and Frequency of Participation in Religious Activities per Month ( $r = .43$ ) (Pecnik & Epperson, 1985). A factor analysis revealed the presence of a general Christianity factor which explains 68% of the variance (Pecnik & Epperson, 1985). This factor can be divided into two sub-factors: a Christian Belief, Values, and Behavior sub-factor and a Identification with the Christian Community sub-factor (Pecnik & Epperson, 1985).

### *Criterion Analysis*

Research Question: Is there a relationship between religious beliefs and practices among practicing Christian couples and general marital satisfaction?

Hypothesis 1: Religious beliefs and practices as measured by the Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981) (see Appendix B) would be significantly correlated with overall marital satisfaction as measured by the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997).

It was predicted that those individuals who endorse a high degree of belief in Christianity combined with a high degree of adherence to Christian practices including frequent church attendance and involvement in church activities, would report a high degree of overall marital satisfaction. The current research was designed to extend previous research using an instrument that was constructed to measure the practices and beliefs of the Christian faith. Christian beliefs and practices were measured using the Beliefs and Christian Walk subscales of the Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981) and marital satisfaction was measured by the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997). This hypothesis was analyzed using a Multiple Regression with Shepherd Scale Christian Beliefs (Bassett et al., 1981) and Shepherd Scale Christian Walk (Bassett et al., 1981), as the predictor variables and marital satisfaction as measured by the Global Distress Scale (GDS) of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997) as the criterion variable.

Hypothesis 2: Beliefs and practices of the Christian faith, as measured by the Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981) (see Appendix B), will better predict marital satisfaction, as measured by the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997), than attendance at religious functions.

Church attendance is a widely used measurement device in most research that correlates marital satisfaction with religiosity. The current research was designed to

extend previous research and to suggest using a method of measuring religiosity that examines the practices and beliefs of the Christian faith. Christian Beliefs and Practices were measured using the Beliefs and Christian Walk subscales of the Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981). This hypothesis was analyzed using a Multiple Regression with Shepherd Scale Christian Beliefs (Bassett et al., 1981), Shepherd Scale Christian Walk (Bassett et al., 1981), and Church Attendance as the predictor variables and marital satisfaction as measured by the Global Distress Scale (GDS) of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997) as the criterion variable.

## CHAPTER 4

## RESULTS

*Description of the Sample*

The sample consisted of 73 male and 81 female participants for a total of 158 combined participants from 4 different Christian churches (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 4.1

## Demographic Data

	Frequency	% of Sample	Mean	SD
Male	73	46.2%		
Female	85	53.8%		
Age			46.99	11.956
Times Married			1.23	0.555
Years Married			19.95	13.295
Number of Children			2.57	1.191
Length of Time to First Child			3.61	2.854
Number of Employed	116	73.4%		
Number Not Employed	42	26.6%		
Length of Employment			14.47	10.729

Table 4.2

Religious Institution		
	Number of Participants	Percent of Sample
Church A	34	21.5%
Church B	40	25.3%
Church C	35	22.2%
Church D	28	17.7%
Church E	21	13.3%

Ages ranged from 26 to 88 with a mean age of 46.99 years and SD of 11.956. Ethnically, the sample consisted of three African Americans, two Asian Americans, 145 Caucasians, five Hispanic Americans, one Pacific Islander, and one European American. Participants were married an average of 19.95 years (range 1 year to 66 years married) and SD= 13.295, with a mean number of marriages 1.23, SD= .555. The average number of children for respondents in this study was 2.57 with a range of zero to six, SD= 1.191. Couples had their first child an average of 3.61 years after being married SD= 2.854). One hundred and sixteen participants described themselves as employed for a mean length of 14.47 years, SD= 10.729 and 42 participants were unemployed. Educationally, 46 participants reported highest educational level completed was high school, 15 completed a two year degree, 66 completed a four year degree, 27 completed a Masters degree, and 3 completed a Ph.D. or equivalent. These data are presented in Table 4.3.



Table 4.3

Education		
	Frequency	% of Sample
High School Diploma	46	29.1%
Associate/ 2 yr degree	15	9.5%
Bachelors/ 4 yr degree	66	41.8%
Masters	27	17.1%
PHD/ Equivalent	3	1.9%

Data for annual household income are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Annual Household Income		
	Frequency	% of Sample
< \$25,000	2	1.3%
\$25,000 - \$75,000	44	27.8%
\$75,000 - \$125,000	67	42.4%
\$125,000 - \$175,000	21	13.3%
> \$175,000	18	11.4%

In summary, the above sample consisted of predominantly white, middle class, Protestant Christians with a large percentage of participants having a degree from a 4 year university. The sample was evenly divided between men and women and was an

accurate reflection of the demographics contained within the churches used in this study.

### *Religious Variables*

Attendance at religious services revealed a mean of 5.13 worship services per month (SD=2.289) and a mean of 3.97 additional church activities per month (SD=2.980). Subjectively, participants were asked to rate their overall marital satisfaction on a five-point Likert scale. Mean subjective marital satisfaction was 4.30, SD= 0.974. Table 5 displays responses to Religious Likert items.

Table 4.5

#### Religious Variables

	Frequency	% of Sample
<b>Importance of Religion in your Life</b>		
Not Important (1)	0	0.0%
Barely Important (2)	0	0.0%
Somewhat Important (3)	2	1.3%
Important (4)	12	7.6%
Very Important (5)	142	89.9%
<b>Importance of Religion in Home as a Child</b>		
Not Important (1)	14	8.9%
Barely Important (2)	27	17.1%
Somewhat Important (3)	31	19.6%
Important (4)	30	19.0%
Very Important (5)	53	33.5%
<b>Importance of Religion into Daily Life</b>		
Rarely (1)	3	1.9%
Some of the Time (2)	5	3.2%
Half of the Time (3)	9	5.7%

Most of the Time (4)	69	43.7%
All of the Time (5)	70	44.3%
 Personal Prayer		
Rarely (1)	1	0.6%
Occasionally (2)	2	1.3%
Weekly (3)	7	4.4%
Once Per Day (4)	40	25.3%
Multiple Times Each Day (5)	106	67.1%
 Joint Prayer		
Rarely (1)	45	28.5%
Occasionally (2)	42	26.6%
Weekly (3)	13	8.2%
Once Per Day (4)	38	24.1%
Multiple Times Each Day (5)	17	10.8%

---

The sample consisted of participants who reported that religion was of prominent importance in their daily lives. Participants attended an average of five church services per month and four additional church related activities each month. On average, participants were involved in church services or activities approximately two times per week.

