

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RIGHTNESS, RELIGIOSITY, AND MARITAL
SATISFACTION AMONG CHRISTIAN SPOUSES IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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ABSTRACT

Marital satisfaction is paramount to a loving and long-lasting married life. The absence of marital satisfaction can lead to poor health, relational stress, and, eventually, divorce. This predictive, correlational study sought to research the relationship between the adoption of a position of rightness, the practice of extrinsic religiosity, and how these factors influence the levels of marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States of America. The researcher used the Brief Version of the Religious Orientation Scale- Revised (ROS-R) to assess the level of intrinsic and extrinsic religious activity of the sample population. To measure the independent variable of their adherence to relational rightness, the researcher used the Revised Sense of Relational Entitlement the community (SRE-R). For the dependent variable of marital satisfaction, the researcher used the Locke-Wallace Marital Assessment Test (LWMAT). Three findings emerged from the study with practical implications for clergy, counselors, and couples: the theme of “false friends”, “religious amplification”, and “one size fits half”. The study concludes that an inflated sense of relational entitlement and extrinsic religiosity negatively impact the marital satisfaction of married Christian couples in the United States.

Keywords: rightness, relational entitlement, narcissism, marital satisfaction, Christians

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to several important people in my life:

To my wife, Tracy Paulino, who introduced me to the world of higher education, patiently and painstakingly waited for my English to mature, and has been my number one supporter, thank you. I will forever be indebted to you, and there is nobody I wish by my side as this life partner than you. Doing life with you is like listening to a song for the first time and knowing it would be my favorite. Every day is a day I feel you believe in me, and this is something I have felt since day one and keep feeling to this day. Thank you for showing me what loves looks like.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This study sought to identify the predictive relationship between rightness and religiosity on marital satisfaction. Specifically, the population studied included married Christian spouses living in the United States of America. This chapter begins with the backdrop to the study, continues with the problem and purpose statement, and presents the reasons and potential beneficiaries of this research. From this core of problem, purpose, and significance, the chapter presents the research question, its subsequent hypothesis, and a series of operational definitions necessary for comprehending the research.

Background

Being right or being happy is a common dilemma quipped in casual conversations and is now part of the general relational banter one can see online or across social media posts (Jampolsky, 2011). This tension, between being right or being happy, encapsulated the beginning backdrop of this research paper. The desire to be right, referred to as “rightness” in this dissertation, permeates and captivates children and adults alike. An example of this can be illustrated by fifth-grade little debaters in training (Malloy et al., 2020) as well as professional scientists exercising their scholarly publications (Ebersole et al., 2016). While the topic of rightness appears several times in academic literature, often under many names (Casale et al., 2018, 2019; Nepon et al., 2016), this study focused on the relationship between rightness and how this stance affects marital satisfaction among married Christian spouses in the United States. While exploring the literature review of how rightness intersected with marital satisfaction among Christian spouses, the body of research revealed another element to consider: the element of religiosity and its orientation.

Problem Statement

The relationship between relational rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States is empirically unknown. While this sense of rightness has been studied before, first in terms of the psychology of being right in general terms (Kruglanski, 1989) and later in terms of romantic relationships (Casale et al., 2018, 2019; Nepon et al., 2016; Seidman, 2016; Williams et al., 2018), one population where this phenomenon has not been studied is how rightness affects Christian spouses in the United States, and this was the gap this study sought to address. About three-quarters of Americans identify themselves as Christians (Newport, 2017), and with divorce around 50% (Shearin, 2016), it is imperative to look at elements that will potentially assist three-quarters of the population of the United States. Moreover, the variable of religious orientation will also be included in this research as a secondary independent variable since the population studied are Christian spouses.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this non-experimental, quantitative, correlational study via multiple regression analysis was to determine whether and to what degree there is a predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States of America. For this study, data were collected utilizing reliable and validated instruments (Warner, 2021), specifically the Brief Version of the Religious Orientation Scale-Revised (ROS-R; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989), the Revised Sense of Relational Entitlement (SRE-R; Tolmacz et al., 2021), and the Locke-Wallace Marital Assessment Test (LWMAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959). The survey recollection execution of this statistical portion was outsourced to the global online vendor and sample provider Lightspeed LLC ("Lightspeed Research", 2022). The independent variables involved in this study were allegiance to rightness

(measured by the Revised Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale) and religiosity (measured by the Revised Religious Orientation Scale). The dependent variables were the levels of marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States (measured by the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test).

Figure 1

Statistical Model



The target population for this quantitative study was adult married Christians living in the United States of America. The plan was to utilize the panel of participants from the world-renowned research firm, Lightspeed LLC ("ESOMAR 36", 2022), for sampling, recruitment, and data collection via an online survey.

Significance of the Study

The correlation study may benefit clergy, counselors, and couples alike. Clergy who seek to encourage marital satisfaction and longevity within their Christian membership would highly benefit from the awareness of the potential benefits of promoting intrinsic religiosity as an antidote to romantic relational dissatisfaction. Another aspect relating to clergy is how this study could be beneficial as they care for their church staff since they are vulnerable to the extrinsic aspects of religiosity. Counselors who seek to establish significant therapeutic alliances with clients (Williams et al., 2011), particularly those of Christian faith, would highly benefit from identifying relational moves towards rightness despite the initial assumption of religion as a

protective factor against marital dissolution and dissatisfaction (Atkins & Kessel, 2008; Joshua & Shannon, 2015; Shearin, 2016). Lastly, couples can benefit from this study since the findings directly impact the quality of their romantic relationships.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Based on the problem and the purpose statement, one research question and two related hypotheses guided this study. The research problem was that it is unknown whether and to what degree there is a relationship between Christian spouses in the United States of America adopting a position of rightness, religiosity, and their levels of marital satisfaction.

The following research question and hypothesis guide this study:

RQ1. Is there a statistical significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States?

H1o. There is no statistical significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States.

H1a. There is a statistical significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States.

Definitions

The following terms were used for operational purposes in this study:

Extrinsic Religiosity. This refers to the individuals utilizing religion as a means to other ends, as social conformity, or for personal benefit (Campbell & Miller, 2011).

Inflated Sense of Relational Entitlement. This refers to individuals expecting their partners to attend to their exaggerated subjectivities and are highly perceptive to any violations or shortcomings (Williams et al., 2018).

Insecure Attachments. This reflects beliefs that the self is unworthy of care and that others are unreliable caregivers. It has two forms, anxious and avoidant styles (Cramer, 2019).

Intrinsic Religiosity. A religion that is characterized as having an end in itself fulfilled at a personal level (Campbell & Miller, 2011).

Marital Satisfaction. The overall positive feelings of love, happiness, and belonging between a wife and a husband (Dobrowolska et al., 2020).

Narcissism. Narcissism is love turned inward (Bergner, 2016).

Relational Entitlement. This refers to what individuals believe they “should” expect from their romantic partner and are highly perceptive to any violations or shortcomings of their expectations (Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011).

Religiosity. A quality that describes the level of religious activity, belief, and dedication (Shearin, 2016). These religious motions can be classified under intrinsic religiosity and extrinsic religiosity (Campbell & Miller, 2011).

Righteous. People who exercise rightness (Lexico, 2022).

Rightness. The relational motion of wanting to feel validated, deferred to, respected, and admired (Lexico, 2022).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are factors that are out of the researcher’s control, but which would fundamentally alter the findings or their significance if they were not what the researcher assumed (Shearin, 2016). The researcher made the following assumptions for this study:

1. The Lightspeed LLC pool of panelists, which served as the pool from which the sample was extracted from, served as a valid representation of the population for studying married Christians in the United States.
2. The surveyed participants were honest in their answers regarding their affinity toward rightness and religious activity. Utilizing online surveys to collect data was a way to promote privacy and, therefore, enhancing honesty and anonymity (Joinson et al., 2010).

Limitations

Limitations are external circumstances that could arise in a study that are out of the researcher's control (Shearin, 2016). This research paper had the following limitations:

1. This study was limited to the United States of America
2. This study accounted for self-described "Christians" and made no further refinement among denomination groups.

Delimitations

Delimitations are deliberate restrictions set by the researcher to make the study possible (Shearin, 2016). The dissertation had the following delimitation:

1. The researcher restricted the study population to Christian spouses living in the United States. Unmarried couples, people of other faith groups, or other geographical areas were excluded from this study.

Summary

Couples marry each other, and traditional wedding vows pledge commitment, permanence, and relational satisfaction. Current literature, however, notes that there are high divorce rates (Brookfield, 2013; Gottman, 2002), and with divorce rates among Christians on par

with the rest of society (Betts, 2016), the significance of this study was relevant to fostering long and loving families in the church and can be utilized by clergy, counselors, and couples alike.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The literature review chapter offers an account of the existing body of literature regarding the relationship between rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction. This review researches the current literature, provides a concise background regarding its development, and points out the gap and need in the scientific literature for studying rightness and religiosity among Christian spouses in the United States. It is important to highlight the fact that the review of literature is not aimed at providing an exhaustive and comprehensive report on rightness or religiosity, but specifically on how this position affects spouses practicing Christianity as their faith. According to Gallup, about three-quarters of Americans identify themselves as Christians (Newport, 2017), and while there is a difference between nominal and active Christianity, it is nonetheless important to present empirical data regarding such a massive population block that could be informative to clergy, counselors, and couples alike.

As explained above, no peer-reviewed academic study has focused on the relationship between rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction in the Christian community. Therefore, this study sought to provide an account of the existing literature linking rightness, religiosity, and its various orientations with couples' satisfaction. In particular, the literature review further contextualizes the following research question:

RQ1. Is there a statistical significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States?

This second chapter is organized into three sections: the first section presents a theoretical framework on the concept of rightness, how rightness interacts with the Christian religion according to the biblical narrative, and how this relational movement affects marital

relationships. This first section, theoretical framework, leads into the second stage titled “review of the literature” by exploring the term rightness and progresses through the application of the term in the context of relationships, relational repairs, and relational conflict. The third stage covers topics related to rightness in general, and it is titled “related literature”. The related literature takes a closer look at the agglomerate of terminologies associated with rightness, namely narcissism, perfectionism, perfectionistic self-presentation, and relational entitlement. The related literature ends with the emerging element of religiosity as a relevant and related factor between rightness and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses. The third section is the summary of the chapter.

The researcher used various scholarly publications to compile and complete this literature review. The researcher accessed most of the information examined and discussed in this review using Liberty University’s online library to access information from the following databases: the *American Journal of Family Therapy*, *Annual Review of Psychology*, *Behavior Therapy*, *Behavioral Sciences*, *Clinical Psychological Review*, *Encyclopedia of Family Studies*, *Family Journal*, *Family Relations*, *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy*, *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, *Journal of Family Issues*, *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *Journal of Psychological and Educational Research*, *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, *Marriage and Family Review*, among others.

While finding relevant scholarly articles, the following keywords helped to search material for this research: “Rightness”, “Righteousness”, “Rightness and Relationships”, “Christians and Rightness”, “Christian couples”, “Rightness and Relational Repairs”, “Rightness and Relational Conflicts”, “Feeling Right”, “Relational Rightness”, “Relational Entitlement”, “Narcissism”, “Narcissism and Relationships”, “Narcissism and Religion”, “Marital

Satisfaction”, “Christian narcissistic marriages”, “Christian Marriages”, “Rightness and Religion”, “Theology of rightness”, “Rightness and Pharisees”, “Grace and rightness”, “Jesus and rightness”, “Christians and scrupulosity”, “Religion and Narcissism”, among others. Besides these keywords, a combination of these phrases or synonyms was used to expand the literature search.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher presented the theoretical framework in different stages, and all stages were centered around the topic of rightness and religiosity. Before launching into the stages, an overarching Christian religious backdrop was provided to address how rightness fits within a biblical narrative. From the religious background, the first stage explores the delimitation of the term rightness and how it applied to this research paper. The second stage focuses on how rightness interacts with relationships, the relational risks it poses to romantic relationships, and the role of rightness and relational repairs.

Religion and Rightness

In biblical terms, the word that is most associated with rightness is righteousness. The problem with this term is that it has different connotations depending on the usage and context. Righteousness is primarily used to show our relationship with God, as seen in Isaiah 64:6 “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away” (New International Version, 1978/2011) and in James 2:10 “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it” (New International Version, 1978/2011).

Further examining the concept of righteousness in relationship to God takes us to the apostle Paul (Oliver, 2018). Per Oliver (2018), while Jesus focused more on the kingdom of God,

Paul is the one who addressed the concept of righteousness ('justification') through his letters and specifically in his letter to the Romans, as evidenced primarily in Romans 1:16-17 and Romans 10:8-10:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith” (New International Version, 1978/2011).

But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, “that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved (New International Version, 1978/2011).

These verses signal that our justification, our righteousness, is a byproduct of our faith and not the outcome of our own goodness or self-sufficiency. This opportunity to exercise our faith is indeed ‘good news’ and an act of grace (Bassett, 2013). The author paints grace as generous, free, and flowing divine provision and antitheses it with legalism. In this construct, legalism is rigid, static, and burdensome. Grace, on the other hand, flows from God into the personhood of Jesus and through Jesus’ followers into the world at large. Bassett (2013) captures this flowing movement from righteousness to grace by saying:

The grace of God means first and foremost the forgiveness of sins and a new standing with God (justification). They enter into a relationship with God which is determined solely by his grace, and in which they can be described as in a state of grace. This same

grace then becomes a power in their lives; producing a new outlook, attitude, spirit, and temper like God's own. (p.43)

In a Christian religious context, rightness is more appropriately represented by self-righteousness and emphasis on self. This kind of righteousness conveys equal or superior status in a relationship with the divine while conveying superior status in a relationship with others (Klein & Epley, 2017). In the context of interpersonal relationships, self-righteousness captures the sense of moral superiority concerning other human beings. In this study, the usage of rightness was limited to human relationships and specifically in the context of spouses, and therefore, the spirit of self-righteousness is the one that communicates the superior moral stance righteous spouses practice.

Defining Rightness

The desire to be right, in the context of dyadic conflict resolution, posits a cognitive challenge due to the many ways one could refer to this action. The challenge is compounded by the lack of word specificity to fully capture this desire. The action that the word "rightness" seeks to capture is the motion, the insistence on being right from one spouse towards the other. In general terms, the concept of rightness is one that people usually have a distorted view of. According to Schulz (2010), most people go through life believing they are right about their ability to distinguish fact from fiction, ranging from memory recollections to making futuristic predictions.

While it is true that humanity has produced extraordinary advances in groundbreaking areas of life, Schulz (2010) argues these advancements are a part of a larger context in which inaccuracies, shortcomings, and errors compose a more complete and fuller picture. Despite this historical and cognitive reality, many people are surprised and, perhaps, offended or ashamed

upon the realization of misjudging a situation where they felt so certain of being accurate. Paradoxically, this pursuit of the feeling of rightness often serves as an obstacle to the overarching goal of finding relational satisfaction (Appelt et al., 2010).

This insistence on wanting to be right appears in the literature as righteousness, narcissism, perfectionism, perfectionistic self-representation, and a sense of relational entitlement (Casale et al., 2018, 2019; Nepon et al., 2016; Seidman, 2016; Williams et al., 2018). Therefore, while “rightness” appeared in some literary sources, most referred to this same motion via the utilization of other words that convey the same desire to feel validated, deferred to, respected, and admired (Vrabel et al., 2019). Therefore, when referring to rightness, and for operational purposes, this study utilized this word to communicate the pull, the movement one spouse chooses to feel validated, acknowledged, deferred to, and agreed with in the context of a romantic relationship. A key signature observed was the framing of rightness in terms of relational movement. While Vrabel et al. (2019) define rightness as wanting to feel admired by others, this study focused on the relational movement away from intimacy and toward a position of perceived truth. This movement, this pull, this action, this relational choice is what this study classified as rightness.

Another term that, depending on the author and context and as covered above under the subtitle ‘religiosity and rightness’, could convey this same sentiment of rightness is self-righteousness. The problem with this term is that it has different connotations depending on the usage and context. As presented in a relational context (Klein & Epley, 2017), self-righteousness captures the sense of moral superiority in relationship to others. In this sense, the words could be interchangeable (Klein & Epley, 2016). Used in a purely religious sense, self-righteousness, however, is more prominently used in relationship to God (Isaiah 64:6; James 2:10), and in this

sense, it departs from the operative definition of our word rightness. Therefore, the usage of rightness, for the purposes of this study, was limited to human relationships, specifically in the context of spouses, in which one embraces a position of moral superiority over the other.

