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Relational Interdependent Self construal, and Spiritual Maturity as Predictors of Marital Satisfaction

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Relational Interdependent Self Construal, and Spiritual Maturity as
Predictors of Marital Satisfaction

by

Conroy Everton Reynolds

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A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Marriage and Family Therapy

_____

June 2012

Each person whose signature appears below certifies that this dissertation in his/her opinion is adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Relational Interdependent Self Construal, and Spiritual Maturity as
Predictors of Marital Satisfaction

by

Conroy Everton Reynolds

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Marital and Family Therapy
Loma Linda University, June 2012
Dr. Colwick M. Wilson, Chairperson

This study examined the extent to which relationality is implicated in relationship
satisfaction. Specifically, this study examined the role of two relational variables,
Spiritual Maturity and Relational Interdependent Self Construal, in predicting the
variance in marital satisfaction, after controlling for number of children, religion,
employment status, education, length of marriage and household income among married
heterosexual couples in Antigua. The Caribbean Island of Antigua is comprised primarily
of persons of African descent, deeply religious, but who are influenced by western ideas
and values.

The results of this study reveal the importance of spirituality but not relational self
construal as a key predictor of marital satisfaction. That is, individuals who reported high
scores in one of the subscales of the spiritual assessment inventory also reported high
scores in marital satisfaction. Further, persons who reported high instability in their
relationship with the divine had lower levels of marital satisfaction. In addition, gender
and age were also found to be significant predictors of marital satisfaction in this study.

The findings in this study will be of benefit to mental health professionals (a fairly
new profession in Antigua), marriage officers, pastors and family life educators, as they

deal with married and prospective couples in Antigua. The results of this study would

suggest that there is utility to the notion of integrating relational spirituality in family

therapy interventions in Antigua and other Caribbean countries. Further, marriage and

family therapist should be aware of the importance of gender and cultures issues in their

practice with married individuals in this region.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

From a marriage and family therapy perspective empirical efforts to connect spirituality and relational self development has been limited although there is recognition of the significance of both constructs on individual and relationship functioning (Mahoney, 2010; Walsh, 1999). The scholarly literature contains a variety of relational models of self influenced by pragmatic or structuralist thought, however empirical validation has not kept pace with theorizing. This is especially pronounced when viewed in the context of marital satisfaction as an outcome measure. Marriage is considered to be one of the strongest relational and interdependent units most societies possess; marital satisfaction as an outcome measure of the quality of that relationship has been the subject of intense scholarly efforts over the past seven decades (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Fincham & Beach, 2010; Koch-sheras & Sheras, 2006). However, studies examining relational self models as predictors of marital satisfaction have been in short supply in the field of Marriage and Family Therapy. Moreover, empirical work on the relational self has largely focused on the notion of self differentiation as a relational construct (Skoron & Dendy, 2004; Giblin, 2004; Jankowski & Vaughn, 2009). Spirituality as a relational construct although having deep theological roots has only recently emerged as a significant mental health construct and has begun to receive scholarly attention in regard to families (Mahoney, 2010).

This study examines the extent to which relational interdependent self and spiritual maturity are implicated in varying levels of marital satisfaction. Specifically, it proposes that both of these constructs are positively related to perceived quality of

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marital relationship when other known confounding factors are accounted for. In this study relational interdependent self construal will be conceptualized as a model of relational self development and spiritual maturity will be used to operationalize the latent construct of healthy relational spirituality.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will examine two main theories as they relate to relational issues and their impact on relationship satisfaction. Emerging from this discussion, a conceptual model will be proposed with three latent constructs; relational interdependent self construal, spiritual maturity, and marital satisfaction. The model will form the basis for this study. The chapter will commence with a brief historical background to relational self development and proceed to a discussion of its expression in Symbolic Interaction and Family Systems theories.

Conceptualization of the self as a relational construct has been traced to the emergence of American pragmatism and French Structuralism at the beginning of the twentieth century (Hermans & Kempen, 1993). Both schools emerged in response to Descartes postulations of the thinking self, centralized, separated from its environment and acquiring knowledge through an objective process. There was general agreement among scholars of both persuasions in decentering the self, given its fundamentally relational character; however, both followed distinct conceptual formulations of the construct (Hermans & Kempen, 1993).

Historical Overview of Self in Relation

Pragmatist led by William James (1890) conceptualized the self as a subject capable of self awareness intersubjective experiences, and creator of meaning while the Structuralists viewed the self as fully created in dialogue (Hermans & Kempen, 1993). Structuralists gave preeminence to language as the creator of self; by contrast pragmatist

emphasized the self as an agent existing prior to discourse. Consequently the structuralist's view became the basis of what is considered by some as the hard social constructionist position evident in the work of individuals such as Gergen (2010), (Shotter, 2009), and (McNamee, 2010). Herbert Mead (1934) further developed James (1890) ideas on the self that later became the basis of Symbolic Interaction theory.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

The term symbolic interaction, first coined by Blumer (1969) focuses attention on two fundamental aspects of human experience, the meaning individuals give to objects in their experience and the notion that such meanings emerge from human interaction (Denzin, 1991). From this perspective, both meaning and self are socially derived. Thus the social context from which the self emerges also provides structures for meaning making as it develops. Blumer (1969) in his elucidation of the theory drew largely on the work of Mead (1934) to provide the philosophical assumptions that became the basis for its conceptual development.

Mead (1934) drew on James's (James, 1890) proposition of the self as a dual "I-ME" construct. The "I" represents the self as subject or knower while "ME" is a metaphor for the self as known or object. In this conceptualization, the self maintains it's embodied character as an independent "I" but is also relational and decentralized as it is capable of relating to itself. Moreover, Mead (1934) argued that the "ME" is comprised of a set of ideas, and ways of being integrated from the social matrix in which it is embedded throughout the lifespan. The self as an object, much like any other object, emerges from social interaction Mead (1934) views this as the basis of the socialization

process and as such it has come to be considered as the foundation for the metaphor of the social self (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Hence, Mead (1934) conceived of the self as developing in relation to an external other in addition to its internal "I-ME" duality; consequently, self development occurs only to the extent that one is able to internalize the attitude of the other. Through the life span the other becomes more abstract and distal as the self interacts in ever more complex social situations. This phenomenon of the self consciously relating to itself and its external environment is a fundamental aspect of self conceptualization in Mead's thought. Consequently, the relational self as it developed subsequently, is consistent with Mead's self theoretical formulations (Willert, 2011).

Mead (1934) also discussed the ways social interaction shapes self development and provides the basis for the self's meaning making processes. In the earlier stages of development, Mead (1934) used the phenomenon of play to conceptualize ways children integrate the perspective of particular others. In play the child adopts the persona of someone such as a parent or teacher and carries on a conversation with itself based on prior interaction or observation. At the more complex game stage, an individual takes the perspective of multiple individuals as in a game. Participants in the game represent members of one or more communities in which the developing self is embedded. For Mead (1934) this develops a whole fully integrated self. At its greatest complexity the "generalized other" emerges. As the self interacts with its internalized representations of the society's views and attitudes, its capacity for abstract thought is developed. Thus Mead propounded an integrationist view of self development in which the internal dialogue of the self is the basis for integrating social norms, values and meaning. Moreover, Mead viewed the self as an actor capable of assessing and responding to a

given situation or interaction. As the "I" in the "I-Me" duality, the self in the moment response to its environment based on its meaning making structure.

Although Mead drew on James' self theory, there were some differences between the two theoretical perspectives. James (1892) conceives of the self as consisting of multiple manifestations; the material self, the social self, the spiritual self, and the pure ego. The material self comprises the body and material possessions, the social self is the self in relation to others, and he believed an individual to possess "as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind" (James, 1892, p. 294). James struggled to define the properties of the spiritual self and how it relates to the other aspects of self, but he accepted and proposed its existence. In contrast to James (1892), Mead (1934) adopted a more thoroughgoing Darwinian worldview and deemphasized the affective and spiritual aspects of the self while elevating its cognitive and relational properties (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Willert, 2011).

Mead's theorizing is widely regarded considered as the basis for the development of symbolic interaction theory, particularly with regard to the origin and development of the self (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Indeed, it has been argued that the notion of self as a social construct is more developed in symbolic interactionism than any other family theory (Chibucos & Leite, 2005). In this conceptualization, the self maintains its agentic force while recognizing the formative influence of the society in its origin and development.

Subsequent scholarly efforts to further develop self as a relational construct from a pragmatic perspective has occurred across multiple disciplines in the social sciences (Chen, Boucher, & Tapias, 2006a; Hermans & Kempen, 1993). Theories in this tradition generally accept the self as an embodied agent while being actively engaged with itself

and its environment as a relational construct. Moreover, individuals tend to display patterns of behavior congruent with their relational development. More highly relational individuals are therefore expected to engage in more pro-relational behaviors, and have healthier, more satisfactory lives and relationships.

Family Systems Theory

Self in traditional systemic theory was viewed with suspicion from the inception of the field (Torsteinsson, 2003). Family Systems theorist viewed dysfunction and pathology in relational terms, therefore attempts to create change had to be directed at what they regarded as the fundamental unit of relationship functioning, the family (Olson, Russell, & Sprenkle, 1980). Intervention directed at the individual was considered largely ineffective and indeed created more problems than it solved, and thus, attention focused on the relational context as the source and the solution (Torsteinsson, 2003). Hoffman (1993) noted "early family therapist were also wary of the idea of self. They tended to believe that the ideas a person held about his or her self would only change when the ideas held by the people close to this person changed (p. 33)." For Hoffman (1993) this resulted in replacing the individual unit for the family unit and consequently the disappearance of the individual from family therapy.

Such ambivalence on the nature of the self did not prevent many systemic thinkers and practitioners from holding a view of the individual as a separate autonomous person who ideally would aim at separation/individuation as part of the maturation process (Fishbane, 2001). Minuchin, Lee, and Simon (Minuchin, Lee, & Simon, 1996) argued that the presence of excessive parental involvement, continuing marital discord

and hierarchical disruptions between the parental and child subsystems hindered the separation – individuation process negatively affecting the individual's ability to separate and form healthy relationships. Consequently, it could be observed that for Minuchin self development occurred in the self-other relationship of the family system originating in the parent-child dyad (Perosa, 1996). Moreover, this allowed therapists to position themselves as experts separate from the family system diagnosing and treating its pathologies (Fishbane, 2001).

Over time debate developed about what came to be known as the essential self and whether or not relationships existed to help persons realize their inner unique core self as the basis of separation/individuation process (Torsteinsson, 2003). Some of the various systemic theories developed varied positions relative to the essential self. Bateson (1971) conceived of the "total self" system. This view of the self included the individual in his/her environment and as such self was always to be considered as part of and in interaction with his environment. He regarded the traditional Cartesian notion of the individual as separate from and master of his environment as an epistemological error. The environment provided the context for the creation of meaning.

Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986) postulated similar notions of the self in contextual therapy. However, for Boszomenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986) the construct does require individual autonomy as well as relational ethical responsibility. They noted, "A multilateral dialogue helps a person assert his own claims and consider the due claims of others. A person learns to discern her own identity or self through this dialogue. She also validates the worth of this self through due care for the other" (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). Here the self is experienced and organized in relationship with others.

Luepnitz (2002) notes that while Satir often referred to self esteem, she does not provide a definition of her notion of self.

Self Differentiation

Among traditional systemic theories, Bowen family systems appear to have one of the most extensive conceptualization of the self in relation (Knudson-Martin, 1996). Central to this understanding of the self is the notion of self differentiation. Traditional Bowenian thought conceived of differentiation as an inner predisposition to achieve a higher level of self awareness that is independent and does not rely on connection with others for its affirmation but who is also committed to relationships. Bowen sees the achievement of this type of differentiation as of first importance and is a prerequisite to building effectively functioning relationships (Titelman, 1998). An essential function of Bowen Systems theory is the lowering of chronic anxiety in the midst of anxiety filled relationships. This has been found to enhance relational functioning (Wright, 2009).

Thus traditional systemic theories attempted in various ways to account for the self as an individual and the self in relation. Fundamentally, there is general agreement that the self develops in relation, which, implies the existence of a self to start with. Secondly, the focus on family interaction was ultimately to provide a healthy environment for autonomous self development. Both Minuchin's separation/individuation (Minuchin et al., 1996), and Bowen's separation/differentiation (Kerr & Bowen, 1988), are predicated on this notion. Boszormenyi-Nagy (1986) has a clear emphasis on autonomy and relationship as equally required. Bateson (Bateson, 1971), is less so and seems more systemic in his understanding of the self. He does not appear to see the self

as separate from its environment and thus leaves little room for the notion of autonomy. Hence ideas on the self within traditional systemic thought encompassed several conceptually similar yet contrasting notions regarding autonomy and interdependence in self development. A logical extension of this thought would be to examine the notion of relational self within the context of relationship. Given that systems theory is fundamentally a relational discipline, it would be a helpful extension of ideas on self to be tested within the context of relationship. This study aims to measure level of relational self as a predictor of relationship quality, specifically a marriage relationship.

In summary, traditional systemic theories appear to have emphasized self autonomy over relationality. The goal of self development was considered to be separation/individuation, and this process was seen as a prerequisite for relational functioning. Consequently, autonomy provided the basis for healthy relational interaction. The emergence of postmodernism presented theoretical challenges to traditional systems thinking. One the one hand, some attempts have been made to think of the self in more relational terms. On the other hand, others have introduced the notion of self as a purely relational construct devoid of any autonomous conceptual postulations.

Post Modern Systems Theorizing

Fishbane (2001) observed that with the advent of post modernism, a multidisciplinary theoretical shift toward reformulating and redefining autonomy in relational terms has been evident. Part of this has involved Family Systems therapy integrating ideas from other disciplines. Fishbane (2001) argues for retention of the notion of autonomy, but attempts to redefine it relationally. She echoes Boszormenyi-

Nagy's (1986) view of autonomy as suggesting a person with identity and history but embedded in a relational context. The two concepts are seen as complementary and recursive and gives rise to the notion of "relational autonomy." This empowers the individual to act in a relational context while highlighting ones ethical responsibility to the relationship. A number of reformulations of Bowenian self differentiation have conceptualized it as a relational construct (Jankowski & Vaughn, 2009; Knudson-Martin, 1996). One study identified correlations between attachment styles and self differentiation (Skowron & Dendy, 2004). Highly differentiated persons showed greater relational functioning and self regulation, a key aspect of the relational self (Chen, Boucher, & Tapias, 2006b).

It has been have argued that the Bowenian notion of self differentiation is predicated on traditional western models of individualism, while collective cultures place greater emphasis on interdependence (Skowron & Dendy, 2004).

Knudson-Martin (1996) offered a redefinition and expansion of Bowen's concept that sees independence and relationship connectivity as reciprocal and complementary constructs in differentiation. Seen from this perspective differentiation is an integration of self and other that allows for one to see through the eyes of another while not relinquishing one's sense of self. The goal of therapy would to be to develop strategies that enhance the integration of autonomy and connectedness in the process of self differentiation. A fully differentiated self is equally connected to self and others.

Feminist critique of Bowen suggests that a more accurate metaphor for the maturation process would involve recognition of an increasing complexity of self engagement as opposed to distancing implied in separation and differentiation, indicating

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individuals may not be distancing themselves from parents but developing more sophisticated ways of relating (Luepnitz, 2002).

Thus post modernism has given rise to several revisions and variations of the autonomy/interdependence conceptualization in self development. Such formulations suggest a continuing concern for the theoretical inadequacy of the traditional ideas. Further it indicates the need to view the self from a more relational perspective, which would be more consistent with systemic notions. One of the goals of this study is to further that debate by studying the self within the context of relationships. Both feminism and social constructionism offer radically different and conflicting contributions to the debate.

Feminism and Systems Theory

Fishbane (2001) indicates that the idea of a relational self is consistent with current feminist and other theorizing on self development in systems theory. Traditional Feminist theory emphasizes the socialization process that has shaped women as society's caregivers resulting in women developing a false self that does not acknowledge its own needs for care. The goal of therapy is to foster female recovery of "the true self" aware of its needs and desires and willing to come out and accept nurturance and care (Luepnitz, 2002).

Current feminist theory emphasize relationality as a more inclusive concept showing interconnections between groups and individuals on the basis of ethnic, cultural, gender, socioeconomic and other considerations (Zinn, Hondagneu-Sotelo, & Messner, 2011). A logical extension of such an approach would suggest that on the individual level

the self knows itself in relation to the other taking such contextual variables into account. As Zinn et al. (2007) note, the meaning of "woman" is defined by the existence of women of different races and classes. For example, "Being a white woman in the United States is meaningful only insofar as it is set apart from and in contradistinction to women of color (Zinn et al., 2007, p. 11)." A meaningful question from this perspective would be, what gendered differences or similarities might there be between relational self manifestations within the context of close relationships? How might these differences assist in a systemic understanding gender construction? The current study offers an opportunity to address this question in a dyadic sample.

