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Religiosity and gender ideology as predictors of relationship quality: Mediating effects of relationship commitment

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**Religiosity and gender ideology as predictors of relationship quality:
Mediating effects of relationship commitment**

by

Karen Bittner

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Psychology

Program of Study Committee:
Fred Lorenz, Major Professor
Susan Cross
Max Gyll

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

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ABSTRACT

Researchers have found religiosity and gender ideology to be associated with higher levels of relationship quality. These effects are weakening as recent generations have become less traditional, but remain consistent for much of the American population. For all couples, it is important to determine the underlying mechanisms governing these associations. It is likely that the associations between religiosity, gender ideology, and relationship quality are mediated by relationship commitment, which has been understood to have three dimensions. The current study uses data from the 1999 wave of the Family Transitions Project ($N = 290$) to test the mediating effects of relationship commitment.

Religiosity is operationalized in individual and dyadic models as either attendance or religious beliefs. Among the findings, women who report attending religious services more frequently were observed to have higher relationship quality. For men and women, there was a negative indirect effect of traditional gender ideology on relationship quality through one dimension, personal commitment, but not the other two, moral and structural commitment. There was an indirect effect of religiosity on relationship quality through personal commitment for men (attendance) and women (religious beliefs).

In the dyadic model, there was an indirect effect of average frequency of attendance on relationship quality through personal commitment. Traditional gender ideology had an indirect effect on relationship quality through personal commitment. In the model with religious beliefs, there was also a positive direct effect of traditional gender ideology. These results emphasize the importance of considering the influence of the three dimensions of relationship commitment in explaining the associations between religiosity, gender ideology, and relationship quality.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of close relationships can profoundly affect people's mental and physical well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Beach, Fincham, & Katz, 1998). Researchers have uncovered many features of individuals that impact how positively they evaluate their relationships. One such feature is how individuals perceive themselves and their environments. A worldview, defined as the fundamental cognitive orientation of an individual or society that encompasses themes, values, and ethics (Palmer, 1996), instills a sense of meaning for people's lives. This framework may have implications for people's perceptions of themselves as well as their perceptions and behavior in romantic relationships.

A belief in a higher power and the expectations of religious principles can provide a worldview that imbues life with greater meaning, and can also influence perception and behavior. For example, one's religion influences perception and behavior in romantic relationships. Although researchers have operationalized religion in different ways, most measures capture a behavioral dimension, a cognitive dimension, or both. Researchers have only recently begun to examine how the concept of religiosity affects romantic relationships, and have found a significant relationship between dimensions of religiosity and relationship quality. Couples who tend to engage in more frequent religious activities and that hold stronger religious beliefs tend to report more positive relationship quality (e.g., Filsinger & Wilson, 1984).

Different worldviews may affect relationship outcomes differently. Does the association between worldview or religiosity and relationship quality differ for less religious or nonreligious individuals? The majority of Americans believe in a deity, whether conceptualized as God, a universal spirit, or a higher power. However, a small but

significant minority (between 5 and 10%) does not believe in the presence of a higher power or doubts the presence (Gallup, 2011). What, if any, worldview do less religious or nonreligious individuals ascribe to in order to imbue their lives with a greater sense of meaning, and how might this differing worldview affect romantic relationships?

An egalitarian gender ideology is one possible worldview to which nonreligious individuals may ascribe. As the proportion of the less religious or nonreligious American population increases, the population has also become less traditional as a whole. Gender roles have become increasingly blurred as the percentage of female homemakers declines and the percentage of women in the workforce increases. Similar to religiosity, gender ideology has been found to be associated with relationship evaluation—those with a more traditional viewpoint tend to report higher relationship quality (Willits & Crider, 1988).

Although both religiosity and gender ideology have been linked to relationship quality, the mechanisms by which these associations exist have yet to be fully determined. An individual's worldview likely influences the manner in which they perceive their relationship, such as their level of relationship commitment. According to Johnson, Caughlin, and Huston (1999), commitment affects relationship evaluation through internal (personal and moral) and external (structural) influences. Couples who report higher levels of religiosity also tend to report higher relationship commitment, likely due to the positive association with moral commitment, or the degree to which individuals feel they *should* remain in the relationship, as opposed to the degree to which they *want* to or *have* to remain in the relationship. The latter two types of commitment are captured by personal and structural commitment, respectively. Could the relationship between gender ideology and relationship quality also be mediated by relationship commitment, and would this association

depend more on one particular dimension of commitment? For nonreligious, egalitarian couples, satisfaction or quality may depend on personal commitment rather than moral or structural commitment, especially since barriers to divorce have decreased over time.

In the following sections, each of these factors (i.e., religiosity, gender ideology, relationship commitment, and relationship quality) is defined and the associations between each of them are outlined in detail. The subsequent analyses address four hypotheses. The first hypothesis posits that religiosity and gender ideology predict relationship quality, and that one is a better predictor than the other. The second hypothesis states that the association between religiosity and relationship quality is mediated by the three dimensions of relationship commitment (personal, moral, and structural), as is the association between gender ideology and relationship quality.

The third and fourth hypotheses address these associations at the couple level. The third hypothesis posits that a couple's religiosity and gender ideology predict their relationship quality, and that either religiosity or gender ideology will be a better predictor. The fourth hypothesis states that the association between the couple's religiosity and relationship quality is mediated by the three dimensions of relationship commitment (personal, moral, and structural), as is the association between the couple's gender ideology and relationship quality.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The quality of one's romantic relationships can greatly impact one's health, happiness, and well-being. Knowing how to positively influence relationship quality could provide a tool to improve it, but to improve relationships, we must first understand how they work. Researchers have found a number of factors that can impact relationship quality, from concrete factors such as the presence of children (Johnson, White, Edwards, & Booth, 1986) to more global factors such as the way one perceives the world and others. Individual differences in perception, or worldview, may affect how relationship quality is expressed.

For the majority of people, religiosity offers a worldview that shapes perception and behavior, which affects relationship quality. Religiosity can be generally defined as a cultural belief system (Geertz, 1973) that relates one to spirituality and moral values. Research studying how religiosity affects relationship quality has defined religiosity in a number of ways, with behavioral aspects such as religious attendance, or cognitive aspects such as religious affiliation or the degree to which one endorses traditional religious beliefs.

Gender ideology is another cultural belief system that can shape the way one thinks about moral values and how one interacts with others. It provides a sense of meaning and order in how the world works, and shapes expectations for how one should behave. Religiosity and gender ideology both affect relationship quality, albeit in different ways. Gender ideology provides a secular worldview, while religiosity provides a sacred worldview. Both of the constructs reflect the degree of traditionality one endorses, so they are likely correlated. One who endorses more traditional religious beliefs may be more likely to endorse a more traditional gender ideology. Figure 2.1 shows the proposed model representing how each of these constructs interacts with relationship quality.

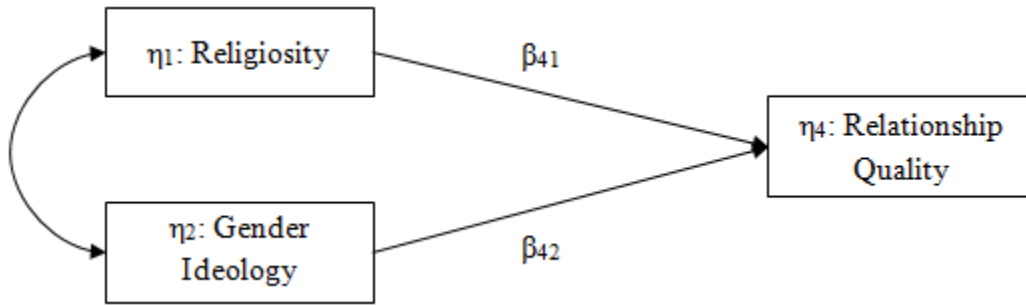


Figure 2.1. Model in which religiosity and gender ideology affect relationship quality.

Each of these constructs may affect relationship quality to a different degree for different people. Those who endorse less traditional religious beliefs may rely on less traditional values such as egalitarianism as a means to understand the world and provide expectations for behavior. One manifestation of this is gender ideology. For those who endorse more traditional religious and gender ideology beliefs, the two constructs may provide converging secular and religious ideologies that provide an even more certain outlook and expectations for behavior.

In the following sections, each of the three constructs (religiosity, gender ideology, and relationship quality) is first defined, and then evidence to support the hypothesized paths in the model (β_{41} : religiosity predicting relationship quality, β_{42} : gender ideology predicting relationship quality) is examined. Potential mechanisms by which these constructs affect relationship quality are then proposed and discussed.

Religiosity

The association between religiosity (η_1 , see Figure 2.1) and relationship evaluation (η_4) has been well-documented in a number of studies (e.g., Ahmadi & Hossein-abadi, 2009; Allgood, Harris, Skogrand, & Lee, 2009; Loser, Hill, Klein, & Dollahite, 2009; Myers, 2006; Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2008; Wolfinger & Wilcox, 2008). Various researchers have explored

religiosity and its interpersonal effects in different ways, including the effects of individual differences and differences between partners in a romantic relationship. At the individual level, researchers have examined associations between the way individuals evaluate their relationship and religious dimensions such as religious affiliation, frequency of religious attendance, and endorsement of traditional religious beliefs. At the couple level, researchers have examined effects of religious homogamy, or similarity in religious beliefs or behavior, on the romantic relationship.

