

Marriage and the Spiritual Realm: The Role of Proximal and Distal Religious Constructs in Marital Functioning

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Ninety-seven couples completed questionnaires about their involvement in joint religious activities and their perceptions regarding the sanctification of marriage, including perceived sacred qualities of marriage and beliefs about the manifestation of God in marriage. In contrast to individual religiousness and religious homogamy (distal religious constructs), these proximal religious variables directly reflect an integration of religion and marriage, and they were associated with greater global marital adjustment, more perceived benefits from marriage, less marital conflict, more verbal collaboration, and less use of verbal aggression and stalemate to discuss disagreements for both wives and husbands. The proximal measures also added substantial unique variance (adjusted R^2 change ranged from .06 to .48) to specific aspects of marital functioning after controlling demographic factors and distal religious variables in hierarchical regression analyses.

Many individuals report that religion and spirituality are integral parts of their lives. As many as 95% of American adults express a belief in God (Hoge, 1996), 84% believe God can be reached through prayer, and 86% state religion is important or very important to them (Gallup & Castelli, 1989). Surveys also suggest religion may play a significant role in many marriages (Blumel, 1992; Jenkins, 1992). Religiousness, as reflected by church affiliation or attendance, emerged as a correlate of higher marital satisfaction in early, classic studies on

marital adjustment (Burgess & Cottrell, 1939; Landis, 1946; Locke, 1951). More recently, greater religiousness has been tied to higher marital satisfaction and adjustment in large, nationally representative samples (Bock & Radelet, 1988; Glenn & Weaver, 1978; Kunz & Albrecht, 1977; Wilson & Musick, 1996), regional community samples (Albrecht, 1979; Edmonds, Withers & Debatista, 1972; Hunt & King, 1978; Larson & Goltz, 1989; Scanzoni & Arnett, 1987; Schumm, Bollman, & Jurich, 1982), and samples of church-going couples (Bahr & Chadwick, 1985; Dudley & Kosinski, 1990; Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Gruner, 1985; Roth, 1988; Wilson & Filsinger, 1986). Greater religiousness has also been related to decreased risk of divorce in multiple national surveys (Brealt & Kposowa, 1987; Glenn & Supancic, 1984; Heaton & Goodman, 1985; Ross & Sawhill, 1975; Shrum, 1980). In addition, *religious homogamy*, defined as couples belonging to the same denomination or faith tradition (e.g., Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, Protestant), has been associated with better marital adjustment (Albrecht, 1979; Alston, McIntosh, & Wright, 1976; Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Dudley & Kosinski, 1990; Glenn, 1982; Heaton, 1984; Ortega, Whitt, & William, 1988; Wilson & Musick, 1996) and with lower separation and

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divorce rates (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Christensen & Barber, 1967; Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993).

Although greater individual religiousness and religious homogamy have been associated with increased marital satisfaction and adjustment, measurement and conceptual advancements are needed in this research area (Thomas & Cornwall, 1990). Most research has involved single, global items to assess religious variables (e.g., individuals' frequency of church attendance, homogamy of partners' church affiliation). This leaves open many theoretical and substantive questions about specific points of intersection between marital and spiritual-religious spheres of life (Breault & Kposowa, 1987; Thomas & Cornwall, 1990). Several studies have linked lengthier or more conceptually based indexes of individual religiousness to marital functioning (Dudley & Kosinski, 1990; Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Roth, 1988; Scanzoni & Arnett, 1987; Wilson & Filsinger, 1986). Examples include measures of "religious devoutness," based on multiple items about religious activity or feelings (Scanzoni & Arnett, 1987), and "experiential religiousness" (e.g., "I know what it feels like to repent and experience forgiveness of sin"; Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Wilson & Filsinger, 1986). However, individually based measures of religiousness do not assess the extent to which couples integrate religion into their dyadic activities or perceptions of their marriage. Likewise, dichotomous indexes of couples' religious homogamy reveal little about how much religion is integrated into marriage. Instead, prior research has focused on "distal" religious variables that are only loosely connected to marriage from a conceptual point of view.

In addition, past studies have overwhelmingly relied on single-item ratings of marital satisfaction (e.g., "all things taken together, how would you describe your marriage: very happy, pretty happy, not too happy?") or scores from omnibus measures of marital adjustment (e.g., Dyadic Adjustment Scale [DAS], Spanier, 1976; Short Marital Adjustment Test [SMAT], Locke & Wallace, 1959) to assess the marital domain. This raises additional questions about the specific aspects of marriage that are related to religious or spiritual constructs. Furthermore, low correlations have emerged with brief, global

measures of religious and marital variables for national or community samples (r s in .08-.20 range; Albrecht, 1979; Edmonds et al., 1972; Glenn & Weaver, 1978; Larson & Goltz, 1989; Scanzoni & Arnett, 1987; Wilson & Musick, 1996), although a broader range of associations has been found using more detailed indexes of individual religious activity for samples recruited directly from churches (r s in .15-.40 range; Dudley & Kosinski, 1990; Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Roth, 1988; Wilson & Filsinger, 1986). In sum, the interface between marriage and religion has been conceptualized and studied primarily "from a distance." A clearer and more compelling understanding of marriage and religion is needed and may emerge by looking more closely at the intersection of these two spheres.

In this study, we assessed two distinct religious or spiritual constructs that we propose are closely or "proximally" connected to couples' experiences or views of their marriage, and we examined the extent to which these proximal religious constructs are related to other aspects of marital functioning. One construct, labeled "joint religious activities," is behavioral in nature and refers to how often partners engage in religious or spiritual activities together *as a couple*. Compared with the traditional, dyadic variable of "homogamy," this construct offers a more in-depth picture about the extent to which partners share religious or spiritual practices and experiences. Joint religious activities include (a) informal behaviors such as praying together, talking about how to live out God's will, discussing personal spiritual issues or God's role in the marriage as well as (b) more formal religious experiences such as attending church and religious education classes, engaging in religious rituals, celebrating religious holidays, or attending retreats together.