### *Research Questions*

The major purpose of this study was to determine if marital satisfaction is related to religiosity, as such a number of analyses are reported below that address this question. Because two assessments of marital satisfaction were used in this study, the single item measure and the Global Distress Scale of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, an initial analysis was performed comparing these two measures. The correlations between the

single item measuring marital satisfaction and the various sub-scales of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

## Correlations Between the Two Measures of Marital Satisfaction

## Single Item Measuring Marital Satisfaction

Global Distress Scale	-.705**
Affective Communication	-.681**
Problem Solving Communication	-.629**
Aggression	-.434**
Time Together	-.636**
Disagreement About Finances	-.321**
Sexual Dissatisfaction	-.552**
Role Orientation	-.126
Family History of Distress	-.316**
Dissatisfaction with Children	-.406**
Conflict Over Child Reading	-.444**
Inconsistency (Validity Scale)	-.189*
Conventionalization (Validity Scale)	.650**

\*p&lt;.05

\*\*p&lt;.01

It is evident from Table 4.6 that the single item assessing marital satisfaction and the various sub-scales of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory correlate significantly in the expected direction. Of special note is the correlation of -.705 between the Global Index and the single item. However, since approximately 50% of the variance is not accounted for, the analyses that follow will use both measures of marital satisfaction.

It was hypothesized that religious beliefs and practices as measured by the Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981) would be significantly correlated with overall marital satisfaction. Correlations between the Shepard Scale and the two measures of marital satisfaction are presented in Table 4.7

Table 4.7  
Correlations Between the Shepard Scale and the Two Measures of  
Marital Satisfaction

		Global Distress Scale	Single Item
Shepherd Total	Scale-	-0.194*	.251**
Shepherd Belief	Scale-	-0.164*	.108
Shepherd Walk	Scale-	-0.172*	.258**

\*p<.05

\*\*p<.01

It is evident from Table 4.7 that the hypothesized relationship between marital satisfaction and religious belief is supported by the data. Specifically, individuals with higher scores on the Shepherd Scale report less marital distress and higher levels of marital satisfaction than individuals with lower scores on the Shepherd Scale. However,

it should be noted that the correlations are generally weak with even the strongest correlations accounting for 4 – 6% of the variance at most.

Attendance at worship services and church related activities was compared with Shepherd Scale Total, Shepherd Scale Belief, and Shepherd Scale Total score to determine if the variables can be used interchangeably. The results are presented in table 4.8.

Table 4.8  
Correlations between Church Attendance and the Shepard Scale

	# Worship per Month	# Church Activities per Month
Shepherd Scale- Total	0.181*	0.124
Shepherd Scale- Belief	0.130	0.035
Shepherd Scale- Walk	0.168*	0.133

\*p<.05

Only Shepherd Scale Walk and Shepherd Scale Total Scores are correlated with number of worships services attended each month. The number of church activities attended each month is not significantly correlated with the Shepherd Scale and the

number of worship services attended each month is not significantly correlated with the Shepherd Scale Belief scale.

It was also hypothesized that beliefs and practices of the Christian faith, as measured by the Shepherd Scale, will better predict marital satisfaction than attendance at religious functions. To answer this question, two multiple regressions were computed: one using the Global Distress Scale as the measure of marital satisfaction and the other using the single item assessing marital satisfaction. The predictor variables in both cases were the two subscales from the Shepherd Scale and two measures of religious attendance: how many religious worship services the person attended each month and how many church activities the person attended each month. The results of these two analyses are presented in Table 4.9. The data in the table are the beta weights of the predictors in both equations.

Table 4.9

---

 Results of Multiple Regressions
 

---

	Global Distress	Marital Satisfaction- Single Item
Shepherd Scale Belief	-.100	.005
Shepherd Scale Walk	-.124	.247**
# of Worship Services	-.088	.059
# of Church Activities	.131	-.090
R	.238 (p = .068)	.267 (p= .025)
Adjusted R 2	.031	.046

---

The data in Table 4.9 indicate that the Global Distress scale cannot be significantly predicted from the variables. The single item measure of marital satisfaction, however, is significantly predicted with the Shepherd Scale-Walk being the only variable which is statistically significant. Thus, individuals who perform activities that correspond with Christianity are generally more satisfied in their marriages.

#### *Secondary Analyses*

To explore the data more fully, Pearson correlations between all of the relevant variables in the data set and the two measures of marital satisfaction were computed. For completeness, the correlations already presented above are included there as well. The results of this analysis is presented in Table 4.10



Table 4.10

## Correlations with Marital Satisfaction

---

	Single Item	Global Distress
Gender	-.108	-.032
Age	-.116	.043
Times Married	-.173*	.103
Years Married	-.025	-.014
# of Children	.096	-.092
Time to First Child	-.066	.081
Employed	.045	-.115
Length of Employment	-.051	.050
Income	-.114	.099
Agree on Politics	.350**	-.363**
Agree on Social Issues	.405**	-.459**
Agree on Spending and Finances	.431**	-.446**
Agree on Religion	.448**	-.433**
Agree on Child Rearing	.528**	-.441**
# of Worship Per Month	.072	-.079
# of Church Activities Per Month	-.046	.095
Importance of Religion in Life	.200*	-.140
Importance of Religion as a Child	.167*	-.083
Importance of Religion in Daily Life	.185*	-.105
Personal Prayer	.045	.077
Joint Prayer with Partner	.306**	-.232**
Shepherd Scale-Belief	.108	-.164*
Shepherd Scale- Walk	.258**	-.172*
Shepherd Scale- Total	.251**	-.194*

\*p&lt;.05

\*\*p&lt;.01

Marital Satisfaction was correlated with agreement among issues such as politics, social issues, finances, importance of religion, child rearing, joint prayer, and Shepherd Scale Walk and Total scores. The single item measure of marital satisfaction added significant relationships with number of times married (an inverse relationship) and Global Distress was correlated with Shepherd Scale Belief scores. Overall, marital satisfaction was related to various religious variables.

As a final analysis, two multiple regressions were computed using the data in Table 4.8 (with the exclusion of the Shepherd Scale Total Score). Both of the regressions were statistically significant, in each case accounting for about 30% of the variance. For the Global Distress Scale, there were three variables that entered the equations at the .05 level: Agreement on Spending and Finances; Agreement on Religion and Number of Church Activities per month, with Agreement on Religion having the greatest predictive power ( $p = .002$ ) For the single item, the only variable that was statistically significant in the equation was Agreement on Religion.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The current research was an attempt to expand the body of literature regarding the relationship between marital satisfaction and religiosity. One of the main methods of measuring religiosity in the research literature is church attendance (Hill & Pargament, 2008; Reinke, 2006; Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001). Someone is thought to be more religious if they attend church weekly as opposed to someone who only attends church on a monthly or monthly basis. While this method is expedient, church attendance does not provide any information about the quality of belief system or about how these beliefs are put into practice. It was believed that a method of measuring religion which provided information about belief and practices of Christianity would better explain marital satisfaction. The current research attempted to contrast two measures of religiosity and examine the relationship between religiosity and marital satisfaction. The following hypotheses were used for the current research:

Hypothesis 1: Religious beliefs and practices will be positively correlated with marital satisfaction. Religious beliefs and practices were assessed using the Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981). Marital satisfaction was measured by the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997). It was predicted that individuals whose self report suggests a high degree of belief in Christianity combined with a high degree of adherence to Christian practices including frequent church attendance and involvement in church activities will report a higher degree of overall marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Beliefs and practices of the Christian faith, as measured by the Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981), will better predict marital satisfaction, as measured

by the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997), than attendance at religious functions. It was believed that a scale that examines the behaviors and practices of the Christian faith would be a better predictor of marital satisfaction than self-reported church attendance.