Individual differences

A substantial proportion of the research defines religiosity simply in terms of affiliation. Different religious affiliations have been linked to differing levels of conservatism or egalitarianism, which also affect relationship quality. For example, Steensland and colleagues (2000) describe the noteworthy differences between evangelical and mainline Protestants. Evangelical Protestants tend to teach strict adherence to religious doctrine and emphasize missionary activity. Mainline Protestants tend to embrace modernity and promote social and economic justice. Because religious affiliation and political leanings (liberal to conservative) are closely intertwined, describing religiosity in terms of religious affiliation tends to emphasize the conservative-liberal spectrum.

Religiosity has also been defined in terms of the frequency of attendance of religious services. Frequency of religious service attendance is one of the simplest ways in which to measure religiosity. Attendance is a concrete, behavioral measure of how involved one is with their religion. Much of the research on religiosity has explored sex differences. Overall, women report being more religious than men (Gallup, 1985; Vaaler, Ellison, &

Powers, 2009), and attend religious services more frequently than men (Shehan, Bock, & Lee, 1990).

Differences between partners

Although findings about how religiosity affects individuals in relationships are informative, being able to understand how the couple views religiosity, and any similarities and differences in beliefs, can provide an even greater understanding of the effects religiosity has on the couple's relationship quality. Homogamous religious beliefs can include beliefs in the sanctity of marriage, the importance of religion, and belief in a particular religious doctrine. In addition to attending religious services together, behavioral measures of religious homogamy have included activities such as praying together, attending religious education classes, or engaging in religious rituals together (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001). The frequency with which religious individuals engage in religious rituals is one possible behavioral measure of how much a religious worldview affects behavior. Religious rituals provide meaning (Allport, 1966; Fiese & Tomcho, 2001; Mahoney, 2010), which can offer direction in life.

Rather than conceiving of religiosity as a single cognitive or behavioral construct, other researchers have separated the construct of religiosity into multiple dimensions, each of which captures cognitive and behavioral components. For example, Bjarnason (2007) conceptualized religiosity as a combination of three factors: affiliation, activities, and belief. Similarly, Tan and Vogel (2008) conceptualized religiosity as a combination of experience, ritual, and belief. Idler (1987) simplified religiosity into two aspects: a cognitive dimension, which she called coherence, and an interpersonal or social dimension, labeled social cohesiveness.

Changes in religion

Both cognitive and behavioral aspects of religiosity are changing. The majority of Americans believe in a higher power, whether it is referred to as God, Allah, or a universal spirit. However, Americans endorse the principles of religion to varying degrees. In the last 50 years, the distribution of the degree to which individuals report being religious has changed. Decreases in moderate beliefs and increases in the proportion of fundamental (conservative) believers and nonbelievers may be leading to a polarization of religious beliefs. Despite the emergence of large, conservative box churches, about 20 percent of Americans report being nonreligious (i.e., secular, atheist, agnostic). This proportion has increased significantly over the past 50 years (Gallup, 2011).

These changes in religious belief and practice reflect a greater phenomenon in which individuals are becoming less traditional overall. Couples are making less traditional family decisions (Caplow, Bahr, Chadwick, Hill, & Williamson, 1982; Thornton & Freedman, 1983), such as choosing to cohabit prior to marriage with increasing frequency. Premarital cohabitation is becoming more the norm than the exception, with cohabitation rates increasing tenfold from 1960 to 2000 (Fields & Casper, 2001).

Gender Ideology

These general declines in traditionalism also include decreases in traditional gender ideology. Historically, gender ideology has provided established guidelines for beliefs as well as expectations for behavior. Gender ideology refers to the culturally determined pattern of behavior that is considered acceptable for men and women (η_2 , see Figure 2.1). Women have been traditionally responsible for indoor household duties, such as cooking and cleaning, which are typically daily events. Men have been traditionally responsible for

earning an income and performing the less frequent outdoor duties, such as lawn care and automobile repair. Much of the research on gender ideology has focused on the behavioral aspect of division of household labor; however, the current study is focused on the expectations that arise from having a traditional or egalitarian worldview.

Successive generations are gradually becoming less traditional regarding gender roles (Myers & Booth, 2002). Since 1970, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of married women who are raising children and working for pay (Casper & Bianchi, 2002). In 1997, over 60% of all married women had paying jobs, nearly double the 32% in the labor force in the 1970s (US Census, 1998).

Many variables affect one's degree of traditional or egalitarian gender ideology. For example, higher education influences attitudes and values in general. Those with a college education tend to become more egalitarian and liberal with regard to gendered familial and occupational roles (Myers & Booth, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Historically, gender has had an effect upon endorsement of traditional gender ideology. Men still report more traditional gender ideology compared to women (Myers & Booth, 2002), although both men and women are endorsing less traditional gender roles than in previous decades.

An individual's current conception of expectations and guidelines may provide insight for understanding and interpreting the world. The degree to which individuals endorse a traditional or egalitarian gender ideology may affect how one perceives and behaves in relationships. How similar or different partners are in their beliefs may also affect how the couple evaluates their relationship. Most research has focused on an individual's perception of gender ideology, so research on couple-level effects is lacking. Like having homogamous religious beliefs, having gender role expectations that are similar to one's

partner's beliefs may provide validation for an individual's own beliefs, leading one to feel more secure in one's worldview. Similarity in gender role expectations may therefore lead to increased relationship quality.

Both religiosity and gender ideology provide a way of looking at the world that provides a sense of meaning and purpose. To what degree are the two worldviews associated? Do people that are more religious tend to subscribe to a certain gender ideology? Does gender ideology provide competing or additive predictive function for relationship quality?

Religiosity and Gender Ideology

It is possible that there is a more overarching ideology that predicts both religiosity and gender ideology, such as political ideology. Religiosity and gender ideology seem to be positively related, in that more religious individuals tend to be more traditional in their gender ideology. Political conservatism may predict both of these orientations.

Indeed, the two ideologies are positively associated. Behavioral and cognitive measures of religiosity have both been shown to be related to a traditional gender ideology. For example, many religious groups support traditional gender roles in marriage and family life (Edgell, 2005). This is especially true for fundamentalist or evangelical Protestants. Increased religious attendance exposes couples to views of traditional gender roles and family relationships in more conservative, traditional affiliations (Edgell, 2005; Wilcox, 2002). Thornton and colleagues (1983) found that high levels of church attendance were positively related to women's more traditional ideologies. Religiosity, along with age and education, has a greater influence on traditionalism than does women's experience in the work force (Myers & Booth, 2002).

The strength of religious beliefs and frequency of religious attendance are changing. Likewise, people are increasingly promoting a less traditional gender ideology. These changes have manifested in observable effects within religious doctrine. Changes include greater acceptance of egalitarian gender roles, divorce, childlessness, and a desire for smaller families (Demmitt, 1992; Stacey & Gerard, 1990). Although changes are generally less traditional across the board, differences between certain religious affiliations remain. For example, fundamentalist or evangelical Protestants have shifted to a less traditional ideology along with the general population, but still remain more traditional than other affiliations (Thornton, 1985; Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn, 1983; Thornton & Camburn, 1983).

A religious worldview and a worldview based on a traditional or egalitarian gender ideology have implications for how people perceive and behave in the world. The focus of these analyses is how these beliefs affect the way individuals and couples perceive their relationships, and how couples interact with each other. Relationship quality is one specific way to measure these effects. Relationship quality is defined next, and then findings pertaining to the associations between religiosity, gender ideology, and relationship quality are examined.

Relationship Quality

The field has yet to settle on a single definition of relationship quality (η_4 , Figure 2.1). Some researchers have divided the construct into two valenced dimensions that are captured in self-report measures: a positive dimension including adjustment and satisfaction, and a negative dimension including relationship instability and disharmony (Johnson et al., 1986). Melby and colleagues (1990) conceptualize relationship quality as the degree to

which the relationship is warm, open, and emotionally satisfying as opposed to unhappy, emotionally unsatisfying, or brittle.

The extent to which couples express commitment to their relationship may vary as a function of individual variables. For example, cohabiting couples (Wiik, Bernhardt, & Noack, 2009) and couples who marry at a young age (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Norton & Moorman, 1987) report lower relationship quality.

As previously stated, both religiosity and gender ideology are hypothesized to be associated with levels of relationship quality (see Figure 2.1). Do religiosity and gender ideology both contribute to gender ideology, and do they influence relationship quality differently? The next two sections outline research findings relating religiosity and gender ideology to relationship quality.

Religiosity and Relationship Quality

Figure 2.1 includes a direct path from religiosity to relationship quality, implying the hypothesis that greater endorsement of traditional religious beliefs indicates greater relationship quality. The majority of research exploring the association between religiosity and relationship quality has focused on effects due to homogamy, or similarity, in belief and behavior (Myers, 2006). A preponderance of research has found a positive association between religious homogamy and relationship quality. The average level of religiosity in the couple can impact how highly they rate their relationship quality. Compared to couples in which neither partner indicates high religious beliefs, couples with high or more traditional religious beliefs tend to report higher relationship quality (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009; Willits & Crider, 1988).

In addition to cognitive measures of religiosity, behavioral measures of religiosity are associated with relationship quality. The more often couples attend religious services, the greater the reported relationship quality (Heaton, 1984; Myers, 2006; Shehan et al., 1990). Couples who attend religious services with similar frequency or that ascribe to the same religious affiliation tend to report higher relationship quality. For example, if the husband attends religious services more often than the wife, both partners report lower relationship quality (Vaaler et al., 2009).