Social Constructionism and Systems Theory

Influenced by French Structuralist thought Social Constructionism postulates the self is fully constructed in a relational dialogical space. Dialogue is not done by delimited persons, it is creative force. As Gergen (2009) notes, "the dialogue or the social experiences are not the form in which a pre-existing self is molded; the dialogue is what brings the self into existence (p. 88)." Such a radical departure from any previous notions in systemic thought is echoed only perhaps in Bateson's notion of the systemic self that cannot be conceived of without its environment (Bateson, 1971). Gergen (2009) eschews any notion of a self existing outside the dialogical process. Collaborative action is what gives meaning to any thought, behavior or language. For Gergen (2009) the issues centers on the possibility of constructing entirely new ways of being rooted in a relational context. From this perspective, knowledge of self or other is a relational phenomenon. Hence while Gergen (2009) accept Mead's (1934) theoretical notions of the self as

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developed within relationships, he argues symbolic interactionism did not go far enough for it left room for the notion of individuality, autonomy and independence.

Such categorical formulations have led to criticism of the socially constructed relational self as totalizing and violent replacing one dominant discourse with another (Larner, 2008). Torsteinsson (2003) argues that given the inflexibility of Gergen's approach all other formulations are relegated to the essentialist notions of Descartes, thus any notion of self as a concrete external manifestation of an internal less concrete phenomenon is summarily dismissed. For Torsteinsson (2003) the presence of ambiguity and diversity suggest uniqueness of perspective that cannot be accounted for by context alone.

Larner (2008) poses a central question, "are persons defined only by the multiple conversations, dialogues, stories and relationships they enter into? What about the contribution of biology, the body, emotional experience, reflection or thinking in constructing an idea of self?" "If the self is formed totally through the voices of relational others, how does one define an individual self (p. 1)?" Is the socially constructed self an individual self?

Based on the work of ethical philosopher Emanuel Levinas, Larner (2008) proposes a postmodern understanding of the self that begins with awareness of "the other in me" but also maintains a relational self that is separate and unique. In this conceptualization the "I" fills a space that cannot be filled by another since the other is separate from it. Further, ethics and social justice demand a contained self that is responsible to the other, hence the relational self is both separate and relational. In its ethical manifestation the self "is not merely contextual, but an existential subject who

requires ontological independence in order to exercise agency and responsibility for others" (Larner, 2008 p. 8). Ethicality presupposes some notion of self-autonomy whereas self awareness is awakened by the other.

Thus the theoretical divisions over the self within marriage and family therapy have been influenced by the broader debate on the nature of the self, the forces that impact its development and the implications for interpersonal functioning. All sides agree that while the self is relational, how one conceptualizes and defines relational self is largely determined by epistemological considerations. Fundamentally, Social Constructionism as proponents of the communal basis of meaning posits the notion of all reality as emergent in dialogue (Gergen, 2009); while critics charge that its subjectivist assumptions threaten to reduce the field to nihilistic relativism (Larner, 2008; Torsteinsson, 2003; Fergus & Reid, 2002). Some degree of objectivism, albeit fallible, is needed to guide therapeutic interventions. Social constructionists (Gergen, 2009; McNamee, 2010) suggest all reformulations of self theory as in symbolic interactionist thought are essentially still rooted in the western individualist ideology and therefore attempt to retain rather than replace it with a new construct. Moreover, symbolic interactionist thought leaves one without "a way to explain how it is a person is able to grasp others' states of mind from their gestures" (Gergen, 2009, p.90). For Gergen (2009) symbolic interactionism is overly influenced by deterministic ideas that suggest individuals are destined to act in ways according to pre-determined socially defined roles. As he argues, "it is not simply that it is difficult to see how the social world gets into or leaves a mark on the mind, but that we are still left with minds inside heads – separated and unknowable" (Gergen, 2009, p. 95).

Drawing on symbolic interactionist notions of a self that is relational and yet agentic, and social constructionist's conceptualization of lived experience as a communal product; it is proposed here that a dialectical model offers a helpful framework to engage these seemingly contradictory or opposing paradigms in marriage and family therapy theory on relational self . A dialectical approach moves beyond what divides and offers a both/and paradigm to replace the either/or that often predominates (Dilsworth-Anderson, Burton, & Klein, 2005). The dialectical approach is increasingly advocated as an effective paradigm for bridging the conceptual divide between traditional and post modern theorizing (Rowan, 2010). Specifically, this approach draws on Montgomery and Baxter (1998) elucidation of relational dialectics. Among the basic concepts of this perspective that will be utilized for purposes of the present study are the notions of contradiction, praxis and totality (Erbert & Duck, 1997). Within the context of close relationships such as marital relations, contradiction focuses attention on the recursive relationship between opposites such as independent/interdependent, or separate/connected. Contradiction suggests that the dialectal tension between such opposites is necessary for understanding each one. Consequently, the self may be both agentic and socially constructed. Praxis is "the quality that designates people as both actors and objects of their action" (Erbert & Duck, 1997, p. 193). From this standpoint, praxis offers a dialectical framework for understanding symbolic interaction's description of the self as subject and object. Here the self may be independent and relational. Totality in relational dialectics is conceptually similar to the multi-systemic view of self development which examines the network of socio-cultural, psychological, and related phenomena that surrounds and influences self development in complex and often

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contradictory ways (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). Research in this view regards close relationships as holistic units shaped by such contextual issues.

Consequently the model proposed here accepts the socially constructed nature of lived experiences, and has an equal focus on the individual self in the context of the close relationships and the forces that shape them. It would address the self as independent yet interdependent and relational and explores ways this conceptualization influences self evaluation of an interdependent relational unit as marriage. Such an approach would deepen and enrich self conceptualization in systemic thought and extend theorizing on the self in relationship in marriage and family therapy.

Within this model three latent variables are proposed; relational interdependent self construal, relational spirituality and marital satisfaction. The following discussion examines these concepts from the perspective of relational dialectics as a basis for studying relational interdependent self construal and relational spirituality as predictors of marital satisfaction.

Relational Interdependent Self Construal

Self construal as a cognitive relational construct is based on Mead's (1934) conceptualization of the self as a self reflective entity capable of self awareness ("I"-"Me") but has come to be a construct of considerable interest in current research (Kagitcibasi, 2007). Indeed it is argued that that if cross-cultural validity can be established, self construal has the potential to emerge as a "universal dimension of human behavior" (Kagicibasi, 2007, p. 151).

Self construal was initially conceptualized as a cultural phenomenon (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Consistent with the Cartesian model of the centralized self, individuals in western countries such as the US and Great Britain were expected to develop a more independent self construction as compared to persons socialized in more collective cultures who were expected to demonstrate greater interdependence. Interdependence in this context relates to one's allegiance to a social group or network. Persons with this orientation would be more likely to act in harmony with group concerns and less likely to contravene group norms and expectations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Consequently, self is defined by the social group to which one belongs (Sato & Cameron, 1999); one thinks and acts in group approved ways.

Combining both terms in research, interdependent self construal, relates positively with relationship harmony (Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997); is more likely to emphasize points of similarity with others (Aaker & Schmitt, 2001); considers the feelings of others even in pursuit of goals (Kim & Sharkey, 1995); and is more likely to defer to others, or compromise to reduce conflict in romantic relationships (Kim & Kitani, 1998). Moreover, interdependent self construal is positively correlated with depression (Sato & McCann, 1998). Thus individuals who are culturally influenced to defer to others may be more vulnerable to depressive symptoms, perhaps due to anxiety attendant on seeking the approval of others.

Kagicibasi (2007) argues Independence/Interdependence have been confounded with Individualism/Collectivism in some studies. She insists the latter refers to the values and beliefs of a culture while the former are dimensions of relatedness and are operative at the individual level. Moreover such confounding has led some researchers to question

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the empirical validity of independence/interdependence as psychological constructs. Indeed, such studies have led to the conclusion that the US because it is high on individualism is not relationally strong. However, when confounding factors are accounted for, independence/interdependence emerge as conceptually similar to separateness/connectedness and as valid dimensions of relationality. Thus a self may have integrated both dimensions to be relational. While there is a dialectical tension between these opposing dimensions, ultimately the self that is independent and related results in a synthesis of "differentiation from others and integration with others" (Kagitçibasi, 1996).

Cross, Bacon, and Morris (2000) argue that given its collectivist cultural orientation, Interdependent self construal does not adequately address relational issues among western populations. Consistent with current self in relation notions, they proposed a conceptualization of the self that is rooted in close interpersonal relationships, in contrast with the group oriented interdependent self. In so conceptualizing the issue they focused attention on the relational foundation of independence/interdependence thus avoiding the pitfall of confounding the construct with the cultural weight of individualism/collectivism. The resulting construct relational interdependent self construal, measures the extent to which the self system has integrated close relationships into its self space (Cross, Morris, & Gore, 2002). It focuses attention on how one thinks about oneself in close relationships. Thus this concept views self development as a relational process. Emphasis is placed on close dyadic relationships Consequently, it recognizes the self as relational, able to reflect on itself, and is embedded in relationships. Further, Cross et al. (2002) posit levels of relational development. Given the nature of

their close relationships, individuals may be high or low on relational interdependent self construal. This view of the self conceptualized within a relational dialectical framework advanced here, accounts for continuity and change in self development. The self as an acting agent is also influenced and shaped across time by relational forces and thus is constructed, co-constructed and emergent. Consequently, individual thought and action is rooted in communal processes. Symbolic interaction theory has traditionally insisted that while the self is an agent, it cannot be conceived of outside the social context. It is posited here that this view is accommodated within the dialectical framework and suggests that relational self is an inherently dialectical construct.

One question that needs to be asked, is whether relational self development is implicated in relationship satisfaction? If relationality is a fundamental property of the self, are persons who more relational more likely to report higher quality relationships? Further, to what extent does one's thinking about oneself in relationships, fundamental to self construal, determine the way one evaluates close relationships? For example, if I regard relationships as fundamental to my sense of self, would I be more likely to render a positive appraisal of my marriage? Would the quality of my marriage affect the way I think of myself? Relational self theorists in the tradition of symbolic interactionsism have maintained the dialectical perspective that the self is capable of relating to itself internally and relating to others externally (Andersen & Chen, 2002; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2004; Hermans & Kempen, 1993). Both dimensions influence each other reciprocally such that a close relationship such as marriage would impact self evaluation of the marriage while relational self development would shape the relational dynamics of the marriage and the satisfaction of the partners in the marriage. Given these theoretical postulates, this study

proposes a positive correlation between the levels of relational interdependent self

construal, the quality of the relationship, and the individual evaluation of the relationship.

<center>**Relational Spirituality and Spiritual Maturity**</center>

The second latent variable in the model is relational spirituality. From a Judeo

Christian perspective a relational view of the self is deeply rooted in scripture,

commencing with the divine pronouncements at creation, "it is not good that man should

be alone" (Gen 2:5). Such conceptualization is receiving increasing scholarly recognition

and support (Evans, 2005). The biblical doctrine of the trinity suggests that the Godhead

is a relationship between its three members. This has prompted some scholars to propose

a relational model of the self that is based on the notion of humans' being created in the

"image and likeness of God" (Balswick, King, & Reimer, 2005; Bray, 2004). Thus the

imago dei is viewed as a relational construct and the goal of self development is

integrally connected with one's level of relational functioning, both vertically to the

divine and horizontally to self and others. Authentic knowing of God and others are

viewed as recursive relational processes that impact each other throughout the lifespan

(Majerus, 2010). Buber's (1970) I-Thou relationship has influenced development of such

ideas both in psychology and theology. For Buber (1970) I –thou is a model of the self

fully engaged with another in ways that recognize and affirm their uniqueness and

interconnectivity. One cannot become an "I" without a "You" and the recognition of

"You" presupposes the existence of "I."

In the social sciences, the notion of relational spirituality has emerged as a

significant organizing principle for understanding the influence of spirituality on

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relational functioning (Mahoney, 2010; Sandage & Williamson, 2010; Shults & Sandage, 2006). Fundamentally, relational spirituality describes the various forms of individual vertical connections with the sacred self transcendent dimension, some of which may have positive or negative effects (Sandage & Shults, 2007). Moreover, a relational view of spirituality is regarded as an effective framework for conceptualizing and integrating the various and dialectical aspects of spirituality evident in the post modern environment. In this regard spirituality is considered to be a core component of the forces that shape self development across the life span (Balswick et al., 2005; Jankowski & Vaughn, 2009). Indeed, spirituality and relational development are conceptualized as recursive processes (Sandage & Shults, 2007). The nature of one's spiritual relationships has significant implications for individual well being and the quality of one's relationship with others (Hill & Hall, 2002; Mahoney, 2010; Sandage & Williamson, 2010).

This research seeks to determine whether there is empirical justification for this postulated link between relational spirituality and relational self development and whether there are implications for relationship satisfaction. A critical question that arises in this connection is therefore, what is the goal of relational spirituality as a component of relational development and is this related to marital interaction and its assessment? The following discussion examines the theoretical basis for a model of relational spirituality as a significant contributor to relational development. Specifically, it posits the view that spiritual maturity may be conceptualized as an effective model for understanding the connection between relational development and marital satisfaction.

Spiritual Maturity as the Goal of Relational Spirituality

Drawing on the foregoing theological and conceptual foundation, some have posited the notion of spiritual maturity as a goal of relational spirituality (Jankowski & Vaughn, 2009; Majerus & Sandage, 2010). Conceptually a spiritually mature relationship with the sacred would positively impact one's self in relation to others and have positive effects on relational functioning. Therefore spiritual maturity would serve as a model of healthy relational practices.   Within the relational spirituality framework, several multidisciplinary models of spiritual maturity have been advanced in the literature. The major theoretical orientations used for development of these models are Object Relations (Hall, Brokaw, Edwards, & Pike, 1998); Attachment Theory (Tenelshof, 2000); and Family Systems Theory (Jankowski & Vaughn, 2009; Majerus & Sandage, 2010).

From the psychoanalytic object relations perspective, it has been proposed that the quality of one's relationship with God would offer a model of spiritual maturity that correlates positively with relational development (Hall et al., 1998). Relational development would be a mirror of the relationship with the divine (Hall & Edwards, 2002). Hall (2004) further develops the model by advancing the notion of implicit relational representations as the mechanism by which one's interaction with God and others are mediated. These representations bear conceptual similarity to relational schemas or models developed within the context of relationships (Baldwin, 1997).

Hall (2004) suggests "a model of psychospiritual maturity" defined by those aspects of religion/spirituality that support spiritual growth including "spiritual commitment, engagement in religious practices, involvement in a spiritual community, and spiritual friendships and mentoring relationships (p. 76)." Moreover, such practices

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give rise to dimensions of spirituality inherent to a mature relationship with God; a sense of being closely connected with the divine, positive mental representations of God, viewing oneself as part of a supportive spiritual network, self sacrificial service, and a feeling of being divinely directed in one's life. For Hall (2004) spiritual maturity interacts with relational maturity in complex ways that may account for the level of relational functioning an individual experiences. A consequence of this relationship is that the implicit relational processes underlying the relationship are not significantly impaired by periods of disappointment and pain.

Tenelshof (2000) postulates a conceptually similar notion of relational maturity as the basis for spiritual maturity. She suggests one's attachment history may provide a model for conceptualizing the quality of individual relationship to the divine. Persons with a secure attachment style are expected to have a higher quality relationship with the sacred characterized by openness and willingness to grow through exploration of all aspects of the relationship without feeling threatened. From this perspective, relational maturity increases one's capacity to relate to God without fear.

From a Systems theory perspective, Bowen Family Systems differentiation of self construct has been offered as a model for spiritual maturity (Majerus & Sandage, 2010). It is noted spiritual maturity is a construct that is relatively new in the literature on spirituality, and as such needs empirical and theoretical grounding. Two fundamental aspects of differentiation of self are utilized extensively to conceptualize spiritual maturity; the dialectical tension of separateness/relatedness and role of anxiety. Highly differentiated persons embody both aspects of individual and relational responsibility

such that each concept is given equal consideration. The ability to handle anxiety is critical to the success of this endeavor.

For Majerus and Sandage (2010), spiritual maturity as discussed in the Christian scripture and systematic theology is a relational notion. The trinity is regarded as the highest manifestation of "differentiated wholeness" (Majerus & Sandage, 2010, p.48). Jesus embodies the principle of differentiation in becoming human yet remaining one with the father. The individual is in relationship to God, and others but takes responsibility for personal actions. Anxiety in one's relationship to God is a growth exercise and not the basis of fear. The spiritually mature relationship is characterized by trust in God and attention to personal growth, while being socially responsible and allowing others to grow responsibly. Consequently, spiritual maturity involves increased differentiation that in turn enlarges the capacity to engage relationally in new and healthier ways. Sandage and Shults (2007) utilize the metaphor of the transformation crucible to describe the process whereby an individual may be prompted to seek a qualitatively different spiritual experience. In the seeking process, the self may encounter higher levels of anxiety in relating to the divine, yet such experiences may become the basis of the transformation that results in a more mature relationship to God and others.