The second proximal construct, called "sanctification of marriage," refers to perceptions of one's marriage having spiritual character and significance. We propose two different indexes of the sanctification of marriage: (a) individuals may view their marriage as having sacred qualities, and (b) individuals may experience marriage as a manifestation of God. The former appraisal process occurs when individuals attribute qualities to their marriage that are often used by spiritual or religious traditions to

describe divine entities or transcendent phenomena. Such qualities include the adjectives of "blessed," "holy," "heavenly," "religious," and "spiritual." This form of the sanctification of marriage reflects the degree to which partners characterize their marriage in spiritual terms, *apart* from personal or institutional beliefs about the role(s) that external, divine entities (e.g. God, Jesus, Higher Power) may play in marriage. This variable is labeled "perceived sacred qualities" in this study. A more traditional, theocentric (i.e., God-centered) index of the sanctification of marriage is the degree to which partners believe their marriage is a manifestation of their beliefs or experiences of God and their religious faith. This religious variable taps the extent to which partners perceive God to be active or reflected in the marital relationship. Within many Judeo-Christian traditions, marital vows between husband and wife are likened to the love and covenant between God and people, and God is often described as potentially influencing or being present in marriage (e.g., Giblin, 1993; Hunt, 1987; Lauer, 1985). This second index of the sanctification of marriage is labeled "manifestation of God."

Scholars in theological and pastoral care circles have articulated numerous constructive functions that religion could serve in marriage (e.g., Giblin, 1993; Lauer, 1985). Extrapolating from this work, joint religious activities and sanctification of marriage may enhance marital functioning in several ways. Joint religious activities entail opportunities for couples to participate in meaningful or enjoyable rituals together, discuss and develop a set of shared values, and provide each other with support, particularly about religious, spiritual, and moral issues. Greater involvement in these activities is likely to be related to higher levels of marital satisfaction, more perceived benefits from the relationship, and less conflict. In addition, couples who perceive their relationship as being a sanctified object (i.e., view marriage as having spiritual character and significance) may be more likely to act and think in ways that protect their marriage. For instance, attributing sacred qualities to marriage may draw partners' attention toward other positive elements of their relationship and may thereby heighten spouses' general evaluation of their marriage as well as

facilitate collaboration and benevolent attributions that short-circuit conflictual interactions. Also, couples who believe God is manifest in marriage may be more likely to use adaptive communication methods (e.g., reasoning, listening, accepting blame) and avoid maladaptive strategies (e.g., verbal aggression, stonewalling), because they want to behave in a manner God would presumably condone.

It is important to recognize the possible negative implications of religion for marriage. For instance, highly religious individuals may report high levels of global marital satisfaction because of greater devotion to marriage but experience fewer personal rewards and benefits from the relationship (Edmonds et al., 1972; Scanzoni & Arnett, 1987). Couples with a strong religious orientation toward marriage may also tolerate high rates of marital conflict or dysfunctional communication strategies (e.g., verbal aggression, avoidance-capitulation, stalemating-stonewalling) because of beliefs about the sacredness of the bond or God's will and because of increased involvement with religious institutions that discourage divorce (Edmonds et al., 1972; Hansen, 1987). Whether greater religiousness is associated with greater satisfaction with marriage, but more negative marital interaction patterns, is unclear because prior research has focused on global indexes of marriage (e.g., single-item ratings, DAS, SMAT).

This study had two primary objectives. First, we tested the hypothesis that wives' and husbands' reports about the couples' joint religious behavior and their own perceptions of the sanctification of their marriage (perceived sacred qualities and manifestation of God in marriage) would be related to specific, nonreligious aspects of marital functioning. Because prior research has found positive links between global marital satisfaction and distal indexes of religiousness (individual religiousness and religious homogamy), we predicted that higher rates of joint religious activities and greater perceptions of the sanctification of marriage would be associated with greater global marital satisfaction, more personal benefits and rewards from marriage, less marital conflict, and greater use of collaboration and less reliance on negative communication strategies when discussing conflictual topics. However, we designed the study to allow for the proximal religious

variables to be related to specific aspects of marriage in adaptive or maladaptive ways. In particular, we phrased items on the proximal religious measures in a neutral manner to avoid biasing results (e.g., "God is present in my marriage" rather than "God helps my marriage"). Also, based on prior studies that have yielded low but statistically significant correlations in large national or community samples between distal religious indexes and global marital adjustment (i.e., r s range from .08 to .20), we anticipated that the associations in this study between the distal religious indexes and marital functioning would be of similar magnitude but unlikely to reach significance because of the sample size we used.

The second objective of this research was to examine whether the set of proximal variables predicted various aspects of marital functioning beyond the combined effects of the two distal measures of religiousness. We hypothesized that joint religious activities and the sanctification of marriage (perceived sacred qualities and manifestation of God) would predict aspects of marital functioning above and beyond the combined effects of individual religiousness and couples' homogamy. In sum, this study was conducted to offer a more fine-grained picture of the roles religion and spirituality may play in marriage. Similar detailed work on individual religious coping has produced a rich and balanced picture of how religion may enhance and harm individual psychological functioning (see Pargament, 1997, for review).

Method

Participants and Procedures

To recruit the 97 married couples in this study, we identified potential participants through public birth records of 6- to 24-month-old babies born between 1995 and 1996 in a midsized metropolitan area in the Midwest. We used this sampling procedure to avoid recruiting couples directly from religious organizations. First, we sent prospective couples a postcard with a brief statement indicating they would be telephoned within a few weeks by researchers from a local university and invited to participate in a research project "on marriage." We made up to three attempts to talk directly by phone to at least one partner of each potential couple using phone numbers listed in the public-birth-record database. If direct contact could not be made after three phone calls, we dropped the

case from the potential participant pool (i.e., unable to reach party because of incorrect phone numbers and addresses; disconnected numbers; no answer or answering machine only). We contacted a total of 379 couples directly and asked them to participate in a 30-min, paper-and-pencil survey about "your view and your spouse's view of your marriage"; 254 couples agreed to participate. Couples then received an envelope with two questionnaire packets and two postage-paid, return-addressed envelopes (couples were instructed to complete surveys independently). We did not use financial incentives to encourage participation; we made one follow-up call if questionnaires were not returned. Five couples returned packets but were not included in analyses because of incomplete data from one or both partners. Another 20 women and 2 men returned packets (singletons), but these cases were dropped because their spouses did not participate. Thus, the return rate of usable data from both a husband and wife in a family with an infant or toddler was 38% for the couples who agreed to participate and 26% relative to all couples who were initially contacted.

We used birth records to recruit couples in order to (a) study couples who were undergoing a stage of family life that tends to be stressful for marriages; (b) include couples who were not necessarily affiliated with organized religious institutions; (c) avoid obtaining a sample in which all couples were newly married (e.g., recent marriage certificates); and (d) avoid obtaining a sample dominated by long-standing, relatively high-functioning couples (e.g., married parents of undergraduates). We anticipated that recruiting couples via birth records would yield adequate variability on the religious and marital measures. The drawback of the obtained sample is a lack of representativeness of all marriages in the general population in terms of length of time married, spouses' and children's ages, and family structure (i.e., excludes couples without children).