This effect may be due to a tendency for more similar partners to enjoy higher relationship quality. Generally speaking, increased frequency of shared activities is associated with greater relationship quality (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009). Therefore, whether a couple attends religious services together influences relationship commitment even more than the frequency with which an individual attends religious services. The influence of similarity in attendance on relationship quality is quite robust. Attending religious services together predicts relationship quality even while controlling for other factors such as gender, work, and family dynamics (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009; Myers, 2006).

Changes in religiosity have implications for its effects on relationship quality. A proportion of the population is becoming less religious and therefore attends religious services less often (Thornton et al., 1983). Changes in religiosity seem to be generational, as current generations report weaker religious beliefs (Gallup, 2011). As religion becomes less important for today's generation, the effect of religious homogamy on relationship evaluation becomes weaker (Myers, 2006).

Individuals or couples who maintain strong religious beliefs may rely solely on a religious worldview to provide meaning and a way to interact with the world. For less

religious or nonreligious individuals, a different worldview may be necessary. These two worldviews may combine to provide a greater, overall perspective or worldview, or the two may compete.

Gender Ideology and Relationship Quality

Figure 2.1 includes a direct path from gender ideology to relationship quality, implying that a more traditional gender ideology leads to greater relationship quality. Although limited research has been done exploring the association between gender ideology and relationship quality, relationship quality has been linked to differences in division of household labor, a behavioral indication of gender ideology. While women's evaluation of the relationship is dependent upon the proportion of routine indoor duties that each partner performs, men's evaluation of the relationship appears to be more dependent upon the perception of the proportion of *all* work necessary to maintain a household (e.g., Coltrane, 2000). These duties include the traditionally gender-typed tasks such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, lawn care, and repairs, but also the responsibility associated with earning an income. Men who work more hours typically do less housework, but as women earn a greater proportion of the household income, the amount of routine housework men perform comes closer to the contributions of their partners (Coltrane & Ishii-Kuntz, 1992).

For women, the relation between household labor and relationship quality is moderated by gender ideology (Lavee & Katz, 2002). Women's expectations about how tasks should be allocated moderates the relationship between how the tasks are actually allocated and their reports of relationship quality. Believing all tasks should be divided equally would result in more conflict if reality does not match expectations. Conversely, believing women should do the routine (indoor) household tasks and men should do the

occasional (outdoor) tasks and be the breadwinners would create less discord if household duties are allocated in a more traditional manner.

Indeed, perceptions of unfairness were more strongly associated with lower relationship quality for nontraditional wives than traditional wives (Kluwer, Heesink & Van de Vliert, 1997). In fact, more traditional couples, in which the husband is the breadwinner and the wife does not work full-time, report higher relationship quality (Willits & Crider, 1988; but see Johnson et al., 1988), perhaps due to clear role delineations and unambiguous expectations. Contrary to other findings, Wilcox and Nock (2006) found that husbands' emotional contributions to their families, rather than household duties, were the most important determinant of relationship quality for their wives. This was especially true when considering the wives' perceptions of those contributions.

Research is lacking in couple-level gender ideology. Researchers have until now tended to focus on individual-level gender ideology, rather than how similarities or differences between romantic partners affect their relationship outcomes. It is likely that, as with differences between romantic partners in religiosity, differences in gender ideology would lead to decreased relationship quality.

Religiosity and gender ideology have both been found to be associated with relationship quality (Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Willits & Crider, 1988). Each of these worldviews offers a different approach—one is sacred, the other secular. Given the changes that have occurred over recent decades in both of these worldviews, do they remain influential? If so, do they both predict relationship quality, or does one explain more of the variance in relationship quality? I predict that each provides explanatory power for the differences in relationship quality (Hypotheses 1a and 1b), although they may predict

relationship quality differently for people with different levels of traditional gender ideology or religious beliefs.

Although more religious and more traditional individuals tend to report higher relationship quality, the mechanisms by which this occurs are still unclear. Religiosity and gender ideology provide overarching worldviews that help people make sense of the world, and it may be the way in which their outlook or worldview is applied to romantic relationships that directly affects relationship quality.

Relationship Commitment

Figure 2.2 introduces relationship commitment as a mediating mechanism that links aspects of religion and gender ideology to relationship quality. General beliefs or expectations about how the world works may lead to more specific beliefs or expectations about how relationships should work. These beliefs or expectations about relationships may influence relationship quality. Relationship commitment is a likely mediator because it offers a way in which the beliefs inherent in general worldviews (i.e., religiosity and gender

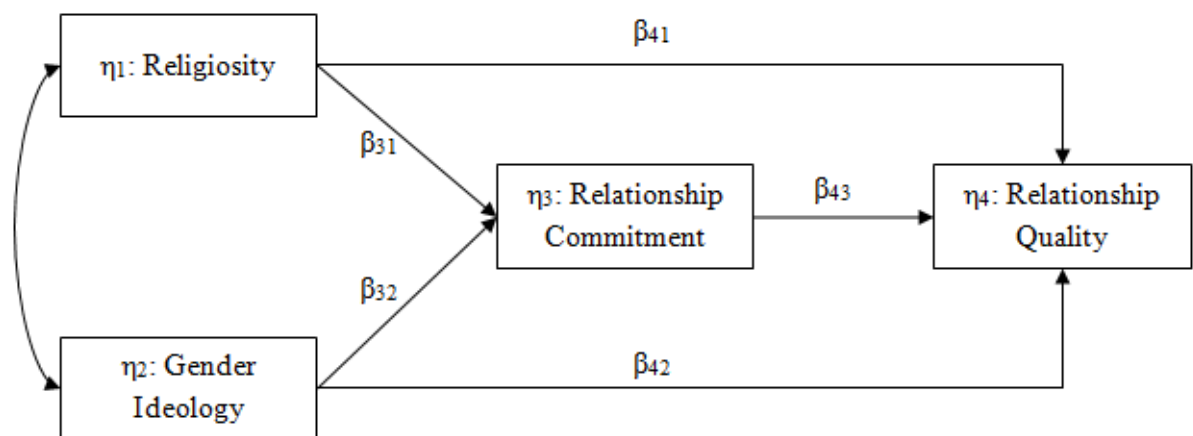


Figure 2.2. Effects of religiosity and gender ideology on relationship quality, mediated by relationship commitment. $\beta_{43} * \beta_{31}$ is the indirect path between religiosity and relationship quality, and $\beta_{43} * \beta_{32}$ is the indirect path between gender ideology and relationship quality.

ideology) may be specifically applied to how people perceive relationships, and how those perceptions influence relationship quality. The following two paragraphs outline two theories of relationship commitment are explained. Next, empirical evidence is reviewed that supports the mediating paths shown in Figure 2.2.

Relationship commitment theories often focus on internal and external influences. Internal influences include factors such as one's personal attraction to a partner and the relationship. External factors include restrictions such as disapproval of divorce or sharing the financial responsibility for a home. In one theory, Stanley and Markman (1992) separate commitment into an internal dimension of personal commitment and an external dimension of constraint commitment. Personal commitment captures the aim of maintaining or improving the relationship for the benefit of both partners. Constraint commitment can include any internal or external factors that create a force that pressures individuals to remain in relationships, regardless of their levels of personal commitment.

In another theory, Johnson and colleagues (1999) define commitment as including three dimensions: personal commitment, moral commitment, and structural commitment. Personal commitment, an internal influence, captures the attraction to one's partner and the relationship and includes defining oneself in terms of the relationship. It can simply be described with one word: *want*. Moral commitment consists of positive evaluations of consistency and stability, or a personal obligation to remain with the partner. It can be described with *ought*. Moral commitment can be an internal or external influence. An individual's positive evaluation of consistency or stability is an internal influence, while an obligation to remain with the partner may be an external influence. Structural commitment, an external influence, includes investments in the relationship, availability of alternatives,

social pressure to remain in the relationship, and effort required in legal proceedings. It can be captured with the word *need*.

Much of the research on relationship commitment has focused on a global measure (e.g., Giblin, 1997; Sullivan, 2001). Johnson's dimensions may be particularly informative in the current context because they provide insight into how relationship commitment may mediate the religiosity–relationship quality and gender ideology–relationship quality associations (see Figure 2.3). Endorsement of different worldviews may lead to the use of different dimensions. Dimensions that are conceptually in line with the worldview may be relied upon to a greater degree. In turn, the belief or expectation inherent in each commitment dimension may differentially affect relationship quality.

Empirical Evidence

Researchers have examined how global relationship commitment is related to the other variables of interest in this study: religiosity, gender ideology, and relationship quality. Each of these three paired associations (relationship commitment and religiosity, relationship commitment and gender ideology, and relationship commitment and relationship quality) is elaborated in the following three sections. These findings provide support for the hypothesized mediation model in Figure 2.2. Following the existing evidence, potential paths are outlined regarding the influence of each of Johnson and colleagues' (1999) three commitment dimensions (see Figure 2.3).