Review of Literature

Rightness and Relationships

The sense of rightness, in the context of dyadic relationships, has been studied before, first in terms of the psychology of being right in general terms (Kruglanski, 1989), and later, in terms of committed romantic relationships (Casale et al., 2018, 2019; Nepon et al., 2016; Seidman, 2016; Williams et al., 2018). For example, Kruglanski (1989) acknowledged the wave of researchers who, over the decade before his publication, pointed out the judgmental biases possessed by human cognition, making the concept of absolute rightness unlikely. However, in this same publication, the author posits adopting an accuracy system based on degrees instead of the more deterministic fully right versus fully wrong. Kruglanski introduces resources and context as instruments towards higher degrees of accuracy, which, in turn, is a departure from the absolute binary sentiment of accurate versus inaccurate, completely right versus completely wrong.

The problem with pursuing a position of rightness, in its absolute binary form, is that it places individuals at a cognitive disadvantage (Appelt et al., 2010; Malloy et al., 2020; Podziba, 2014). Appelt et al. note that the pursuit of being right actually hinders accuracy since those who think they are right tend to deemphasize the importance of applying critical evaluations in their workloads. Therefore, the sensation of being right alone is correlated with critical stagnation, thus, rendering its practitioners the risk of not grasping reality (Appelt et al., 2010). Malloy et al. (2020) corroborated with Appelt et al. (2010) while observing the effectiveness of debating

strategies among a younger population segment: fifth graders. While being right was certainly a motivator for the young debaters to craft their research and presentation, moving away from these being right and wrong debates led to a higher development of critical participatory literacy.

Podziba (2014) offers insight into why adopting a spectrum of accuracy instead of a binary model presents itself as more advantageous: the introduction of the element of curiosity. According to this author, the sensation of knowing produces certainty, and, in contrast, the adoption of a position of not fully knowing encourages curiosity, and it is at this point the literature favors learning towards understanding with curiosity ahead of the relational stagnation that comes with pursuing rightness. In other words, relationally speaking, curiosity beats certainty every time.

This humble, forward attitude towards learning, pursuing, and growing is one that Gottman and Gottman (2017) associate with positive bids and their absence with negative bids. According to these authors, the presence of rightness is associated with what is called negative sentiment override. A negative sentiment override is characterized as a general sense of negativity, walking on eggshells, and hopelessness in the relationship (Gottman et al., 2015). Negative sentiment override is directly associated with an embracement of rightness since rightness suctions the liveliness of relationships and promotes what the Gottman and Gottman call the four horsemen of the relational apocalypse: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling.

Couples who suffer from negative sentiment override have an easy entry to arguments but find it extremely difficult to exit the crisis mode. Rightness not only promotes these four horsemen of the relational apocalypse, but tends to diminish humor, laughter, playfulness, and curiosity in the relationship (Gottman & Gottman, 2017). This second aspect of negative

sentiment override eventually creates what is known as a devitalized or disaffected couple (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2015). According to Abbasi and Alghamdi (2015), these disaffected couples experience habituation to conflict, lack of positive bids, an overall sense of emotional distancing, and feelings of indifference, which pave the way toward a loveless relationship. Rightness seems to be a sure way to sap liveliness out of relationships, thus, rendering the couple at risk of relational dissolution or unhappiness.

Moreover, Johnson (2004), from emotionally focused couples therapy (EFCT), points out how this lack of vulnerability, softer stance, is diametrically oppositional to building authentic and intense emotional connections among couples. Both emotion-centered approaches, EFCT, and Gottman's couple therapy communicate the same message regarding this motion towards rightness; it either evolves towards a rigid and dry relational environment in which love and joy are notorious for their absence (Gottman & Gottman, 2017) or it prevents partners from connecting at a significant and intimate level (Gurman et al., 2015; Johnson, 2004).

Rightness and Relational Conflict

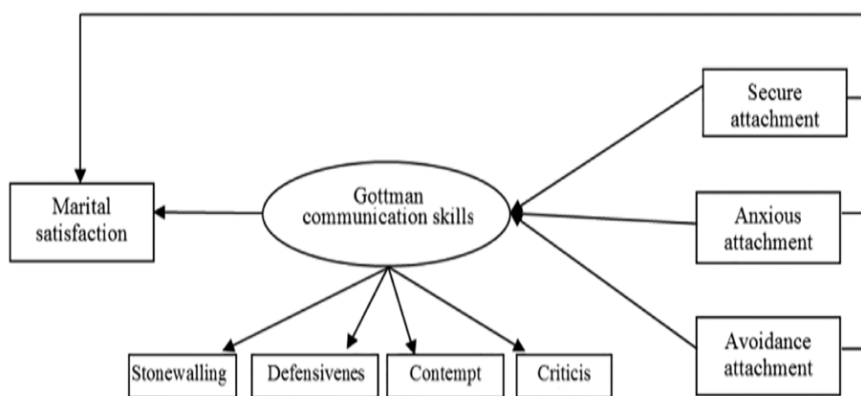
A possible moderator between rightness and marital satisfaction is paying attention to conflict management (Delatorre & Wagner, 2019). Research shows that conflicts are a part of interpersonal relations (Exline et al., 2004) and how couples address their differences would clarify the intent of the spouses: rightness versus connection. Conflict offers opportunities for spouses to connect (Overall & McNulty, 2017), but if the rigidity of rightness is chosen, then conflict could have negative physical, mental, and relational consequences (Delatorre & Wagner, 2019; Fincham & Beach, 1999).

According to the literature research, three structures explain conflictual interactions; these are destructive structure, withdrawal structure, and constructive structure (Williams et al.,

2018). According to Williams et al. (2018), the first two structures are marred by insults, criticalness, belligerence, contempt, and stonewalling. Johnson (2004) expands on these two conflicted interactions and labeled them attack-attack (find the bad guy), attack-withdraw (the protest polka), and withdraw-withdraw (freeze and flee). Within the same vein, these elements resonate with Gottman's four horsemen of the relational apocalypse presented before: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling (Figure 2; Gottman & Gottman, 2017). Mardani et al. (2021) published a graphic model to visually communicate the concept of these nefarious four elements:

Figure 2

Nefarious Four Elements



When spouses move toward rightness, they take an antagonistic position and one that Wurst et al. (2017) identify as one of “rivalry”. According to Wurst et al. (2017), the move toward rivalry is rooted in defensiveness and is designed to protect oneself while derogating others. Defensiveness, the third horseman of the relational apocalypse, is any attempt to ward off and to defend oneself from a perceived attack (Lute, 2015), and it takes the form of a counterattack characterized by what Sauerheber and Ponton (2018) refer to as righteous

indignation. Defensiveness is cataloged as pervasive communication that packs the potential to wreak havoc on both individuals and relationships (Becker et al., 2008). While this motion towards defensiveness might start with one individual, Becker et al. (2008) posit that defensiveness from one person often provokes the other person to also be defensive, quickly turning this dynamic into a negative vicious cycle.

The leaning on rightness amid a romantic conflict discussion carries the risk of anchoring the interaction on defensiveness instead of emotional integration. This anchorage in defensiveness has been studied since the 1990s (Stamp et al., 1992), and in the 2000s, a qualitative research paper presented a theoretical model of defensive communication (Becker et al., 2008). This new theoretical model presented a perpetuating middle cycle of threat-other perceived flaw-sensitivity, and this sensitivity is perceived as a threat by the spouse, and the cycle repeats and escalates all over again. Special attention ought to be given to this “sensitivity” since it packs the power to generate a cascade of reactions.

These sensitivities are short and sharp by nature, and they could look a lot like what the same author characterizes as a generator of: a) lack of warmth, b) lack of communicative sharing, and c) inattentiveness. According to Becker et al. (2008), all three of these characteristics share one commonality: the triggering of defensiveness. Pairing this knowledge of the defensiveness cycle with the inflated sense of self and desire to feel validated that comes with rightness, it is logical to foresee the relational disadvantage and liability this creates.

The literature shows that conflict escalation has been associated with accusation, rationalization, and victimization (Whiting & Cravens, 2015). These authors studied how couples interact during conflict, and a pattern of distortion presented itself in their quantitative grounded theory journal. A sample of 56 couples ($n = 112$ individuals), 18 years and above, engaged in a

committed relationship for at least 3 months and revealed two patterns, one that leads towards conflict escalation and another that leads towards relational integration. The one correlated with conflict escalation was characterized by accusation, rationalization, and victimization. These three elements are also associated with the original concept of rightness, and one could see how adopting a relational position of rightness could lead to disconnection and conflict escalation. On the other hand, the pattern that leads toward integration is characterized by clarification, responsibility, declaration of intentions, and appreciation. Hence, rightness is not usually associated with these elements of relational integration.

Rightness and Relational Repairs

Gottman et al. (2015) paint a challenging relational picture for spouses who pursue rightness in their marital interactions. Assuming the spouse acknowledges his/her limited and gradual perception of reality and assuming they make the personal choice to practice forgiveness as an effective conflict resolution posture, Gottman et al. present the concept of effective repairs versus damaged repairs. The effective relational repairs presented in the published research paper (Gottman et al., 2015) are humor, affection, self-disclosure, understanding, empathy, taking responsibility, and okay codes.

In contrast to effective relational repairs, Gottman et al. (2015) present the concept of “damaged repairs”. These damaged relational repairs are defensive in nature, contain “yes-but” endings, and appeal to cognitive problem-solving, logic, or rationality. In essence, when the spouse chooses to lead relational dynamics with the rigid rationality of absolutist black or white, right or wrong, this spouse risks committing damaged relational repairs, which, in turn, translate into marital dissatisfaction. Rightness, with its inflated sense of self, coupled with the desire to feel validated, deferred to, respected, and admired (Vrabel et al., 2019), has the added

disadvantage of precluding effective relational repairs from even beginning in the first place (Exline et al., 2004; Gottman et al., 2015; Kruger & Dunning, 1999). This is particularly alarming since relational repairs cannot occur without awareness of the need for the relationship to be repaired (Gottman et al., 2015). It is unfavorable news when the relationship is struggling; however, it is worse when the partners are blinded to the criticalness of the situation.

The *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* presented the curious case of the “unskilled and unaware” in which the less people know, the more they feel like they know (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). Thus, the lower they are in the accuracy spectrum, the more they feel that they are right. However, assuming the threshold of humility is broken and the righteous seek to make relational repairs, these repair attempts would prove challenging.

An element that counters effective repairs is when the individual escalates their motion toward rightness and mounts defensive positions (Gottman et al., 2015). Relational moves rooted in defensiveness are associated with damaged repair attempts and result in relational dissatisfaction between spouses (Becker et al., 2008). Gottman et al. (2016) echo this point by presenting a foundational tool in an acronym form to connect with a partner: A-T-T-U-N-E. This acronym stands for awareness, turning towards, understanding, non-defensive talk, and empathy. In this element of defensiveness, when one of the spouses leans towards rightness, that is a move contrary to marital happiness. So, anti-marital adjustment is an element of defensiveness amid romantic conflict management that the Gottman Institute has labeled it the “four horsemen of the relational apocalypse” along with criticism, contempt, and stonewalling (Figure 2; Lisitsa, 2022), and these are seen as precursors of relational collapse (Becker et al., 2008).

According to Exline et al. (2004), effective relational repairs are linked with the ability to “let go” of justifiable feelings of resentment in favor of reestablishing relational harmony. This

relational repair is referred to as forgiveness (Exline et al., 2004), and this same study negatively correlates rightness as a predictor of relational forgiveness. The nature of this position of rightness is one of wanting to assert their self-assessed justifiable rights and seek retribution for perceived offenses (Exline et al., 2004). Therefore, the literature supports embracing a relational position of rightness as negatively correlated with effective relational repair.

Related Literature

To find how the variable of rightness affects marital satisfaction, this section presents relevant scholarly research on terminology that either communicates elements of rightness or interacts with this concept regarding marital relationships. While researching the concept of rightness, other terms were presented in the literature that communicated relatedness to rightness, and these themes were, in order of presentation: narcissism, perfectionism, perfectionistic self-presentation, attachment, and relational entitlement. While seemingly independent, the reality is that these themes are interconnected and can be divided into two camps, individual level and relational level. At an individual level, there is narcissism, perfectionism, and perfectionistic self-presentation. At a relational level, there is the attachment theory and relational entitlement. Towards the end of this related literature, the researcher presented the inclusion of rightness as the other independent variable influencing marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States.

Rightness and Narcissism

The body of research overwhelmingly associates rightness with dyadic dissatisfaction (Brunell & Campbell, 2012; Campbell & Miller, 2011; Exline et al., 2004; Gottman et al., 2015; Haring et al., 2003; Hewitt et al., 2003; Lavner et al., 2016; Seidman, 2016; Wurst et al., 2017). Similar to studying the concept of accuracy, rightness in the context of romantic relationships

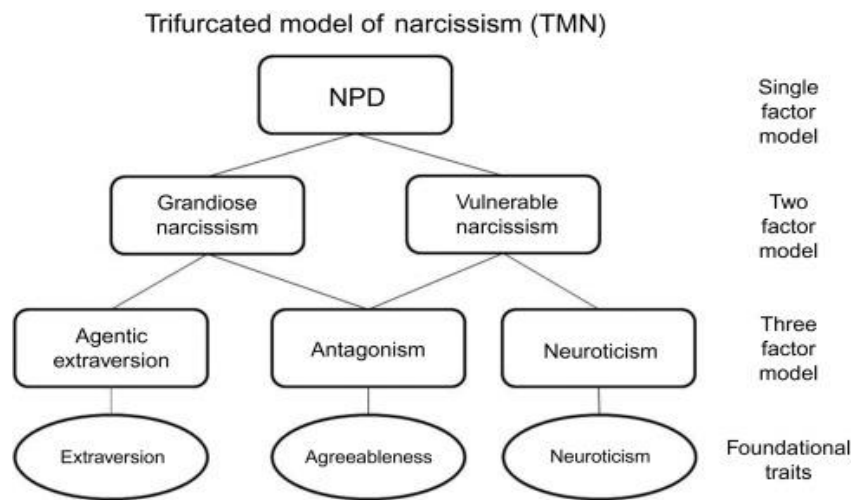
has a negative connotation when it leads to absolutism, stagnation, and rigidity (Brunell & Campbell, 2012; Campbell & Miller, 2011). According to the literature, the motion of rightness is anchored in defensiveness, and this aspect of defensiveness paves the way toward a deeper look into personal insecurities that manifest themselves in relationships. Among these personal insecurities, narcissism is the central one (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Campbell & Miller, 2011; Hermann et al., 2018).

Narcissism is both a popular and controversial topic among researchers (Miller et al., 2017). According to Miller et al. (2017), since 2010, over 2,500 peer-reviewed articles have been published in which the word narcissism is included in the abstract, whereas prior to 2010, the number of articles under the same criteria did not reach 500. Despite its recent popularity, the authors highlight the lack of consensus among researchers, specifically in the centric area of a categorical definition of narcissism. The literature supports the categorical personality disorder classified as a narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) in the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013), as well as the observation of theorists (Campbell & Miller, 2011; Hermann et al., 2018) of the presence of two types of narcissism, the vulnerable narcissism, and grandiose narcissism. The DSM-5 requires clients to meet criteria of at least 5 of the following list:

1. Has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g. – exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements)
2. Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love
3. Believes that he or she is “special” and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people (or institutions)
4. Requires excessive admiration

5. Has a sense of entitlement (i.e. – unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations)
6. Is interpersonally exploitative (i.e. – takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends)
7. Lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others
8. Is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her
9. Shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes

Ackerman et al. (2017) published a list of descriptive constructs to a group of 47 academicians in the field of mental health and asked them to identify common and centric characteristics they have encountered when working with narcissists. The common elements found across all academicians inquired were grandiose presentation, entitlement, self-serving distortions, self-absorptions or egocentricity, grandiose fantasies, and dependency on external sources of admiration. According to these authors, this translates into one central relational feature that pierces through all the constructs of narcissists and is the element of interpersonal antagonism (Miller et al., 2017). With that in mind, Weiss et al. (2019), in a 3-tier cascade, published a graphic model (Figure 3) to visually communicate these commonalities found by all 47 academicians:

Figure 3*Trifurcated Model of Narcissism*

This relational antagonism is the aspect that relates to rightness and the one who poses a risk to relationships, in our case, romantic relationships. This is different from self-esteem, which is merely a personal appraisal of our own affective evaluation and can range from positive to negative (Miller et al., 2017). To take inventory of one's self-worth and to validate strengths and weaknesses is one thing, but it is when this self-appraisal is exaggerated, favoring one's virtues and the sense of "unrealistic self-inflation" takes over, that the point passes from positive self-esteem into narcissistic territory (Campbell & Miller, 2011, p.5).

Brunell and Campbell (2012) present the paradoxical relationship of righteous people in romantic relationships: on one hand, they seem to dazzle their partners in the initial phases of the relationship, but with time, their partners experience relational dissatisfaction. This phenomenon of high romantic attractability is called "the chocolate cake experience" (Campbell, 2005), and it refers to the positive onset of relationships with people with a strong allegiance to rightness, but eventually deteriorates and leads to dyadic dissatisfaction.