Taking a developmental perspective, Gibson (2004) draws on Kholbergs' (1984) stages of morality to propose a stage like developmental view of Christian spiritual maturity. He argues Kholberg's theory is limited to the extent that it accepts that human nature is basically good; that the supreme motivator of morality is justice; and human reason as the source of understanding. For Gibson (2004) the glory of God replaces justice as the main driver of spiritual development. He posits a "holistic spiritual

development, which involves cognitive (reasoning), affective (emoting), and volitional (behavioral) maturation" (p.3). His model offers four levels of spiritual development commencing with obedience to God out of fear of punishment akin to one's early development through emulating outstanding others devoted to obedience to God followed by a principle centered commitment to the Christian worldview. The highest level involves accepting the implications of divine ownership of the created order, its contamination by sin and the need for redemptive activity to re-establish divine rule. Thus spiritual maturity is kingdom centered and therefore transcends individual piety. By contrast the first level is self centered, level two is other centered, while level three is principle centered. Ultimately, spiritual maturity is a developmental journey from a self centered experience to one focused on living for the glory of God. Gibson (2004) summarizes, "an individual at the highest level of spiritual maturity is guided by a Kingdom-centered locus of control. Thus, the motivation for the believer to act lovingly, caringly, and justly extends solely from his or her desire to glorify God by advancing his Kingdom" (p.9).

Drawing on this multidisciplinary literature on spiritual maturity, this study posits a dialectical framework that draws together the strands of thought embedded in the varied theoretical approaches to spiritual maturity. From the perspective of relational dialectics, a mature relationship is one that is open and accepting of the inherent contradictions in relational dynamics (Ebert & Duck, 1997). Whether the relationship involves a divine entity or is purely human to human, relationships consist of inherently contradictory issues. Such a perspective would suggest that an ability to allow contradictory and opposing aspects of the relationship to inform and shape ones experience of it is

characteristic of maturity. Moore (2004), notes, "every human life is made up of the light and the dark, the happy and the sad, the vital and the deadening. How you think about this rhythm of moods makes all the difference (p. xiv)."

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the sacred writings are replete with dialectical dimensions of the divine human relationships as exemplars of spiritual maturity. The Hebrew torah describes God as one yet three, in the psalms the writer frequently describes his experiences with God as being one of pain, and disappointment yet he remains certain that God is with him even in the valley of the shadow of death (e.g. Psalm 22 & 23). The Job character who suffers devastating losses despite his faithfulness to God speaks passionately of the bitterness of his soul and his wish for an umpire between himself and God and yet declares his abiding belief that despite his suffering he fully expects God will redeem him (Job 19:25-27). The prophet Jeremiah lashes out in anger at God for deceiving him into believing that the message he was given to proclaim would come to pass when he finds himself being made a laughing stock, but in the same chapter affirms his abiding faith in the divine presence with him (Jeremiah 20:7-18).

In the New Testament, the dialectic manifests in numerous passages, the poor are rich, the weak are strong, surrender is taught as the way to victory, and suffering is the path to growth. The Christ event, the pivotal figure in Christian history is named Immanuel, "God with us," is both God and human and was born of a virgin without a human father. Those who die spiritually with him, become alive to God (Romans 6:11). The Christian classic "The Dark Night of the Soul" describes a spiritually barren period in the life of John of the Cross, yet the experience led to him experiencing a more intimate relationship with his God. Within this dialectical framework, spiritual maturity is

posited to be one characterized by the ability to allow opposing dimensions of one's

relationship to the divine to inform one's experience of the relationship. Consequently the

spiritually mature have developed the capacity to remain securely attached when the

relationship appears contradictory or fails to fulfill expectations. Consistent with this

position, the concept of object permanence in Object Relations theory suggests that the

individual is not threatened by the seeming absence of divine in the face of need. From

the system theory perspective, the highly differentiated self experiences transformation

and growth to maturity in the presence of contradiction and disappointment in the

divine/human relationship.

In summary, relational spirituality defines various ways of relating to the divine.

However, individual experiences may vary based on the quality of such a relationship.

Spiritual maturity is a qualitatively higher relational experience with the sacred such that

a spiritually mature individual enjoys an open, growth oriented and self affirming

connection. Such a relationship is characterized by the ability to hold opposing ideas and

experiences of the relationship in a dialectical tension. Conversely the spiritually

immature may be expected to have a more impoverished spiritual experience that reflects

low levels of relational self development. A number of factors may be implicated in how

one experiences the relationship. These include implicit mental representations of God

acquired in the process of self development. Intersubjective experiences occurring within

the context of close relationships may shape cognitive structures that determine how the

self assesses the quality of relationships across the lifespan. A fundamental characteristic

of the spiritually mature relationship is one that accommodates and allows contradictory

aspects of the relationship to inform ones understanding of and ways of relating to the sacred (Hall & Brokaw, 1995).

One important question that arises in this connection is, to what extent does relational self development influence one's ways of relating to the divine or vice versa? Given that relational processes underlay both constructs, it may be hypothesized that these processes are mediated by similar mechanisms and therefore suggest an interrelationship between them. Consequently, spiritual maturity as a higher expression of relational spirituality would have a positive relationship with higher levels of relational self construal as a model of relational development. In addition, given that for the spiritually mature a relationship with the divine would supersede other relationships, it would be expected that the spiritual relationship would impact intersubjective experiences in close relationships such as marriage.

Marital Satisfaction

The third latent variable in the model is marital satisfaction. Although one of the most researched constructs in marriage and family, there are still significant differences in how it is conceptualized (Ward, Lundberg, Zabriskie, & Berrett, 2009). As a reflection of this historical ambiguity several terms have been used interchangeably throughout the last century as research proceeded. These included, marital happiness, marital stability, marital cohesiveness and marital adjustment (Anthony, 1993). Fincham and Beach, (2006) note the relative lack of clarity and consensus regarding the definition of marital satisfaction while insisting that a definition will afford cross-cultural validity. Moreover, the situation is similar on the question of theoretical development. Theoretical

conceptualization has lagged behind research, specifically the need for integrative

framework for interpretation and has been noted in the literature (Carroll, Knapp, &

Holman, 2005; Fincham & Beach, 2010).

Carroll et al. (2005) point out that the history of theorizing on marital satisfaction

has been dominated by social exchange and rational choice theories rooted in

individualized behaviorist perspectives. They suggest such theories are predicated on an

intrapsychic view of the self that asserts individuals evaluate and act in accordance with

internally generated cost benefit analysis. Thus behavior patterns become the basis for

identifying predictors of satisfaction in marriage. In the past such implicit assumptions

have often remain unexamined and unchallenged, however recent scholarship have called

such traditional ways of acquiring knowledge into question and are offering alternative

ways of conceptualizing marital theory.

Utilizing a life span developmental framework, Li and Fung (2011) postulate a

goal setting theory of marital satisfaction that suggests partner's evaluation of their

marriage is based on the extent to which the marriage enables realization of life goals.

They identify the companionship goals or the need for relatedness as one of the

fundamental goals that will determine how satisfied individuals are with their marriage.

In symbolic interaction theory, marriage is an example of joint action executed by

both partners (Denzin, 1992). Individuals act according to the meaning arising from

interactional processes. Moreover meaning making is done through the interpretative

framework that is used (Niehuis, Lee, Reifman, Swenson, & Hunsaker, 2011). From this

perspective marital satisfaction is a partly a function of the meaning individuals give the

history of their interactions. As a result symbolic interaction theory has provided the

framework for continued work on self and self identity, the family and close relationships (White & Klein, 2008). Central to such efforts is the influence of society on self development. Consistent with Mead's thought society is posited as the repository of social roles that the individual integrates into its self space. Roles are enacted according to identities mediated through shared meanings and symbols of its socio-cultural milieu. Thus individuals live out their socially derived roles in harmony with such accepted identities (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Further, identities are hierarchically organized according to saliency, defined as "the probability of an identity being invoked in a given situation or in a variety of situations" (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993, p. 144). Consequently, symbolic interaction theorists have linked marital satisfaction with role salience.

Within this basic conceptual framework several propositions have been developed relative to marriage and relationships. For example, the self as a relational construct is guided by cognitive understandings of its role and identity in a given relationship; and individual satisfaction with a relationship is a function of the self's evaluation of its fulfillment of the expected role within such a relationship (White & Klein, 2008).

Within marriage and family therapy research in marital satisfaction has burgeoned resulting in a large body of literature on the construct (Fincham & Beach, 2010). However, while studies have established subjective evaluations of marital satisfaction as the most reliable measure of this construct (Shanhong et al., 2008), little or no examinations of the construct have been done utilizing the relational quality of self as a predictor of marital satisfaction. For example, some critical questions that may be posited in this connection are; what relational self factors might influence individual assessment of marital relational processes and consequently partners satisfaction with their

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relationships? To what extent is relational self construal implicated in the assessment of marital satisfaction? Moreover, if self shapes appraisal of relational processes, and if marital satisfaction is conceptualized as a product of interactional processes, would highly relational persons be more likely to evaluate their relationships more positively than those who are les relational? Furthermore, are there gendered differences in levels of relational self development and marital satisfaction?

This study draws on self as a relational construct and the forces that shape its development to evaluate its impact on couple's assessment of their marital satisfaction. It hypothesizes that the cognitive appraisal of self will have a significant impact on levels of marital satisfaction. Further, spiritual maturity as a relational construct is considered an integral part of the developmental process and is influential in relational functioning. Thus both relational self development and spiritual maturity are expected to be positively related and in turn impact levels of marital satisfaction.

The following section provides an overview of the socio-cultural and historical milieu of the Island in which the study took place. This is given as a context that will guide understanding and interpretation of the data and implications for clinical practice and future research.

Antigua

This study was conducted in the Caribbean Island of Antigua. This is an island of 108 square miles and a population of 87, 884 persons largely of African descent with small minorities of British, Portuguese and Arab origins.

History and Changes in Family Norms in Antigua

Like many other Caribbean islands Antigua emerged from slavery with a two

tiered society consisting of a small white upper class and a large, poor, and mostly

illiterate lower class. Traditionally, among the masses, marriage was considered to be an

exalted state requiring significant financial resources such that many felt it beyond their

means. As a result cohabiting became a more acceptable alternative. Years of cohabiting

could then culminate in marriage. Individuals, particularly males often went through

several such arrangements before deciding which one to marry. Once marriage was

entered into divorce was seldom if ever an option (Reynolds, in press).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century traditional religions such as Roman

Catholic, Anglicans and Moravians dominated religious life. With the rise of other

protestant and evangelical groups in the mid-twentieth century, common law unions were

strongly condemned as morally wrong and divorce was viewed as displeasing to God.

Becoming members of these churches meant breaking up the common law relationship

and getting married. In this context divorce was considered a moral and spiritual failure

and was accompanied by religious and social stigma (Reynolds, in press).

The expanding economy of the 1980s and 90s provided the financial resources for

larger numbers of individuals to enter marriage and also to end it. For the twenty year

period 1987 – 2007 marriages increased 126 percent. With the transition from an

agrarian to tourism economy in the 1970's Antigua saw a large increase in the number of

visitors from North America and Europe. This has led some to suggest that such exposure

to more liberal attitudes to divorce would inevitably support a similar attitudinal shift

already underway (Lazarus-Black, 1994). Increased financial ability also helped

Antiguans to embrace technological advances allowing for greater access to more liberal opinions further reinforcing a more open and receptive attitude to marriage and divorce. A part of this shift has been a greater willingness to challenge religious injunctions against divorce and act in ways not approved by the church (Reynolds, in press).

In addition to financial independence, greater educational opportunities have fostered a regendering of Antiguan society. Whereas previously many women unquestionably accepted the view of themselves as less valuable than their male counterparts and therefore were willing to settle for a series of common law relationships with the hope of one day getting married; in the present environment a new understanding of the female self has emerged. As a result women are less likely to remain in unsatisfactory relationships indefinitely, consequently, the greatest number of divorce petitions in Antigua are filed by women (Lazarus-Black, 1994).

In the context of the significant rise in marriage and divorce in Antigua, the present study is the first known to the author to examine predictors of marital satisfaction in this population. In addition to providing useful data on the quality of marriages in Antigua, the study provides an opportunity to test the cross-cultural validity of relational interdependent self construal as model of relational self development. Cross et al. (2000) have argued that relational interdependence self construal is a more culturally sensitive model of western relational self. Moreover, studies of marital satisfaction have been largely done in western societal context (Fincham & Beach, 2006). As a Caribbean island, Antigua has been subject to the influence of western cultural ideas and practices. These have often collided with traditional ways of being that have historical roots in Africa but have been uniquely adapted to the Caribbean. Consequently, Caribbean

scholars have called for examination of whether a culture that is uniquely Caribbean exists and ways such centripetal and centrifugal forces have impacted it (Titus, 1995). One such area is related to how persons think and behave in close relationships such as marriage. The view advanced here is that Antiguan society has been a sort of hybrid between the more tribal orientation of many African countries and the independent practices of the west. Thus it is of interest to examine to what extent relational self construal models self development in the Antiguan context and how it has it has influenced assessments of marital satisfaction. However, given that relational interdependent self construal has not been tested as a predictor of marital satisfaction as is the case in this study, the opportunity for cross-cultural comparison is limited to a more general discussion of a predictor of satisfaction in close relationships (Morry & Kito, 2009).

Moreover, Antiguan society has traditionally been strongly influenced by religious and spiritual values and practices. Therefore it seems pertinent to suggest that spirituality may be a significant influence in self development and therefore would be implicated in evaluating levels of marital satisfaction. It is expected that relational self and spiritual maturity as a model of relational spirituality would be positively associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction in the Antiguan population. In addition from a gender perspective, consistent with other studies women are expected to have higher relational self construal, be more highly spiritual and thus show higher levels of marital satisfaction.

On a wider scale, none of the three latent constructs in the model have been tested in an Antiguan sample. Consequently, this study may be the start of developing a body of literature within marriage and family therapy that is centered on Caribbean family life.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following literature review will examine current empirical support for the three latent constructs in the study, relational interdependent self construal, spiritual maturity and marital satisfaction as a basis for developing hypotheses to be addressed in the analysis. The review will also examine correlates of marital satisfaction to be accounted for in this dissertation.

Relational Interdependent Self Construal

It should noted from the outset that no studies have been located that tests relational interdependent self construal as a predictor of marital satisfaction. These studies examined the construct in the context of close relationships.

In two studies Gore, Cross, and Morris (2006) seek to replicate the intimacy development process by observation of the same sex college roommates. The roommates were not acquainted with each prior to being placed in the same room. It was expected that the level of relational self construal would be a significant determinant of the roommate's ability to develop close personal relationships. Such relationships would be characterized by reciprocal self disclosure in an atmosphere of mutual trust.

In the first study (Gore et al., 2006) it was hypothesized that persons with high relational self construal would disclose more personal information and that the level of self disclosure and empathic response would predict the quality of the relationship. Participants (n = 95) were college roommates who knew little or nothing of each other prior to being roommates. Results of the study showed persons who scored high on the

measure of relational self construal disclosed personal and emotional information. When such disclosure was met with supportive responses, the roommates reported a successful relationship.

The next study sought to replicate the results of the earlier study; however, this study included a one month follow up assessment of the relationship since the prior study only assessed the early stages of the relationship. College roommates (n = 142) completed a battery of questionnaires to measure relational self construal, partner responsiveness and relationship quality. Results showed the students in the study had RISC and relationship quality scores positively correlating with the level of self reported intimate disclosure. Those who had high relational scores had higher quality relationship that correlated with the nature of their self disclosure. Further, participants self disclosures of a personal and intimate nature were predictive of relationship quality when such disclosures were reciprocated by the participants roommates. Additional analysis of these data showed both participants and roommates self construal relational scores significantly impacted all other variables. Thus relational interdependent self construal scores are positively correlated with relationship quality. In the context of the present study this association points to salience of this construct as a model of relational self development. Self construal is also associated with disorders thought to be associated with poor relational functioning.

Low levels of relational self construal have been found to be a predictor of eating disorder. Among a sample of asymptomatic (n =169), symptomatic (n = 73) and bulimic patients (n = 21), bulimics were significantly lower on the RISC Green, Scott, DeVilder, Zeiger, and Darr (2006). Categorization of participants was done by scores on the

Questionnaire of Eating Disorder Diagnosis (Q-EDD), a reliable measure of eating

disorder with good convergent validity with other standard measures. However, the study

was correlational, therefore cannot make causal inferences. The overwhelming majority

of the participants were white (87%) and students from a Midwestern university (mean

age 19.32). The results suggest that persons with high need and desire for social

interaction and support can exhibit low levels of relational self construal due to presence

of co morbid conditions. Moreover, the results indicate, relational interdependent self

construal is sensitive to the presence of relational self development deficits. Such

impairments may affect individual self assessments of relationship quality.