When conducting research on religion, it is important to know if the general religious attitudes of recruited samples are biased. To evaluate the representativeness of participants in this study, we conducted secondary, descriptive analyses on data from a national survey of families on parenting practices (Gallup Organization, 1995). Results indicated that participants in this study did not report more favorable feelings or involvement in religion than is typical of couples with young children and in research not focused on religion. For example, 5% of wives and 9% of husbands in this study said they had no religious or denominational affiliation of any kind compared to 6% of wives and 3% of husbands in the Gallup poll. Base rates of church attendance were also not atypical. For instance, approximately 40% of wives and 50% of husbands in this study said they

never or seldom attended church compared to 36% of wives and 42% of husbands in the general population. Finally, self-reports of global religiousness indicated that participants in this study were not more favorably predisposed to religion than is usual. For example, 4% of wives and 9% of husbands rated themselves as "not religious at all" in this study, whereas 2% of wives and 5% of husbands in the Gallup poll said religion was "not at all" important in their life.¹

Participants were predominantly Caucasian² (98% and 95% for husbands and wives, respectively) with mean ages in the early 30s ($M = 33.7$ years, $SD = 5.6$; $M = 30.1$, $SD = 4.1$). A college or post-graduate degree had been earned by 60.4% of husbands and 54.7% of wives. In 1997 dollars, family income was \$0–35,000 for 7%; \$35,000–50,000 for 32%; \$50,000–65,000 for 31%; \$65,000–80,000 for 15%; and greater than \$80,000 for 12% of the sample (2% missing data). Most couples were in their first marriage (91%), with 37% married less than 5 years; 43% married 5–10 years; 14% married 10–15 years; and 5% married more than 15 years. The mean number of children was 2.0 ($SD = .87$), and mean age of the oldest child was 4.4 years ($SD = 4.2$).

In terms of wives' religious affiliation, 41% were Roman Catholic, 47% were Protestant, 3% were Jewish, 4% reported "other" religious affiliation, and 5% had no religious affiliation. For husbands, 38% were Roman Catholic, 47% were Protestant, 0% were Jewish, 6% reported "other" religious affiliation, and

9% had no religious affiliation. Within the 97 couples, 69% of the partners had the same religious affiliation (i.e., Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, other, or none).

Measures

Individual religiousness. To assess individual religiousness, respondents answered four global items often used in research on psychology and religion: (a) frequency of attending religious services

were 10.3% and 39.7% (total 50%). In response to the Gallup poll question, "How often do you attend church or synagogue," 11.2% and 24.7% wives said "never" and "seldom," respectively (total 35.9%); for husbands these figures were 12.7% and 29.3% (total 42.0%). Base rates for mid-range frequency of church attendance were also similar. In this study, the combined percentages of "1 time per month" and "2–3 times per month" were 27.9% for wives and 29.9% for husbands. In the Gallup poll, the combined percentages of "once per month" and "almost weekly" were 33.2% for wives and 39.7% for husbands. In terms of frequent church attendance, 31.9% for wives and 26.8% for husbands in this study said they attended church either "more than once a week" or "weekly." For the Gallup poll, 30.9% of wives and 19.3% of husbands said they attend church "at least weekly."

The item used in this study to capture global religiousness (i.e., "rate yourself on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning *not religious at all* and 5 meaning *very religious*) was worded slightly differently than the Gallup poll item (i.e., "How important would you say religion is in your life?"). In this study, 4.1% of wives and 9.3% of husbands rated themselves as "not religious at all." In the Gallup poll, 2.2% of wives and 5.3% of husbands reported that religion was "not at all" important in their life. On the other end of the continuum, in this study, 37.1% of wives and 28.9% of husbands rated themselves as being "very religious" or "more than moderately religious." By comparison, 64.6% of wives and 57.4% of husbands in the Gallup poll said that religion was "extremely" or "very" important in their life. At the midpoint of the global religiousness item in this study, 44.3% of wives and 51.5% of husbands described themselves as being "moderately religious." At the midpoint of the Gallup item, 28.7% of wives and 28.0% of husbands said religion was "somewhat" important.

²Based on 1990 U.S. Census bureau data, the ethnic breakdown of married couples with biological children who live in the geographical area from which the sample was recruited is 88% Caucasian, 9% African American, 1% Asian, and 2% other racial background.

¹The Gallup poll database involved a random sample of 1,000 families from the United States with children ages 0–17 (Gallup Organization, 1995). Global items on religious preference, church attendance, and global religiousness were in the demographic section of the survey. We compared responses given to these items by the subset of White, married individuals in the United States who had biological children between 0–10 years (wives, $n = 178$; husbands, $n = 150$) to similar data provided by participants in this study. More information on the items and response options are reported below.

In this study, 5.3% of wives and 9.3% of husbands gave the response "none" to the item "indicate your religious affiliation." By comparison, 6.2% of wives and 3.3% of husbands in the Gallup poll endorsed the category of "none" in response to the question, "What is your religious preference?"

To assess frequency of church attendance, we used different item scales in this study (7-point scale) and the Gallup poll (5-point scale). In this study, the question was phrased, "How often have you attended religious services in the past year." In response, 10.3% wives endorsed "never," and 29.9% endorsed "1–2 times/year" or "3–6 times/year" (total 40.2%). For husbands in this sample, these respective figures

in the past year; (b) frequency of prayer outside of church on a 7-point scale (never; once/year; once/6 months; once every 2–3 months; twice/month; twice/week; and at least once/day); (c) global religious self-rating on a 5-point scale (from *not at all religious* to *very religious*); and (d) global spiritual self-rating on a 5-point scale (from *not at all spiritual* to *very spiritual*). Ratings for these items were summed to yield a total score of individual religiousness.

Religious homogamy. Couples were categorized as “religiously homogamous” if both partners were Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, other, or none, and as “religiously heterogamous” if partners differed in their type of religious affiliation.

Joint religious activities. We created a 13-item questionnaire for this study to assess how often partners engaged in religious or spiritual activities together using a 7-point scale from *never* (1) to *very often* (7), with a midpoint of *sometimes* (4). These items cover informal activities, such as praying together, talking about how to live out God’s will, discussing personal spiritual issues or God’s role in the marriage, as well as more formal and traditional religious practices, such as attending church and religious education programs, engaging in religious rituals, celebrating religious holidays, or attending retreats together. We summed ratings for items to create a total score. (See Appendix A for a copy of items.)