The literature consistently shows poor relational satisfaction with this trait of rightness found in narcissism (Lavner et al., 2016). A quantitative study of 146 newlywed couples, evaluated six times over their first four years of marriage, did not find a significant association between narcissism and a satisfying beginning of romantic relationships (chocolate cake position), but it did align with Campbell (2005) and Campbell and Miller's (2011) assertion of eventual marital deterioration (Lavner et al., 2016). This association between maladaptive personality traits and long-term relational dissatisfaction aligns with the work of Karney and Bradbury (1995). This suggests people with a strong association towards rightness could start romantic relationships in a positive or not-so-positive way, but the research shows how these relationships develop poorly over time.

Just because a romantic relationship starts positively, this alone does not mean it will be a satisfying relationship in the long run. For example, another recent study attributed this to the dimension of admiration regularly associated with narcissists (Wurst et al., 2017). However, as the relationship continues, this study aligns with the rest of the literature review in associating narcissism with low levels of dyadic satisfaction. According to Wurst et al. (2017), this low level of dyadic satisfaction is accredited to the dimension of rivalry narcissists introduce to romantic relationships. This dimension of rivalry is characterized by arrogance and lacks relational warmth, trust, and forgiveness (Wurst et al., 2017). Interestingly, these characteristics are the same as those who, as seen before, opt to anchor the relationship in defensiveness instead of relational integration (Becker et al., 2008; Stamp et al., 1992).

These characteristics of arrogance, lacking relational warmth, trust, and forgiveness paired with the core elements academicians found in narcissists, grandiose presentation, entitlement, self-serving distortions, self-absorptions or egocentricity, grandiose fantasies, and

dependency on external sources of admiration (Campbell & Miller, 2011; Wurst et al., 2017), are the elements those who seek to pursue rightness are believed to apply in their romantic interpersonal relationships. In doing so, romantic partners make a relational move towards an exaggerated view of self at the expense of their partner and, therefore, at the expense of relational satisfaction.

Rightness as Perfectionism

This relational dissatisfaction is evident in the research paper published by the *Journal of Marriage and Family* (Haring et al., 2003), in which the position of rightness is represented by the term “perfectionism,” and it is associated with maladaptive dyadic coping and poor marital adjustment for the righteous individual and the partner. Kim (2011), quoting the work of Flett and Hewitt (2002), Haring et al. (2003), and Hewitt and Flett (1991), defines perfectionism as one’s pursuit of striving for flawlessness. The authors are keen to differentiate between different kinds of perfectionism, self-perfectionism, other perfectionism, and social perfectionism.

To explain the three types of perfectionism found in individuals, Kim (2011) defined the self-oriented perfectionist as one who puts major pressure on themselves to achieve perfection, and when they fail at this unrealistic expectation, they blame themselves. The other-oriented perfectionistic is the one who expects perfectionism from others and blames others through criticism. The socially prescribed perfectionistic believes others are expecting perfection out of them, and in retaliation, they keep pointing out the flaws of others as a defensive mechanism. While all three forms of perfectionism could have a negative impact on relationships, from an empirical research standpoint, only the socially prescribed perfectionism is the one that is significantly correlated with poor relational satisfaction (Haring et al., 2003). Per the researchers,

socially prescribed perfectionism is rooted in the belief that others hold unrealistic high (perfect) expectations of the self, which translates into self-defense and attack.

Egan et al. (2015) studied the relational dynamics of 222 university students and specifically how perfectionism impacts relational adjustment. Consistent with the body of literature, this study also found a correlation between perfectionism and poor marital adjustment. The study found the element of criticism as the singular most detrimental aspect of perfectionism and the one that tilts couples toward dissatisfaction (Egan et al., 2015). This ingredient of criticism, as presented above, is one intrinsically connected with our concept of rightness, and Gottman (2002), Gottman et al. (2015), Gottman and Gottman (2017), and Gottman et al. (2016) identify it as the first of the four horsemen of the relational apocalypse (Figure 2).

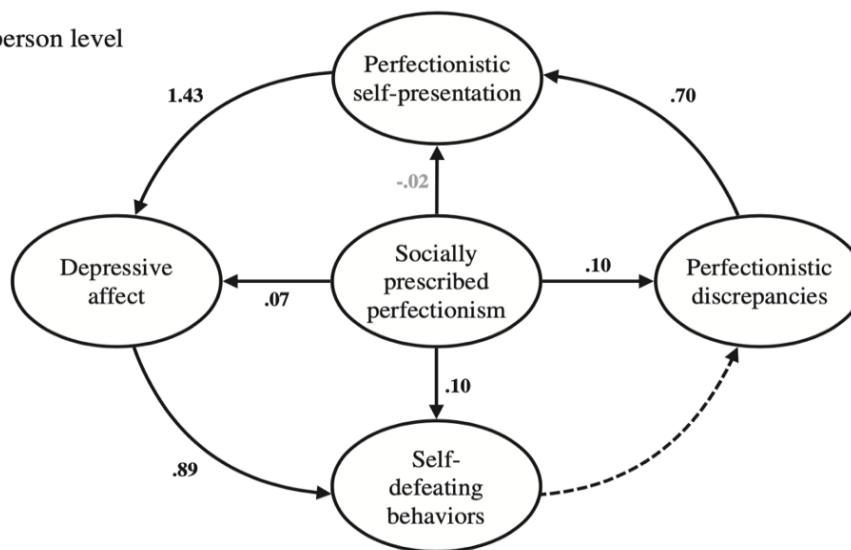
Rightness as Perfectionistic Self-Presentation

A step above perfectionism is perfectionistic self-presentation. This term appeared in Haring et al.'s (2003) study, and it builds from the concepts of perfectionism first presented by Hewitt and Flett (1991) and continued by Haring et al. (2003). According to Haring et al. (2003), perfectionistic self-presentation addresses the level at which perfectionists present themselves to others, while perfectionism alone addresses the relational dimension, meaning self-oriented, other-oriented, or socially prescribed. When perfectionists express their perfectionism, this takes another connotation, and it is this next level the authors coined as perfectionistic self-presentation. Haring et al. (2003) introduced the Perfectionistic Self-Presentation Scale (PSPS) as a reliable instrument to account for this behavior.

Mushquash and Sherry (2012) published a graphic model (Figure 4) to visually communicate the outcomes and the interconnectedness of the socially prescribed perfectionist in the context of perfectionistic self-presentation:

Figure 4*Perfectionistic Self-Presentation*

Between-person level



In this model (Mushquash & Sherry, 2012), the socially prescribed perfectionism, manifesting itself into perfectionistic self-presentation, leads to a depressive affect, self-defeating behaviors, and perfectionistic discrepancies. The outcome of perfectionistic discrepancies harbors resentment and defensiveness. The cited study also mentions binge eating, procrastination, and interpersonal conflicts as the outcomes of this cycle rooted in socially prescribed perfectionism.

While initially the literature linked grandiose narcissists and perfectionistic self-presentation (Haring et al., 2003), later research linked both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism with perfectionistic self-presentation (Casale et al., 2016, 2019). According to the authors, both the vulnerable and grandiose narcissists exhibit traits of selfishness and an inflated view of self. In contrast, while the grandiose deploy dominance, the vulnerable narcissist displays a fragile self that makes them expect constant feedback from their partners. Either way, they project perfectionistic self-presentation, which negatively impacts relational satisfaction (Casale et al., 2019). In that same study, Casale et al. (2019) utilized a dyadic model to arrive at such

conclusions, and after examining 344 heterosexual couples, the hypothesis of either form of narcissism, grandiose or vulnerable, having a negative impact on relationship satisfaction was supported.

A small but important caveat must be made; perfectionistic self-presentation does not correlate negatively with personal self-esteem, and in fact, perfectionistic self-presentation has different personal self-esteem appraisals depending on cultural backgrounds, as evidenced by Wang et al. (2019) when studying this topic in eastern culture versus western ones. The consensus of the negative impact of perfectionistic self-presentation is validated by the peer-reviewed body of research regarding romantic relationships, not personal self-appraisals.

Rightness and Attachment

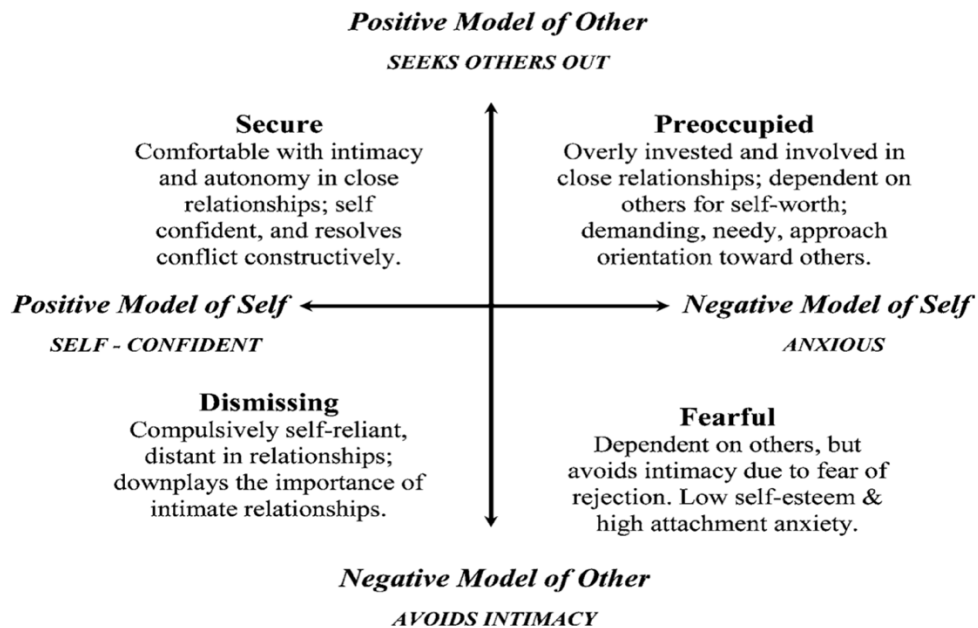
Anytime there is a social relational dynamic in which closeness, intimacy, and secure emotional connections are being threatened, it is pertinent to address the possibility of an association with attachment theory (Cramer, 2019). While narcissism, perfectionism, and perfectionistic self-presentation are qualities embodied at a personal level, the purpose of this study is to account for the marital satisfaction of spouses, and thus, literature now focuses on the relational (not just individual) aspects of rightness. Attachment theory is a relational construct, and it proposes that early relationships in life shape the formation of expectations in adult relationships (Besser & Priel, 2009).

According to the authors, and quoting the founder of attachment theory, John Bowlby, these relationships were meant to be based on security and the worth of self and others. These factors of self and others, combined with bonding experiences of security, anxiety, and dismissive, are the elements of the four attachment styles: secure attachment, anxious preoccupied attachment, dismissive attachment, and fearful attachment (Cramer, 2019). The

following visual model (Figure 5) is Bartholomew's two model of attachment (Henderson et al., 2005).

Figure 5

Model of Attachment



In the secure relational attachment, the individual is perceived as worthy and lovable, while the partner is perceived as trustworthy and dependable (Cramer, 2019). In other words, Cramer (2019) explains Figure 5 utilizing a “positive/negative” typology, in which secure relational attachment is represented by a positive-positive, positive view of self and a positive view of others. On the other side of the attachment spectrum, the fearful attachment embraces negative views of self and others, which would be represented by negative-negative. The anxious preoccupied relational attachment perceives a positive model of the other while subscribing to a negative appraisal of self. The dismissive relational attachment is based on a positive view of self while maintaining a negative appraisal of others. Cramer (2019) then theorizes narcissistic

behavior, based on the Bartholomew and Horowitz model, should correlate with the fearful attachment model or anxious preoccupied since both models have a low appraisal of self.

In terms of actual empirical research, a study published by Tolmacz and Mikulincer (2011) presented that relational entitlement was positively associated with the anxious preoccupied attachment style. Specifically, the inflated sense of relational entitlement manifested the anxious preoccupied attachment by exaggerated attention to the other's negative aspects and expectation of attention from the partner. Similarly, Besser and Priel (2009) conducted a study with a sample of 125 people (63 men and 62 women) and sought to find the link between attachment styles and romantic rejection perception. Consistent with the theory, their result showed a strong association between those with anxious preoccupied attachment proclivity and their perception of romantic relationships. The next section examines the concept of insecure attachment styles since the literature blended with the concepts of relational attachment and the next relational step: relational entitlement.

Rightness as Relational Entitlement

Right at the epicenter of rightness, in the context of relationships, sits the concept of relational entitlement. While narcissism, perfectionism, and perfectionistic self-presentation begin with the individual and then manifest in life and relationships, and the concept of attachment stretches the focus from parental bonding to bonding with loved ones, the observance of relational entitlement is the expected sequential next step. Relational entitlement builds on the literature of all previous concepts and focuses on measuring the level of entitlement among romantic partners (Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011). Therefore, the relational moves romantic partners make in the context of relational entitlement embody the concept of rightness sought in

this study. These movements expect to receive favored treatment at its center, and it is a part of the narcissism conglomerate (George-Levi et al., 2014).

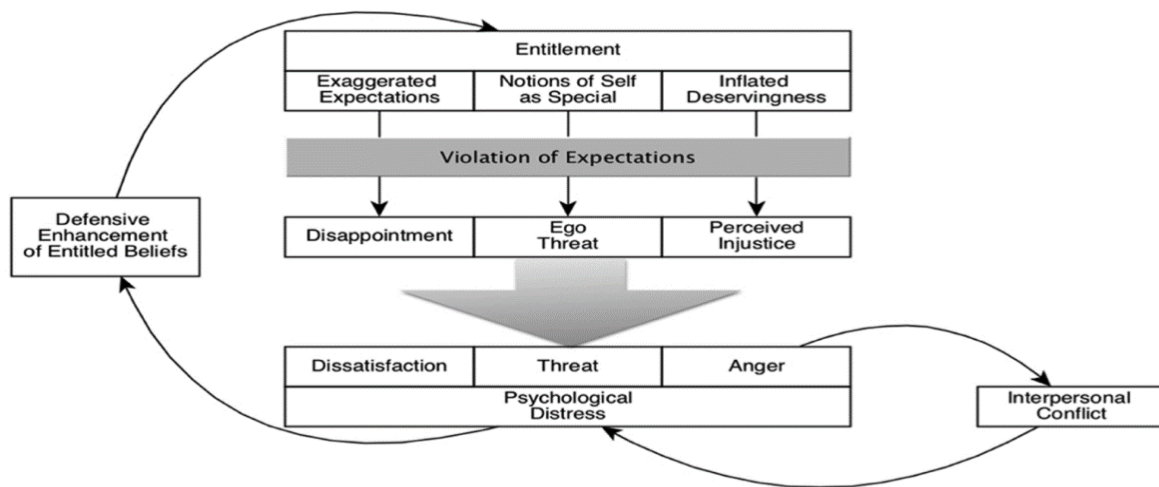
The relationship between entitlement and poor relational outcomes has been theorized; however, without a reliable tool to measure relational entitlement and a proper scholarly study, it would have been impossible to bring empirical credibility to this assertion. Tolmacz and Mikulincer (2011) took on the challenge and developed a reliable 33-item self-report scale to assess a person's sense of relational entitlement (SRE). Further studies, such as the one conducted by George-Levi et al. (2014), utilized such a scale and using a sample size of 240, they were able to validate the original three factors from the SRE: "excessive entitlement", "restricted entitlement", and "assertive entitlement". According to the authors' original scale, these three aspects of relational entitlement are distinct from the other and capture different types of relationships.

In terms of descriptions of these three factors, assertive relational entitlement individuals can recognize their own and their partner's needs and wants without taking a negative approach towards one or the other. Individuals with an excessive (also referred to as inflated) sense of relational entitlement expect their partners to attend to their subjectivities and are highly perceptive to any violations or shortcomings. People with a restricted sense of relational entitlement exhibit an inhibited expression of their needs and expectations and assume a lack of worthiness from their romantic partners (Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011). Nonetheless, both inflated relational entitlement and the restricted one are associated with attachment insecurities and poor romantic satisfaction (George-Levi et al., 2014; Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011). To develop a visual model in which entitlement could be depicted, Grubbs and Exline (2016) developed a model (Figure 6) which plasters how inflated entitlement moves through

exaggerated expectations, notions of the self as special, and inflated deservingness, which end in psychological distress.

Figure 6

Entitlement Model



The visual model (Figure 6) that starts from a sense of entitlement evolves to disappointment, ego threat, and perceived injustice, ultimately producing dissatisfaction, a sense of threat, and anger. In this visual model, rightness would be represented by every arrow. Rightness is the choice to move towards an inflated sense of self, the desire to feel validated, deferred to, respected, and admired by others (Vrabel et al., 2019).

