

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON MARITAL CRISIS:
A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

By Kendal Thomas

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences
Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2023

TO BE APPROVED BY:

Dr. Bridgette Hester, Committee Chair

Dr. William C. Townsend, Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study was to explore how married Christians couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage in New York. The theory guiding this study was the Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977). The Social Learning Theory was fundamental in the discussion of marriage because behaviors can occur in a marriage that one spouse may disagree with, but due to lack of consequences or rewards, the behavior has persisted, leading to conflict within the marriage. The researcher interviewed ten Christian couples, six pastors, and held two separate focus groups to obtain substantial data regarding addressing the three research questions. To complete a thorough thematic analysis the researcher implemented Robert Yin's (2014) five-step analysis. The data resulted in three themes in answering research question one, three themes in answering research question two, and one theme in answering research question three. Findings show that couples and pastors agree, although from different points of view, that couples that center their marriage around God rather than secular opinions about their marriage and participate in community-centered social processes (i.e., Christian-centered activities such as Bible studies or small groups), report more success in overcoming marital crises.

Keywords: case study, married, Christian couples, pastors, Social Learning Theory, religion, religious over-idealization, community-centered social processes

Dedication

To My parents,

God truly blessed me beyond measure with having you both as my mom and dad. I owe everything to you. I could never thank you enough for your sacrificial love, support, and guidance. I love you more than you will ever know.

To My Husband

I prayed for someone to love me for who I am, to love God above all else, and for someone who would help me to be all that God intended me to be. God answered my prayers with more than I could ever deserve by sending me you. Being married to you is one of God's greatest blessings. You will forever be my always.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family especially my parents and husband who have supported me, encouraged me, and prayed for me throughout my journey in completing my doctorate. I would also like to thank all of my professors at Liberty University who were a constant source of support, especially Dr. Hester who continuously provided feedback and words of encouragement throughout the dissertation process.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	i
Dedication	ii
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	10
Overview.....	10
Background	12
Summary of Literature.....	12
Historical Context	13
Theoretical Context.....	14
Social Context.....	14
Situation to Self.....	16
Problem Statement	17
Purpose Statement.....	19
Significance of the Study	21
Research Questions	23
Definitions.....	26
Summary	27
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	30
Overview	30
Theoretical Framework	31
Attention	33

Retention	33
Reproduction	34
Motivation	34
Related Literature	36
Views and Purpose of Christian Marriage	37
Characteristics of Christian Marriage/Spouses	43
Marital Satisfaction in Christian Couples	46
Marital Conflict/ Conflict Resolution Strategies in Christian Couples	50
Power of Soft Words and Temperance	57
Forgiveness	60
Religious Over-Idealization	62
Biblical Marriage Counseling and Outcomes of Christian Couples	63
Summary	65
CHAPTER 3: METHODS	70
Overview	70
Design	71
Research Questions	73
Setting	74
Participants	76
Procedure	78
Role of Researcher	81
Data Collection	82
Informed Consent	83

Data collection procedures.....	84
Semi-Structured Open-Ended Interviews	81
Focus Groups	81
Interviews.....	86
Focus Groups	90
Data Analysis	92
Thematic Analysis	94
Trustworthiness.....	97
Credibility	99
Dependability and Confirmability	102
Confirmability	102
Dependability	102
Transferability	105
Ethical Considerations	107
Summary	110
References.....	156
Appendix A. Site Authorization	1
Appendix B. IRB Approval Letter.....	2
Appendix C. Informed Consent	3
Appendix D. Copy of Interview Questions.....	2
Appendix E. Codebook.....	3
Appendix F. Transcripts.....	12
Appendix G. Interview Protocol.....	13

Appendix H. Focus Group Protocol.....	15
Appendix I. Demographic Questionnaire	21

List of Tables

Table 1. Interview Matrix for Christian Couples (Couple Interviews for Each Spouse)	85
Table 2. Interview IQ Matrix for Six Pastors	87
Table 3. Focus Group Questions with Relation to Theoretical Foundation and RQ	92
Table 4. Focus Group Questions for Pastors	94

List of Figures

Figure 1. Social Learning Theory (Gerard Learning Design, 2020).....	33
--	----

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This qualitative research study explored how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion and community-centered social processes and how religious over-idealization influences couples' ability to cope with relationship maintenance and crises within their marriage. Prior research has been completed on this topic directly related to this study. An early study by Habtu (2006) highlighted how essential forgiveness is in a marital relationship; When a spouse cannot forgive their partner, conflict escalates. Habtu recommended that spouses forgive one another just as God forgave us (Colossians 3:13; Habtu, 2006). Later studies by Timmons et al. (2016) and Chukwuma et al. (2020) explored the causes of conflict within the marital relationship, how couples' approach to conflict that arises, and how husbands and wives can resolve conflict by relating to biblical proverbs, respectively. This later study by Timmons (2016) indicated that stress is a crucial component that leads to conflict in marriage and tends to cause the conflict to last longer or become worse due to stress leading to intense emotions.

Other studies have recommended further exploration of the topic as well. Specifically, Lakato and Martos (2019) recommended other avenues for future research, including understanding how couples' community-centered social processes influence religious couples' marriages and exploring how religious over-idealization influences relationship management. Bahnaru et al. (2019) also identified a need to examine how couples cope with relationship crises based on the involvement of religion within their marriage. Thus, this proposed qualitative descriptive study addressed the gaps identified by Lakato and Martos (2019) and Bahnaru et al. (2019) by exploring how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the

influence of religion and community-centered social processes and religious over-idealization influences couples' ability to cope with relationship maintenance and crises within their marriage.

This research is specifically essential for individuals in a marital relationship to help them understand how their faith can help them and their spouse overcomes conflict and crises when it arises within their marriage and will contribute to the existing literature by gathering data specific to the perspective of not only couples but pastors as well. Three research questions guided this case study and be answered after this qualitative study. These three research questions are:

RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

The problem that necessitates the research, which is unknown from the existing literature, is how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage. The researcher utilized semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with couples and pastors and two focus groups to address the research questions in this proposed qualitative descriptive case study.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: OVERVIEW OF STUDY – 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student introduces the dissertation topic evidenced by providing a foundation that necessitates proper referencing research.	3	3	
The student provides a clear overview of the context of the literature.	3	3	
The student details why the research is important and introduces the RQs.	3	3	
Briefly describe how the study will be done	3	3	
Explain how this study can contribute to the existing knowledge	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well, and uses correct grammar & mechanics.	3	3	
The student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completion, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Background

Summary of Literature

In the article Shared Mass Attendance, Sacred Views of Marriage, and Shared Spiritual Behaviors Predicting Relationship Satisfaction, author Julia Klausli (2020) discussed the impact in marriages when couples have a unifying spiritual belief that they prioritize within their marriage. Literature has emphasized that when Christ is the center of a marriage, the relationship becomes a truly unbreakable force, making it impossible for the enemy to contend with (Klausli,

2020). Christian couples declared their marriage is overall more satisfactory than couples who lack God and faith (2020). Although existing literature has discussed Christian marriages (Bahnaru et al., 2019; Chukwuma et al., 2020; Habtu, 2006; Lakato and Martos, 2019; Timmons et al., 2016), the problem that this proposed study addressed is to determine how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion on Christian couples' ability to cope with relationship crises and conflict within their marriage, thus filling the recommendations from Lakato and Martos (2019) and Bahnaru et al. (2019).

Historical Context

Historically, Christian marriages have not altered incalculably due to individuals and couples being substantiated in their faith and therefore not losing focus on what God envisioned marriage (Hull et al., 2014). There will always be individuals that do not hold to everything God has called them to do, but most Christians have not changed their views, actions, and beliefs about marriage because they turn to the Bible of being the ultimate source of truth and direction for them, which has not changed (Hensley, 2020). One modification of Christian marriages throughout history is the role of husbands and wives in marital relationships. Husbands were regarded as the head of the household and were called to provide for their bride and family financially. Wives were called to be stay-at-home mothers to care for their children and take care of household obligations (Hunter, 2007). Although for some Christian couples, these roles still presently exist, many Christian couples both provide for their family financially and take care of their children and household duties (Hunter, 2007). All individuals are sinners, and therefore Christians are not perfect - it is essential to establish the influence that religion has on Christian couples overcoming conflict and crises in marriage.

Theoretical Context

The social learning theory (SLT) by Albert Bandura postulated a foundation for this case study. The version implemented within this case study incorporates four components: Attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1977). Bandura's SLT can be related to behavioral marital therapy and suggests that individuals modify their behavior toward one another by implementing the consequences of their behaviors (Johnson & Bradbury, 2015). Dysfunction emerges when maladaptive behaviors are rewarded over adaptive behaviors (Johnson & Bradbury, 2015). The social learning theory is imperative to this qualitative study because it accentuates how consequences directly influence whether a behavior is conserved or eliminated. This theory is fundamental in the discussion of marriage because behaviors can occur in a marriage that one spouse has exhibited their whole life that their spouse may disagree with, but due to lack of consequences or rewards, the behavior has persisted, possibly leading to conflict within the marriage.

Social Context

Marriage holds different values depending on the individual or couple. Mullins (2016) discusses four familiar social contexts concerning a religious marriage (Mullins, 2016). These four social contexts that provide sacred meanings to a couple's marriage include prayer, sermons/worship services, first-rite rituals, and communion (Mullins, 2016). With these four components implemented in a couple's marital relationship, there is a direct connection to the couple's longevity and successful, joy-filled marriage (Mullins, 2016). In his study, Mullins (2016) concluded that couples sought social contexts that supported their beliefs regarding handling conflict, crises, and planning for their future together as husband and wife (Mullins, 2016). Couples sought guidance and strategies that aligned directly with their religious

involvement with social contexts that aligned positively with the couple's religious beliefs (Mullins, 2016).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: BACKGROUND 4-5 PARAGRAPHS			
The student has addressed the historical context(s) of the existing research within the last 10-15 years and how the proposed study will add to this context.	3	3	
The student has addressed the theoretical context of the existing research within the last 10-15 years and how the proposed study will add to this context	3	3	
The student has addressed the social context(s) of the existing research within the last 10-15 years and how the proposed study will add to this context.	3	3	
The student utilizes the proper level 2 headings for historical, social, and theoretical sections.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well, and uses correct grammar & mechanics.	3	3	
The student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completion, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Situation to Self

The researcher's motivation for conducting the study is not only to fill the gap in the literature (Bahnaru et al., 2019; Lakato & Martos, 2019) but to illuminate the power God has in a couple's ability to overcome crises within their marital relationship. The philosophical assumption for this study is ontological, and the paradigm is constructivism, which helped guide the study. Ontology is the philosophical study of the nature of existence, becoming and relating to questions about how things can be grouped based on similarities and differences (Haase, 2014). Haase informs the reader that one of the analytical truths about existence in ontology is marriage between a husband and wife (Haase, 2014). Constructivism is the theory that states individuals do not just passively take in information – they construct information as they can reflect on experiences they have gone through. Once individuals experience new information, they incorporate it by building on their pre-existing knowledge (Maxwell et al., 2020).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: SITUATION TO SELF – 1 PARAGRAPH			
The student has provided their motivation for the proposed study.	3	3	
The student provides an identification of the philosophical assumption for the proposed research (ontological, epistemological, rhetorical, axiological)	3	3	
The student identifies the paradigm for the proposed research (positivism/post-positivism, constructivism, participatory, and pragmatism).	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well, and uses correct grammar & mechanics.	3	3	
The student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: SITUATION TO SELF – 1 PARAGRAPH			
*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completion, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Problem Statement

What remains to be understood from the literature is how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion and community-centered social processes, and religious over-idealization on couples' ability to cope with relationship maintenance and crises within their marriage. This proposed descriptive case study addressed the undeniable truth that all married couples will face individual or joint hardships but will focus on the influence of when God is prioritized within their marriage and their perception that this influence has on conflict resolution. The general population for this case study is married couples and pastors, while the target population will specifically be Christian couples and pastors in New York. The sample will be at least eight to twelve Christian couples and four to eight pastors.

Previous literature has focused on spouses making God the center of their marital relationship. When couples centralize God at the forefront of their marriage, Klausli (2020) informs the reader that the couple can withstand anything they face. Jeffrey Dew (2020) evaluated the 36 marriage and cohabitation studies from the *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* articles to determine trends within a couple's marital relationships; the articles explored by Dew were published between 2010–2019. Dew discovered that both behaviors and social norms concerning the family structure have drastically shifted in the past 60 years and referenced

the United States Census Bureau, which indicated that 30% of households in the United States with children present were single-parent households which was a 24% increase from 1960 (Dew, 2020; United States Census Bureau 2020). Dew (2020) also referenced statistics from Allred (2019), who discussed the trend in divorce rates for women 50 years or older and indicated that the divorce rate per 1000 married women has increased from 4.9% in 1990 to 10.3% in 2017.

Although the literature has discussed Christian marriages, there is a gap in the literature that requires a greater exploration of Christian marriages overcoming conflict. Lakato and Martos (2019) asserted that research is limited regarding how couples cope with relationship crises based on the involvement of religion within their marriage. Bahnaru et al. (2019) also identified a need to examine how couples cope with relationship crises based on the involvement of religion within their marriage. The problem of couples not handling conflict healthily or giving up on their spouse needs to be explored for the steadfast commitment and meaning of marriage.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: PROBLEM STATEMENT – 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student identified the general population, target population, and sample for the proposed research.	3	3	
The student has provided recent (within the last 3-5 years) statistics and literature relevant to the topic and draws on the background section.	3	3	
Begins with “The problem is...” or “It is not known how...” or “What remains to be understood is...”	3	3	
The problem from the literature is supported with 3-5 citations within the last 3-5 years.	3	3	
Clearly presents the specific problem from the literature, the research focus.	3	3	

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: PROBLEM STATEMENT – 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student introduced the problem and explained why existing literature fails to address the problem. In other words, it is presented as an empirical problem, not a social problem.	3	3	
The student summarized BRIEFLY (1-2 paragraphs) explained why the proposed problem needs to be explored.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well, and uses correct grammar & mechanics.	3	3	
The student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completion, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Purpose Statement

Conflicts are expected in relationships, but how couples face crises or conflict when it arises can play a crucial role in the marital relationship. The purpose of this descriptive case study explored how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion and community-centered social processes and religious over-idealization influences couples' ability to cope with relationship maintenance and crises within their marriage in New York. For this proposed research, a Christian marriage will be defined as God's covenant between man and woman who strive to draw closer to God in their individual lives and as a couple (Barton, 2016). The theory guiding this study is The Social Learning Theory (SLT) by Bandura, which is crucial in the discussion of marriage because the behavior of a spouse can lead to conflict within a couple's marital relationship.

The main components that the current literature has addressed concerning this case study's topic are the discussion of couples engaging in weekly service, praying with one another, and connecting on a spiritual level, which ultimately leads to an increase in the marital relationship and spouses' overall well-being (Klausli, 2020). Although prior research has been done on this topic that directly corresponds to investigating how religion influences couples, this study is unique in focusing on the gap in current literature. This gap focuses on Christian couples coping with marital crises and conflict based on the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-processes on resolving and overcoming conflict in a couple's marital relationship (Bahnaru et al., 2019; Lakato & Martos, 2019). This descriptive case study is essential because marriage is a crucial counseling topic; over half of all Americans are married, and therefore, marriage relates to a substantial portion of the population (Parker & Stepler, 2020).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: PURPOSE STATEMENT – 2-3 PARAGRAPHS			
<p>The student has a purpose statement born from the problem statement to maintain alignment in the document. The purpose s statement also identifies the theoretical foundation. EXAMPLE:</p> <p>The purpose of this</p> <hr/> <p>(phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, case, historical) study is to</p> <hr/> <p>(understand? describe? develop? discover?) the</p> <hr/> <p>(central phenomenon of the study) for_(the participants) at (the site). At this stage in the research,</p> <hr/> <p>(central phenomenon) will be generally defined as</p> <hr/> <p>(a general definition of the central concept). The theory guiding this study is (identify theory and cite theorist) (explain the relationship between the</p>	2	2	

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: PURPOSE STATEMENT – 2-3 PARAGRAPHS			
theory and your focus of inquiry).			
The student summarizes how the purpose of the study is relevant to the current literature and how the proposed study will add to that literature.	2	2	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well, and uses correct grammar & mechanics.	2	2	
The student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	2	2	
*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completion, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Significance of the Study

This study is essential because marriage is a crucial topic because over half of all Americans are married, constituting a substantial portion of the population (Parker & Stepler, 2020). Hull et al. (2014) discussed the changing aspects of marriage. This article references historian Nancy Cott (2014), who informed the reader that Americans view marriage as the foundation of a healthy family and community, but unfortunately, nearly half of all marriages result in divorce (Cott, 2014). This study is essential in exploring how couples can overcome conflict in their marital relationship to decrease the divorce rate hopefully.

The Social Learning Theory, which psychologist Albert Bandura developed (1977), was utilized in this case study as the theoretical foundation. The version of Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory that is implemented within this case study incorporates four components:

Attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1977). This theory directly relates to the marital relationship because when couples work through a conflict, they also learn and observe behaviors to be learned or avoided. The Social Learning Theory is essential to elaborate on the importance of behavior in marriage and how individuals modify their behavior based on these four main components. It is anticipated that this proposed case study assisted in advancing Bandura's theory by directly relating it to the Christian marital relationship.

Although other dissertations have addressed the role religion plays in Christian couple's handling marital conflict, this specific study is different to other studies due to specifically addressing how religious over-idealization, religion, and community-centered social processes influence Christian marriages in overcoming conflict. The researcher also anticipates that this study may affect individual marriages, specifically Christian marriages. This case study can help assist pastors in further assisting Christian couples in overcoming marital conflict by utilizing the interview answers and focus group discussion/answers from the Christian couples. The researcher's study provides the reader with how religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes influence each spouse/couple in overcoming marital conflict. This information assisted with pastors meeting with Christian couples who may be struggling with conflict in their marriage by informing them of how these three components; religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes have impacted those couples and see if the same applies to the couple the pastor is working with.

The researcher foresees that this qualitative study assisted couples in understanding how religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes may influence how they contend with conflict and crisis within the marital relationship. Specifically, couples are able to understand better how behavior concerning Bandura's theory can be applied and

biblical principles to assist couples in overcoming marital crises and conflict. In terms of the literature, this case study advanced current literature by determining how the three components of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social process influence a couple's ability to overcome a crisis within the marital relationship.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY – 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student explains the gaps in the literature being used to justify their proposal.	3	3	
The student explains: How the proposed research will advance an understanding of the phenomenon. How the proposal advances extant research How the proposal will advance the theory How the proposal could potentially be applied practically in the field.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well, and uses correct grammar & mechanics.	3	3	
The student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completion, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Research Questions

The phenomenon under exploration in this proposed descriptive case study is religion's influence on Christian couples overcoming conflict and crisis that arises within their marital

relationship. There are three research questions for this proposed study which are driven by the recommendations from the literature (Bahnnaru et al., 2019; Lakato & Martos, 2019):

The first research question that was answered is:

RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

This data the researcher hopes to gather for this research informed the reader of the influence that a couple's faith, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes all affect a couple's ability to overcome crisis or conflict that arises in their marital relationship.

The second research question is:

RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

This question, once answered, is intended to help the reader understand from a pastor's experience and viewpoint how they believe religion influences a Christian couple's ability to overcome crisis and conflict in their marriage.

Lastly, the third research question is:

RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

Once this question is answered, it is anticipated that it provided data to understand what characteristics and factors contribute to a Christian couple's having and maintaining a good marriage that can overcome conflict and crisis.

These questions address the problem statement and the recommendations from the existing literature. The case study design is the most appropriate for this qualitative study because the research focuses on gaining concrete details about the specific real-world marriage phenomenon. Within a case study design, key characteristics were explored, focusing on the qualities that relate to the behavior patterns of a specific population; Christ-centered marriages. To most effectively accomplish this, the use of a qualitative descriptive case study enabled the researcher to collect data.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: RESEARCH QUESTIONS – 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student clearly states at least 3 (or one overarching RQ with two sub-RQs for the proposed study. Questions are not closed-ended, resulting in a y/n answer, and are concerned with the “how” or “why” of the problem	3	3	
The student provides a discussion of each RQ with citations.	3	3	
The RQs are born from the problem and purpose statements and are appropriate for the chosen research design.	3	3	
In the student's wording of the RQs, it is clear that the question is derived from the purpose statement, problem statement, and theory.	3	3	
It is clear that the RQs address the recommendations from the gap articles.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well, and uses correct grammar & mechanics.	3	3	
The student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completion, but there are changes needed. See the			

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: RESEARCH QUESTIONS – 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Definitions

Christian Marriage – The union of two people coming together to fulfill God’s kingdom here on Earth, which involves two individuals becoming one despite their differences (Barton, 2016). This term is crucial within this qualitative study to help the reader understand the specific type of marriage that is being studied in determining the influence of religion.

Prayer - turning to greater power; in this case, God promotes change, humility, positivity, communication, understanding, and unity amongst couples (Hatch et al., 2016).

Social Learning Theory – Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory applies to behavioral marital therapy, which suggests individuals observe, model, and imitate the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions to modify them. Dysfunction transpires when maladaptive instead of adaptive behaviors are rewarded (Bandura, 1977).

Over-Idealization –Relates to a spouse or partner’s view of their partner exceeds the partner's perception of self (Tomlinson et al., 2013). This term relates to religious over-idealization and individuals having high regard, opinion, or expectation of an individual or couple due to their faith or belief.

Community-Centered Social Processes – Includes how the broader environment supports, ostracizes, and accepts ideas, individuals, and/or couples (Lakato & Martos, 2019).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: DEFINITIONS – AS NEEDED DEPENDING ON DEFINITIONS			
The student identifies the terms in the proposal that might not be known to a layperson.	3	3	
The student defines the existing literature (WITH CITATIONS) and an operationalized definition of each term.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well, and uses correct grammar & mechanics.	3	3	
The student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completion, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Summary

This qualitative descriptive study explored how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage in New York. Prior research indicated that couples engaging in weekly service, praying with one another, and connecting on a spiritual level, increased the couple's marital relationship and spouses' overall well-being (Klausli, 2020). However, no research has yet to address the influence religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes have on a couple's ability to overcome marital conflict (Bahnaru et al., 2019; Lakato & Martos, 2019). This proposed study addressed these recommendations.

Specifically, Lakato and Martos (2019) recommended other avenues for future research, including understanding how couples' community-centered social processes influence religious couples' marriages and exploring how religious over-idealization influences relationship management (Lakato & Martos, 2019). Alongside Lakato and Martos (2019), this study also addressed the recommendation from Bahnaru et al. (2019) and explored how couples cope with relationship crises based on the involvement of religion within their marriage. The researcher used a qualitative descriptive case study design with purposive sampling to garner participants.

Purposive sampling is a technique implemented by qualitative researchers used to recruit participants who was able to provide vital and detailed information about the specific topic that is under investigation (Campbell et al., 2020). Purposive sampling is appropriate for this qualitative study because the researcher can select participants with a high volume of in-depth and valuable information. This study built on previous research on Christian marriages (Allred, 2019; Dew, 2020; Hensley, 2020; Hunter, 2007; Hull et al., 2014; Klausli, 2020; Mullins, 2016). Additionally, Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory was the theoretical foundation for this qualitative case study and focused on four main components: Attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1977). It is expected that this proposed case study assisted in advancing Bandura's theory by directly relating it to the Christian marital relationship.

Chapter two provided a review of literature by addressing the following themes: Views and Purpose of Christian Marriage, Characteristics of Marriage/Spouses, Marital Satisfaction in Christian Couples, Marital Conflict/Conflict Resolution Strategies in Christian Couples, Power of Soft Words and Temperance, Forgiveness, Biblical Marriage Counseling, Over-Idealization, and the Outcomes of Christian Couples, while also addressing the conceptual framework. Following chapter two, chapter three informed the reader about the research methodology, which

included details concerning the research design, procedures regarding data collection, the research problem, and the recruitment procedures while also addressing validity, dependability, reliability, and trustworthiness. Chapter four focused on both the data analysis and results. The final chapter, chapter five, discussed a summary of the researcher's findings, which discussed implications and recommendations for future research.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: SUMMARY – 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student briefly summarizes the chapter, including a summary of the literature related to the topic	3	3	
The student provides citations from academic sources to support key points.	3	3	
The student describes what is in the remainder of the proposal (describes what is to be addressed in chapters 3-5).	3	3	
The student provides a transition paragraph to Chapter 2.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well, and uses correct grammar & mechanics.	3	3	
The student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completion, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Conflicts are expected in relationships; However, how couples face crises or conflicts plays a crucial role in the marital relationship. Religion is a crucial topic because marriage is the most important relationship on this side of the Earth and plays a vital role in the family unit and communities (Pronk et al., 2017). This proposed qualitative descriptive case study addressed how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion and community-centered social processes and religious over-idealization influences couples' ability to cope with relationship maintenance and crises within their marriage. However, what remains to be understood is how married Christians couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage. This case study addressed individual or joint hardships couples face but focused on the influence on a couple when God is prioritized within their marriage regarding conflict resolution (White et al., 2020).

The following literature review was comprised of an overview, a discussion of the theoretical framework section, a related literature section, and a summary. The literature covered themes from the current literature, including Views and Purpose of Christian Marriage, Characteristics of Marriage/Spouses, Marital Satisfaction in Christian Couples, Marital Conflict/Conflict Resolution Strategies in Christian Couples, Power of Soft Words and Temperance, Forgiveness, Biblical Marriage Counseling, Over-Idealization, and the Outcomes of Christian Couples. These themes are essential in answering the problem statement to determine how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion on Christian couples' ability to cope with marital crises.

Chapter three addressed the study methods, chapter four addressed the case study's findings, and chapter five provided an overall summary and recommendations for future research. These chapters all contributed to determining the influence religion has on Christian couples overcoming conflict within the marital relationship. When seeking this information, the Liberty University online database was utilized specifically using JSTOR, Family Studies Abstracts, and World Christian Database.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Reader's Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: OVERVIEW 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student provides an overview/introduction about what the literature will cover (specifically what themes are to be covered in the lit. review and what databases were used in seeking literature).	3	3	
The student explains how the rest of the study will be organized by chapter and included sections.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well. Correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
The student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completion, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Theoretical Framework

The Social Learning Theory (SLT) and a Biblical worldview provided a foundation for this study. The social learning theory emphasizes how consequences directly influence whether a

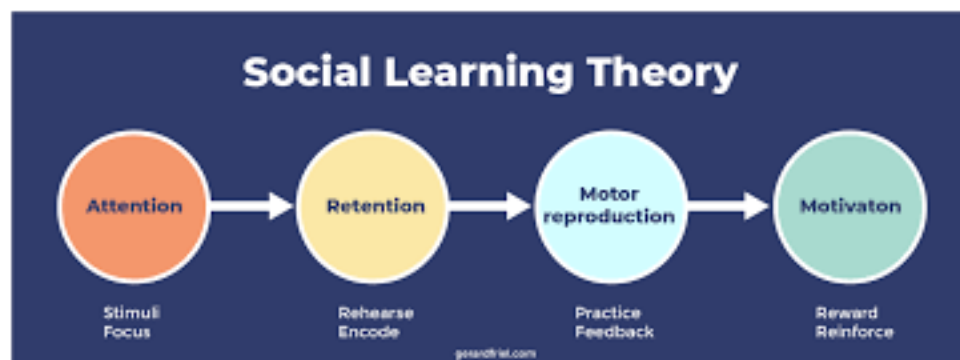
behavior is preserved or eradicated (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) social learning theory applies to behavioral marital therapy, which suggests individuals observe, model, and imitate the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions to modify their behaviors. Dysfunction transpires when maladaptive instead of adaptive behaviors are rewarded (Bandura, 1977).

Observation is an effective way for individuals and couples to develop new behaviors and learn whether a behavior is appropriate or not. Social learning arises when an individual has witnessed behavior and then finds themselves in a parallel situation and is faced with whether to respond in the same manner, signifying that the learning through observation has been cognitively stored (Bandura, 1977). The Social Learning Theory is essential to elaborate on the importance of behavior in marriage and how individuals modify their behavior based on four main components. It is anticipated that this proposed case study assisted in advancing Bandura's theory by directly relating it to the Christian marital relationship.

The social learning theory, which psychologist Albert Bandura (1977) developed directly relates to the marital relationship because when couples work through a conflict, they are also learning and observing behaviors to be learned or avoided. The version implemented within this case study incorporates four components: Attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation.

Figure 1.

Social Learning Theory (Gerard Learning Design, 2020)



Attention

According to Bandura's SLT model, attention is the component that stresses that individuals need to be cognizant of their behavior, understand the outcomes that result from those behaviors, and form the behavior (Bandura, 1977). In terms of this proposed study, this component focuses on the importance of spouses paying attention to one another. When spouses are distracted or too concerned about religious over-idealization - their full attention is not present, negatively impacting the marital relationship (Bandura, 1977). Similarly, pastors' perspectives of couples' behaviors and subsequent outcomes in the marital relationship may influence how pastors view a couple's ability to function.

Retention

According to Bandura's SLT model, retention is the component that focuses on the ability of a behavior to be remembered (Bandura, 1977). Although it is common for individuals to recognize a behavior –behavior is not always remembered, which impedes imitation (Bandura, 1977). In relation to this case study, individuals need to be cognizant of their behavior, understand the outcomes that result from those behaviors, and form the behavior (Bandura, 1977). In terms of this proposed study, this component relates to the marital relationship

regarding how spouses store information. When spouses discuss vital information, retention plays a vital role in avoiding conflict in the marital relationship (Bandura, 1977). Pastors may deem a couple's ability to cope with relationship maintenance and crises within their marriage by focusing on the retention of a couple.

Reproduction

According to Bandura's SLT model, reproduction is the element that focuses on the ability of the demonstrated behavior to be performed (Bandura, 1977). Regarding this study, when spouses accurately display the first two components, attention and retention, husbands and wives can reproduce the behavior observed (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, pastors' views or beliefs on a couple's ability to reproduce a behavior can be influenced by religion, community-centered social processes, and religious over-idealization. Spouses can help resolve conflict by implementing the appropriate behavior within the marital relationship.

Motivation

According to Bandura's SLT model, motivation is the component that strictly focuses on the will of an individual to perform the behavior (Bandura, 1977). Regarding this qualitative study, this fourth component of Bandura's SLT is crucial in the marital relationship. A pastor's perspective of a couple overcoming conflict within their marriage may be influenced by a couple's motivation in not permitting community-centered social processes and religious over-idealization to interfere in maintaining and coping with a crisis within their marriage. Husbands and wives must hold one another accountable and assist their spouses in learning the new behavior through reinforcement (Bandura, 1977). Both spouses' motivation needs to be present for adequate learning to occur.

A Biblical worldview abetted in establishing this study as well. Multiple core values fall under a Biblical worldview that incorporates focusing on an individual's call from God and their overall purpose, finding truth from the Bible and God, and morals (Valk, 2020). A biblical worldview is grounded on the unfailing scripture of God. In a Biblical worldview, individuals believe scripture is true, and the Bible is the foundation of all aspects of their life (Strom & Faw, 2017). Confusion can occur when couples do not share a biblical worldview, and a marriage can be misled and lost in what God truly intended marriage to be (Strom & Faw, 2017).

In marriage, couples may feel that there is a sense of imbalance in their daily interactions with one another. When these imbalances continuously occur, the likelihood of marital conflict increases (Mendicino, 2018). When an imbalance is present within a marriage, at least one spouse is always seeking more than the current expectations within the marriage (Mendicino, 2018). This unsatisfactory balance of power amongst spouses leads to marital conflict and emotional unbalance (Mendicino, 2018). Although conflict arises within marriage when power struggles occur, it is usually not the conflict that is the focal problem but the process couples take to resolve those imbalances and expectations (Mendicino, 2018). It is crucial that neither spouse ever feels entitled within their marriage and that both spouses know they must understand the importance of pursuing their spouse and letting their partner know they are cared for, loved, and respected (Mendicino, 2018).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION – 3-4 PARAGRAPHS (also dependent on the number of theories used).			
The student discusses the theoretical importance (and by extension and associated frameworks) that undergird the study. Also being sure to address if the theory has been utilized in previous research using empirical citations.	3	3	

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION – 3-4 PARAGRAPHS (also dependent on the number of theories used).			
The student provides a clear understanding of how the theory connects to the proposed study – including any theoretical components.	3	3	
Student explains thoroughly how the proposed study may advance the theory.	3	3	
The student appropriately cites the theory to the original researcher responsible for its development and any subsequent modifications are properly cited.	3	3	
Student provides a visual graphic of the study for understanding.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well. Correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
The student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completion, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Related Literature

The literature review provides the groundwork for this proposed study by understanding the influence of religiosity, community-centered social processes, and religious over-idealization on the marital relationship within the current literature. The researcher has divided the literature review into several themes, including; Views and Purpose of Christian Marriage, Pastors' View of the Purpose of Marriage, Christian Couple's View of the Purpose of Marriage, Characteristics of Christian Marriage/Spouses, Marital Satisfaction in Christian Couples, Marital

Conflict/Conflict Resolution Strategies in Christian Couples, Power of Soft Words and Temperance, Forgiveness, and Biblical Marriage Counseling, Forgiveness, Over-Idealization, and Outcomes of Christian Couples. These themes are essential in understanding the worldview of Christians and Christian pastors related to marriage and couples' ability to cope with marital crises. Understanding this viewpoint is especially important considering that a substantial portion of the population (Parker & Stepler, 2020), over half of all Americans, are married.

A Christian marriage is a relationship that affects many individuals and is vital to discuss. Marriage is one of the most critical relationships affecting individuals' well-being throughout adulthood (Thomas et al., 2017). When an individual is a part of a healthy and happy marriage, their overall mental and physical health is enhanced substantially (Thomas et al., 2017). Being happily married is associated with better psychological and physical health (Thomas et al., 2017). Due to the marital relationship being such a substantial part of an individual's well-being, it is fundamental to understand better how couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion on couples' ability to cope with marital crises.

Views and Purpose of Christian Marriage

Understanding how Christian couples and pastors define and view marriage is critical to this proposed study. Although conflict and crises will inevitably arise at different stages of marriage, this theme contributes to helping the reader understand that Christians view marriage as a covenant that cannot be broken regardless of the challenges that may emerge. Marriage is the oldest human establishment, which began in the Garden of Eden.

Adam was created first by God, followed by Eve, who was created as a companion for Adam, which began the origin of marriage in establishing this creation of both man and woman (King James Bible, 1769/2017). God intended marriage to be for man and woman and must be

protected and preserved (King James Bible, 1769/2017). Matthew 19:6 informs individuals that the sacrament of marriage takes two individuals and makes them one in God (King James Bible, 1769/2017).