Participants consisted of 158 men and women from 4 suburban Protestant churches in Southern New Jersey. All participants were married and volunteered to participate in the research. The sample consisted of 73 male and 81 female participants with an ethnic composition of three African Americans, two Asian Americans, 145 Caucasians, five Hispanic Americans, one Pacific Islander, and one European American. Average household income for the sample was \$75,000 to \$125,000 and average education consisted of a four year degree.

Sampling consisted of randomly selecting 13 Catholic and Protestant churches listed in the Yellow Pages phone directory under “churches”. Each church received a letter requesting cooperation in conducting the research (Appendix A). Initially, five churches agreed to participate in the research, but one church withdrew from the study for unknown reasons. Leaders from that church did not return phone calls or emails, thus no explanation was provided. Participants for the research were obtained by requesting volunteers through announcements made during weekend religious services. One church selected small groups and asked members of the small group to participate. Subjects were asked to sign informed consent (Appendix D), complete a demographics questionnaire (Appendix C), complete the Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981) (Appendix B), and complete the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997). Church attendance was assessed using a demographics questionnaire (Appendix

C) and participants were asked to rate overall marital satisfaction on a single item 5-point Likert scale.

The Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised Edition (MSI-R) (Snyder, 1997) is a 150-item scale used to measure dissatisfaction along specific dimensions of the marital relationship (Snyder, 1997). Those scales include: Inconsistency (INC) which identifies random responding, Conventionalization (CNV) which identifies overly positive self-presentation, Global Distress (GDS) a scale measuring overall marital satisfaction, Affective Communication (AFC), Problem-Solving Communication (PSC), Aggression (AGG) a scale measuring verbal intimidation and physical aggression, Time Together (TTO), Disagreement About Finances (FIN), Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX), Role Orientation (ROR), Family History of Distress (FAM), Dissatisfaction With Children (DSC), and Conflict Over Child Rearing (CCR) (Snyder, 1997).

The Shepherd Scale (Bassett et al., 1981) is a 38-item, Likert scale designed to separate Christians from non-Christians based on their beliefs and practices. This instrument was constructed by sampling passages of the Bible detailing qualifications, characteristics, and behavior of Christians. The instrument is separated into two subscales: the Belief scale and Christian Walk scale and also contains a Total scale. The Belief subscale seeks to measure intrinsic values and attitudes of the Christian faith and the Walk subscale seeks to measure behaviors that correspond with Christianity.

Results confirm that a relationship exists between Christian religious beliefs and marital satisfaction when the Global Distress Scale (GDS) of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997) is used to measure marital satisfaction. A relationship also exists between the single item measure of marital satisfaction, Shepherd

Scale total scores (Bassett et al., 1981), and Shepherd Scale Walk scores (Bassett et al., 1981). No such relationship exists between the single item measure of marital satisfaction and religious beliefs. Results show a strong relationship between the two measures of marital satisfaction used in this research: GDS and the single-item measure. This suggests that a time consuming and costly measurement instrument is not necessary to measure marital satisfaction, instead a single item subject measure of marital satisfaction may be sufficient. Results measuring the ability to predict marital satisfaction from measures of Christianity show that only Shepherd Scale Walk (Bassett et al., 1981) was able to predict marital satisfaction, and only when the single item measure of marital satisfaction was used, however the effect size was very small.

*Hypothesis One: Shepherd Scale and Marital Satisfaction*

It was hypothesized that religious beliefs and practices would significantly correlate with marital satisfaction. The Shepherd Scale Total score (Bassett et al., 1981) was correlated with marital satisfaction using both the MSI-R and the single item measure. The results show a stronger correlation between the single-item measure of marital satisfaction than with the MSI-R.

The Shepherd Scale Walk scale (Bassett et al., 1981) was correlated with marital satisfaction using both the GDS and single item measure of marital satisfaction. Results show a stronger correlation between Shepherd Scale Walk (Bassett et al., 1981) scores and the single item measure of marital satisfaction than exists between the Shepherd Scale Walk (Bassett et al., 1981) and GDS. Evidence from this research supports research from other authors concerning the relationship between marriage and Christianity.

The only significant correlation between Shepherd Scale Belief scores (Bassett et al., 1981) and marital satisfaction was found when the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997) was used. One possible reason for the difference between the 2 measures of marital satisfaction may lie in the construction of the MSI-R (Snyder, 1997). The MSI-R assesses many facets of marital satisfaction and offers a comprehensive score for marital satisfaction that is based on subscales of marital satisfaction. In contrast, the single item measure is a subjective question asking about level of marital satisfaction. Participants could have based their response on one small facet of marital satisfaction, such as satisfaction with finances, satisfaction with problem solving communication, or satisfaction with the sexual relationship while ignoring issues which detract from marital satisfaction. The single item measure of marital satisfaction may have more of a temporal relationship to recent marital events. One spouse might report high marital satisfaction on the single item measure for reasons such as having received a wonderful birthday present or having had an intimate conversation the day prior to assessment. Since the MSI-R examines a wide spectrum of contributions to marital satisfaction it may be more representative of marital satisfaction over time. The ability of participants to manipulate scores in a desired direction is another possible explanation for the apparent difference between marital satisfaction scores.

#### *Hypothesis Two: Predicting Marital Satisfaction*

It was hypothesized that religious beliefs and practices would better predict marital satisfaction than church attendance would predict marital satisfaction. Shepherd Scale Belief and Walk scales (Bassett et al., 1981) were compared to two measures of marital satisfaction, the single item measure and the MSI-R. Shepherd Scale Walk scores

predicted marital satisfaction, but only when the single item of marital satisfaction was used. Though the result is statistically significant the small effect size means only a small portion of marital satisfaction is explained by Christian behaviors. Shepherd Scale Belief scores are not significantly correlated with church attendance and as such do not predict marital satisfaction. The small effect size of the results could suggest that additional variables other than beliefs, practices, and church attendance are involved in marital satisfaction. Another possible explanation for the non-significant results is the low variability of scores on the single item measure of marital satisfaction. Eighty percent of participants reported themselves as above average to highly satisfied when asked to subjectively rate marital satisfaction. Low variability may have contributed to the non-significant results and low effect size. Small effect size may have been related to social desirability; the desire of participants to appear more religious or more satisfied in their marriage. Shepherd Scale Walk scores were significantly correlated with monthly church attendance.