Entitlement has been linked to narcissism (Brunell & Campbell, 2012), and as explained earlier, narcissism is linked with poor relational adjustment. Relational entitlement's negative impact on relationships goes beyond poor relational satisfaction, and adds elements of violence and aggression among couples, a spike in divorce rates, and selfishness (George-Levi et al., 2014). Williams et al. (2018) reported an association between relational entitlement and verbal aggression, control, and domination. This research studied 195 women between the ages of 18-60 and, using the same sense of relational entitlement instrument (Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011),

found a positive correlation between entitlement and individuals being less accommodating to their partner's needs, prone to verbal aggression, and coercion. Thus, proving the negative relationship between these two variables.

There is, however, one prototype of relational entitlement, which is not significantly correlated to the destructive conflict resolution structure nor the withdrawal conflict resolution structure, and it is the "restricted entitlement". According to Williams et al. (2018), the reason for this is that it lends itself to compromise and a calm delivery of one's needs. This could be correlated to what Gottman et al. (2015) call the antidote of the first horseman of the relational apocalypse- criticism, which is a soft start. This soft start allows couples to integrate, whereas a harsh start (other forms of relational entitlement) leads to poor relational satisfaction (Williams et al., 2018).

A more recent study reemphasized the correlation between the inflated entitlement version of relational entitlement and poor relational satisfaction (Candel & Turliuc, 2021). In this study, the authors conducted both a qualitative and quantitative study on 99 couples, and this combination corroborated previous studies pinpointing inflated relational entitlement as the most malignant version of relational entitlement, but yielding non-statistical significance between the other versions of relational entitlement and marital satisfaction.

To further quantitative empirical research, the original creators of the SRE published a revised version of this scale to account for the shortcomings of the original and incorporate insights from the research community (Tolmacz et al., 2021). The Revised Sense of Relational Entitlement (SRE-R) has 15 items, as opposed to the original 33, and this shorter version presents itself as a friendlier and easier tool to apply in research studies. Using a combination of the SRE-R and Emotions in Close Relationship Scale – Short Form (ECR-S; Wei et al., 2007),

the authors studied 854 participants. The results were consistent with previous theoretical literature research, positively correlating insecure attachment styles with high levels of relational entitlement.

Rightness and Religiosity

When pairing religion with rightness, there could be an initial reaction to dismiss this association based on the direct biblical discouragement for pride and entitlement as evidenced in verses such as, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” from Proverbs 16:18 and “humility comes before honor” from Proverbs 15:33. Furthermore, the central figure of Christianity, Jesus Christ, is quoted in Luke 15:7-11 sharing the following parable on the sense of entitlement:

When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted (New International Version, 1978/2011).

Moreover, the research literature supports religiosity, in general, as a protective factor against divorce (Atkins & Kessel, 2008; Joshua & Shannon, 2015; Shearin, 2016). For example, Shearin (2016) conducted a national study and presented statistical results consistent with a negative correlation between active Christian practices and the likelihood of divorce. The two

instruments used by the author were the Revised Religious Orientation Scale to measure religious orientation and the Wallace Marital Adjustment Test as the criterion data for the likelihood to divorce.

However, as Campbell and Miller (2011) pointed out in their book *The handbook of narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder*, taking on Christianity as a monolith does not yield effective empirical research given its various denominations. Therefore, instead of studying Christianity as a block, for the sake of research specificity, the authors make the delimitation of intrinsic versus extrinsic religiosity. In other words, the focus is not on religion in general or Christianity as a denomination, but on the religious activities (religiosity) of spouses who practice Christianity. According to the authors, intrinsic religiosity refers to individuals internalizing their spirituality and seeing religion as an end in itself. Extrinsic religiosity, on the other hand, refers to the utilization of religion as a means to other ends, as social conformity, or for personal benefit. It is this second form of spirituality and that of Christianity that is positively associated with narcissism.

Dyer (2012) made this association between extrinsic spirituality, popularity, narcissism, and the potential theoretical association with mega-churches in the United States. Dyer (2012) argues mega-churches have created a “religion of self,” and although this might look like intrinsic spirituality, the reality is that the religion of self-appeals to the senses via the presentation of a theater-like experience and to the intellect via the provision of Sunday school classes. This combination of sensory and intellectual experience combined with the strong leader-follower association between the member and pastor runs the risk of customizing everything to fit their members and, thus, encouraging a religion based on the self (Dyer, 2012).

Driving this point of extrinsic approach to Christianity, Kang and Lakshmanan (2018) published an article based on the positive connection between narcissists and charitable giving, but only when giving is centered and promotes the giver (themselves) and their generosity. On the other hand, intrinsic religiosity is positively correlated to higher marital satisfaction via the regulation of the insecure attachment styles of bonding (Cirhinlioğlu et al., 2016). These last authors published an article in which higher levels of religiosity among 510 married people and utilizing a combination of the aforementioned ECR-S (Wei et al., 2007), a self-developed religious practices questionnaire, and the Quality of Marriage Index (QMI).

A study from the University of North Texas researched the variables of how religiosity affected insecure attachments in young marriages (Lopez et al., 2011). Studying a total of 92 couples, all within 1 to 5 years of marriage and without children, found a positive association between religious involvement and marital satisfaction for both men and women. However, when calibrated in terms of religious involvement and attachment styles, the study showed religiousness buffered the marital dissatisfaction brought by insecure avoidants, but the opposite happened with insecure anxiety. When religious commitment interacts with insecure, anxious actors, it exacerbates the behavior and negatively affects marital satisfaction.

Summary

Within Chapter 2, the researcher reviewed the concept of rightness and religiosity in the existing literature and how this concept related to marital satisfaction, specifically among Christian couples. To define the term rightness, the researcher referred to the motion of wanting to feel validated, deferred to, respected, and admired (Vrabel et al., 2019). Within the context of a marital relationship, rightness is the movement one spouse chooses to feel validated, acknowledged, deferred to, and agreed with. To define religiosity, the researcher referred to a

quality that describes the level of religious activity, belief, and dedication (Shearin, 2016), and these religious activities can be classified under intrinsic religiosity and extrinsic religiosity (Campbell & Miller, 2011).

Embracing rightness as a relational move is portrayed by the literature as a relational liability, as evidenced by the absence of total and absolute rightness (Appelt et al., 2010; Malloy et al., 2020; Podziba, 2014), continuing with the blinding disadvantages of embracing rightness (Kruger & Dunning, 1999; Podziba, 2014), and ending with the relational penalties associated with choosing rightness (Becker et al., 2008; Gottman et al., 2015). According to the literature, the motion of rightness is anchored in defensiveness, and this aspect of defensiveness paves the way toward a deeper look into personal insecurities that manifest themselves in troubled relationships. Although the general themes associated with rightness are narcissism, perfectionism, perfectionistic self-presentation, attachment theory, and relational entitlement, the reality is that upon closer look at the literature, there is a particular prototype sketch that captures the essence of relational rightness.

The literature sketches a particular profile of a person who chooses rightness. This person meets the criteria for narcissism, someone with a socially prescribed perfectionism, and someone who exhibits perfectionistic self-presentation, specifically the socially prescribed one. Furthermore, this individual possesses high levels of attachment maladaptive insecurities, but out of the two insecure attachments, they are high, specifically on anxious, insecure attachment since this one is based on a negative view of self (Cramer, 2019). This anxious insecure attachment translates relationally into an inflated sense of relational entitlement (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Campbell & Miller, 2011; Candel & Turliuc, 2021; Casale et al., 2016, 2019; Grubbs & Exline, 2016; Haring et al., 2003; Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011).

Therefore, by singling out and measuring inflated relational entitlement as one independent variable, this study sought to examine how rightness impacts the romantic relationship of Christian spouses in the United States.

In addition to the independent variable of rightness (measured by tracking the inflated sense of relational entitlement), the presence of extrinsic religious activity emerged as a potential amplifier of rightness, and, thus, a negative element in marital satisfaction (Atkins & Kessel, 2008; Joshua & Shannon, 2015; Shearin, 2016). The literature identified extrinsic religiosity as a negative factor in marital satisfaction and intrinsic religiosity as a positive factor (Campbell & Miller, 2011; Lopez et al., 2011). Therefore, this study sought to also isolate and measure the independent variable of extrinsic religiosity to account for this factor of religiosity and how it relates to marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States.

The current literature was clearly associated with rightness (inflated sense of relational entitlement) and poor marital satisfaction (Casale et al., 2018, 2019; Nepon et al., 2016; Seidman, 2016; Williams et al., 2018). The current literature review also clearly associated religiosity (extrinsic religiosity) and poor marital satisfaction (Campbell & Miller, 2011; Lopez et al., 2011). This partially answers the first research question asking if there is a correlation between the level of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States. While the theory shows a negative correlation between the variables, the literature shows an empirical gap extending this coverage to Christian spouses in the United States.

The closest research found to answer this question was a study (Lopez et al., 2011) in which 92 couples' religious activity positively improved the relationship of insecure avoidants, but it deteriorated the romantic relationship of insecure, anxious attachment actors. That study,

however, focused on how the level of religiosity affected insecure attachment styles, whereas this study sought to find how the levels of relational movement of rightness influence marital satisfaction among Christian couples. Therefore, while the existing literature posits a negative correlation between rightness and marital satisfaction overall, the topic has not been studied among Christian couples at a national level. Likewise, the causality of rightness as a predictor of marital dissatisfaction among Christian couples is also a gap in the literature.

The relationship and predictability this study sought to present were of utmost importance to clergy, counselors, and couples alike. Clergy who seek to encourage marital satisfaction and longevity within their Christian membership would likewise highly benefit from the awareness of the influence of religiousness rightness and how spouses apply such spirit within their romantic relationships. Counselors who seek to establish significant therapeutic alliances with clients (Williams et al., 2011), particularly those of Christian faith, would highly benefit from identifying relational moves towards rightness despite the initial assumption of religion as a protective factor against marital dissolution and dissatisfaction (Atkins & Kessel, 2008; Joshua & Shannon, 2015; Shearin, 2016). Lastly, couples can be beneficiaries of this study since the findings have a direct impact on the quality of their romantic relationships

When rightness is approached as a binary dichotomy, spouses run relational risks, jeopardizing marital satisfaction. Instead, when spouses adopt a spectrum model of accuracy that aims to emotionally connect, exercise relational curiosity, and bestow the healing effects of effective repairs, the opposite effect occurs: couples experience feelings that align with the wedding vows most took on their wedding day.

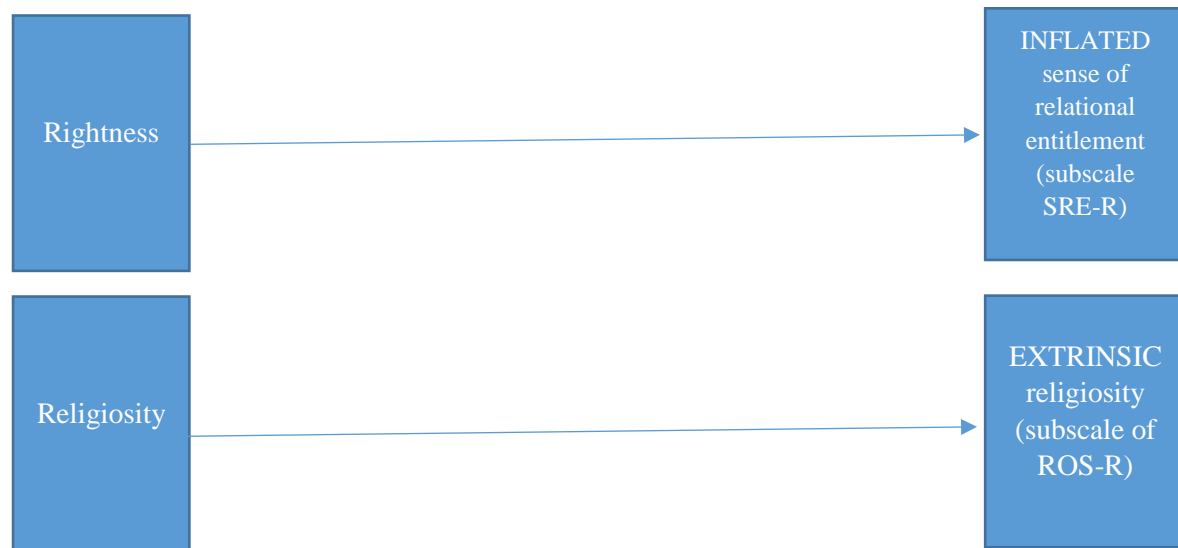
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This study sought to identify the relationship and predictability between rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States. This chapter presents the design selected for this research, followed by the research question, the hypothesis, and information regarding the participants. The particular information regarding participants covers sampling, recruitment, gender parity, and outsourcing these tasks to an online survey vendor. The chapter then proceeds with instrumentations for the variables, procedures, data analysis, ethical considerations, and a summary.

Design

The purpose of this correlational, non-experimental, quantitative, correlational study, via multiple regression analysis, was to determine the strength of the relationship between two independent variables, rightness and religiosity, among the dependent variable of Christian spouses in the United States. As seen in the previous chapter, rightness and religiosity do not present themselves with those titles in the literature review and, therefore, the researcher employed two scales to account for and isolate these two independent variables: The Brief Version of the Religious Orientation Scale- Revised (ROS-R; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989) for religiosity and The Revised Sense of Relational Entitlement (SRE-R; Tolmacz et al., 2021) for rightness. Since these two scales have two other subscales, the independent variables were more specifically identified by the subscale of an inflated sense of relational entitlement (for rightness) and the subscale of extrinsic religiosity (for religiosity), as seen in Figure 7:

Figure 7*Relationship between Rightness, Religiosity, and Subscale Variables*

Therefore, during the rest of the paper, the independent variable of rightness was interchangeable with an inflated sense of relational entitlement, and the independent variable of religiosity was interchangeable with extrinsic religiosity. The dependent variable of marital satisfaction was referred as such since this terminology clearly appears in the literature review.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

RQ1. Is there a statistical significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States?

H10. There is no statistical significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and the marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States.

H1a. There is a statistical significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and the marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States.

Participants

Adult Christian Client Sample

The target population for this quantitative study were Christian spouses living in the United States of America. The researcher used Lightspeed LLC research firm for sample recruitment and data collection via an online survey. Lightspeed LLC, linked to its parent company Kantar, reaches out to their panelists under LightPoints Panels ("Lightspeed Privacy Policy. LifePoints", 2020). The body of potential participants under this firm represents a pool of over four million panelists in 38 markets ("ESOMAR 3", 2022). The three requirements for participation were being over the age of 18, self-identify with the Christian faith, and having marital status showing as married, regardless if living together or separately.

Participants were incentivized to participate in this survey via a “points” system that Lightspeed LLC utilizes, which, in turn, could be swapped for store discounts (See Appendix I for more information). Those who participated in this study have previously populated a profile sheet with basic demographic information such as age, gender, race, household size, number of children, finances, relationship status, religion, and nationality. To ensure the participants were real, instead of bots or other forms of impersonations, Lightspeed/Kantar enforced the following checkpoints for all panelists ("ESOMAR 3", 2022):

- Proxy Detection: Detects a proxy server used to mask the registrant’s true IP address and past fraudulent activity
- IP Geofencing: Locates the registrant’s country location via their IP address and determines their eligibility for registration based on country-specific rules

- Email Address Verification: Queries our database to ensure the email address is unique (all registrants must verify their email addresses through a double opt-in registration process)
- Digital Finger Printing: Detects duplicate respondent entries within a single survey and blocks their entry
- Honesty Detector: Patented pre-survey technology that identifies over-reporters and blocks them from entering a survey upon failure.
- Verity®: In the United States panels, Lightspeed utilizes Verity®. Verity® is a proprietary program designed to determine if respondents are real via an external database by looking up their names, mailing addresses, and email addresses.

The sample consisted of 164 Christian spouses residing in the United States of America. The sample of 18+-year-old married Christians residing in the USA is one section represented within Lightspeed panelist bank. An ‘a priori’ power analysis for a regression analysis using G*Power 3.1.9.2 (Faul et al., 2009) with power = .95, effect size (f^2) = .10, α = .05, and two predictors (rightness and religiosity) found a sample size of 158 was needed. Therefore, the actual number of participants, 164, exceeded the minimum number of 158 required for a medium effect size with a statistical power of 0.95 at the 0.05 alpha level (Gall et al., 2007).

To ensure proper national representation, gender parity, and age proportionality, Lightspeed provided the following breakdown of the sample data:

Table 1*Sample Data*

Gender					
	Required		Achieved		Remaining
	%	Count	Count	Difference (%)	
Male	50	79	80	-1	-1
Female	50	79	83	1	-4
Prefer not to Say	As Falls	As Falls	1		As Falls
Total	100	158	164		-6

Age					
	Required		Achieved		Remaining
	%	Count	Count	Difference (%)	
18 to 34 yrs.	30.0	47	49	0	-2
35 to 54 yrs.	32.0	51	51	-1	0
54+ yrs.	38.0	60	64	1	-4
Total	100	158	164		-6

Location-USA					
	Required		Achieved		Remaining
	%	Count	Count	Difference (%)	
Northeast	18	28	30	0	-2
Midwest	22	34	36	0	-2
South	36	58	59	0	-1
West	24	38	39	0	-1
Total	100	158	164		-6

Instrumentation**Scales**

The instruments for the study were the Brief Version of the Religious Orientation Scale-Revised (ROS-R; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989), which assesses the religious orientation and the specific independent variable of religiosity under the extrinsic religiosity subscale. To measure spousal adherence to relational rightness, the researcher used The Revised Sense of Relational Entitlement, the community (SRE-R; Tolmacz et al., 2021). This SRE-R measures both the restricted sense of relational entitlement and the specific independent variable of an inflated

sense of relational entitlement. For the dependent variable of marital satisfaction, the study used The Locke-Wallace Marital Assessment Test (LWMAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959).