It is reasonable to assume that pastors believe there are roles that both the husband and wife were assigned when they wed. Chukwuma et al. utilized the descriptive research methodology and examined the peril of conflict between husbands and wives concerning biblical proverbs (Chukwuma et al., 2020). This article focuses on the messages presented in the Book of Proverbs to resolve marital conflicts between husbands and wives (Olajuyin, 2019). The research completed by Chukwuama et al. (2020) utilizes the Bible as a primary source and books, journal articles, and the internet to collect data.

The husband was always viewed as the head of the household from the beginning of the institution of marriage from a Christian perspective (Martin, 2017). A husband's primary responsibility is to lead his wife and family to come to know God and to put Him at the center of everything each family member does, says, and thinks (Martin, 2017). The husband's role of having the power to direct his family also presents him with the responsibility to provide for his wife and family financially and protect his wife and family (Martin, 2017). The husband is known for displaying the qualities of the Two P's— the provider and the protector (Martin, 2017).

In marriage, both the husband and wife have roles. In the book *Christian marriage: A comprehensive introduction*, author Ayers (2018) elaborated on God's intention for the husband's role. Husbands are called to love their wives just as God has loved the church (Ayers, 2018). Regarding the calling God has for the role of the wife, He explains in Genesis 2:18 that women were created so that man is not alone (King James Bible, 1769/2017). Under the husband's authority, wives are called to guide their marriage and family (King James Bible,

1769/2017). The book of Genesis also claimed that God granted the wife the responsibility of conceiving and nursing children (King James Bible, 1769/2017).

It is reasonable to assume that if a couple wants to have marital satisfaction, it is essential to understand the overall purpose of marriage. Certain qualities can assist in contributing to the success of the marital relationship. Two components explored concerning a couple's marital satisfaction are Christian religiosity and traditional marriage attitudes. Klausli (2020) completed a qualitative study with 200 participants, including 128 women and 72 men ranging from 21 to 62 years old and were in a Christian marriage. Klausli (2020) explored how spirituality and marital satisfaction are linked – with a specific focus on regular service attendance at church and prayer as a couple. When Christ is the center of a marriage, the relationship becomes a truly unbreakable force and makes it impossible for the enemy to contend with (Klausli, 2020). Klausli (2020) discussed the influence on marriages when couples have a unifying spiritual belief that they prioritize within their marriage; Christian couples declared their marriage is overall more satisfactory than couples who lack God and faith.

Some factors contribute to marital longevity and satisfaction. Karimi et al. (2019) completed a systematic review of the literature as part of their qualitative study that explored fundamental protective factors in long-term marriages (Karimi et al. 2019). Karimi et al. completed a database search for articles with vital terms concerning the longevity of marriage; 1,706 articles were retrieved from the comprehensive database searches, and of these – twenty-five articles were utilized for the review process (Karimi et al., 2019).

The six main aspects of marital relationships important for longevity and satisfaction include religious agreement, commitment, love and attachment, respect, intimacy, forgiveness, and loyalty (Karimi et al., 2019). These factors contributed to couples maintaining a good

marriage. Although all these factors contribute to marital longevity and satisfaction, they genuinely impact a couple's religion and spirituality in moments of hardship. Furthermore, authors reported that religion and spirituality amongst spouses helped promote healthy coping strategies that encourage commitment, accept adversity, and enhance stability (Karimi et al., 2019).

Christians believe that the sole purpose of marriage is to love their spouse the way God loves His children. This belief plays a critical role in religion's influence on these couples overcoming marital conflict. Couples attempt to mirror God's love within the marital relationship

Christian couple's view of the purpose of marriage. Christian couples have a strong view of marriage and what marriage entails. In Christian marriages, the Bible sets the foundation for a husband and wife's purpose of being joined together as one. Author Barton (2016) discussed conclusions drawn from a personal perspective as a biblical scholar regarding interpreting what the Bible states about marriage and family. According to the author's perspective, Christian couples view marriage as a union of two people coming together to fulfill God's kingdom here on Earth; marriage involves two individuals becoming one despite their differences (Barton, 2016).

Many Christian married couples define marriage similarly by focusing on the crucial role of God in the marital relationship. In her qualitative study, Koçyiğit Özyiğit (2017) had a total of fourteen participants ranging from 22 to 32 to assist in determining how married students who are in their final year of college would define the meaning of marriage. Koçyiğit Özyiğit (2017) results indicated that when two individuals come together to take the next step in their relationship, both individuals are truly unified when they both are grounded in their faith that

God is at the center of their marriage (Koçyiğit Özyiğit, 2017). Koçyiğit Özyiğit (2017) also highlighted the urge and need for individuals to not only love others but also receive love in return. Aside from love, couples need to address other needs within a marriage.

One of these other key qualities in a marriage that positively affect conflict resolution is prioritizing God as the marriage center. For instance, in his book, Christian sociologist David Ayers (2018), focused on social science research and empirical data to display a vivid picture of marriage as a covenant and foundation for human flourishing in marriage. Ayers (2018) weaved together biblical texts, social science, and his personal experience in providing insights into a Christian marriage (Ayers, 2018).

God did not intend for marriage simply for pleasure but to have two individuals come together to fulfill His purpose. Although conflict is inevitable in all marriages, Christian couples can overcome conflict and crisis due to focusing as a union to fulfill God's purpose here on Earth (Klausli, 2020). Presumably, Christian couples should display Christ's love to their spouse and all of God's children by looking outwards past themselves and towards others through acts of service and love. Biblically speaking, there are two primary purposes regarding God's creation of marriage. The first purpose of marriage is procreation, and the second is intimacy (Margelisch et al., 2017).

Procreation is one of God's purposes for marriage for both man and woman. Procreation refers to God's calling for married couples to reproduce and multiply to fill His Earth with children that will live out God's purpose for them (Margelisch et al., 2017). In Genesis 1:28, God calls husband and wife to be fruitful and fill the Earth with individuals who will fulfill His kingdom and purpose (King James Bible, 1769/2017). This part of scripture calls Christian couples to procreate and to know that children are a pure blessing from God (King James Bible,

1769/2017). Christian couples are instructed through the Word to pray that their children will grow up in "the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (King James Bible, 1769/2017, pg.102). It is essential to recognize that not every couple will be able to procreate, and these couples can still glorify God in their marriage by coming together as husband and wife and fulfilling God's mission on Earth together as a team.

Intimacy is a second purpose. God created the union of marriage between males and females. Although intimacy can relate to sexual intimacy, intimacy refers to much more than just this type of intimacy (Squires, 2016). There are five main types of intimacy, and when these five types of intimacy are not fulfilled by a spouse's significant other, conflict can arise. In marriage, the following types of intimacy should be displayed: Intellectual or cognitive intimacy, social intimacy, emotional intimacy, spiritual intimacy, and physical intimacy (Squires, 2016).

Intellectual or cognitive intimacy is intended to have spouses openly exchange their opinions, thoughts, and concerns. When spouses feel heard and listened to, a level of stimulation is reached, which aids couples in growing closer to one another and strengthen their marital relationship (Squires, 2016). Social intimacy relates to couples truly living life together by finding activities to do together, spending time with one another's friends, and planning date nights (Squires, 2016). Emotional intimacy corresponds to sharing emotions. In this type of intimacy, it is crucial for spouses to feel that their spouse empathizes with them and attempts to understand their partner's feelings (Squires, 2016). Spiritual intimacy comes from nurturing spouses' religious beliefs by praying together and taking the time to read scripture together.

The fifth and final type of intimacy that couples should strive to achieve in their marriage is physical intimacy, such as a simple touch, hug, or kiss (Squires, 2016). Physical intimacy within marriage is intended to serve God by establishing a relationship of God-honoring

intimacy and faithfulness that depicts the eschatological affection that the church of our Lord will enjoy with Christ, her bridegroom (Squires, 2016). Marriage is a central component of two individuals becoming one and is crucial to forming a family. When a marital relationship is satisfactory, and couples are happy within their relationship, there is a direct correlation to both individual's well-being and marital stability (Squires, 2016).

It is evident from the results of Klausli (2020), Chukwuma et al. (2020), Ayers (2018), Liefbroer and Rijken (2019), Squires (2016), Barton (2016), and scripture that living a God-fulfilling marriage that glorifies Jesus through spouses' interactions, communication, and daily spiritual journey is of the high priority of purpose to both pastors' and couples' overall view of marriage. Understanding Christian couples' views and the purpose of marriage are critical to this proposed study. It is essential for spouses never to lose vision of God's calling for marriage and remember the vows that, although said on the wedding day, should be displayed in the couple's marriage daily (Margelisch et al., 2017). Regarding the marital relationship, there are essential characteristics associated with Christian spouses and the Christian marriage.

Characteristics of Christian Marriage/Spouses

Exploring the literature regarding Christian marriage and spouses' characteristics is crucial to this proposed qualitative study. Certain qualities in Christian couples help spouses overcome conflict or crises that occur within the marital relationship. Investigating characteristics of Christian spouses and their marriage assisted in understanding what qualities and factors within a Christian marriage influence a couple's ability to overcome conflict and crises when it occurs.

There are vital qualities that spouses display and implement within Christian marriages. Author David Mullins (2016) completed a qualitative study to determine the effects of religion

on enduring Christian marriages by completing in-depth interviews with 43 Christian couples (Mullins, 2016). One quality that was determined from this study is that when spouses view their marriage as sacred, their marriage can overcome stressful events endured by couples (Mullins, 2016). When couples view their marital relationship as sacred, they are more likely to remain committed to their marriage because they want to abide by the promise that has been made to God and honestly believe that the union of marriage is God's will (Mullins, 2016). Qualities such as forgiveness, sacrifice, and commitment assist couples in resolving or preventing conflict (Mullins, 2016).

Not only are there qualities that assist in helping couples to have a successful marriage, but there are also three main qualities that Christian couples can implement within their marriage to make their relationship as Christ-like as possible (Wallace-Goddard, 2016). Wallace-Goddard et al. (2016) completed a qualitative study with 1,513 heterosexually married individual spouses that were selected from Arkansas, Utah, and Vermont. Attributes were examined within these individuals' marriages; These characteristics included humility, compassion, and positivity (Wallace-Goddard, 2016). When these three qualities are practiced by couples and displayed within the marriage, they are building a Godly marriage that corresponds to the Bible's calling for man and woman to have a harmonious and satisfactory life-long marriage (Wallace-Goddard, 2016).

Attributes are examined within the marital relationship to determine the impact on longevity and success. The first attribute, humility, is related to spouses accepting the truth that there are times in a marriage that one must accept being wrong and that one's spouse may have something of value to offer; and when spouses honor when another, they cherish one another (Wallace-Goddard, 2016).

When the second quality, compassion, is displayed in marriage, husbands or wives wholeheartedly not only acknowledge but can accept differences between themselves and their spouse (Wallace-Goddard, 2016). Compassion encourages spouses to meet their partners where they are and promotes a deep understanding between spouses. The third characteristic, positivity, relates to the presence of emotions, including gratitude, love, and joy (Wallace-Goddard, 2016). When positivity is present within the marital relationship, spouses declare their relationship to be more satisfactory, and spouses can truly enjoy their commitment and thrive daily with their husband or wife (Wallace-Goddard, 2016).

Some qualities assist in helping couples have a successful marriage, but there are also three main qualities that Christian couples can implement to make their relationship as Christ-like as possible (Wallace-Goddard, 2016). The first attribute, humility, related to spouses accepting the truth that and that there are times in a marriage that one must accept being wrong and that one's spouse may have something of value to offer; and when spouses honor when another, they cherish one another (Wallace-Goddard, 2016). These three attributes are examined within the marital relationship to determine the impact on the longevity and success of a marriage.

When the second quality, compassion, is displayed in marriage, husbands or wives wholeheartedly acknowledge, but they can accept differences between themselves and their spouse (Wallace-Goddard, 2016). Compassion promotes spouses to meet their partner where they are and promotes a deep understanding between spouses. The third characteristic, positivity, relates to the presence of emotions, including gratitude, love, and joy (Wallace-Goddard, 2016). When positivity is present within the marital relationship, spouses declare their relationship to be

more satisfactory, and spouses can genuinely enjoy their commitment and thrive daily with their husband or wife (Wallace-Goddard, 2016).

Mullins (2016), Doe (2016), Wallace-Goddard (2016), Faber (2009), and Fentz and Trillingsgaard (2016) concurred that the characteristics of marriage and spouses as a vital theme in the discussion of this qualitative case study to determine each spouse's role, and God's calling for the sacrament of marriage. Doe (2016) and Fentz and Trillingsgaard (2016) conveyed the importance of effective and consistent communication within marriage. Although there are vital qualities within marriage, the most important quality for spouses is their love for God; when spouses love God first, they can love their spouse well (Doe, 2016; Fentz & Trillingsgaard, 2016; Mullins, 2016; Wallace-Goddard, 2016).

Marital Satisfaction in Christian Couples

Marital satisfaction in Christian couples is a fundamental theme in this case study, due to marital satisfaction or lack-there-of potentially leading to marital conflict. Marital satisfaction is crucial in preserving strong marriages and ensuring the couple's and each spouse's well-being. One way religiosity plays a role in marital satisfaction is by helping prepare couples for the next step in their relationship; marriage (Bahnaru et al., 2019). Religiosity directly correlates to increased marital satisfaction (Bahnaru et al., 2019). A Christian's devotion to their faith, but ultimately to God, helps safeguard couples from declining marital satisfaction (Bahnaru et al., 2019). When it comes to marital satisfaction, it is essential to understand that the overall needs of both spouses must be met. Presumably, marriage should be beneficial for both individuals in the marriage. When an individual feels satisfied within their marriage, there is a direct connection to the individual feeling and individual satisfaction with their life and overall well-being.

A marriage is tremendously influenced when both spouses prioritize God in their personal life and when God is prioritized at the center of the marital relationship (Ayers, 2018). To positively affect marital discord, couples have tools to utilize. The first five years of marriage are a critical stepping-stone to establishing a solid foundation for the marital relationship. Klausli (2020) completed a qualitative study on 100 Christian couples in their first five years of marriage to determine if attending weekly service and prioritizing prayer within each spouse's individual lives would positively affect the marital relationship. In these 100 couples, Klausli (2020) concluded that engagement in weekly service, prayer with one another, and the overall connection of spirituality increased the marital relationship and spouses' overall well-being. When couples share their faith and religious beliefs and are open to growing their faith together, there is a direct link to an increase in their marital longevity.

A husband and wife's closeness to God helps couples not only bond with one another and work on the foundation of their marriage and what they have been called to do in the sacrament of marriage, but it also helps to maintain the couple's relationship by establishing the groundwork to their life together as well as ascertaining a solid source of commonality (Klausli, 2020). The closeness of both husband and wife is displayed on multiple levels. Klausli (2020) examined the different levels of closeness present when couples take the time to strengthen their faith, not just in their journey with Christ but also in their journey with Christ together as a couple (Klausli, 2020).

Furthermore, according to Klausli's (2020) results, taking the time to build stepping stones in a marriage is key to success. Marriage is the start of a couple being forever together; it is a life-long commitment to one person. Marriage entails two individuals to grow in selflessness, and selflessness must be constantly displayed in marriage and consistently worked on because

marriage is intended to serve God and both spouses with sacrificial love (Klausli, 2020).

Marriage is more than a physical coalition; Marriage is also both an emotional and spiritual union between two individuals to mirror the marriage between God and His Church (Klausli, 2020). When selflessness is displayed within a marriage, spouses can come together to help one another fulfill God's purpose here on Earth.

Christians are impacted at multiple stages in their marriage due to their faith. One stage that marital satisfaction impacts occur before a couple is married; they are the steps an individual takes in selecting their spouse, deciding to get married, and when to get married. A Christian's faith assists in all three of these choices, which could lead to a good marriage because they lean on God for whom He has selected for them, and again they lean on God's timing to take the next step in their relationship (Bahnaru et al., 2019).

Early marriage is the next stage in which a Christian's faith positively impacts marital satisfaction. A couple's faith impacts this stage by influencing both spouses to implement their morals in decision-making. A couple's faith increases marital satisfaction by helping couples to focus on crucial qualities that must be displayed in a healthy and satisfactory marriage, including unconditional love, commitment, and passion (Bahnaru et al., 2019).

A third stage impacted by a Christian couple's faith, which directly increases marital satisfaction, is couples who enter the stage of starting a family. Many couples struggle when raising children due to confrontations arising regarding how they want to raise their children (Bahnaru et al., 2019). Christian couples allow their faith to be their foundation, which positively impacts raising their children and decision-making regarding their child's future, decreasing the likelihood of marital satisfaction (Bahnaru et al., 2019).

The final stage that is impacted by a Christian couple's faith, which directly increases a couple's marital satisfaction, is the stage when children leave their parents' home (Bahnaru et al., 2019). Many couples experience hardships when their children leave home due to couples experiencing a lack of connection without their children present (Bahnaru et al., 2019). Christian couples can face this stage with grace, love, and confidence, knowing that God has their children in His hands and that this is a part of marriage that God has designed for couples to refocus on one another (Bahnaru et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, not all individuals and couples experience satisfaction within their marriage. There is a vast difference between a couple's marital satisfaction in Christian marriages versus couples who lack God in their marriage (Marks, 2018). In the article, *How Does Religion Influence Marriage?* Marks (2018) implemented the qualitative approach to clarify religion's direct impact on a couple's marital satisfaction and success by interviewing 76 couples with school-aged children. Conflict occurs in all marriages, but conflict is also handled differently in marriages. Although conflict is unavoidable, and all marriages face conflict at some point in their marriage, it is evident from Marks' (2018) research that religiosity provided a strong foundation for Christian couples to overcome conflict at a high success rate due to being grounded and focused on their faith (Marks, 2018).

Conclusion: Being aware of these seven stages of marriage will assist couples in establishing while also maintaining marital satisfaction. When couples do not have a strong faith and God as their foundation, some stages will conflict and cause hardships. The seven stages of passion, realization, rebellion, cooperation, reunion, explosion, and completion help couples to draw closer to one another and work towards having a stronger and happier marriage by better understanding the hardships as well as joys that arise as marriage evolves (Faber, 2009). The

information presented within Faber's book is supported by a survey completed by over 1,000 participants (Faber, 2009).

Couples experience seven stages in their marriage that significantly impact the overall marital relationship, but so does stress present within individual spouses or the marriage. Although the seven stages that occur within marriage are critical regarding marital conflict, stress is also a vital topic. In the qualitative study by Fentz and Trillingsgaard (2016), research was completed with 2,152 participants, or 1,076 couples, to determine the qualities of poorer mental health in marriages and what assisted in increasing each spouse's overall health. Fentz and Trillingsgaard's (2016) study determined that stress was the key contributor to a spouse's mental health decline. Furthermore, the factor that helped the most in increasing a spouse's overall mental health was consistent and effective communication with their significant other (Fentz & Trillingsgaard, 2016). It is critical to understand that conflict in the marital relationship is inevitable, and therefore spouses need to implement conflict resolution strategies when conflict arises.

Marital Conflict/ Conflict Resolution Strategies in Christian Couples

Marital conflict and conflict resolution strategies in Christian couples are essential in this research study because this case study solely focuses on the influence of religion on Christian couples, precisely when conflict arises within the marital relationship. Conflict arises in marriages for many reasons, but how conflict is addressed and overcome is critical to the success and satisfaction of marriage (Timmons et al., 2016). The influence of religion plays a role in how Christian couples handle crises and conflict in their marriage and was discussed in this section of the literature review.

As seen from the longitudinal study completed by Timmons et al. (2016) that consisted of

114 couples, stress is a vital component that leads to conflict. Stress plays a significant role in marital conflict by causing couples to react negatively towards their spouse, resulting in an increase in confrontation due to more intense emotions being involved because of stress (Timmons et al., 2016). Stress negatively impacts conflict within marriage by causing the conflict to last longer due to couples losing focus of the actual conflict and turning their focus towards their spouse's negative communication or actions. The more prolonged conflict lasts, the greater the difficulty to overcome.

Although stress plays a role in conflict within marriage, communication is also essential in discussing conflict within marriage. In every marriage, Christian couples overcome conflict at a higher success rate. This is due to the commonality of relying on God when hardship occurs (Cirhinlioğlu et al., 2018). In the qualitative study by Cirhinlioğlu et al. (2018), 510 married individuals, including 255 men and 255 women, completed interviews and questionnaires related to marital satisfaction and religiosity (Marks, 2018).

A major source of marital conflict can be religion. Lambert and Dollahite (2006) completed a study by interviewing 57 highly religious couples to determine the impact of religion on conflict within the marital relationship and on resolving conflict in marriage (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006). In regard to religion affecting conflict within marriage, conflict occurs three times greater within the marital relationship when the wife regularly attends religious services, but the husband lacks attending service (Heaton, 1997). There are greater marital disagreements when disparities in religious attendance patterns occur (Curtis & Ellison, 2002).

Although dissimilarity amongst religious dedication within the marital relationship can result in conflict, when there is a unified sense of religious participation, there is a higher

association with conflict resolution (Dudley & Kosinski, 1990). Curtis and Ellison (2002) divulged that men's religious attendance positively affected decreasing marital arguments (Curtis & Ellison, 2002). Not only does the unification of religious beliefs help decrease conflict within the marital relationship, but Lorig & Holeman (2003) found that couples can forgive one another when conflict arises (Lorig & Holeman, 2003).

During the 57 interviews that Lambert and Dollahite performed, couples felt that having shared sacred purpose and vision with their spouse greatly assisted in conflict prevention while also discovering that stress levels were highly reduced in marriage when spouses share religious activities (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006).

During their study, relational virtues were also discussed. Two common qualities discussed were selflessness and unconditional love. Alisia, a Catholic Latino biologist who was a participant in Lambert and Dollahite's (2006) study, stated, "The principle that we learned from God's message is not to be selfish. Be humble. And, caring for the other and giving. And one of the messages that I remember they instilled was "the other." It's not much about your needs, but what is it you can do for others" (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006 pg.2).

Prayer was also highly associated with couples resolving conflict (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006). Many couples discussed that prayer alleviated anger and facilitated open communication with their spouse (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006). In Lambert and Dollahite's (2006) study, they discovered that prayer was a powerful tool that was able to reduce spouses' expressions of anger and promote open communication, which ultimately led to a decrease in marital conflict and resolving conflict when it was present within the marital relationship (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006).

Conflict resolution was also discussed within this study. Lambert and Dollahite (2006) defined conflict resolution as what spouses do to restore and promote harmony within the marital relationship when conflict is present (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006). Scriptural readings were ways couples were able to resolve conflict. Many couples discussed turning to scripture when conflict arises in their marital relationship. When spouses turned to scripture during the conflict, they could focus on specific teachings presented within scripture that helped couples work through their disagreement and find unity (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006).

Many counselors who have worked with non-religious couples have noted that when conflict arises amongst atheist couples, they tend to leave the conflict unresolved, which then later leads to more significant conflict, or the conflict is addressed in a way where fighting occurs instead of focusing on resolving the underlying issue (Cirhinlioğlu et al., 2018). All couples can overcome conflict in their marriage, but non-Christians lack a strong unifying faith as a foundation in marriage, which leaves secular couples more challenging to resolve conflict. In contrast, Christian couples can overcome conflict because of the influence of the religion of the marital relationship (Cirhinlioğlu et al., 2018). According to the study's results, prayer, sermons, and worship are three main factors Christian couples relate to in overcoming conflict (Cirhinlioğlu et al., 2018).

Conflict occurs in all marriages. However, Cirhinlioğlu et al. (2018), Marks (2018), and Bahnaru et al. (2019) elaborated on marital satisfaction as a fundamental discussion in the influence of religion on Christian couples overcoming marital conflict and crises. Even though conflict is inevitable in all marriages, overall marital satisfaction should not decrease when conflict arises due to Christian couples relying on healthy conflict resolution strategies and, above all, relying on God as their ultimate healer and provider. Based on the research, Christian

couples have greater marital satisfaction due, at least in part, to the foundation they establish by prioritizing God and their faith (Timmons et al., 2016). Understanding Christian marriage characteristics may promote understanding marital conflict and conflict resolution, another central theme of this proposed qualitative study.

Conflict arises in all marital relationships, but couples are more likely to overcome conflict when God is present in the couple's marriage. In Kroff et al. (2018) qualitative study, twenty-three Christian families, including forty-six parents and ten youth, discussed themes related to marital strengths during qualitative interviews (Kroff et al., 2018). Like the findings by Özyiğit (2017) regarding unity, Kroff et al. (2018) reported that although conflict will arise within a marriage, the participants believed that when God is at the center of a marriage, there is no crisis that a marriage cannot overcome (Kroff et al., 2018); When couples keep God in the center of their marriage, each spouse has personal qualities that can be instrumental to the marriage. For example, according to Kroff et al. (2018), there are three main qualities that both spouses should aspire to display daily within their marriage. These elements include trust, respect, and God's love (Kroff et al., 2018). When couples can demonstrate trust, respect, and God's sacrificial love, spouses can withstand many obstacles and trials within their marriage.

A couple's ability to trust in God even when conflict arises is a significant influence of religion on Christian marriages. Christian couples take the time to establish trust in their personal lives by relying on God's Word and His timing, but Christian couples also take the time to ensure their marriage has trust and their spouse fully trusts their significant other (Kroff et al., 2018). Trust is established in a marriage when spouses align their words and actions, are honest, apologize for past wrongs, have open communication, and promote and establish a safe place for their significant other (Kroff et al., 2018). Although trust is crucial, there are other key qualities

that Christian couples share that positively affect the resolution of conflicts that arise within their marriage.

In marriage, spouses must communicate and interact with one another effectively. When conflict is present, it is feasible that many couples avoid their spouse out of frustration or to avoid discussing the conflict. Not only does negative interaction between spouses directly affect the marriage, but both individuals' health is also negatively impacted (Martin et al., 2015).

Communication occurs between two or more individuals. There is a sender, the individual or group of people that deliver information, and a receiver, the individual or group that obtains the information the sender is delivering (Chukwuma et al., 2020). Communication is the most crucial skill for couples to have a long, healthy, and good marriage. Marriage is truly one never-ending conversation and covers many topics including, but not limited to, wants, needs, concerns, children, and daily plans. Communication is arguably necessary for working together to reach decisions and support one another.

Communication can dramatically impact the way conflict unfurls. When a marriage lacks effective communication, it may not leave a pathway for spouses to convey their thoughts and concerns. Additionally, a lack of communication may leave husbands and wives no avenue to adequately express in words their love for one another (Okoye, 2001). Conflict may manifest into violence when communication is not present or ineffective, but when communication is existent and effective, it permits learning and growth within the marriage; therefore, communication is fundamental in conflict resolution (Okorafor, 2003). Although communication is crucial to overcoming conflict within the marital relationship, spouses need to be aware of the three leading causes of conflict concerning marriage.

In marriage, there are common topics that lead to conflict within marriage. Asadi et al.

(2021) completed a qualitative study that included 45 married women in determining the overall quality of their relationship by participating in in-depth interviews and focus groups (Asadi et al., 2021). These causes that lead to marital conflict include a lack of communication/effective communication, a lack of discussion and plan about finances, and an allotment of time together as husband and wife and as a family (Asadi et al., 2021). These causes of conflict are significant components of simple self-satisfaction and marital satisfaction; therefore, when conflict arises due to these three cases, it may lead to a bad marriage. Although conflict is inevitable in marriage, resolving conflict between couples is crucial to the marital relationship (Asadi et al., 2021). Conflict resolution relates to the approaches and methods of terminating a dispute peaceably between two or more individuals (Asadi et al., 2021).

Conflict resolution skills are essential skills in marriage. In the literature, conflict resolution is simply defined as the procedures of terminating a quarrel peacefully between two or more individuals who do not agree with one another (Shonk, 2019). Christian couples can resolve their conflict at a much higher rate than couples who lack faith and God as the priority of their marriage by rooting themselves in the Bible and taking biblical approaches to resolving conflict that arises within their relationship. Christians are not out to win the fight with their spouse, but instead they strive to highlight the positive and assuage the negative. Even in times of conflict Christian couples can resolve conflict by assuring that they are not tearing down their spouse and pointing blame; they acknowledge that marriage takes both individuals working together and putting forth an immense amount of effort daily. Conflict resolution strategies are vital for couples to implement within their marriage to resolve conflict healthily, and one study in the literature attested there are multiple ways that Christian couples can implement within

their marriage to resolve conflict. First, Thessalonians 5: 11 states, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are doing” (King James Bible, 1769/2017, pg. 389).

Marital conflict, although inevitable, can be overcome. It is vital when conflict arises for both husband and wife to implement the seven main conflict resolution strategies. It is also crucial for spouses to whole-heartedly forgive their spouses. Anderson and Rajeswari Natrajan-Tyagi (2016), Chukwuma et al. (2020), Frye-Cox et al. (2021), Martin et al. (2015), and Timmons et al. (2016) discussed marital conflict and conflict resolution strategies in Christian couples by addressing common causes of conflict within marriage and addressing beneficial conflict resolution strategies that spouses can implement to help them overcome conflict within marriage. The power of soft words and the implementation of temperance is another critical theme in overcoming marital conflict. Christian couples turn to scripture as the ultimate source of truth and guidance, and God calls husbands and wives to implement both soft words and temperance in their marriage (Ozor, 2018; Ugwuoye, 2019)

which is a theme that will be discussed next.

Power of Soft Words and Temperance

The power of soft words and the implementation of temperance is a vital theme in this case study because both soft words and temperance could positively impact couples overcoming marital conflict. According to Clarke (1832), Christian couples utilize the power of soft words to avoid using harsh words when conflict arises, which assists couples in overcoming conflict (Clarke, 1832). Proverbs 15: 1 discusses that when individuals use harsh words, anger results, but when people turn to soft words, anger does not arise (King James Bible, 1769/2017). The influence of religion on Christian couples overcoming conflict and crises within their marriage is

highly affected by the implementation of soft words and temperance between spouses (Ozor, 2018; Ugwuoye, 2019).

Soft words are gentle, kind-hearted, compassionate, and sympathetic to the other individual's feelings and emotions, not harsh, and are not used out of anger (Chukwuma et al., 2020). When couples focus on soft words in their marital relationship, it is known as the instrument for conflict resolution (Chukwuma et al., 2020, Proverbs 15:1). Humility is often displayed when soft words are used because it is not always easy for spouses to use soft words when their spouses may turn to use harsh words.

Christian couples are influenced by religion in the way they choose their words. According to Clarke (1832), a single word of anger will always generate another; therefore, words of gentleness and love will produce kindness, and rage will produce rage (Clarke, 1832). Echoed within God's Word, Proverbs 15:1 emphasizes that soft words restore relationships while harsh words result in anger and more significant conflict (King James Bible, 1769/2017). Although it is not always easy, Christians should not conform to the way others react and should be careful with their words knowing that words hurt.

Christians are reminded that silence is not only appropriate, but it is at times encouraged during the conflict. Silence promotes time with God to listen to His Word. By doing so, God provides spouses with the appropriate words to speak to their husband or wife to avoid the consequence of harsh words, which results in spouses being torn down (Ozor, 2018). According to research, but biblically, words play an influential role in the relationship between spouses and their ability to overcome conflict within their marriage.

Although the power of soft words is vital in a Christian couple's ability to overcome conflict, the skill of temperance is also essential. Christian couples can cope with crises and

conflicts within their marriage because of their faithfulness to follow God's Word in being slow to anger. They should not allow their temporary emotions or conflict to interfere with their life-long commitment and promise they made to one another. In Malachi 2:14, God's Word describes marriage as a covenant to which God is a witness (King James Bible, 1769/2017). This covenant is not to be broken because two individuals who marry are joined in the name of God to be together through the good times and bad times and sickness and health (King James Bible, 1769/2017).

Temperance is another vital skill that Christian couples implement within their marriage to resolve conflicts. Temperance is an individual's self-control or self-discipline; it is the ability of an individual to control their thoughts, words, and actions to restrain from speaking or acting in anger or frustration (Schwarzer, 2012). Temperance is a skill that should be fostered and exercised daily; Christian couples who take the time for temperance to develop and be implemented effectively and appropriately, marriages can thrive (Proverbs 12:16, Proverbs 29:22).

Temperance heavily relates to respect; spouses have respect for themselves and their spouses. It is vital in Christian marriages to put their spouse above themselves and God above all; implementing temperance within the marital relationship requires spouses to exercise self-restraint and moderation within every aspect of their marriage. The temperance movement was prevalent in history, but Christian couples are advised to have a 'temperance movement' within their marriage by exercising moderation and self-restraint and, with God's assistance, staying clear of anything that has the possibility of damaging the unity of marriage. Along with the power of soft words and temperance, Christian couples display sacrificial love within their marriage, which positively impacts a couple's ability to overcome conflict.

The sacrament of marriage requires spouses to display sacrificial love, which assists in Christian couples overcoming marital conflict. When spouses are intemperate, they are exhibiting selfishness; for sacrificial love to be displayed, the virtue of temperance and soft words must be conveyed (Ozor, 2018; Ugwuoye, 2019). God did not call husbands and wives self-centered, but instead to put God first and their spouse before themselves. When selfishness is present in a marriage, it is detrimental. Temperance is to be nurtured and exercised because when temperance is properly exercised within the marital relationship, it enables spouses to die to themselves, a type of sacrificial love that Christ displays to His church (Schwarzer, 2012).

Although temperance can positively impact a couple's marriage, a couple's marital relationship can also be impacted when temperance is absent. Chukwuma et al. (2020) and both Proverbs 12:16 and Proverbs 29:22 discussed that when couples lack temperance, conflict can arise by stirring up feelings that stem from powerful emotions such as anger and frustration. Chukwuma and scripture elaborate on the essential virtue in human relationships for temperance to be conveyed because when anger is displayed within a marriage, it can be destructive. The power of soft words and the implementation of temperance within a marriage is vital to the ability of Christian couples to overcome conflict and crises within their marriage. When conflict arises within a Christian marriage, it is common for couples to seek Biblical marriage counseling advice and guidance, which is another central theme in this qualitative study.

Forgiveness

Conflict will inevitably arise in the marital relationship. One vital aspect of overcoming conflict is implementing forgiveness. When grievances occur in marriage, the strength of the marriage lies in the capability of both husband and wife to forgive one another. Udo (2016) elaborated on forgiveness's power in promoting love and unity (Udo, 2016). When spouses

cannot forgive one another, estrangement and strife are present within the marriage (Keil & Delitzsch, 1971). Habtu (2006) emphasizes how crucial forgiveness is. Although conflict is inevitable in marriage, it escalates when a spouse cannot ask for forgiveness or is reluctant to forgive their significant other (Habtu, 2006). Therefore, just as God forgave us (Colossians 3:13), husbands and wives should be quick to forgive one another (Habtu, 2006).