Sanctification of marriage. We created two scales to assess the construct of “sanctification of marriage.” The first measure, labeled the Perceived Sacred Qualities of Marriage Scale, was designed to assess how much spouses perceived their relationship as having qualities often used to describe divine entities or transcendent phenomena (i.e., “sacred” qualities). Such qualities include “heavenly,” “religious,” “spiritual,” “holy,” “blessed,” and so on. The measure consisted of a semantic differential adjective checklist and included nine pairs of opposing adjectives (e.g., heavenly–earthly, religious–nonreligious, spiritual–worldly (secular), holy–unholy, blessed–cursed) placed on a 7-point scale, with each endpoint anchored as *very closely describes* and a midpoint of *neutral*. We developed this measure to assess the degree to which partners subjectively characterize their marriage in spiritual terms, apart from explicit, theocentric beliefs about religion and marriage. We summed ratings for items for a total score. (See Appendix B for complete list of items.)

The second measure, labeled Manifestation of God Scale, was designed to assess the degree to which partners perceived their marriage to be a manifestation of beliefs and experiences of God and their religious faith. This measure represents a more traditional, theocentric (i.e., God-centered) index of the sanctification of marriage. We created 14 items to assess beliefs such as “God is present in my

marriage”; “My marriage is influenced by God’s actions in our lives”; “My marriage is symbolic of God and what I believe about God”; and so on. Respondents rated each item on a 7-point scale from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (7) with a midpoint of *neutral* (4). Ratings for all items were reverse scored and summed for a total score. (See Appendix B for complete list of items.)

Global marital adjustment. We assessed global marital adjustment with the SMAT (Locke & Wallace, 1959), a widely used, 15-item index of an array of issues involved in marital adjustment. The SMAT has high internal consistency, discriminates between couples seeking therapy for marital problems and nonclinic couples, and correlates highly with other measures of marital adjustment (O’Leary & Turkewitz, 1978; Sabatelli, 1988).

Benefits from marriage. To assess personal benefits that partners derive from their marriage, we took five items from a six-item “marital dependency” scale used in the National Survey of Families and Households (Wilson & Musick, 1996). With this tool, respondents were asked “Even though it might be very unlikely, think for a moment about how various areas of your life might be different if you and your spouse separated. For each of the following areas, how do you think things would change?” The areas were (a) standard of living, (b) social life, (c) sex life, (d) career opportunities, and (e) parenting. Response options were (a) much worse, (b) worse, (c) same, (d) better, and (e) much better. The items exhibit high internal consistency and relate to global marital happiness, church attendance, and religious homogamy (Wilson & Musick, 1996).

Frequency of marital conflict. To assess the frequency of marital conflict, we used a two-item subscale from Kerig’s (1996) Conflicts and Problem-Solving Scales (CPS). Based on a 6-point scale (from *once a year or less* = 1 to *just about every day* = 6), respondents indicated how often they have (a) minor disagreements (e.g., “spats,” getting on each other’s nerves) and (b) major disagreements (e.g., big fights, “blow-ups”). The items display adequate internal consistency, and the subscale is moderately associated with global marital adjustment and specific types of problem-solving strategies (Kerig, 1996).

Problem-solving strategies. To assess marital problem-solving strategies, we used four subscales from the CPS: (a) Collaboration, 8 items (e.g., express thoughts and feelings openly, listen or try to understand other, accept blame); (b) Avoidance–Capitulation, 7 items (e.g., hold in feelings, give in to escape argument, placate or humor other); (c) Stalemate, 5 items (e.g., sulk, give the “silent treatment,” withdraw love or affection, bicker unproductively); and (d) Verbal Aggression, 8 items (e.g., name calling, yell or shout, sarcasm, interrupt, hurt other’s feelings). Respondents indicated how often they and their spouse use the behaviors on each

subscale on a 4-point scale from *never* (0) to *often* (4). The alpha coefficients range from .84 to .86 for collaboration and verbal aggression subscales and from .70 to .78 for avoidance and stalemate subscales (Kerig, 1996). The test-retest reliability of CPS subscales is also satisfactory. Interscale zero-order correlations and factor analyses support the use of the separate subscales.

The packets were organized so participants completed items about demographics (including global items about religiousness and homogamy), followed by questionnaires about marital functioning, and then followed by detailed items about the religion and marriage (perceived sacred qualities, manifestation of God, joint religious activities). We used this order of items to minimize possible response bias by highly religious individuals.

Results

Descriptive Information on Predictor and Criterion Measures

Table 1 displays mean scores and standard deviations for wives' and husbands' reports. The following points are noteworthy. First, participants were moderately religious, with a normal

distribution of total scores of individual religiousness. Further, based on item-level data, wives and husbands reported attending church about once a month ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 1.8$; $M = 4.0$, $SD = 1.8$, respectively), and they rated themselves as being moderately religious ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 0.94$; $M = 3.1$, $SD = 1.0$, respectively) and spiritual ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.1$; $M = 3.0$, $SD = 1.0$, respectively). Wives reported praying about twice a week ($M = 5.7$, $SD = 1.7$), whereas husbands said they engaged in prayer about twice a month ($M = 4.7$, $SD = 2.2$). The alpha coefficient of the four items was .85 for wives and .78 for husbands. Second, spouses reported engaging in religious activities together occasionally. The alpha coefficient for items on this scale was .92 for wives and .90 for husbands. In descending frequency, the following items were the seven most common activities: celebrate religious holidays, attend church, pray for each other, talk about spiritual and moral issues, talk about how to live out God's will, talk about God's role in marriage, and pray together. Total joint religious scores were positively skewed, partly because couples

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of the Religious and Marital Variables