Religious Orientation Scale- Revised (ROS-R; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989)

The Revised Religious Orientation Scale (ROS-R; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989) is an abbreviated version of the 20-item original scale published in 1967 by Allport and Ross (Smither & Walker, 2015). This short ROS-R version uses 14 questions with responses in a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 “strongly agree” to 5 “strongly disagree”. Subsequently, this scale is further divided into two main subscales “Intrinsic Religiosity” (IR) with 8 items, and “Extrinsic Religiosity” (ER) with 6 items. This main subscale of extrinsic religiosity is pegged to the independent variable of religiosity, which is tracked in this study.

Appendix E has the Revised Religious Orientation Scale (ROS-R; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989). Some examples of ER are “I go to church because it helps me make friends”, “I mainly pray to gain relief and protection”, “Prayer is peace and happiness”, and “I go to church mainly because I like seeing people I know there”. Smither and Walker (2015) reported adequate reliability for the Intrinsic-revised scale with an $\alpha = .83$ (Brimhall & Butler, 2007; Byrd et al., 2007; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989) and $\alpha = .65$ for the Extrinsic-revised scale (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989).

The Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale—Revised (SRE-R; Tolmacz et al., 2021)

This is the updated version of the original Sense of Relational Scale (SRE; Tolmacz et al., 2021). This newer version addresses the shortcomings of the original and incorporates insights from the research community (Tolmacz et al., 2021). The SRE-R has 15 items (Appendix A), as opposed to the 33 the original had, along with two subscales:

- 1- A seven-item restricted subscale that measures:

- a. The extent to which the respondent's ability to express their wishes, expectations, and needs in relationships is limited
 - b. The perceived lack of deservingness in the partner's eyes
- 2- An 8-item inflated (excessive) that measures:
- a. The extent to which the respondent's expectations and demands from their romantic partner are excessive
 - b. Feelings of regret about the current partner

The inflated sense of relational entitlement is the one pegged to the independent variable of rightness and, thus, the one this study tracked to answer the research question. Some examples of the inflated subscale are "I spend a lot of time thinking of my partner's weaknesses", "when my partner hurts me, I'm immediately filled with a sense of distrust", and "When my partner makes me angry, I sometimes regret the fact that I don't have a different partner" (Tolmacz et al., 2021). The Cronbach's alpha for the inflated entitlement subscale is 0.85 and 0.91 for the restricted entitlement subscale.

The Locke-Wallace Marital Assessment Test (LWMAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959)

The LWMAT claims to be the most validated instrument to evaluate the dyadic marital quality (O'Leary & Arias, 2013). This instrument is composed of 15 Likert questions (Appendix C) and targets specific ideas, feelings, and behaviors (Gubbins et al., 2010). According to Pote et al. (2020), the LWMAT is comprised of varying response scales, including both ordinal and Likert scales:

- Item 1 uses a 7-point Likert scale (from 'Very Unhappy' to 'Perfectly Happy').
- Items 2–9 use a 6-point ordinal scale (from 'Always Agree' to 'Always Disagree').
- Item 10 asks respondents to select one of three options.

- Item 11 uses a 4-point ordinal scale (from ‘All of Them’ to ‘None of Them’)
- Item 12 asks respondents to select one of two options in relation to themselves and their partner.
- Item 13 uses a 4-point ordinal scale (from ‘Frequently’ to ‘Never’)
- Item 14 and 15 asks respondents to select one of three options and one of four options, respectively.

Scores range from 0 to 158, with higher scores representing better relationship satisfaction and scores under 100 representing lower relationship satisfaction (Halford et al., 2014). A recent study presented a Cronbach’s alpha for this instrument shows ranges between 0.89 and 0.84 (An et al., 2021).

Internal Consistency and Reliability

Validity is a crucial component of scientific research (Warner, 2021), and LWMAT has the reputation and track record of being considered the most validated instrument to measure marital quality (O’Leary & Arias, 2013). A recent study with a sample of 318 found the LWMAT Cronbach’s alpha of 0.92 and reliability of 0.95 (Khatun et al., 2019). Pote et al. (2020) found good internal consistency for this assessment after studying an assortment of research papers and found Cronbach’s alpha values ranging from 0.62 to 0.90. The same authors found a test-retest reliability of 0.82 for men and 0.84 for women. Likewise, Smither and Walker (2015) reported adequate reliability for the Intrinsic-revised scale with an $\alpha = .83$ (Brimhall & Butler, 2007; Byrd et al., 2007; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989) and $\alpha = .65$ for the Extrinsic-revised scale (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989).

Building from the standard Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale (SRE; Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011), the revised Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale – Revised (SRE-R;

Tolmacz et al., 2021) proved a good factor structure and convergent validity by the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Tolmacz et al. (2021) found a Cronbach's α for the inflated entitlement subscale was 0.85 and for the restricted entitlement subscale 0.91 as they updated the original and implemented this short and revised version. Beyond researching the internal validity of the instruments, it is also important to control the sample size number, which is the minimum required to represent the larger population.

Another aspect considered was that this research took place post COVID-19 pandemic, which could have affected the study's internal validity. The Revised Religious Orientation Scale (ROS-R; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989) shows Cronbach's alphas of 0.89, 0.73, and 0.72 for the intrinsic and extrinsic, respectively, in a study quoted by García-Alandete et al. (2019). In that same study, García-Alandete et al. (2019) utilized this same scale and showed a very good internal consistency for the intrinsic scale, $\alpha = 0.94$, and acceptable for the extrinsic, $\alpha = 0.77$.

External Validity

To conduct a study truly representative of the population at large, this research leaned on the Lightspeed LLC pool of panelists being representative of the general population in terms of demographics and Lightspeed LLC pool of respondents represented the general population ("ESOMAR 3", 2022). Along with representation, another aspect to externally validate was controlling the study to incorporate participants congruent with the present times. To achieve this, the researcher solicited current data concurrent with the year 2022.

Procedures

The researcher sought for IRB approval before conducting this study. Upon approval from the IRB (Appendix G), the next step was to secure a contract agreement with Lightspeed LLC to outsource the recruitment of participants. In terms of recruitment and consent, each

participant needed to approve their participation, and they were aware of their rights and confidentiality before agreeing to participate (“Lightspeed Privacy Policy. LifePoints”, 2020).

This agreement to participate was considered as consent.

Finally, each participant was presented with the following forms: (a) The Revised Religious Orientation Scale, (b) the Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale (SRE-R), and (c) the Locke-Wallace Marital Assessment Test (LWMAT). Upon recruitment, dissemination, and collection of data, Lightspeed LLC presented raw and anonymous data for further processing on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS; Pallant, 2011). Once the data were provided, the next step was to input the survey results into SPSS and run statistical correlational tests via multiple regression to measure the strength of the dependent variable of marital satisfaction among Christian spouses and the following independent variables:

- Rightness: Represented by the Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale, specifically the inflated subscale. The inflated subscale comprises items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 12, and 15.
- Religiosity: Represented by the Revised Religious Orientation Scale, specifically the extrinsic subscale. The extrinsic subscale comprises items 2 (reversed scored), 6, 8, 9, 11, and 13.

Regarding the dependent variable of marital satisfaction, it is important to notice that taking the raw data from the LWMAT and inputting it into SPSS would have rendered an inaccurate representation of the participants’ marital satisfaction. The reason is that the scoring of the LWMAT is complex in nature, and not all the questions are graded equally (Locke & Wallace, 1959; "Marriage Assessment", 2022). This is to say, each answer follows a particular scoring weight, and in theory, it could be as low as 2 for the lowest level of marital satisfaction

and as high as 158 for the highest level of marital satisfaction. Therefore, each question needed to be painstakingly evaluated to be properly and correctly inputted.

Data Analysis

The two independent variables and the dependent variable are ‘continuous variables,’ meeting the first criteria and second criteria for multiple regression ("Multiple Regression", 2013). Once all the data had been collected, the next step was to run a multiple regression using the SPSS software. Multiple regression predicts a continuous criterion variable based on multiple predictor variables ("Multiple Regression", 2013). To ensure meeting the criteria, it was necessary to run a visual data screening on SPSS to account for missing data, outliers, and the visual curvature of the distribution (Warner, 2021).

With multivariate data sets, it is important to account for outliers. Outliers are observations with identifiable values distinctly different from the rest of the data and pose the potential to alter the statistical outcome. One more step to verify the data meeting criteria for multiple regression was to perform a scatterplot to visually see a classic ‘cigar shape’. Lastly, a Variance Inflation Factor score higher than 10 would suggest multicollinearity, which means the criteria have not been met. Acceptable scores are between 1 and 5. Regarding the acceptance and rejection of the null hypothesis, the null hypothesis is rejected at a 95% confidence level (Badru, 2022).

Research Ethics

Ethics was a top priority for this study. This study followed the ethical standards prescribed by the American Psychological Association (APA) and Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). By utilizing established, valid, and reliable instruments, the researcher sought to employ proven statistical tools for higher credibility. In terms of contacting

participants, the researcher used Kantar/LightSpeed/LifePanels to recruit the participants (“ESOMAR 3”, 2022; “Lightspeed Privacy Policy. Lifepoints”, 2020). Lightspeed’s total panel covers more than four million panelists in 38 markets. On their website, the vendor claims to have access to “more than 150 million permission-based respondents globally across 130 markets via our proprietary panels and our audience network of specially vetted partners” (“ESOMAR 3”, 2022).

The anonymous nature of outsourcing data collection to Kantar/LightSpeed/LifePanels provided participants with a high level of confidentiality and privacy. The vendor delivered confidential raw data to the researcher. This data cannot be traced back to the participants by the researcher. Participants were incentivized to participate in this survey via “points” since Lightspeed LLC utilized this point-per-survey for store discounts. Since the medium of data collection was surveys, the risks to human subjects associated with this study were minimal. All participants were over 18 years of age and did not demonstrate any impaired mental capacity as determined by their ability to enroll in the LifePoints program.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology that was utilized in this study. Included in this section were the statistical design, research question with the hypothesis, participants’ demographics, psychometric descriptions of the instruments, and procedures. Special attention was given to how this study accounted and planned to measure rightness and religiosity. With this in mind, an inflated sense of relational entitlement was chosen as the path to track rightness in romantic relationships. An inflated sense of relational entitlement is a subscale of the Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale—Revised (SRE-R; Tolmacz et al., 2021). Likewise, this study accounted for and measured religiosity by the levels of extrinsic religiosity. This extrinsic

religiosity is a subscale of the Religious Orientation Scale- Revised (ROS-R; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989). The dependent variable of marital satisfaction was clearly presented in the literature review and was used as such and measured by the Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale—Revised (SRE-R; Tolmacz et al., 2021). Midway through the chapter, the focus was drawn to the specificity of the sample size and its national, gender, age proportional representation, and the outsourcing of the data collection portion to a multinational vendor. The chapter concluded with a description of the data analysis procedures and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Overview

This chapter introduces the results and analysis of the independent variables (IV) in relation to the dependent variable (DV). To test the predictive relationship between IV rightness, represented by the inflated sense of relational entitlement, IV religiosity, represented by extrinsic religious orientation, on DV marital satisfaction, Multiple Regression was applied since the variables are measured on continuous levels rather than categorical ones. The assumptions of the model are examined before examining the predictive ability of rightness and religiosity on marital satisfaction.

This study adopted three scales, namely the Religious Orientation Scale- Revised (ROS-R; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989) to account for extrinsic religiosity, The Revised Sense of Relational Entitlement (SRE-R; Tolmacz et al., 2021) to account for an inflated sense of relational entitlement, and The Locke-Wallace Marital Assessment Test (LWMAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959) to account for marital satisfaction. Each scale contained various items that measured the same construct. It was, therefore, necessary to compute the score of each item on a scale to get the total score of the variable. The computation of the items was run on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS; Pallant, 2011). Based on the total mean of all items on a scale, three variables separately were generated: extrinsic religiosity, inflated sense of relational entitlement, and marital satisfaction.

The progression of this chapter begins with the research question and hypothesis, presents the data screening, and the testing of the assumptions via descriptive statistics. Then the chapter introduces a correlational table to measure the strength of the relationship between the variables, a multiple regression model to account for how much of the variance within marital

satisfaction can be attributed to the presence of rightness and religiosity. The chapter proceeds with a Coefficient Table to identify the individual contributions of each independent variable separately. Toward the end, the chapter controls for linearity using probability plot charts, collinearity, and residual statistics.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

RQ1. Is there a statistical significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States?

H1o. There is no statistical significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States.

H1a. There is a statistical significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States.

Data Screening

The researcher sought to determine if there was a statistically significant predictive relationship between rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses. These three variables were represented statistically by an inflated sense of relational entitlement (rightness), extrinsic religious orientation (religiosity), and marital satisfaction. Each predictor variable (rightness and religiosity) was screened to search for and identify inconsistencies. The total sample was 164, which exceeded the required minimum of 158 for a medium effect size with a statistical power of 0.95 at the 0.05 alpha level (Gall et al., 2007). Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the dependent variable of marital satisfaction and the independent variables of an inflated sense of relational entitlement and extrinsic religiosity:

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics Table*

Parameters			Statistic	Std. Error
Marital Satisfaction	Mean		5.5988	.11236
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	5.3769	
		Upper Bound	5.8207	
	5% Trimmed Mean		5.6746	
	Median		5.9333	
	Variance		2.070	
	Std. Deviation		1.43892	
	Minimum		1.27	
	Maximum		7.80	
	Range		6.53	
	Interquartile Range		2.05	
	Skewness		-.727	.190
	Kurtosis		-.086	.377
Inflated Sense of Relational Entitlement	Mean		2.7614	.07513
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.6131	
		Upper Bound	2.9098	
	5% Trimmed Mean		2.7610	
	Median		2.8750	
	Variance		.926	
	Std. Deviation		.96217	
	Minimum		1.00	
	Maximum		5.00	
	Range		4.00	
	Interquartile Range		1.47	
	Skewness		-.055	.190
	Kurtosis		-.811	.377
Extrinsic Religiosity	Mean		2.7866	.06696
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.6544	
		Upper Bound	2.9188	
	5% Trimmed Mean		2.7816	
	Median		2.8333	
	Variance		.735	
	Std. Deviation		.85753	
	Minimum		1.00	
	Maximum		5.00	
	Range		4.00	
	Interquartile Range		1.33	
	Skewness		.087	.190
	Kurtosis		-.445	.377

For marital satisfaction, the table shows $\bar{x}=5.5988$, $\sigma=.11236$, and a minimum of 1.27 & maximum of 7.80. The important calculation in the above table is skewness and kurtosis; both are used to determine the normal shape of the distribution. The standard skewness value for

normal distribution falls between -3 and +3 (Griffin & Steinbrecher, 2013). Positive skewness implies scores on average below the mean, whereas negative skewness indicates scores on average above the mean. The skewness of marital satisfaction is shown in the above table -.086, which is between the acceptable ranges for normal distribution.

Kurtosis, on the other hand, refers to the “tailedness” of the data. A kurtosis of 3 is the range for normal distribution, when larger than >3 , it is termed ‘leptokurtic’, and when lower than 3, it is called ‘platykurtic’ (Anders Kallner, 2018). The kurtosis of -.727 marital satisfaction shown in the above table is yet another evidence of distribution close to normal. As far as the Skewness and Kurtosis of independent variables are concerned, the results show an inflated sense of relational entitlement (rightness) negatively skewed, i.e., skewness -.055 and kurtosis -.811, while extrinsic religiosity (religiosity) is little positively skewed, i.e., Skewness .087 and Kurtosis -.445.

Assumption Testing

Multiple regression tests the predictive ability of two or more independent variables on a continuous dependent variable (Astivia & Zumbo, 2019). The continuous variables, the absence of multicollinearity, homoscedastic, and linearity of the variable are key assumptions of multiple regression. Scholars argue for checking these rigorous assumptions when applying the multiple regression model. According to Williams et al. (2013), the necessary inspection of the Multiple Regression assumptions boosts the confidence to infer valid and reliable results (Williams et al., 2013). Therefore, the following statistics are run to inspect the assumptions related to multiple regression.