Joint prayer between spouses was significantly correlated with marital satisfaction. This appears to support the statement, “The couple that prays together stays together” (Mahoney, Pargament, Jewell, Swank, Scott, Emery, & Rye 1999). Prayer can be a significant behavior of many of the major world religions, Christianity included. When a couple uses joint prayer, the process may involve increased communication as the couple decides on prayer topics about their concerns i.e., marital arguments, difficult decisions, child-rearing strategies, and finances, etc. Prayer may also operate as a coping mechanism (Hill & Pargament, 2008) during times of personal and marital difficulties. Some couples may also discuss the way their prayers have been answered, helping them



cope with difficulties by focusing on a benevolent God. Prayer can also contribute to a couple feeling like a team rather than isolated individuals. Praying about problems may offer couples a sense of hope and diminish any sense of powerlessness they may have. Increased hope may also contribute to increased marital satisfaction.

#### *Agreement and Marital Satisfaction*

Individuals who report agreement on politics, social issues, finances, religion, and child rearing also report high marital satisfaction. Disagreement on these issues could result in more conflictual communication between spouses or withdrawal from communication altogether. Disagreement on finances, politics, child rearing, religion, or social issues could result in tension within the relationship or impede productive communication. There are gender-based differences among agreement variables. Agreement about finances was more important for females and agreement about child-rearing was more important for males.

#### *Summary*

In conclusion, the current study explored the relationship between Christianity and marital satisfaction. Results confirm that a relationship existed between Christian religious beliefs and marital satisfaction such that people who pray more with their spouse, integrate religion into their lives, and who live their life in harmony with Christian behaviors were more satisfied in their marriage. Results also revealed a strong relationship between a single-item measure of marital satisfaction and the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997). Beliefs and practices of the Christian faith did not better predict marital satisfaction than attendance at religious functions. When the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997) was

used to assess marital satisfaction a participant's religious beliefs, religious behaviors, or number of times at church each month did not predict marital satisfaction. However, when the single item, subjective measure of marital satisfaction was used, the results suggest religious behaviors predicted marital satisfaction. A final finding revealed that personal prayer and time spent in joint prayer were able to predict marital satisfaction regardless of the method used for assess marital satisfaction. Overall, the strongest predictor of marital satisfaction was how much a person agrees with their spouse, though gender differences exist in agreement variables. Agreement about finances was more important for women and agreement about child-rearing was more important to men.

One final result shows that 80% to 85% of the variation in marital satisfaction scores was not explained by a combination of the variables of this research. It is likely that marital satisfaction is a very complex issue that has not been fully explained by any research completed on the subject to date.

#### *Limitations of the Study and Future Research*

Results from this research are not generalizable to the general population of the United States. Assumptions based on this research only apply to Protestant Christians in southern New Jersey. Future research should attempt to measure a sample of individuals that is more representative of the Christian population in the United States. Additionally, the current research is entirely focused on Christians and results show high endorsement of Christian beliefs and practices. Failure to include individuals of significantly differing levels of belief and practice in Christianity may have distorted the results. It is possible that individuals with low scores on the Shepherd Scale due to low personal religiousness would score high on marital satisfaction if a sample was constructed which reflects

different levels of religious beliefs. There is also the potential that individuals with strong beliefs and practices of religions other than Christianity would also have high marital satisfaction. Future research is needed on marital satisfaction and religiosity in other major world religions. Future research should also focus on examining a sample that represents individuals who are very religious and others who are minimally religious.

Sampling for the current research was conducted randomly but the response rate from sampled churches was very small. Fourteen churches were sent letters explaining the research and requesting help. Ultimately only four churches agreed. It is possible the churches that declined to participate had church members that experienced low marital satisfaction with high endorsement of Christian beliefs and practices. It is possible that sampling from individuals who attend church will bias the results toward those who are more religious. Future research should focus on finding a representative sample of the population that includes participants who do and do not attend formal religious services. Additionally, sampling in 4 of the churches occurred through announcements made during weekend services on one specific weekend. One of the four churches selected small groups and requested participation in the research. It is possible the church selected small groups with members who scored high on religiosity and marital satisfaction which skewed the results. It is also possible that some factor which prevented individuals from attending services during the weekend when the announcement for volunteers occurred may have resulted in a non-representative sample of church members. Future research should focus on sampling from the entire church membership by random means to eliminate the above mentioned bias.

The ethnic diversity of the sample was very homogeneous and could also present a confound to the research. The sample consisted of three African Americans, two Asian Americans, five Hispanic Americans, one Pacific Islander, One European American, and 145 Caucasians. The ethnic homogeneity of this research makes the results ungeneralizable to the general population. Perhaps characteristics of race interact with religiosity and/ or marital satisfaction and a different result occurs when a heterogeneous sample is used. Future research should focus on measuring religiosity and marital satisfaction in an ethnically heterogeneous sample.

Not all subjects were randomly selected for inclusion in the study. A portion of participants were selected by church leaders at one of the churches. Leaders from that church selected specific small groups and encouraged participation of all members of that group. All of the small groups from that church were not selected for inclusion in the study. There is a potential bias that the leaders selected participants that are more religious, more satisfied in their marriages, or more willing to participate due to a desire to present Christianity in a positive manner. It is also possible that small group members, by their very attendance at small groups, represent a population skewed toward higher religious participation.

Asking for volunteers instead of randomly selecting participants may have elicited participation from more biased participants such as those in marital distress, those with very satisfactory marriages, and/ or those with a desire to present Christianity in a positive manner. Future research using a truly random sample of church members or members of a specific community would result in a more generalizable finding.

As all instruments used are self-report measures, social desirability, the tendency of an individual to present themselves in a favorable manner, may have confounded the results. Future research should examine measurable behaviors of Christianity, utilize scales that have low face validity, or include scales of social desirability.

Future research is needed to study the aspects of religious beliefs and practices that increase marital satisfaction and decrease divorce. Future research should also examine the utility of the GDS scale as a stand-alone instrument which would contribute to more rapid measurement of marital satisfaction than when using the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (Snyder, 1997) in its entirety.

There is little evidence in the literature exploring marital satisfaction and religion with many of the world's major religions. Future research should focus on the development of an instrument which can measure religiosity irrespective of the religious preference or the current research could be repeated with other major world religions using instruments capable of detecting differences in beliefs and practices of those religions. Future research should also examine changes in marital satisfaction over time and how this impacts results from the MSI-R versus subjective responses on the single item measure of marital satisfaction.

### *Practical Implications*

Results from the current research may offer insight into methods of working with religious couples who are in couple's therapy. Psychologists could examine the integration of religious behaviors into marriage and suggest increased joint prayer as a possible means of increasing communication, hope, and a sense of godly benevolence in the marriage. Psychologists should also focus on important issues such as child-rearing

and finances to increase agreement on these issues which may result in greater marital satisfaction.