Variable (possible range)	Reporter			
	Husbands		Wives	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Religious domain				
Individual religiousness (4–24)	14.7	4.8	16.4	4.6
Joint religious activities (13–91)	37.5	14.8	40.5	16.3
Perceived sacredness of marriage (9–63)	44.4	8.2	45.7	7.6
Manifestation of God (14–98)	67.3	19.3	71.4	18.9
Marital domain				
Global marital adjustment (2–158)	108.4	22.3	113.4	23.0
Personal benefits from marriage (5–25)	17.9	3.4	18.7	2.7
Frequency of marital conflict (2–12)	6.2	1.9	6.1	1.9
Husbands' problem-solving skills				
Collaboration (0–24)	18.4	2.8	18.0	3.6
Verbal aggression (0–24)	11.6	4.7	11.5	5.2
Stalemate (0–15)	4.1	2.4	4.1	2.7
Avoidance (0–21)	10.1	3.5	10.5	4.0
Wives' problem-solving skills				
Collaboration (0–24)	17.5	3.5	19.5	2.5
Verbal aggression (0–24)	10.2	4.6	11.8	4.3
Stalemate (0–15)	5.1	3.0	5.6	2.7
Avoidance (0–21)	9.4	3.7	9.4	3.5

Note. Higher scores correspond to higher levels of the construct for all predictor and criterion variables. Religious homogamy is a dichotomous, categorical variable and is not listed in the table.

very rarely do some religious activities together (e.g., religious education classes, Bible studies, retreats). Third, wives and husbands, on average, agreed with statements that their marriage is a manifestation of God and their faith. The alpha coefficient for items on this scale was .97 for wives and .97 for husbands. Also, these scores were negatively skewed with 27% of the sample reporting high scores between 84 and 98. Fourth, both spouses said that "sacred" qualities described, to some degree, their marriage. The alpha coefficient was .87 for wives and .88 for husbands. These total scores were not skewed, but most (84%) were higher than the sum that would be yielded by endorsing "4" (*neutral*) for all nine items (i.e., 36).

Table 2 displays the intercorrelations of the five religious variables. Associations between the three proximal and two distal variables were significant (range .21 to .71); higher correlations emerged for the proximal religious variables and individual religiousness relative to those between the proximal religious variables and homogamy. Associations within the three proximal variables were in the moderate-to-moderately-high range (.53 to .74), indicating overlap but not complete redundancy between the variables. The overlap of husbands' and wives' reports on the five religious variables was in the moderate-to-high range (.48 to .86).

In terms of marital functioning, couples reported a moderate level of general marital adjustment, with a sizable number reporting

marital distress. Specifically, based on the commonly used cutpoint of less than 100 on the SMAT, at least one partner per couple reported clinical levels of marital dissatisfaction in 38% of the cases (21% and 29% of wives and husbands, respectively). The means of items assessing personal benefits derived from marriage were virtually identical to those published for a nationally representative sample (Wilson & Musick, 1996). Partners' self-ratings of various problem-solving skills approximated those of parents of school-aged children, with slightly higher mean ratings for the use of collaboration (Kerig, 1996). Correlations between parallel measures of spouses' marital functioning (e.g., his and her marital satisfaction; his and her verbal aggression) ranged from .36 to .76 (average $r = .56$). Agreement between partners about each partner's use of the four problem-solving strategies (e.g., his and her perceptions of his verbal aggression) ranged from .22 to .50 (average $r = .39$).

Bivariate Correlations Between Religious and Marital Variables

To address the first hypothesis that the proximal religious variables would be related to specific aspects of marital functioning, Pearson correlations are displayed on Table 3. Significant positive associations occurred between global marital adjustment and all three proximal measures of religion (joint religious activities,

Table 2
Intercorrelations of Distal and Proximal Religious Variables

Husbands	Wives				
	Proximal variable			Distal variable	
	Joint religious activities	Perceived sacredness	Manifestation of God	Individual religiousness	Homogamy
Proximal					
Joint religious activities	.86***	.60***	.74***	.71***	.47***
Perceived sacredness	.53***	.48***	.68***	.43***	.29**
Manifestation of God	.73***	.57***	.66***	.71***	.41***
Distal					
Individual religiousness	.70***	.39***	.71***	.65***	.34***
Homogamy	.48***	.21*	.38***	.44***	—

Note. Correlations in the upper right-hand triangle involve wives' reports on religious variables; correlations in the lower left-hand triangle involve husbands' reports on religious variables; correlations on the diagonal (marked in bold) reflect the degree of overlap between wives' and husbands' reports on the religious variables. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3
Correlations Between Religious and Marital Variables

Variable	Proximal religious variables			Distal religious variables	
	Joint religious activities	Sanctification of marriage		Homogamy	Individual religiousness
		Perceived sacredness	Manifestation of God		
Wives					
Global marital adjustment	.35***	.68***	.37***	.19	.14
Personal benefits from marriage	.38***	.47***	.29**	.17	.21*
Frequency of marital conflict	-.21*	-.40***	-.25*	-.13	-.06
Collaboration					
Self-wife report	.33**	.46***	.34***	.11	.27**
Spouse-husband report	.30**	.12	.12	.03	.07
Verbal aggression					
Self-wife report	-.08	-.31**	-.15	.00	.00
Spouse-husband report	-.25*	-.27**	-.19	-.03	-.16
Stalemate					
Self-wife report	-.19	-.38***	-.15	-.16	-.04
Spouse-husband report	-.23*	-.36***	-.16	-.07	-.05
Avoidance					
Self-wife report	-.16	-.24*	-.11	-.11	-.08
Spouse-husband report	-.13	-.17	-.12	.00	-.08
Husbands					
Global marital adjustment	.39***	.64***	.42***	.07	.12
Personal benefits from marriage	.34***	.22*	.24*	.07	.24*
Frequency of marital conflict	-.21*	-.13	-.10	-.10	.09
Collaboration					
Self-husband report	.21*	.20*	.12	.00	.04
Spouse-wife report	.36***	.42***	.29**	.18	.14
Verbal aggression					
Self-husband report	-.30**	-.23*	-.21*	-.01	-.13
Spouse-wife report	-.17	-.23*	-.09	-.03	-.03
Stalemate					
Self-husband report	-.25*	-.09	-.18	-.12	-.06
Spouse-wife report	-.22*	-.27**	-.18	-.18	-.06
Avoidance					
Self-husband report	-.05	-.20*	-.07	.13	.11
Self-spouse report	-.07	-.18	.08	-.05	-.05

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

perceived sacred qualities of marriage, and manifestation of God) for wives and husbands; perceived sacred qualities of marriage was an especially strong correlate of general marital adjustment. Ratings of personal benefits from marriage were also positively associated with each of the proximal religious variables for wives and husbands. Less marital conflict was also related to higher ratings by wives on all three proximal religious indexes and related to higher frequency of joint religious activity reported by husbands.