In addition to the identification of skewness and kurtosis examined above, two other tests were conducted to test for the assumption of normal distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and

the Shapiro-Wilks test (Table 3). A Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk non-significant p-value ($>.05$) indicates the normal distribution, and a significant p-value ($<.05$) suggests the data is non-normal (Steinskog et al., 2007). The inflated sense of relational entitlement variable is normal according to Kolmogorov-Smirnov, and extrinsic religiosity is normally distributed according to the above Shapiro-Wilk test. Marital satisfaction was presented as not normally distributed on both tests. With $p = \leq 0.001$, the assumption for normal distribution was not met; however, due to the large sample size of over 20 individuals, this does not indicate invalid data (Multiple Regression, 2017). In other words, since the sample size of 164 respondents was quite sufficient, the assumption of the central limit theorem still argues the parametric tests could be applied (Kwak & Kim, 2017).

Table 3

Test of Normal Distribution

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Inflated Sense Relational Entitlement	.064	164	.200*	.977	164	.008
Extrinsic Religiosity	.097	164	.001	.983	164	.037
Marital Satisfaction	.117	164	.001	.946	164	.001

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

^a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

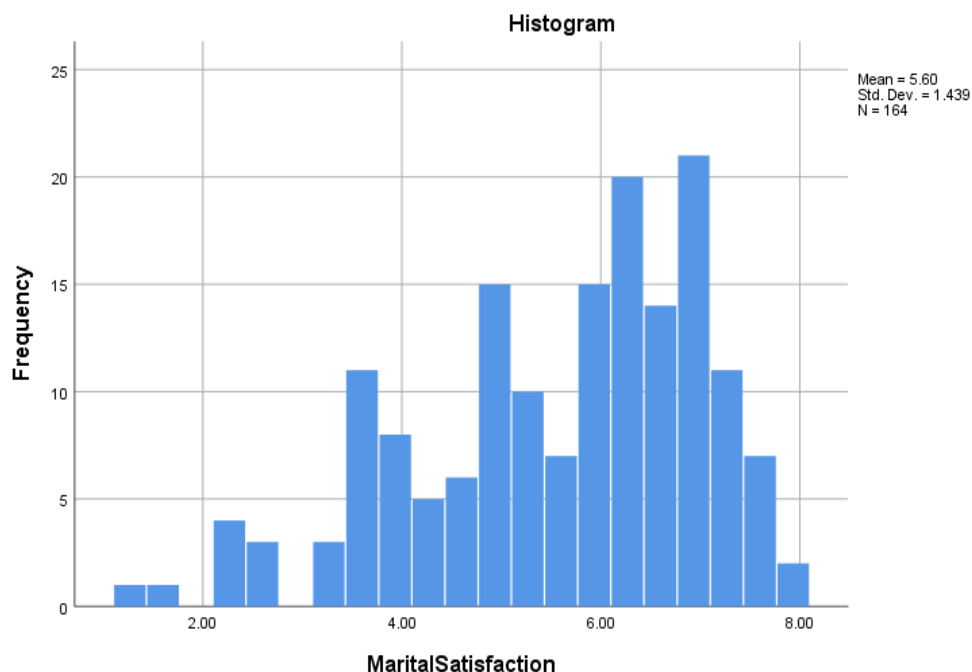
Marital satisfaction, inflated sense of relational entitlement, and extrinsic religiosity are the three total variables used in the Multiple Regression analysis. These variables were measured on continuous levels rather than categorical ones as the prime assumption of Multiple Regression analysis (Multiple Regression, 2017). N refers to a sample size that was 164 for all three variables with no missing value in the data set. The Case Processing Summary (Table 4) summarizes the sampling information.

Table 4*Case Processing Summary*

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Marital Satisfaction	164	100.0%	0	0.0%	164	100.0%
Inflated Sense of Relational Entitlement	164	100.0%	0	0.0%	164	100.0%
Extrinsic Religiosity	164	100.0%	0	0.0%	164	100.0%

Marital Satisfaction

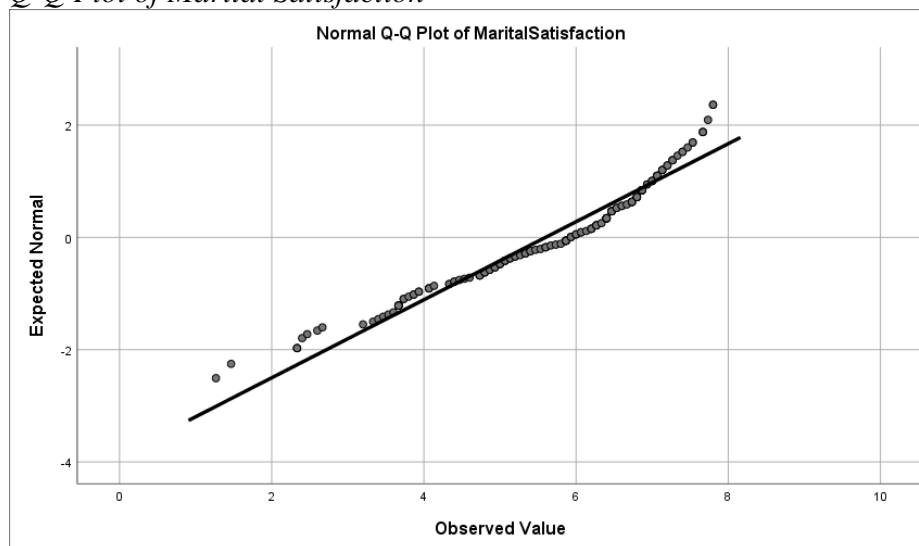
The visual description of the data in the Histogram (Figure 8) was conducted to examine the visual shape of data distribution. The data is slightly negatively skewed. This is because the dependent variable, marital satisfaction, was measured on continuous levels ranging from 0 (very unhappy) to 15 (happy) and 35 (very happy). This tends to make the distribution negatively skewed. However, the majority of values are quite normally distributed because the majority of the values are close to the mean score of 5.60 of the outcome variable marital satisfaction:

Figure 8*Histogram of Marital Satisfaction*

Multiple Regressions operate under the umbrella of linear distribution. It can be seen in Figure 9 Q-Q plot. The utilization of a Q-Q plot where the predictor variable (x) and a criterion variable (y) were graphed helps to visually observe how the data points fall on (or near) the line of distribution and, therefore, assess normal distribution (Multiple Regression, 2017). The values follow a linear pattern except for a few of the values deviating from it. These exceptional cases do not significantly threaten the dependent variable's linearity because of the adequate sample size. The central limit theorem is the preferred argument when it comes to the normality of the data distribution. According to the central limit theorem, if the sample comes randomly from the population and it is above 20 or 50 sample size, then it takes itself the assumed normal distribution of the data (Kwak & Kim, 2017).

Figure 9

Q-Q Plot of Marital Satisfaction



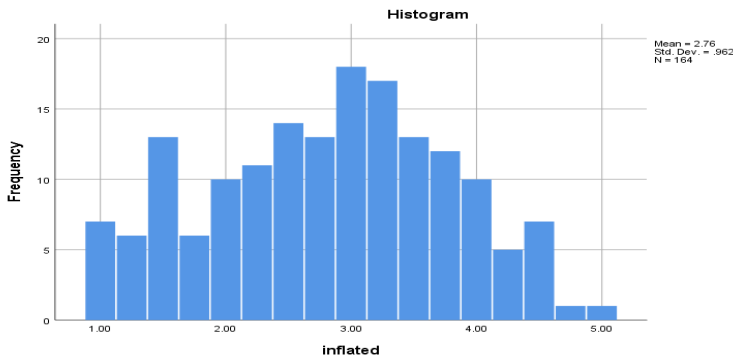
Inflated Sense of Relational Entitlement

The visual description of the data in the Histogram (Figure 10) was conducted to examine the visual shape of the independent variable inflated sense of relational entitlement (Multiple

Regression, 2017). This is the variable that measures rightness in this study. The distribution is normal because a symmetry of the scores is seen near the mean of the total score:

Figure 10

Histogram of Inflated Sense of Relational Entitlement

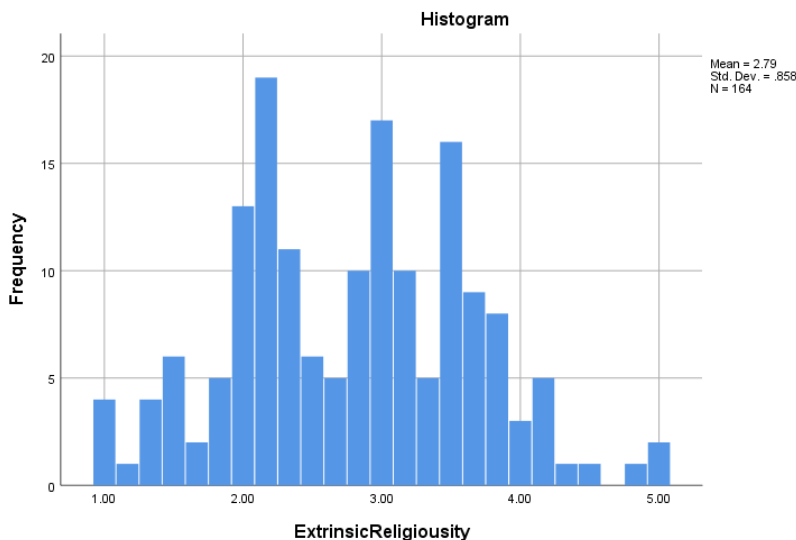


Extrinsic Religiosity

The visual description of the data in the histogram (Figure 11) was conducted to examine the visual shape of the independent variable extrinsic religiosity. This is the variable that measures religiosity in this study. The distribution is seen as quite normal because the majority of the scores are seen near the mean of 2.79 of the total score:

Figure 11

Histogram of Extrinsic Religiosity



The correlation table below (Table 5) shows whether the independent variables only significantly correlate with the dependent variable or significantly correlate with each other. A strong correlation ($>.7$) among independent is called multicollinearity, which is problematic in Multiple Regression analysis (Lien & Balakrishnan, 2021). However, there was no major issue found as the Pearson correlation between extrinsic religiosity and inflated sense of relational entitlement is $-.19$ in this data set. This same table shows a stronger correlation between marital satisfaction among Christian spouses and an inflated sense of relational entitlement $-.604$, than the correlation between marital satisfaction among Christian spouses and extrinsic religiosity $-.122$. It is also worth noting the table shows a negative correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

Table 5

Correlation Table: Multicollinearity

		Marital Satisfaction	Inflated Sense Relational Entitlement	Extrinsic Religiosity
Pearson Correlation	Marital Satisfaction	1.000	-.604	-.122
	Inflated Sense of Relational Entitlement	-.604	1.000	-.191
	Extrinsic Religiosity	-.122	-.191	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Marital Satisfaction	.	.001	.060
	Inflated Sense of Relational Entitlement	.001	.	.007
	Extrinsic Religiosity	.060	.007	.
N	Marital Satisfaction	164	164	164
	Inflated Sense of Relational Entitlement	164	164	164
	Extrinsic Religiosity	164	164	164

Results

Multiple Regression Analysis

The Multiple Regression model is employed to test the following hypotheses of the study:

H₀: There is no statistically significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States.

H₁: There is a statistically significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States.

Table 6 shows the mean, std. deviation, and sample size (*N*) for three variables. Marital satisfaction $\bar{x}=5.5988$, $\sigma=1.43892$, and $n=164$. Extrinsic religiosity $\bar{x}=2.7614$, $\sigma=.96217$, and $n=164$. Inflated sense of relational entitlement $\bar{x}=2.7866$, $\sigma=.85753$, and $n=164$.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>N</i>
Marital Satisfaction	5.5988	1.43892	164
Inflated Entitlement	2.7614	.96217	164
Extrinsic Religiosity	2.7866	.85753	164

The summary of the entire Multiple Regression model is given in the Model Summary (Table 7). The regression value ($R=0.650$) communicates the direction and strength of the linear relationship between rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction. The R square ($R^2=0.423$), on the other hand, shows how well the regression line predicts actual values (Multiple Regression, 2017). In this case, R square communicates how well the regression value of rightness and religiosity predicts marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States. In other words, R represents how strong and in which direction rightness and religiosity modify marital satisfaction, while R square predicts how well the model translates into actual values.

Table 7*Model Summary*

^a. Predictors: (Constant), Extrinsic Religiosity, Inflated Sense of Relational Entitlement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.650 ^a	.423	.416	1.10001	.423	58.956	2	161	.001

^b. Dependent Variable: Marital Satisfaction

Brought to percentages, the table above indicates that the combination of rightness and religiosity modifies 65% of marital satisfaction levels among the sample studied. The fact that R^2 is .42 indicates how well the model translates into actual values. This means the variance accounted for in the model was 42% while sustaining a significance of $\alpha=.000$ ($F(2) = 58.956$ sig.000).

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is the statistics of the overall variation of the model in Multiple Regression (McHugh, 2011). The ANOVA (Table 8) shows the model was a significant predictor of marital satisfaction, $F(2,161) = 58.956$, $p=.000$. In other words, when taken together as a group, rightness represented by an inflated sense of relational entitlement and religiosity represented by external religiosity significantly predict marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the sample population.

Table 8*ANOVA*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	142.675	2	71.338	58.956	.001 ^b
	Residual	194.813	161	1.210		
	Total	337.489	163			

^a. Dependent Variable: Marital Satisfaction

^b. Predictors: (Constant), Extrinsic Religiosity, Inflated Sense of Relational Entitlement

While ANOVA shows the overall model significance, the coefficients (Table 9) calculate the individual contribution of religious orientation and allegiance to rightness on marital satisfaction (Courville & Thompson, 2001). Looking at the *t*-value is significant since it revealed that both predictors, extrinsic religiosity and inflated, significantly contributed to marital satisfaction prediction at $\alpha=.000$. Column B is another important component in the coefficient table.

Table 9

Variables in the Multiple Linear Regression Model Predicting Marital Satisfaction

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	9.438	.424		22.261	.001					
	Inflated Sense of Relational Entitlement	-.973	.091	-.651	-10.667	.001	-.604	-.643	-.639	.963	1.038
	Extrinsic Religiosity	-.413	.102	-.246	-4.037	.001	-.122	-.303	-.242	.963	1.038

^a. Dependent Variable: Marital Satisfaction

The number B -.0973 next to the sense of relational entitlement indicates that per every one unit increase of inflated sense of relational entitlement will result in a .0973 decrease in marital satisfaction. Brought to percentages, per every one unit increase of rightness, marital satisfaction decreases by 9.73% among Christian spouses. Regarding our other independent variable, it communicates that per every one unit increase in extrinsic religiosity leads to a decrease in marital satisfaction by .413. Brought to percentages, a 1 unit increase in extrinsic religiosity decreases marital satisfaction by 4.13% among Christian spouses.

The column Part is also important in the above table. The Part value $-.24$ (extrinsic religiosity) implies the strength of the correlation of the model would drop by $-.24$ if extrinsic religiosity was excluded from the model. Inflated sense of relational entitlement Part value $-.63$ suggests a decrease in overall model strength by $-.63$ if the inflated sense of relational entitlement variable is not used as a predictor. Comparatively, the Part value of inflated sense of relational entitlement is much larger than extrinsic religiosity. This means inflated sense of relational entitlement more significantly predicted marital satisfaction in this Multiple Regression analysis than extrinsic religiosity. The last important column is the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), calculated to examine Multicollinearity. A VIF score lower than 10 would suggest an absence or lack of Multicollinearity (Badru, 2022). The above VIF 1.038 shows no threat to the assumption of Multicollinearity in this analysis.

Table 10 is the diagnosis of Collinearity among variables. The Eigenvalue close to 0, while condition index is above 15, and a variance proportion of at least two values above .90 score displays Multicollinearity exists (Hair et al., 2013). However, there is no problem with the assumption since the Eigenvalue was not close to 0 for all 3 dimensions, the condition index was lower than 15 for all 3 dimensions, and the variance proportion was less than .90 for all 3 dimensions.

Table 10

Collinearity Diagnostics

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions		
				(Constant)	Inflated Sense of Relational Entitlement	Extrinsic Religiosity
1	1	2.857	1.000	.00	.01	.01
	2	.116	4.967	.00	.49	.32
	3	.027	10.293	.99	.50	.67

^a. Dependent Variable: Marital Satisfaction

The casewise result (Table 11) displays only case numbers 137 std. residual above negative 3 on the marital satisfaction outcome variable and 63 number case negative 3.120 std. residual. Given the adequate sample size in this analysis and the reference given below the table's interpretation, the residual was not eliminated or transformed.

Table 11

Casewise Diagnostics

Case Number	Std. Residual	Marital Satisfaction	Predicted Value	Residual
63	-3.120	2.33	5.7650	-3.43168
137	-3.013	1.27	4.5807	-3.31406

^a. Dependent Variable: Marital Satisfaction

According to Tabachnick and Fidell, the standard residual range (Table 12) is between minimum -3.3 and maximum +3.3 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The minimum Std. Residual - 3.120 and maximum Std. Residual 2.271 ranged in the normal size residual. This shows a lack of Residual problems and, thus, the assumptions of the goodness of the model are fulfilled.