Relationship commitment and religiosity

In general, more religious individuals tend to be more committed to their relationships (Giblin, 1997). Findings associating relationship commitment with religiosity have focused mainly on attitudes toward divorce and behavior leading up to and including

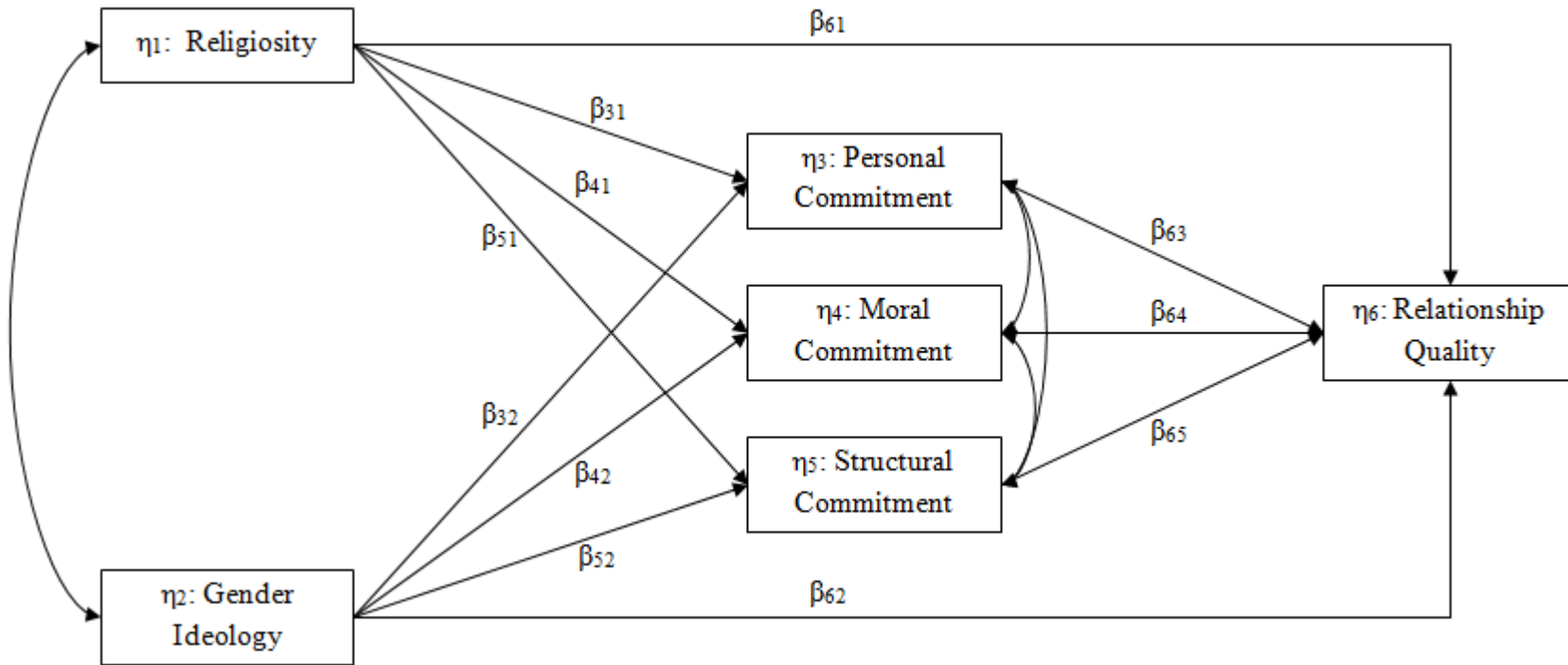


Figure 2.3. Effects of religiosity and gender ideology on relationship quality, mediated by personal, moral, and structural commitment. Indirect paths are denoted by the combination of the two paths. $\beta_{63} * \beta_{31}$ represents the relationship between religiosity (η_1) and relationship quality (η_6), mediated by personal commitment (η_3).

divorce. Couples who are more religious tend to hold more conservative attitudes about divorce and greater levels of relationship commitment (Sullivan, 2001). These findings provide support for the mediating path of moral commitment ($\beta_{64} * \beta_{41}$, Figure 2.3).

Relationship commitment and gender ideology

Relationship commitment may help explain differences in relationship quality for individuals at varying points of the gender ideology spectrum. Like those who hold stronger religious beliefs, those who hold a more traditional gender ideology may report more moral commitment in their relationships. In fact, findings show that traditional couples report higher moral relationship commitment (Helms, Proulx, Klute, McHale, & Crouter, 2006). Additionally, these couples tend to report lower levels of relationship satisfaction compared to egalitarian couples, which suggests they are lower on personal commitment. When parceling out actor and partner effects, Helms and colleagues (2006) found that actor's egalitarianism predicted women's commitment, but not men's.

Relationship commitment and relationship quality

Lastly, research has shown that relationship commitment is strongly related to relationship quality (Amato, 2007; Stanley, Whitton, & Markman, 2004). Commitment promotes behaviors that help maintain the relationship, which leads to a more positive evaluation of the relationship (Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986).

Differences in relationship status are related to differences in reported relationship quality, especially when comparing married and cohabiting couples. Cohabiting couples tend to have lower relationship quality and commitment than do married couples (Stanley, Rhoades, Amato, Markman, & Johnson, 2010), especially cohabiting couples who do not

have plans to marry (Brown & Booth, 1996). Cohabiting couples who have cohabited with other partners in the past also tend to report lower relationship quality (Teachman, 2003).

Much of the research on the associations explained in earlier sections has focused on individual-level differences. The findings that do examine couple-level variables, especially in religiosity, have shown that similarities or differences between romantic partners do impact their relationship quality. Therefore, the hypotheses made regarding individuals in romantic relationships can be generalized to hypotheses regarding couple-level influences in romantic relationships.

Indirect Effects of Relationship Commitment Dimensions

The dimensional differences in Johnson and colleagues' (1999) relationship commitment may affect relationship quality to differing degrees. Personal commitment may be important for all couples, although moral and structural commitment may be especially relevant for married or traditional couples. The knowledge that these couples have committed to a lifetime together may influence their behavior towards their partners—they may be more likely to engage in behaviors that contribute to higher relationship quality. The following two sections elaborate potential mediational paths by which Johnson's (1999) three commitment dimensions may mediate the relationships between religiosity, gender ideology, and relationship quality.

Religiosity–relationship quality mediation

The degree to which individuals report being religious may affect which dimension of commitment is most relevant for their worldview. For more religious individuals, it may be more important to hold true to religious doctrine, one aspect of which is the emphasis on the importance of marriage as a lifetime covenant. Therefore, moral commitment (η_4), or the

personal obligation to remain with the partner, may be most salient for more religious individuals. The religiosity worldview may lead to the inference that the quality of one's relationship is a function of one's level of religious or moral dedication. If this dimension is most salient for highly religious individuals, it may predict relationship quality more strongly than personal commitment ($\beta_{64} * \beta_{41}$, Figure 2.3).

Structural commitment (η_5) may be an additional mediator for religious individuals. One aspect of structural commitment captures the degree to which an individual experiences social pressure to remain in the relationship. This may be an especially influential mediator for individuals who attend religious services frequently ($\beta_{65} * \beta_{51}$), due to more frequent exposure to religious teachings and interactions with people who hold more conservative beliefs regarding the acceptability of divorce. Structural commitment may influence relationship quality due to the perception of availability of alternatives. If fewer alternatives are available, the current relationship may appear more favorable, leading to higher relationship quality.

For less religious or nonreligious individuals, personal commitment (η_3) may be most relevant. A decreased reliance on traditional religious doctrine may lead to an increased reliance on intrinsic motivation. If marriage is not a sacred institution, but a social contract that lasts as long as it is mutually beneficial, then relationship quality could be influenced most by the degree to which the individual is attracted to and emotionally invested in the relationship ($\beta_{63} * \beta_{31}$).

Gender ideology–relationship quality mediation

More traditional individuals may be more likely to rely on the same commitment dimensions that religious individuals use to understand their relationships and orient their

behavior. Because traditional gender ideology is correlated with greater religious beliefs, the two worldviews likely share some overlap in the way they influence how people think about their relationships.

Individuals with a more traditional gender ideology may be more morally committed to the relationship because they endorse traditional beliefs regarding the permanence of marriage—that marriage is a lifetime agreement. Similarly, moral commitment may influence relationship quality ($\beta_{64}*\beta_{42}$) through the emphasis on positive evaluations of consistency and stability. Traditional individuals may be more comfortable and satisfied with their relationships, knowing that there is little chance that things will change.

Structural commitment may also be a mediating variable for traditional individuals ($\beta_{65}*\beta_{52}$). This may be especially true for women, because traditional women may earn less money and may be more reliant upon their husbands for financial support. They may also be less educated or have less work experience and therefore have fewer skills that would enable them to be viable employment candidates. Therefore, structural commitment may influence relationship quality due to the decreased availability of alternatives. Given the relatively unappealing alternatives, the current relationship may seem more appealing, and individuals may be more likely to appreciate their current partner, leading to higher relationship quality. Greater traditionality for men may lead to less experienced structural commitment—the opposite pattern—because a more traditional man may incur fewer or less extreme negative consequences like financial hardship after a divorce or breakup.

Finally, personal commitment may provide the strongest mediating influence for individuals with a less traditional gender ideology ($\beta_{63}*\beta_{32}$). Egalitarian individuals may place more emphasis on the subjective experience in the relationship. They may see

marriage as a social contract, an agreement to stay together “as long as you both shall love” rather than “as long as you both shall live”. As long as the individual remains personally committed, relationship quality may be maintained.

Research Hypotheses: Individual Effects

The first set of hypotheses (H1a and H1b) attempt to replicate the earlier findings regarding religiosity, gender ideology, and relationship quality:

H1a: High religiosity predicts higher levels of relationship quality.

H1b: Traditional gender ideology predicts higher levels of relationship quality.