The pattern of associations between the proximal religious variables and problem-solving strategies was more complex. One notable pattern involved collaboration. Both spouses' reports of greater levels of the three proximal religious variables were generally associated with greater use of collaboration by each partner, according to self- and spouse reports. (Exceptions involved two correlations with partners' beliefs about the manifestation of God in marriage and one correlation with husbands' reports of sacred qualities). Another

consistent pattern was that spouses' reports of both their own and their partner's use of verbal aggression and stalemate declined as each partner attributed more sacred qualities to the marriage (exception involved husbands' self-reported use of stalemate). In addition, both partners' reports of greater joint religious activities were inversely related to husbands' reports of their own and their wives' use of verbal aggression and stalemate. Parallel negative correlations for wives' reports of these two problem-solving strategies, however, were less robust with only one reaching statistical significance (i.e., her report of his use of stalemate and his report of joint religious activities). Neither partner's beliefs regarding the manifestation of God in marriage were consistently associated with wives' and husbands' use of verbal aggression and stalemate (exception involved husbands' self-reports of verbal aggression). Finally, reports of wives' and husbands' use of avoidance-capitulation to handle marital disagreements were generally not associated with the proximal religious indexes (two exceptions involved perceived sacredness of marriage).

As expected, the two distal religious variables—individual religiousness, religious homogamy—were not strongly or consistently related to specific indexes of marital functioning. Although the associations of individual religiousness and homogamy with global marital satisfaction were similar in size ($r_s .07-.19$) to those found in very large, nationally representative samples (e.g., Glenn & Weaver, 1978; Wilson & Musick, 1996), these relatively low correlations were not statistically significant in this smaller sample. Overall, no significant correlations emerged for religious homogamy for either wives' or husbands' reports of their marriage. Wives' individual religiousness was positively associated with perceived personal benefits and wives' reports of their own use of collaboration during marital conflict. Husbands' personal religiousness was related to self-reports of greater personal benefits from marriage.

For a comprehensive examination of links between specific aspects of the marital and religious domains, Table 3 contains 110 correlations (55 for each partner's functioning) with 66 involving proximal religious variables and 44 involving distal religious variables. Sixty-two

percent of the former and 7% of the latter group of associations were significant at $p < .05$; it may be noted that approximately 5% of either set of correlations could be expected to emerge by chance using this alpha criterion. Consistent with a priori hypotheses, the overall pattern of results suggests that proximal religious variables are more firmly and closely integrated with marital functioning than the distal religious variables, despite significant overlap between the two types of religious variables (see Table 2).

Multiple Regression Analyses

We conducted separate hierarchical, multiple regression analyses to investigate whether the proximal measures of religion and marriage (joint religious activities, perceived sacred qualities, manifestation of God) contributed to marital functioning over and above the effects of the distal measures (individual religiousness, couples' homogamy) of religion. A preliminary step for these analyses involved examining correlations between the demographic indexes and marital variables to determine the need to control for their influence on the results. We controlled husbands' education in subsequent analyses because of its significant association with marital variables for wives (five variables) and husbands (one variable).

We examined each of the marital variables (global marital satisfaction, perceived benefits, frequency of marital conflict, use of collaboration, verbal aggression, stalemate, and avoidance as reported by self and spouse) separately for husbands and wives. In Step 1 of each analysis, we entered husband education and the two distal religious variables (individual religiousness and couples' homogamy) into the equation. In Step 2 of each analysis, we entered the proximal religious variables. The results from these analyses are summarized in Table 4. After taking into account husbands' education and the distal religious variables, wives' reports of the proximal religious variables added variance to wives' reports of marital adjustment, personal benefits from marriage, frequency of marital conflict and self-reported use of verbal aggression, and both spouses' reports of wives' use of collaboration and stalemate. Thus, for wives, the set of proximal religious variables contributed moderate-to-high amounts of vari-

Table 4
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses: Unique Variance Accounted for by Proximal Religious Variables

Marital variable	Husband education and distal religious variables (Step 1)	Proximal religious variables (Step 2)	
	Adjusted R^2	Adjusted R^2 change	F
Wives			
Global marital satisfaction	.04	.43	26.6***
Personal benefits from marriage	.06	.18	8.1***
Frequency of marital conflict	.00	.14	6.2***
Collaboration			
Self-report	.04	.13	5.8***
Spouse report	-.03	.13	5.5**
Verbal aggression			
Self-report	-.03	.11	4.5**
Spouse report	.00	.04	2.5
Stalemate			
Self-report	.00	.13	5.6**
Spouse report	.01	.12	5.4**
Avoidance			
Self-report	.00	.01	1.5
Spouse report	-.01	-.01	0.8
Husbands			
Global marital satisfaction	-.01	.48	29.1***
Personal benefits from marriage	.03	.04	2.6
Frequency of marital conflict	.01	.09	4.3**
Collaboration			
Self-report	.01	.04	2.5
Spouse report	.10	.18	8.8***
Verbal aggression			
Self-report	.01	.08	3.6*
Spouse report	-.03	.05	2.6
Stalemate			
Self-report	.06	.06	2.8*
Spouse report	.07	.07	3.2*
Avoidance			
Self-report	.06	.08	4.0**
Spouse report	.03	.01	1.3

Note. In Step 1 of each hierarchical regression analysis, husbands' education and the two distal religious variables (individual religiousness, religious homogamy) were entered as a group. In Step 2, the three proximal religious variables (joint religious activities, perceived sacred qualities, manifestation of God) were entered as a group.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

ance to all criterion variables (based on at least one spouses' report) except wives' use of avoidance (adjusted R^2 changes ranged from .11 to .43). Husbands' reports of the proximal religious variables added moderate-to-high amounts of variance to husbands' reports of global marital adjustment and frequency of marital conflict and to at least one partner's

report of husbands' use of collaboration, verbal aggression, stalemate, and avoidance (adjusted R^2 changes ranged from .06 to .48).