Relational self construal has been shown to be a predictor of relationship quality

(Morry & Kito, 2009). The study authors hypothesized that persons with high levels of

relational self construal will engage in more relationship supportive behaviors resulting in

higher quality relationship. Consistent with prior studies e.g. (Gore et al., 2006),

supportive behaviors include intimate self disclosure and attending to a partners

disclosures. Relationship satisfaction is characterized by emotional closeness,

satisfaction, liking and commitment. Relationships in the study included homogenous and

heterogeneous relationships (Morry & Kito, 2009).

Participants (n= 253, 145 females, 108 males) were students in an Introductory

Psychology class at a Canadian Western University (mean age = 19.80) who were asked

to assess their relationship with one who was not a family member nor romantic partner

but whom they knew well as more than acquaintance for 3 months or more. The largest

ethnic groups in the sample were white (60%) and Asians (17%). A battery of assessment

scales were utilized to measure the required variables, RISC, with accepted reliability and

validity scores (Cross et al., 2000), Relationship Supportive Behaviors (RSB) were measured by the Disclosure and Opener Scales a four point Likert scale measure developed   by Miller et al. (1983) and The Trust Scale a 7 point measure of relationship trust (Rempel et al., 1985), no psychometric information was provided to support the reliability or validity of either measure. McGill Friendship Questionnaire measured the construct of friendship function, as with the measures for relationship supporting behaviors scant psychometric information is provided. Two measures for relationship satisfaction were used; the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) and the Liking and Loving scale. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data.

Results of the study (Morry & Kito, 2009) indicated higher RISC scores were associated with higher levels of relationship supporting behaviors, friendship function, and relationship quality. Significantly higher RISC scores were reported for cross-sex than for same sex relationships and women had higher RISC scores across relationships than men. In addition, relationship supporting behaviors mediated the relationship between RISC and RQ. The study supports the notion that persons with well developed relational selves tend to have higher quality relationships.

Cross et al. (2002) conducted a series of studies to determine the relationship between relational self construal and "implicit or indirect cognitive processes." All studies were grouped together in the same report and therefore will be discussed as such in this section. The studies compared the responses of participants in the top and bottom quartiles of the Relational -Interdependent Self -Construal scale. Participants were shown sets of words related to either independent or interdependent construal processes. Overall,

these studies indicate that high scores on the RISC associated with the relational

outcomes of these studies.

For example in the first study (n = 45, 81% female) persons scoring high on the

RISC showed a greater likelihood of having positive connection with relational terms.

Further, in a subsequent study, participants in the high score group (n = 50, 81% female)

were compared with the low score group (n = 48, 65% female), those in the high group

had a positive association with positive and negative relational terms. That is, these

participants were able to better recall information that they associated with relational

terms.

One study (n = 128, 63% female) tested the hypothesis that persons who scored

high on the RISC would tend to remember others in the context of relationships.

Participant's responses were tallied and categorized into high and low scores. Results of

the comparison confirmed the hypothesis. Another study (n = 208, 71% female) further

examined the hypothesis that relationally oriented persons would organize memory in

relational terms, this study also confirmed the hypothesis. Individuals who scored high on

the RISC also tended to recall information using a clustering tool to facilitate

recollection.

The last two studies examined perceptions of self and others. One study examined

the notion that participants' scores on the RISC would be more strongly related to those

of a close friend than for casual acquaintances. Results showed participants who scored

high on the RISC tended to describe themselves and a close friend in similar terms.

The second study (n = 145) further extended the results by asking whether highly relational persons would view themselves and intimate friends as more alike than others who were not close friends. The results of this study indicated support for the hypothesis.

Consistency across relational and situational contexts has been regarded as characteristic of independent self construal and as integral to personal well being. In three studies compiled together in a single report Cross, Gore and Morris (2003) investigated the relationship between consistency, self construal and well being in groups of North American undergraduate student populations (study 1 n =186, 41 males, 143 females, 2 unstated); (study 2, n = 155, 46 males, 109 females); (study 3 n = 333). The studies found self construal played a moderating role between behavior consistency and well-being. Persons scoring high on the Relational Interdependent Self Construal scale (RISC) did not consider behavior consistency across all relationship as necessary to well being as those who scored low on the scale. These studies focused on self perceptions in relationships not situations. Here the ability to adapt one's behavior according to the relational context was found to be supportive of well being for relational self construal (Cross, Gore, & Morris, 2003).

Taken together these studies provide empirical basis for the viability of relational interdependent self construal and it's accompanying cognitive processes. In sum, individuals high in relational self construal tend to have more satisfying and larger numbers of close relationships characterized by higher self disclosure and related behaviors that promote relational closeness. Further, such persons are more attendant to the needs of partners and consider the impact of important decisions on those close to them. However, as noted previously, none have examined relational interdependent self

construal as a predictor of marital satisfaction, therefore its effects on partner's assessment of marriage relationships remains unknown. Consequently, the present study would offer an opportunity to add to the body of literature on studies of relational self. Moreover, it would deepen the theoretical shift in marriage and family therapy theory to think of the self in more relational terms.

Cognitively, high relational construals tend to think in more relational terms evidenced by more extensive use of relational language, tighter cognitive networks of interconnecting relational terms and have a greater recall of information in response to relational cues. Moreover, whereas highly independent persons consider consistency across relationships as a mark of the mature self, persons higher in relational interdependent self construal are more likely to attend to the needs of individual relationships and would act in ways supportive of that relationship. Consequently, there is less emphasis on consistency and more on authenticity within given relationships. Indeed, higher levels of relational interdependent self construal positively predict relationship quality. Highly relational persons are more likely to engage in relationship supporting behaviors than individuals who report lower relational scores (Cross et al., 2003; Gore et al., 2006; Morry & Kito, 2009).

Given such findings, relational interdependent self construal appears to be a suitable model for conceptualizing the relational self in the individualistic western cultural environment. However, studies were affected by small sample sizes in some cases; in addition samples tended to consist of undergraduate students and had a disproportionately large number of females.

This study draws on relational interdependent self construal as a useful assessment of relational development. It addresses the question of whether and to what extent relational interdependent self construct as a relational construct is a predictor of relational satisfaction among married couples.

Spirituality and Spiritual Maturity

Studies have traditionally identified religion/spirituality as critical components of self identity (Chumbler, 1996; Pedersen, 1996). Pedersen (1996) tested four groups of individuals (n = 226) of various religious persuasions; LDS, Catholics, Other, and None utilizing the Self Identity Scale. The scale measures four central dimensions of identity; Spiritual, Personal/Social, Family and Identifications. The last category referred to personal identifiers such as gender, age, occupation. The study compared the significance of the four dimensions across groups. The results indicated the group differed primarily on the basis of spirituality with the LDS group placing spirituality as the most significant self identifier while the other groups chose the Personal/Social dimension as their most central self identifier. The study author concluded the strong emphasis on spiritual relationships within LDS teaching may have influenced member's perceptions of themselves as spiritual persons.

Genia (1997)in studies validating the Spiritual Experience Scale (SES), a measure designed to "distinguish the spiritually mature from less evolved forms of faith" (p. 2) found support for a typology of spiritual faith development; four types were identified in the research, spiritually growth-oriented, transitional, dogmatic, or underdeveloped. Faith was "conceptualized as personal relatedness to an ultimate being" (Genia, 1997, p.

2). Underdeveloped faith was characterized by low commitment and a sense of disconnection; dogmatics had strong beliefs in and commitment to their own faith; while transitionals were conceptually similar to seekers in the process of re-examining their faith beliefs. Spiritually mature persons were found to be growth-oriented with strong beliefs connected to faith communities but receptive to a variety of other beliefs. Genia (1997) suggests faith development may proceed from the underdeveloped through dogmatic, transitional, and on to maturity.

Reinert and Bloomingdale (1999) study confirmed and extended Genia's (1997) findings. That is persons lower in spiritual maturity, tended to be more dogmatic and underdeveloped, showed increased levels of distress and lower levels of trust that impaired their ability to develop intimate relationships. The evidence suggested such persons may have experienced deficits in self construction in the process of development. Consequently, less developed faith was associated with impaired self development.

Ji (2004) investigated the connection between spiritual maturity conceptualized as faith maturity and doctrinal orthodoxy in a protestant sample in two Christian congregations (N=207). The Faith Maturity Scale used in this study conceptualizes faith maturity as, involving "both one's personal relationship to God (vertical faith maturity) and one's relationship with others, including behavioral manifestations of social service and justice (horizontal faith maturity) (p.1)." Results indicated that faith maturity was largely unrelated to doctrinal orthodoxy, hence spiritual maturity may have more to do with relational factors than doctrinal ones. Utilizing the same Faith Maturity Scale in a study of students (N=216) at Talbot School of Theology, Tenelshof (2000) hypothesized that a relationship with God like any other love relationships forms an attachment and

that a secure attachment style would predict spiritual maturity. Her study found a significant relationship between secure adult relationship and total faith maturity defined as "the degree to which a person in relationship embodies the priorities, commitments, and perspective characteristic of vibrant and life transforming faith …" (Tenelshof, 2000, p. 102). Hence faith maturity is located in relationships and has both a vertical transcendental and a horizontal other dimension.

Beck (2006) investigated empirical links between three measures of relationship with God, each with a different theoretical orientation. Participants in the study were (N=225) undergraduate students at a Christian University. The measures used in the analysis were The Attachment to God Inventory based on attachment theory concepts, The Spiritual Assessment Inventory, from Object Relations theory, and the Triangular Love Scale based on Barnes and Sternberg (1997) triangular love theory. The study concluded that mature relationships with God were characterized by two factors, communion and complaint co-mingling together and contributing to a balanced love relationship with God. Spiritually mature persons appear to have a greater capacity for accommodating opposing ideas about God without loss of connection.

Froehlich, Fialkowski, Scheers, Wilcox, and Lawrence (2006) examined the relationship between spiritual maturity and life satisfaction in a sample of Catholic males in one religious order (N=251). They hypothesized spiritual maturity, conceptually similar to psychological maturity, would be a significant predictor of life satisfaction and greater social support. Results of the study confirmed the hypothesis. The study authors concluded "the results from this study suggest that fostering the ongoing development of a psychologically-healthy, relationally-based spirituality among male religious (a) may

reduce difficulties inherent in their unique personal lifestyle, (b) may increase levels of

professional morale and commitment to public ministry, and (c) may contribute to their

vocational stability" (p.11). Cullen, Welch, and Welch (2006) surveyed a group of

students (N = 114) at a Christian university to determine the extent to which Christian

education may contribute to the spiritual development of its students. Results indicated

that prayer and bible study are significant aspects of Christian spiritual maturity. In

addition, spiritual growth was significantly influenced by the participant's response to

feelings of disappointment with God. Disappointment with God was often accompanied

by "questioning and doubt, openness to change, self-criticism, perceiving doubt as

positive, and asking existential questions" (p. 3). Such responses were often a catalyst for

development of higher spiritual experiences with the divine.

Taken together, these studies give empirical validation for the concept of spiritual

maturity as a qualitatively healthier expression of relational spirituality. It is characterized

by a growth oriented approach to one's relationship with the sacred, a grounding in

spiritual beliefs accompanied by an appreciation of other belief systems and openness to

them. Further, spiritual maturity requires a capacity for trust, and is able to develop close

communion with God while feeling free to express pain and hurt when there is a need to

do so. Consequently, spiritual maturity involves the capacity to incorporate opposing

ideas in one's relationship with the sacred without jeopardizing the relationship.

Contradictory ideas or experiences are used as mechanisms of growth. Finally, spiritual

maturity is related to the embodiment of virtues integral to a vibrant faith. It is important

to note that spiritual maturity so conceived has noted been tested in relationship to marital

satisfaction. Therefore, the present study offers the possibility of contributing to the growing body of literature on studies of spirituality and marital satisfaction.

Marital Satisfaction

This section is a review of current studies on marital satisfaction. It focuses primarily on relational factors affecting marital satisfaction. Both self and couple characteristics predict levels of marital satisfaction (Shanhong et al., 2008); as well as demographic and cultural factors (Faulkner, Davey, & Davey, 2005). Among the more salient theoretical concepts that have been found to be associated with marital satisfaction are cognitive structures (Epstein, Chen, & Beyder-Kamjou, 2005), attachment styles (Alexandrov, Cowan, & Cowan, 2005), spirituality, (Brimhall & Butler, 2007), level of self differentiation, (Peleg, 2008), and couple interaction patterns, (Gubbins, Perosa, & Bartle-Haring, 2010).

Grames, Miller, Robinson, Higgins, and Hinton (2008) examined predictor s of marital satisfaction from the perspective of relational ethics embodied in contextual theory. The study reviewed data from a national sample of married mid-life persons (N=632). Analysis revealed persons who scored high on the Relational Ethics Scale were more likely to report higher levels of marital satisfaction and were less likely to experience depression and other health problems than those who scored low on the measure. In systems theory, several studies have found individual level of self differentiation is a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. High differentiation was associated with emotion regulation, cognitive clarity and increased capacity to combine separateness and relatedness (Gubbins et al., 2010). Further, spouse's level of

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differentiation significantly impacted their partner's evaluation of the marriage and their

relational functioning. Parsons, Nalbone, Killmer, and Wetchler (2007) found highly

differentiated persons and those with an achieved identity status reported higher marital

satisfaction. Moreover, self differentiation provided unique variance in marital

satisfaction over and above identity status. In line with these results, self differentiation

predicted level of marital satisfaction in a sample of Israeli married men and women

(Peleg, 2008).

 Epstein et al. (2005) point to the importance of cognitive processes in individual

assessment of marital satisfaction. They note that previously identified cognitive models

such as: partners evaluations of selective aspects of their relational interactions; partners

negative or positive attributions; predictions about the future of the relationship;

individual taken for granted beliefs about individuals and relationships; and individual

relational schemas, have been supported in the literature as having significant impact on

emotional and behavioral responses and evaluations of marital satisfaction.

An emerging area of interest in research on marital satisfaction focuses attention

on the impact of affective display and problem solving skills on varying levels of

satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2005). Specifically, positive affect was associated with high

satisfaction and even buffered the effects of high negative skills. Moreover, longitudinal

analysis of marital interaction showed affective tone is a significant predictor of

satisfaction levels over a two year period (Gee, Scott, Castellani, & Cordova, 2002).

Adult patterns of attachment are self related models that shape relationship

patterns (Imamoglu & Imamoglu, 2007). Alexandrov et al. (2005) tested the relationship

between adult attachment patterns and levels of marital satisfaction in (N=73) married

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heterosexual couples. Comparisons were made across four categories developed in the study; both secure, both insecure, husband insecure/wife secure, and husband secure/wife insecure. The results confirmed existing findings (Feeney, 2002) that securely attached couples showed higher levels of marital satisfaction and that husbands secure attachment style mediated evaluation of marital satisfaction for insecurely attached wives. In addition, insecure attachment styles with both partners correlated significantly with lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Thus, self related processes continued to receive significant attention in the research literature on marital satisfaction.

From a wider socio-cultural perspective, Dakin and Wampler (2008) examined the effects of socio-economic status on marital satisfaction among (N=51) very low income and (N=61) middle income couples. Analysis showed middle income couples reported higher levels of marital satisfaction, were better educated, more likely to reflect the dominant culture and were more likely to be fully employed. From the perspective of gender, Faulkner et al. (2005) analyzed longitudinal data from the National Survey of Families and Households to determine the effects of gender on marital satisfaction. Analysis showed lower levels of satisfaction when husbands had traditional gender roles, and worked more hours outside the home. African American couples had lower satisfaction levels than their white counterparts. Moreover husbands who were frequent church-goers were more satisfied with their marriages. Length of marriage also proved a significant predictor of satisfaction with husbands being married sixteen or more years tending to report greater levels of marital than satisfaction, while wives who were married 0-7 years reported lower levels of satisfaction. Physical or mental illness also predicted decreases in satisfaction in both genders over time.

Perrone, Webb, and Blalock (2005) examined the effects of role congruence conceptualized as a balance between salient life roles such as time spent with spouse, performance of parental responsibilities, work, leisure, providing community services and studying on marital and life satisfaction. Results of the study indicated that individuals who achieved congruence in their life roles had higher levels of marital and life satisfaction.

Using a dyadic analysis of dual income couples, Helms, Walls, Crouter, and McHale (2010) examined the association of provider role attitudes and marital satisfaction. They found couples categorized as co-providers, indicating both shared responsibilities for financial and household task, had the highest levels of marital satisfaction compared to those where the wife was a supplemental provider or those where the wife contributed equally with the husband but he was still regarded as the main provider. This last category identified as ambivalent co-providers had the lowest levels of marital satisfaction. Thus the meaning couples gave to their responsibilities had a significant effect on their evaluation of relationship satisfaction.