Although both religiosity and gender ideology have been associated with relationship quality, the sacred (religiosity) or the secular (gender ideology) may provide greater predictive value, depending on the individual’s level of traditionalism.

The mechanisms by which these associations exist have yet to be fully determined. The association between gender ideology and relationship quality may be mediated by relationship commitment. Relationship commitment is one way in which general worldviews are specifically applied to beliefs about relationships, which in turn affect relationship quality. Specifically, the three different dimensions of relationship commitment may elaborate this result by uncovering competing or conflicting mediating effects (Hypothesis 2). For nonreligious, egalitarian couples, relationship quality may depend upon personal commitment instead of on moral or structural commitment. For religious couples, relationship quality may depend upon moral commitment more than personal commitment.

H2: Personal, moral, and structural relationship commitment mediate these relationships. This is the mediating hypothesis, arguing that the effects of religiosity

and gender ideology on relationship quality are indirect through relationship commitment.

These two hypotheses are explored in Chapter 3. First, the degree to which religiosity and gender ideology affect relationship quality is compared with past findings. Predictive ability of religiosity and gender ideology is discussed (H1a and H1b). Second, the mediating effects of the three dimensions of relationship commitment (personal, moral, and structural) are examined. Specific effects of the commitment dimensions are discussed with respect to their strength of influence as mediators (H2).

Research Hypotheses: Dyadic Effects

Much of the research on religiosity that has focused on whether romantic partners are similar or different has focused on how these similarities or differences affect relationship outcomes (e.g., Mahoney et al., 2001). Although research has examined relationship outcomes due to an individual's endorsement of traditional gender ideology beliefs (Myers & Booth, 2002), there is a lack of research focusing on how similarities and differences in gender ideology affect relationship outcomes. Researchers who study similarities and differences in levels of religiosity between romantic partners have found that differences in beliefs and behavior can negatively impact relationship quality (Myers, 2006). Therefore, it is likely that similarities within romantic partners will positively affect relationship quality, and differences between partners will negatively affect relationship quality (Hypothesis 3a and 3b). Combining reports from both romantic partners will allow these comparisons.

H3a: The couple's average level of religiosity and gender ideology positively predict relationship quality.

H3b: The couple's differences between partners in religiosity and gender ideology negatively predict relationship quality.

Figure 2.4 shows the model in which relationship quality is affected by religiosity and gender ideology at the couple level. Religiosity and gender ideology are conceptualized at the couple level by an average and difference score. The average represents the mean of the partners, and the difference score represents the score of one partner subtracted from the other. In this way, both similarities and differences between partners can be explored as potential influences on relationship quality.

As an individual's worldview and its inherent beliefs affect relationship quality, so do beliefs or expectations held as a couple, measured by similarities and differences. As previously stated, general beliefs or expectations about how the world works may lead to more specific beliefs or expectations about how relationships should work. These beliefs or

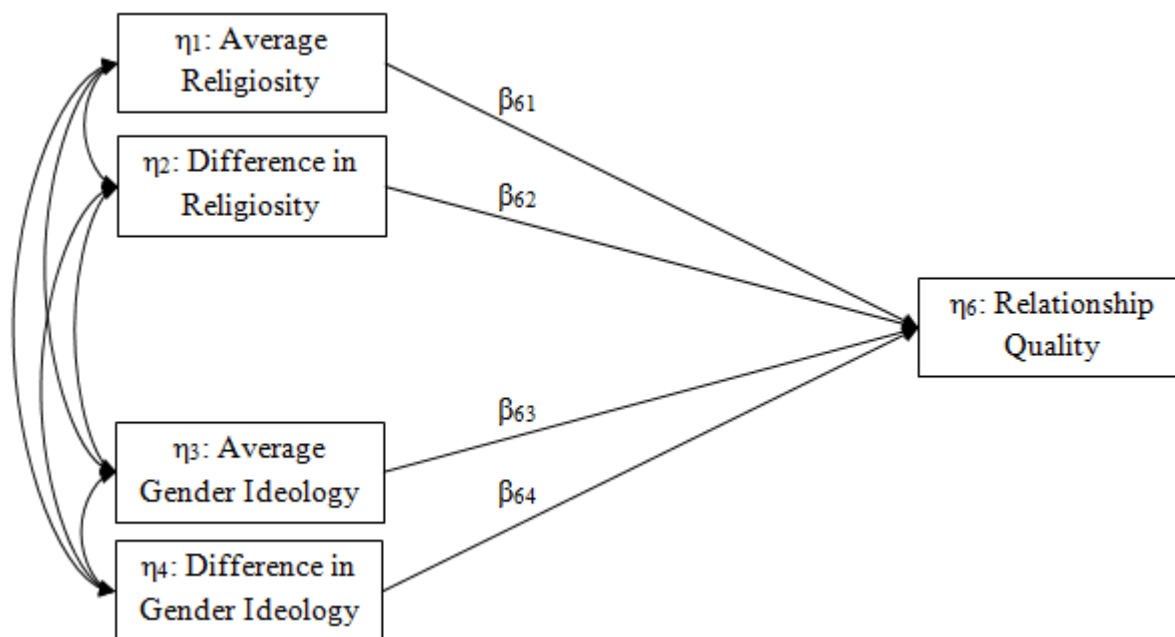


Figure 2.4. Dyadic model in which the levels and differences in religiosity and gender ideology predict relationship quality.

expectations about relationships may influence relationship quality. Relationship commitment is a likely mediator because it offers a way in which the beliefs inherent in more general worldviews (i.e., religiosity and gender ideology) may be specifically applied to how couples perceive relationships, and how those perceptions then influence the couple's relationship quality.

Johnson's dimensions of relationship commitment may be more informative than a global evaluation of commitment at the couple level as well, because the dimensions offer multiple avenues by which commitment may mediate the religiosity–relationship quality and gender ideology–relationship quality associations (Hypothesis 4). For example, the average levels of religiosity and gender ideology may function similarly to the individual-level variables in that couples who are more religious or that have a more traditional gender ideology on average are more likely to report greater moral commitment. For less religious or less traditional couples, personal commitment may provide the greatest mediating impact. Differences in couples may influence relationship quality via relationship commitment by affecting personal commitment to a greater degree. Couples who are more different may feel less personally committed due to decreased similarity and therefore a decreased sense of justification of one's worldview, which may result in lower relationship quality for the couple.

Figure 2.5 shows the model in which relationship commitment mediates the relationship between relationship quality and the religiosity and gender ideology variables, conceptualized at the couple level. Religiosity and gender ideology are conceptualized by average and difference scores in order to assess the influence of similarities and differences between partners. A series of three models will be run to assess the specific influence of

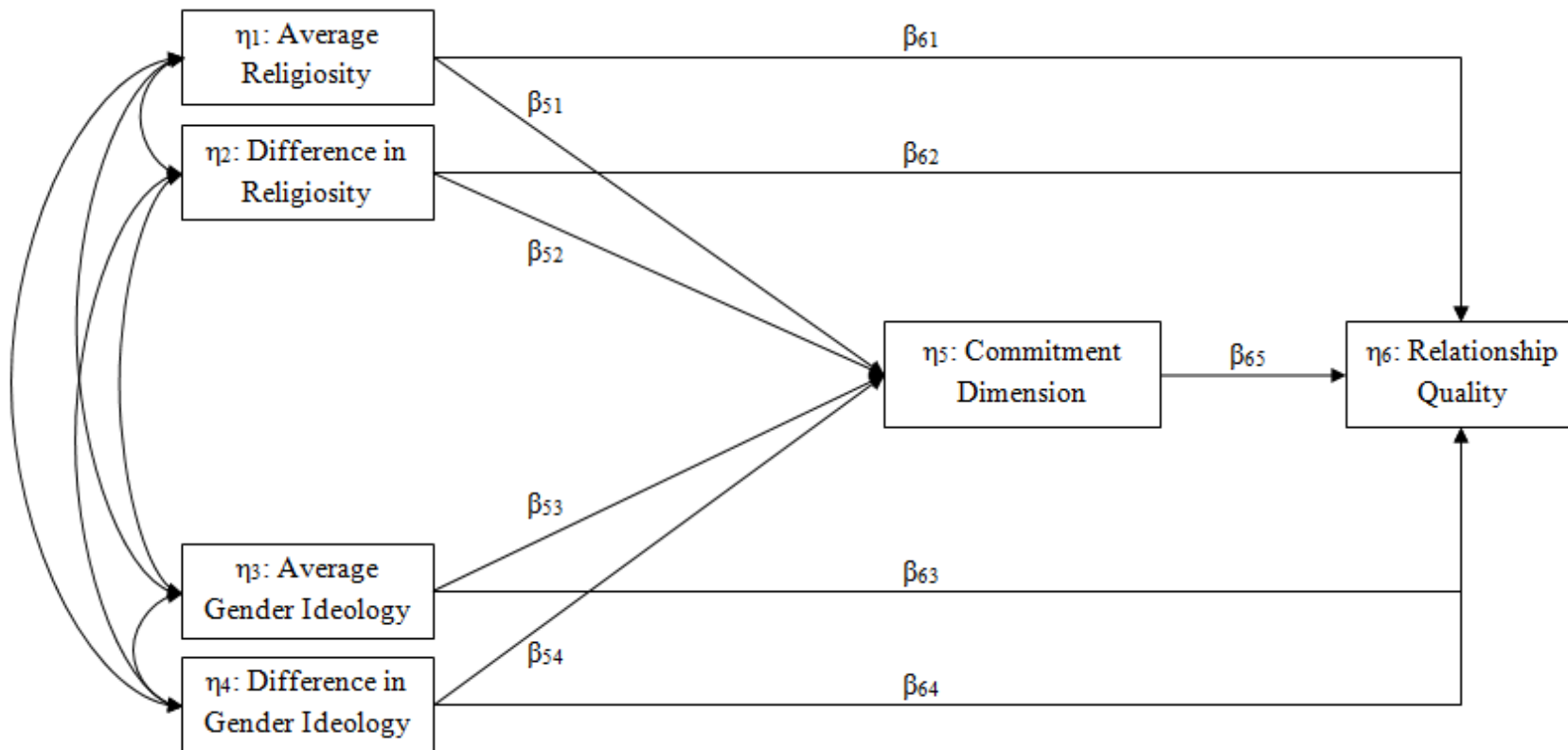


Figure 2.5. Dyadic model in which the effects of religiosity and gender ideology on relationship quality are mediated by three dimensions of relationship commitment. Each commitment dimension (personal, moral, and structural) is run in a separate model to explore differences in effects.

each commitment dimension. In other words, the model will be run once with personal commitment as a mediator, once with moral commitment, and once with structural commitment. In this manner, the specific influence of each dimension can be closely examined.