In their grounded theory study, Anderson and Natrajan-Tyagi (2016) explored forgiveness's influence on marriage. Forgiveness is defined as an “individual, pro-social alteration toward a perceived wrongdoer that is positioned within an interpersonal context” (Anderson & Rajeswari Natrajan-Tyagi, 2016, pg. 3). The authors interviewed five couples individually and together to determine how Christian married couples forgive significant relational hurts. According to the authors, couples must implement forgiveness within their marriage because all couples face conflict, hardships, and hurt feelings at some point (Anderson & Rajeswari Natrajan-Tyagi, 2016).

Christian couples ask for forgiveness and accept apologies from their spouse with genuine intentions of putting their hurt in the past. Alternatively, according to the research, many atheist couples tend to forgive their spouse at the moment but will bring up their hurt in future conflicts, which displays the spouses not truly forgiving one another (Anderson & Rajeswari Natrajan-Tyagi, 2016). The ability of Christian couples to truly forgive their spouse for the hurt caused is crucial in overcoming conflict.

Lambert and Dollahite (2006), after the 57 interviews, determined that religiosity nurtured forgiveness (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006). An interviewee, Neil, a Christian financial analyst, stated, “We go to church in the car every Sunday. We each ask individually, each member asks every other member of the family individually for forgiveness” (Lambert &

Dollahite, 2006). It was concluded from Lambert and Dollahite's (2016) study that religious couples had an escalated keenness to forgive due to the thankfulness of God forgiving them.

Religious Over-Idealization

Idealization plays a role in many marital relationships. This theme directly relates to this study because people over-idealize Christians as perfect (O'brien, 2009). It is common for individuals to have a false sense of reality regarding Christian couples. Problems can arise within the marital relationship when couples are left to believe they must maintain the individual's thoughts or expectations of Christians.

Star et al. (2022) recruited 125 husbands and wives that were married for twenty years or more and were at least fifty years old (Star et al., 2022). This study focused on determining if cross-sectional or longitudinal associations existed between marital satisfaction and idealization, specifically if marital idealization is a result of marital satisfaction or if marital satisfaction is a result of marital idealization (Star et al., 2022). This study concluded that for husbands that reported marital satisfaction, marital idealization was reported by their wives (Star et al., 2022).

Abreu-Afonso et al. (2021) also completed a study regarding marital idealization (Abreu-Afonso et al. 2021). This study consisted of 331 heterosexual participants ranging from 19-80 years old who were asked to answer questionnaires related to communication, marital satisfaction, conflict management, and spouses' perception of one another (Abreu-Afonso et al., 2021). This study focused on if certain components affected a couple's ability to manage differences within their marital relationship-idealization being one of those qualities (Abreu-Afonso et al., 2021). This study indicated a correlation between marital satisfaction and the qualities of each spouse, including communication, intrinsic motivation, and idealization (Abreu-Afonso et al., 2021).

This theme is essential for this proposed descriptive case study. O'Brien (2009), Star et al. (2022), and Abreu-Afonso et al. (2021) discussed the correlation between marital satisfaction and idealization that occurs within a couple's marital relationship, by informing the reader of the direct correlation before marital satisfaction and idealization within the marital relationship. The proposed case study will address Lakato and Martos's (2019) recommendation for future research on religious over-idealization regarding marital management (Lakato & Martos, 2019).

Biblical Marriage Counseling and Outcomes of Christian Couples

With Christian couples viewing marriage as a covenant that cannot be broken when a crisis arises within the marital relationship, spouses will do their best to resolve conflict, and sometimes they turn to counsel. While many couples may resolve conflicts together, it may be necessary for some couples to seek Biblical counseling. Individuals and couples have different struggles and when seeking counseling, counselors address those needs and challenges (Aririguzoh, 2020).

The influence of religion plays a role in Christian couples receiving professional guidance from a counselor who uses the Bible as their foundation for assisting couples, directly impacting their ability to overcome conflict and crises within their marriage (Aririguzoh, 2020). Biblical Marriage Counseling is a type of counseling that many Christian couples turn to when faced with trials within their marriage so that the help they receive is based on scripture (Aririguzoh, 2020). Biblical counseling seeks to turn individuals and couples toward the truth found in God's word (Aririguzoh, 2020). Scripture cannot only meet spiritual and physical, financial, emotional, and mental needs (Aririguzoh, 2020).

Christian marriage counselors see life through the lens of God's Word. Christian couples seek to attend Christian marriage counseling due to the counselor's knowledge of scripture and

working with both spouses in their walk with God and the couple's relationship with God as a unit. Christian counselors strive to alter spouses' behavior by utilizing the Word of God, which they believe has the power to overcome every human problem (Aririguzoh, 2020).

Unfortunately, many couples who lack the foundation of Christ in their marriage permit conflict to destroy their relationship, but religion has a powerful influence on Christian marriages because giving up is never an option for these couples (Aririguzoh, 2020).

Conflict in marriage is inevitable, and at times it is necessary to receive professional assistance in overcoming challenges that arise within the marital relationship. Christian couples that take the time to seek professional help are showing their significant other how much they value their marriage and their eagerness to work on themselves to better their marriage (Aririguzoh, 2020). In Biblical Marriage Counseling, when couples take the time to know and implement God's Word, lives are changed, and marriages are reconciled (Aririguzoh, 2020). The counselor's view of marriage is a significant component of Christian marriage counseling. Christian counselors view marriage as God-Ordained and sacred (Aririguzoh, 2020). Many secular counselors will take a relativistic approach and focus on each spouse's desires instead of Biblical values and God's calling for man and woman in marriage to help couples overcome trials and challenges (Aririguzoh, 2020).

Many counselors who have worked with non-religious couples have noted that when conflict arises amongst atheist couples, they tend to leave the conflict unresolved, which then later leads to more significant conflict, or the conflict is addressed in a way where fighting occurs instead of focusing on the resolving the underlying issue (Aririguzoh, 2020). According to the study, prayer, sermons, and worship are three main factors that Christian couples relate to in overcoming conflict (Aririguzoh, 2020). All couples can overcome conflict in their marriage,

but non-Christians lack a strong unifying faith as a foundation in marriage, which leaves secular couples more challenging to resolve conflict. In contrast, Christian couples can overcome conflict because of the influence of religion on the marital relationship (Aririguzoh, 2020).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: RELATED LITERATURE – MINIMUM OF 30 PAGES			
The student provides a minimum of 30 pages in the review of the lit section.	3	3	
The student provides citations from academic sources to support key points.	3	3	
In each theme, the student provides the necessary context of why the literature chosen as evidenced by proper synthesis.	3	3	
The student explains the significance of the studies used within the literature review.	3	3	
Each theme in the lit review includes an introduction paragraph explaining what the theme is and why it is important to the proposed research.	3	3	
Each theme in the lit review includes a synthesized summary of the studies presented in each theme, with a cogent transition to the next presented theme in the review.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Summary

Chapter two has discussed an overview of the study, the theoretical foundation, and the literature review of this proposed case study. The foundation of this study is based on Bandura's

SLT and multiple themes addressed in this case study. Chapter two covered the following themes from the current literature; Views and Purpose of Christian Marriage, Characteristics of Marriage/Spouses, Marital Satisfaction in Christian Couples, Marital Conflict/Conflict Resolution Strategies in Christian Couples, Power of Soft Words and Temperance, Religious Over-Idealization, Biblical Marriage Counseling, and the Outcomes of Christian Couples.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory is the theoretical foundation for this qualitative study. The review included reviewing the concept of the theory and how the Social Learning Theory is directly associated with the marital relationship (Johnson & Bradbury, 2015). Bandura's social learning theory can be applied to behavioral marital therapy and suggests that individuals alter their behavior toward one another by utilizing the consequences of their behaviors (Johnson & Bradbury, 2015). The social learning theory emphasizes how consequences directly influence whether a behavior is preserved or eradicated. Dysfunction transpires when maladaptive instead of adaptive behaviors are rewarded (Johnson & Bradbury, 2015).

What remains unknown from the current literature is how married Christians couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion, religious over idealization, and community-centered social processes on Christian couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage. Bandura's SLT relates to this study regarding conflict arising as a result of spouses learning behaviors inversely and handling conflict differently, which can be difficult in resolving conflict that arises within marriage. According to the literature, it is evident that religion in a Christian couple's marriage dramatically impacts the ability of spouses to cope with relationship crises and conflict within their marriage. Mullins (2016) discusses that those couples who believe that marriage is sacred are more likely to remain committed to their marital commitment due to their strong belief in abiding by God's guidelines for marriage and believing their marriage is

part of God's will (Mullins, 2016). Mullins references Goodman and Dollahite (2016), who discussed that couples who prioritize God in their marriage and believe their marriage is part of His would exhibit more stability, happiness, peace, and unity (Goodman & Dollahite, 2016).

Pastors and Christian couples discuss the commitment that Christian couples have to one another, but above all else, to God plays a critical role in their ability to overcome trials and struggles that may arise within their marriage. Mullins (2016) referenced Kusner et al. (2016) findings, which inform the reader that increased levels of religious discourse between spouses decreased negative interactions during periods of conflict within the marital relationship (Kusner, 2016). Lakato and Martos (2019) recommended three avenues for future research, including how couples cope with relationship crises based on the involvement of religion within their marriage, the influence of religiosity and religious over-idealization on Christian couples, and how couples' community-centered social processes influence both religious and non-religious couples' marriages. Bahnaru et al. (2019) identified a need to examine how couples cope with relationship crises based on the involvement of religion within their marriage.

The literature review has assisted in discussing religion's influence on Christian couples overcoming conflict and crises within their marriage. Thus, this proposed qualitative descriptive case study addresses the three recommendations identified by Lakato and Martos (2019) and Bahnaru et al. (2019) by exploring how married Christians couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage. The topic of marriage is critical because marriage is the most imperative relationship on this side of the Earth and plays a fundamental role in the family and community (Pronk et al., 2017). This case study addresses the unquestionable truth that all married couples will face individual or joint hardships, but the

influence of religion on Christian couples may help them to be able to overcome anything with which they are faced. When God is the center of a couple's marriage and is the priority of the marital relationship, there is a direct and positive relationship to conflict resolution (White et al., 2020).

In the next chapter, chapter three, the methods of this study will be discussed. Chapter three will discuss the proposed study's methods, the research design, research questions, setting, participants, procedures, the researcher's role, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, credibility, dependability and confirmability, transferability, and ethical considerations. Chapter four will discuss the findings of the participants, and the fifth and final chapter will summarize the findings and future research.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: SUMMARY – 2-3 PARAGRAPHS			
The student gives a summary of the chapter synthesizing the information from the entire chapter in a succinct manner (this tells the reader what is known) .	3	3	
The student provides a clear statement of what is not known and how their proposal will fill these gaps.	3	3	
The student provides a transition paragraph to Chapter 3.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Overview

Research has supported that Christian couples have a foundation that helps equip them to overcome conflict, give and accept forgiveness, and consistently fight for their marriage (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006). A qualitative case study was performed and explored how married Christians couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion, community-centered social processes, and religious over-idealization on couples' ability cope with relationship maintenance and crises within their marriage. Chapter three will discuss the study's research design, questions, setting, participants, procedures, the researcher's role, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and ethical considerations.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: OVERVIEW – 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student provides an orienting paragraph about the nature and purpose of the study.	3	3	
The student describes the content and organization of the chapter.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Design

This research utilizes the qualitative approach. Qualitative research data collection consists of non-numerical information that pertains to a specific population (Tarnoki & Puentes, 2019). This study will focus on two main groups of people: Christian Couples and Pastors/Associate Pastors. The quantitative methodology is not appropriate for this case study because the focus is not on collecting and analyzing numerical data. Several methods will be implemented to ensure that comprehensive data is received from the participants in this study. A significant advantage to utilizing the qualitative approach within this study is to provide in-depth detail to the why of a phenomenon (Marx, 2016).

Qualitative research began in 1925 with psychologist Paul Felix Lazarsfeld (Bailey, 2014). When qualitative research first began, there was a focus on exploring and providing explanations of human behavior (Bailey, 2014). This qualitative study will be implemented by organizing data, reviewing data, developing a coding system, and identifying themes. Robert Yin discusses that one of the features of qualitative research is to contribute insights into concepts that can assist in explaining human social behavior, which is what this case study will focus on (Yin, 2011).

A descriptive case study design is implemented because the research focuses on gaining concrete details about the specific real-world marriage phenomenon. Within a case study design, key characteristics are explored. The researcher used a descriptive case study design because it is the most appropriate approach. This study focuses on indicating the qualities that relate to the behavior patterns of a specific population; Christ-centered marriages. The researcher decided not to use a narrative, grounded theory, or phenomenological design for this proposed study. The grounded theory design is not appropriate for this study because it does not focus on a current

phenomenon; this study focuses on current Christian marriages and not the changes in Christian marriages, so this theory would be inappropriate (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017). There is too much emphasis on storytelling regarding the narrative design instead of focusing on factual data (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Lastly, the phenomenological design does not apply to this research due to this design focusing on a phenomenon from the quintessence of lived experiences by the participants, but instead focuses on describing participants' experiences (Giorgi, 2015).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: DESIGN – 3 PARAGRAPHS			
The student identifies the selected design for the proposed research.	3	3	
The student clearly explains why design is appropriate and why other possible qualitative designs are not appropriate – backs with appropriate methodological resources.	3	3	
The student identifies the specific approach (For example, if selecting a phenomenological study, be sure to identify what type (e.g., hermeneutic, transcendental, consensual, etc.). If conducting a case study, identify whether it is a single instrumental, collective, or intrinsic case study)	3	3	
The student clearly defines the chosen design including a brief history of the design with appropriate citations.	3	3	
The student refers to primary qualitative research texts for the proper design.	3	3	
The student provides a concise description of the study's implementation	3	3	
Student clearly links design to the purpose of the study.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: DESIGN – 3 PARAGRAPHS			
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Research Questions

Several recommendations were made for further research. First, Lakato and Martos (2019) recommended research on how couples cope with relationship crises based on the involvement of religion within their marriage, exploring the influence of religiosity on Christian couples, and how couples' community-centered social processes influence both religious and non-religious couples' marriages. Secondly, Bahnaru et al. (2019) also identified a need to examine how couples cope with relationship crises based on the involvement of religion within their marriage.

Thus, this proposed qualitative descriptive study fills the gap identified by Lakato and Martos (2019) and Bahnaru et al. (2019) by exploring how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationships crises within their marriage.

RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: RESEARCH QUESTIONS -1 PARAGRAPH PLUS RQS			
The student explains how the RQs will address the gap in the literature and how the RQs are supported by the theory, problem, and purpose.	3	3	
The student restates the RQs from chapter one.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Setting

The site for this qualitative descriptive case study will be a large, non-denominational Christian Church in New York. The site location was chosen due, in part, to the diversity of the congregation and the church leadership. At this church, the head pastor is not the sole person in charge; there is a team of pastoral leaders who work together to assist in the success of this

congregation. For this descriptive case study, it is vital to have participants in multiple phases of marriage for the researcher to receive the most accurate data. The researcher received site authorization from the head pastor of the non-denominational Christian church (see Appendix A). The site authorization letter informed the head pastor of the study's details and sought permission to recruit married couples who attend their congregation and pastors of the church to participate in the study.

To recruit participants from the church, the pastor will inform the congregation about the researcher's study, and those who are interested will give them the researcher's contact information to reach out to the researcher. If the researcher cannot gain sufficient participants for the study from this location, volunteer sampling by recruiting online will take place using church groups online. Should this become necessary, the researcher sought moderator permission from these sites to recruit participants. Pseudonyms will be utilized within this case study to ensure confidentiality for each individual that will participate in this case study.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LEGNTH: SETTING – 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student clearly <i>describes</i> the setting for the research – describes the site location (e.g., geographic location, school system, the course, etc.).	2	3	
The student clearly provides the reasoning for the selection of the site for the study – including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Why was this setting (site) chosen for this project? b. What does the organization look like with regards to leadership, organizational structure, etc.? 	2	3	
The student uses Pseudonyms for both individuals and institutions.	2	3	
The student explains and describes the process for site authorization	2	3	

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: SETTING – 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Participants

The general population of this study includes Christian couples and Christian pastors. The target population is married couples within the site location in New York that identify as a married Christian couple, are congregants of the site location, and have been married for at least two years. The sample will be chosen from the target population and consist of six couples, or 12 individuals. The type of sampling implemented within this descriptive case study is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a technique implemented by qualitative researchers used to recruit participants who will be able to provide vital and detailed information about the specific topic that is under investigation (Campbell et al., 2020). Purposive sampling is appropriate for this qualitative study because the researcher can select participants with a high volume of in-depth and useful information. Should the researcher not obtain enough participants using purposive sampling, the researcher will then utilize convenience sampling and recruit participants via online Christian Groups.

The sample for the study focuses on eight to twelve couples, and four to eight pastors, which is appropriate to focus on the overall problem statement and fill the gap in literature (Boddy, 2016). This sample size is sufficient for the proposed study because in qualitative research the overall goal in regard to sample size is to reveal an array of opinions while also maintaining a sample size at the point of saturation (Boddy, 2016). The researcher recruited eight to twelve couples and four to eight pastors to account for attrition. Additionally, the researcher recruited four pastors to participate in a focus group. A demographic questionnaire will be given to all participants that sign the consent form to participate in this case study; they will be made aware in the informed consent that they will be asked for demographic information. This questionnaire will be implemented for the researcher to gather information on the characteristics of the sample in the study. The demographic questionnaire (see Appendix H) will ask participants their age, gender, ethnicity, employment status, and the highest level of education.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: PARTICIPANTS – 2 OR MORE PARAGRAPHS			
The student clearly <i>defines the GENERAL POPULATION</i>	3	3	
The student clearly <i>defines the TARGET POPULAITON</i>	3	3	
The student clearly <i>defines the sample</i> for the study. Student also provides methodological citations for why the sample size is sufficient for the proposed study.	3	3	
The student defines the type of sampling to be used, why it is appropriate per the design, and the information is backed with appropriate, scholarly resources.	3	3	
IF the student uses a published survey to gather demographic information, permission is noted and included in the appendix.	n/a	n/a	

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: PARTICIPANTS – 2 OR MORE PARAGRAPHS			
The student describes what demographic information will be collected and why. If the researcher is making their own demographic survey a copy of this is provided in the appendix.	3	3	
Student provides a statement of why the demographic data is collected and why the specific demographic questions are relevant to the study.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows well. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Procedure

There are necessary authorization steps that need to take place before the researcher recruits' participants. Only after site authorization, IRB authorization, and obtaining informed consent forms from all participants is the researcher able to recruit participants. This proposed qualitative study entailed gaining site authorization from a non-denominational Christian church in New York (see Appendix A) that was signed by the head pastor of the church. The site authorization letter informed the head pastor of information regarding this proposed descriptive case study, information regarding the research process, a copy of the informed consent forms that

will be given to potential participants, inclusion criteria, and notification that participation is voluntary, and all data received from participants will remain confidential. However, no recruitment will take place until after IRB approval. To recruit participants from the church, the pastor will inform the congregation about the researcher's study, and for those who are interested, the pastor will give them the researcher's contact information to reach out to the researcher. The church that the researcher is utilizing to recruit participants recently went from a congregation with two locations to one. The one congregation now has about 1,000 attendees. Due to this congregation being the researcher's parent's home church, the researcher will verify that all participants interested in participating in this case study will have no correlation to my parents to ensure there is no possibility of responder bias during the data collection process.

The researcher anticipates recruiting twenty participants, including eight to twelve Christian couples and four to eight pastors, which will ensure data saturation even if attrition occurs. Once participants contact the researcher, they will sign informed consent from potential participants, including each participant filling out and signing the informed consent form and then emailing it back to the researcher via DocuSign. The researcher will have the head pastor inform potential participants of the researcher's study. Once the researcher has the head pastor inform potential participants of the researcher's study by posting information in the church bulletin, the pastor will provide the researcher's contact information for potential participants to directly reach out to the researcher. The researcher will then have direct contact with potential participants and will have them read the consent form and then return this to the researcher via DocuSign. Once the researcher receives each participant's signature, the researcher and each participant will be able to discuss appropriate times to schedule an interview and attend a focus

group. If the researcher does not obtain sufficient participation from the Christian church, online recruitment will occur through church groups on Facebook.

Participants will be informed about the researcher transcribing and recording both interviews and focus groups to ensure trustworthiness, and that data will be stored for a minimum of three years on a password-protected personal laptop with a carbonite backup (Nowell et al., 2017). Interviews and both focus groups will be recorded to permit the researcher to complete the transcription of both data collection methods. The researcher will be utilizing Descript, software to complete the transcription of the interviews and focus groups. Additionally, to strengthen the study's credibility, the researcher will perform member checking after transcribed interviews and focus groups (Candela, 2019).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: PROCEDURES – MINIMUM of 3-4 PARAGRAPHS			
The student explains the appropriate authorization steps in order (site authorization, instrument authorizations (if applicable), committee approvals, IRB approval, etc.	3	3	
The student explains – in detail - the process for how participants will be recruited.	3	3	
The student explains – in detail - the process recording and transcribing of data.	3	2	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: PROCEDURES – MINIMUM of 3-4 PARAGRAPHS			
Notes:			

Role of Researcher

The researcher's role as the human instrument for this proposed qualitative descriptive case study explored Christian participants' thoughts, opinions, and feelings. The researcher will safeguard all participants' privacy by obtaining informed consent and assigning pseudonyms to all participants. The researcher's role is to ingress participants' thoughts, opinions, and feelings: this will allow the development of discernment of the meaning that people attribute to their experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The setting where participants will be selected will be held at a non-denomination Christian church that the researcher's parents attend in another state than the researcher. To ensure bias does not occur, the researcher will not interview or hold a focus group with anyone that personally knows the researcher or her family. This congregation recently brought two campuses into one, so there is a large population at this church, and obtaining possible participants that meet these requirements is obtainable.

It is essential during the research process to recognize that bias can occur as a novice researcher. Bias could affect the data collection process by allowing the researcher's personal beliefs as a Christian to contribute to the data. To ensure bias does not occur and to strengthen the study's credibility, the researcher will utilize member checking the transcriptions (Carroll et al., 2017) to ensure the recorded data are representative of their beliefs (Galdas, 2017). During the analysis process, the researcher will also utilize bracketing, which will reduce the

researcher's bias while establishing themes and throughout the coding process (Tufford & Newman, 2010). The researcher will keep a journal to memo the processes and any apparent bias throughout the data collection process.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: RESEARCHER'S ROLE – 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
Student clearly describes their role as the "human instrument" and what that entails including any possible conflicts this may cause.	3	3	
The student clearly states how they will counteract the bias that comes from being a novice researcher and backs with empirical resources.	3	3	
The student is clear about any potential relationships to the participants, role at the research site, or any biases that may influence the study.	3	3	
The student explains, in terms of the design, how bias could affect the data collection process.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Data Collection

A vital quality of qualitative inquiry is arduous data collection techniques. Three data sources will be implemented for this research study, including semi-structured couple interviews

and two focus groups. The three data sources will be conducted in the following order: interviews with eight to twelve Christian couples, interviews with four to eight pastors, a focus group with four to five pastors, and a focus group with three to four Christian couples. This sequence has been chosen to help the research gain insight from interviews and then utilize focus groups to fill any gaps that may still be present from interviewing participants (Paradis et al., 2016).

Although there are multiple methods of collecting data, the researcher chose these methods based on which sources will best help the researcher thoroughly answer research questions in the study. These data collection methods for this descriptive case study will provide both replication and reliability (Yin, 2014). This section will include informed consent, data collection, and data management.

Informed Consent

Once site authorization is received, the researcher will seek IRB approval from Liberty University. Once the researcher has the head pastor inform potential participants of the researcher's study by posting information in the church bulletin, the pastor will provide the researcher's contact information for potential participants to directly reach out to the researcher. Once the researcher is aware of the participants' interests, the researcher will email the participants. Participants will be made aware that their participation is voluntary; therefore, they may remove themselves from the study at any time with no consequence. The consent form will be sent by the researcher through email using DocuSign and will provide all individuals with the approximate time commitment, contact information of the researcher, their role as the participant, and the overall purpose of the case study. Participants will be encouraged to reach out to the researcher with any questions before signing the consent form. Once interested

participants sign and return the consent form, the researcher will provide dates and times to participants to schedule interviews and focus groups. The researcher will also ensure that the time and location of the interviews and focus groups are convenient for the participants. If the researcher does not obtain sufficient participation from the Christian church, online recruitment will occur through church groups on Facebook.

Data collection procedures

The data collection process will include semi-structured interviews and two focus groups led by the researcher. Site authorization (see Appendix A) and IRB approval (see Appendix B) will be obtained before data collection begins. The head pastor will inform potential participants of the researcher's study by posting information in the church bulletin. The pastor will provide the researcher's contact information for potential participants to directly reach out to the researcher. Once participants contact the researcher, the researcher will email each potential participant with an informed consent form via DocuSign, and once all consent forms are returned to the researcher with appropriate signatures, the researcher will set up interviews as detailed above.

All interviews will take place utilizing an online platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams software. Before each interview starts, the researcher will remind each participant that the interview will be audio and video recorded and confirm the receipt of the informed consent. An interview protocol (see Appendix F) will be developed to promote consistency with all participants and each interview process. Each participant will be given a pseudonym to ensure privacy and confidentiality and protect each individual's identity (Heaton, 2021). Each interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes. After all transcription of the interviews has occurred, the

researcher will send copies of the transcripts to the participants to perform member checking (Candela, 2019).

Once all interviews are completed and member-checked, participants will be contacted via phone or email to inform them of when their focus group will occur. There will be one focus group consisting of Christian couples and one focusing group consisting of pastors; all focus group participants will have already participated in the interviews. The researcher will utilize a focus group protocol similar to the interview protocol (see Appendix G) for both focus groups. Focus group A will consist of eight to twelve Christian couples, and focus group B will consist of four to eight pastors, and each focus group will last approximately 60-90 minutes. As with the interviews, members of the focus groups will be sent the focus group transcripts for member checking (Candela, 2019). Once all data has been member checked, the researcher will begin the analysis process.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: DATA COLLECTION – 2+ PARAGRAPHS			
The student clearly describes the data collection method in narrative form – AND IN ORDER of the data collection process. – <u><i>another researcher should be able to read this section and replicate your data collection.</i></u>	3	3	
The student clearly explains the reason for the particular order of the process.	3	3	
The student backs with appropriate resources as justification for the data collection process ((e.g., Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1980, 1990, etc.).	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: DATA COLLECTION – 2+ PARAGRAPHS			
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Section is missing. Considerable revisions/completion is required. 1 = Section is Present. The element is here, but revisions are required, see notes in the sidebar. 2 = Section is Acceptable. Meets expectations, however, there are some revisions that are suggested. 3 = Section is complete			
Notes:			

Interviews

Interviews will be conducted as the first data collection method to obtain detailed information on all participants' perceptions of how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion and community-centered social processes and how religious over-idealization influences couples' ability to cope with relationship maintenance and crises within their marriage. Interviews promote engaging conversations that use open-ended questions in an appropriate setting (Busetto et al., 2020). Interviews also allow the researcher to gain insights into an individual's opinions and experiences (Busetto et al., 2020).

Interviews will be conducted utilizing an online platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Three different types of interviews include structured, semi-structured, and narrative. Structured interviews only permit specific responses from the interviewee (Stuckey, 2013). Semi-structured interviews use open-ended and probing questions (Busetto et al., 2020) and are the type the researcher will use as this type of interview is most commonly utilized in qualitative research. Although the researcher outlines what will be discussed in semi-structured interviews,

the interviewee can guide the interview (Stuckey, 2013). The third type of interview is a narrative interview, with the interviewee telling their story; this type of interview is highly driven by the interviewee (Stuckey, 2013), thus not appropriate for this proposed research. A qualitative approach, specifically a case study design, justifies the use of semi-structured interviews and is also justified based on past research; other researchers' studies on marriage have also used semi-structured interviews, which makes it feasible for this researcher to choose this interviewing method (Busetto et al., 2020).

Before interviews can be used, it is important to ensure the interview questions are appropriate and yield sufficient data. Milagros Castillo-Montoya (2016) discussed the four-phase interview refinement protocol (IRP), commonly known as IRP (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Phase one aligns the research questions and interview questions to affirm the purpose of each interview question and warrant the necessity of each question for the study. Phase two establishes an inquiry-based conversation between the researcher and the participant

To balance questioning and conversing, phase three focuses on receiving feedback regarding interviewing protocols to acquire feedback on the interview protocol, which is essential to amplify the trustworthiness and reliability of the study. The fourth and final phase assesses the interview protocol. These processes will also be used through the development of interview questions using an interview question matrix and the utilization of an expert panel to review the questions prior to IRB approval.

Each interview will be held via Zoom. Zoom is an online video conferencing tool that permits secure recordings and storage of recordings without needing third-party software (Archibald et al., 2019). The researcher will permit participants to select a time that works best for them to complete the interview. This online platform will be utilized because it is not feasible

for the researcher and participants to meet face-to-face due to differences in geographic location. The researcher will receive informed consent before scheduling an interview with each participant. Each participant will provide their signature via DocuSign. Once consent is provided, rapport building will occur. Each participant will be asked demographic questions to gain background information used later to describe the study's sample.

Each interview with a Christian couple will be asked seven open-ended semi-structured interview questions, and the four pastors will be asked five open-ended semi-structured questions. Each interview will be audio and video recorded and will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. After each interview, the data will be member-checked to ensure clarification and validity (Carroll et al., 2017); each interview will be transcribed using the software. Interview questions for the couples and pastors are located in appendix K.

The interviews with each participant are necessary and highly beneficial within this qualitative study to gaining the story behind each participant's feelings, opinions, and experiences and gaining in-depth information regarding how married Christians couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion and community-centered social processes and religious over-idealization influences couples' ability cope with relationship maintenance and crises within their marriage. The researcher will complete a field test by interviewing Christian couples not eligible to participate in the study to evaluate interview questions utilized during data collection. This process will help inform the researcher if the interview questions are clear and

concise to ensure the most valuable and detailed data from this process possible (Busetto et al., 2020).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: INTERVIEWS – MINIMUM OF 2 PARAGRAPHS			
Student clearly describes the interviewing method and justifies the method via the design – back with an appropriate design resource.	3	3	
The student justifies the use of interviews and backs with methodological and empirical sources .	3	3	
The student explains any logistics (when/where/how/with whom will data be collected, recording, etc.)	3	3	
The student clearly explains which of the research questions will be answered using the individual interviews.	3	3	
Student explains the expert panel process used to evaluate interview questions to be used in data collection.	3	3	
The student provides an interview protocol and a table of panel experts and is included in the appendix.	3	3	
The student lists the questions and provides an item-by-item discussion of each question and its basis in the literature	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: INTERVIEWS – MINIMUM OF 2 PARAGRAPHS			
Notes:			

Focus Groups

Two focus groups will also be utilized as data collection methods in this proposed study. Focus groups can provide deep and valuable information (Leung & Savithiri, 2009) and significant, meaningful insight into participants' experiences, beliefs, and perspectives (Gill & Baillie, 2018). Another justification of the implementation of focus groups is that focus groups provide the researcher with candid responses, which provides the researcher with a deeper meaning of data received by encouraging participants to build on one another's opinions, thoughts, and ideas (Leung & Savithiri, 2009).

Focus groups will be conducted once interviews have been completed with the eight to twelve Christian couples and four to eight pastors. Focus groups are group interviews to reconnoiter participants' knowledge and experiences on a specific topic (Busetto et al., 2020). Focus groups will be left as the second and third data collection methods to have individuals come together with a common focus to discuss and share their expertise, experience, and opinions on the topic of marriage and how religion has impacted how they overcome conflict and crisis that occurs. Focus groups are necessary because it is an extension of the interview process that will provide the researcher with a more in-depth dialogue in a group setting that is structured and organized (Gundumogula, 2020). Constant comparison analysis will permit the researcher to evaluate focus group questions and general data saturation across groups (Gundumogula, 2020).

This researcher will hold two different focus groups. The first focus group will consist of eight to twelve Christian couples. In this focus group, the researcher will ask thirteen questions relating to Christian couples' opinions, beliefs, and perceptions regarding the influence that religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes have on their ability to overcome crises within their marital relationship. The second focus group will consist of four to eight pastors. The researcher will ask this group five questions that will once again relate to the pastors' perception of the influence religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes have on couples overcoming crises within the marital relationship.

There are three main steps in the focus group protocol. The first protocol occurs before the focus groups occur. Before focus groups, it is essential to establish questions, participants, and locations for each focus group (Dos Santos Marques et al., 2021). The second part of the focus group protocol is to conduct the focus groups (Dos Santos Marques et al., 2021). During this phase, it is crucial to introduce oneself as the facilitator, have a laptop or paper and pencil to take notes and write down direct quotes, and set a positive tone (Dos Santos Marques et al., 2021). Once focus groups are completed, the third phase of the focus group protocols takes place: to interpret and report the results of the focus groups. In this phase, it is important to immediately write up a summary and transcribe the notes or audio recording to send for member checking. It is also important to analyze the data to determine the themes and trends and type up the report. An expert panel of three individuals will also be reviewing the researcher's questions to provide the researcher with a credible alternative point of view (Langfeldt, 2004). Questions for both focus groups and their relationship to the theoretical foundation and research questions can be seen in appendix L.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: FOCUS GROUPS – 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student justifies the use of a focus group and backs with methodological and empirical sources .	3	3	
The student clearly explains which of the research questions will be answered using the focus group.	3	3	
Student explains the expert panel process used to evaluate the focus group questions to be used in data collection.	3	3	
The student provides a focus group protocol in the appendix.	3	3	
The student lists the questions and provides an item-by-item discussion of each question and its basis in the literature	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes: 			

Data Analysis

The purpose of this descriptive case study sought to explore how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within

their marriage in New York. No specific sample size or amount of data is needed in qualitative research, but ideally, one should complete enough interviews until the researcher reaches data saturation (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Sufficient and adequate data should result from a 60–90-minute interview or focus group resulting in about 20-25 pages (Adams et al., 2007). Should the datasets be smaller than the anticipated 20-25 pages, this is acceptable, but the researcher will aim for a minimum of 8-12 pages of single-spaced data in 12-point Times New Roman font. Once all data has been gathered and transcribed, member checking will be implemented within this case study. Member checking is also referred to as respondent validation (Candela, 2019). Member checking or respondent validation indicates the practice of safeguarding with all participants in the study that the research is congruent with their responses and views (Candela, 2019). All data will be secured using a password-sensitive personal laptop available only to the researcher and kept in a locked cabinet, to which only the researcher has the key. A backup of the data will also be put on a USB drive that will be stored in a locked cabinet.