Story et al. (2007) compared samples of middle aged and older couples to determine whether attitudes to marriages affected overall satisfaction with the relationship. The results confirmed older couples tended to view partners actions more favorably and therefore tended to have higher satisfaction in their close relationships. Consequently age appears to be a predictor of marital satisfaction.

In summary, demographic factors such as age, gender, education, socio-economic status and length of marriage remain significant predictors of marital satisfaction. However, self and couple characteristics have been found to be stronger predictors, these

include cognitive attributions, attachment styles, affective display, conflict management skills, role congruence, provider role attitudes and religiosity.

Relational Interdependent Self Constural, and Marital

Satisfaction

This review has not identified empirical studies examining the relationship between relational interdependent self construal and marital satisfaction. Indeed studies examining self in relation as a predictor of marital satisfaction have also been difficult to locate. Predictors of marital satisfaction have largely been conceptually separated into discrete categories, intrapersonal, environmental and interpersonal (Feeney, Noller, & Ward, 1997). As noted previously, individual subjective evaluations of the marriage relationship are more significant predictors of marital quality than demographic and other variables (April Chiung-Tao, 2004). Relational interdependent self construal emphasizes both intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. Given this reality, this section of the review examines conceptually similar notions, such as relational identity and Bowenian self differentiation to shed light on possible empirical links connecting self in relation processes and marital satisfaction.

A relational identity has been found to be a significant predictor of marital satisfaction (Acitelli, Rogers, & Knee, 1999). The study surveyed (N = 238 couples, n=90 unmarried, n=148 married) to determine the extent to which one's identity moderated the link between partners' thinking about the relationship and level of marital satisfaction. Persons who were highly relational, defined as the ability to see oneself as a

bona fide member of the marital dyad, tended to think more positively about the marriage and experienced higher marital satisfaction.

In a study of married Israeli males and females (N=121) Peleg (2008) investigated the relationship between level of self differentiation and marital satisfaction. The results indicated emotional cutoff was negatively related to marital satisfaction for both men and women. The study confirmed earlier finding (Parsons et al., 2007) that found higher self differentiation to be predictive of higher marital satisfaction among interfaith couples (N=84). Moreover this study also found persons who are able to resolve self identity issues in earlier life stages had higher levels of marital satisfaction. Gubbins et al. (2010) measured gendered differences in self differentiation and marital satisfaction in a sample of (N=169) couples. Analysis confirmed the hypothesized connection between both constructs for males and females. That is, level of self differentiation positively predicted marital satisfaction. However one weakness in all of these studies is absence of dyadic analysis. Though study samples included couple level data, the unit of analysis has been individual.

Together these studies suggest relational models of the self are predictive of marital satisfaction, it remains to be tested whether relational interdependent self construal may have similar effects in couple assessment of relationship satisfaction.

One study examined relational interdependent self construal as a predictor of relationship quality. Relational interdependent self construal has been shown to be a predictor of relationship quality (Morry & Kito, 2009). The study authors hypothesized that persons with high levels of relational self construal will engage in more relationship supportive behaviors resulting in higher quality relationship. Supportive behaviors

include intimate self disclosure and attending to a partner's disclosures. Relationship satisfaction is characterized by emotional closeness, satisfaction, liking and commitment. Relationships in the study included homogenous and heterogeneous relationships. Results of the study indicated higher scores on Relational Interdependent self Construal were associated with higher levels of relationship supporting behaviors, friendship function, and relationship quality. The study supports the notion that persons with well developed relational selves tend to have higher quality relationships.

This study will explore the relationship between relational interdependent self construal and marital satisfaction to address the critical gap in the literature on this emerging relational model of the self. Studies examining the connection between relational interdependent self construal and marital satisfaction as an outcome measure of relational quality will provide an opportunity for empirical validation and continued development of relational models of the self.

Spiritual Maturity and Marital Satisfaction

Current research provides evidence of the positive correlation of religion/spirituality and marital satisfaction (Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2006; Weaver et al., 2002). This relationship has also been established across religious and spiritual groups showing cross-cultural validity (Ahmadi & Hossein-abadi, 2009; Hünler & Gençöz, 2005). Religious/spiritual beliefs, practices and involvement have been identified as positively related to marital satisfaction with spiritual beliefs as the highest rated of the three (Marks, 2006). Giblin (1997) study of spirituality in marital relationships found that when spirituality is an integral part of the couples interaction

affecting all dimensions of their relationship, its effects on marital satisfaction were positive. However, the literature is also clear that the precise nature of the relationship and the religious factors contributing to the positive impact on marriages remains largely elusive (Giblin, 2004; Marks, 2005). One possible way to examine this connection is by investigating whether spiritual maturity as a relational construct predicts levels of marital satisfaction. However only one study was located that attempted to do this.

Anthony (1993) conducted a study examining a hypothesized relationship between spiritual maturity, defined as an intrinsic spirituality that has internalized religious values of commitment, selflessness and altruism, and marital satisfaction. Hence his conceptualization of spiritual maturity was more intrapersonal than relational. His study found persons with an intrinsic spiritual orientation reported the highest level of marital satisfaction. Interestingly the second highest group was the non-religious. Anthony (1993) suggested both groups may have had similarly levels of commitment to their ideology and this commitment may have mediated the levels of marital satisfaction.

Thus the association of spiritual maturity and marital satisfaction remains largely unexplored in the empirical literature. A goal of this investigation is to help address this gap.

Relational Interdependent Self Construal and Spiritual Maturity

Given the recent emergence of both relational interdependent self construal and spiritual maturity as relational constructs, the literature investigating any link between them is scant. As has been done previously, the review will examine existing studies with conceptually similar notions to inform hypothesis building.

Utilizing a relational understanding of spiritual maturity (Hall et al., 1998). Hall et al., (1998) conducted a study to determine how the quality of relationship with God related to internal models of relational self. The study confirmed that participant's relational models affected the way they related to God, and their relationship with God impacted internal models of self in relationship. In a related study examining Bowenian self differentiation and spiritual maturity, Jankowski and Vaughn (2009) found a positive relationship between levels of spiritual development and self differentiation within family of origin. Highly differentiated persons showed higher levels of spiritual maturity. It should be noted that highly differentiated persons show greater relational functioning and self regulation (Skowron & Dendy, 2004).

This study focuses attention on a relational model of spiritual maturity as a predictor of relationship quality within marriage. If spirituality impacts relational self development, it may be hypothesized to impact marital satisfaction as a relational outcome, perhaps as a mediating variable or as accounting for its own unique variance in marital satisfaction. This study is intended to address such a hypothesized connection.

Gender, Spirituality and Marital Satisfaction

From a gendered perspective, female spirituality appears to have a more nuanced relationship with marital satisfaction, with female relational processes mediating the relationship while male satisfaction is more directly related to intrinsic spiritual/religious concerns such as religious attendance, prayer and bible study (Faulkner et al., 2005; Fincham, Ajayi, & Beach, 2011). Brimhall and Butler (2007) found husband's intrinsic religiosity influenced husband's level of marital satisfaction but not wives'. They

theorized that Christian values of commitment, self sacrifice and willingness to help shaped husbands intrinsic religious experience but wives may have already been socialized to develop these virtues and their religious experience added little to the socialization process in this regard. Moreover, husbands who had wives with low religiosity were less satisfied with their marriages while those who frequently attended services reported higher satisfaction (Faulkner et al., 2005).

This phenomenon appears to hold for a construct often related to spirituality, the process of forgiveness. Forgiveness has been found to have positive association with marital satisfaction and conflict resolution and is regarded as a potentially fruitful avenue for future research on marital health (Fincham & Beach, 2010; Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2004; Fincham, Hall, & Beach, 2006). Current research has found female forgiveness has a recursive relationship to marital satisfaction with each impacting levels of the other while for males willingness to forgive is determined by how satisfied they were with the marriage (Fincham & Beach, 2007). Fincham et al. (2011) studied gendered differences in spirituality and marital satisfaction in an African-American population. The study distinguished between religiosity as an institutional phenomenon and spirituality as a more intrinsic construct. Analysis revealed that while both constructs were significant, spirituality had a more significant effect over religiosity on levels of marital satisfaction. Moreover husbands spirituality "was more important in decreasing husbands' negative evaluation of the marriage and somewhat important for wives' positive evaluation of the marriage" (p.7). Thus there appears a more direct association between religiosity/spirituality and marital satisfaction for males, while for females relational processes may be a more significant predictor. Consequently, while studies

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have documented the positive impact of religion/spirituality on marital relationships, the issue of gendered differences in spiritual experiences and level of relational self development as related to evaluation of marriage seems in need of further investigation. A critical question that may be asked is whether levels relational and spiritual development co-vary in their impact on individuals and couples in the assessment of the marriage relationship.

The study will examine possible empirical connection between relational interdependent self construal as a model of relational self and spiritual maturity as the goal of relational spirituality. Consistent with the previous studies using related models of relational self, the study hypothesizes a recursive relationship between both constructs. Further, given that marital unions are considered to be "perhaps the most interdependent social units in western culture" (Cross et al., 2002, p. 406); this study will therefore examine the relationship between levels of relational interdependent self construal, spiritual maturity, and marital satisfaction among married couples living on the Caribbean island of Antigua. To date no studies have been located that test these constructs on a population outside of the US. This is especially salient in Antigua given that empirical studies of marital satisfaction have not been conducted with this population. Consequently, such a study would add significantly to the literature by engaging in a cross-cultural exploration of the relationship among the predictors identified in this study and their possible connections to marital satisfaction. In addition, the study will examine gendered patterns in levels of interdependent self construal, spiritual maturity, and marital satisfaction in this population. Given the gendered differences found in current studies, it would be of interest to determine if such

differences hold for a population that is thought to be influenced by western ideas and practices yet struggling to maintain its own cultural uniqueness. Accordingly the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1

Spiritual Maturity as defined by the Spiritual Assessment Inventory Subscales, (Awareness of God, Realistic Acceptance of God, Disappointment with God, Grandiosity, and Instability in relationship with God) will be positively associated with increased levels of marital satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, years married, number of children, education and economic status.

Hypothesis 2

Relational interdependent self construal will predict higher levels of marital satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, years married, number of children, and economic status.

Hypothesis 3

Are there gendered differences between levels of relational interdependent self construal, spiritual maturity and marital satisfaction after controlling for age, years married, number of children, education?

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODS AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Research Strategy

To address the hypotheses advanced, a non-experimental correlation-predictor design was used. The unit of analysis was married cohabiting heterosexual couples. The dependent variable was marital satisfaction and the independent variables spiritual maturity and relational self construal. Specifically, this study used data from a study of couples in Antigua that is entitled "The Antiguan Married Couples Study." This study was approved by IRB and is a joint project with Loma Linda University and a group of community leaders in Antigua.

Participants

The inclusion criteria for participants in this study were heterosexual couples 18 years and older, married 2 or more years and living together at the time of the study. A convenience sample of (n = 91) couples from the island of Antigua responded and complete the questionnaires associated with this study. Participants were recruited from churches, community groups, village gatherings, and other communal events. Flyers were placed on church and community center bulletin boards. Additionally, church pastors who were willing to participate in the study were given announcements scripts to be read to their congregations. Some churches allowed the study author to make the announcement himself. In addition, participants responded to advertisements in mass media outlets and telephone calls initiated by a member of the research team.

Procedure

Persons who responded to any of the above mentioned advertisements were contacted by phone by a member of the research team. Once contacted, potential participants were provided with pertinent details about the study and were given an opportunity to ask any questions that they may have about their participation in the study. If the couple agreed to be part of the study an appointment was made for them to complete the survey. Each couple was given an envelope containing two questionnaires and a consent form. The process involved completion of the consent form prior to completion of the survey; the researcher emphasized the voluntary nature of their participation and explained confidentiality. Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from completing the questionnaire at any time. After signing the consent document, both participants then completed the survey sometimes in the presence of the team member; at other times couples were allowed to keep the survey to be completed subsequently once they agreed to notify the researcher when the form was completed. Each husband and wife was required to complete the survey separately and not consult with each other. Questionnaires were completed as paper and pencil test only. In the event one partner was absent, the questionnaire was left for the partner to complete when available. The research assistant kept in touch with the couple to determine when to return for the remaining questionnaire. One hundred and seventy-five questionnaire packets were given out to participants who decided to participate in the study and 91 couples completed the surveys resulting in a response rate of fifty-two percent.

Variables

All intervally scaled measures were coded in the direction of the variable name so that a high score reflected a high value of the variable name. The dependent variable for this analysis was marital satisfaction. The two key independent variables were spiritual maturity and relational self construal.

Age (in years) and gender (1 = female, 0 = male) are socio-demographic control variables used in the analyses. Income and education are two measures of socio-economic status. Income captures total household income in the previous year after taxes and is used as a continuous variable. Because the meaning of a given level of income is related to the number of persons living in the home, in these analyses household size was included in the models used in this study. Household size is a count of the number of persons living in the household ranging from 1 to 6 persons or more. Education was divided into four categories that capture meaningful differences in levels of education; 0 - 11 years, 12 years, 13 – 15, and 16 or more years. It was used as a set of dummy variables in the analyses with 16 years or more as an omitted category. Similarly number of years married and number of children were dummy coded to facilitate analysis.

Measurement

The following section discusses the choice of instruments used in the study and the rationale for making such choices. Given that the study appears to be the first of its kind in a population on which the instruments have not been normed, measurement choices were largely guided by theoretical considerations. Each instrument was assessed by its ability to capture relational dynamics. Among the critical questions

that guided the choices were: what is the intent of the authors of this instrument? What theoretical assumptions may have shaped their thinking? Do the research findings using this instrument demonstrate its relational capacity? Utilizing this relational framework, the paper proposes that the Relational Interdependent Self Construal Scale (RISC), the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI), and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (SAS) were appropriate instruments for an investigation of the relationship among the three aforementioned constructs.

Relational Interdependent Self Construal Scale

The Relational Interdependent Self Construal Scale (RISC) scale (Cross et al., 2000) was used to assess the relational interdependent self-construal. It is an 11 item measure using a 7 point Likert scale with composite scores ranging from 11 – 77. Participants indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each of the 11 statements, responses range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Cronbach's coefficient alpha for internal consistency as a measure of reliability is .88, inter-item correlations range from 0.25 - 0.66 with a mean of .41. The test – retest reliability over 2 months on 2 samples is 0.73 (n = 67, p < .001) and 0.63 (n = 317, p < .001). The test-retest reliability over one month was 0.74 (n = 405, p < .001) and 0.76 (n = 46, p < .001). Convergent validity was achieved through assessment of association with measures of interdependence; a moderation correlation was found with the Communal Orientation Scale (r = .41) and the group oriented Interdependent Self-Construal Scale (r = .41). It was unrelated to one measure of independent self-construal (.08).

The RISC is intended to assess how an individual thinks of him/herself in the

context of close relationships. The questions on this measure are as follows: "My close

relationships are an important reflection of who I am," "When I feel very close to

someone, it often feels to me like that person is an important part of who I am," "Overall,

my close relationships have very little to do with how I feel about myself," "I think one

of the most important parts of who I am can be captured by looking at my close friends

and understanding who they are," "When I think of myself, I often think of my close

friends or family also," "When I establish a close friendship with someone, I usually

develop a strong sense of identification with that person," "If a person hurts someone

close to me, I feel hurt as well," "I usually feel a strong sense of pride when someone

close to me has an important accomplishment," "My close relationships are unimportant

to my sense of what kind of person I am," "In general, my close relationships are an

important part of my self-image" and "My sense of pride comes from knowing who I

have as close friends."

Spiritual Assessment Scale

The second independent variable used in this study was spiritual maturity.

Spiritual maturity was assessed with the Revised Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI)

(Hall & Edwards, 2002) a 48 item inventory with 5 subscales; Awareness,

Disappointment, Realistic Acceptance, Grandiosity and Instability. Responses are on a 5

point Likert scale with answers ranging from 1 (not true of me) to 5 (true of me). For

reliability Cronbach's coefficient alpha showed internal reliability of 0.95 for the

Awareness scale, 0.90 for Disappointment, 0.83 for Realistic Acceptance, 0.73 for

Grandiosity, and 0.84 for Instability. Construct validity was achieved through correlating

the various subscales with other measures with a similar theoretical orientation, Bell

Object Relations Inventory (BORI) and the Spiritual Well Being Scale (SWB).

Statistical comparison with the SWB showed strong correlations with Awareness

subscale with both subscales of the SWB, Existential Well-Being (0.56) and Religious

Well-Being scale (0.68); In line with theoretical expectations, Moderate negative

correlations were found between the SAI Instability (-0.43, -0.56) and Disappointment

subscale (-0.34, -0.37) and RWB and EWB.