H4: Relationship commitment will mediate the relationships between the following constructs:

- *average religiosity and relationship quality*
- *difference in religiosity and relationship quality*
- *average gender ideology and relationship quality*
- *difference in gender ideology and relationship quality*

Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 4 are explored in Chapter 4. First, the degree to which the average and difference in religiosity and gender ideology affect relationship quality is examined. Whether the average and difference scores of religiosity and gender ideology predict relationship quality positively or negatively is discussed (H3a and H3b). Second, the mediating effects of the three dimensions of relationship commitment (personal, moral, and structural) are examined. Specific effects of the commitment dimensions are discussed with respect to their strength of influence as mediators (H4).

CHAPTER 3. STUDY 1: INDIVIDUAL EFFECTS

Study 1 addresses the first two hypotheses, which explore the associations between religiosity, gender ideology, relationship commitment, and relationship quality at the individual level. Hypotheses 1a and 1b state that religiosity and gender ideology predict relationship quality. Hypothesis 2 states that these two predictive relationships will be mediated by the three dimensions of Johnson and colleagues' (1999) relationship commitment: personal commitment, moral commitment, and structural commitment. Personal commitment refers to the degree to which individuals want to be in the relationship. Moral commitment is the degree to which individuals feel they ought to remain in the relationship, and structural commitment captures the degree to which situational factors constrain one to remain in the relationship.

This chapter contains a description of the sample used for both sets of analyses and an inventory of the measures used for the individual-level analyses. Individual-level model results and a short chapter discussion follow. See Chapter 4 for dyadic-level analyses, results, and a short discussion.

Method

Participants

In 1989, Conger and colleagues (1994) began the Iowa Youth and Families Project (IYFP) to study the effects of the 1980s farm crisis on rural Iowa families. They contacted schools in rural Iowa and invited 7th grade “target” students to participate in the study. Students were eligible if they were living with their biological parents and had a sibling within four years of age. Those who participated were compensated according to the number of tasks and questionnaires they completed. In 1991, Simons (1996) started the Iowa Single

Parent Project (ISPP), focusing on recently divorced single mothers. ISPP included a 9th grade “target” student in 1991 that also had a sibling within four years of age. In 1994, the two projects were combined to create The Family Transitions Project ($N = 559$ families). The following analyses focused only on the targets and their romantic partners who participated during the tenth year of the study, 1999 (N couples = 290). This wave of data collection was used because it contains the religion variables used in this study.

Procedure

All waves of data collection included in-home interviews for participants who had consented to participate in an observational task with a romantic partner. Those not participating with a romantic partner, or whose romantic partners declined to participate, completed questionnaires that were mailed to their home. Prior to the interviewer visit, targets and partners were mailed a packet of “homework” questionnaires. After the participants had sufficient time to complete them, trained interviewers traveled to their homes and administered additional questionnaires during or after the videotaped interaction tasks. Both the homework and home visit questionnaires were tailored to the characteristics of the participants—married and dating participants completed different sets of questionnaires with questions worded to reflect their marital status. The questionnaire items asked targets and their romantic partners questions about their beliefs and behaviors.

Measures

Although participants provided a great deal of information via the questionnaires, only those measures relevant for the current analyses will be defined (i.e., demographic information, religiosity, gender ideology, relationship commitment, and relationship quality).

For all scales, items were recoded as necessary so a higher score reflects a greater level or

degree of affirmation. All measures were conceived of by Conger and colleagues (1994), unless otherwise noted. Details about each measure are in Appendix A (Religiosity), C (Gender Ideology), D (Relationship Commitment), and E (Relationship Quality). Appendix B includes the strategy used by Vaaler and colleagues (2009) to categorize religious affiliations into cohesive groups.

Demographics. Participants reported their age in years, sex, ethnicity, highest year of education completed, income, marital status (i.e., married or cohabiting), and religious affiliation. All demographics that were related to significant differences in the factors were used as covariates in these analyses. Descriptive statistics of demographics are shown in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

Religiosity. Participants answered items that assessed behavioral and cognitive dimensions of religiosity (see Appendix A). To capture the behavioral dimension of religiosity, participants reported the frequency at which they attend religious services, from 1 (*more than once a week*) to 5 (*never*). Attendance was reverse coded so higher scores represented more frequent attendance.

Four continuous items and an average of four dichotomous items created five indices that were combined to create a latent factor of religious beliefs. The first and second items included the degree to which participants feel religion is important to them, from 1 (*very important*) to 5 (*not at all important*), and the degree to which religion helps them in their daily life, from 1 (*quite a bit*) to 4 (*not at all*). The third and fourth items captured the degree to which the participants feel it is important to be a religious person, and how confident they are that they will be able to be a religious person. Both of these questions were rated from 1 (*extremely important/confident*) to 5 (*not at all important/confident*). Each of these four

items was reverse coded so higher scores represented greater endorsement of religious beliefs. The fifth item in the latent factor was created from an average of four dichotomous items. The four dichotomous items evaluated the change in religiosity over the past year, including whether participants had increased their frequency of attendance, had an increase in their faith or spirituality, had a decrease in their faith or spirituality, or had been “born again”. Participants indicated “yes” or “no” for each of these change questions. All dichotomous items were coded so higher scores represented greater endorsement of religious beliefs and were then averaged to create a single item.

The dimensions of religious behavior (attendance) and religious beliefs were explored in separate but parallel models. This is because attendance was highly correlated with the religious beliefs index and the two tell somewhat different stories when entered into the model. Running parallel models, one with each dimension, allowed for a more thorough understanding of how religiosity interacts with the other variables in the model. See Table 3.3 for descriptive statistics of model variables, including internal reliability estimates.

Gender ideology. The 15-item gender ideology scale contains a list of statements regarding the acceptability of men and women’s roles in the home and the workplace (see Appendix C). Participants indicated the degree to which they endorse traditional gender roles by indicating how much they agree with statements such as, “A woman should not let having and raising children stand in the way of a career if she wants one” or “Except in special cases, the wife should do the cooking and house cleaning, and the husband should provide the family with money”. All items were scored on a scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). Applicable items were recoded so higher scores represent greater endorsement of traditional gender ideology. These 15 items were averaged for each participant to create a

single score which represents the degree to which participants endorsed a traditional gender ideology.

Relationship commitment. Relationship commitment was measured according to Johnson's (1991) conceptualization of personal, moral, and structural commitment (see Appendix D). The personal commitment scale includes four items, such as "My relationship with my partner makes me happy", scored from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). These four items were averaged into a single score. The moral commitment scale includes three items, such as, "My religious beliefs would keep me from getting divorced", also scored from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). These three items were also averaged into a single score. The structural commitment scale includes 15 items, such as, "You would be better off economically", scored from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). As with the other two dimensions, these items were also averaged into a single score.

Relationship quality. To obtain the ratings of relationship quality, behaviors of couples during a video recorded discussion task were scored by trained observers using the *Iowa Family Interaction Rating Scales* (Melby et al., 1990; Melby & Conger, 2001). This scale is an objectively rated assessment of the dyad's relationship, scored from 1 (*negative*) to 9 (*positive*). (See Appendix E.) The couples participated in up to two coded interactions. The first interaction was a marital discussion task in which the Target and his/her partner engaged in a discussion about their similarities, differences, and relationships. In the second interaction, the couple participated in a problem solving discussion.

To evaluate reliability of ratings, one quarter of the total interactions were randomly selected to be independently rated by a second observer, meaning one quarter of the

interactions were independently coded by two people. Differences were then reconciled by the two raters or in a group meeting format ($ICC = .62$). One rating of couple relationship quality is possible for each of the tasks (see Appendix E).

Relationship measures are frequently assessed using self-report questionnaires. While it is more convenient and less expensive to obtain data via self-report measures, data from multiple responders or trained observers provide a more complete picture of the results. For example, obtaining data from both partners in a romantic relationship can provide information beyond that which one can glean from an individual's self-report, such as differences in perception of the relationship. Any confounds due to shared method variance may be reduced.