## REFERENCES

- Acitelli, L. K. (1992). Gender differences in relationship awareness and marital satisfaction among young married couples. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 18*, 102-110.
- Allport, G. W. (1950). *The individual and his religion: A psychological interpretation*. New York: Macmillian.
- Amato, P. R. (2004). The consequences of divorce for adults and children. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 62*(4), 1269-1287.
- Apt, C. & Hurlbert, D. F. (1992). The female sensation seeker and marital sexuality. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy, 18*, 315-324.
- Aron, A., Aron, E. N., & Smollan, D. (1992). Inclusion of other in the self scale and the structure of interpersonal closeness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63*(4), 596-612.
- The Barna Update. (2004). Barna's annual review of significant religious findings offers encouragement and challenges. Retrieved October 27, 2005, from <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?PageCMD=Print>
- Basset, R., Sadler, R., Kobischen, E., Skiff, D., Merrill, I., Atwater, B., & Livermore, P. (1981). The Shepard scale: Separating the sheep from the goats. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 9*(4), 335-351.
- Bouchard, G., Sabourin, S., Lussier, Y., Wright, J., & Richer, C. (1998). Predictive validity of coping strategies on marital satisfaction cross-sectional and longitudinal evidence. *Journal of Family Psychology, 12*(1), 112-131.
- Booth, A., Johnson, D. R., Branaman, A. & Sica, A. (1995). Belief and behavior: Does

- religion matter in today's marriage? *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57, 661-671.
- Bowlby, J. (1979). The making and breaking of affectional bonds. London: Tavistock.
- Bradbury, T. N. & Fincham, F. D. (1988). Individual difference variables in close relationships: A contextual model of marriage as an integrative framework. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54(4), 713-721.
- Brody, G. H., Stoneman, Z., Flor, D., & McCrary, C. (1994). Religion's role in organizing family relationships: Family process in rural, two-parent, African-American families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56, 878-888.
- Brown, N. M. (2000). Love relationships of children of divorce: How are they different from others? *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences & Engineering*, 60(12-B). 6419.
- Brown, J. H., Portes, P. R., & Christensen, D. N. (1989). Understanding divorce stress on children: Implications for research and practice. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 17(4). 315-325.
- Bugaighis, M. A., Schumm, W. R., Jurich, A. P., & Bollman, S. R. (1985-1986). Factors associated with thoughts of marital separation. *Journal of Divorce*, 9(2). 49-59.
- Butler, M. H., Stout, J. A., & Gardner, B. C. (2002). Prayer as a conflict resolution ritual: Clinical implications of religious couples' report of relationship softening, healing perspective, and change responsibility. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 30(1). 19-37
- Butman, R. E. (1990). The assessment of religious development: Some possible options. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 9(2), 14-25.



- Campbell, J. L. & Snow, B. N. (1992). Gender role conflict and family environment as predictors of men's marital satisfaction. *Journal of Family Psychology, 6(1)*, 84-87.
- Carey, M. P., Spector, I. P., Lantinga, L. J., & Krauss, D. J. (1993). Reliability of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. *Psychological Assessment, 5(2)*, 238-240.
- Carstensen, L. L., Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (1995). Emotional behavior in long-term marriage. *Psychology and Aging, 10(1)*, 140-149.
- Cassidy, J. (2000). Adult romantic attachments a developmental perspective on individual differences. *Review of General Psychology, 4(2)*, 111-131.
- Caughlin, J. P., Huston, T. L., and Houts, R. M. (2000). How does personality matter in marriage? An examination of trait anxiety, interpersonal negativity, and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78(2)*, 326-336.
- Chintz, J. G. & Brown, R. A. (2001). Religious homogamy, marital conflict, and stability in same-faith and interfaith Jewish marriages. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 40(4)*, 723-733.
- Clydesdale, T. T. (1997). Family behaviors among early U.S. baby boomers: Exploring the effects of religion and income change, 1965—1982. *Social Forces, 76*, 605-635.
- Collins, C. L. (1998). Early marital attraction, barriers, and alternatives as predictors of later marital status. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences & Engineering, 59(2-B)*. 0911.
- Dufton, B. D. & Perlman, D. (1986). Lonliness and Religiosity: In the world but not of it. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 14*, 135-145.

- Ellis, A. (2000). Can rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) be effectively used with people who have devout beliefs in god and religion? *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 31(1)*, 29-33.
- Fenell, D. L. (1993). Characteristics of long-term first marriages. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 15*, 446-460.
- Fergusson, D. M., Horwood, L. J. & Shannon, F. T. (1984). A proportional hazards model of family breakdown. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 46*, 539-549.
- Fetzer Institute. (1999). Multidimensional Measurement of Religiousness/ Spirituality for Use in Health Research: A Report of the Fetzer Institute/ National Institute on Aging Working Group. John E. Fetzer Institute, Kalamazoo, MI.
- Filsinger, E. E. & Wilson, M. R. (1984). Religiosity, socioeconomic rewards, and family development; Predictors of marital adjustment. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 46*, 663-670.
- Fowers, B. J. & Olson, D. H. (1993). ENRICH marital satisfaction scale a brief research and clinical tool. *Journal of Family Psychology, 7(2)*, 176-185.
- Fraenkel, P., Markmen, H., & Stanley, S. (1997). The prevention approach to relationship problems. *Sexual & Marital Therapy, 12(3)*. 249-258.
- Fraley, R. C., & Shaver, P.R. (1998). Airport separations- a naturalistic study of adult attachment dynamics in separating couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75(5)*, 1198-1212.
- Glock, C.Y., & Stark, R. (1965). Is there an American Protestantism? *Trans-Action, 3*, 8-13.
- Gorsuch, R. L. (1984). Measurement: The boon and bane of investigating religion.

- American Psychologist*, 39, 228-236.
- Gottman, J. M. & Silver, N. (1999). The seven principles for making marriage work.  
New York: Three Rivers Press
- Gottman, J. M. & Krokoff, L.J. (1989). Marital interaction and satisfaction- a longitudinal view. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 57(1), 47-52.
- Hall, T. W., & Edwards, K. J. (1996). The initial development and factor analysis of the Spiritual Assessment Inventory. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 24(3), 233-246.
- Hardy, K. R. (1949). *Construction and validation of a scale measuring attitudes toward the LDS church*. Unpublished masters thesis, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.
- Hazan, C. & Shaver, P. R. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 511-524.
- Heaton, T. B. & Pratt, E. L. (1990). The effects of religious homogamy on marital satisfaction and stability. *Journal of Family Issues*, 11, 191-207.
- Heaton, T. B. (1984). Religious homogamy and marital satisfaction reconsidered. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 46, 729-733.
- Heck, T. A. (2006). Sacred healing of marriage: A quasi-experimental study of prayer's effect on marital satisfaction among Catholic and Protestant Christians.  
Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, 67(1-B), 599.
- Heyman, R. E., Sayers, S. L., & Bellack, A. S. (1994). Global marital satisfaction versus marital adjustment an empirical comparison of three measures. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 8(4), 432-446.