Table 12

Residual Statistics

Parameters	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	3.2632	8.0512	5.5988	.93558	164
Std. Predicted Value	-2.496	2.621	.000	1.000	164
Standard Error of Predicted Value	.087	.279	.143	.041	164
Adjusted Predicted Value	3.3465	8.0685	5.5993	.93566	164
Residual	-3.43168	2.49821	.00000	1.09324	164
Std. Residual	-3.120	2.271	.000	.994	164
Stud. Residual	-3.130	2.281	.000	1.003	164
Deleted Residual	-3.45516	2.51948	-.00051	1.11314	164
Stud. Deleted Residual	-3.220	2.311	-.002	1.010	164
Mahal. Distance	.020	9.500	1.988	1.828	164
Coo's Distance	.000	.058	.006	.010	164

Centered Leverage Value	.000	.058	.012	.011	164
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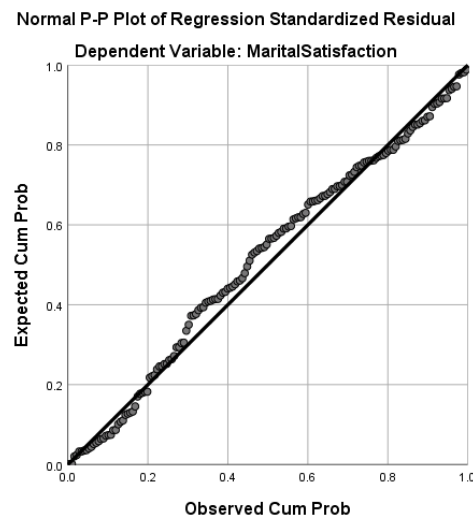
^a. Dependent Variable: Marital Satisfaction

Charts

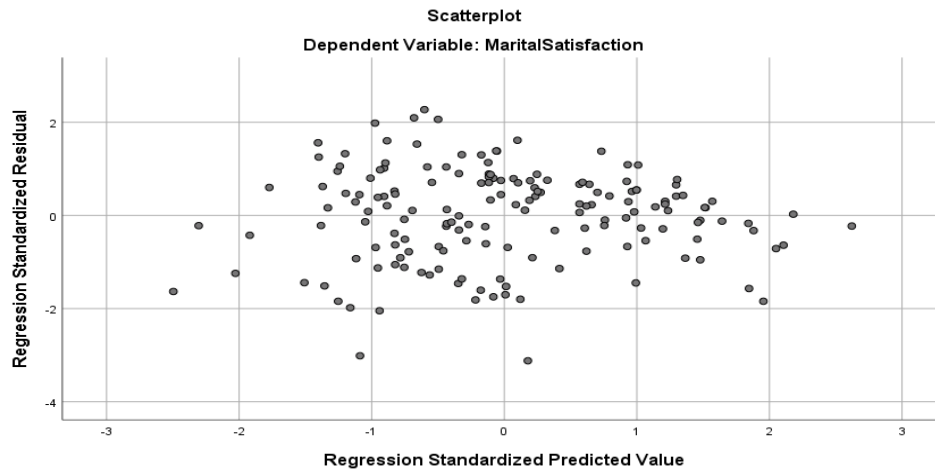
Based on the probability plot (Figure 12), it can be seen that existing points follow a linear pattern while following the diagonal line. This is an indication of the normal distribution of residuals and, hence, the procedure of multiple regressions has been fulfilled in this analysis.

Figure 12

Probability Plot



The scatterplot (Figure 13) was conducted to visually screen the shape of data distribution. Pallant (2011) notes that it is expected that residuals in the scatterplot should be distributed on equal variance in the center to be shown rectangular distribution while higher on one side or curvilinear distribution witness assumption violated (Pallant, 2011). The scatterplot shows the value is more scattered in rectangle form rather than in cigar shape. As a result, it implies residuals are not significantly affecting the variables' including extrinsic religiosity and inflated predictive ability on marital satisfaction.

Figure 13*Scatterplot*

Summary

After data screening and assumption testing, the chapter presented a Pearson's correlation test to determine the strength of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. This test revealed a strong and negative relationship of -0.604 between rightness, represented by an inflated sense of relational entitlement, and marital satisfaction. The same test revealed a weaker, but still negative, relationship of -0.122 between religiosity, represented by extrinsic religiosity, and marital satisfaction.

Multiple Regression was conducted to test whether and to what extent rightness and religiosity predicted marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States. All the assumptions of the model were pre-examined for appropriate model fit. The Multiple Regression model summary table corroborated the correlational table's assertion of a strong relationship with a R -value of $.650$. In addition to the correlational strength, this model also presented the R squared value of $.42$. This communicates 42% of the variation in marital satisfaction among Christian spouses can be explained by the combination of rightness and religiosity.

After accounting for the strength of the relationship (correlational test) and percentage of variance (R square), the chapter focused on the statistical significance of both predictors, rightness and religiosity. According to the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test, both predictors, inflated sense of relational entitlement and extrinsic religiosity, were found to be significant predictors of marital satisfaction $F(2) = 58.956, p = .000$. While these results are important in and out of themselves, the chapter focused on how each independent variable affected the dependent variable.

Measured separately, the contribution of an inflated sense of relational entitlement was found to be larger and stronger than the extrinsic religiosity predictor. According to the Coefficient Table, 1 unit increase in rightness results in a 9.73% decrease in marital satisfaction, whereas 1 unit increase in religiosity results in a 4.13% decrease in marital satisfaction among Christian spouses. The same Coefficient Table informs that excluding rightness from the model would have resulted in a loss of correlational strength $-.63$, which represents nearly 3 times the potential loss of relationship if we were to remove religiosity $(-.24)$ from the model.

As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected, i.e., H_0 : There is no statistically significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religious orientation, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States, since there is a statistically significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religious orientation, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States. Moreover, this relationship between rightness and religiosity is negatively correlated with marital satisfaction.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Overview

In Chapter Five, the researcher discusses the study results presented in Chapter Four. The researcher reflects on the literature surrounding various facets of rightness, religiosity, and the null hypotheses. Crowning over this reflection is the search for new knowledge in the form of evaluation of findings. That said, this dissertation yielded three new relational and religious findings regarding marital satisfaction among Christian spouses. These themes have practical applications for clergy, counselors, and couples alike. Towards the end of the chapter, the implications and limitations of the research study and recommendations for future research are presented along with a conclusion.

Discussion

This study examined the relationship between rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States. Relational satisfaction is key to a healthy home environment and functional conjugal life. The literature review provides abundant evidence of the factors influencing marital satisfaction, ranging from humility to defensiveness. This study attempted to determine whether there is a statistically significant predictive relationship between the levels of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States.

Following the literature review, this study adopted the approach of accounting for rightness by tracking the inflated sense of relational entitlement and accounting for religiosity by tracking extrinsic religiosity. The scales used were the Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale Revised (SRE-R) and the Revised Religious Orientation Scale (ROS-R), respectively. For the dependent variable of marital satisfaction, the study used the Locke-Wallace Marital Assessment

Test (LWMAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959). A combination of descriptive statistics, analysis of variance (ANOVA), Multiple Regression Model, and coefficients table were applied to investigate the relationship between the two independent variables, rightness and religiosity, with the dependent variable of marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States.

The results have shown that rightness and religiosity have a significantly and negatively predictable relationship with marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States. In terms of ranking, the role of religiosity, in the form of extrinsic religiosity, was found to be secondary to the presence of rightness in terms of overall negative relational impact. Rightness, or as the literature identifies, the inflated sense of relational entitlement, is responsible for the most negative significant change in the dependent variable of marital satisfaction among Christian spouses. Rightness is an excessive expectation from one partner to be admired and appreciated by the other (Lexico, 2022). The self-exaggerated expectations are found to negatively and significantly contribute to the change in the outcome variable. Not surprisingly, there was an inverse relationship between an inflated sense of relational entitlement and marital satisfaction. There are academic as well as logical reasons for this negative correlation.

While testing the model on the sense relational entitlement scale (SRE), Candel and Turliuc (2021) used an electronic daily diary on 198 participants (99 couples) for a week. Daily, SRE levels significantly predicted the partner's level of relational satisfaction. The study presented the expected results that excessive partner expectations coupled with the partner's perceived responsiveness were diminishing couple satisfaction. The difference between that study and this one is this one focuses on Christian spouses and adds the element of religiosity.

As the literature showed, the inflated sense of relational entitlement determiners are a grandiose sense of self-importance, preoccupied with fantasies, ideal love, the belief of being

special and unique, requires excessive admiration, unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations, and unwillingness to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others (Brunell & Campbell, 2012; George-Levi et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2018). The negative influence is evidence that eliminating or controlling these inflated values would result in high marital satisfaction.

In addition to the literature review's corroboration, a few themes emerged from this study. These themes are extracts from this study, specifically from chapter 4, and are meant to serve as bricks of relational insight to add to the wall of relational research among religious participants. The found themes were “false friends,” “religion amplification”, and “one size fits half”.

Evaluation of Findings

False Friends

Prior to this study, the academic consensus was to positively associate religious participation (religiosity) with marital satisfaction (Atkins & Kessel, 2008; Dudley & Kosinski, 1990; Joshua & Shannon, 2015; Shearin, 2016). This study takes the knowledge presented and paints a different picture by adding a more nuanced observation. Contrary to the established consensus linking religion with happy and long-lasting relationships, the results of this study presented the independent variable of religiosity to be inversely related to marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States.

At first, this seems to refute the protective and positive relationship the current literature makes between religiosity and marital satisfaction. To explain the seemingly oppositional connection between this study and the literature review regarding the role of religiosity, it is important to unpack the concept of religiosity. This is because religious activity is a broad umbrella term, but when closely analyzed, not all religious activity is the same; some have an

intrinsic religious orientation and others an extrinsic one (Campbell & Miller, 2011; Lopez et al., 2011). This study sharpened the focus on religiosity and isolated the variable of extrinsic religiosity. Extrinsic religiosity refers to using religion as a means to other ends, as social conformity, or for personal benefit (Campbell & Miller, 2011).

Extrinsic religiosity utilizes religion as a means to a personal end, and this personal end is associated with the positioning of self at the center. This second form of spirituality, the variant of religiosity, is closely associated with narcissism, perfectionism, and perfectionistic self-presentation (Dyer, 2012). In other words, the higher the extrinsic religiosity, the lower the marital happiness. Therefore, the previous association of generic religious practices and positive marital satisfaction is proven to be a false friend due to the two variants of religiosity rooted within the generic and broad religiosity umbrella concept.

Another observation on the topic of religiosity was the similarity in responses from the gender perspective. The role of extrinsic religiosity was previously thought to be different for males on the one hand and for females on the other (Brimhall & Butler, 2007). To counter the issue of gender disparity, this study was composed of 80 males and 83 females, and only 1 preferred not to say anything. Having virtually equal gender proportion in the sample size, this study examined both sexes about their partner. Regardless of gender, the response rate was almost uniform. For example, males and females equally exhibited high extrinsic religiosity with low marital satisfaction and vice versa. This observation of the study eliminates the influence of gender when it comes to the relationship between extrinsic religiosity and inflated marital satisfaction.

Religion Amplification

Since religiosity cannot be taken as a monolith, but its extrinsic and intrinsic variants ought to be considered (Campbell & Miller, 2011), this study established the segment of extrinsic religiosity as an amplifier of rightness. This study showed that when Christian spouses have an elevated degree of rightness (inflated sense of relational entitlement), the practice of religiosity (when extrinsic) compounds the negative marital effect. When righteous spouses engage in religious practices as a means to boost their sense of self, these practices do not positively counteract their rightness; on the contrary, the practice of this kind of religiosity fans the flames of rightness and exacerbates marital dissatisfaction. In other words, the question is not if the spouse is Christian or not, but if the spouse shows traits consistent with rightness. If the second is true, it is likely that their religious practices will only serve as an augmentation of this maladaptive relational trait. In other words, what people bring to their religion matters more than their religious practices.

One Size Fits Half

The Multiple Regression Model (Table 6) of this study found that rightness and religiosity combined predicted 64% of marital dissatisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States. This means that more than half of the marital dissatisfied sample population was accredited to the maladaptive combination of an inflated sense of relational entitlement and extrinsic religiosity. In other words, when presented with a Christian spouse experiencing marital dissatisfaction, paying attention to these two factors combined could explain over half of their relational discontent; therefore, this one size combination fits over half of cases. While it is true that rightness presents more of a detrimental effect in romantic relationships among Christian

spouses (Table 8), the maximum relational malfunction comes when rightness is paired with religiosity.

Implications

As a result, the study research hypothesis was accepted, and the null hypothesis was rejected. In a nutshell, the study has produced a significant contribution to academia in the form of findings that “There is a statistically significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses in the United States”. Moreover, the relationship between these two independent variables is inversely proportionate to marital satisfaction, and the independent variable of rightness impacts marital satisfaction twice as much as religiosity for Christian spouses in the United States.

This study added to the existing body of knowledge as it not only confirms the negative relationship between rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses, as the literature indicated, but it adds specificity and compound effect of these two independent variables. Religious activity (religiosity) alone cannot be taken as a protective factor for romantic relationships—the kind of religious activity, extrinsic versus intrinsic, matters for relational satisfaction. Moreover, and far more important than religiosity, the presence of rightness poses an even greater threat to marital relationships between Christian spouses (Table 8). Religion simply exacerbates the presence of relational entitlement.

For Clergy

The awareness of the effect extrinsic religiosity could have on the healthiness of the romantic relationships of their congregants could incentivize programs that promote the values of intrinsic religiosity. The emerging theme of ‘religious amplification’ presented in this study proves that practicing extrinsic religiosity exacerbates those congregants with a baseline of

rightness. On the contrary, the opposite of extrinsic religiosity is intrinsic religiosity, and this second one is characterized by the shift from faith as an enhancer of self to faith as an enhancer of God. This diminishing of self yields positive romantic relational returns. Extrinsic religiosity promotes self overall (self-righteousness), whereas intrinsic religiosity promotes the grace of God and places all of us in a receiving position, a position of gratitude and camaraderie. The first breeds haughtiness, the second humbleness.

For Counselors

This study showed, through the presentation of the ‘false friends’ theme, that one should not take the practice of religion as an automatic protective factor among spouses. Former studies have positively associated religiosity with marital and relational satisfaction, but this study proves not all religious activities are equal. Indeed, there is one that leads toward humbleness and integration, but there is another one that leads toward haughtiness and disintegration. Moreover, via the emerging theme from this study titled ‘one size fits half,’ counselors can confidently presume the presence of rightness mixed with religiosity as the main culprit behind most cases of marital dissatisfaction among Christian spouses in the USA. In other words, ‘one size fits half’ could be utilized as a primary tool to screen Christian clients experiencing marital dissatisfaction.

Personally, as one who practices counseling at a Christian Counseling Center, this insight has an immediate impact on onboarding new clients. Typically, the couples’ onboarding process consists of a general intake form (Paulino & Paulino, 2022) mixed in with assessments from the Gottman Institute (Gottman & Gottman, 2022) and the Young Schema Questionnaire (Schema Therapy Institute, 2022). However, after realizing the relational weight and impact rightness could have among Christian spouses, the Revised Sense of Relational Entitlement (SRE-R;

Tolmacz et al., 2021) ought to be incorporated into the onboarding assessment routine protocol. In addition to the SRE-R as a regular couples' onboarding assessment, the Relationship Scale Questionnaire (RSQ; Andersen et al., 2017) is another valuable tool since it assists clinicians in screening for insecure attachment styles. This is important since, according to the literature review (Henderson et al., 2005), there is a strong correlation between rightness and insecure attachment styles, specifically the ones high on anxious preoccupation.

For Couples

Couples will benefit from all three emerging themes from this study. Starting with 'false friends', just having an awareness of the double edge sword effect of religion in their romantic relationships. Just because a potential romantic partner is a practitioner of the Christian religion, this does not automatically serve as a prophylactic factor against relational dissatisfaction. On the contrary, Christian romantic partners can consciously or subconsciously utilize their religiosity of self (extrinsic religiosity) to enlarge their baseline condition of rightness. In such cases, their religiosity is highly correlated with poor marital satisfaction. In other words, just because one is a practicing Christian does not mean this will equate to a satisfying romantic relationship. Far more important is assessing personal shortcomings first instead of making the erroneous assumption of Christian faith practice automatically results in positive marital satisfaction.

Similarly, when and if someone practices extrinsic religiosity with a baseline of an inflated sense of relational entitlement, the second emerging theme from this study, 'religious amplification,' carries significance for couples. According to this theme, religion not only fails as a prophylactic, but serves as an amplifier of this maladaptive relational behavior. Failing to catch signs of rightness characterized by defensiveness, verbal aggression, control, and domination

(Williams et al., 2018) in self or a potential romantic partner, will only worsen when paired with extrinsic religiosity.