Missing Data

Standard ad hoc methods of dealing with missing data such as listwise or pairwise deletion are not an efficient way to manage data in most cases. Simple methods of imputation, such as assigning the mean, also have biasing effects. Instead, structural equation modeling allows for the use of full-information maximum likelihood (FIML) method. Rather than imputing specific values, FIML uses all available data to create estimate parameters and standard errors. Using FIML, the final sample included all 290 couples. Partial cases were included, so the estimation algorithm was able to more accurately estimate parameters through existing relations among variables. In general, FIML estimates are less biased and more efficient than those calculated using ad hoc methods (Enders & Bandalos, 2001).

Research Hypotheses

For each research hypothesis, religiosity is operationalized as either attendance or religious beliefs. Each model is run twice, once with attendance, and once with religious beliefs. The analyses will examine the following hypotheses:

H1a: High religiosity predicts higher levels of relationship quality.

H1b: Traditional gender ideology predicts higher levels of relationship quality.

H2: Personal, moral, and structural relationship commitment mediate these relationships. This is the mediating hypothesis, arguing that the effects of religiosity and gender ideology on relationship quality are indirect through relationship commitment.

Descriptive Statistics

The sample was reduced to targets and their romantic partners who participated in 1999 and who identified as married ($N = 184$, 63.4%) or cohabiting ($N = 106$, 36.6%). Two homosexual couples were omitted from the sample because there would not be a large enough number to facilitate comparisons with heterosexual couples. The resulting sample size was 290 couples. A number of demographic variables were collected. Participants indicated their sex, age, race, ethnicity, education, household income, relationship status, and religious affiliation. Results are reported separately for women and men when applicable. See Table 3.1 for household demographics (marital status and household income) and Table 3.2 for individual demographics (race, ethnicity, education, and religious affiliation).

Household income. The current analyses used household income, for which one value was reported for each couple. Household income ranged from \$0 to \$905,888, with a

Table 3.1. Demographic characteristics of participants: Household demographics

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Marital status		
Married	184	63.4
Cohabiting	106	36.6
Household income		
\$0–25,000	74	25.5
25,001–35,000	53	18.3
35,001–45,000	46	15.9
45,001–55,000	32	11.0
55,001–65,000	22	7.6
65,001–75,000	16	5.5
75,001+	12	4.1

Note. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to missing values for some scales. *N* = 290 couples.

Table 3.2: Demographic characteristics of participants: Individual demographics

Characteristic	Women (N = 290)		Men (N = 290)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Race				
Native American / Alaskan Native	1	0.3	1	0.3
Asian	—	—	4	1.4
Black / African American	—	—	2	0.7
White	283	97.6	270	93.1
Multiracial	3	1.0	3	1.0
Ethnicity				
Hispanic	3	1.0	5	1.7
Non-Hispanic	283	97.6	273	94.1
Education				
Less than high school diploma	7	2.4	10	3.4
High school graduate or GED	46	15.9	72	24.8
2 nd year of college/Associate Degree	82	28.3	71	24.5
Some college	22	7.6	15	5.2
B.S./B.A.	109	37.6	84	29.0
Bachelor's plus	8	2.8	10	3.4
M.S./M.A.	3	1.0	5	1.7
Master's plus	2	0.7	2	0.7
Religious affiliation				
Evangelical Protestant	52	17.9	37	12.8
Mainline Protestant	159	54.8	126	43.4
Catholic	42	14.5	46	15.9
Liberal nontraditional	9	3.1	14	4.8
Nonreligious (agnostic, atheist, no religion)	11	3.8	20	6.9
Refused to answer	4	1.4	16	5.5

Note. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to missing values for some scales.

mean of \$45,190 ($SD = \$73,110$) and a median of \$35,598. The income data were log transformed.

Education. Participants reported the highest grade they completed at the time of the interview. The average female participant had some post-high school education ($M = 14.51$ years, $SD = 1.75$, range grade 8 to 19 completed). Males had similar levels of education ($M = 14.15$ years, $SD = 1.96$, range grade 8 to 19 completed). For details, see Table 3.2.

Age. The average age of female participants was 23.4 years ($SD = 1.37$, range 18.2 to 28.7 years); for males, it was 24.9 years ($SD = 0.43$, range 18.1 to 44.0 years).

Religious affiliation. Participants were categorized into religious affiliation groups based on the approach used by Vaaler and colleagues (2009; see Appendix B). The categories used in the analyses were: evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, Catholic, liberal nontraditional, and nonreligious (i.e., agnostic, atheist, or “not religious”). The distribution of participants in each of the categories was roughly similar for men and women (see Table 3.2). Approximately half of the couples had the same religious affiliation for both partners in the couple ($N = 127$, 43.8%), and about half reported having different affiliations ($N = 120$, 41.4%).

Results

Correlations

Marital status. Marital status was significantly negatively correlated with all of the religiosity items for men, and significantly negatively correlated with all but the dichotomous change index for women (see Table 3.4). Cohabiting participants were generally less religious than married participants. For example, cohabiting was associated with less frequent attendance for both men ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$) and women ($r = -.30$, $p < .01$), and a

Table 3.3. Descriptive statistics of model variables

Characteristic	Women (N = 290)				Men (N = 290)			
	M	SD	range	α (# of items)	M	SD	range	α (# of items)
Attendance	2.44	1.10	1–5		2.31	1.15	1–5	
Religiosity				.864 (5)				.850 (5)
R1	3.08	0.83	1–4		2.79	0.98	1–4	
R2	2.89	1.01	1–4		2.53	1.09	1–4	
R14	3.11	1.15	1–5		3.00	1.16	1–5	
R15	3.07	1.14	1–5		2.98	1.12	1–5	
Dich relig	0.41	0.22	0–1		0.36	0.21	0–1	
Gender ideology	1.82	0.58	1–4.13	.892 (15)	2.19	0.54	1–4.32	.903 (15)
Relationship commitment								
Personal commitment	4.36	0.58	2.25–5.00	.731 (4)	4.24	0.62	2.00–5.00	.719 (4)
Moral commitment	3.09	0.95	1.00–5.00	.731 (3)	3.22	0.89	1.00–5.00	.715 (3)
Structural commitment	3.24	0.52	1.76–4.53	.843 (15)	3.00	0.48	1.18–4.59	.840 (15)

Note. R1 = importance of religious/spiritual beliefs; R2 = help handle troubles; R14 = important to be religious; R15 = confident will be religious. Dich relig is an average of four dichotomous religiosity items measuring change in religion over the past year. See Appendix A for a detailed list of the items. Each dimension of commitment (personal, moral, structural) is an index of items.

Table 3.3. (continued) (*N couples* = 290)

Characteristic	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	range
Relationship quality			
Relationship quality (marital)	5.83	1.85	1–9
Relationship quality (problem solving)	4.47	1.63	1–8

Note. Each relationship quality item is from a different observational task. The first is from a marital discussion task; the second is from a problem solving task. One observation is available for each couple, so the same score applies to both the man and the woman in the dyad.

decreased likelihood of reporting that religious or spiritual beliefs were important ($r_{women} = -.13, p = .024$; $r_{men} = -.18, p < .01$) or helpful ($r_{women} = -.12, p = .036$; $r_{men} = -.21, p < .01$).

This is consistent with previous findings that found cohabiting couples to generally be less traditional than married couples (Smock, 2000). Religiosity is one way in which couples exhibit traditionality. Interestingly, marital status was not significantly correlated with traditional gender ideology for men, but it was significantly correlated for women. Women who were cohabiting tended to report significantly lower levels of traditional gender ideology ($r = -.25, p < .01$).

Household income. Household income was significantly correlated with most items in the religiosity measure for women with the exception of the dichotomous change scale. Women with a higher household income generally reported being more religious. For men, income was significantly correlated with importance of being a religious person ($r = .16, p < .01$) and confidence in the ability to be a religious person ($r = .18, p < .01$).

Education. Educational achievement, measured by achievement of a Bachelor's degree, was significantly correlated with all religiosity items for men. Men who were more educated were generally also more religious. For women, having a Bachelor's degree was correlated significantly with attending religious services more frequently ($r = .13, p = .03$) and with how important they viewed their religious or spiritual beliefs to be ($r = .12, p = .04$).

Religiosity and gender ideology. Women who reported being more religious tended to endorse a more traditional gender ideology. For example, women's traditional gender ideology was correlated significantly with attending religious services more frequently ($r = .38, p < .01$), and believing in the importance ($r = .21, p < .01$) and helpfulness of religion ($r = .17, p < .01$). For men, only frequency of religious attendance correlated significantly with