The SAI was chosen because of its explicit focus on relational spirituality as a

framework for spiritual maturity (Hall & Edwards, 2002). It measures the quality of one's

relationship with God as one of two dimensions underlying the scale. The five subscales

assess five aspects of spirituality: Awareness of God, Disappointment (with God),

Grandiosity (excessive self-importance), Realistic Acceptance (of God), and Instability

(in one's relationship to God). Some of the questions include, "I have a sense of how God

is working in my life," "There are times when I feel disappointed with God," "When this

happens, I still want our relationship to continue," "God's presence feels very real to

me," and "I am aware of God's presence in my interactions with other people."

Dyadic Adjustment Scale

The dependent variable is marital satisfaction measured by The Dyadic

Adjustment Scale. The DAS (Spanier, 1976) has been used in numerous studies in

marriage and family and has been the subject of a plethora of validation studies since its

inception in 1976. This is a 32-item scale that assesses for the quality of marriage

according to the individual respondent's self-report. Its four subscales Dyadic Satisfaction (10 items) 0.94, Dyadic Cohesion (5 items) 0.86, Dyadic Consensus (13 items) 0.90, and Affectional Expression (4 items) 0.73 have acceptable coefficients. The overall alpha coefficient is 0.96 (Spanier, 1976). Construct validity was obtained through correlation with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale with a correlation coefficient of 0.88 and factor analysis of the 32 items in the scale.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale approaches construct measurement from a multidimensional perspective and is able to distinguish between distressed and non-distressed couples (Crane, Middleton, & Bean, 2000). Crane et al. (2000) conducted research to successfully establish cut off scores for distressed and non-distressed couples that can be converted across other measures. In addition, the measure can be used to determine couple scores in addition to individual scores available with traditional approaches.

In this scale, the participants are asked to rate how often they agreed or disagreed with their spouse with respect to specific items, the frequency of particular behaviors, the degree of happiness in their relationship and their feelings about the future of their relationship. The levels of agreement range between "always agree" to "never agree." Some of the items of the DAS, for instance, include: "Demonstration of affection;" "Household tasks;" and "Sex relations." "Do you ever regret that you married your spouse?"

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

First, univariate statistics were run on all variables. For numeric variables, means, standard deviations and ranges were calculated. For categorical variables, frequencies were tabulated. Next, point-biserial correlations were run between the pair ID and all the measured variables. Finally, structural equation modeling was conducted, this consisted of an initial run and a second run on a final model.

Table 1 presents a summary of all the variables used in this dissertation. The mean age of all respondents was 46.01 and a standard deviation of 9.37. Not surprising, just about half of the respondents are male and couples were married for an average of 17.03 years (sd = 8.82). On average, the couples reported just about two children each (2.17; SD = 1.32). The mean and standard deviation of the four subscales of The Dyadic Adjustment Scale respectively were: consensus (3.69, 0.60), expression (2.53, 0.44), satisfaction (3.81, 0.58), and cohesion (3.85, 0.67). For the Revised Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI), the subscale "Aware" had the highest mean score (4.11 and SD=0.75), followed by "Realistic" with 3.95 (SD=1.27), "Instability" (Mean = 2.11, and SD=0.80), "grand" (Mean=1.73, and SD=0.61) and finally "Disappoint" (Mean=1.59, and SD=0.69). The Relational Interdependent Self Construal Scale (RISC) had three parcels with randomly assigned items. Risc 3 had the highest mean score

Table 1

Descriptive. Univariate statistics for predictor and outcome variables

Variable	M	SD	Range
Age	46.01	9.37	28-76
Years married	17.01	8.34	3-44
Number children	2,18	1.33	0-7
SES	-0.03	0.87	-2.17-3.39
DAS consensus	3.69	0.60	1.31-5.00
DAS expression	2.53	0.44	1.25-4.50
DAS satisfaction	3.81	0.58	2.00-4.88
DAS cohesion	3.85	0.67	1.20-5.00
SAI aware	4.11	0.75	1.00-5.00
SAI realistic	3.95	1.27	1.00-5.00
SAI disappoint	1.59	0.69	1.00-4.33
SAI grand	1.73	0.61	1.00-3.57
SAI instability	2.11	0.80	1.00-4.67
RISC 1	4.86	1.32	1.25-7.00
RISC 2	4.97	1.18	1.00-7.00
RISC 3	5.03	1.29	1.00-7.00

A confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the measures. Such a test indicates to what extent an instrument measures the construct it purports to measure. The results indicate high reliability scores on all measures. The DAS consensus subscale had Cronbach's alpha of 0.90, affectional expression 0.63, satisfaction of 0.81, and cohesion 0.80. The Cronbach's alpha SAI subscales were awareness 0.94, disappointment 0.84, realistic acceptance 0.89, and instability 0.75. The RISC measures a single dimension and had Cronbach's alpha of 0.85. (See Appendix G for a summary of the results).

None of the point biserial correlations were large, only one was statistically significant (and if adjustments are made for multiple comparisons, none were). Therefore, the initial SEM was a uni-level SEM with gender included among the IVs (also included were age, years married, number of children, SES and the SAI variables). Dependent variables included were the DAS and RISC variables. In the initial SEM, there was moderate multivariate kurtosis (normalized estimate = 3.57, where a normal distribution has kurtosis = 0). For the final, adjusted model, the normalized estimate of multivariate kurtosis was 3.24, below the problematic 3.3 level (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Consequently, robust fit indices were not used. Table 2 contains the results of this procedure.

Table 2

Goodness of fit measures, initial model and final model

Measure	*Initial Model Value*	*Final Model Value*
BENTLER-BONETT NORMED FIT INDEX	0.52	0.72
BENTLER-BONETT NON-NORMED FIT INDEX	0.53	0.80
COMPARATIVE FIT INDEX (CFI)	0.59	0.83
RMSEA		0.86
c^2		243.00
Df		115

Next, the model was adjusted to allow age and years married to covary, as well as SAI instability, SAI disappointment, SAI awareness and SAI realistic acceptance. The results suggested that these variables were correlated, Nevertheless the fit showed significant improvement. Good fit was defined as a CFI of .92 and a RMSEA of at least .08 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The Wald test suggested dropping the paths from

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variables socioeconomic status, number of children and SAI grandiosity to marital

satisfaction from the model.

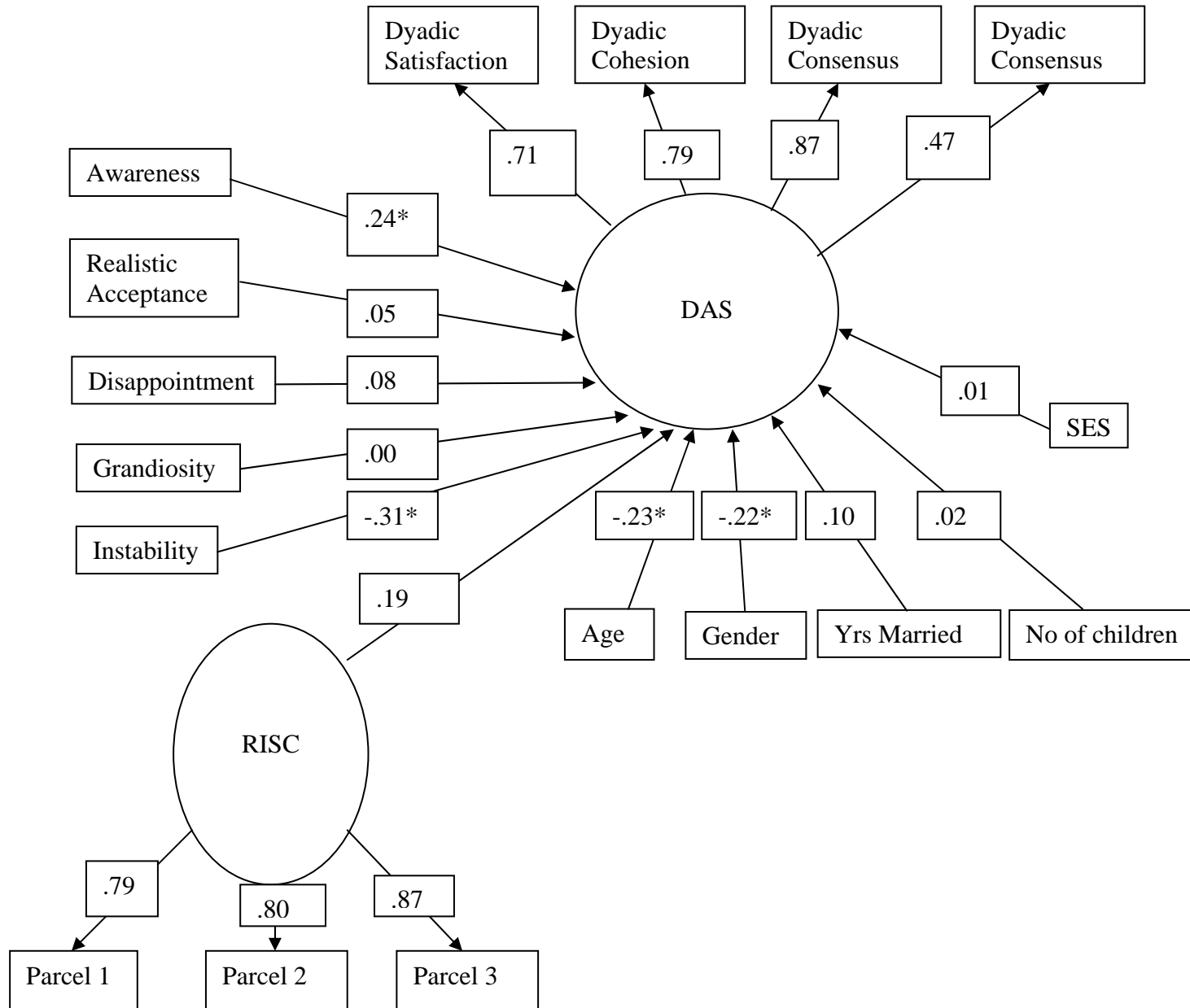The final model is depicted in Figure 1

Figure 1. Path Model of Predictors of Marital Satisfaction

Further analysis was conducted with marital satisfaction as a categorical variable. Crane, Middleton, and Bean (2000) found 107 to be the cutpoint indicator of distress and non-distress for married individuals on the DAS. Table 3 displays the means and standard deviation for both the distress and the non-distress groups. There were no significant mean age differences across groups (non-distressed M=43.81; distressed M=44.79). Distressed couples had significantly lower scores on spiritual awareness compared to non-distressed (non-distressed M=80.31; distressed M=73.15; p <.05). There were no significant mean scores across groups on the disappointment and realistic acceptance subscales, however the instability subscales showed statistically significant scores (non-distressed, M=17.39; distressed, M =19.98; p <.05). That is couples who had higher scores on marital satisfaction scored lower on spiritual instability. Moreover, non-distressed couples had significantly higher scores on the SAI compared to distressed couples (non-distressed, M=147.57; distressed, M=140.62; p < .05). Finally, although the non-distressed group had 'higher' mean scores on the RISC, the differences were not significant at (p=.05). However, a more liberal probability value (p = .10) would support marginal significance especially given the sample size.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for distressed and non-distressed couples

	106 or less		107 or more		P-value*
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
AGE	44.79	8.17	43.81	9.40	0.440
SAI_Awareness	73.15	15.76	80.31	12.56	0.001
SAI_Disappointment	10.79	4.16	10.95	5.19	0.811
SAI_Realistic	20.59	9.35	20.86	10.49	0.858
SAI_Instability	19.98	6.56	17.39	7.13	0.010
SAI_Total (Score)	140.62	24.15	147.52	18.47	0.033
Relational Interdependent	51.39	12.94	54.72	13.19	0.082

Analysis also compared mean scores on each demographic variable across the non-distressed and the distressed groups and found no statistically significant differences. Specifically, males were not significantly different from females in terms of membership in the non-distress or distress groups. Religious attendance is a dichotomous variable; respondents who reported attending religious services more than once a week and those who said that they attended less than once a week were not statistically different with regards to their distress scores. Similar results were obtained for education and employment status. Tables 4 – 7 display the results of these analyses.

Table 4

Mean group difference scores by gender

			DAS Score Categories		P-value*
			106 or less	107 or more	
Gender of Respondent	Male	Count	38	59	0.268
		% within Gender of Respondent	39.2%	60.8%	
		% within DAS Score Categories	44.7%	52.7%	
	Female	Count	47	53	
		% within Gender of Respondent	47.0%	53.0%	
		% within DAS Score Categories	55.3%	47.3%	

P-value for Pearson Chi-Square

Table 5

Mean group difference scores by Religious Attendance

			DAS Score Categories		P-value*
			106 or less	107 or more	
Religious Attendance	Once a week	Count	51	80	0.094
		% within Religious Attendance	38.9%	61.1%	
		% within DAS Score Categories	60.7%	72.1%	
	More than once a week	Count	33	31	
		% within Religious Attendance	51.6%	48.4%	
		% within DAS Score Categories	39.3%	27.9%	

P-value for Pearson Chi-Square

Table 6

Mean group differences scores by Education

| | | | DAS Score Categories | | P-value* |
			106 or less	107 or more	
Highest level of Formal Education Completed	Less than College	Count	46	49	0.142
		% within Gender of Respondent	48.4%	51.6%	
		% within DAS Score Categories	54.8%	44.1%	
	College or more	Count	38	62	
		% within Gender of Respondent	38.0%	62.0%	
		% within DAS Score Categories	45.2%	55.9%	

P-value for Pearson Chi-Square

Table **7**

Mean group difference scores by Employment Status

| | | | DAS Score Categories | | P-value* |
			106 or less	107 or more	
Currently Employed	Yes	Count	77	95	0.192
		% within Gender of Respondent	44.8%	55.2%	
		% within DAS Score Categories	91.7%	85.6%	
	No	Count	7	16	
		% within Gender of Respondent	30.4%	69.6%	
		% within DAS Score Categories	8.3%	14.4%	

P-value for Pearson Chi-Square

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In summary, the focus of the current study is to examine the relationship between relational self construal as a model of relational development, spiritual maturity, as a model of healthy relational spirituality and marital satisfaction as the outcome of the strongest relational unit, marriage in a sample of married couples from the Caribbean Island of Antigua. This investigation was exploratory and therefore guided by key a research question: do relational models of self and spirituality predict levels of marital satisfaction? In the following discussion I interpret the results of the statistical analysis in the context of the current literature comparing the results with studies done with other populations. Finally, I discuss overall implications for clinical practice, define limitations of the study, and suggest future directions for research based on these results.

For purposes of clarity, the discussion relating to Spiritual maturity will be done by developing hypotheses based on a composite score as well as the five subscales of the spiritual assessment inventory.

Hypothesis 1

Spiritual maturity will predict higher levels of marital satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, years married, number of children, education and economic status. As noted previously, the SAI was chosen because of its explicit focus on relational spirituality as a framework for spiritual maturity (Hall & Edwards, 2002). It measures the quality of one's relationship with God as one of two dimensions underlying the scale; the other dimension being one's level of awareness of God. The five subscales assess five

aspects of spiritual maturity: Awareness of God, Disappointment (with God), Grandiosity (excessive self-importance), Realistic Acceptance (of God), and Instability (in one's relationship to God). Spiritual maturity is theorized to be the goal of relational spirituality. Marriage is conceptualized as a relational unit with partner's evaluation of its quality as an outcome measure of marital satisfaction. Consequently, relational maturity would be evidenced by high levels of satisfaction in one's relationship with God as well as with one's marital partner. Given this relational foundation for both variables, it was expected that spiritual maturity would be associated with increased levels of marital satisfaction. This hypothesized connection was supported in the present analysis. That is couples with high scores on the measure of spiritual maturity also tended to have higher scores on marital satisfaction compared with those who scored lower on spiritual maturity.

This finding is consistent with the current literature showing a positive connection between spirituality and marital satisfaction (Fincham et al., 2011; Fincham & Beach, 2010). However, it opens an additional pathway for understanding this connection. Specifically, it suggests that the level of one's spiritual development may influence interactional patterns in marriage and one's assessment of those patterns. Consequently, this study links relationship with God and relationship with others such as in marriage.

The robustness of this finding is reinforced by the results of a logistic regression that created two groups, distressed and non-distressed based on their DAS scores. Couples with a composite score of 107 and above were classified as non-distressed while those 106 and below were placed in the distressed category. The results indicated that the non-distressed group scored significantly on the SAI as the measure of spiritual maturity

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than the distressed group. This finding remained significant when controlling for demographic variables.

In the following sections, I discuss how the various subscales may have contributed to the aforementioned findings.