- Hill, P. C., & Hood, R. W., Jr. (Eds.). (1999). *Measures of religiosity*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press.
- Hill, P. C., & Pargament, K. I. (2008). Advances in conceptualization and measurement of religion and spirituality: Implications for physical and mental health research. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 5*(1), 3-17.
- Ho, D. Y., & Ho, R. T. (2007). Measuring spirituality and spiritual emptiness: Toward ecumenicity and transcultural applicability.
- Hoge, D. R. (1972). A validated intrinsic religious motivation scale. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 11*. 369-376.
- Houlden, L. (1995). The New Testament: Content and character. In P. Byrne & L. Houlden (Eds.), *Companion encyclopedia of theology* (pp. 92). London: Routledge.
- Hunler, O. S., & Gencoz, T. (2005). The effect of religiousness on marital satisfaction: Testing the mediator role of marital problem solving between religiousness and marital satisfaction relationship. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 27*(1), 123-136.
- Huston, T. L., Caughlin, J. P., Houts, R. M., Smith, S. E., & George, L. J. (2001). The connubial crucible: Newlywed years as predictors of marital delight, distress, and divorce. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 80*(2), 237-252.
- Jenks, R. J., & Christiansen, L. (2002). A comparison of four Catholic groups on well-being and religiosity. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, 37*(3/4), 143-156.
- Johnson, G. R., Krug, E. G., & Potter, L. B. (2000). Suicide among adolescents and young adults: A cross-national comparison of 34 countries. *Suicide & Life-Threatening Behavior, 30*(1). 74-82.

- Jones, D. R., Ripley, J. S., Kurusu, T. A., & Worthington, E. L. (1998). Influential sources in the integration of psychology and theology: A decade summary. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 17*, 43-54.
- Kaatz, Y. (1988). The relationship between intelligence and attitudes in a bilingual society: The case of white South Africa. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 128*, 65-74.
- Kaiser, A., Hahlweg, K., Fehm-Wolfsdorf, G., & Groth, T. (1998). The efficacy of a compact psychoeducational group training program for married couples. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 66(5)*, 753-760.
- King, L. A. (1993). Emotional expression, ambivalence over expression, and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 10*, 601-607.
- King, J. E., & Crowther, M. R. (2004). The measurement of religiosity and spirituality. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 17*, 83-101.
- King, M. B., & Hunt, R. A. (1975). Measuring the religious variable: National Replication. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 11*, 53-64.
- Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Hood, R. W. (1990). Intrinsic-extrinsic religious orientation: The boon or bane of contemporary psychology of religion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 29*, 442-462.
- Koenig, H. G., McCullough, M.E., & Larson, D. B. (2001). *Handbook of religion and health*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kulik, Liat, Bar Ilan U. (2002). Marital equality and the quality of long-term marriage in later life. *Aging & Society, 22(4)*. 459-481.
- Lambert, N. M. & Dollahite, D. C. (2008). The threefold cord: Marital commitment in

- religious couples. *Journal of Family Issues*, 29(5), 592-614.
- Lawrence, R. T. (1991). *The God Image Inventory: The development, validation, and standardization of a psychometric instrument for research, pastoral and clinical use in measuring the image of God*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Catholic University of America, Washington D. C.
- Liao, T. F. & Stevens, G. (1994). Spouses, homogamy, and social networks. *Social Forces*, 73, 693-707.
- Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., Jewell, T., Swank, A. B., Scott, E., Emery, E., & Rye, M. (1999). Marriage and the spiritual realm the role of proximal and distal religious constructs in marital functioning. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 13(3), 321-338.
- Mahoney, A. (2001). Religion in the home in the 1980's and 1990's: A meta analytic review and conceptual analysis of links between religion, marriage, and parenting. *Journal of family Psychology*, 15(4). 559-596.
- Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., Tarakeshwar, N., & Swank, A. B. (2001). Religion in the home in the 1980s and 1990s a meta-analytic review and conceptual analysis of links between religion, marriage, and parenting. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15(4), 559-596.
- Mangis, M. W. (1995). Religious beliefs, dogmaticism, and attitudes toward women. *Journals of Psychology and Christianity*, 14(1), 13-25.
- Margolin, G. & Weiss, R. L. (1978). Comparative evaluation of therapeutic components associated with behavioral marital treatments. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 46, 1476-1486.
- Markman, H. J., Floyd, F. J., Stanley, S. M., and Storaasli, R. D. (1988). Prevention of

- marital distress a longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 56(2)*, 210-217.
- Miller, W. R., & Thoresen, C. E. (2003). Spirituality, religion, and health: An emerging research field. *American Psychologist, 58*, 24-35.
- Morrow, D., Worthington, E. L., & McCullough, M. E. (1993). Observers' perceptions of a counselor's treatment of a religious issue. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 71*, 452-456.
- Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., & Griffin, D. W. (1996). The benefits of positive illusions: Idealization and the construction of satisfaction in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70 (1)*, 79-98.
- McClure, R. F. & Loden, M. (1982). Religious activity, denominational membership and life satisfaction. *Psychology- A Quarterly Journal of Human Behavior, 19*, 12-17.
- National Center for Health Statistics (2002). National Vital Statistics Reports, 50(7).
- Negy, C. and Snyder, D. K. (1997). Ethnicity and acculturation- assessing Mexican American couples' relationships using the marital satisfaction inventory-revised. *Psychological Assessment, 9(4)*, 414-421.
- Orathinkal, J., & Vansteenwegen, A. (2006). Religiosity and marital satisfaction. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 28*, 497-504.
- Osarchuk, M., & Tatz, S. J. (1973). Effect of induced fear of death on belief in afterlife. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 27(2)*, 256-260.
- Paley, B., Cox, M. J., Burchinal, M. R., & Payne, C. C. (1999). Attachment and marital functioning- comparison of spouses with continuous-secure, earned-secure, dismissing, and preoccupied attachment stances. *Journal of Family Psychology,*

13(4), 580-597.