After three years, all electronic data will be fully deleted using erasure software to be irreversible (Anderson & Corneli, 2018).

The demographic information (see Appendix H) will include age, ethnicity, language spoken, the highest level of education, years of marriage, years attending church/being a Christian, and gender. Scheffner Hammer (2011) stated that participants' age, gender, ethnicity, SES/educational level, and language should be obtained when it pertains to demographic information (Scheffner Hammer, 2011). Determining participants' demographic information permits both the researcher and readers to determine to whom the research findings relate and allows for research synthesis (Scheffner Hammer, 2011). The researcher will utilize participants' demographic data to determine trends within the participants and to describe the sample.

Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis by Robert Yin (2014) will be implemented for data analysis for this proposed research. This type of analysis assists in determining themes within a data set (Nowell et al., 2017). Yin established five steps in implementing thematic analysis: compile, disassemble, reassemble, interpret, and conclude (Yin, 2014). In step one, the researcher will compile data from the interview to develop groupings. In step two, the data will be disassembled to reduce and eliminate invariant themes of the case study. In the third step, the data will be reassembled, and the researcher will cluster core themes. In the fourth step, patterns will be checked against the interview transcripts to interpret the meaning of the data. The fifth and final step will involve summarizing or concluding the data into an overall description and analysis. During the analysis process, the researcher will also utilize bracketing, which will reduce the researcher's bias while establishing themes and throughout the coding process (Tufford & Newman, 2010), and a codebook will be established before the initial analysis. The following five steps compromise Yin's (2014) analysis process regarding the data analysis plan for the proposed research.

Compile. Deductive coding involves codes drawn from the existing literature and assumes the main core concepts are present within the data (Azungah & Kasmad, 2018).

Disassemble. In the second phase, Yin (2011) refers to breaking down the data, or disassembling the data, from the first phase by organizing the data into smaller fragments (Yin, 2011). During this phase, initial coding will begin once the researcher has become familiar with each data set. During this phase, the researcher will begin hand-coding by highlighting and taking notes on patterns that have appeared throughout the data. In this phase, the researcher must focus on coding themes and patterns relevant to this case study's research questions.

Reassemble. After compilation and disassembling have been completed, Yin (2011) refers to this stage as the phase where the researcher should organize and analyze codes to determine potential themes; this is also known as reassembling the data (Yin, 2011). The researcher will take the pieces from the previous phases to determine groupings and sequences that may have been missed from the researcher's original notes (Yin, 2011). The researcher will then review the themes by focusing on the most relevant data to the research questions in the case study that represent patterns of meaning. The researcher may return to step four if more applicable themes need to be identified (Yin, 2011).

Interpret. In this phase, Yin (2011) focuses on having the researcher define what each identified theme represents (Yin, 2011). This step involves stating the identified themes and elaborating on what each theme entails. Themes will be categorized based on trends, and the researcher will hand-code these themes to represent the language that participants within the study utilized closely (Yin, 2011).

Conclude. In the last step, Yin (2011) expresses that in this conclusion phase, appropriate and applicable themes are identified (Yin, 2011). The researcher will present a detailed analysis of the overall data within the study (Yin, 2011). It may take the researcher weeks or even months to successfully implement all five of Yin's (2011) phases.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: DATA ANALYSIS– 5-8 PARAGRAPHS			
The student restates the problem or purpose statement for the reader.	3	3	
The <i>student details and describes</i> in narrative form how they will prepare the data for analysis (transcription, member checking, etc.)	3	3	

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: DATA ANALYSIS– 5-8 PARAGRAPHS			
The student describes identified the specific analysis approach they will use and has explained in detail each step of the process.	3	3	
The student provides and backs with a scholarly source, that both the quantity and quality of data is adequate to answer the research questions and has justified the analysis is aligned with the chosen design.	3	3	
The student has described the process in such a way that another researcher could use this ONE section and replicate the process.	3	3	
The student describes important information such as bracketing and memoing as needed.	3	3	
The student gives a detailed plan of how the data will be reported.	3	3	
The student details how they will manage the data (hard copy and/or electronic copies – both must be addressed), how they will secure the data, how long data will be kept, how it will be destroyed – all points must be backed with scholarly resources.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is imperative in any study. Trustworthiness refers to the extent of confidence within the methods, data, and interpretation of data to warrant the quality of the case study (Nowell et al., 2017). Trustworthiness is extremely important in qualitative research because it permits researchers to depict the assets of qualitative terms outside the limitations typically applied in quantitative research (Nowell et al., 2017). Trustworthiness in qualitative research is crucial for the researcher to display that data analysis has been piloted in a precise and reliable approach and to persuade readers that the researcher's findings are worthy of reading (Nowell et al., 2017).

Trustworthiness will be established based on Guba's (1981) four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility assists in establishing that the researcher's results are believable, accurate, and credible, transferability extends to the researcher's results and ability to relate to other contexts, dependability assists in assuring the findings of the research are repeatable, and confirmability assists in the ability of other researchers to confirm that the findings that arose from the study are accurate (Forero et al., 2018). Each is important in ensuring a well-balanced study where the researcher has demonstrated his or her due diligence. In order to ensure these four areas are adequately addressed, the researcher will employ techniques, including but not limited to reflexivity, member checking, describing the specific purpose of the study, explaining the techniques used to determine the credibility of the data, and taking notes regarding personal feelings, biases, and insights immediately after an interview.

Possible threats to trustworthiness include researcher bias, participant bias, and reactivity (Lietz et al., 2006). To mitigate participant bias, or having participants respond to interview

questions or focus group questions based on what they believe to be socially acceptable, the researcher will implement open-ended questions to avoid simple answers and to have participants truly elaborate on answering the question truthfully. Member checking will ensure that researcher bias has not skewed the data (Candela, 2019). To ensure that reactivity does not result as a threat to trustworthiness, the researcher will record all interviews and focus groups on reviewing data received multiple times to make sure the response to the researcher and participants did not affect data (Paterson, 1994).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: TRUSTWORTHINESS–1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
Student defines trustworthiness (including all aspects) and backs with an empirical source or a methodological source.	3	3	
Student clearly articulates why trustworthiness, and all its aspects are imperative to qualitative research and backs with scholarly sources.	3	3	
Student provides a list of which techniques will be used to achieve trustworthiness in the aspects of credibility, dependability, transferability, or confirmability	3	3	
The student explains threats to trustworthiness and explains how such threats will be minimized and backs with a scholarly source.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: TRUSTWORTHINESS–1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
Notes:			

Credibility

Another essential component of a study is the researcher's credibility. Credibility establishes whether the research findings represent probable information from the participants to accurately interpret their unprecedented views (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). To ensure credibility, member checking will be implemented within this case study. Member checking is also referred to as respondent validation, which will increase the authenticity of the final transcript (Candela, 2019). Member checking or respondent validation indicates the practice of safeguarding with all participants in the study that the research is congruent with their responses and views (Candela, 2019). All data will be secured using a password-sensitive personal laptop and a backup of the data will also be put on a USB drive that will be stored in a locked cabinet. After three years, all electronic data will be fully deleted using erasure software to be irreversible (Anderson & Corneli, 2018) and the USB will be properly disposed.

Adoption of a well-establish data collection plan will be established. A vital quality of qualitative inquiry is arduous data collection techniques. This research study will implement three data sources, including interviews and two focus groups. The three data sources will be conducted in the following order: couple of interviews of eight to twelve Christian couples, interviews with four to eight pastors, a focus group with pastors, and a focus group with Christian couples. This sequence has been chosen to help the research gain insight from interviews and then utilize focus groups to fill any gaps that may still be present from interviewing participants (Paradis et al., 2016).

The researcher will ensure deep engagement to promote allotted time to listen, document, and achieve data saturation. The researcher will describe the participants' background, including their age, gender, and culture, which will increase creditability and provide a deeper understanding of the data presented in the descriptive case study (Dodgson, 2019). A thick description will be implemented, which will provide a background of the study and provide readers with the participants' thoughts, emotions, and perceptions to create a vivid and clear picture of the study (Ponterotto, 2015). Through the implementation of thick descriptions, the overall voice of participants will be displayed (Ponterotto, 2015). Researcher reflexivity will also be implemented to enhance credibility.

A threat to credibility in this study is researcher bias due to the researcher being in a Christian marriage. To ensure that credibility is not at risk, the researcher will not permit personal beliefs and experiences to impact the data collected throughout the research process. During the analysis process, the researcher will also utilize bracketing, which will reduce the researcher's bias while establishing themes and throughout the coding process (Tufford & Newman, 2010). The researcher will keep a research journal to memo the processes that occur and avoid bias that becomes apparent throughout the data collection process. To confirm that bias is not present, the researcher will utilize member checking and have all participants review the interviews they provided to confirm that their meanings and information is accurate and precise. Member checking or respondent validation insinuates the practice of ensuring with all participants in the study that the research lines up with their responses and views (Candela, 2019).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: CREDIBILITY–1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
Student describes and defines credibility and backs with a scholarly source.	3	3	
<p>Student identifies which techniques will be used to achieve credibility – these are (but not limited to):</p> <p><i>A well-established data collection plan.</i></p> <p><i>A description and understanding of a naturalistic inquiry.</i></p> <p><i>Deep engagement.</i></p> <p><i>Member checking.</i></p> <p><i>Narrative truth.</i></p> <p><i>Negative cases and rival explanations.</i></p> <p><i>Researcher reflexivity.</i></p> <p><i>Thick description.</i></p> <p><i>Triangulation</i></p> <p><i>Researcher experience.</i></p>	3	3	
The student explains possible threats to credibility, and how they will minimize such threats, and backs with scholarly sources.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. Correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. Structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: CREDIBILITY–1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
Notes:			

Dependability and Confirmability

Confirmability

Confirmability is an essential component of the research process. Confirmability refers to confirming the findings established within the study by other researchers (Yin, 2014).

Confirmability concentrates on ascertaining that data and interpretations of the findings are not illusions of the researcher but strictly a derivative of the data (Yin, 2014). To establish confirmability within this case study, the researcher will be coding data from the interviews with eight to twelve Christian couples and four to eight pastors participating in this study. When coding, the researcher will select words and phrases, apply codes, and then derive themes from those codes. The researcher will implement Robert Yin's five-step data analysis process: Compile, disassemble, reassemble, interpret, and conclude (Yin, 2014).

Researcher reflexivity will also be implemented to enhance credibility. The researcher will describe the participants' background, including their age, gender, and culture, which will increase creditability and provide a deeper understanding of the data presented in the descriptive case study (Dodgson, 2019). To enhance credibility, an in-depth methodological description will be implemented to permit the integrity of research results to be scrutinized (Dodgson, 2019). The researcher will provide a statement about their beliefs and assumptions regarding credibility.

Dependability

Dependability is another crucial component of the research process. Dependability is the consistency and reliability of the findings from this qualitative study; if another researcher completed a similar study, that researcher could concur with the same or similar findings

(Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Dependability also refers to the quantity and amount of documentation established throughout the process (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Evidence will be provided to ensure that dependability is present within this study, including transcripts and data-gathering sessions' documentation. Transcripts of the interviews and the focus groups will assist in providing dependability within this case study.

An audit trail is a technique associated with dependability. An audit trail will provide a detailed log of each action the researcher took concerning data collection throughout the inquiry process (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 2004). Another technique that demonstrates dependability is an in-depth methodological description which will provide a comprehensible record of how data is collected and analyzed. The thematic analysis by Robert Yin (2014) will be implemented for data analysis. This type of analysis assists in determining themes within a data set (Nowell et al., 2017). Yin established five steps in implementing thematic analysis: compile, disassemble, reassemble, interpret, and conclude (Yin, 2014).

During the analysis process, the researcher will also utilize bracketing, which will reduce the researcher's bias while establishing themes and throughout the coding process (Tufford & Newman, 2010). A codebook will also be utilized to assist in analyzing interview data (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2010). Codebooks are a vital tool for analyzing qualitative research because they precisely operationalize codes (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2010).

The purpose of this case study was to explore how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage in New York. A precise alignment of this descriptive case study's problem and purpose will be evident. A possible threat to dependability is researcher bias. Bias could affect the data collection process

by allowing the researcher's personal beliefs as a Christian to contribute to the data. Member checking will ensure bias does not occur (Carroll et al., 2017).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
DEPENDABILITY AND CONFIRMABILITY– approximately 1-2 paragraphs			
The student clearly defines dependability and confirmability and backs with scholarly sources.	3	3	
The student discusses the research protocols to be executed to achieve dependability and backs those choices with scholarly source.	3	3	
The student explains possible threats to dependability and how those threats will be mitigated and backs with scholarly sources.	3	3	
Student address elements of dependability including: <i>Audit trails</i> <i>Evidence</i> <i>Methodological description of how data is collected</i> <i>How the student will record data analysis</i> <i>Demonstrates alignment with problem and purpose</i> <i>Peer debriefing</i> <i>Checking analysis against documents or records (the dataset)</i>	3	3	
The student discusses the research protocols to be executed to achieve confirmability and backs those choices with scholarly source.	3	3	
The student explains possible threats to confirmability and how those threats will be mitigated and backs with scholarly sources.	3	3	
Student address elements of confirmability including: <i>Coding</i> <i>Evidence to support claims</i> <i>Rival explanations</i> <i>Researcher reflexivity</i> <i>Admission or statement of researcher's beliefs and assumptions</i> <i>Checking analysis against documents or records (the dataset)</i>	3	3	

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
DEPENDABILITY AND CONFIRMABILITY– approximately 1-2 paragraphs			
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			
Notes:			

Transferability

This study could potentially be applied in other contexts, including marital relationships and assisting individuals who experience conflict and crisis. Transferability infers those results of this study may be pertinent to comparable situations or individuals (Carminati, 2018). Christians are not just called to live out a Christian marriage but to discipline others and help others come to know God (Wilhoit, 2018). This study can apply to all Christians, whether married or single, to assist in overcoming crises and conflict when it occurs.

Transferability will be addressed by implementing a thick description of the data and a sufficient sample size. A thick description will provide a background of the study and provide readers with the participants' thoughts, emotions, and perceptions to create a vivid and clear picture of the study (Ponterotto, 2015). Through the implementation of thick descriptions, the overall voice of participants will be displayed (Ponterotto, 2015). A threat to transferability is not reaching thick description. If a thick description is not met at the main site, the Christian church

in New York, the researcher will utilize multiple sites such as another Christian church and/or online private Facebook groups. The researcher utilizes multisite benefits, including maximizing the data received in the qualitative research (Jenkins et al., 2018). Additionally, this study will utilize a sufficient sample size. A sample size of twenty participants is adequate for this proposed study because, in qualitative research, the overall goal of sample size is to reveal an array of opinions while maintaining a sample size at the saturation point (Boddy, 2016).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESED LENGTH: TRANSFERABILITY– 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student clearly defines transferability and backs with scholarly sources.	3	3	
The student explains possible threats to transferability and how those threats will be mitigated and backs with scholarly sources.	3	3	
The student explains how the study could potentially be applicable in other contexts, this includes theoretically, practically, and in future research.	3	3	
Student provides the appropriate appendices including materials, protocols, codebook(s).	3	3	
Student discussed sampling sufficiency and backs with a scholarly source.	3	3	
Student addresses thick description and backs with a scholarly source.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Element is missing. 1 = Element is mentioned but needs expansion. 2 = Element is approaching completing, but there are changes needed. See the sidebar for notes. 3 = Section is complete; leave section as it is.			

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESED LENGTH: TRANSFERABILITY– 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
Notes:			

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations that are vital to address are confidentiality and informed consent. According to the Belmont report, three considerations must be addressed: Respect for Persons, Beneficence, and Justice (Office for Human Research Protections OHRP, 2021). Regarding respect for persons, it is essential that all participants are treated as autonomous agents and that all individuals that have diminished autonomy are entitled to protection (Office for Human Research Protections OHRP, 2021). The second ethical consideration, respect for beneficence, relates to an individual's well-being and protects them from harm while respecting their personal decisions (Office for Human Research Protections OHRP, 2021). The third ethical consideration discussed in the Belmont report relates to justice, and the responsibility to reasonably allocate the benefits and burdens of research (Office for Human Research Protections OHRP, 2021).

The researcher will implement respect for people by receiving informed consent from each participant before data collection begins. Beneficence will be implemented within this case study by having minimal direct risks to the participants. The third ethical consideration, justice, will be applied by assuring that society can benefit from this research. According to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board Handbook, two more considerations are also essential. These include Justice and Scientific Integrity. Justice establishes that there will be fair procedures and outcomes in the choice of participants, individually and socially (Liberty University IRB. (2021). The scientific integrity principle entails lucidity around research processes adequate to permit a satisfactory evaluation of the research's influence on participants and ensure the ethical behavior of the researcher.

Although there are risks that participants can be impacted by, including anxiety, exploitation, and misrepresentation, the researcher will prioritize the well-being of participants at all times. To minimize these risks, the researcher will remind participants that their participation is voluntary. They may remove themselves from the research process at any time and remind them that pseudonyms will be implemented to safeguard all participants' identities. A list of code-to-name matchups will be kept on a password-secured personal computer (Allen, 2017). Misrepresentation will be addressed by the researcher member checking (Stahlke, 2018).

The rights and well-being of participants will always be granted throughout the research process by utilizing pseudonyms and receiving consent. A recruitment letter will be established and provided to the church where participants attend to learn about the research and details regarding the researcher and why the research is being done. Once site authorization is received, the researcher will seek IRB approval.

The researcher will email six couples and four pastors consent forms that will inform them about the descriptive case study and the research process that will take place if they choose to participate. The consent form will also provide all individuals with the approximate time commitment, contact information of the researcher, their role as the participant, and the overall purpose of the case study. Participants will be encouraged to reach out to the researcher with any questions before signing the consent form. Participants will be made aware that their participation is voluntary, and therefore they may remove themselves from the study at any time with no consequence.

All participants will then sign and return the consent form to the researcher to start interviews and focus groups. Participants will be made aware of recordings that will take place during interviews and focus groups in the consent form. The researcher will have access to the

data, and participants will be made aware that the researcher's professor, who will review the researcher's work, board members, and eventually the public will have access to the data provided by participants. Participants' names will be replaced with fictitious names for confidentiality purposes.

It is vital to acknowledge the potential risks for harm within the study. In a qualitative study, participants can feel a sense of anxiety when specific topics are brought up within the data collection portion (Stahlke, 2018). Misinterpretation can also occur, which is why it is vital to conduct member checking once data is typed out to confirm validity and accuracy (Stahlke, 2018). Data will be in one file on the researcher's computer to ensure that all data is kept in one location for approximately three years. Coercion is prevented by implementing confidentiality and privacy strategies (Allen, 2017). Confidentiality and privacy will be attained by using pseudonyms or implementing participant codes to label data using participant names. A list of code-to-name matchups will be kept on a password-secured personal computer (Allen, 2017).

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS– 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student provides a complete discussion of ethical issues, <i>per Belmont Report and LU IRB guidelines; student must address all aspects of the Belmont Principles, and what steps they will take to execute</i> those principles.	3	3	
The student recognizes the potential risks for harm in the study and provides a discussion on mitigating risks and backs with a scholarly source.	3	3	
The student details how they will gain informed consent, specifically discussing how they will protect the rights and well-being of the participants.	3	3	
The student discusses who has access to the data and why and for what purpose.	3	3	

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS– 1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
Student specifically explains each of the following: anonymity, confidentiality, privacy, strategies to prevent coercion, and any potential conflict of interest and backs with a scholarly source.	3	3	
Student explains how data will be stored, accessed, and destroyed and backs with a scholarly source.	3	3	
Includes copy of site authorization letter (if appropriate), IRB Informed Consent (Proposal) and IRB Approval letter (Dissertation) in appropriate Appendices.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	
Scoring Scale: 0 = Section is missing. Considerable revisions/completion is required. 1 = Section is Present. The element is here, but revisions are required, see notes in the sidebar. 2 = Section is Acceptable. Meets expectations, however, there are some revisions that are suggested. 3 = Section is complete			
Notes:			

Summary

Chapter three includes the following elements of the qualitative case study: Design, research questions, setting, participants, procedures, the researcher's role, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, credibility, dependability and confirmability, transferability, and ethical considerations. This study will implement the qualitative methodology and the case study

design. Data analysis will utilize Yin's five phases, including compile, disassemble, reassemble, interpret, and conclusion (Yin, 2014). This chapter focused on data collection methods, including interviews and two focus groups. Eight to twelve couples will be interviewed together, and four to eight pastors will also be interviewed. One focus group will consist of the same Christian couples from the interviews, and one focus group will consist of the same pastors from the interviews. While collecting data from participants, the researcher needs to consider three ethical considerations: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

As shown in chapter two, research has supported that Christian couples have a foundation that helps equip them to overcome conflict, give and accept forgiveness, and consistently fight for their marriage. Although these couples can work through most personal trials in secular marriages, there is an inclined probability that these couples will struggle more than Christian couples due to not having a unifying faith and trust in God as individuals and as a couple (Marks, 2018). Chapter three has shown how the data will be collected and analyzed to address the problem and gaps within the research, and chapter four will discuss data collected from Christian couples and pastors.

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: SUMAMRY-1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
The student provides a brief description of the methodology, design, chosen analysis procedure, and ethical concerns in a summative manner.	3	3	
The student provides a transition to chapter four.	3	3	
The student's writing is clear, concise, well structured, & flows wells. correct grammar, mechanics, and APA according to the 7 th edition. structured,	3	3	
Student utilizes proper grammar and APA according to APA 7 th edition.	3	3	

Standard	Student's Score	Chair's Score	Readers' Score
SUGGESTED LENGTH: SUMAMRY–1-2 PARAGRAPHS			
Scoring Scale: 0 = Section is missing. Considerable revisions/completion is required. 1 = Section is Present. The element is here, but revisions are required, see notes in the sidebar. 2 = Section is Acceptable. Meets expectations, however, there are some revisions that are suggested. 3 = Section is complete			
Notes:			

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this descriptive case study sought to explore how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion, community-centered social processes, and religious over-idealization on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriages in New York. The researcher utilized Yin's (2014) five-step process to complete proper data analysis. Utilizing Yin's (2014) five-step process allowed the researcher to establish a comprehensive codebook to examine the data received by participants to answer the study's research questions.

Chapter four will discuss the data collected by the researcher, the descriptive statistics of the data and participants, the data analysis process, and the results presented by each research question. Specifically, chapter four will detail the researcher's process to analyze all the data from the study's 26 participants. Reporting on the results will include the themes the researcher established from the interviews and focus groups in answering all three research questions.

The researcher chose to implement a descriptive case study design because the research focuses on acquiring concrete details about the specific real-world marriage phenomenon while exploring key present characteristics (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017). The researcher used a qualitative descriptive case study design to assist in understanding through Christian couples' and pastors' perceptions of how the three components of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes influenced the ability of couples to overcome crises in their marriage. A descriptive case study design was the most appropriate approach for this qualitative study because there is a focus on determining the qualities that relate to the behavior patterns of a specific population; Christ-centered marriages.

It is important to note that there were changes in data collection and analysis from what was mentioned in the proposal. In the proposal, the researcher indicated that data would be collected using interviews with each participant. Each of the six pastors was interviewed individually, but the Christian couples were interviewed together based on participant feedback. Participants were willing to participate, but they mentioned time was the only interference and had asked to be interviewed with their spouse instead of two separate interviews that would utilize the amount of time on their behalf. The researcher felt it was vital to consider the participants' concerns and honor their request, knowing that the researcher would still be hearing from both spouses and receiving the same necessary data.

Additionally, the researcher originally interviewed eight couples and four pastors. These participants then attended the appropriate focus groups: one for Christian couples and one for pastors. However, once the researcher began coding the transcripts from the interviews, it was decided to interview two more couples and two more pastors to ensure sufficient data was received.

The phenomenon explored in this study was the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on Christian couples, and the research questions that were addressed were as follows:

RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

Changes occurred during the collection and analysis part of this qualitative study. After interviewing eight couples and four pastors and then completing a focus group with the same eight couples that were interviewed and a separate focus group with the same four pastors that were interviewed, the researcher decided it would be beneficial to collect more data. The researcher proceeded with interviewing an additional two couples and two additional pastors. Due to the focus groups already being held previously, these additional couples and pastors that were interviewed did not participate in a focus group.

Descriptive Statistics of Participants

The researcher selected a qualitative methodology for this study with a case study design that utilizes Yin's (2014) five-step analysis and data collection approach. To answer the research questions presented, the researcher interviewed Christian couples and pastors and explored the "how" and "why" of the phenomenon. Data analysis comprised the researcher assessing the data collected from the demographic questionnaire, interview, and two separate focus group transcripts. The researcher also created and determined codes, commonalities, categories, and themes for inferred explanations associated with the phenomenon under investigation in this case study.

This study's sample (N=26) included ten Christian couples and six pastors twenty-one years old or older. All twenty-six participants completed the demographic questionnaire to determine their eligibility, and then interviews via Microsoft Teams were completed. Husbands and wives from Christian couples were interviewed together, and the pastors were individually

interviewed. Once all interviews were complete, utilizing Microsoft Teams again, two focus groups occurred; one with the four pastors and one with the eight Christian couples.

Table 1 (see Appendix M) displays the demographic characteristics of the study's twenty-six participants. Twenty participants included ten Christian couples (77%) and six pastors (23%). Of the twenty-six participants, seven were female (38%), and 13 were male (62%). Couples ranged in age from 23-60 years old, and pastors ranged in age from 31-61 years old. Couples were married between one year to fifty-one years. Of the twenty-six participants, 16 were white (62%), 5 participants were black (19%), and 3 participants were Hispanic (1%). All 26 participants are congregants of a non-denominational church in New York.

Narrative of Descriptive Data

To be eligible to participate in this qualitative single-case study, participants had to be twenty-one years old or older, a congregant of the research site, a non-denominational Christian church in New York, and either married or a pastor. To determine eligibility, those interested in participating completed a seven-item demographic questionnaire that included inclusion criteria questions. Once the researcher determined eligibility, the researcher contacted each individual or couple to set up an appropriate time to complete the interview via Microsoft Teams.

The interviews were a fundamental part of the research study and were utilized to gain insight into the components and characteristics of spouses in determining how Christian couples overcome conflict. All twenty-six participants completed an interview with the researcher. The researcher allowed participants to determine the time that worked best for them for the interview. Due to the interviews taking place via Microsoft Teams, participants could pick the most comfortable location and determine their level of privacy. The researcher also implemented the use of pseudonyms to protect participants' identities.

The reflexive process of the semi-structured interview permitted the researcher to acclimate and ask any necessary follow-up questions to acquire more data from participants to increase the researcher's understanding of each individual's response. As summarized in Table 2, a total of twenty participants were interviewed. Each interview was audio and video recorded and then transcribed into text by implementing the transcription feature on Microsoft Teams. The average length of interviews was 72 minutes, and the average number of pages of interview data was 13 pages. See Table 2 (Appendix N).

After the interviews, the researcher established possible days and times for the couples' and pastors' focus groups. The first focus group consisted of eight of the ten Christian couples interviewed. These eight couples included: Larry and Laura, Elliott and William, Sandra and Sam, Sophia and Scott, John and Tori, Lucy and Harry, James and Alexandra, and Sean and Julie. This focus group resulted in fifteen pages of transcript. The second focus group consisted of four of the six pastors interviewed. The pastors that attended the focus group included: Pastor Adam, Pastor Peter, Pastor Charles, and Pastor Dylan. The researcher received eight pages of transcripts after the pastors' focus group.

Participants. Participants in the study were from varied backgrounds and lengths of marriage. All participants readily signed the informed consent forms, and 20 of the 26 participants completed the interviews and one of the two focus groups. The first couple, Larry and Laura, have been married for 35 years.

Larry is a white male who is 59 years old. Laura is a white female who is 60 years old. The second couple, Elliott and William, have been married for 20 years. Elliott is a white female who is 45 years old. William is a white male who is 47 years old. The third couple, Sandra and Sam, have been married for over a year. Sandra is a black female who is 23 years old. Sam is a

black male who is 24 years old. Sophia and Scott have been married for 35 years. Sophia is a Hispanic female who is 33 years old. Scott is a white male who is 35 years old.

The fifth couple, Tori and John, have been married for 51 years. Tori is a Hispanic female who is 71 years old. John is a white male who is 71 years old. Lucy and Harry were the sixth couple and had been married for 18 years. Lucy is a white female who is 52 years old. Harry is a white male who is 53 years old. The seventh couple, James and Alexandra, have been married for 30 years. James is a black male who is 30 years old. Alexandra is a black female who is 32 years old. The eighth couple, Sean and Julie, have been married for nine years.

Sean is a white male who is 45 years old, and Julie is a white female who is 43 years old. These eight couples were the couples that participated in the focus group that consisted of Christian couples: the ninth couple, Cheryl and Tony. Tony is a Hispanic male who is 49 years old, and Cheryl is a white female who is 50 years old. The tenth and final couple was Patty and Tom. Patty is a white female and is 40 years old, and Tom is a white male and is 43 years old.

Peter was the first pastor that was interviewed. Peter is a 61-year-old white male who has been married to his wife Diane for 32 years and is the senior pastor of a non-denominational church in New York. He has been married to his wife Diane for 32 years. Peter is a highly effective communicator of scripture and is best known by congregants of the church for his teaching style in helping individuals, and couples apply God's word and truth in their day-to-day lives. Charles was the second pastor interviewed; he is a white male and is 47 years old. He has been married for 19 years to his wife, Cindy. Charles is the associate pastor at a non-denominational church in New York. He honorably served in the United States Armed Forces for ten years and felt God was calling him into ministry. Charles' goal as a leader in the church is to bring scripture into the church and spread God's light and truth throughout the community.

Adam is the third pastor interviewed, a white male, and is 38 years old. He has been married to his wife, Carolyn, for nine years. Adam and Carolyn have twin girls that are four years old. Adam is the campus community pastor of a non-denominational church in New York. He was an associate pastor at a church in Ohio for three years. However, he and Carolyn prayed about the new position at a non-denominational Christian church in New York for a campus-community pastor. They felt a strong calling to relocate and take this position. Adam and his wife Carolyn are passionate about counseling young couples engaged in their first few years of marriage. Dylan was the fourth pastor interviewed and is a white male who is 54 years old. He has been married to his wife Patricia for 26 years. He is the lead worship pastor at a non-denominational Christian church in New York. These four pastors made up the second focus group that consisted of pastors.

Pastor Brad was the fifth pastor interviewed and is a fifty-eight-year-old white male. He serves as the youth pastor at the non-denominational Christian church. Pastor Brad worked as an accountant for a few years but felt a strong calling to transfer into ministry. He knows that working with youth and sharing the Gospel is where God has called him to be. The sixth and final pastor interviewed was Pastor Bill. He is a thirty-one-year-old black male. He has been married to his wife for just over six years. He has been the youth pastor specifically to middle school-aged children for just under a year. He explained to the researcher that moving to New York from Washington was a huge move, but nothing had ever felt so right other than marrying his wife. He is so happy to call the non-denominational church his home.

Results

Data Analysis Procedures

The purpose of this descriptive case study sought to explore how married Christians couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage in New York. The researcher established three research questions that would address the purpose of this qualitative study. The three research questions are:

RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage? Qual or Quan Qualitative

RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

Data Management

The researcher's goal was to understand how religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes influence couples in overcoming conflict and addressing all three research questions. Before organizing any of the interviews, the researcher read through each transcript and listened to the audio recording to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. The researcher cleaned the data eliminating any information in the transcript that was incorrect or not captured properly when the file was electronically transcribed. When managing data throughout the study, the researcher created folders on their laptop to organize it. A folder was created for the Christian couple's interviews, and a folder was created for the pastors' interviews.

There was also a folder for the first focus group with the Christian couples and one for the second focus group with the pastors. In each folder, transcripts were placed, including uncoded and coded transcripts. The researcher also had a folder labeled "additional notes" containing the audit trail, codebook, and memoing notes.

There were three folders, one folder for each research question. In each of these folders, the researcher included the codes, categories, and themes that assisted in addressing each research question. Once the researcher established these folders, additional folders were added to break down the data further. Breaking down the collected data helped the researcher remain organized and thoroughly address all three research questions efficiently.

Data Analysis

The researcher utilized a descriptive qualitative case study design and implemented Yin's (2014) five-step data analysis approach to collect data from the interviews and the two focus groups. Yin's (2014) five-step analysis process includes the steps: compile, disassemble, reassemble, interpret, and conclude (Yin, 2014). To support the purpose of this study, Yin's (2014) five-step analysis process signified the paramount choice for best understanding the influence religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes have in Christian couples overcoming conflict. Yin's (2014) five-step data analysis process ensured that the researcher utilized personal data collection methods, including interviews (Yin, 2014). Yin's five-step analysis process provided a chance for the researcher to explore the role of the influence religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes have in Christian couples overcoming conflict.

This case study implemented three sources of data collection to ensure data saturation and methodological triangulation were present to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of

the researcher's findings. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher utilized qualitative methods of inquiry and collected details from each of the twenty-six participants, including their views, opinions, perceptions, and first-hand experiences of being in a Christian marriage and working with Christian couples.

Compile. The first step in Yin's (2014) process had the researcher collect data from three different sources. The researcher thoroughly and methodically organized the data collected from the three sources into a logical set of codes, categories, and themes. The codes, categories, and themes then became the researcher's database for analysis (Yin, 2014). Included in the first phase of this case study, the researcher provided all potential participants with a demographic questionnaire with seven screening questions to determine the individual's eligibility. When the individual emailed the demographic questionnaire back to the researcher and was deemed eligible, the researcher then provided each participant with an informed consent form. Once the researcher received each participant's signature, a time was established to conduct an interview via Microsoft Teams.

To conduct the interviews, the researcher sent each pastor and each couple a reminder email at least twenty-four hours before the established date and time agreed upon by the participant and researcher. The researcher established an interview protocol (see Appendix E) that was put into place. The researcher ensured that each participant established the pseudonym to be used in association with the data collected. Utilizing a pseudonym for each participant ensured that each individual's identity would remain confidential. Each interview was video and audio recorded, then transcription occurred and was put into a document with the individual's pseudonym. After all interviews, the researcher reached out to each individual within focus group A, which consisted of Christian couples, and focus group B, which consisted of the

pastors, to establish a time and date that worked well for each group to attend a focus group session via Microsoft Teams.

At the time of each focus group, the researcher shared with the participants the purpose of the qualitative descriptive study once again, which was to explore how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion and community-centered social processes and religious over-idealization influences couples' ability cope with relationship maintenance and crises within their marriage. The researcher then had each participant use their pseudonym to introduce themselves to the rest of the group. The researcher ensured that each participant's pseudonym was utilized throughout the discussion for identification purposes and asked the group to do the same when calling on each other. The researcher then discussed how the focus group would be run by letting the group know that questions would be asked one at a time, and the researcher reiterated the importance of respecting one another's contributions to the group's time together.