Hypothesis 1a

High Awareness of God will be positively associated with increased levels of marital satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, years married, number of children, education and economic status. Awareness of God is a subscale of the Spiritual Assessment Inventory and measures the extent to which an individual experiences the presence of and communication from God (Hall & Edwards, 2007). As such it constitutes one dimension of the relational basis of the measure. The analysis indicates support for this hypothesized relationship. Individuals, who consistently report greater awareness of the presence of God in the daily transactions, believe God is guiding them, is able to discern his leadership in their lives and pray to him tended to report greater marital satisfaction. Such persons believe God is present with them and communicates his direction to them. Further, it would be consistent with the theoretical intent of this construct to expect that such persons believe God is present in their marriage relationship and influences their decisions. Consequently, such persons are likely to evaluate their relationships more positively. This finding is consistent with the general literature in that it is plausible given that Antiguans are known for their commitment to religious ideals (Reynolds, in press). In particular, individuals in this context seem to benefit in their

marital relationships from adopting the view of God as an active influence in their daily

lives.

Hypothesis 1b

High Realistic Acceptance with God will positively predict increased marital

satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, years married, number of children, and

economic status

Realistic Acceptance constitutes one of the scales in the spiritual development

dimension of the SAI and measure the level at which persons are able to handle

uncertainties in their relationship with God while maintaining and valuing the connection.

This hypothesis was not supported by the study findings. Realistic acceptance of God is

postulated as an important dimension of spiritual development and shows the extent to

which persons are able to continue an active relationship with God despite being

frustrated, angry and/or disappointed with some aspect the relationship. For this reason

the Disappointment with God subscale is linked with Realistic Acceptance. The thought

being that persons who are unable to maintain the relationship with God despite being

disappointed would score high on the Disappointment but low in Realistic Acceptance.

The theoretical position advanced in this study has posited that realistic acceptance has

been a hallmark of spiritual maturity in the Christian tradition; nonetheless, it may be

argued based on the results of this analysis, that while acceptance may be a mark of

maturity, it may not be an indication of satisfaction. Persons may maintain their

relationships with a spouse or partner for other reasons such as commitment to the larger

social context in which they live their lives and the importance of adherence to religious postulates.

In addition, realistic acceptance has been found to be moderately correlated with awareness of God (Hall & Edwards, 2002) and may therefore be sharing some of variance accounted for by that variable.

Hypothesis 1c

Higher Disappointment with God will be inversely related with high marital satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, years married, number of children, and economic status

As noted the previous section, Disappointment with God refers to frustration, anger and confusion with regard to one's relationship with God. Theoretically it is postulated that such disappointment may suggest inadequate models of relationships generally and therefore high levels of disappointment with God would predict low levels of satisfaction. This hypothesis was not supported. A possible explanation for this finding relates to the cultural influences in the transmission of religious beliefs. As noted previously, adherence to religious beliefs that divorce is morally wrong may have impacted the historically low divorce rate in Antigua (Reynolds, in press). In a similar manner, individuals would be unlikely to acknowledge anger, frustration and disappointment in their relationship with God given their strong belief in religious dogma. Religious beliefs may be mediating assessment of one's relationship with God. Such attitudes would be reinforced by awareness of God in one's daily life.

Hypothesis 1d

Higher Instability in Relationship with God will be negatively associated with marital satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, years married, number of children, and economic status.

Instability measures the extent to which persons in relationship with God feel rejected or isolated from God. This type of relationship is characterized by negative emotional states. Persons may feel God is punishing them or has left them out his plan. Consequently, it was expected that such feelings and beliefs in connection with God would be indicative of low relational development and therefore predict low levels of satisfaction. In other words, persons scoring high on instability would show low levels of marital satisfaction. This hypothesis was supported.

Based on this analysis only this measure of spiritual development in the SAI significantly predicted levels of marital satisfaction. Awareness of God, the other significant predictor focuses attention on the extent to which persons are aware of the presence of God in their lives. However it does indicate that a negative relationship with God would indicate a greater likelihood of negative appraisal of one's relationship with marital partner. Taken together with the finding that awareness of the presence and activity of God in one's life predicts higher marital satisfaction, it may be suggested that the nature of one's relationship with God may indicate how satisfied an individual is with a marital relationship. These findings would support the relational influence of spirituality and offer additional support to the growing body of literature on this construct.

Hypothesis 2

Relational interdependent self construal will predict higher levels of marital satisfaction after controlling for gender, age, years married, number of children, and economic status.

Relational Interdependent Self Construal is predicated on the notion that all individuals have an internal and stable set of beliefs and ideas and attributes through which they see themselves and the world and are the basis of cognitive, emotional and interactional processes (Cross et al., 2003). Persons scoring high on the RISC tend to regard important relationships in more intimate ways and display greater commitment. High RISC individuals tend to consider the needs and wishes of others when making decisions (Cross et al., 2002).

Relational interdependent self construal has been shown to be a predictor of relationship quality (Morry & Kito, 2009). Consequently it was expected that RISC, as a relational construction of self, would predict levels of marital satisfaction. The results of this study did not support this hypothesis. This was a surprising result given the conceptually similar theoretical foundation to spiritual maturity. It was theorized that given the relational basis of both constructs, both would be significant predictors of relationship satisfaction.

A number of theoretical considerations may be advanced to account for this result. RISC was conceptualized as a primarily westernized model of interdependence (Cross et al., 2000) and may not be fully capturing the Antiguan model of self in relation. Antiguans like many Caribbean persons are influenced by western, particularly North American ways of being, but these have often collided with traditional ideas shaped by

their African heritage. Lazarus-Black (1994) argues that post emancipation society in

Antigua tended toward individualization is several ways. Individualism is prized as a

mark of independence, the ability to govern one's own affairs and determine the quality

of one's life. Freedom from slavery was followed by a long struggle for national

independence from Great Britain. In that environment individual independence came to

be valued as a symbol of freedom to be oneself. Interestingly, this applies to both

genders. Lazarus-Black (1994) notes, "Caribbean women long have been noted for their

independence and active participation in the wage economy (p. 168)." From this

perspective, such a thoroughly westernized model may not be a good measure of the

Antiguan self construal. Moreover, Bresnahan, Chiu, and Levine (2004) note that

relational interdependent self construal may only be one of four types of interdependent

self construal and possibly ten types of independent self construal. Given such

postulations, it may be that the unique historical, cultural and contemporary realities

shaping Caribbean identity would require another conceptualization of interdependent

self construal.

Another theoretical possibility may be to consider whether the notion of

interdependent self construal is a viable construct in the context of marriage. As noted in

the literature review, the RISC has not been tested in the context of the marriage

relationship. The studies done to date have been conducted with unmarried persons, the

majority of whom have been university students. However, given the exploratory nature

of this study, further studies would be needed to replicate its findings before such a claim

can be made.

Hypothesis 3

Are there gendered differences in marital satisfaction after controlling for age, years married, number of children, education?

The results of the analysis indicate support for gender as a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. Consistent with the current literature males were found to have higher levels of marital satisfaction. Consequently, it is to be noted the finding of higher male marital satisfaction is consistent across cultures. In common with females in other cultures, Antiguan females have traditionally tended to view themselves as less valuable than their male counterparts. Consequently it was considered socially acceptable for females not to expect the level of satisfaction males enjoyed in the marriage relationship. The finding that females are becoming more vocal in their expectations is supported by the evidence; the greatest numbers of divorce filing are from females.

Limitations of the Research

There are a number of limitations that are associated with this study. First, this study seeks to use a convenience sample and as such is subject to the challenges that are linked with this data gathering approach. For example, the results of this study may be limited to the couples who are in the actual pool of participants and not necessarily applicable to be generalized to couples in Antigua. Hence, the biases associated with such a sample should be taken into consideration when making conclusions about the results. Second, this study employs a cross-sectional design which limits the ability to make conclusions about the causal direction of the variables used in this study. While, the proposed direction of the variables identified in this study are based on current empirical

findings and known theoretical postulates, the causal directions of the relationships will be better evaluated by a longitudinal design that will afford more clarity on the causal flow of variables. Third, given that the measures used in this study have not been evaluated in the population of interest, it is unclear whether these constructs operate differently in this setting as compared to the other geographical identified with previous studies. It may have been more useful to conduct a qualitative study to explore and understand these constructs in the study population and then develop measures that could be used in a quantitative study. Additionally, the developed scales could be tested along with established scales to evaluate the validity of both sets of measures in this region. Fourth, the theoretical and methodological approach to spirituality employed in this study is primarily Christian and therefore the results may not operable to non Christian populations. Fifth, it is conceivable that other variables such religious identity status, self esteem, conflict management styles, cultural and contextual attitudes to marriage and divorce that may have influenced self assessment of relationship satisfaction and were not accounted for in this study. Lastly, the study used the traditional DAS to assess marital satisfaction as opposed to the newer version due to the author's acceptance of its theoretical multidimensional approach to assessing marital satisfaction in a Caribbean context. It may be that a single global evaluation may have provided a more accurate assessment of the variable and might garnered greater participation in the study.

Implications for Future Research

This study has examined individual and couple differences in levels of marital satisfaction and some the variables that influence such evaluations. Given this is the first

of its kind in the Antiguan context, several implications for continued work in this area present themselves. As noted previously, a qualitative study comprising interviews or focus groups of married couples would support the development or selection of measurements that may more accurately assess the latent predictors of marital satisfaction. This may particularly be the case for the RISC. Moreover a longitudinal design following a cohort of married individuals and their spouses across time would provide a more in-depth and nuanced view of the variations in marital satisfaction in the population. For example such a study would not only account for factors in the continuity and change in marital satisfaction, but allow for helpful comparisons across cultures. The so-called developed world countries where an existing body of literature is already available still lacks longitudinal views of marital satisfaction and therefore such a design would add significantly to the current literature. Of particular interest is the study of gendered differences in spirituality and its connection with individual assessment of marital satisfaction. Do males and females experience similar changes across time? Only longitudinal studies can address such questions.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to a deeper conceptualization of spirituality and how it may shape marital relationships. Spiritual maturity as the goal of relational spirituality is a viable concept for understanding the level and quality of individual relatedness to the divine and consequently with others in close relationships.

Although numerous studies have examined marital satisfaction, a number of factors suggest this study may add significantly to the body of literature on this construct.

Firstly, this study was done with a West Indian population, specifically, the island of Antigua. To date no studies have been located that does this. Consequently this study expands the knowledge base of marital satisfaction and provides additional evidence for the notion that spirituality is an important consideration in such a relationship. Secondly, the underlying factor connecting all variables in this model is their relational orientation. There is a consistent call in the literature for research to identify specific pathways by which spirituality/religion might be influencing marital satisfaction; the findings of this study helps to address that need.

Relational processes have been fundamental to the field of Marriage and Family Therapy from its inception. Given this foundation, it may be suggested that theoretical development would be enhanced if emerging constructs such as spirituality can be examined within a relational framework. Empirical support for such approaches adds credibility to the field and provides pathways for further theoretical development.

Implications for Clinical Practice

If the way people think about themselves in relationship predicts levels of relationship satisfaction then it would be clinically advisable for marriage and family therapist working with couples to explore differences in the way each member of the couple dyad thinks about relationship and what are the issues that might be shaping their thinking. From the systemic perspective relationships are the contextual matrixes for mental health (Allen, 2004). Depressed symptoms in one member of a relationship dyad can impact the relationship dynamic and generate negative responses that solidify, maintain and even intensify the individual's depression (Whisman, 2007). Relationships

are sometimes a part of the disorder itself, relationship difficulties can also mediate and moderate genetic responses and impact the immune system (Wamboldt & Reiss, 2006).

Helping clients examine their relationship with God or the sacred will offer insights into relational functioning and how satisfied they might be in the current relationship. On the other hand healing relationship issues with significant others may offer benefits in one's spiritual relationships. Clinicians working with married couples need to help them determine the source of their relational distress that may prove to be unrelated to their presenting problem. For example a client whose relationship with a deity may reflect similar fear based responses in relationship to a marital partner. Helping such a client would involve developing healthier models of relating to God as a precursor to improving a marital relationship. Seen from this perspective, spirituality as a relational phenomenon is an unavoidable aspect of therapy. Consequently in therapy one does not so much integrate spirituality as seek to understand the nature of the client's spirituality and ways it influences marital interaction.

Concurrent with relational co-construction in therapy is the effort to co-construct mature spirituality. Deconstructing the language of pain in therapy is attending to ways client's language their understanding of self in relation such as those that allow for acceptance of relational oppression in the name of God. Therapist and client co-construct a new language of options and growth. Client's recognize the destructive impact of self blame, shame and fear as they experience themselves in relationship.

Ultimately therapeutic outcomes include relational and spiritual growth. Relational growth involves identifying obstacles hindering the relational self's integration of other perspectives, and acting in ways mutually beneficial for self and other.

Relational self growth would be enhanced through examination of spiritual beliefs particularly about relational issues, exploration of the state of one's connection with the sacred and with a supportive community, and the nature of one's spiritual beliefs about self in relation. Consequently relational self growth parallels spiritual growth while spiritual growth enhances relational self development.

Conclusion

This study has examined relational predictors of marital satisfaction in a sample of married couples on the Caribbean Island of Antigua. It is the first study of its kind known to the author to be attempted on the island and therefore marks an important milestone for the community. The results of the study found support for spirituality as relational construct predicting marital satisfaction. However, relational interdependent self construal adapted as model of relational development did not predict marital satisfaction. The possible explanations for this have been discussed. The study results are an important addition to the growing body of literature supporting spirituality as relational construct that should be attended by researchers and practitioners in marriage and family therapy.

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APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Hello, my name is Conroy Reynolds and I am a student of Loma Linda University. In preparation for my dissertation I am conducting a survey of about marriage, relationships, and spirituality in Antigua. This survey will specifically look at how our relationship with God affects the way we behave in relationships and what that means for happiness in marriage. The survey involves only couples who have been married 2 years and up. Couples who agree to participate will be given an envelope with 2 surveys and asked to complete one survey each. They will then put the completed surveys in the envelope and return them to the person who gave it to them who will then pass it to me. Your participation in the survey is completely voluntary and anonymous. We ask everyone not put any names. All information will be kept strictly confidential and no-one will be able to identify which survey is filled out by a particular individual. I am requesting that your assistance in recruiting participants for the study. If it possible I can make a brief announcement in your church along with a flyer that can posted on your bulletin board. If you prefer to make the announcement yourself that would be acceptable as well.

Would you be willing to complete a survey?

(if yes, make appointment to read and sign consent form and complete the survey)

(If no, thank them for taking the time to listen and terminate the call.)

INFORMED CONSENT

Loma Linda University

Loma Linda

Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in this study exploring how married persons relationship with God affects the way they behave in other relationships and whether such behaviors impact the happiness of their marriage. It would help us to better understand the connections between spiritual relationships and the way people behave in relationships in general. This student is conducted by a graduate student under the supervision and direction of a faculty member from the Department of Counseling and Family Sciences at Loma Linda University in the United States.

Purpose
To participate in this study you must be married two or more years. The purpose of this study is gain greater understanding of relationship dynamics, particularly the marital relationship. This will provide increased knowledge of marital satisfaction how spiritual concerns contribute to it.

Procedures
Couples deciding to participate are requested to read and sign this consent form and return it to the study investigator. After the consent form is returned the survey will then be sent to you. After you receive the survey, complete it and place it in the envelope provided, seal it and return it to the investigator. The spiritual maturity questionnaire asks you about your relationship with God, the relationship questionnaire asks about how you think and behave in relationships and the marital satisfaction questionnaire asks you how satisfied are you with your marriage relationship.

Confidentiality
To protect your confidentiality please note that it is not required for you to put your name or any identifiable information on this questionnaire. Husbands and wives are asked to complete their survey separately and are discouraged from discussing, consulting, or sharing their answers. Your responses and that of other participants will be stored in a locked cabinet, only accessible to the investigators of this study.

Initial _____
Date _____

The Relationship between Spiritual Maturity, Relational Self and Marital Satisfaction

Voluntary
Your participation in filling out this questionnaire is entirely voluntary. You have the right not to participate and withdraw your participation at any time. Terminating your participation will in no way affect your relationship with the research assistant or with Loma Linda University.

Possible Risks or Benefits
There may be minimal risk to those who participate in the study. The risk to you is the possibility that you or your spouse may experience some discomfort over issues raised by one or more questions. If this happens you can choose to not answer the question, continue or terminate your participation. You are asked not to put your name on any of the forms so that information will be unidentifiable. No effort will be made to identify you. We hope that since you cannot be identified that you will carefully answer all questions provided. If there is any need to seek counseling you may contact Koren Norton, Social Worker, Mt St John Medical Center, located in St John's, Antigua or call, (268) 784 5015, Fax, (268) 561 5411.