- Pargament, K. I., Ensing, D. S., Falgout, K., Olsen, H., Reily, B., Van Haitsma, K., & Warren, R. (1990). God help me (I): Religious coping efforts as predictors of the outcomes to significant life events. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 18, 793-824.
- Pargament, K. I., Kennell, J., Hathaway, W., Grevengoed, N., Newman, J., & Jones, W. (1988). Religion and the problem-solving process: Three styles of coping. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 27, 90-104.
- Parsons, R. N., Nalbone, D. P., Killmer, J. M., & Wetcher, J. L. (2007). Identity development, differentiation, personal authority, and degree of religiosity as predictors of interfaith marital satisfaction. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 35(4), 343-361.
- Peckik, J. A., & Epperson, D. L. (1985). A factor analysis and further validation of the Shepherd Scale. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 13(1), 42-49.
- Postovoit, L. E. (1990). The attitudes toward Christian women scale (ACWS): Initial efforts towards the development of an instrument measuring patriarchal beliefs. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 2, 65-72.
- Reisman, C., Aaron, A., & Bergen, M. R. (1993). Shared activities and marital satisfaction: Causal direction and self-expansion versus boredom. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 10, 243-254.
- Reinke, L. (2006). Christianity, forgiveness, and marital satisfaction: Is there a common thread that links them?. Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, 67(4-B), 2240.



- Richards, M, Hardy, R., & Wadsworth, M. (1997). The effects of divorce and separation on mental health in a national UK birth cohort. *Psychological Medicine*, 27(5), 1121-1128.
- Rokeach, M. (1956). *The open and closed mind*. New York: BasicBooks.
- Rosen-Grandon, J. (1999). Improving your marital satisfaction [Electronic version]. Retrieved 9/11/08, [www.dr-jane.com/chapters/satisfaction/htm](http://www.dr-jane.com/chapters/satisfaction/htm)
- Rosenbaum, W. L. (2000). Variables associated with the involvement and frequency of contact of nonresidential fathers with their children following divorce. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences & Engineering*, 61(4-B). 1865.
- Sabouria, S., Laporte, L., Wright, J. (1990). Problem solving self appraisal and coping efforts in distressed and non-distressed couples. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 16, 89-97.
- Schroeder-Wallace, J. (1996). *The effects of Christianity on marital satisfaction*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma.
- Schumm, W. R. (1982). Religiosity and marital satisfaction: Can marital conventionalization explain away the relationship?. *Journal of Psychology & Christianity*, 1(2). 16-21.
- Schumm, W. R., Bollman, S. R., & Jurich, A. P. (1982). The “marital conventionalization” argument: Implications for the study of religiosity and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Psychology Theology*, 10(3). 236-241.
- Seyfarth, L. H., Larsen, K. S., Lamont, K., Haasch, C., Hale, T., & Haskin, D. (1984). Attitude toward evangelism: Scale development and validity. *Journal of Socio*

- Psychology*, 123, 55-61.
- Sharp, L. W. (1990). How missionary children become world Christians: The role of the MK school and the local culture. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 18(1), 66-74.
- Sher, T. G. and Baucom, D. H. (1993). Marital communication: Differences among maritally distressed, depressed, and nondistressed—nondepressed couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7(1), 148-153.
- Sherman, R. & Fredman, N. (1986). *Handbook of Structured Techniques in Marriage and Family Therapy*. New York: Brunner/ Mazel Inc.
- Smith, D. A., Vivian, D., & O'Leary, K. D. (1990). Longitudinal prediction of marital discord from premarital expressions of affect. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 58(6), 790-798.
- Snyder, D. K. (1979). Multidimensional assessment of marital satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 41, 813-823.
- Snyder, D. K. (1997). *Manual for the Marital Satisfaction Inventory—Revised*. Los Angeles, CA: Western Psychological Services
- Sullivan, K. T. (2001). Understanding the relationship between religiosity and marriage an investigation of the immediate and longitudinal effects of religiosity on newlywed couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15(4), 610-626.
- Thomson, E. (1992). Cohabitation and marital stability: Quality or commitment? *Journal of Marriage & the Family*, 54(2). 259-267.
- Wade, S. H. (1989). *The development of a scale to measure forgiveness*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Fuller Graduate School of Psychology, Pasadena, CA.

- Wendland, L.V. (1949). *The Salvation Opinionnaire*. Unpublished manuscript, Graduate School of Religion, University of Southern California.
- Wilson, M. R. & Filsinger, E. E. (1986). Religiosity and marital adjustment: Multidimensional interrelationships. *Journal of Marriage & the Family*, 48(1). 147-151.
- Woods, L. N. (2002). The cohabitation effects on divorce: Causation or selection? *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 37(3-4). 101-119.
- Yang, B. & Lester, D. (1991). Correlates of statewide divorce rates. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 15 (3). 219
- Yates, W. (1985). And the roots shall not be severed: Reflections on marriage and spiritual formation. *Studies in Formative Spirituality*, 6, 283-296.

APPENDIX A  
PERMISSION LETTER TO CHURCHES

Dear Sir/ Madam

Hello, my name is Scott Parker. I am a PHD student working on a research project as part of my studies at Temple University, looking at marital satisfaction and religion. My research will examine how religion is measured. Past research has focused on a simple measure of religion, i.e. how many times per month a person attends religious services. I believe that a method which measures a person's religious beliefs and religious behaviors will better explain marital satisfaction than a simple measure of how many times a person attends religious services.

The reason for this research is simple; it is counter-intuitive that the approximate divorce rate of 50% is the same in Christian churches as it is in the general population. Marital satisfaction is used instead of divorce rate to examine the quality of the marital relationship. I believe that the way researchers have measured Christianity has been flawed and if this measurement issue is corrected it will be shown that the marital satisfaction is improved in couples who are more highly religious. Past researchers have simply looked at how many times per month people attend church services as their guide for how religious someone is. In this system, a more religious person is someone who attends church services 4 times per month versus someone who attends once per month, who would be classified as significantly less religious.

I intend to explore the question of how religious someone is in a different manner. There is a scale called the Shepherd Scale that was created by a team of Christians using Biblical beliefs and practices of Christianity as described by the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. This instrument was constructed by sampling passages of the Bible detailing qualifications, characteristics, and behavior of Christians.

I am asking for your help in this research. I would like to ask members of your congregation for their voluntary participation in this research. I need approximately 120 individuals to complete a measure of religiosity (The Shepherd Scale), a measure of Marital Satisfaction (The Marital Satisfaction Inventory), and a demographics questionnaire. Participation is voluntary and there are very few risks. Participants will not be paid for their participation and I am not asking for any financial support. I only ask to attend weekend services, ask for volunteers, and be able to provide survey questionnaire's to your congregants.

I hope you will agree to help me conduct this research. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me. Perhaps a face to face meeting would allow you the opportunity to have all of your questions answered. Please call or email me at your earliest convenience to discuss this research. If you allow me to conduct research in your church I need a letter to share with my university.

Thanks in advance for all your help.

Sincerely,

Scott Parker, M.A.