Yin's first step in the analysis process had the researcher compile data. Compiling the data included Word documents consisting of transcription from the interviews and focus groups. The researcher reviewed each data source to assist in identifying concepts that would contribute to addressing the purpose of the case study and the three research questions. Before the codes could be established, the researcher took the time to review all three data sources to understand better how the coding process would be completed.

The researcher listened numerous times to the recordings from each interview and both focus groups. The researcher read through all transcripts while listening to the audio. The researcher felt this was important to become familiar with the responses from participants to better prepare for the next steps in Yin's (2016) analysis process – disassembling and

reassembling, which incorporated coding and categorizing the data. The researcher ensured that all data was on a password-protected computer and backed up to a drive kept in a locked safe to guarantee that only the researcher had access to the data.

Disassemble. The second step in the analysis process consisted of the researcher disassembling data to prepare for coding, categorizing, and determining themes. Data collected during the interviews and focus groups were coded, categorized, and sorted to best address the three research questions. In this second step of disassembling, the researcher's goal was to understand better how Christian couples were influenced by religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes in overcoming conflict by identifying words or phrases in the data collected. The disassembling process involved the researcher reviewing the three data sources and focusing on highlighted words and phrases that related to the overall purpose of the qualitative case study. Once the researcher fully understood the coding process, the researcher proceeded to identify codes in each data source.

The researcher reviewed each interview transcript thoroughly and focused on words, sentences, and phrases related to the research questions and the purpose of the study to complete coding—the researcher then did this same process but with the transcripts from the two focus groups. The researcher implemented inductive analysis, which involved utilizing the raw data to derive concepts and themes (Thomas, 2006). Responses from participants resulted in being a part of multiple concepts throughout the open coding process. Words, sentences, and phrases commonly appeared throughout all three data sources in the first round (Level I) of coding.

A second coding round began (Level II), where the researcher implemented analytic memos. This use of analytic memos assisted in highlighting the commonalities between the three data sources and standard codes. The researcher focused on the commonality among the

three research questions. Although the researcher attempted to ensure codes were placed under the most appropriate concept, data was included amongst more than one concept in multiple areas. Key codes were identified throughout the analysis and are shown in Appendix D to help the reader better understand and interpret the data.

In this second step of Yin's (2014) data analysis, the researcher took the data from the three sources and broke the data down into smaller sections to make the data review more manageable. Codes were loosely assigned to the data reviewed. For example, the researcher focused on concepts incorporating spouses' behavior, religion, and community-centered social processes and how these three components influenced couples in overcoming conflict. Words, sentences, and paragraphs related to these concepts were repeated numerous times, thus highlighting their importance to participants. While these concepts occurred early in the analysis process, the researcher remained open to discovering other data from participants related to the theoretical foundation of the research questions.

Throughout coding the research in the interview and focus group transcripts, analytic memos were utilized to highlight pertinent words, sentences, and phrases the researcher deemed relevant to the study. Maintaining analytic memos and an audit trail permitted the researcher to track each step of the data analysis process and helped diminish the possibility of researcher bias occurring when grouping data and increase trustworthiness (Saldaña, 2016).

Reassemble. Once the data was disassembled, the third step of the analysis began: reassembling the data into separate groups, leading to categories and identifying patterns within the data (Yin, 2014). During this process, the researcher used deductive analysis (Azungah & Kasmad, 2018) and looked for common words and phrases in the interview transcripts and focus groups that were congruent with the study's purpose. The familiar words and phrases throughout

all three data sources were then grouped into categories (See appendix D) and then into themes, which assisted in addressing the three research questions. The third round (Level III) of coding took place when the researcher took initial concepts and codes and then grouped and regrouped these concepts and codes, which resulted in categories. Level IV of coding, or the fourth coding round, consisted of the researcher seeking commonalities between categories that validated all three data sources. After the fourth coding round, grouping established themes (Yin, 2014).

Comparing participants' responses between all three data sources helped the researcher narrow down the categories to establish themes that helped to address the three research questions. The first research question provided a foundation for understanding how religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes influence Christian couples overcoming conflict. Data that helped address these questions consisted of participants sharing how their faith, community, and peers have positively or negatively influenced their marital relationship.

The second research question focused on the same three components but from the perspective of pastors rather than married couples. The data received from participants that assisted in addressing these questions consisted of the time pastors have spent with individual spouses in marital counseling or time with couples together in marital counseling. The third research question was addressed by data from both Christian couples and pastors and focused on the behavioral characteristics of couples in overcoming conflict. This data consisted of spouses either positively or negatively addressing behaviors in their spouse or pastors addressing common behaviors seen or reported in counseling sessions.

During this third step of reassembling data, the interviews and two focus groups provided the researcher with coded and categorized data. Then the researcher made connections and

comparisons throughout the data to establish categories. Similarities within the data were made present by reassembling the data amongst the three data sources. In this analysis phase, the researcher focused on developing themes and how the data addressed the research questions. The researcher had a total of forty-four codes and five categories as a result of the analysis.

Categories were created in the reassembly step related to spouses' behaviors, conflict strategies, implementation of faith, and qualities of spouses. The categories helped the researcher understand the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on Christian couples overcoming conflict. The researcher then created seven themes from the categories and the present data. The seven themes included:

1. Christian couples' beliefs, faith, and religious components contribute to overcoming marital conflict and crisis.
2. The qualities and behaviors between spouses' influence the manner in which the couple contends with crises within the marriage.
3. Pastors perceive that spouses' faith, beliefs, and religiosity influences overcoming marital conflict and crisis
4. Pastors perceive the effects of thoughts, opinions, and actions of others as having a detrimental influence on marriage.
5. Pastors perceive how community-centered social processes influence Christian couples overcoming marital conflict and crisis.
6. How Christians are viewed by other individuals and the influence, those individuals have on the marital relationship of Christian couples
7. The effects of implementing conflict resolution strategies assisted Christian couples overcoming marital conflict.

The development of themes transpired during the disassembling and reassembling phases of Yin's (2014) analysis process. Data from all three sources were thoroughly reviewed and coded. After the initial codes had been identified, the researcher analyzed the data again and pared down and reflected on the initial codes to generate more appropriate or relevant codes based on the data. After final codes were established, the researcher coalesced these codes into categories which were utilized to develop themes. Appendix L contains seven visual representations of how each theme emerged from the established codes and categories discovered within the data.

Categories helped to establish individual themes that would assist in addressing this study's three research questions. The following categories lead to the seven themes. Categories were organized as Beliefs and faith, key qualities of the spouse, behaviors of the spouse, putting forth effort and work in marriage, and Christian community. See Table 3 (Appendix O)

Triangulation. Denzin (2009) stated that the implementation of triangulation assists in avoiding both researcher and participant bias, which leads to an increase in credibility (Denzin, 2009). Methodological triangulation was implemented in this case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The researcher collected data utilizing three sources; these three sources included: interviews and two different focus groups. The researcher implemented three different data sources, and through triangulation, the researcher's findings were affirmed across all three data sources. The first research question was answered from two data sources, including the interviews with Christian couples and the focus group with Christian couples. The second research question was answered from two data sources, including the interviews with pastors and the focus group with pastors. The third research question was answered from three data sources,

including the interviews with Christian couples, the focus group with Christian couples, and the focus group with pastors.

Interpret. Step four in Yin's (2014) analysis process called for the researcher to interpret the data in the established themes to understand better the relationships within the data and participants' personal experiences and views. The researcher wanted to ensure that researcher bias did not occur, so the researcher used a structured process throughout the data collection and analysis process. The seven themes created from the data analysis best address how the three components of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes, influence Christian couples in overcoming conflict. The researcher established these themes through a careful and thorough process. This process included reading over each transcript three times. Each time the researcher read a transcript highlighting, notes were taken to determine common phrases and words. After each transcript was coded, the researcher established a codebook. The codes were then analyzed, and from the codes, categories were established. The categories then led to a total of seven themes. Three themes were established to address the first research question, another three themes were established to answer the second research question, and one theme was established to answer the third research question.

The first theme, Christian couple's beliefs, faith, and religious components contribute to overcoming marital conflict and crisis describes how couples have leaned on their beliefs and faith to assist them in overcoming conflict. This theme was vital in addressing the research question by informing the researcher of how each couple incorporated components of their faith into their marriage and how their faith was able to help them overcome problems that arose in their marriage.

The second theme, The qualities and behaviors between spouses' influence the manner in which the couple contends with crises within the marriage, emphasizes characteristics and behaviors that spouses discussed that either hindered or positively impacted couples overcoming conflict. This theme addresses how couples have to adapt their behaviors and learn what is pleasing and respectful to their spouse. This theme incorporated Bandura's Social Learning Theory in the researcher's discussions where couples addressed changing their behaviors.

The third theme, Pastors perceive that spouses' faith, beliefs, and religiosity influences overcoming marital conflict, and crisis focuses on how pastors believe a Christian couple's faith and beliefs greatly influence the marital relationship. The researcher gained vital information from pastors who have worked with Christian couples regarding how they felt a couple's faith and their walk with God affected their marriages, especially in regards to the couple overcoming conflict in their marriage.

The fourth theme is that Pastors perceive the effects of others' thoughts, opinions, and actions as detrimental to a marriage. This theme discussed how pastors believe Christian couples are influenced by an individual's view of how a Christian marriage should look. This theme was vital because it informed the researcher on how the pastors felt Christian couples are influenced by how other individuals label or view Christians as a whole and whether or not this influenced the couple in overcoming marital conflict.

The fifth theme is, Pastors perceive how community-centered social processes influence Christian couples to overcome marital conflict and crisis. This theme focused on how pastors believe involvement in the Christian community influences Christian couples. The researcher gained insight into how essential pastors felt it was for Christian couples to be a part of a

Christian community, not only for the spouses' walk with God but also for their marital relationship.

The sixth theme is, How Christians are viewed by other individuals and the influence those individuals have on the marital relationship of Christian couples. This theme focuses on how Christian couples are influenced by individuals' views of how Christian marriages should look. Many Christian couples discussed with the researcher that others do not affect their marriage and are only looking for the approval of God alone.

The seventh and final theme, the effects of implementing conflict resolution strategies in assisting Christian couples in overcoming marital conflict, highlights what skills or factors couples lean on to resolve marital conflict. Christian couples and pastors discussed conflict resolution strategies that they found to be exceptionally important in overcoming marital conflict healthily and productively.

All seven themes disclosed vital factors of how religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes have influenced couples positively or negatively. More specifically, these components have influenced Christian couples to overcome conflict.

Conclude. Concluding was the fifth and last step of Yin's (2014) analysis process. In this step, the researcher made inferences from the data collected from all three sources. Due to a specific phenomenon – Christ-centered marriages being under exploration, the researcher found Yin's (2014) to be the most appropriate process for analyzing data because the researcher received the point of view from both Christian couples and pastors who have worked directly with Christian couples. Yin's (2014) analysis allowed the researcher to compile data, disassemble data by breaking it down for further inspection, reassemble codes from the data into

relevant categories, interpret the data from all three data sources using triangulation, and then draw conclusions in the form of the seven resulting themes.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness in this descriptive case study, the researcher utilized multiple data sources, completed field testing, and implemented member checking from interviews with open-ended questions. Member checking was crucial in the data collection process to enhance trustworthiness. The researcher ensured to have each participant reviewed the transcript from their interview to validate that the information displayed truth (Carlson, 2010). Additionally, the researcher surpassed Yin's (2014) suggestion of having at least 12 participants to reach data saturation and had 26 participants. The sample size is not large, but the researcher's data from all three sources thoroughly answered the phenomenon and all three research questions.

The researcher achieved dependability by creating and following a strict protocol for the interviews and focus groups (Morse, 2015). Not only were protocols utilized, but the researcher kept an audit trail of each step of the data collection process, and the researcher ensured objectivity throughout the process of interpreting data and making conclusions (Morse, 2015). To ensure confirmability throughout the research process, the researcher minimized researcher bias and implemented transparency throughout the research process (Saldaña, 2016).

The researcher applied an analysis process involving manually coding, categorizing, and theming, as well as performing member-checking with all transcriptions to confirm data accuracy and interpretations. The researcher felt that these steps were necessary to ensure the credibility of the data received through interviews and both focus groups. Member-checking permitted all participants to check for the accuracy of any interpretations the researcher made, enhancing credibility. The researcher ensured transferability by implementing a thick description

of the data and a sufficient sample size. A thick description provides a background of the study and provides the reader with the participants' thoughts, emotions, and perceptions to create a vivid and clear picture of the study (Ponterotto, 2015).

Data Sources, Research Questions, and Theme Alignment

The researcher implemented three data sources to collect ample data from Christian couples and pastors. The three data sources included; interviews with Christian couples and interviews with individual pastors, a focus group with Christian couples, and a focus group with pastors. The researcher asked questions in both the interviews and focus groups that addressed the three research questions. From the data collected, the researcher then established codes, categories, and seven themes that assisted in addressing all three research questions.

Face-to-face Interviews

During the sixteen interviews, the researcher gained insight into participants' and pastors' perceptions of their experiences of the influences of religion, community-centered social processes, and religious over-idealization on marriage. During the interviews, couples discussed their perceptions of the qualities of their spouse, struggles in their marriage, how they display love, and how conflict is handled within their relationship. Pastors described their perceptions of common conflicts in marriage, qualities of a Christ-centered marriage, and behavioral characteristics of spouses that influence the marital relationship. At some point in the interview, every participant discussed the importance of their faith and God in marriage. Many couples discussed how difficult times in the marital relationship were overcome by turning to God in times of conflict. All participants also discussed how a spouse's behavioral characteristics could help or hinder a marriage. The topic of motivation brought about a robust discussion regarding how spouses are affected by one another's motivation or lack thereof. When a spouse felt their

partner was highly motivated, they also felt motivated to be better, but when the spouse lacked motivation, the significant other felt pressure to pick up their partner's responsibilities.

Couples' Focus Group

The first focus group was with the first eight couples who were interviewed. This focus group gave the researcher a great deal of insight into how religion influences a couple's marriage. Couples discussed how even during the most difficult challenges in their marriage, they knew that God would provide and help each spouse, but more importantly, the couple was together because it was a union God had brought together.

Another topic heavily discussed in the couples' focus group was the influence that community-centered social processes have on a couple's marriage. Many couples discussed that community-centered social processes greatly influenced their marriage. Most couples were in small groups with other couples from their church. They felt that being a part of this group provided them with friendships that helped them grow closer to God, provided support, especially in prayer, and held couples accountable.

Regarding religious over-idealization, one couple discussed that they felt that in the most challenging part of their marriage, they felt immense pressure from family members and friends that would judge them if they turned to get separated to work on themselves as individuals. The seven other couples felt grounded in who they were in Christ and were not seeking approval from anyone but God. These couples discussed that it is important to maintain one's morals, values, and beliefs at the center of marriage because people will always have something to say, and letting outsiders control your marriage can be detrimental.

Pastors' Focus Group

The Pastors' focus group included four of the pastors that were interviewed. This focus group focused on very similar topics to the couples' focus group, but gathering data from a pastor's perspective working with Christian couples and spouses was extremely insightful. Community-centered social processes were a topic that all pastors felt had a tremendous influence on a couple's marriage. All four pastors mentioned their church's opportunities for couples to grow closer to one another, but more importantly, closer to God by hosting marriage nights every other Friday and marriage retreats three days twice a year. Pastors felt that these events help couples learn what a godly marriage looks like from scripture while surrounded by similar couples. At these events, couples share their testimonies and life experiences, and they can relate to what other couples have overcome, worked through, and grown from early on in their marriage.

Another topic discussed during this second focus group consisted of religion and its influence on the marital relationship. All the pastors discussed how Jesus is the ultimate example of what a selfless, patient, empathetic, gracious, faith-filled, God-centered life looks like. As couples draw near to Jesus and prioritize living life with Him, spouses will begin to see those same attributes develop in their own lives, which then contribute to better, healthier, and ultimately more godly avenues of communication.

Regarding overcoming marital conflicts, the pastors emphasized the importance of healthy communication. A Godly spouse should be a source of encouragement, strength, peace, hope, and faith for their partner. One aspect of this that the pastors truly emphasized was that a spouse could only give what they have into their marriage, which is why it is so important for each spouse to prioritize their personal walk with the Lord to have a strong marriage.

Encompassed in the results section are the researcher's interpretation and understanding of the data procured by the participants from the study. Table four provides a visualization of the connection between the three research questions and the resulting themes from the completed study that resulted from completing the five-step data analysis. The results in Chapter Five discuss Bandura's Social Learning Theory to show how this theory is directly associated with the marital relationship (Johnson & Bradbury, 2015) and the results from the study.

Table 4*Research Questions and Theme Alignment*

Research Question	Theme
How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian couples' beliefs, faith, and religious components contribute to overcoming marital conflict and crisis • How Christians are viewed by other individuals and the influence, those individuals have on the marital relationship of Christian couples • The effects of implementing conflict resolution strategies assisted Christian couples overcoming marital conflict. • Pastors perceive how community-centered social processes influence Christian couples overcoming marital conflict and crisis
How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastors perceive that spouses' faith, beliefs, and religiosity influences overcoming marital conflict and crisis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastors perceive the effects of thoughts, opinions, and actions of others as having a detrimental influence on marriage
How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couple's ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The qualities and behaviors between spouses influence the manner in which the couple contends with a crisis within the marriage

Note. This table displays the three research questions and the established themes that assisted in answering each of the three research questions.

Results

The research questions for this study were based on the Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura, which discusses how individuals modify their behavior toward one another by implementing the consequences of their behaviors (Johnson & Bradbury, 2015). Dysfunction emerges when maladaptive behaviors are rewarded over adaptive behaviors (Johnson &

Bradbury, 2015). The research questions in this study were used to explore the details of the specific real-world marriage phenomenon. The researcher completed Yin's (2014) five-step data analysis process and established themes to answer the three research questions. Research questions organize the themes the researcher discovered from the data and the results.

Results for Research Question 1

The first research question asks how married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage. Three themes emerged from the data to answer Research Question 1. Theme 1 was Christian couple's beliefs, faith, and religious components contribute to overcoming marital conflict and crisis. Theme 2 was how Christians do not permit the views of other individuals to influence their Christian marriage. The third and final theme in answering the first research question was The effects of implementing conflict resolution strategies assisted Christian couples in overcoming marital conflict.

The following section presents the results of this first research question. It was evident that religion and community-centered social processes positively influenced couples coping with relationship crises within their marriage. The third component, religious over-idealization, did not seem to influence the couple's overcoming conflict because the Christians that participated in this study wanted to please God, not other individuals. Furthermore, all participants discussed the importance of getting involved in a community of other Christians to strengthen their walks with the Lord, building encouraging relationships that promote seeking God and setting good examples. Three themes emerged concerning answering the first research question.

Christian couples' beliefs, faith, and religious components contribute to overcoming marital conflict and crisis. This theme addresses components of participants' religion

influencing their marriages. The codes included in the development of this first theme included: Power of prayer, God as counselor and healer, Asking God for guidance, Beliefs, Christian, Truth from scripture, Working on the foundation of your marriage, Personal relationship with Jesus, Time with God, Getting over hurdles through prayer, Three in marriage, Commitment, God can overcome anything, Importance of faith, Attending weekly service, More than love is needed, and Power of displaying an understanding. These codes were then organized into five categories, and the categories that emerged for this first theme included: Beliefs and Faith, Key Qualities of Spouse, Behaviors of Spouse, Putting forth effort and work in marriage, and Christian community.

This theme emerged from data collected from the data sources, including the interviews with Christian couples and the focus group with Christian couples. The researcher gained insight into when Christian couples discussed that their faith and beliefs were at the core of their marriage and helped them overcome conflict healthily. The following are examples of what couples or individual spouses said either during the interviews or focus group sessions with the researcher that assisted in theme development:

Sandra stated, “He helps lead our marriage towards God and always makes it a point in time of conflict or crisis to take my hand and pray with me, for me, and for our marriage.” Another example was Sam's statement, “Above all else, I would say both individually and together as a couple we turn to God during conflict and crises. We know that God is our ultimate healer and counselor.” Another example from the focus group with the couples was when Sandra stated, “The struggles of marriage require more than love to grow a strong and healthy relationship. You need to keep God and faith center and rely on them.”

Larry discussed that he and his wife, Laura, quickly realized that even if their marriage had Christ at the center, they needed to work on their relationship with Jesus to be the best spouse they could be; “Early on when me and Laura got engaged, I would read Ephesians 5:25-30 every morning to remind myself of what God had called me to do as Laura’s future husband.” Tori informed the researcher that in fifty-one years of marriage, “you endure many crises, whether directly in your marriage or something a family member is facing that affects you.” She said the only way she knew she and her husband John could get through and overcome the many crises they faced was because of God and the support system that continuously prayed with them and for them.

How Christians are viewed by other individuals and the influence, those individuals have on the marital relationship of Christian couples. This theme emerged from two data sources, including the interviews with Christian couples and the focus group with Christian couples. In this theme, participants discussed how other people view Christians or how religious over-idealization has influenced their marriage. The codes included in the development of this first theme included: Pleasing to God not others, Do not compare to others, Idolize God, and Jesus as the ultimate example. These codes were then organized into one category called Beliefs and faith.

William made a statement concerning religious idealization or how other individuals view Christians as a whole. William stated “It would be naive to think that non-Christians hold us as Christians to this standard of basic perfection, but we know that we are neither perfect nor claim to be.” When the researcher asked Alexandra how religious over-idealization influenced her marriage, she clarified to the researcher that she and her husband do not search for the approval of anyone but God. She informed the researcher that: “We have chosen to idealize

God, for He is the only perfect man; no other human's thoughts or opinions of either one of us or our marriage as a whole would impact our relationship.” During the first focus group with the eight Christian couples, Harry shared with the group that he was so consumed with what others would think of his marriage that it made present conflicts even bigger. Harry shared with the group: “I realized that everyone will have something to say about anything and everything, including my marriage, but I do not owe them any explanation or need to search for approval in anyone other than Jesus.”

This theme was essential in addressing the first research question. Christian couples discussed with the researcher that they do not allow the thoughts of other individuals to affect their marriage. Couples focused on pleasing God in their marriage and were not interested in pleasing anyone else.

The effects of implementing conflict resolution strategies assisted Christian couples overcoming marital conflict. This third theme for the first research question resulted in interviews and a focus group with the couples. Couples agreed that conflict is inevitable in marriage, but how spouses handle conflict individually and as a couple is crucial to the marital relationship. The codes included in the development of this first theme included: God as counselor and healer, Asking God for guidance, Healthy communication, Love language, Getting over hurdles through prayer, Working as a team, Three in marriage, Commitment, God can overcome anything, Importance of faith, Attending weekly service, and Establishing peace in the marriage. These codes were then organized into four categories, including: Putting forth effort and work in marriage, Christian community, Beliefs and faith, and Key qualities of spouse.

During the interview with the researcher, Sam clarified that his way of handling conflict early in his marriage was not working, and a change was necessary. Sam described how he used

to manage conflict to how conflict is addressed now in his marriage. “My wife and I used to give one another the silent treatment. We now communicate how we are feeling and how we can adjust our actions or words to avoid making one another feel poorly.” It was clear from the discussion with Sam that he was conveying his feelings that conflict can be handled without tearing your significant other down and simply making them aware of the facts. For example, Sam had discussed that his wife used to approach him about never putting his clothes in the hamper, but she did by putting Sam down and making him feel that something so easy he was unable to do. Sam explained that now they display healthy communication in their marriage. Sam stated, “Above all else, I would say that individually and together as a couple, we turn to God during conflict and crises. We know that God is our ultimate healer and counselor.”

Sophia experienced great conflict in her marriage when she and her husband were diagnosed with a degenerative retinal condition early, leading to mental health struggles with depression and anxiety. Sophia stated: “We credit overcoming this crisis to embracing our vows and fully believing that God was amid every hardship we faced and gave us what we needed to overcome those challenging moments, days, and weeks.” See Table 5 (Appendix P)

This theme assisted in answering the first research question. Both couples and pastors discussed conflict resolution strategies that were essential to couples overcoming conflict that arose in their marriage in both a healthy and productive way. Both pastors and couples discussed that conflict and crisis would occur in marriage, so being equipped with strategies is exceptionally beneficial for the couple’s marital relationship.

Results for Research Question 2

Three themes emerged from the data to answer Research Question 2. The first theme that answered the second research question was that Pastors perceive how a Christian church’s

involvement in a community influences Christian couples overcoming marital conflict and crisis. Theme 2 was that Pastors perceive the effects of thoughts, opinions, and actions of others as having a detrimental influence on marriage. The third and final theme in answering the second research question was that Pastors perceive that spouses' faith, beliefs, and religiosity influences overcoming marital conflict and crisis.

The second research question asked how pastors perceived religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriages. The following section presents the results of this second research question. Results were highly similar to couples' responses to the first research question. Once again, it is evident that both components, religion and community-centered social processes, positively influence a couple in coping with a relationship crisis within their marriage. The third component is religious over-idealization; the six pastors felt this component did not play a role in a couple's ability to overcome conflict. All four pastors discussed how crucial getting involved in a community of other Christians is and how having a solid community of believers as friends and mentors help strengthen each spouse's relationship with The Lord and, overall, helps to make the couple's marriage stronger.

Pastors perceive how community-centered social processes influence Christian couples overcoming marital conflict and crisis. In this theme, data from the interviews with the six pastors and the second focus group that consisted of four pastors provided data to the researcher that supported the second research question of this case study. The codes included in the development of this first theme included: SS, SCOC, and GICC. These codes were then organized into one category, and the category that emerged for this first theme helped answer the second research question: Christian community.

Pastor Dylan discussed how effective and beneficial community-centered social processes could be for Christian couples that involve being with other Christians.

Pastor Dylan stated, “When couples surround themselves with other Christians, it helps couples to have a support system that encourages their walk with God and leans on scripture for truth.”

Pastor Peter also discussed what community-centered social processes he believed to have the most significant influence on motivating a couple to overcome crises in their marriage are getting connected with the church. Pastor Peter discussed the importance of getting involved with other Christians to surround yourself with Godly examples of behaviors, morals, values, and beliefs that will help couples grow as individuals and together as a couple. Pastor Peter specifically stated, “Community and getting involved is so important. I always encourage young couples to get involved in church events to be surrounded by other Christian couples.”

During the interview with Pastor Dylan, he discussed that every individual needs a support system; the same goes for a couple. Being a part of social events and a community that enhances one’s spiritual walk and journey is “absolutely” necessary. “God has created us for relationships and fellowship, which is another reason why establishing a network of people that will provide advice and guidance that leads you closer to God is crucial.”

This theme addressed the second research question by addressing how influential pastors felt it was for couples to be involved in a Christian community. Pastors discussed in both one-on-one interviews and the focus group with pastors how beneficial it is for Christian couples to be a part of a community of other believers that can be role models, provide support, and encourage couples during difficult times in their marriage while supplying guidance and wisdom.

Pastors perceive the effects of thoughts, opinions, and actions of others as having a detrimental influence on marriage. The six pastors during the interviews and the second focus group helped the researcher gain insight into how pastors feel a couple's marriage is affected by others. The codes included in the development of this second theme included: Pleasing to God not others, Do not compare to others, Idolize God, and Jesus as the ultimate example. These codes were then organized into one category and the category that emerged for this second theme helped answer the second research question: Beliefs and faith.

During the interviews, Pastor Adam gave the researcher information on how others affect marriages, especially regarding religious over-idealization.

“Religious idealization can put unnecessary and overwhelming pressure on Christian marriages. Couples can begin to heap massive amounts of pressure on the other spouse to be godlier and more passionate about the things of God than they currently are.”

This information from Pastor Adam displays a sense of spouses letting the way others are seen for short bits of time influence a couple in striving to be like those individuals or couples. All six pastors emphasized the importance of couples only seeking to be more like Christ and not any other human. During the interviews, Pastor Charles emphasized what God informs us in Romans 12:2, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Pastor Charles informed the researcher that it is vital for couples to stay rooted in scripture and stay grounded on the vows they made to one another. When a couple focuses on their vows and scripture, they will not be affected when the world around them constantly throws other ideas and thoughts of how a couple should be or what they should do. Pastor Charles continued to discuss the following: As Christians, we are called by God, with the help of His

Spirit, to live a life, in action, words, and deeds, that aligns with the Written Word of God and not the views of others.”

Pastors discussed in both the interviews with the researcher as well as the focus group with pastors that couples must not allow the thoughts and opinion of outsiders effect their marriage. Pastors discussed that couples should only focus on pleasing God. This theme helped in addressing the second research question.

Pastors perceive that spouses’ faith, beliefs, and religiosity influences overcoming marital conflict and crisis. The codes included in the development of this second theme included: Power of prayer, God as counselor and healer, Asking God for guidance, Beliefs, Christian, Truth from scripture, Pleasing to God not others, Working on the foundation of your marriage, Personal relationship with Jesus, Time with God, Getting over hurdles through prayer, Three in marriage, Commitment, God can overcome anything, Importance of faith, Attending weekly service, God completing us not others, More than love is needed, and Power of displaying an understanding. These codes were then organized into five categories, and the categories that emerged for this third theme that helped answer the second research question were: Beliefs and faith, Key qualities of spouse, Behaviors of spouse, Putting forth effort and work in marriage, and Christian community. This third and final theme addressed the second research question of this case study. During the interview with Pastor Charles, he discussed how religion could influence a Christian couple, especially in times of conflict. Pastor Charles stated:

Having a firm belief that there is a God and that He is aware, concerned, and with us leads us to a place of knowing we can Get through any crisis, as difficult as it may be in the midst of it. If you take it from a pure sense of overcoming the crisis with Marriage as a strength to overcome, there is a section in Ecclesiastes 4 that speaks about the benefits

of doing life and overcoming as a couple and concludes with verse twelve of that chapter that says,” a cord of three Strands is not easily broken - the two cords representing the husbands and wives, and the third being God providing hope in all areas of the marriage. When practicing Christians live their lives according to the Bible, all the teachings consistently point to Christ-like behavior, actions, and thought processes that, if applied, will literally take them to the other side of Crisis.

The researcher, during the interviews, was also able to discuss the topic of religious components with Pastor Peter, specifically about the importance of spouses being motivated to attend weekly service. Pastor Peter discussed with the researcher and conveyed that weekly church attendance is vital to sustaining a healthy, happy, and successful marriage. Pastor Peter elaborated on this topic by stating:

Obviously the most important thing for an individual is to have their own personal walk with the Lord...In addition to that personal walk though, being a part of the community of faith where couples can draw close to others who are on a similar journey as ours, we can find a support system that speaks the truth in love, motivates us to do the hard but necessary things, and encourages always.”

During his interview with the researcher, Pastor Dylan also discussed the importance of attending weekly service. Pastor Dylan expressed to the researcher the following:

By attending a weekly service together, a couple is given the “spiritual tools” needed to become better individually and ultimately as a couple. That, in turn, helps them address the “storms of life” that comes their way. In the second focus group with the four pastors and the researcher, the topic of how religion motivates and influences a couple in overcoming conflict arose. Pastor Adam discussed that Matthew 5:9 states, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called

children of God.” He continued to discuss scripture with the group and said, “Peacemaking may involve conflict at times, but the ultimate goal is to have peace; because we are human, there will always be conflict of some sort, but there is a difference between going through conflict and living in conflict. We should ultimately be pursuing peace in our relationships, even if conflict is present for a short time. See Table 6 (Appendix Q)

It was evident through discussions with the pastors how influential they felt a couple’s faith was in overcoming marital conflict. The researcher gained insight into specific examples of conflict couples had overcome because of relying on their faith and believing giving up on their spouse was not an answer because of knowing God’s plan and purpose was for the couple to be together and work towards fulfilling His work. This theme greatly assisted in addressing the second research question.

Results for Research Question 3

The third research question asks how Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples’ ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage. One theme emerged from the data to answer Research Question 3. The theme that assisted in answering the third research question was that the qualities and behaviors between spouses’ influence the manner in which the couple contends with crises within the marriage. The researcher received data from both the interviews and the focus groups about spouses’ behaviors and qualities and the influence these two components had on couples’ overcoming crises.

The following section presents the results of the third research question. All eight couples and four pastors discussed qualities and behaviors that hindered a couple’s marriage and behaviors that helped spouses and couples overcome marital conflict. It was evident from the data received that motivation was a positive influence in a marriage when both spouses were

motivated in all areas of life, including as a Christian, as a husband/wife, as a mother/father, and in their job field.

The qualities and behaviors between spouses' influence the manner in which the couple contends with crises within the marriage. This theme helped the researcher address the case study's third and final research question. The codes included in the development of this second theme included: Power of displaying an understanding, God can overcome anything, Strength, Time with God, Love language, Trustworthy/honest, Selfless/Giving, Motivated, Introvert/extrovert, Respectful, Intelligent, Mature, Beliefs, Attraction, Personality, Asking God for forgiveness, and Power of prayer. These codes were then organized into four categories, and the categories that emerged for the theme helped answer the third research question: Key qualities of spouse, Putting forth effort and work in marriage, Behaviors of spouse, and Beliefs and faith. The interviews and focus groups provided the researcher with vital information regarding this theme. During the interview with Larry provided the research insight on key qualities of his wife Laura that helped him to know Laura was his person. Larry told the researcher the following:

I knew that Laura was the person I wanted to spend the rest of my life with when she instantly talked about Jesus. I always wanted someone who, of course, loved me but ultimately loved The Lord first and foremost. I loved the way she saw the positive in every situation, and it was very clear to me that she was living to please God and God alone. One example of noticing Laura loved The Lord with her whole heart was on our first date; when we discussed what we enjoyed doing in our free time, she mentioned that she loves volunteering in homeless shelters. She mentioned she feels closest to God in this type of setting, where she can share God's goodness and encourage others to come to

know Him. I remember she told me she would always keep these little Bibles in her car, and when she saw a homeless person, she would give them a Bible to reassure them that everything is going to be ok and it is in God's hands. This instantly reassured me that with Laura putting God first our relationship could withstand anything.

Tori conveyed to the researcher that a quality her spouse possessed that made her realize he was the person she wanted to spend the rest of their life with them was how Christ radiated from him. Tori informed the researcher of the following:

When Sam became a Christian, he got radically saved and changed his lifestyle. I was drawn to his sincerity and level of commitment toward God. I could start crying tears of joy thinking about the work God did in his life – absolutely a beautiful thing to witness. When he completely surrendered his life to God, I saw Christ in him and fell in love with that new man. Sam's optimistic view on life was a great balance to my realistic perspective. I was drawn to his outgoing, friendly personality and great smile. I was also impressed with his ability to handle stressful and sometimes awkward situations gracefully.