According to the literature, other indicators of an inflated sense of relational entitlement are a grandiose sense of self-importance, preoccupied with fantasies, ideal love, the belief of being special and unique, the expectation of excessive admiration, unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations, and unwillingness to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others (Brunell & Campbell, 2012; George-Levi et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2018). When rightness is overlooked, religion could serve as an enhancer of relational dissatisfaction among Christians. Given the coefficient findings of this study (Table 8), the knowledge that an inflated sense of relational entitlement affects marital satisfaction among Christian spouses twice as much as their practice of extrinsic religiosity indicates that Christian spouses should take a hard look at themselves first when appraising the quality of their marital relationship.

Last but not least, the third emerging theme of ‘one size fits half’ can also practically apply to couples. If a Christian individual is currently in a romantic relationship, and dissatisfaction is being experienced, a good way to troubleshoot is to account for the combination of rightness and religiosity. As evidenced by Table 6 of the Multiple Regression model, over 50% of romantic dissatisfaction can be traced back to this combination of an inflated sense of entitlement plus extrinsic religiosity. Therefore, if and when a Christian is experiencing relational dissatisfaction, assessing these two variables would be a great place to start.

Limitations

The results and implications are used to offer recommendations for future studies. While the study added to the literature, there are a few limitations due to the sample selection criteria,

specifically selecting Christian spouses and selecting self-declared Christians. Due to practicality, time, and budget constraints, this study targeted Christian spouses and not Christian couples. This deliberate decision produced outcomes consistent with the spouse with a baseline of rightness who practice extrinsic religiosity, leaving out the recipient of this dynamic. The literature shows dissatisfaction for both spouses; however, this study only focused on one spouse and not the other.

Likewise, the deliberate decision to focus on self-declared Christians brings an element of ambiguity to their faith family. The umbrella title of Christian is not specific enough to account for specific denominations nor the strength of their Christian practices. In other words, this study does not account for how different church groups or affiliations fare in promoting extrinsic or intrinsic religious practices among Christian spouses with a baseline condition of an inflated sense of relational entitlement.

Another limitation to consider is the self-reported results of the participants within this non-experimental predictive, correlational study. It is possible for individuals to not fully understand the questions presented in an online survey form or to struggle to capture emotions and intentions into a fixed multiple-option categorical number. In addition, participants may also have over or under-reported their technology efficacy levels. The researcher could interview and include focus groups by conducting research using the mixed-method approach.

Recommendations for Future Research

During this research, recommendations involving the study of rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction among Christian spouses arose. The first recommendation pertains to expanding the sample to recruit Christian couples and not only Christian spouses. This could have rendered a more comprehensive picture of the effects of rightness and religiosity on all

participants of the romantic relationship. Likewise, adding a scale dedicated to identifying the particular religious affiliations of the participants could have also rendered significant information to specific clergy and members of certain faith groups and denominations. Lastly, the potential incorporation of qualitative elements could have added substantial insight into the dynamic between rightness, religiosity, and marital satisfaction. This is because each statistical model has limitations, and one of the limitations of a non-experimental quantitative model is the absence of nuances and the discovery of emerging themes.

Summary

The hypothesis of the study was tested through empirical results. Multiple Regression clinical interpretation was carried out extensively throughout the chapter to analyze the study's findings. The Multiple Regression model performed significantly well against all the assumption violations and the significant predictors of rightness (measured as an independent variable inflated sense of relational entitlement) and religiosity (measured as independent variable extrinsic religiosity).

The findings of this study were contextualized with the existing studies in the discussions portion. The hypothesis of the study was contrasted with some previous studies. As a result, this study highlights that rightness (inflated sense of relational entitlement) and religiosity (extrinsic religiosity) negatively impact the marital satisfaction of Christian spouses in the United States. This negative effect is not proportional since, according to the Multiple Regression model, every one unit of rightness decreases marital satisfaction among Christian spouses by 9.73%, whereas one unit of religiosity decreases it by 4.13%. In keeping with percentages, this study found that in marital dissatisfaction among Christian spouses, the combination of rightness and religiosity is found in over 65% of cases. In other words, more than half of marriage dissatisfactions among

Christian spouses could be traced back to the combination of rightness and religiosity. These findings gave birth to three relational findings: 'false friends', 'religious amplification', and 'one size fits half'. These three findings have real and practical implications for clergy, counselors, and couples.

This study opened with the tension between "being right or being happy" regarding romantic relationships. According to this study, the answer to such a conundrum is to rephrase it "to be right or to be connected". For it is connectedness, the path leads away from dissatisfaction and towards oneness. Integration leads toward liveliness, curiosity, wonder, which are elements associated with happiness, whereas righteousness leads towards distance, superiority, and defensiveness, which are elements associated with dissatisfaction. When romantic partners make a relational move towards an exaggerated view of self, the literature shows they do so at the expense of their partner and, therefore, at the expense of relational satisfaction.

The relational path of self-over-others either evolves towards a rigid and dry relational environment in which love and joy are notorious for their absence, or it prevents partners from connecting at a significant and intimate level. Satisfaction is found in integration, spiritual, personal, and relational. When rightness and religiosity lead to romantic dissatisfaction between Christian spouses, individuals are indeed in the presence of characteristics from something else other than love, since:

Love is patient; love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (New International Version, 1978/2011).

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Appendix A: Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale—Revised (SRE-R)

SRE-R

The following statements concern attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and reactions in romantic relationships. Please respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree with it.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral/mixed	Agree	Strongly agree

1	When my partner makes me angry, I sometimes regret the fact that I don't have a different partner.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I spend a lot of time thinking about my partner's weaknesses.	1	2	3	4	5
3	When my partner hurts me, I'm immediately filled with a sense of distrust.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I often feel my partner deserves someone better than me.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Sometimes I have a lot of criticism toward my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
6	When my partner frustrates me, I get very angry.	1	2	3	4	5
7	When I am frustrated by my partner, I feel I do not deserve it.	1	2	3	4	5
8	Usually, when my partner compliments me, I believe I do not deserve the compliment.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I think my partner deserves someone more successful than me.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I often ask myself whether I deserve such a great partner.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I feel my partner deserves more than s/he gets from me.	1	2	3	4	5
12	When my partner frustrates me, I sometimes think of ending the relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
13	Sometimes, I think my partner loves me more than I deserve.	1	2	3	4	5
14	Sometimes I feel I'm not good enough for my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
15	Sometimes I'm angrier with my partner than with other people.	1	2	3	4	5

Inflated sense of entitlement: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 12, 15.

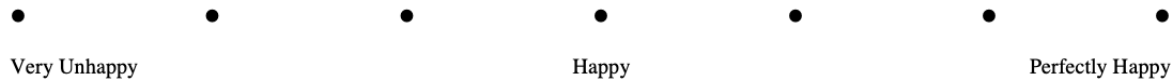
Restricted sense of entitlement: 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14.

Appendix B: Permission to Use Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale—Revised (SRE-R)

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Appendix C: Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test

Circle the **dot on** the scale below which best describes how happy your relationship is. The middle point ("happy") represents the degree of happiness you believe that most people get from romantic relationships. Do not share answers with your partner.



State the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your mate on the following items by checking a response for each item. Do not share answers with your partner

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Always Disagree
Handling Family Finances					
Matters of Recreation					
Demonstrations of Affection					
Friends					
Sex relations					
Conventionality (right, good, or proper conduct)					
Philosophy of Life					
Ways of dealing with in-laws					
Other (describe):					

Please answer the following items by circling ONE answer. Please substitute your partner's identity for the term "wife" and "husband" if you are not married.

1. When disagreements arise, they usually result in:

- (a) husband giving in
(b) wife giving in
(c) agreement by mutual give and take

5. Does your mate generally prefer:

- (a) to be "on the go"
(b) to stay at home?

2. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together:

- (a) All of them
(b) some of them
(c) very few of them
(d) none of them

6. If you had your life to live over again, do you think you would:

- (a) marry the same person
- (b) marry a different person
- (c) not marry at all

3. Do you ever wish you had not married?

- (a) Frequently
(b) occasionally
(c) rarely
(d) never

7. Do you ever confide in your mate:

- (a) almost never
(b) rarely
(c) in most things
(d) in everything

4. In leisure time do you generally prefer:

- (a) to be "on the go" _____
(b) to stay at home?

Appendix D: Permission to Use Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test



This is a License Agreement between Juan Arturo Paulino ("User") and Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. ("CCC") on behalf of the Rightsholder identified in the order details below. The license consists of the order details, the Marketplace Order General Terms and Conditions below, and any Rightsholder Terms and Conditions which are included below.
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ISSN	0885-7059	Portion	Chart/graph/table/figure

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Author/Editor	NATIONAL COUNCIL ON FAMILY RELATIONS; NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FAMILY RELATIONS (U.S.)	Rightsholder	John Wiley & Sons - Books
Date	01/01/1941	Publication Type	Journal
Language	English		

REQUEST DETAILS

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NEW WORK DETAILS

Title	The Relationship Between Rightness and Relational Satisfaction Among Christians In The United States	Institution name	Liberty University
Instructor name	Juan Arturo Paulino	Expected presentation date	2022-08-01

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

The requesting person / organization to appear on the license	Juan Arturo Paulino
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REUSE CONTENT DETAILS

Title, description or numeric reference of the portion(s)	Short Marital-Adjustment and Prediction Tests: Their Reliability and Validity	Title of the article/chapter the portion is from	Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test
Editor of portion(s)	N/A	Author of portion(s)	NATIONAL COUNCIL ON FAMILY RELATIONS; NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FAMILY RELATIONS (U.S.)
Volume of serial or monograph	21	Publication date of portion	1959-08-01
Page or page range of portion	3		

Appendix E: The Revised Religious Orientation Scale

Religious Orientation Scale- Revised (ROS-R)**Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989**

1. I enjoy reading about my religion. I
2. I go to church because it helps me to make friends. E+
3. It doesn't much matter what I believe so long as I am good. I
4. It is important to me to spend time in private thought and prayer. I
5. I have often had a strong sense of God's presence. I
6. I pray mainly to gain relief and protection. E
7. I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs. I
8. What religion offers me most is comfort in times of trouble and sorrow. E
9. Prayer is peace and happiness. E
10. Although I am religious, I don't let it affect my daily life. I+
11. I go to church mostly to spend time with my friends. E
12. My whole approach to life is based on my religion. I
13. I go to church mainly because I like seeing people I know there. E
14. Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important. I+

"I" intrinsic religiosity

"E" extrinsic religiosity

+ reversed-scored

Appendix F: Permission to Use the Revised Religious Orientation Scale

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Publication Title	Journal for the scientific study of religion	Country	United States of America
Author/Editor	SOCIETY FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION.	Rightsholder	John Wiley & Sons - Books
Date	01/01/1961	Publication Type	Journal
Language	English		

REQUEST DETAILS

Portion Type	Chart/graph/table/figure	Distribution	Worldwide
Number of charts / graphs / tables / figures requested	1	Translation	Original language of publication
Format (select all that apply)	Print, Electronic	Copies for the disabled?	No
Who will republish the content?	Academic institution	Minor editing privileges?	No
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NEW WORK DETAILS

Title	The Relationship Between Rightness, Religiosity, and Marital Satisfaction Among Christian Couples in the USA	Institution name	Liberty University
Instructor name	Juan Arturo Paulino	Expected presentation date	2022-08-01

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

The requesting person / organization to appear on the license	Juan Arturo Paulino
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Title, description or numeric reference of the portion(s)	I/E-R SCALES	Title of the article/chapter the portion is from	N/A
Editor of portion(s)	N/A	Author of portion(s)	SOCIETY FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION.
Volume of serial or monograph	N/A	Publication date of portion	1961-01-01
Page or page range of portion	353		

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Appendix G: IRB Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 8, 2022

Juan Paulino
Scott Edgar

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-110 The Relationship between Rightness, Religiosity, and Marital Satisfaction among Christian Spouses in the United States of America

Dear Juan Paulino, Scott Edgar,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

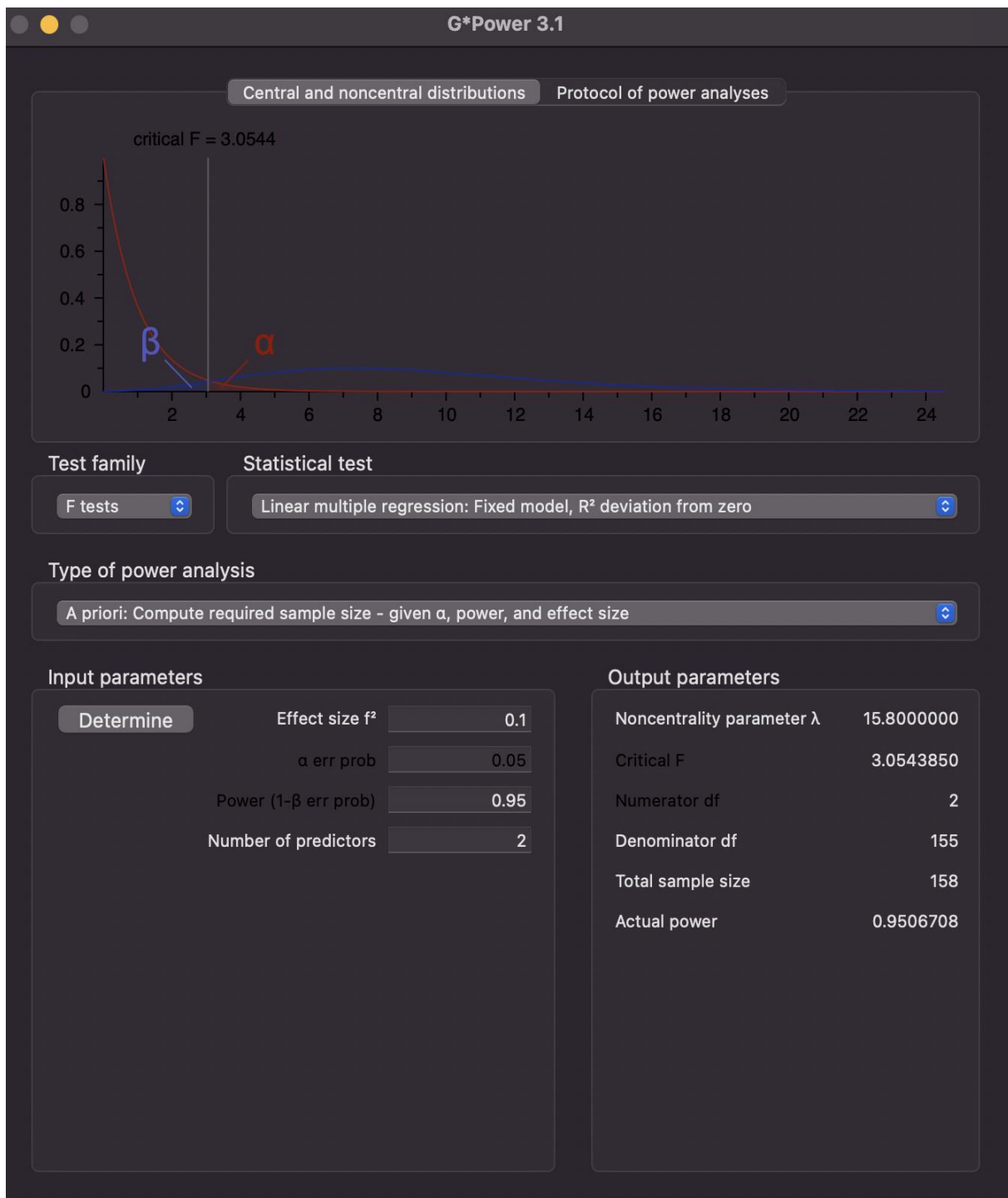
Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix H: G*Power Sample Size Computation for One-tailed Significance

Appendix I: Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Title of the Project: The Relationship between Rightness, Religiosity, and Marital Satisfaction among Christian Spouses in the United States of America

Principal Investigator: Juan Arturo Paulino, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years old or older, married, and identify yourself as a Christian. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to examine any statistically significant predictive relationship between the level of rightness, religious orientation, and marital satisfaction among married Christians in the United States.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete online the Revised Religious Orientation Scale (approximately 5 min.)
2. Complete online the Revised Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale (approximately 5 min.)
3. Complete online the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Survey (approximately 5 min.)

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include: The results of this research could potentially provide insight into the marital satisfaction of Christian individuals in the United States of America.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous.
- Data will be secured on a password-locked computer and will be retained for three years upon completion of the study.

How will you be compensated for being a part of this study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Participants will earn 100 LifePoints per completing these surveys, and this, in turn, may be traded for cash. The participants will earn the points equivalent to \$7.25 US Dollars.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Juan Arturo Paulino. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Scott Edgar, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above