Impartial Third Party
If you wish to contact any impartial third party that is not associated with this study regarding any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact the
_____
_____

Consent Statement
After you have read the contents of this letter, you may sign this consent to indicate you have chosen to participate in this study. Please keep the attached copy of this letter for your future reference, and return the signed copy to the researcher right away. You may also call the study investigator Conroy Reynolds, at (268) 462- 7489 if you have any additional questions.

Initial _____
Date _____

I have been given a copy of this consent form

_____

                                                            _____

Signature of participant   Date

Thanks for your participation,

Colwick Wilson, PhD
Professor of Counseling and Family Sciences
Loma Linda University

Conroy Reynolds MA, MS
Department of Counseling and Family Sciences
Loma Linda University

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Please circle/fill in your responses. For the results to be useful, you must answer all questions.

Q1. Gender: Male   Female

Q2. When were you born? Day _____ Month _____ Year _____

Q3. When was your spouse born? Day _____ Month _____ Year _____

Q4. When did you get married to your current spouse? Day _____

Month _____ Year _____

Q5. What is your religious affiliation? (such as Catholic, Baptist, SDA,

Pentecostal, Methodist, Anglican etc or none)? _____

Q6. What is your spouse's religious affiliation? _____

Q7. How often do you attend church services other than funerals, weddings, or

other special occasions?

☐ More than once a week   ☐ At least once a week

☐ Two or three times monthly   ☐ Once every month

☐ Less than once a month

Q8. How often does your family have family worship?

☐ Twice daily   ☐ Once daily   ☐ At least once weekly

☐ Less than weekly ☐ Seldom

Q9. Are you currently employed? ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, are you employed ☐ Full time   ☐ Part time

Q11. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

☐ Primary   ☐ Junior Secondary   ☐ Secondary

☐ College/University ☐ Graduate

Q12. Have you completed any special training or received any diploma or

certificate?

☐ Yes   ☐ No If yes please specify _____

Q13. What is your spouses' highest level of education? _____

Q14. What is you monthly household income? (for both husband and wife after

taxes) _____

Q15. How many children do you have? _____

Q16. Your children's gender: 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th

__   ___   ___   ___   ___   ___   ___   ___

_____

Q17. How old are your   ____ ____ ___   ____ ____ __ __ Children?

Q18. Are your children   ____   ____ ____ ____ ____ ___

Living at home?

APPENDIX D

DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE

Instructions: Most people have disagreements in their marriages. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list. Please circle the appropriate response. Circle one answer for each line

Q19a	Handling Family Matters	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q19b	Matters of Recreation	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q19c	Religious Matters	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q19d	Demonstration of Affection	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q19e	Friends	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q19f	Sex Relations	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q19g	Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q19h	Philosophy of Life	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q19i	Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5

Q19j	Aims, goals and things important	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q19k	Amount of time spent together	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q19l	Making major decisions	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q19 m	Household task	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q19n	Leisure time, interests and activities	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q19o	Career decisions	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Agree	Hardly Ever Agree	Never Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
Q20	How often do you discuss or consider separation?	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
		1	2	3	4	5
Q21	How often do you or your spouse leave the house after and argument?	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
		1	2	3	4	5
Q22	In general, how often do you think things between you and spouse are going well?	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
		1	2	3	4	5
Q23	Do you confide in your spouse?	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
		1	2	3	4	5
Q24	Do you ever regret that you married your spouse?	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
Q24	How often do you or	All the	Most of	Sometimes	Hardly	Never

		1	2	3	4	5
	your spouse quarrel?	time	the time		Ever	
		1	2	3	4	5
Q25	How often do you or your spouse really annoy each other?	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
		1	2	3	4	5
Q26	Do you kiss your spouse?	Every day	Almost every day	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
		1	2	3	4	5
Q27	Do you and your spouse engage in outside interests together?	Every day	Almost every day	Sometimes	Hardly Ever	Never
		1	2	3	4	5
Q28	How often do you have an interesting conversation?	At least once per day	Once or twice per week	Once or twice a month	Less than once a month	Never
		1	2	3	4	5
Q29	Laugh together?	At least once per day	Once or twice per week	Once or twice a month	Less than once a month	Never
		1	2	3	4	5
Q30	Calmly discuss something?	At least once per day	Once or twice per week	Once or twice a month	Less than once a month	Never
		1	2	3	4	5
Q31	Work together on a project	At least once per day	Once or twice per week	Once or twice a month	Less than once a month	Never

Indicate if the items below were problems in your marriage during the past <u>FEW WEEKS</u> by filling in a circle for YES or NO.

Q32a. Being too tired for sex　　　0 No　　　　0 Yes

Q32b. Not showing love　　　　　0 No　　　　0 Yes

Please circle the number that best describes the degree of happiness in your marriage

1 Very unhappy　　2 Somewhat unhappy　　3 Fairly happy　　4 Mostly happy　　5 Very happy

Q33. Which one of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your marriage (Please check the box for the most appropriate statement)?

　　　　☐1 I want desperately for my marriage to succeed, and <u>would go to almost any length</u> to see that it does.

　　　　☐2 I want very much for my marriage to succeed, <u>and will do all I can</u> to see that it does.

　　　　☐3 I want very much for my marriage to succeed, and <u>will do my fair share</u> to see that it does.

　　　　☐4 It would be nice if my marriage succeeded, <u>but I can't do much more than I'm doing now</u> to help it succeed.

　　　　☐5 My marriage can never succeed, and <u>there is no more that I can do</u> to keep the marriage going

RELATIONAL INTERDEPENDENT SELF CONSTRUAL SCALE

Listed below are a number of statements about various attitudes and feelings. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions; we are simply interested in how you think about yourself. Please circle the number that indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of these statements using the following scale.

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

Q34	My close relations are an important reflection of who I am	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Q34	When I feel very close to someone, it often feels to me like that person is an important part of who I am	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Q35	Overall, my close relationships have very <u>little</u> to do with how I feel about myself	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Q36	I think one of the most important parts of who I am can be captured by looking at my close friends and understanding who they are	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Q37	When I think of myself, I often think of my close friends or family also.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Q38	When I establish a close friendship with someone, I usually develop a strong sense of identification with that person.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Q39	If a person hurts someone close to me, I feel hurt as well.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Q40	I usually feel a strong sense of pride when someone close to me has an important accomplishment.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Q41	My close relationships are <u>un</u>important to my sense of what kind of person I am.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Q42	In general, my close relationships are an important part of my self-image.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Q43	My sense of pride comes from knowing who I have as close friends.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT INVENTORY

1. Please respond to each statement below by writing the number that best represents your experience in the box to the right of the statement.
 2. It is best to answer according to what *really reflects* your experience rather than what you think your experience should be.
3. Give the answer that comes to mind first. Don't spend too much time thinking about an item.
4. Give the best possible response to each statement even if it does not provide all the information you would like.
5. Try your best to respond to all statements. Your answers will be completely confidential. 6. Some of the statements consist of two parts as shown here:
[61a] There are times when I feel disappointed with God.
[61b] When this happens, I still want our relationship to continue.
Your response to 61a tells how true statement 61b is for you when you have the experience of feeling disappointed with God described in statement 61a.

Q60	I have a sense of how God is working in my life	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q61a	There are times when I feel disappointed with God	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q61b	When this happens, I still want our relationship to continue	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q62	God's presence feels very real to me	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q63	I am afraid that God will give up on me	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q64	I seem to have a unique ability to influence God through my prayers	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q65	Listening to God is an essential part of my life	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5

Q66	I am always in a worshipful mood when I go to church	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q67a	There are times when I feel frustrated with God	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q67b	When I feel this way, I still desire to put effort into our relationship	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q68	I am aware of God prompting me to do things	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q69	My emotional connection with God is unstable	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q70	My experiences of God's responses to me impact me greatly	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q70a	There are times when I feel irritated at God	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q70b	When I feel this way, I am able to come to some sense of resolution in our relationship	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q71	God recognizes that I am more spiritual than most people	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q72	I always seek God's guidance for every decision I make	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q73	I am aware of God's presence in my	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True

		1	2	3	4	5
Q74	There are times when I feel that God is punishing me	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q75	I am aware of God responding to me in a variety of ways	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q76a	There are times when I feel angry at God	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q76b	When this happens, I still have the sense that God will always be with me	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q77	I am aware of God attending to me in times of need	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q78	God understands that my needs are more important than most people's	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q79	I am aware of God telling me to do something	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q80	I worry that I will be left out of God's plans	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q81	My experiences of God's presence impacts me greatly	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q82	I am always as kind at home as I am at church.	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q83	I have a sense of the	Not	Slightly	Moderately	Substantially	Very

Above Q74 (continued from previous page): interactions with other people

		1	2	3	4	5
	direction in which God is guiding me	True	True	True	True	True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q84	My relationship with God is an extraordinary one that most people would understand	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q85a	There are times when I feel betrayed by God	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q85b	When I feel this way, I put effort into restoring our relationship	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q86	I am aware of God communicating to me in a variety of ways	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q87	Manipulating God seems to be the best way to get what I want	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q88	I am aware of God's presence in times of need	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q89	From day to day, I sense God being with me	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q90	I pray for all my friends and relatives every day	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q91a	There are times when I feel frustrated by God for not responding to my prayers	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q91b	When I feel this way, I am able to talk it through with God	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q92	I have a sense of God communicating guidance to me	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True

		1	2	3	4	5
Q93	When I sin, I tend to withdraw from God	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q94	I experience an awareness of God speaking to me personally	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q95	I find my prayers to God are more effective than other people's	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q96	I am always in the mood to pray.	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q97	I feel I have to please God or he might reject me	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q98	I have a strong impression of God's presence	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q99	There are times when I feel that God is angry at me	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q100	I am aware of God being very near to me	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q101	When I sin, I am afraid of what God will do to me	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q102	When I consult God about decisions in my life, I am aware of my prayers for his direction and help	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q103	I seem to be more gifted than most people in discerning God's will	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5

Q104	When I feel God is not protecting me, I tend to feel worthless	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q105a	There are times when I feel like God has let me down	Not true	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5
Q105b	When this happens, my trust in God is not completely broken	Not True	Slightly True	Moderately True	Substantially True	Very True
		1	2	3	4	5

Table 8

Reliability data for DAS Consensus Subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items		N of Items
.902	.907		13

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Handling Family Matters	3.68	0.75	167
Matters of Recreation	3.55	0.88	167
Religious Matters	4.08	0.79	167
Friends	3.72	0.80	167
Conventionality	3.65	0.78	167
Philosophy of Life	3.67	0.85	167
Ways of Dealing With Parents or In-laws	3.70	0.90	167
Aims, Goals, and Things Important	3.81	0.87	167
Amount of Time Spent Together	3.63	0.91	167
Making Major Decisions	3.78	0.93	167
Household Task	3.56	0.91	167
Leisure Time, Interests, and Activities	3.44	0.84	167
Career Decisions	3.63	1.22	167

Table 9

Reliability data for DAS Affection Expression Subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items		N of Items
.625			4
	.613		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Problems In Marriage Within Past Few Weeks- Being Too Tired For Sex	1.75	0.48	173
Problems In Marriage Within Past Few Weeks- Not Showing Love	1.72	0.45	173
Demonstration of Affection	3.68	0.81	173
Sex Relations	3.71	0.80	173

Table 10

Reliability data for DAS Satisfaction Subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items		N of Items
.806	.820		9
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
How Often Do You Discuss/Consider Separation	4.48	0.79	124
How Often Do You/Your Spouse Leave The House After An Argument	4.05	1.03	124
How Often Do You Think Things Are Going Well Between You/Spouse	3.79	0.71	124
Do You Confide In Your Spouse	3.81	1.19	124
Do You Ever Regret That You Married Your Spouse	4.15	0.91	124
How Often Do You/Spouse Quarrel	3.24	0.70	124
How Often Do You/Spouse Really Annoy Each Other	3.06	0.84	124
Do You Kiss Your Spouse	3.52	0.96	124
Degree of Happiness in Marriage	3.81	1.27	124

Table 11

Reliability data for DAS Cohesion Subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.799		5
	.798	

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Do You/Spouse Engage in Outside Interests Together	3.15	0.80	158
How Often Do You Have An Interesting Conversation	4.27	0.86	158
How Often Do You/Spouse Laugh Together	4.37	0.90	158
How Often Do You/Spouse Calmly Discuss Something	3.96	1.00	158
How Often Do You/Spouse Work Together On A Project	3.12	1.04	158

Table 12

Reliability data for SAI Awareness Subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.938		
	.938	19

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
I Have A Sense of How God is Working In My Life	4.10	1.11	163
God's Presence Feels Very Real To Me	4.50	0.97	163
Listening To God Is An Essential Part of My Life	4.23	0.98	163
I Am Aware Of God Prompting Me To Do Things	4.18	1.01	163
My Experiences of God's Responses To Me Impact Me Greatly	4.37	0.99	163
I Am Aware Of God's Presence In My Interactions With Other People	3.80	1.09	163
I Am Aware Of God Responding To Me In A Variety of Ways	4.17	1.02	163
I Am Aware of God Attending To Me In Times Of Need	4.47	0.93	163
I Am Aware of God Telling Me To Do Something	3.85	1.08	163
My Experiences of God's Presence Impacts Me Greatly	4.42	0.83	163
I Have A Sense of the Direction In Which God Is Guiding Me	3.96	0.96	163
I Am Aware of God Communicating To Me In A Variety of Ways	4.02	1.11	163
I Am Aware of God's Presence In Time's of Need	4.29	0.92	163
From Day to Day, I Sense God Being With Me	4.36	0.90	163
I Have A Sense of God Communicating Guidance To Me	3.98	0.95	163
I Experienced An Awareness of God Speaking To Me personally	3.90	1.18	163
I Have A Strong Impression of God's Presence	3.82	1.04	163
I Am Aware of God Being Very Near To Me	4.12	0.96	163
When I Consult God About Decisions In My Life, I Am Aware of My Prayers	4.15	0.93	163

Table 13

Reliability data for SAI Disappointment Subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items		N of Items
0.843			7
	0.844		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
There Are Times When I Feel Disappointed With God	1.77	1.07	162
There Are Times When I Feel Frustrated With God	1.69	0.99	162
There Are Times When I Feel Irritated at God	1.38	0.73	162
There Are Times When I Feel Angry At God	1.69	1.08	162
There Are Times When I Feel Betrayed by God	1.20	0.56	162
There Are Times When I Feel Frustrated by God for Not Responding to My Prayers	1.94	1.14	162
There Are Times When I Feel Like God Has Let Me Down	1.46	0.83	162

Table 14

Reliability data for SAI Realistic Acceptance Subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items		N of Items
.892	.894		7
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
When This Happens, I Still Want Our Relationship To Continue	4.27	1.38	110
When I Feel This Way, I Still Desire to Put Effort Into Our Relationship	3.83	1.48	110
When I Feel This Way, I Am Able to Come to Some Sense of Resolution In Our Relationship	3.05	1.64	110
When This Happens, I Still Have the Sense That God Will Always Be With Me	3.90	1.59	110

Table 15

Reliability data for SAI Instability Subscale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.751		9
	.750	

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
I Am Afraid That God Will Give Up On Me	1.64	1.15	163
My Emotional Connection With God Is Unstable	1.91	1.24	163
There Are Times When I Feel That God Is Punishing Me	2.39	1.32	163
I Worry That I Will Be Left Out of God's Plans	1.77	1.15	163
When I Sin, I Tend To Withdraw From God	2.17	1.33	163
I Feel I Have To Please God Or He Might Reject Me	2.28	1.48	163
There Are Times When I Feel That God is Angry At Me	2.31	1.34	163
When I Sin, I Am Afraid Of What God Will Do To Me	2.60	1.44	163
When I Feel God Is Not Protecting Me, I Tend to Feel Worthless	1.89	1.32	163

Table 16

Reliability data for RISC

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.851		11
	.855	

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
My Close Relationships Are An Important Reflection of Who I Am	5.20	1.80	173
When I Feel Very Close To Somone, It Often Feels to Me Like That Person Is An Important Part of Me	5.25	1.71	173
My Close Relationships Have Very Little To Do With How I Feel About Myself	4.53	2.03	173
One Of My Most Important Parts of Who I Am Can be Caputred by Looking At My Close Friends	4.46	1.82	173
When I Think Of Myself, I Often Think of My Close Friends/Family Also	4.80	1.81	173
When I Establish A Friendship With Someone, I Develop a Strong Sense of Identification With That Person	4.90	1.68	173
If a Person Hurts Someone Close to Me, I Feel Hurt As Well	5.79	1.30	173
I Usually Feel a Strong Sense of Pride When Someone Close to Me Has an Important Accomplishment	5.83	1.43	173
My Close Relationships are Unimportant to my Sense of Who I Am	4.77	1.86	173
My Close Relationship are an Important Part of My Self-Image	4.79	1.60	173
My Sense of Pride Comes From Knowing Who I Have as Close Friends	3.94	1.95	173