Motivation was a heavily discussed topic during the interviews that coincided with addressing this theme and the third research question. Sandra had conferred with the researcher that her husband's motivation has positively impacted their marriage. She elaborated by informing the researcher of the following:

My husband is an extremely motivated man to not just consistently look for ways to assure we are financially stable but to always make sure, first and foremost, we are seeking God in every part of our lives. I have realized that the motivation my husband has to not only be the best husband to me, father to our son, but also the best overall

version of himself is an absolutely beautiful part of my husband that I now adore. If it was not for my husband's motivation to always provide for our family and lead us to serve the Lord in our house, I would not be able to be a stay-at-home mother which he knew was a dream of mine.

Another topic discussed during the interviews was the reproduction of behavior. Sophia had informed the researcher that it was vital for her to make her husband aware of behaviors that were meaningful to her so he knew to reproduce those behaviors. Sophia stated:

In terms of something like love languages, it's been essential for him to understand how I want to receive affection, and vice versa. We started out showing affection in ways we wanted to receive it, without communicating about our needs. We've since had multiple conversations about what we want/don't want and have moved to more individualized affection – he feels loved through touch. Elliott also discussed the topic of reproduction in relation to behaviors. During the interview with Elliott the researcher was made aware that feedback was a vital key in performing a behavior that was witnessed, which is known as reproduction. Elliott stated the following: We often give each other feedback on things that make each other feel loved, for example, I will pick up a coffee for Charlie and he will let me know it made him feel loved, or he will stop to give me an unexpected hug that makes me feel loved. Positive feedback has been very helpful in enabling us to each understand how to overcome challenges related to having and speaking different love languages.

This theme greatly assisted in addressing the third and final research question. The researcher gained data from both couples and pastors regarding behavioral characteristics of spouses that played a role in the conflict itself or the

ability of the couple to overcome conflict. When this theme was established, it was evident to the researcher that Bandura's Social Learning Theory was evident in many of these couple's marriages through discussion of learning and adapting behaviors in their relationship.

Table 7*Themes Supporting Research Question 3*

Themes	Categories in Relation to Theme	Codes Within Categories
The qualities and behaviors between spouses influence the manner in which the couple contends with crisis within the marriage		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attraction (A) • Personality (P) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs (B) • Mature (M) • Respectful (R) • Intellectually (I) • Introvert/Extrovert (I/E) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivated (m) • Trustworthy/Honest (T/H) • Selfless/Giving (S/G) • Power of prayer (POP) • Asking God for guidance (AGAG) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love language (LL) • Time with God (TWG) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength (s) • Commitment (c) • Motivation of self and spouse (MOSAS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God can overcome anything (GCOA) • Serving each other and others (SEOAO) • Marriage takes work (MTW) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouragement for spouse (EFS) • Power of displaying an understanding (PODAU)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key qualities of spouse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviors of spouse • Beliefs and faith 	

Note. This table breaks down the codes and categories that contributed to the established theme

that assisted in answering the third research question.

Summary

This descriptive case study explored how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage in New York. The data collected from the interviews and the two focus groups showed how religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes influence Christian couples in overcoming marital conflict – addressing the purpose of this qualitative study. When couples are grounded in their faith, prioritize Christ at the center of their individual lives and marriage, become involved in a community that enhances their walk with God, and turn to scripture for truth, there is no conflict too big for Christian couples to overcome.

The researcher created a total of seven themes that assisted in addressing all three research questions. The seven themes included the following: Christian couple's beliefs, faith, and religious components contribute to overcoming marital conflict and crisis, Influence on Christian couple's marriage in regards to how other individuals view Christians as a whole, Conflict resolution strategies that are implemented within Christian couple's marriage to assist in overcoming conflict and crisis, Pastors' view on how community-centered social processes influence Christian couples overcoming marital conflict and crisis, Pastors' view of spouses' beliefs, faith, and religious components contributing to overcoming marital conflict and crisis, Pastors' view on how Christian couples are influenced by the thoughts and opinions of other individuals concerning overcoming marital conflict, and The qualities and behaviors between spouses influence how the couple contends with crises within the marriage. Codes and categories established these seven themes. The categories included: Beliefs and faith, Christian community, Putting forth effort and work in marriage, behaviors of spouse, and key qualities of

spouse. The codes included: Power of prayer, God as creator and healer, Asking God for guidance, Healthy communication, personality, attraction, beliefs, mature, intellectually, respectful, introvert/extrovert, motivated, Christian, truth from scripture, pleasing to God not others, working on the foundation of your marriage, putting forth effort and work in marriage, support system, selfless/giving, trustworthy/honest, surrounded by other Christians, personal relationship with Jesus, love language, time with God, getting over hurdles through prayer, strength, do not compare to others, idolize God, working as a team, three in marriage, commitment, God can overcome anything, importance of faith, serving each other and others, attending weekly service, healthy communication, God completing us not our spouse, motivation of self and spouse, Jesus as the ultimate example, establishing peace in marriage, encouragement for spouse, more than love is needed, power of displaying an understanding, and Grounded in Christian community.

Chapter Four outlined the data received from three data sources, including interviews and two focus groups, and a breakdown of the researcher's five-step data analysis process to analyze data. Through the interviews and focus groups, the researcher was able to address the gap identified by Lakatos & Martos (2019) and Bahnaru, Runcan, & Runcan (2019), which was to explore how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage. Chapter Five will describe how this specific case study can contribute to similar populations while addressing limitations and future research recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

This descriptive case study explored how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage in New York. Literature has recommended further exploration of this topic. Lakato and Martos (2019) suggested other avenues for future research, including understanding how couples' community-centered social processes influence religious couples' marriages and exploring how religious over-idealization influences relationship management. Bahnaru et al. (2019) also identified a need to examine how couples cope with relationship crises based on the involvement of religion within their marriage. Thus, this qualitative descriptive study addressed the gaps Lakato and Martos (2019) and Bahnaru et al. (2019) identified.

This study is important to help individuals and couples in a marital relationship by helping them understand their faith's role and influence in overcoming conflict and crisis. The researcher also finds this case study critical and essential for individuals in a marital relationship to better help them appreciate and comprehend how their faith can help them and their spouse overcome conflict in their marital relationship. This study was designed to help the reader better understand the topic of Christian marriage and how the three main components, including religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes, assist in couples overcoming marital conflict and crisis. Three research questions guided this case study and were answered by implementing three data sources, including interviews and two focus groups comprising twenty participants. The three research questions included:

RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with marital relationship crises?

RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with marital relationship crises?

RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

Chapter five will discuss an overview of the study's findings, how the findings relate to previous literature, the theoretical theory, theoretical, empirical, and practical implications, delimitations and limitations, and recommendations for future research. While chapter four discussed in detail in both words and graphics the breakdown of the data concerning answering each question, chapter five will bring all the data back together and summarize the case study's findings.

Summary of Findings

The researcher applied Yin's (2014) five-step data analysis approach to collect data from the interviews and the two focus groups. To support the purpose of this study, Yin's (2014) five-step analysis process signified the paramount choice for best understanding the influence religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes have in Christian couples overcoming conflict. Methodological triangulation was implemented in this case study, which means the researcher used more data collection method to explore a specific phenomenon. Denzin (2009) informed the reader that the implementation of triangulation assists in avoiding both researcher and participant bias, which leads to an increase in credibility (Denzin, 2009). Although the researcher implemented three different data sources, through triangulation, the researcher's findings were affirmed across all three data sources.

This case study implemented three sources of data collection to ensure data saturation and methodological triangulation were present to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Before identifying out codes from each of the three data sources, the researcher took the time to review carefully each of the three data sources to establish how to proceed with completing the coding process. Due to the three research questions heavily guiding this qualitative case study, the researcher found it important to highlight and focus on data related to the research questions.

Research Question 1

The first research question asks how married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage. The three data sources showed that religion and community-centered social processes positively influenced couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage. The third component, religious over-idealization, did not influence the couple's overcoming conflict to please God and no other individuals. All participants discussed the influence of getting involved in a community of other Christians to strengthen their relationship with Jesus and establish friendships that embolden couples to seek God and set good examples.

The researcher established a total of three themes that assisted in addressing the first research question. These three themes included:

- Christian Couples' Beliefs, Faith, and Religious Components Contribute to Overcoming Marital Conflict and Crisis.
- How Christians do not permit the views of other individuals to influence their Christian marriage.

- The Effects of Implementing Conflict Resolution Strategies Assisted Christian Couples Overcoming Marital Conflict.

Christian Couples' Beliefs, Faith, and Religious Components Contribute to Overcoming Marital Conflict and Crisis

The first theme addressed components of participants' religion regarding influencing their marriage. This theme was established from data collected during the interviews, and the couples' focus group. Using these two data sources, the researcher gained insight into how all twenty participants discoursed that their faith and beliefs were central to their marriage and greatly assisted the couple in overcoming conflict healthily.

How Christians are viewed by other individuals and the influence, those individuals have on the marital relationship of Christian couples

The second theme included how participants feel the way others view Christians as a whole influenced them in their marital relationship, specifically in overcoming marital conflict. It was evident to the researcher from the interview and focus group data that most individual spouses and couples focused on pleasing God and not man. They felt called to live a Christ-like marriage and not present behaviors or actions in their marriage strictly based on how others view Christians.

The Effects of Implementing Conflict Resolution Strategies Assisted Christian Couples Overcoming Marital Conflict

It was apparent in from the data collected from the couples' interviews and focus group that all couples felt that conflict was inevitable in marriage, but it was essential for couples to implement healthy strategies to overcome marital conflict. Turning to God in prayer to ask for

wisdom and guidance was commonly discussed among couples. Healthy communication involving talking and listening was also a common conflict resolution strategy.

Results for Research Question 2

The second research question asks how pastors perceived religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriages. The researcher established three themes to address the second research question using the data collected from the interviews with pastors and the focus group with pastors. The three themes that emerged were:

- Pastors perceive how a Christian church's involvement in a community influences Christian couples overcoming marital conflict and crisis.
- Pastors Perceive the Effects of Others' Thoughts, Opinions, and Actions as Having a Detrimental Influence on Marriage.
- Pastors Perceive that Spouses' Faith, Beliefs, and Religiosity Influences Overcoming Marital Conflict and Crisis.

Results were similar to the data received from couples in addressing the first research question. It was apparent from the data that both components, religion, and community-centered social processes, positively influenced a couple coping with a relationship crisis within their marriage. The third component was religious over-idealization; the six pastors felt this component did not play a role in a couple's ability to overcome conflict. All four pastors conversed about how vital getting involved in a community of other Christians is and how having a solid community of believers as friends and mentors helps strengthen each spouse's relationship with The Lord and, overall, helps to make the couple's marriage stronger.

Pastors Perceive how Community-Centered Social Pprocesses Influence Christian Couples Overcoming Marital Conflict and Crisis

All six pastors emphasized the importance of couples being involved in the Christian community and how beneficial this involvement was to a couple's marriage. Pastors elaborated on how a Christian community provides couples with individuals and other Christian couples who provide support and encourage the couple's walk with God. Pastors also discussed that being a part of a Christian community can provide helpful tools and events that couples can partake in that will help make their marriage stronger by ultimately making their relationship with God stronger.

Pastors Perceive the Effects of Thoughts, Opinions, and Actions of Others as Having a Detrimental Influence on Marriage

It was clear from all six pastors that although, because of human nature, some spouses will be concerned with the thoughts and opinions of others, in most cases, Christian couples did not allow the thoughts and opinions of others to influence their marriage. Pastors discussed that many Christian couples do not look to please others and only care about pleasing God.

Pastors Perceive that Spouses' Faith, Beliefs, and Religiosity Influences Overcoming Marital Conflict and Crisis

All six pastors agreed that a spouse's faith plays a significant role in overcoming marital conflict and crisis. Pastors discussed that spouses that put their relationship with the Lord first and at the center of their individual life and couple who put God at the center of their marriage could overcome any conflict or crisis that were to occur in their marriage.

Results Research Question 3

The third research question asked how Christian couples perceived the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage. From the interviews and focus group with the couples, the researcher collected data on how spouses' behaviors and qualities influence couples in overcoming marital conflict. From the two data sources, the researcher established one theme that addressed the third research question: the qualities and behaviors between spouses' influence the manner in which the couple contends with crises within the marriage. All ten couples and six pastors discussed qualities and behaviors that encumbered or aided a couple's marriage in overcoming marital conflict.

How the Couple Contends with Crises within the Marriage was Influenced by the Qualities and Behaviors of Spouses

This theme was established from data from both the pastors and the couples; all of the interviews and both focus groups. The number one quality or characteristic discussed across all three data sources was the spouse's love for Jesus and their heart to serve and honor God. Another common characteristic that spouses found important for their significant other to display in the marital relationship to help overcome conflict was motivation. Data revealed that when a spouse was motivated in their roles as a Christian, father, husband, wife, mother, wife, employee, or other role, it positively influenced the couple's marital relationship. Motivation of both spouses was a key component of a healthy marriage. During the interviews, Laura stated, "Motivation has made our marriage stronger because we both are highly motivated people and we complement each other by being consistent in accomplishing our goals. Sandra during interviews also shared that her husband's motivation to always provide for their family and lead them to serve the Lord, is what permitted her to be a stay-at-home mother which was her dream.

From the interviews it was evident to the researcher that spouses bounce off of one another's motivation. James had stated, "My wife's motivation truly gives me motivation to be an all-around better person in every aspect of my life as well. When my wife is motivated to do something, it motivates me."

Pastors, as well as couples, emphasized the importance of daily communication. It was evident to the researcher that healthy communication can help prevent conflict, but if conflict or crisis does arise in the marital relationship, healthy communication will significantly help the couple overcome the conflict. During the focus group with pastors, Pastor Adam informed the group that he felt healthy communication was of utmost importance in the marital relationship. Pastor Adam stated, "A godly spouse should be a godly source of encouragement, strength, peace, hope, and faith for the other." The researcher gathered from James during the interviews how important love being communicated daily and consistently was. James stated, "Many couples take their vows and start to become relaxed in regards to pursuing their significant other. It is so important to assure your spouse never ever goes a day with wondering if their husband or wife loves them."

Discussion

The study's findings are related to previous literature discussed in chapter two. Specifically, Koçyiğit Özyiğit's (2017) study informed the reader that the data resulted in her participants discussing marriage as both individuals truly being unified when they both are grounded in their faith that God is at the center of their marriage. While Koçyiğit Özyiğit's literature discussed couples being grounded in their faith, this case study went into more detail on three specific components including religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes. This case study builds off of Koçyiğit Özyiğit's literature while

addressing the three components in detail and not just the overall component of faith. Ayers (2018) discussed that another key quality in a marriage that positively affects conflict resolution is prioritizing God as the marriage center. Ayers (2018) weaved together biblical texts, social science, and his personal experience in providing insights into a Christian marriage to display God's incredible influence on a couple's marital relationship when God was the center (Ayers, 2018). Both Koçyiğit Özyiğit's (2017) and Ayers' (2018) literature were extremely similar to this case study's findings. Participants discussed the power of having God in their marriage, especially concerning the couple's ability to overcome marital conflict.

Viewing the data through the lens of the social learning theory was essential regarding the behavior and modification of those behaviors influenced spouses in their marriage. The social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) is directly related to the marital relationship because when couples work through a conflict, they are also learning and observing behaviors to be learned or avoided, which was evident from the data collected in the interviews and focus groups. For example, Laura stated in her interview, "Larry can observe a behavior that makes me appreciate him or makes our daily life better and will continue to do that behavior once he realizes it is making everything go well." Sandra stated in her interview, "Even though reproducing his dad's behavior was not positive, once we discussed my concern, my husband was quick to adjust and change." These two examples showed that behaviors can be learned and adapted to support the Social Learning Theory.

It was evident from participants that Bandura's Social Learning Theory most definitely played a role in a couple's marriages. Spouses discussed that behaviors changed and adapted during their marriage phases based on marital and family needs. Behaviors also become adapted and shift when roles in the household also shift. For example, behaviors may be tolerable when

an individual is filling the role of a husband, but behaviors may need to change once an additional role is added, such as becoming a father.

Tori's ability to witness and reproduce a behavior positively affects our marriage. She is highly aware of when a behavior positively impacts those around her, and she once told me she loves fellowshipping with the women at our church to witness their behaviors and mannerisms to help her continue to grow in her faith. She can implement behaviors she has witnessed at church and go out into the world and reproduce those behaviors to help those in need. John informed the researcher that his wife Tori is exceptionally aware of when a behavior positively impacts those around her, especially regarding her role as a wife and mother. She is constantly adjusting and implementing new behaviors based on my feedback, witnessing other women and mothers at our church, and seeing the impact of her behaviors on our family.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The social learning theory by Albert Bandura was the foundation for this case study. The specific version of the SLT implemented within this case study incorporated four components: Attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1977). Bandura's SLT can be related to behavioral marital therapy and suggests that individuals modify their behavior toward one another by implementing the consequences of their behaviors (Johnson & Bradbury, 2015). The social learning theory was essential to the discussion of marriage because it was evident in the interviews and focus groups that a spouse's behavior plays a significant role in whether conflict arises or whether the behavior displayed by a spouse assists in overcoming marital conflict. It is evident from the findings of this qualitative study that implemented Bandura's (1977) Social learning theory as the foundation resulted in theoretical implications. From the

data received from participants, a theoretical implication is that counselors and pastors who are directly working with Christian couples should apply the importance of learning and adapting a spouses' previous behaviors or possibly a lack of necessary behaviors to be able to better assist couples in maintaining a healthy marriage and overcoming conflict that may arise in a couple's marital relationship.

Empirical Implications

The researcher gained a substantial amount of information from the three data sources. Chief Data Scientist Imed Bouchrika (2022) informed the reader that “a study is empirical when it uses real-world evidence in investigating its assertions” (Bouchrika, 2022, pg.2,). The researcher gained real-world evidence from meeting with both couples and pastors. An empirical implication from the data the researcher gathered from participants is that a spouses motivation to strengthen their personal walk with God also benefits the marital relationship. It was evident to the researcher that even when a couple was facing marital conflict, when they were able to rely on their faith individually and together as a couple their conflict was able to be overcome.

Practical Implications

The researcher gained insight into ten Christian marriages directly from the couples and also gained insight from six pastors who have directly worked with Christian couples and helped counsel them. A practical recommendation that the researcher would make to a counsel assisting a couple going through marital conflict is to recommend that the couple returns to their roots. Have the couple consider their vows and God's purpose for bringing them together. It is essential to note the practical implications of marriage's effects on society. Marital solid relationships result in positive outcomes for society. In her testimony, Dr. Barbara D. Whitehead stated,

"Marriage is a "seedbed" of prosocial behavior that fosters social connections, civil and religious involvement, and charitable giving (Barbara D. Whitehead, U.S. Senate Testimony). Another practical implication is for pastors or counselors who are working with Christian couples to utilize the findings of this case study to develop homework material or other tangible information to provide Christian couples with who are experiencing marital conflict.

Christian Worldview

A Christian worldview is highly relevant to the topic of this qualitative study. Tackett informed the reader, "When you believe the Bible is entirely true, then you allow it to be the foundation of everything you say and do" (Tackett, 2006), which is the root of a Christian worldview. It was apparent to the researcher that even if the researcher was unaware that each couple was Christian, they lived with a Christian worldview and each pastor. The researcher believes that a reader with a Christian worldview will find blithe from the study results, seeing the positive influence a couple's faith played in helping overcome marital conflict and crisis. A Christian worldview reader can understand the three components, religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes, at a level of importance and appreciation, especially if they have first-hand experienced the influence of these components on their marriage.

Delimitations and Limitations

This qualitative study established boundaries for participants to participate in this study – these parameters are referred to as a delimitation. A delimitation, as defined by Anthony Miles (2019), is *establishing the boundaries* for a study to avert declaring findings from the study are generalizable to a population as a whole (Miles, 2019). The study participants were delimited to only married Christian couples who are congregants of the non-denominational Christian church

in New York and are above the age of twenty-one or pastors of the non-denominational Christian church; this limited the demographic sample. The rationale for establishing this delimitation for this qualitative study was due to the researcher's feeling that married couples and pastors who work first-hand with Christian couples have the most accurate and valid information about the study's topic. The researcher felt that if couples who were included in the study were not married, the data would only reflect assumptions or recommendations. It was evident from the delimitation of only having Christian couples and pastors that all participants shared a Christian worldview. All participants were congregants of the non-denominational Christian church in New York. All participants, whether during the interview or a focus group, discussed their faith's role in their life or the life of Christian couples, especially regarding overcoming marital conflict.

A weakness was present in this qualitative study, or a limitation. A limitation is defined by Miles (2019) as constraints a researcher cannot control in their study (Miles, 2019). A limitation of this qualitative study was the length of transcripts from the interviews with couples and pastors. To ensure the researcher received comprehensive data, the researcher interviewed two additional couples and two additional pastors. An additional limitation of this study was responder bias. Although the researcher reiterated multiple times that it was vital for participants to be both vulnerable and honest in their responses and the information they were conveying. Participants may have answered questions based on what they thought the researcher wanted to hear or what they thought would be an appropriate Christian response. Honesty from participants is a limitation because although the researcher asked for honesty in all participants' answers and member checking was completed; the researcher cannot guarantee that all data received conveys truth.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of this study, five recommendations for future research are made.

1. Have married pastors participate and provide a spouse's perspective instead of a pastor's. This could provide more data directly from Christian couples from another perspective being a spouse of a pastor.
2. Interview spouses separately instead of together. Interviewing spouses individually instead of together as a couple could help increase the number of transcript pages produced per couple.
3. Have couples where both spouses are not Christian and only one spouse is. Having only one spouse be Christian and one spouse not be a Christian could be fascinating to see how faith influences couples when there is no shared religious component.
4. Have half of the participants be Christian married couples and half of the participants be non-Christian couples who are married. Having half of the participants be Christian married couples and half of the participants be non-Christian couples who are married would provide a compare-and-contrast outlook to see how conflict is overcome in both types of marriage.
5. Utilize a diverse non-denominational church to recruit participants with multiple ethnicities.

A design that should be employed with these recommendations is to implement the phenomenological design. Implementing the phenomenological design would provide the couples with first-hand marriage experience and how different components of their lives influence their marital relationship. Tomaszewski, Zarestky, and Gonzalez (2020) define this design approach as "Describing the meaning of the lived experiences of a phenomenon by the people who lived it" (Tomaszewski, Zarestky, & Gonzalez, 2020). An empirical recommendation the researcher would make to a couple's counselor is how evident and influential a spouse's faith plays in their ability to overcome marital conflict. It was evident to

the researcher that Christian couples put God at the forefront of their lives and were confident their marriage could withstand anything with God by their side. The researcher would specifically recommend to a couple's counselor that healthy communication and turning to God are essential tools for couples facing marital conflict. Based on Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the researcher would recommend to counselors and pastors who are directly working with Christian couples the importance of learning and adapting previous behaviors or possibly a lack of necessary behaviors in order to help couples maintain a healthy marriage and overcome the conflict that may arise in the marital relationship.

Summary

This qualitative research study explored how married Christian couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion and community-centered social processes and how religious over-idealization influences couples' ability to cope with relationship maintenance and crises within their marriage. Lakatos & Martos (2019) recommended three avenues for future research, including how couples cope with relationship crises based on the involvement of religion within their marriage, exploring the influence of religiosity on Christian couples as well as a lack of religiosity in non-Christian couples, and to understand how couples' community-centered social processes influence both religious and non-religious couples' marriages. Bahnaru, Runcan, & Runcan (2019) also identified a need to examine how couples cope with relationship crises based on the involvement of religion within their marriage. This case study addressed these recommendations by Lakatos & Martos (2019) and Bahnaru et al. (2019).

Three research questions guided this case study and were answered after this qualitative study. These three research questions are:

RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

These three research questions were answered from data received from interviews and two different focus groups from Christian couples and pastors from a non-denominational church in New York.

Regarding the first research question, it was clear that religion and community-centered social processes positively influenced couples coping with relationship crises within their marriage. The third factor, religious over-idealization, did not play a significant role in the couple's overcoming of conflict. Religious over-idealization did not play a significant role in the couple's overcoming conflict because spouses focused on pleasing God and not other individuals. Participants discussed the significance of getting involved in a community of other Christians to strengthen their walks with the Lord, building satisfying relationships that endorse seeking God, and setting good examples. Regarding the second research question, the results were highly similar to those from the first research question but from a pastor's perspective. The pastors discoursed how critical getting involved in a community with other Christians is in strengthening each spouse's relationship with God and the couple's overall marital relationship. It was apparent that religion and community-centered social processes certainly influence couples coping with a relationship crisis within their marriage.

Both couples and pastors answered the third research question. Couples and pastors discussed qualities and behaviors that encumbered a couple's marriage and behaviors that aided spouses and couples in overcoming marital conflict. It was apparent to the researcher that motivation played a significant role in a couple's marital relationship. Motivation positively influenced marital relationships when spouses were motivated in all components of their life, including their personal walk with God, their role as a spouse, their role as a parent, and their occupations.

References

- Abreu-Afonso, J., Ramos, M., Queiroz-Garcia, I., & Leal, I. (2021). How couple's relationship lasts over time? A model for marital satisfaction. *Psychological Reports*, 003329412110006. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00332941211000651>
- Adams, J., Khan, H., Raeside, R., & White, D. (2007). *Research methods for graduate business and Social Science Students*. SAGE Publications.
- Allen, M. (Ed.). (2017). Confidentiality and anonymity of participants. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483381411.n86>
- Anderson, E., & Corneli, A. (2018). *100 Questions (and answers) about research ethics*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Anderson, J., & Natrajan-Tyagi, R. (2016). Understanding the process of forgiveness after a relational hurt in Christian marriages. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 15(4), 295–320. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332691.2015.1089804>
- Andrade, C. (2020). The inconvenient truth about convenience and purposive samples. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 43(1), 86–88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0253717620977000>
- Archibald, M., Ambagtsheer, R., Casey, M., & Lawless, M. (2019). Using zoom videoconferencing for qualitative data collection: Perceptions and experiences of researchers and participants. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919874596>
- Aririguzoh, S. (2020). Christian marriage counseling and its effects on homes. *The Christian Race*. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.30572.92800>
- Ayers, D. (2018). *Christian marriage: A comprehensive introduction*. Lexham Press.

- Azungah, T., & Kasmad, R. (2018). Qualitative research: Deductive and inductive approaches to data analysis. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 18(4), 383–400. <https://doi.org/10.1108/qrj-d-18-00035>
- Bahnaru, A., Runcan, R., & Runcan, P. (2019). Religiosity and Marital Satisfaction. *Revista De Asistentia Sociala*, (3), 107–114.
- Bailey, L. (2014). The origin and success of Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Market Research*, 56(2), 167–184. <https://doi.org/10.2501/ijmr-2014-013>
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Barton, S. (2016). Marriage, family, the Bible, and the gospel. *Theology*, 119(3), 163–171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571x15623690>
- Boddy, C. (2016). Sample size for qualitative research. *Emerald Insight*, 19(4).
- Busetto, L., Wick, W., & Gumbinger, C. (2020). How to use and assess qualitative research methods. *Neurological Research and Practice*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42466-020-00059-z>
- Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8), 652–661. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>
- Candela, A. (2019). Exploring the function of member checking. *The Qualitative Report*, 24. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.3726>
- Carlson, J. A. (2010). Avoiding traps in member checking. *The qualitative report*, 15(5), 1102-1113. <https://tqr.nova.edu/>

- Carminati, L. (2018). Generalizability in qualitative research: A tale of two traditions. *Qualitative Health Research*, 28(13), 2094–2101.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318788379>
- Carroll, H., Toumpakari, Z., Johnson, L., & Betts, J. (2017). The perceived feasibility of methods to reduce publication bias. *Plos One*, 12(10). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0186472>
- Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2016.2337>
- Chukwuma, O., Ngele, O., Eze, V., Ngwoke, P., Odo, D., Asadu, G., Onah, T., & Uwaegbute, K. (2020). Conflict resolution between husband and wife in the light of the hermeneutics of biblical proverbs. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 76(4), 1–9.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i4.5969>
- Cirhinlioğlu, F., Cirhinlioğlu, Z., & Tepe, Y. (2018). The mediating role of religiousness in the relationship between the attachment style and marital quality. *Current psychology*, 37(1), 207–215. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-016-9504-5>
- Clarke, A. (1832). *Proverbs*, Adam Clarke's Commentary, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN.
- Curtis, K., & Ellison, C. (2002). Religious heterogamy and marital conflict. *Journal of Family Issues*, 23(4), 551–576. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513x02023004005>
- Cutcliffe, J., & McKenna, H. (2004). Expert qualitative researchers and the use of audit trails. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 45(2), 126–133. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2003.02874.x>

- Dafoe-Whitehead, B. (n.d.). National Healthy Marriage Resource Center. Retrieved April 30, 2023, from <http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org/resource-detail/testimony-of-barbara-dafoe-whitehead-ph-d-co-director-national-marriage-project-rutgers-the-state-university-of-new-jersey-before-the-committee-on-health-education-labor-and-pensions-subcommitt/>
- DeCuir-Gunby, J., Marshall, P., & McCulloch, A. (2010). Developing and using a codebook for the analysis of interview data: An example from a professional development research project. *Field Methods*, 23(2), 136–155. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822x10388468>
- Denzin, N. K. (2009). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. New York, NY: Aldine Transaction.
- Dew, J. (2020). Ten Years of marriage and Cohabitation Research in the Journal of Family and Economic Issues. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 42(S1), 52–61. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-020-09723-7>
- Dodgson, J. (2019). Reflexivity in qualitative research. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 35(2), 220–222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890334419830990>
- Doe, N. (2016). Articulating the Christian principles of marriage. *Politics, religion & ideology*, 17(2-3), 306–310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2016.1234745>
- Dos Santos Marques, I., Theiss, L., Johnson, C., McLin, E., Ruf, B., Vickers, S., Fouad, M., Scarinci, I., & Chu, D. (2021). Implementation of virtual focus groups for qualitative data collection in a global pandemic. *The American Journal of Surgery*, 221(5), 918–922. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjsurg.2020.10.009>
- Dudley, M., & Kosinski, F. (1990). Religiosity and Marital Satisfaction: A Research Note. *Review of Religious Research*, 32(1), 78–86. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3511329>

- Faber, A. (2009). A review of: "The seven stages of marriage." *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 8(2), 203–204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332690902813893>
- Fentz, H., & Trillingsgaard, T. (2016). Checking up on couples-a meta-analysis of the effect of assessment and feedback on marital functioning and Individual Mental Health in Couples. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 43(1), 31–50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jmft.12185>
- Forero, R., Nahidi, S., De Costa, J., Mohsin, M., Fitzgerald, G., Gibson, N., McCarthy, S., & Aboagye-Sarfo, P. (2018). Application of four-dimension criteria to assess rigour of qualitative research in emergency medicine. *BMC Health Services Research*, 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-018-2915-2>
- Frye-Cox, N., Ganong, L., Jensen, T., & Coleman, M. (2021). Marital conflict and health: The moderating roles of emotion regulation and marriage order. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 62(6), 450–474. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2021.1925853>
- Galdas, P. (2017). Revisiting bias in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917748992>
- Gerard Learning Design. (2020, October 20). *Social Learning theory*. gerardfriel.com. Retrieved January 7, 2022, from <http://www.gerardfriel.com/instructional-design/social-learning-theory/>
- Gill, P., & Baillie, J. (2018). Interviews and focus groups in qualitative research: An update for the Digital age. *British Dental Journal*, 225(7), 668–672. <https://doi.org/10.1038/sj.bdj.2018.815>
- Giorgi, A. (2015). *The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in psychology: A modified Husserlian Approach*. Duquesne University Press.

- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2(163-194), 105.
- Gundumogula, M. (2020). Importance of focus groups in qualitative research. *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies*, 8(11).
<https://doi.org/10.24940/theijhss/2020/v8/i11/hs2011-082>
- Habtu, T. (2006). *Proverbs*, Africa Bible Commentary, WordAlive, Nairobi.
- Hammer, C. S. (2011). The Importance of Participant Demographics. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 20(4), 261–261. [https://doi.org/10.1044/1058-0360\(2011/ed-04\)](https://doi.org/10.1044/1058-0360(2011/ed-04))
- Haase, J. (2014). The Ontology of Marriage (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Calgary, Calgary, AB. doi:10.11575/PRISM/28260
- Heaton, J. (2021). “*pseudonyms are used throughout”: A footnote, unpacked. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 28(1), 123–132. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004211048379>
- Hensley, A. (2020). Divine blessing and order in marriage and the church. *Lutheran Theological Journal*, 54(1).
- Hull, K., Meier, A., & Ortyl, T. (2014). The changing landscape of love and marriage. *Gender, Sexuality, and Intimacy: A Contexts Reader*, 9(2), 262–267.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506352299.n69>
- Hunter, D. (2007). Marriage, celibacy, and heresy in ancient Christianity. *Oxford Scholarship Online*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199279784.001.0001>
- Jenkins, E., Slemon, A., Haines-Saah, R., & Oliffe, J. (2018). A guide to multisite qualitative analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 28(12), 1969–1977.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318786703>

- Johnson, D., & Bradbury, T. N. (2015). Contributions to social learning theory to the promotion of healthy relationships: Asset or liability? *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 7, 13-27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfr.12057>
- Karimi, R., Bakhtiyari, M., & Masjedi Arani, A. (2019). Protective factors of marital stability in long-term marriage globally: a systematic review. *Epidemiology and Health*, 41. <https://doi.org/10.4178/epih.e2019023>
- Keil, C., & Delitzsch, F. (1971). *Commentary on The old testament*. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- King James Bible. (2017). King James Bible
Online. <https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/> (Original work published 1769)
- Klausli, J. (2020). Shared Mass Attendance, Sacred Views of Marriage, and Shared Spiritual Behaviors Predicting Relationship Satisfaction. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 39(2), 114–124.
- Koçyiğit Özyiğit, M. (2017). The meaning of marriage according to university students: A phenomenological study. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 17(2), 679–711. <https://doi.org/10.12738/estp.2017.2.0061>
- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120–124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092>
- Kroff, S., Cragun, K., Reyes, J., Wilmoth, J., Dollahite, D., & Marks, L. (2018). Relationship with God and the Word: Faith among American Evangelical Christian families. *Strengths in Diverse Families of Faith*, 77–89. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429296307-6>

- Lakato, C., & Martos, T. (2019). The role of religiosity in intimate relationships. *European journal of mental health*, 14(2), 260–279. <https://doi.org/10.5708/ejmh.14.2019.2.3>
- Lambert, N., & Dollahite, D. (2006). How religiosity helps couples prevent, resolve, and overcome marital conflict. *Family Relations*, 55(4), 439–449. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2006.00413.x>
- Langfeldt, L. (2004). Expert panels evaluating research: Decision-making and sources of bias. *Research Evaluation*, 13(1), 51–62. <https://doi.org/10.3152/147154404781776536>
- Leung, F.-H., & Savithiri, R. (2009). Spotlight on focus groups. *National Library of Medicine*, 55(2), 218–219.
- Liberty University IRB. (2021). *Liberty University Institutional Review Board Handbook*.
- Liefbroer, A., & Rijken, A. (2019). The Association BETWEEN Christianity and Marriage attitudes in EUROPE. does religious CONTEXT MATTER? *European Sociological Review*, 35(3), 363–379. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcz014>
- Lietz, C., Langer, C., & Furman, R. (2006). Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research in Social Work. *Qualitative Social Work*, 5(4), 441–458. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325006070288>
- Lorig, K., & Holman, H. (2003). Self-management education: History, definition, outcomes, and mechanisms. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 26(1), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15324796abm2601_01
- Margelisch, K., Schneewind, K. A., Violette, J., & Perrig-Chiello, P. (2017). Marital stability, satisfaction, and well-being in old age: Variability and continuity in long-term

- continuously married older persons. *Aging and Mental Health*, 21(4), 389-398.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2015.1102197>
- Marks, L. (2018). How does religion influence marriage? christian, jewish, mormon, and muslim perspectives. *Marriage & Family Review*, 38(1), 85–111.
https://doi.org/10.1300/j002v38n01_07
- Martin, P. M., Miller, R. B., Kubricht, B., Yorganson, J. B., & Carroll, J. S. (2015). Relational aggression and self-reported spousal health: A longitudinal analysis. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 37, 386-395. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-015-9348-4>
- Martin, W. C. (2017). ‘Husband’, in *The Layman’s Bible Encyclopedia*, pp. 335–336, The Southwestern Company, Nashville, TN.
- Marx, S. (2016). Qualitative research in STEM: studies in equity, access, and innovation. *Studies of equity, access, and innovation*, 4(2), 12–17.
- Maxwell, M., Davis, S., Miller, M., & Wooley, S. (2020). Covenant Attachment: A Constructivist Grounded Theory of Christian Couples and God. *National Library of Medicine*, 46(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/jmft.12368>
- Mendicino, K. (2018). Oppositional views AND APOSITIONAL points: Addressing the practice of theory in Marx. *MLN*, 133(5), 1206–1232. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mln.2018.0080>
- Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2017). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Langara College.
- Morse, J. M. (2015). Critical analysis of strategies for determining rigor in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative health research*, 25(9), 1212-1222. doi: 10.1177/1049732315588501

Mullins, D. (2016). The effects of religion on enduring marriages. *Social Sciences*, 5(2), 24.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci5020024>

Nowell, L., Norris, J., White, D., & Moules, N. (2017). Thematic analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 160940691773384.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>

O'brien, G. (2009). Perfecting not perfect: Christology and pneumatology within an imperfect yet purposeful creation. *Theology and Science*, 7(4), 407–419.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700903239577>

Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). (2021, June 16). *The Belmont Report*.

HHS.gov. Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/index.html>

Okorafor, C.O., 2003, *Conflict management among Christians*, Conok Communications, Enugu

Okoye, E. (2001). Management of Stress in a Depressed Economy. *Journal of Management Sciences*, 5(1), 1–10.

Olajuyin, O. A. (2019). ‘Congruent Proverbs: The concept and roles in conflict

resolution’, *International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies* 8(2), 45–

58. <https://doi.org/10.4314/laligens.v8i2.4>

Ozor, H. (2018). *Teachings from Proverbs*, Abrams Book Publishers, Enugu.

- Paradis, E., O'Brien, B., Nimmon, L., Bandiera, G., & Martimianakis, M. (2016). Design: Selection of data collection methods. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 8(2), 263–264. <https://doi.org/10.4300/jgme-d-16-00098.1>
- Parker, K., & Stepler, R. (2020, May 30). *As U.S. marriage rate hovers at 50%, education gap in marital status widens*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/14/as-u-s-marriage-rate-hovers-at-50-education-gap-in-marital-status-widens/>.
- Paterson, B. (1994). A framework to identify reactivity in qualitative research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 16(3), 301–316. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019394599401600306>
- Ponterotto, J. (2015). Brief note on the origins, evolution, and meaning of the qualitative research concept thick description. *The Qualitative Report*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2006.1666>
- Pronk, T., Buyukcan-Tetik, A., Lliás, M., & Finkenauer, C. (2017). Marriage as a training ground: Examining change in self-control and forgiveness over the first 4 years of marriage. *Journal of social and personal relationships*, 36(1), 109–130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407517721065>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications LTD.
- Schwarzer, R. (2012). *Personality, human development, and culture: International perspectives on psychological science*, Psychology, Hove.
- Squires, J. (2016, March 2). *Marital Intimacy Is More Than Sex Five Ways to Connect with Your Spouse*. Desiring God. Retrieved from <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/marital-intimacy-is-more-than-sex>

- Stahlke, S. (2018). Expanding on notions of ethical risks to qualitative researchers. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918787309>
- Star, A., Cohn-Schwartz, E., & O'Rourke, N. (2022). Reciprocal effects of marital idealization and marital satisfaction between long-wed spouses over time. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00914150221077953>
- Strom, W., & Faw, H. (2017). Worldview orientations in close relationships: Development and initial validation of the contract-covenant continuum. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 45(3), 151–165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009164711704500301>
- Stuckey, H. (2013). Three types of interviews: Qualitative research methods in Social Health. *Journal of Social Health and Diabetes*, 01(02), 056–059. <https://doi.org/10.4103/2321-0656.115294>
- Sutton, J., & Austin, Z. (2015). Qualitative research: Data collection, analysis, and Management. *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, 68(3). <https://doi.org/10.4212/cjhp.v68i3.1456>
- Tarnoki, C., & Puentes, K. (2019). Something for everyone: A review of qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. *The qualitative report*, 24(12), 3122–3124. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.4294>
- Thomas, D. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(2), 237–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748>

- Thomas, P., Liu, H., & Umberson, D. (2017). Family Relationships and Well-Being. *US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health*, 1(3).
<https://doi.org/10.1093/geroni/igx025>
- Timmons, A. C., Arbel, R., & Margolin, G. (2016). Daily patterns of stress and conflict in couples: Associations with marital aggression and family-of-origin aggression. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 31(1), 93-104. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000227>
- Tomlinson, J., Aron, A., Carmichael, C., Reis, H. T., & Holmes, J. (2013). The costs of being put on a pedestal. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 31(3), 384–409.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407513498656>
- Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 11(1), 80–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325010368316>
- Ugwuoye, U. E. (2019). *Marriage in an African society*, Chidubem Publishers, Nsukka.
- Valk, J. (2020). Christianity through a Worldview Lens. *Journal of Adult Theological Education*, 9(2), 158–174. <https://doi.org/10.1179/ate.9.2.hp430835g071v773>
- Vasileiou, K., Barnett, J., Thorpe, S., & Young, T. (2018). Characterizing and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: Systematic Analysis of qualitative health research over a 15-year period. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 18(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0594-7>
- Wallace-Goddard, H., Olson, J., Galovan, A., Schramm, D., & Marshall, J. (2016). Qualities of character that predict marital well-being. *Family Relations*, 65(3), 424–438.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12195>

White, T., Chelladurai, J., Monroe, P., Garand, J., Dollahite, D., & Marks, L. (2020). Kept together by faith: confession and forgiveness among american catholic and orthodox christian families. *Strengths in diverse families of faith*, 54(7), 61–76.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429296307-5>

Wilhoit, J. (2018). Self-Compassion as a Christian spiritual practice. *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, 12(1), 71–88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1939790918795628>

Yates, J., & Leggett, T. (2016). Qualitative Research: An Introduction. *Radiologic technology*, 88(2), 225–231.

Yin, R. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage Publication.

Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Appendix A.
Site Authorization

Pastor Mike Jankowski

The Harbor Church

25 Frowein Rd, Center Moriches, NY 11934

Dear Kendal,

After careful review of your research proposal entitled The Influence of Religion on Marital Crisis: A Qualitative Case Study, I have decided to grant you permission to access our membership list, contact our faculty or staff, or recruit congregants via flyers in the church and invite them to participate in your study

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☐ I will provide our membership list to Kendal, and Kendal may use the list to contact our members to invite them to participate in her research study.

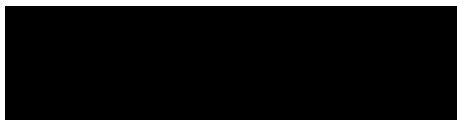
☒ I grant permission for Kendal to contact pastors, or Christian couples who are at least 21 years old to invite them to participate in her research study.

☐ I will not provide potential participant information to Kendal, but we agree to send/provide her study information to pastors, or Christian couples who are at least 21 years old on her behalf.

☐ I am requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

Mike Jankowski, Pastor



The Harbor Church

25 Frowein Rd, Center Moriches, NY 11934

Appendix B.

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 26, 2022

Kendal Thomas
Bridgette Hester

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-462 The Influence of Religion on Marital Crisis: A Qualitative Case Study

Dear Kendal Thomas, Bridgette Hester,

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.(iii). 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) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

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 C.

Informed Consent

Title of the Project: The Influence of Religion on Marital Crisis: A Qualitative Case Study

Principal Investigator: Kendal Thomas, Doctoral Student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 21 years old or older, and affiliate yourself as a Christian and classify your marriage as a Christian marriage. 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.

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

The purpose of this research is to explore how married Christians couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

Interview: This will take approximately one hour. With permission, the interview will be audio/video recorded and notes will be taken.

Attend a Focus Group: This will occur once and last about an hour and a half. With permission the focus group will be audio/video recorded and notes will be taken. Two focus groups will take place. One focus group will include three couples and one focus group will include five pastors.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

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. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms/codes. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.

Data will be stored on a password-locked computer, a backup of the data will also be put on a USB drive that will be stored in a locked cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and the USB will be properly discarded.

Interviews/focus groups] will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher[s] will have access to these recordings.]

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or The Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time 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 contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. [Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Kendal Thomas. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Hester 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

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record/photograph me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix D.

Codebook

<u>Code</u>	<u>Categories</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Example</u>
Power of prayer (POP)	Beliefs and Faith	<p>Praying individually as a spouse</p> <p>Praying together as a couple</p>	<p>“I will say it was amazing that this time conflict was handled by stopping and praying together.”</p> <p>“He helps lead our marriage towards God and always makes it a point in time of conflict or crisis to take my hand and pray with me, for me, and for our marriage.”</p> <p>“. James demonstrates this every morning by spending time with me in prayer and conversation.”</p> <p>“We handle crises by immediately by going to the Lord in prayer and supporting each other with words of comfort.”</p> <p>“It is automatic for me to turn to prayer and ask for God’s wisdom when I feel that life has presented us with conflict or crisis. “</p>
God as creator and healer (GACAH),	Beliefs and Faith	<p>God can heal couples who are struggling</p> <p>God created each individual in His own image</p>	<p>“I know early on in our marriage we would turn to one another, which yes, in a marriage we should be confiding in each other, but we came to realize as our individual journeys with God become stronger, that God is our ultimate healer and provider. “</p>

			<p>“She feels loved when I ask to pray over her thoughts, concerns, or feelings once I am done listening because it shows her that not only was I listening, but I also want to turn to God, who is our ultimate healer and counselor to best help her.”</p> <p>“We know that God is our ultimate healer and counselor.”</p>
Asking God for guidance (AGFG)	Beliefs and Faith	<p>Talking to God about clarification on what to do</p> <p>Asking God for which path to take</p>	<p>“She listens when people need a listening ear, she turns to prayer and scripture for her source of truth and guidance to better help others, and she offers hugs, which in my opinion she is the best at. “</p> <p>“We have come a long way and now stop what we are doing in the moment of conflict or crisis and ask God for prevision and guidance.”</p>
Healthy communication (HC)	Key qualities of spouse	Both spouses listening and talking with respect and kindness	“I will say both humility and healthy communication are also crucial. When”
Personality (P)	Key qualities of spouse	Spouses qualities that determine their character	<p>“His mind amused me, and I thought he was funny and a lot of fun.”</p> <p>“Sophia was always happy, joyful, driven, beautiful, fun, and smart.”</p>
Attraction (A)	Key qualities of spouse	Outward features of spouse	“I thought he was very cute.”

			“an incredible and beautiful Godly girl”
Beliefs (B)	Key qualities of spouse	What the spouse views as truth	<p>“I would say the two qualities that stood out to me the most and made me know that this is who God wanted me to be with was her faith and loyalty.”</p> <p>“I loved that she was a woman of God. She had and continues to have such a strong faith.”</p>
Mature (M)	Key qualities of spouse	Displaying growth in personality and being an adult	“I was being mature by not letting my emotions say things that would hurt John”
Intellectually (I)	Key qualities of spouse	The way someone’s mind critically thinks	“I was initially drawn to Scott’s mind; he was quiet, but a deep thinker.”
Respectful (R)	Key qualities of spouse	Displays consideration even when differences are present	<p>“Reconciling our different approaches to things is a constant challenge and we’ve had to learn how to respect and appreciate these differences.”</p> <p>“I respected his sense of humor, honesty and communications skills and how he always helps others.”</p>
Introvert/Extrovert (I/E)	Behaviors of spouse	<p>More comfortable keeping thoughts to themselves</p> <p>Comfortable with expressing ideas and thoughts with others</p>	<p>“Scott is an introvert and inward thinker, and his love languages are words of affirmation and acts of service.”</p> <p>“I am an extrovert, a doer and a people pleaser.</p>
Motivated (m)	Behaviors of spouse	Displaying a desire to achieve or accomplish something	“Sophia is extremely motivated. Honestly I don’t even know if I would

			<p>say motivated because to me she is so much more than that. “</p> <p>“Harry is extremely motivated. Harry always puts in 110% effort whether it’s a small house project, being a husband, a father, or a friend.”</p>
Christian (C)	Behaviors of spouse	Individual who has asked Jesus into their heart to be their personal Lord and Savior	“When James became a Christian, he got radically saved and changed his lifestyle.”
Truth from scripture (TFS)	Beliefs and Faith	Believing that what the Bible says is ultimate source of truth	“She listens when people need a listening ear, she turns to prayer and scripture for her source of truth and guidance to better help others, and she offers hugs, which in my opinion she is the best at. “
Pleasing to God not others (PTGNO)	Beliefs and Faith	Trying to satisfy God and not other individuals	“It is important to be empathetic and supportive of another person in spite of their shortcomings. We must remember what scripture says in Matthew 7, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.”
Working on the Foundation of your marriage (WOTFOYM)	Putting forth effort and work in marriage	Couples want to build their marriage on strong roots specifically putting God at the center	<p>“A house if not built on a strong foundation and strong pillars it will wash away; marriage is the exact same.”</p> <p>“I wanted the Bible to be the foundation”</p>
Support System (SS)	Christian community	Being a part of a community of other believers	<p>“having a support system has really enriched our marriage by having cheerleaders for us and friends to speak truth to us when we need it”</p> <p>“Couples are</p>

			able to find such hope when they are able to receive godly instruction but also given the gift of godly friendships that they can find support and encouragement through.”
Selfless/Giving (S/G)	Behaviors of spouses	More concerned with the needs of others	“She never does anything in hopes of receiving something in return. She gives so selflessly and so graciously. “ “I love how selfless he is and how much he loves God with his whole being. “
Trustworthy/Honest (T/H)	Key qualities of spouse	Able to rely on someone to receive truth	“Harry is trusting, funny, and loyal. “
Surrounded by other Christians (SBOC)	Christian community	Being a part of community of other believers of Jesus	“I think some of the most beneficial community centered opportunities that we offer for couples are our marriage nights and marriage retreats/conferences. It’s at these events that you learn what godly marriage looks like from scripture, while being surrounded by other couples just like you.” “I think that when you attend a church and get involved in a small group or marriage ministry, this provides a setting to see how other couple’s handle conflict, love each other, pray for each other, and pursue a better marriage together.”

Personal relationship with Jesus (PRWJ)	Beliefs and Faith	Individual has asked God into their heart as their personal Lord and Savior	<p>“Conflict was so much harder to overcome and handle before I had my relationship with Jesus and became saved. “</p> <p>“He has poured so much love into me and has forever changed my life by introducing my faith to me and helped lead me to my relationship with The Lord.”</p>
Love Language (LL)	Key qualities of spouse	The way an individual prefers to receive or express love	<p>“The five love languages came along when we were going through a difficult time. It was very helpful in allowing us to see how we were both trying to love each other, but it was not recognized as love by the other person. “</p> <p>“We now make sure that we communicate love based on each other’s love language.”</p>
Time with God (TWG)	Beliefs and Faith	When an individual takes the time to read scripture, pray, or attend small group to spend time with God	<p>“Every morning when I wake up Tony has already been up for about an hour or so, so he has had his alone time with God and diving into scripture and his daily devotional.”</p> <p>“he prioritizes my time with God before himself, which to both of us God needs to be put first and at the center of each of our lives and our marriage.”</p>
Getting over hurdles through prayer (GOHTP)	Beliefs and Faith	Turning to prayer for guidance from God when conflict or obstacles occur	<p>“The way we were able to handle this struggle I had during this time was to constantly pray together.”</p> <p>“I will say it was amazing that this time conflict was handled by stopping and praying together.”</p>

Strength (s)	Key qualities of spouse	Strong mentally	<p>“Another quality about Patty that made me know this was the person I wanted to spend the rest of my life with was her strength.”</p> <p>“She also showed an immense amount of strength by not only surviving but thriving in a challenging environment”</p>
Do not compare to others (DNCTO)	Beliefs and Faith	Individuals do not let themselves contrast to others	<p>“Our faith helps to overcome conflicts or crisis and not religious over-idealization because we do not look at what others do or think and compare ourselves.</p> <p>“We don’t compare to what others have and try to impress or keep up with what the others do. We rely on knowing what is right and expected as Christians and live a faithful life.”</p>
Idolize God	Beliefs and Faith	<p>Worship and praise Jesus</p> <p>Look up to God</p> <p>Strive to be like God</p>	<p>“We have chosen to idealize God, for He is the only perfect man.”</p>
Working as a team (WAAT)	Putting forth effort and work in marriage	Husband and wife work as a unit to accomplish things and overcome obstacles	<p>“We are a team and much more effective than apart. We believe that it is God’s plan to have us more together than we could ever accomplish alone. Together things are easier to resolve.”</p> <p>“I know with Lucy by my side we can get through anything.”</p>
Three in Marriage (TIM)	Beliefs and Faith	Husband, wife, and God in the marriage	<p>“This is a reminder that no matter how big the conflict or crisis is that a couple is</p>

			<p>facing they are motivated by their faith to overcome the difficult time they are faced with because they know their marriage does not just consist of husband and wife, but God woven throughout as well.”</p> <p>“With God all things are possible. Putting Him and His word at the forefront of our marriage will help us overcome any crisis in our marriage”</p>
Commitment (c)	Key qualities of spouse	Dedicated to each other and to God	<p>“When spouses are committed to one another they are displaying God’s love because Jesus gave us the ultimate depth of commitment through his sacrifice on the cross for each and every one of us.”</p> <p>“In a Christ-centered marriage, neither husband or wife should ever have to question their partner’s commitment to them.”</p>
God can overcome anything (GCOA)	Beliefs and Faith	Belief that no matter how big a problem is that is present, God can help the couple overcome the obstacle	<p>“There is going to be difficult times in marriage but to God be the glory there is nothing too big that He cannot overcome.”</p> <p>“Christian couples are motivated to overcome crisis in their marriage because they know that God keeps his promises and they know that they were brought together for a greater purpose and hold their vows to an extremely high regard.”</p>
Importance of faith (IOF)	Beliefs and Faith	Relying and having complete trust in God no matter what the circumstance is	<p>“When couples let their faith and their walk with God be their priority and foundation in their marriage I promise there is</p>

			no conflict or crisis they cannot get through together.”
Serving each other and others (SEOAO)	Putting forth effort and work in marriage	Doing something for the betterment of others	<p>“You need to serve each other every day.”</p> <p>“The qualities that I think a couple must draw their attention to in order to have a Christ-centered marriage are honesty, an unselfish attitude, and a willingness to serve your partner.”</p>
Attending weekly service	Christian community	Attending church each Sunday no matter what “pops up” in the couple’s life	<p>“I strongly believe that by attending a weekly service together, a couple is given “spiritual tools” needed to become better individually and ultimately as a couple.”</p> <p>“By having a couple attend weekly service shows that no matter how busy a couple’s life is God should be the priority and center of a marriage, so by attending weekly service it promotes unity within the marriage by being able to praise, worship, dive into scripture, and connect with God.”</p>
Healthy communication (HC)	Putting forth effort and work in marriage	<p>Exchanging information in a healthy manner</p> <p>Both partners take turns listening and talking</p>	<p>“A lack of healthy communication in a relationship presents itself in many ways. Individuals who are not receiving healthy, open, and honest communication from your spouse begin to make assumptions about their spouse’s intentions, motives, thoughts, and feelings that end up leading to major miscommunications.”</p> <p>“It’s</p>

			impossible for an individual to truly know their spouse without healthy communication.”
God completing us not our spouse (GCUNOS)	Beliefs and faith	<p>We should be fulfilled by God not another person</p> <p>Spouse can bring you more joy and love but should not complete you</p>	“Our “wholeness” is not supposed to be dependent on our spouse. They are not capable of making us whole. Only God is.”
Motivation of self and spouse	Key qualities of spouse	Eager to accomplish a personal goal or a goal your spouse wants achieved	“An individual’s motivation to build their own relationship with God is paramount to having a godly marriage.”
Marriage takes work (MTW)	Putting forth effort and work in marriage	Putting forth 100% effort each and every day	<p>“Any relationship takes effort, intentionality, and work.”</p> <p>“Both spouses should always try their best to give one-hundred percent, but there are going to be days were one spouse may have to put forth 125% because the other spouse is only putting forth 75%.”</p>
Jesus as the ultimate example (JATUE)	Beliefs and faith	When both husband and wife strive to be Christ-like and do not look to be like anyone else	<p>“Jesus is the ultimate example of what a selfless, patient, empathetic, gracious, faith filled; God centered life looks like.”</p> <p>“As we draw near to Jesus and prioritize living life with him, we begin to see those same attributes develop in our own lives.”</p>
Establishing peace in marriage (EPIM)	Putting forth effort and work in marriage	When calmness, relief, and happiness is present	<p>“The Bible says in Matthew 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”</p> <p>“We should ultimately be</p>

			pursuing peace in our relationships even if conflict is present for a short time.”
Encouragement for spouse (EFS)	Key qualities of spouse	Providing your spouse with support, love, and hope	<p>“We need to encourage each other in us journey to please and honor Our Father.”</p> <p>“We need to encourage one another, work through challenges together and use each other’s strengths to help us to keep our marriage healthy and happy.”</p>
More than love is needed (MTLIN)	Putting forth effort and work in marriage	Love is vital in marriage, but it also takes understanding, faith, patience, forgiveness, and God	“The struggles of marriage require more than love to grow a strong and healthy relationship. You need to keep God and faith center and rely on them.”
Power of displaying an understanding (PODAU)	Key qualities of spouse	Showing sympathy, forgiving each other, and respecting emotions	<p>“We understand that by living a life with an active faith we will be preparing for our spot in the Kingdom of God.”</p> <p>“Understanding my spouses’ views and knowing he understands my thoughts and views help us discuss and resolve issues in a sensible manner. We respect the others’ views and listen to each other’s opinions.”</p>
Grounded in Christian community (GICC)	Christian community	Establishing roots with other Christians in a community that will support and help the couple grow in Christ	<p>“Marriages need to be rooted in a community of God’s people who value the same things.”</p> <p>“We are all God’s children and need to grow together through other people. We need to surround ourselves with Godly people who will help to teach us and guide us.”</p>

Appendix E.

Interview Protocol

Participant Invitation Process: Participants for this proposed study will be invited to participate in the semi-structured interview and asked to participate in one focus group via an online platform such as zoom or Microsoft Teams with the researcher. Before officially beginning each interview, the researcher will reiterate with each participant that they may decide to withdraw from the study at any time. Approximately five to ten days after completing the interview, the researcher will inform each participant that the researcher will contact them via phone or email depending on which participant prefers to inform them of when the necessary focus group will take place. The researcher will verify each participant's contact information.

1. Interview Setup and Location:

Interview Location: The interview will take place online via zoom or Microsoft teams.

Materials: A word document of the interview questions for the researcher, a demographic questionnaire that will be completed before interviews if participant agrees, researcher's personal laptop to utilize zoom or Microsoft teams, and ipad to take notes during the interview.

Interviewer: Kendal Thomas – The primary researcher

2. Interview Overview:

The purpose of this proposed study: The purpose of this proposed qualitative descriptive case study explored how married Christians couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion and

community-centered social processes and religious over-idealization influences couples' ability cope with relationship maintenance and crises within their marriage.

Consent Form/Ethical Considerations: The informed consent will be explained and signed before the start of the interview and observation.

How you will share study results with participants: Each participant will be asked to review the data collected during their time with the researcher to ensure data was interpreted accurately and to ensure researcher bias is not present. At the completion of the study each participant will receive a summary.

Length of interview: 60-90 minutes

Process for the interview: The researcher will record each interview both audio and video with participants' permission. The researcher will permit adequate time for the participant to answer each question and when necessary, the researcher will provide a probing question.

The session will be completed by implementing member checking. The researcher and each participant will thoroughly review a summary of each question and the researcher will implement reflective listening; at this time the researcher will ask the participant if there is any other information they would like to add or if they have any additional questions.

How the participants' confidentiality will be maintained: A pseudonym for each participant will be provided and all recordings of the interviews will be kept on the researcher's private, password-protected laptop. This data will be kept for a minimum of three years.

Appendix F.

Focus Group Protocol

Introductions:

B. Purpose of the Study- Once all participants have joined the Zoom or Microsoft teams conference – this is dependent on what platform participants prefer, the researcher will share with the participants the purpose of this qualitative descriptive study which explored how married Christians couples and pastors perceive the influence of religion and community-centered social processes and religious over-idealization influences couples' ability cope with relationship maintenance and crises within their marriage.

C. Participant Introductions- Each participant will use their pseudonym to introduce themselves to the rest of the group.

D. The researcher will explain the purpose of the focus group. The researcher will use each participants pseudonym for identification purposes and ask the group to do the same when calling on each other.

Focus Group facilitation

E. Discuss how the focus group will be run- Questions will be asked one at a time and the researcher will reiterate the importance of respecting one another's contributions to the group's time together.

F. Share the importance of confidentiality and privacy and how this will be provided to the participants such as:

- a. Identifying the participants by their pseudonyms.
- b. The researcher will collect and store all data from the focus group on the researcher's private password-secured laptop.
- c. The data on the researcher's laptop will be kept for a minimum of three years and then destroyed using erasure.

Focus Group 1 Questions – Christian Couples

Question 1: What is the most challenging part about marriage? Can you explain why (*insert interviewee's response here) is the most challenging part of your marriage?

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 2: How do you handle conflict in your marriage? Can you please explain how you handle conflict within your marriage and if you think this is beneficial to your marriage or is this an area of your marriage that would not be considered a strength?

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 3: How does your spouse handle conflict in your marriage? Can you please explain how he/she handles conflict within your marriage and if you think this is beneficial to your marriage or is this an area of your marriage that would not be considered a strength?

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 4: How much does religion motivate/influence you to overcome conflict or crisis that arises within your marriage? Please explain.

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 5: How much does religion motivate/influence you to overcome conflict or crisis that arises within your marriage? Please explain.

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 6: How vital is your attention to your faith and God in your personal life? Can you please explain how your faith is applied in your daily personal life?

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 6: How important is faith and God in your marriage? Can you please explain how your motivation to prioritize your faith and God in your marriage occurs?

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 7: How much does religion influence your marriage and reproducing what you learn at church and what the Bible says? Can you describe specific times that you can recall religion has influenced your marriage?

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 8: Do community-centered processes positively or negatively affect your marriage – why or why not? You said, “they do” or “they don’t” (fill in with interviewee’s response) can you explain why or why not?

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 9: How does attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation of your spouse affect your marriage? Can you explain how these five components have affected your marriage?

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 10: How does religious over-idealization motivate you to maintain or overcome crisis that occurs in your marriage? Please explain.

Focus Group 2 Questions – Pastors

Question 1: Could you describe for me how attention from your spouse affects your ability to overcome conflict?

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 2: What is the biggest obstacle you have noticed in Christian marriages? Can you please describe or explain them?

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 3: How would you say a couple or spouses' motivation to build a relationship with God impacts their marriage?

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 4: How do you think religion and religious over-idealization motivates a couple to overcome conflict in their Christian marriage? Could you share an example of how religion may assist in couple's overcoming conflict within their marriage?

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Question 5: Can you identify community-centered social processes that you believe have the biggest influence on motivating a couple to overcome crisis in their marriage?

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses and Ideas:

Appendix G.
Demographic Questionnaire

1. Are you a pastor at Harbor Church in NY? Please circle one. **Yes** **No**
2. Are you a congregant of the Harbor Church in NY? Please circle one. **Yes** **No**
3. Please circle one. **Single** **Married**
4. How old are you? _____
5. What is your gender? Please circle one. **Male** **Female**
6. What is your ethnicity? _____
7. What is your highest level of education? _____

Appendix H.**Expert Panel**

Name	Occupation	Degree
Ben Murray	Pastor	Doctoral Degree in Christian Ministry
Kim Jankowski	Associate Pastor/Counselor	Doctoral Degree in Family and Marriage Counseling
Dr. Langner	Pastor	Doctor of Education

Appendix I.

Field Test

Interviewee (Pseudonym) Roger Smith:

Interviewer: Kendal Thomas

Date: Thursday, May 19, 2022

Meeting Place: Online via Zoom

Attendees: RS = Roger Smith (interviewee), KT = Kendal Thomas (interviewer)

KT: Hello Roger, I appreciate you taking the time to meet with me today. Today I will be asking you a total of six questions that will relate to the topic of my dissertation which is to explore how religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered processes influence a couple's ability in overcoming crisis that occurs within the marital relationship. Do you have any questions before we begin?

RS: No, I do not – I am looking forward to providing you feedback on the questions you will be asking me.

KT: Great! Let's get started. The first question is, are there certain qualities a couple must draw their attention to in order to have a Christ-centered marriage? Please explain these qualities.

RS: This is actually a great question to start off with because I have noticed when meeting with couples for pre-marital counseling at my church I will ask the woman, "What three qualities do you find most important in a Christian marriage?" and majority of the time I will get a deer in headlights type of look. Right off the bat I would say the three most important qualities a couple must draw their attention to in order to have a Christ-centered marriage would be: Faithfulness, honor, and unity. When it comes to faithfulness, I like to also mention loyalty because to me faithfulness it first being loyal to God and when spouses are faithful to God, they can be faithful or loyal to their spouse. The quality of honoring your spouse is similar in regard to Christian spouses should always honor God first in their marriage and then their spouse comes second. When spouses honor God and put him first in their individual life and their marriage, there is nothing a marriage cannot get through. The third quality I mentioned, unity I guess you can say is obvious. But looking not just at the obvious component of marriage bringing forth unity within two people, couples should focus on the commandment that the Lord and His prophets have for both husbands and wives, which is to be unified in God, love, and to always work side-by-side.

KT: I appreciate you not only identifying three qualities but elaborating on why faithfulness, honor, and unity help couples draw their attention on having a Christ-centered marriage. The next question is, "How would you say Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics

of their spouse in relation to overcoming crisis that arises in their marriage? Please provide examples.”

RS: So behavioral characteristics definitely play a major role in the ability of a couple overcoming crisis that arises in marriage – which we know conflict is bound to occur at some point in marriage, but it’s those behavioral characteristics that can either hinder or assist in a couple overcoming conflict. When I think of behavioral characteristics that would assist in a couple overcoming conflict, I think of a spouse that is honest, dependable, and compassionate. I have met with many couples who will point blame on their spouse and focus on the “but I” or “he knows I like...”; not that you should forget about yourself in a marriage, but hopefully in a Christian marriage the goal is have a relationship that displays Christ’s love which means it’s important for spouses to put one another first – after God of course. When a spouse focuses on themselves there is a selfishness that I believe leads to a snowball effect of conflict getting worse because a spouse is not opened to compromising what they want, or admitting their wrong, or maybe not being opened to forgive their spouse.

KT: Thank you for your response. It is extremely helpful to have you explain your responses, so thank you for that. We will be moving on to question three now which is, “When working with Christian couples, what is the most common conflict that arises within their marriage? Can you explain why you think (*insert pastor’s response here) is the most common conflict that occurs in marriage?”

RS: Immediately dollar signs popped up in my head. I have met with hundreds of couples and would say finances is the most common conflict that arises within the marital relationship. I would say this is a common conflict because before marriage there’s this phase that people refer to as the honeymoon phase, right? Well, many couples tend to have a mindset of “Oh we will figure this out once we are married.” This is a topic that definitely needs to be discussed prior to marriage. I always advise couples I meet with in pre-marital counseling to discuss whether or not there will be a joint account, discuss a weekly and monthly budget, discuss who will be in charge of bills, and discuss what is an amount that each spouse should not exceed without asking for “approval” before making that purchase.

KT: It seems like you were quickly able to answer that last question which informs me that finances is most definitely a reoccurring conflict with couples that you have met with. The next question is, “How does religion motivate Christian couples to overcome crisis in their marriage? Please provide an example of how religion has motivated Christian couples to overcome crisis in their marriage.”

RS: I would say religion or one’s personal relationship with Jesus plays a major role in motivating Christian couples in overcoming crisis in their marriage. It is natural for a spouse to have this urge to become defensive or fight with their spouse, but in Christian couples to give their heart to God including their conflict. One’s faith can motivate them to pray for their marriage and the patience, love, forgiveness, and wisdom to overcome the conflict or crisis that is present. Overall, my hope is that Christian couples know there is nothing too big that God cannot help them overcome.

KT: Thank you, Roger for your response. I appreciate you taking the time to explain your answers – it is extremely helpful! We will now move onto the fifth question, which is, “How does religious over-idealization motivate Christian couples in overcoming crisis in their marriage? Please provide an example of how religious over-idealization motivates Christian couples to overcome crisis in their marriage.