To address whether one or the other proximal religious constructs was solely responsible for the above results, we conducted two sets of post hoc hierarchical regression analyses for wives and husbands. One set of regressions assessed

the *R*-squared change associated with the inclusion of only joint religious activities, after controlling for husband education and the distal religious variables. The other set of regression analyses examined the incremental *R*-squared

changes associated with the inclusion of only the sanctification of marriage indexes (i.e., perceived sacred qualities and manifestation of God). As can be seen in Table 5, the results indicate that the constructs of joint religious

Table 5
Variance Accounted for by Joint Religious Activities or Sanctification of Marriage After Controlling Husband Education and Distal Religious Variables

Marital variable	Joint religious activities		Sanctification of marriage	
	Adjusted <i>R</i> ² change	<i>F</i>	Adjusted <i>R</i> ² change	<i>F</i>
Wives				
Global marital satisfaction ^a	.09	10.7**	.44	39.4***
Personal benefits from marriage ^a	.10	11.2**	.15	9.8**
Frequency of marital conflict ^a	.04	4.8*	.15	9.4**
Collaboration				
Self-report ^a	.03	4.0*	.14	8.7*
Spouse report ^a	.14	15.8***	.01	0.6
Verbal aggression				
Self-report ^a	.01	1.5	.11	6.7**
Spouse report	.04	4.7*	.03	2.6
Stalemate				
Self-report ^a	.03	3.5	.14	8.4**
Spouse report ^a	.06	6.9**	.12	7.1**
Avoidance				
Self-report	.01	1.4	.02	2.1
Spouse report	.00	1.4	.00	1.1
Husbands				
Global marital satisfaction ^a	.19	22.7***	.47	41.0***
Personal benefits from marriage	.06	7.6**	.00	1.1
Frequency of marital conflict ^a	.11	12.4***	.04	3.0
Collaboration				
Self-report	.05	6.0*	.03	2.4
Spouse report ^a	.09	11.2**	.18	12.2***
Verbal aggression				
Self-report ^a	.09	10.0**	.04	2.7
Spouse report	.04	4.5*	.04	2.9
Stalemate				
Self-report ^a	.06	6.6*	.03	2.5
Spouse report ^a	.03	3.4	.07	4.7*
Avoidance				
Self-report ^a	.03	3.9	.09	6.0**
Spouse report	.00	0.00	.01	1.7

Note. In Step 1 of each hierarchical regression analysis, husbands' education and the distal religious variables were entered. For the results located in the "Joint religious activities" column, the variable of joint religious activities was entered in Step 2. For the results located in the "Sanctification of marriage" column, the two variables of perceived sacred qualities and manifestation of God represented the construct of the sanctification of marriage and were entered in Step 2.

^aSignificant results were found for this dependent variable on Table 4.

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

activities and sanctification of marriage each yielded half or more of the significant outcomes that emerged when the "package" of proximal measures was used, but neither construct alone produced all of the significant results found with the package. Specifically, for joint religious activities, the *R*-squared change was significant for five of the seven significant package outcomes for husbands and six of the eight significant package outcomes variables for wives. For the sanctification of marriage, the *R*-squared change was significant for four of seven variables for husbands and seven of eight variables for wives. In sum, these supplemental analyses indicate that both proximal religious constructs are relevant to couples, with each having some unique and some overlapping effects.

Discussion

This study offers a more finely delineated picture of the intersection of marriage and religion than is available from prior research focusing on individual religiousness (e.g., Bock & Radelet, 1988; Glenn & Weaver, 1978) or couples' religious homogamy (e.g., Glenn, 1982; Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993). Although messages encouraging "marital spirituality" are frequently promoted by Western religious literature and institutions (e.g., Giblin, 1993; Hunt, 1987; Lauer, 1985), this study is the first to document directly the extent to which couples engage in a variety of dyadic behaviors or hold perceptions about their marriage that are substantively religious or spiritual in content. Specifically, wives and husbands in this study indicated that they commonly engage in a variety of informal and formal religious activities together (e.g., celebrating religious holidays, attending church together, praying for each other, talking about spiritual and moral issues, talking about how to live out God's will, talking about God's role in marriage, and praying together). The majority of husbands and wives also reported that "sacred qualities" describe the nature of their marriage. That is, spouses viewed adjectives often associated with transcendent phenomena or divine entities (e.g., spiritual, blessed, holy) as being applicable to their marriages. Most participants also held strong convictions that their marriage is a manifestation of their beliefs and experiences about God, and their

faith life, as illustrated by agreement with statements such as "God is present in my marriage"; "My marriage is influenced by God's actions in our lives"; or "My marriage is symbolic of God and what I believe about God."

This study found better marital functioning to be generally associated with more joint religious activities between couples as well as greater perceptions of marriage having spiritual character and significance (i.e., perceived sacred qualities and manifestation of God). A consistent pattern of bivariate associations emerged between the three proximal religious variables and greater global marital satisfaction, more perceived personal benefits, less marital conflict, and greater use of collaboration for wives and husbands. In addition, greater joint religious activities and perceptions of marriage having sacred qualities were associated with less reliance by both spouses on verbal aggression and stalemate strategies to handle marital conflict, based on one or both partners' reports. Moreover, the group of proximal religious measures consistently contributed moderate-to-remarkable amounts of variance of various aspects of marital functioning for both husbands and wives, after taking into account individual religiousness, religious homogamy, and demographic factors. The only marital variable not consistently linked to the proximal religious measures was the use of avoidance-capitulation, perhaps because this problem-solving method may function positively or negatively, depending on the specific couple and conflictual situation.

This research illustrates the benefits of shifting from *distal* concepts and measures of religion toward more specific, *proximal* indexes to study the interplay of marriage and religion. By using a more fine-grained conceptual framework, the results highlight more clearly what it is about religion that relates to marriage (Thomas & Cornwall, 1990) and yield a rich set of empirical associations. This type of information should facilitate marital therapists' awareness of religion as an important dimension of marriage for many couples. Because mental health professionals are less religiously oriented than members of the general population (Shafranske & Malony, 1990; Shafranske, 1996) and are rarely trained to address religious issues in

therapy (Shafranske, 1996), marital therapists may overlook clients' experiences of marriage and religion. In the process, clinicians may neglect religion as a potential resource or area of concern for many couples. For example, a decline in joint religious activities or perceived sacred qualities of marriage may constitute serious marital problems in and of themselves as well as signal difficulties in other areas of marriage.

We made efforts to avoid biasing the results of this study in a positive or negative direction by phrasing the proximal religious items in a neutral manner; items did not directly assess whether couples believed religion helped or harmed marital functioning. Thus, although the findings indicate that religion plays a positive role in marriage, additional research is needed to explain fully the results. Several processes merit further examination. Spouses who view their marriage as having sacred, transcendent qualities may be more willing to forgive and accept their partners, more likely to minimize or dismiss minor conflicts, more likely to engage in attributional processes and behaviors to resolve marital conflict effectively, and more likely to make greater use of religious coping methods (e.g., seek spiritual support; Pargament, 1997). Self-report instruments directly assessing such processes and behavioral observations of marital interactions are needed to test these inferences. It would also be helpful to determine if the "sacred" adjectives used in this study represent a distinct factor within a broad constellation of "nonsacred" adjectives that may also be associated with better marital functioning (e.g., important, fun). Evidence of this kind could help illuminate the potentially unique meaning that a sacred status of marriage holds for couples.