APPENDIX B  
THE SHEPHERD SCALE

Belief Component

1. I believe that God will bring about certain circumstances which will result in the judgment and destruction of evil.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
2. I believe I can have the personal presence of God in my life.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
3. I believe that there are certain required duties to maintaining a strong Christian lifestyle (i.e., prayer, doing good deeds, and helping others).  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
4. I believe that it is possible to have a personal relationship with God through Christ.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
5. I believe that by following the teaching of Jesus Christ and incorporating them into my daily life, I receive such things as peace, confidence, and hope.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
6. I believe that God raised Jesus from the dead.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
7. I believe that God will judge me for all of my actions and behaviors.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
8. I believe that by submitting myself to Christ He frees me to obey Him in a way I never could before.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
9. I believe in miracles as a result of my confidence in God to perform such things.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
10. Because of God's favor to us, through Jesus Christ, we are no longer condemned by God's laws.

- (1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
11. Because of my personal commitment to Jesus Christ, I have eternal life.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
12. The only means by which I may know God is through my personal commitment to Jesus Christ.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
13. I believe that everyone's life has been twisted by sin and that the only adequate remedy to this problem is Jesus Christ.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true

#### The Christian Walk Component

1. I am concerned that my behavior and speech reflect the teachings of Christ.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
2. I respond positively (with patience, kindness, self-control) to those people who hold negative feelings toward me.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
3. I do kind things regardless of who's watching me.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
4. Status and material possessions are not of primary importance to me.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
5. I do not accept what I hear in regard to religious beliefs without first questioning the validity of it.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true



6. I strive to have good relationships with people even though their beliefs and values may be different than mine.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
7. It is important to me to conform to Christian standards of behavior.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
8. I am most influenced by people whose beliefs and values are consistent with the teachings of Christ.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
9. I respect and obey the rules and regulations of the civil authorities which govern me.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
10. I show respect towards Christians.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
11. I share things that I own with Christians.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
12. I share the same feelings Christians do whether it be happiness or sorrow.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
13. I'm concerned about how my behavior affects Christians.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
14. I speak the truth with love to Christians.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
15. I work for Christians without expecting recognition or acknowledgements.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true
16. I am concerned about unity among Christians.  
(1) true    (2) generally true    (3) generally not true    (4) not true

17. I enjoy spending time with Christians.  
(1) true (2) generally true (3) generally not true (4) not true
18. My belief, trust, and loyalty to God can be seen by other people through my actions and behavior.  
(1) true (2) generally true (3) generally not true (4) not true
19. I can see daily growth in the areas of knowledge of Jesus Christ, self-control, patience, and virtue.  
(1) true (2) generally true (3) generally not true (4) not true
20. Because of my love for God, I obey His commandments.  
(1) true (2) generally true (3) generally not true (4) not true
21. I attribute my accomplishments to God's presence in my life.  
(1) true (2) generally true (3) generally not true (4) not true
22. I realize a need to admit my wrongs to God.  
(1) true (2) generally true (3) generally not true (4) not true
23. I have told others that I serve Jesus Christ.  
(1) true (2) generally true (3) generally not true (4) not true
24. I have turned from my sin and believed in Jesus Christ.  
(1) true (2) generally true (3) generally not true (4) not true
25. I daily use and apply what I have learned by following Jesus Christ.  
(1) true (2) generally true (3) generally not true (4) not true

APPENDIX C  
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

## Demographic Questionnaire

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifier #: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender (circle one):

Male

Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe your ethnicity:

African American

Asian

Caucasian

Hispanic

Middle Eastern

Native American

Pacific Islander

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

How many times have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_

How long married? \_\_\_\_\_

How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

How long married or in a relationship before your first child? \_\_\_\_\_

How satisfied are you in your marriage?

High

Above average

Moderately

Below average

Low

EMPLOYMENT/ EDUCATION

**Are you currently employed?** Yes No      **For how long?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your occupation?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the highest level of education you obtained?**

High School   BA/ BS   MA/ MS   PhD   MD   other: \_\_\_\_\_

**What best describes your yearly household income?**

<25K   25K-75K   75K-125K   125K-175K   >175K-225K

AGREEMENT

**Do you and your spouse/ partner agree on issues of politics?**

**We agree:**

All of the time   Most of the time   Half of the time   Some of the time   Rarely

**Do you and your spouse/ partner agree on social issues?**

**We agree:**

All of the time   Most of the time   Half of the time   Some of the time   Rarely

**Do you and your spouse/ partner agree on spending/ finance?**

**We agree:**

All of the time   Most of the time   Half of the time   Some of the time   Rarely

**Do you and your spouse/ partner agree on religion?**

**We agree:**

All of the time   Most of the time   Half of the time   Some of the time   Rarely

**Do you and your spouse/ partner agree on child rearing practices?**

**We agree:**

All of the time   Most of the time   Half of the time   Some of the time   Rarely

### RELIGION

**What religious institution do you attend? \_\_\_\_\_**

**How many religious worship services do you attend per month? \_\_\_\_\_**

**How many church activities/ programs, events (not counting weekend worship) do you attend per month? \_\_\_\_\_**

**How important is religion in your life?**

Very important   Important   Somewhat important   Barely important   Not important

**How important was religion in your house when you were a child?**

Very important   Important   Somewhat important   Barely important   Not important

**Do you integrate religious practices (prayer, fasting, etc) in your daily life?**

All of the time   Most of the time   Half of the time   Some of the time   Rarely

**Which statement describes your personal prayer life? I pray:**

Multiple times each day   Once per day   Weekly   Occasionally   Rarely

**Which statement describes your joint prayer life with your wife? We pray together:**

Multiple times each day   Once per day   Weekly   Occasionally   Rarely

APPENDIX D  
INFORMED CONSENT



## CONSENT FORM

**TITLE:** Marital Satisfaction and Religiosity: A comparison of two measures of religiosity.

**STUDENT INVESTIGATOR:** Scott Parker, LPC, MA, Psychological Studies in Education, [REDACTED]

**ADVISOR:** Joseph Ducette, PhD., Psychological Studies in Education, (215) 204-4998

We are currently engaged in a study of marital satisfaction and religion. To help us gain further insights into this area we will ask you to sign this consent, then complete a demographics questionnaire, the Shepherd Scale, The Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised Edition and return the materials within 2 weeks.

There are no physical risks associated with this study. Emotional risks include: possible distress related to questions concerning marital satisfaction; however this risk is no greater than you already experience if you are in a marriage with low satisfaction.

The data you will provide will be recorded anonymously and your participation and anything you say during the session will be held in the strictest confidence. Overall patterns of response to study questions will be provided to participant churches upon request but any information linking you to the information will be omitted.

We welcome questions about the experiment at any time. Your participation in this study is on voluntary basis, and you may refuse to participate at any time without consequence or prejudice.

Questions about my rights as a research subject may be directed to Mr. Richard Throm, Office of the Vice President for Research, Institutional Review Board, Temple University, 3400 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19140, (215) 707-8757.

Singing your name below indicates that you have read and understand the contents of this Consent Form and that you agree to take part in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date