RS: This is a very interesting question and I think it is actually extremely important to address religious over-idealization as a motivating factor in overcoming crisis in marriage. We know that everyone is a sinner – and yes, Christians included. With Christian couples that I have met with I have seen many spouses say things such as, “but what will our parents think?” There are couples who want to hide their conflict and put it on the back burner because they feel that they have to keep this façade about themselves that Christians are “perfect” when this is far from the truth. The problem with trying to please other humans is that it can lead to greater conflict within the marital relationship; the only “person” Christian couples should strive to please is God.

KT: I am glad that you felt religious over-idealization is an important topic to discuss in regard to Christian couples overcoming conflict within their marriage. We are going to move on to the sixth and final question, which is, “How does community-centered social processes motivate Christian couples in overcoming crisis in their marriage? Please provide an example of how community-centered social processes motivates Christian couples to overcome crisis in their marriage.

RS: I think community-centered social processes can go two ways. I think one – community-centered social processes can hinder Christian couples from overcoming crisis in their marriage due to lack of resources, or lack of a “Christian community” to help steer, guide, and support a couple in their journey. The second approach I have to this question is that community-centered social processes can greatly assist in Christian couples overcoming conflict within their marriage. For example – I met with a couple who attended a church where they offered multiple different small groups for individuals and couples on all different topics. This would be a great way for a couple to take advantage of what their community offers and become a part of something where other people are going through something similar and together the couple can be supported, encouraged, and helped.

KT: That was the final question. I truly appreciate your time today and the data you have provided me. Do you have any questions before we wrap up our interview?

RS: It was my pleasure meeting with you today. I do not have any questions at this time.

KT: Great – I hope you have a great rest of your day and thank you again for your time!

Appendix J.

IQ Matrix – Interview Questions

Interview Matrix for Christian Couples (Couple Interviews for Each Spouse)

Interview Question	How does it relate to the Theory?	Which RQ is addressed and how?
Interview question goes here	State how the question relates back to your theory	Say which RQ is addressed by the IQ and how.
<p>Please describe the qualities in your significant other that made you know this was the person you wanted to spend the rest of your life with.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Please provide examples of those qualities that your spouse possesses. 	Behaviors and learned behaviors directly relate back to Bandura's Social Learning Theory.	RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?
<p>What is the most challenging part about marriage?</p> <p>Can you explain why (*insert interviewee's response here) is the most challenging part of your marriage?</p>	This can directly relate to a spouse's behavior qualities that may result in conflict within the marriage. Behaviors directly relate to Bandura's SLT.	RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?
<p>What are some ways you assure that love is communicated in your marriage and is consistently reproduced?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Please provide examples and explain if this is a strength or weakness in your marriage. ○ If it is a weakness, how do you think you can strengthen this part of your marriage. 	Reproduction is a component of Bandura's SLT that relates to a behavior that was witnessed being performed.	RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?
How does your spouse's ability to witness a behavior and then perform that behavior - commonly known as reproduction? affect your marriage?	Reproduction is a component of Bandura's SLT.	RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples'

- Can you explain how reproduction has affected your marriage?

ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

How does motivation of your spouse affect your marriage?

This is a component of Bandura's SLT.

RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

- Can you explain how this component has affected your marriage?

Can you explain how your spouse's ability to remember a behavior – retention, affects your marriage?

This is a component of Bandura's SLT - retention.

RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

Can you explain how retention has affected your marriage?

How do you and your spouse handle conflict or crises?

Please explain and provide examples of specific conflict or crises you have overcome and how.

This can directly relate to a spouse's behavior qualities that may result in conflict within the marriage. Behaviors directly relate to Bandura's SLT.

RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

Interview IQ Matrix for Pastors

<p>Are there certain qualities a couple must draw their attention to in order to have a Christ-centered marriage?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please explain these qualities. 	<p>Attention is a component of Bandura's SLT.</p>	<p>RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?</p>
<p>How would you say Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse in relation to overcoming crisis that arises in their marriage?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please provide examples. <p>When working with Christian couples, what is the most common conflict that arises within their marriage?</p> <p>Can you explain why you think (*insert pastor's response here) is the most common conflict that occurs in marriage?</p>	<p>Behavior relates to Bandura's SLT.</p>	<p>RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?</p>
<p>How does religion motivate Christian couples to overcome crisis in their marriage?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please provide an example of how religion has motivated Christian couples to overcome crisis in their marriage. 	<p>This can directly relate to a spouses' behavior qualities that may result in conflict within the marriage. Behaviors directly relate to Bandura's SLT.</p>	<p>RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?</p>
<p>How would you say a couple's motivation to attend weekly service effects marital conflict being overcome?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please provide an example of how motivation to attend weekly 	<p>Motivation is a component of Bandura's SLT.</p>	<p>RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?</p>
	<p>Motivation is a component of Bandura SLT.</p>	<p>RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?</p>

service effects the
marital
relationship?

How do you think
religious idealization
influences a couple's
behavior in a marital
relationship?

- Please provide an
example of
behaviors you feel
occur within the
marital
relationship as a
result of religious
idealization.

How does community-
centered social processes
motivate Christian couples
in overcoming crisis in
their marriage?

Please provide an
example of how
community-
centered social
processes
motivates
Christian couples
to overcome crisis
in their marriage.

Behavior relates to
Bandura's SLT.

Motivation is a component
of Bandura's SLT.

RQ2: How do pastors
perceive religion, religious
over-idealization, and
community-centered social
processes on couples' ability
to cope with relationship
crises within their marriage?

RQ2: How do pastors
perceive religion, religious
over-idealization, and
community-centered social
processes on couples' ability
to cope with relationship
crises within their marriage?

Appendix K.

IQ Matrix - Focus Groups

Focus Group Questions for Christian Couples

Focus Group Question	How does it relate to the Theory?	Which RQ is addressed and how?
Interview question goes here	State how the question relates back to your theory	Say which RQ is addressed by the IQ and how.
Could you describe for me how attention from your spouse affects your ability to overcome conflict?	These four components are part of Bandura's SLT.	RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?
What is the most challenging part about marriage? Can you explain why (*insert interviewee's response here) is the most challenging part of your marriage?	This can directly relate to a spouse's behavior qualities that may result in conflict within the marriage. Behaviors directly relate to Bandura's SLT.	RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?
How do you handle conflict in your marriage? Can you please explain how you handle conflict within your marriage and if you think this is beneficial to your marriage or is this an area of your marriage that would not be considered a strength?	Conflict can be highly related to behaviors of spouses, and this can be "fixed" when spouses implement Bandura's Social Learning Theory.	RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?
How does your spouse handle conflict in your marriage? Can you please explain how he/she handles conflict within your marriage and if you think this is beneficial to your	Conflict can be highly related to behaviors of spouses, and this can be "fixed" when spouses implement Bandura's Social Learning Theory.	RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

<p>marriage or is this an area of your marriage that would not be considered a strength?</p> <p>How much does religion motivate/influence you to overcome conflict or crisis that arises within your marriage?</p> <p>Can you please provide an example?</p>	<p>Motivate is one of the components of Bandura's SLT.</p>	<p>RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?</p>
<p>How vital is your attention to your faith and God in your personal life?</p> <p>Please explain how your faith is applied in your daily personal life.</p>	<p>Attention is one of the components of Bandura's SLT.</p>	<p>RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?</p>
<p>Can you describe for me how important is faith and God in your marriage?</p> <p>Can you please explain how your motivation to prioritize your faith and God in your marriage occurs?</p>	<p>Motivation is one of the components of Bandura's SLT.</p>	<p>RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?</p>
<p>How much does religion influence your marriage and reproducing what you learn at church and what the Bible says?</p> <p>Can you describe specific times that you can recall religion has influenced your marriage?</p>	<p>Reproduction is one of the components of Bandura's SLT.</p>	<p>RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?</p>
<p>Do community-centered processes positively or negatively affect your marriage – why or why not?</p> <p>You said, “they do” or “they don’t” (fill in with interviewee’s response) can you explain why or why not?</p>	<p>Spouses can learn behaviors from the community, which would relate to the four components of Bandura's SLT.</p>	<p>RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples’ ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?</p>

How does religious over-idealization motivate you to maintain or overcome crisis that occurs in your marriage?

Please explain how religious over-idealization has motivated you to maintain or overcome crisis that occurs in your marriage.

Motivation is one of the components of Bandura's SLT.

RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

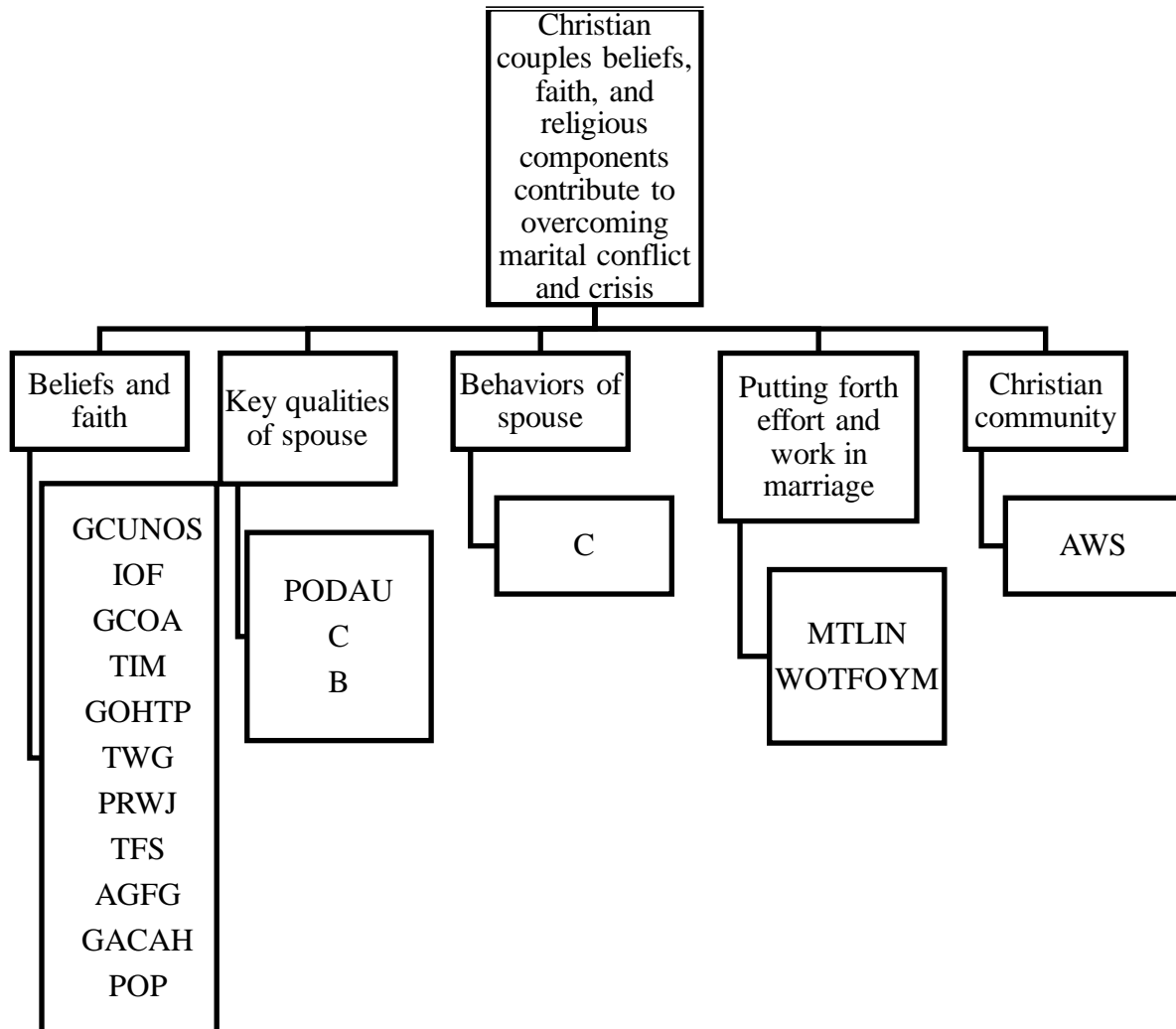
Focus Group Questions for Pastors

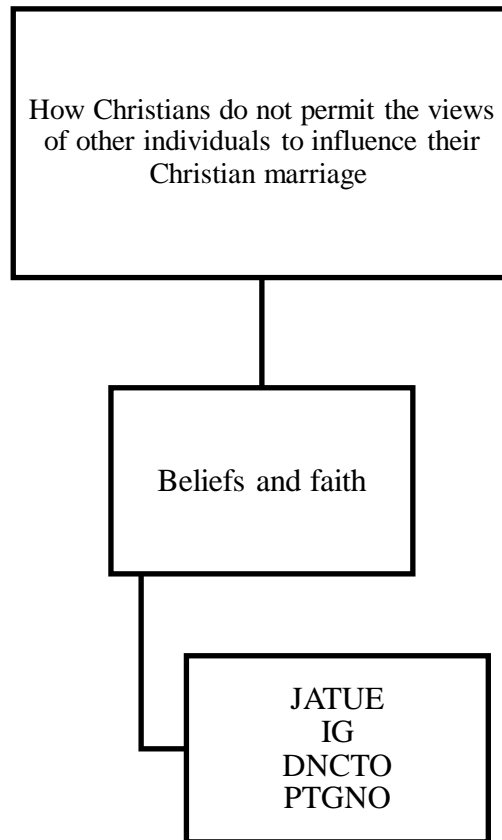
Interview Question	How does it relate to the Theory?	Which RQ is addressed and how?
<p>Can you describe one of the biggest obstacles you have noticed in Christian marriages?</p> <p>1. Can you please provide an example of an obstacle you have noticed in Christian marriages? Can you please describe or explain them?</p>	Behaviors of spouses can lead to conflict and behavior directly relates to Bandura's SLT.	RQ3: How do Christian couples perceive the behavioral characteristics of their spouse on the couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?
<p>How would you say a couple or spouses' motivation to build a relationship with God impacts their marriage?</p> <p>i. Could you provide an example of how motivation to build a relationship with God could impact a couple's marriage?</p>	Motivation is a component of Bandura SLT.	RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?
<p>How do you think religion motivates a couple to overcome conflict in their Christian marriage?</p> <p>ii. Could you share an example of how religion may assist in couple's overcoming conflict within their marriage?</p>	Motivation is a component of Bandura's SLT.	RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?
<p>How do you think religious over-idealization motivates a couple to overcome conflict in their Christian marriage?</p> <p>1. Could you share an example of how religion may assist in couple's overcoming conflict within their marriage?</p>	Motivation is a component of Bandura's SLT.	RQ2: How do pastors perceive religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on couples' ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

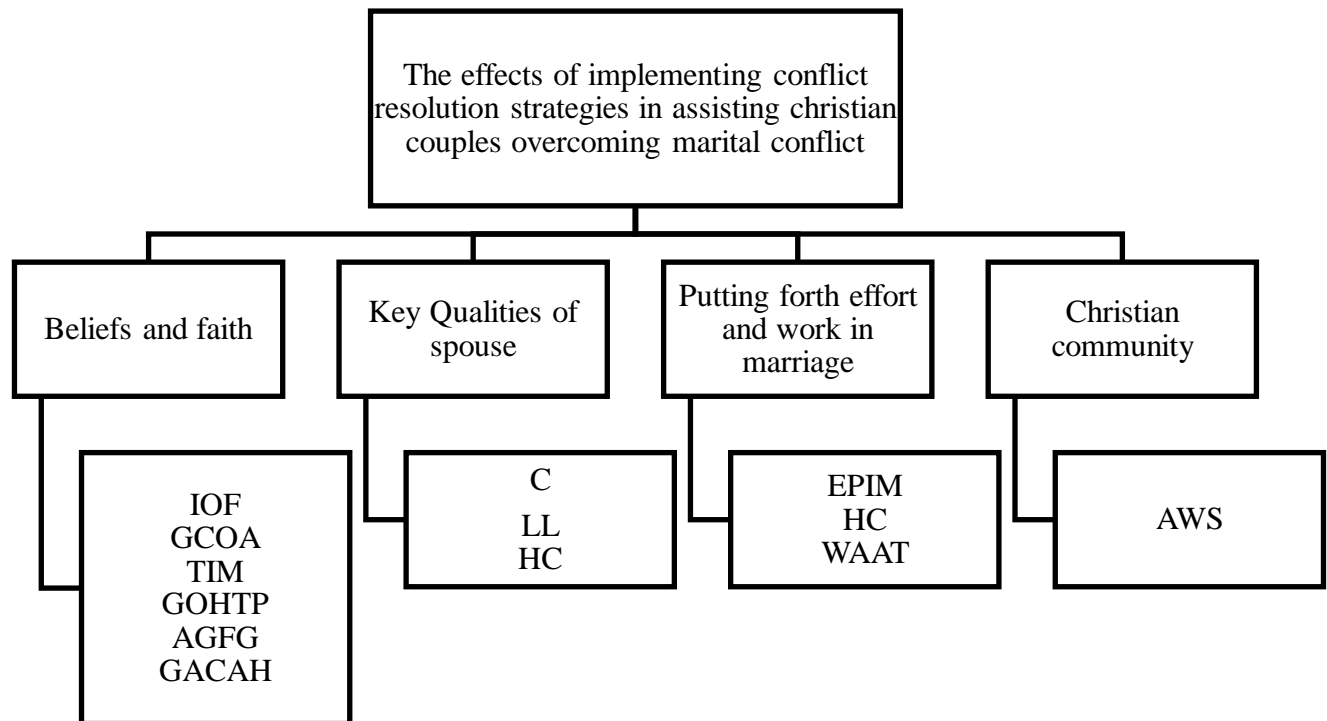
Can you describe community-centered social processes that you believe have the biggest influence on motivating a couple to overcome crisis in their marriage?

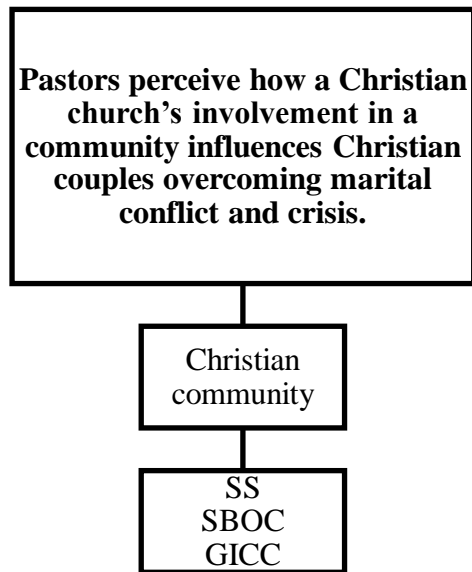
Motivation is a component of Bandura's SLT.

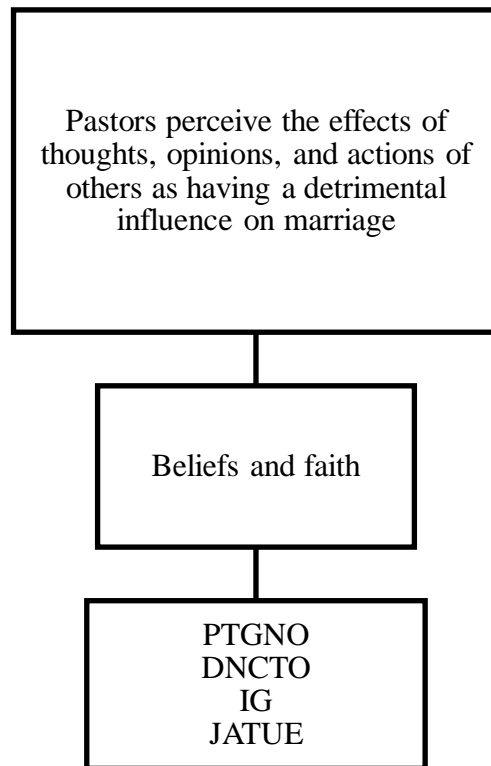
RQ1: How do married couples perceive the influence of religion, religious over-idealization, and community-centered social processes on their ability to cope with relationship crises within their marriage?

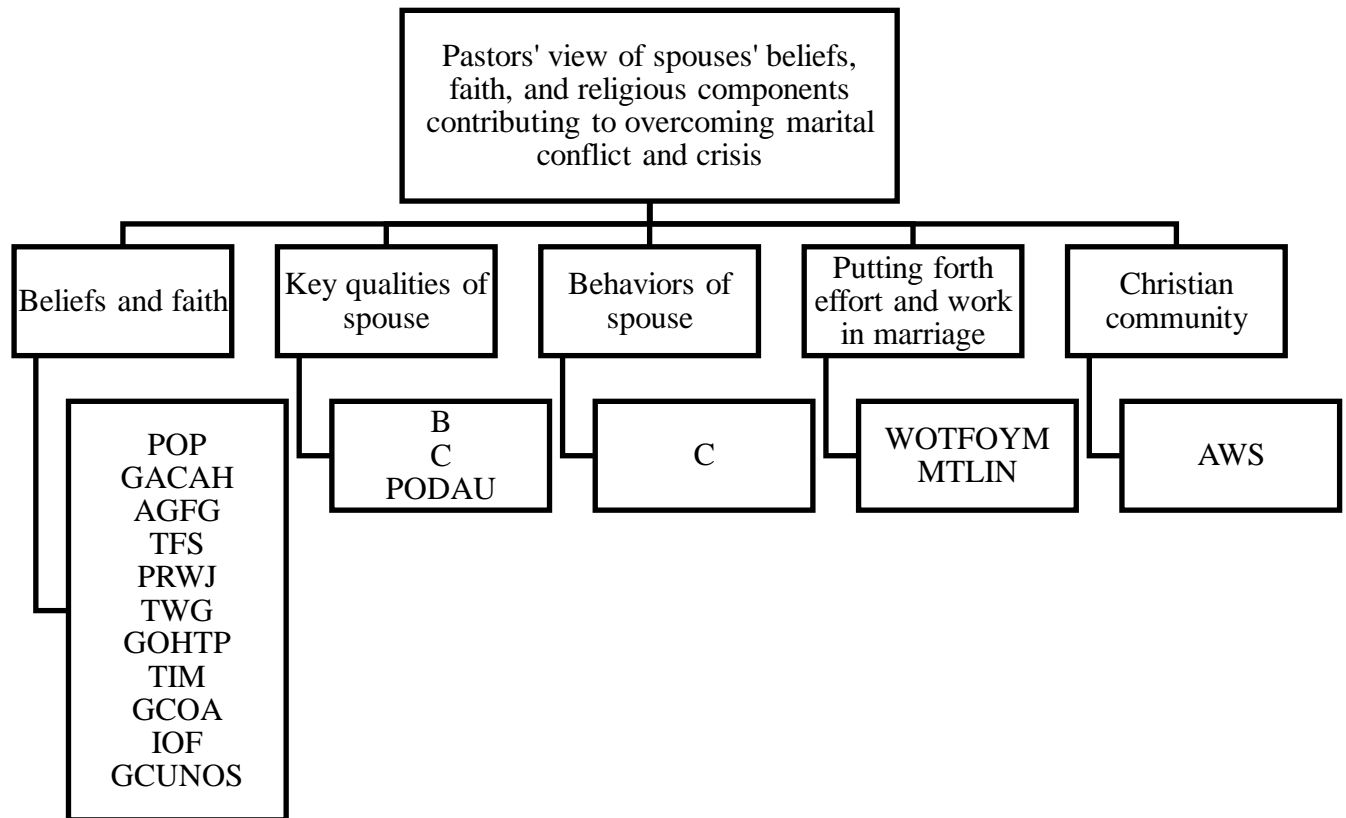
Appendix L.**Theme Creation****Research Question 1: Theme 1**

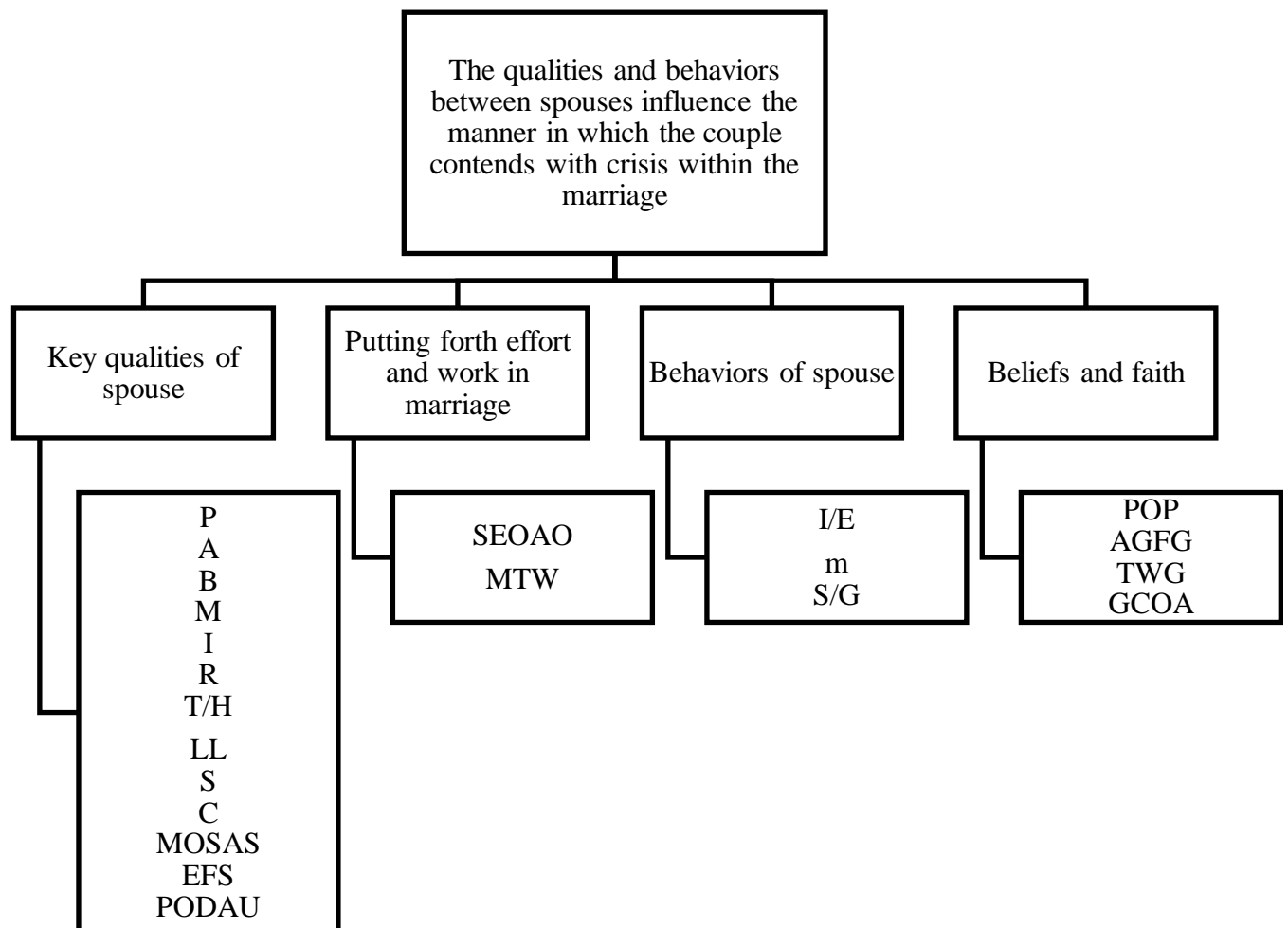
Research Question 1: Theme 2

Research Question 1: Theme 3

Research Question 2: Theme 1

Research Question 2: Theme 2

Research Question 2: Theme 3

Research Question 3: Theme 1

Appendix M.**Table 1: Participant Demographics****Table 1***Participant Demographics*

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Pastor/Married	Years of marriage	Congregant
Larry	59	Male	White	Married	35	Yes
Laura	60	Female	White	Married	35	Yes
Elliott	45	Female	White	Married	20	Yes
William	47	Male	White	Married	20	Yes
Sandra	23	Female	Black	Married	1	Yes
Sam	24	Male	Black	Married	1	Yes
Sophia	33	Female	Hispanic	Married	4	Yes
Scott	35	Male	White	Married	4	Yes
John	71	Male	White	Married	51	Yes
Tori	71	Female	Hispanic	Married	51	Yes
Lucy	52	Female	White	Married	18	Yes
Harry	53	Male	White	Married	18	Yes
James	30	Male	Black	Married	7	Yes
Alexandra	32	Female	Black	Married	7	Yes
Sean	45	Male	White	Married	9	Yes
Julie	43	Female	White	Married	9	Yes
Tony	49	Male	Hispanic	Married	28	Yes

Cheryl	50	Female	White	Married	28	Yes
Patty	40	Female	White	Married	13	Yes
Tom	43	Male	White	Married	13	Yes
Peter	61	Male	White	Pastor	32	Yes
Charles	47	Male	White	Pastor	19	Yes
Adam	38	Male	White	Pastor	9	Yes
Dylan	54	Male	White	Pastor	26	Yes
Brad	58	Male	White	Pastor	35	Yes
Bill	31	Male	Black	Pastor	10	Yes

Note. This table entails the name, age, gender, and ethnicity of each participant. Each participant/couple is determined to either be married, or a pastor and also if the participant is a congregant of the non-denominational Christian church in New York.

Appendix N.

Table 2: Interview and Focus Group Demographics.**Table 2***Data Sources*

Participant Pseudonym	Interview Complete	Duration of Interview	Number of Transcript Pages	Attended Focus Group
Larry and Laura	Yes	51m	5	Yes
Elliott and William	Yes	45m	5	Yes
Sandra and Sam	Yes	53m	5.5	Yes
Sophia and Scott	Yes	48m	4	Yes
John and Tori	Yes	49m	4	Yes
Lucy and Harry	Yes	54m	4.5	Yes
James and Alexandra	Yes	41m	3.5	Yes
Sean and Julie	Yes	46m	3.5	Yes
Tony and Cheryl	Yes	58m	8	No
Patty and Tom	Yes	59m	8	No
Peter	Yes	37m	2.5	Yes
Charles	Yes	41m	2.5	Yes
Adam	Yes	43m	3.5	Yes
Dylan	Yes	40m	3	Yes
Brad	Yes	58m	8	No
Bill	Yes	53m	8	No

Note. This chart informs the reader of how long each couple or pastor's interview lasted, the number of transcript pages that resulted from each interview and whether or not the couple or pastor attended a focus group.

Appendix O.

Table 3: Categories to Established Themes

Table 3

Categories to established themes

Interview Categories	Focus Group I (Christian Couples) Categories	Focus Group II (Pastors) Categories	Developed Themes
Beliefs and Faith	Beliefs and faith	Beliefs and faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian couples beliefs, faith, and religious components contribute to overcoming marital conflict and crisis • Pastors perceive that spouses' faith, beliefs, and religiosity influences overcoming marital conflict and crisis • How Christians are viewed by other individuals and the influence those individuals have on the marital relationship of Christian couples • Pastors perceive the effects of thoughts, opinions, and actions of others as having a detrimental influence on marriage • The qualities and behaviors between spouses influence the manner in which the couple contends with crisis within the marriage • The qualities and behaviors between spouses influence the manner in which the couple contends with crisis within the marriage
Key qualities of spouse	Key qualities of spouse	Key qualities of spouse	
Behaviors of spouse	Behaviors of spouse	Behaviors of spouse	

Putting forth effort and work in marriage	Putting forth effort and work in marriage	Putting forth effort and work in marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The effects of implementing conflict resolution strategies in a system Christian couples overcoming marital conflict
Christian community	Christian community	Christian community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pastors perceive how community-centered social processes influence Christian couples overcoming marital conflict and crisis

Note. This table displays the categories that assisted the researcher in establishing themes.

Appendix P.
Themes Supporting RQ 1

Table 5

Themes Supporting Research Question 1

Themes	Categories in Relation to Theme	Codes Within Categories
Christian couples beliefs, faith, and religious components contribute to overcoming marital conflict and crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs and faith • Key qualities of spouse • Behaviors of spouse • Putting forth effort and work in marriage • Christian community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power of prayer (POP) • God as creator and healer (GACAH) • Asking God for guidance (AGAG) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs (B) • Christian (C) • Truth from scripture (TFS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on the foundation of your marriage (WOTFOYM) • Personal relationship with Jesus (PRWJ) • Time with God (TWG) • Getting over hurdles through prayer (GOHTP) • Three in marriage (TIM) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment (c) • God can overcome anything (GCOA) • Importance of faith (IOF) • Attending weekly service (AWS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God completing us not our spouse (GCUNOS) • More than love is needed (MTLIS) • Power of displaying an understanding (PODAU) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasing to God not others (PTGNO)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not compare to others (DNCTO) • Idolize God (IG)
How Christians do not permit the views of other individuals to influence their Christian marriage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs and faith 	

relationship of Christian couples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus as the ultimate example (JATUE)
The effects of implementing conflict resolution strategies in a system Christian couples overcoming marital conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God as creator and healer (GACAH) • Asking God for guidance (AGAG) • Healthy communication (HC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love language (LL) • Getting over hurdles through prayer (GOHTP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working as a team (WAAT) • Three in marriage (TIM) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment (c) • God can overcome anything (GCOA) • Importance of faith (IOF) • Attending weekly service (AWS) • Healthy communication (HC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing peace in marriage (EPIM)

Note. This table breaks down the codes and categories that contributed to the established three themes that assisted in answering the first research question.

Appendix Q.
Themes Supporting RQ 2

Table 6

Themes Supporting Research Question 2

Themes	Categories in Relation to Theme	Codes Within Categories
Pastors perceive how community-centered social processes influence Christian couples overcoming marital conflict and crisis	Christian community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support System (SS) • Surrounded by other Christians (SBOC) • Grounded in Christian community (GICC) • Jesus as the ultimate example (JATUE)
Pastors perceive the effects of thoughts, opinions, and actions of others as having a detrimental influence on marriage	Beliefs and faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idolize God (IG) • Do not compare to others (DNCTO) • Pleasing to God not others (PTGNO) • Power of prayer (POP) • God as creator and healer (GACAH) • Asking God for guidance (AGAG) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs (B) • Christian (C) • Truth from scripture (TFS)
Pastors perceive that spouses' faith, beliefs, and religiosity influences overcoming marital conflict and crisis	Beliefs and faith, key qualities of spouse, behaviors of spouse, putting forth effort and work in marriage, Christian community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on the foundation of your marriage (WOTFOYM) • Personal relationship with Jesus (PRWJ) • Time with God (TWG) • Getting over hurdles through prayer (GOHTP) • Three in marriage (TIM) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment (c) • God can overcome anything (GCOA) • Importance of faith (IOF)

-
- Attending weekly service (AWS)
 - God completing us not our spouse (GCUNOS)
 - More than love is needed (MTLIS)
 - Power of displaying an understanding (PODAU)
-

Note. This table breaks down the codes and categories that contributed to the established three themes that assisted in answering the second research question.