Research could also be pursued to examine why joint religious activities are related to marital functioning. Joint religious activities involve opportunities for couples to participate in meaningful or enjoyable rituals together, discuss and develop a set of shared values, and provide each other with support, particularly with regard to religious, spiritual, and moral issues. Such opportunities may facilitate intimacy and provide couples with more internal and external social support (e.g., friends, authority figures) to cope with marital conflict

effectively. In addition, greater involvement in religion may represent increased internal and external pressure on partners to resolve marital difficulties and accept each other's limitations. Again, detailed measures that explicitly inquire about the ways religious activities advance or impede marital functioning could be developed to explore these hypotheses. Research is also needed to clarify if greater joint involvement in nonreligious leisure, social, or communal activities (e.g., sports, hobbies) is associated with better marital functioning to the same degree as religious activities. Increased involvement in joint religious activities may simply reflect pleasurable activities, overlapping interests or values, and shared social networks between partners, rather than reflecting a unique contribution of religion to marriage.

The findings from this study also raise the intriguing question of why a stronger conviction that God is manifest in marriage is associated with greater marital satisfaction and perceived personal benefits from marriage but is not consistently related to problem-solving strategies. Specifically, although spouses' reports of God being active or reflected in marriage were related to wives' reports of greater collaboration by both spouses, manifestation of God in marriage was not generally associated with decreased use of maladaptive problem-solving strategies by husbands or wives. One possible explanation for the nonuniform pattern of results is that the particular content of partners' beliefs about God's role in marriage may moderate the association between this variable and marital interaction patterns. For example, individuals who believe God intends marriage to be a permanent bond, whatever the costs, may be more likely to engage in or tolerate negative communication patterns, while still reporting high levels of stability, investment, commitment, and satisfaction; in contrast, individuals who believe that God intends marriage to be harmonious and sanctions divorce under some circumstances (e.g., chronic verbal aggression) may be less likely to tolerate negative communication patterns.

Several cautions should be noted about this research. This cross-sectional study involved Caucasian couples from the community who had young children and who came primarily from a Judeo-Christian background (91%).

Although the couples in this study exhibited wide variability in marital functioning, individual religiousness, and the proximal religious variables, additional research is needed to generalize the findings to older couples, couples without children, clinic-referred couples, and couples from other ethnic or religious backgrounds. Different results could also emerge for homogenous samples of highly conservative or liberal church-going couples whose beliefs about marriage and religion are likely to be more extreme and uniform in nature than the couples in this study who were comparable in general religious attitudes to a random sample of couples in the United States. Another caution is that longitudinal studies are needed to untangle the effects of religion over time on marriage, particularly on marital stability and divorce. Finally, although the theory and discussion in this study have focused on the impact of religion on marriage, the correlational results are bidirectional in nature. Additional theory and research is needed to elucidate ways in which marriage may facilitate or impede religiousness and spirituality.

In sum, researchers who have studied religion and marriage have tended to view this topic from a distance, relying heavily on global and individually based assessment tools. This study illustrates the benefits of looking more closely at the intersection between marriage and the spiritual realm. Many couples incorporate religion into their marriage both behaviorally and cognitively. Moreover, greater involvement in joint religious activities and increased perceptions of marriage as having spiritual character and significance are related to better functioning across a variety of specific aspects of marriage. Overall, this study's findings help to clarify and underscore the importance of religion and spirituality for couples. Further development of theory and research clearly would be useful regarding the positive and negative functions religion serves in marriage.

Implications for Application and Public Policy

Religion represents an important dimension of marriage that deserves closer scrutiny by social scientists and clinicians. Most research on religion and marriage has relied on a few global

items (e.g., homogamy, church attendance) to link religion and spirituality to marital functioning. Practically, most interactions between religious groups and marital or family therapists have been one sided (Kloos, Horneffer, & Moore, 1995), limited to requests by mental health practitioners for referrals from clergy (Meylink & Gorsuch, 1986). Although collaboration has occurred between religious institutions that offer premarital counseling and marital researchers (e.g., Stanley, Markman, St. Peters, & Leber, 1995), those efforts have primarily focused on the benefits of disseminating nonreligiously oriented marital programs within religious institutions. Researchers have paid little attention to how couples' religious activities or beliefs about their relationship may facilitate or hinder marital functioning. This study highlights the fact that more in-depth research is needed to promote a thorough, balanced understanding in society of how couples use religion. In addition, marital and family therapists could benefit from greater awareness of the various roles religion may play in marriages (Weaver, Koenig, & Larson, 1997). Training programs could also place more emphasis on helping mental health professionals respect and draw on religious resources for marriages.

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Appendix A

Joint Religions Activities Questionnaire

Joint Religious Activities

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

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

Likert Scale used for Joint Religious Activity items:

Never		Sometimes		Very Often
1	2	3 4 5	6	7

(Appendix B follows)

Appendix B

Sanctification of Marriage Questionnaires

Perceived Sacred Qualities

Directions: Please rate whether your marriage is more closely described by the adjective on the left or the adjective on the right by placing a check mark on the appropriate line.

	Very Closely Describes	Closely Describes	Slightly Describes	Neutral	Slightly Describes	Closely Describes	Very Closely Describes	
1. Holy	___	:	___	:	___	:	___	Unholy
2. Inspiring	___	:	___	:	___	:	___	Uninspiring
3. Blessed	___	:	___	:	___	:	___	Cursed
4. Everlasting	___	:	___	:	___	:	___	Temporary
5. Awesome	___	:	___	:	___	:	___	Ordinary
6. Heavenly	___	:	___	:	___	:	___	Earthly
7. Spiritual	___	:	___	:	___	:	___	Worldly (Secular)
8. Religious	___	:	___	:	___	:	___	Nonreligious
9. Mysterious	___	:	___	:	___	:	___	Routine

Manifestation of God

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

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

Likert Scale used for all Manifestation of God items:

Strongly Agree Neutral Strongly Disagree
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Note. To simplify interpretation and discussion, items were reverse scored prior to conducting any data analyses so higher total values of these items would reflect greater agreement with the statements.

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