Table 3.4. Correlations among individual model variables

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Mar/Coh	—	-.08	-.10	-.32**	-.18**	-.21**	-.22**	-.20**	-.15*	-.07	-.15*	-.24**	-.34**	-.03	-.04
2. Income	-.08	—	.25**	.04	.09	.05	.16**	.18**	.08	-.11	.13*	.11	.02	.09	.06
3. Educ	.01	.16**	—	.31**	.21**	.27**	.30**	.25**	.14*	-.09	.19**	.24**	.07	.29**	.23**
4. Attend	-.30**	.10	.13*	—	.59**	.63**	.54**	.50**	.48**	.15*	.22**	.58**	.17**	.15*	.16*
5. R1	-.13*	.17**	.12*	.55**	—	.81**	.66**	.60**	.41**	.06	.09	.43**	.14*	.08	.06
6. R2	-.12*	.18**	.09	.54**	.74**	—	.64**	.59**	.46**	.03	.10	.47**	.13*	.12*	.08
7. R14	-.19**	.16**	.11	.60**	.68**	.63**	—	.85**	.43**	.07	.11	.46**	.10	.17**	.01
8. R15	-.21**	.13*	.08	.56**	.65**	.61**	.88**	—	.33**	.04	.15*	.36**	.09	.17**	.06
9. Dich relig	-.12	.00	-.04	.51**	.47**	.43**	.39**	.41**	—	.07	.11	.35**	.08	.11	.00
10. GI	-.25**	.00	-.17**	.38**	.21**	.17**	.23**	.22**	.26**	—	-.28**	.14*	-.14*	-.11	-.10
11. PC	-.04	.10	.22**	.02	.15*	.12*	.09	.09	-.02	-.17**	—	.19**	.42**	.44**	.37**
12. MC	-.28**	.15*	.06	.52**	.42**	.46**	.56**	.55**	.29**	.41**	.02	—	.23**	.19*	.05
13. SC	-.36**	.05	.01	.21**	.16**	.13*	.22**	.19**	.06	.13*	.37**	.19**	—	.19**	.13*
14. RQ1	-.03	.09	.25**	.14*	.16**	.13*	.12	.14*	.03	-.05	.36**	.08	.11	—	.51**
15. RQ2	-.04	.06	.26**	.18**	.03	.06	.06	.07	.02	-.03	.39**	.08	.20**	.51**	—

Note. Correlations for male participants ($n = 280$) are presented above the diagonal, and correlations for female participants ($n = 290$) are presented below the diagonal. Mar/Coh: 0 = *married*, 1 = *cohabiting*; Income = \log_{10} of household income; Educ: 0 = *no Bachelor's degree*, 1 = *Bachelor's degree*; Attend = frequency of religious attendance; R1 = importance of religious/spiritual beliefs; R2 = help handle troubles; R14 = important to be religious; R15 = confident will be religious; Dich relig = average increase in religiosity over past year; GI = traditional gender ideology. PC = personal commitment; MC = moral commitment; SC = structural commitment; RQ1 = relationship quality in marital task; RQ2 = relationship quality in problem solving task.

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

endorsing traditional gender role ideology ($r = .15, p = .02$). In summary, for women, both religious behavior and beliefs were related to endorsement of traditional gender role ideology. For men, only the behavioral component of religiosity was significantly related to traditional gender ideology.

Religiosity and relationship commitment. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, all religiosity items were significantly correlated with moral commitment for both women (r s from .29 to .56, all p s $< .01$) and men (r s from .35 to .58, all p s $< .01$). For women, attendance and the first four religious beliefs items were also significantly correlated with structural commitment, although the relationships were not as strong (r s from .13 to .22, p s from $< .01$ to .03). For men, only attendance ($r = .15, p = .01$), importance of religion ($r = .14, p = .02$), and helpfulness of religious or spiritual beliefs ($r = .13, p = .03$) were significantly correlated with structural commitment.

For women, importance ($r = .15, p = .01$) and helpfulness of religion ($r = .12, p = .05$) were significantly correlated with personal commitment. For men, only attendance ($r = .22, p < .01$) and confidence that one can become a religious person ($r = .15, p = .01$) were significantly correlated with personal commitment. In summary, participants who were more religious were more likely to report being morally committed to their relationships. Structural commitment and, to an even lesser degree, personal commitment, were not as strongly linked to religiosity.

Gender ideology and relationship commitment. In addition to religiosity, traditional gender ideology was also significantly correlated with relationship commitment. However, traditional gender ideology was negatively correlated with personal commitment for both women ($r = -.17, p = .01$) and men ($r = -.28, p < .01$). Participants who endorsed a

more traditional gender ideology reported being less personally committed to their relationships, and this effect was slightly stronger for men than for women.

The correlational results support the hypothesized path from traditional gender ideology to moral commitment. Both men and women who held more traditional gender ideologies reported being more morally committed to their relationships, although this effect was stronger for women ($r = .41, p < .01$) than for men ($r = .14, p = .02$). The association between traditional gender ideology and structural commitment differed for men and women. Women who were endorsed a more traditional gender ideology reported higher structural commitment ($r = .13, p = .03$), while men who endorsed a more traditional gender ideology reported lower structural commitment ($r = -.14, p = .02$).

Religiosity and relationship quality. The majority of the religiosity items were correlated significantly with relationship quality for both men and women, although this was truer of the relationship item from the marital discussion task than from the problem solving task. Frequency of religious attendance was significantly correlated with both relationship quality items for women ($r_s = .14$ and $.18, p_s = .03$ and $< .01$, respectively) and men ($r_s = .15$ and $.16, p_s = .01$, respectively). Confidence that one can be a religious person was significantly correlated with relationship quality for both women ($r = .14, p = .02$) and men ($r = .17, p = .01$). Helpfulness of religious/spiritual beliefs was significantly related to relationship quality for both women ($r = .13, p = .03$) and men ($r = .12, p = .04$).

Two correlations were not significant for both men and women. First, the importance of religious/spiritual beliefs was significantly correlated with relationship quality for women only ($r = .16, p = .01$). Second, believing it is important to be a religious person was significantly correlated with relationship quality for men only ($r = .17, p = .01$).

In summary, stronger religious beliefs and more frequent attendance were positively associated with higher observer ratings on relationship quality. These results replicate earlier findings using self-report measures of relationship quality—more religious couples tend to report more positive relationship quality (e.g., Myers, 2006). The hypothesized mediating role of the dimensions of relationship commitment may help explain this phenomenon.

Gender ideology and relationship quality. Although there was some evidence for a positive association between religiosity and relationship quality, endorsing a traditional gender ideology was not significantly related to relationship quality for women or men. These results suggest that gender ideology and relationship quality are unrelated. A more definitive statement will depend on the results of the multivariate analysis, which is summarized in the next section.

Relationship commitment and relationship quality. The three dimensions of relationship commitment were differentially related to relationship quality. For both men and women, personal commitment was significantly positively related to the marital discussion and problem solving relationship quality items ($r_{women} = .36$ and $.39, ps < .01$; $r_{men} = .44$ and $.37, ps < .01$). Moral commitment was only correlated with one relationship quality item for men ($r = .14, p = .03$). Structural commitment was significantly correlated with both relationship quality items for men ($rs = .19$ and $.13, ps < .01$ and $.04$, respectively), but was significantly correlated with only one relationship quality item for women ($r = .20, p < .01$); the other item was marginally significant ($r = .11, p = .08$). In summary, relationship quality was most highly correlated with the personal commitment dimension for both men and women.

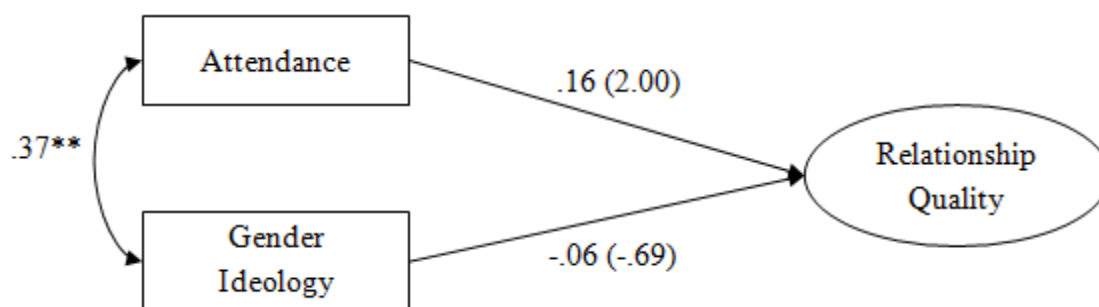


Figure 3.1. Model results: total effects model with attendance as religiosity variable for women. For all models, standardized path estimates are reported with t -ratios. For correlations, * = $p < .05$. ** = $p < .01$.

Structural Equation Models

Total effects models

The first two total effects models show the results with attendance as the religiosity variable for women (Figure 3.1) and men (Figure 3.2). The last two total effects models show the results with religious beliefs as the religiosity variable for women (Figure 3.3) and men (Figure 3.4). Findings from all individual-level models are discussed in the chapter discussion, following the model results.

Attendance. As shown in Figures 3.1 and 3.2, frequency of religious attendance was significantly correlated with traditional gender ideology for both women ($r = .37, p < .01$) and men ($r = .15, p = .02$), although the relationship was stronger for women. Attendance significantly predicted observed relationship quality for women ($b = .16, p = .05$), but not

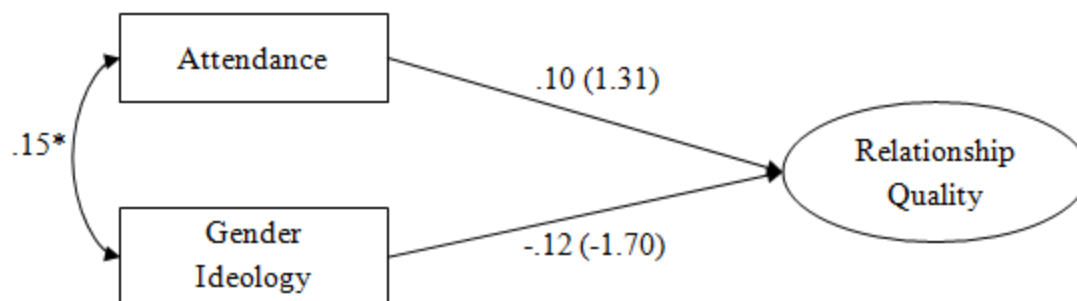


Figure 3.2. Model results: total effects model with attendance as religiosity variable for men.

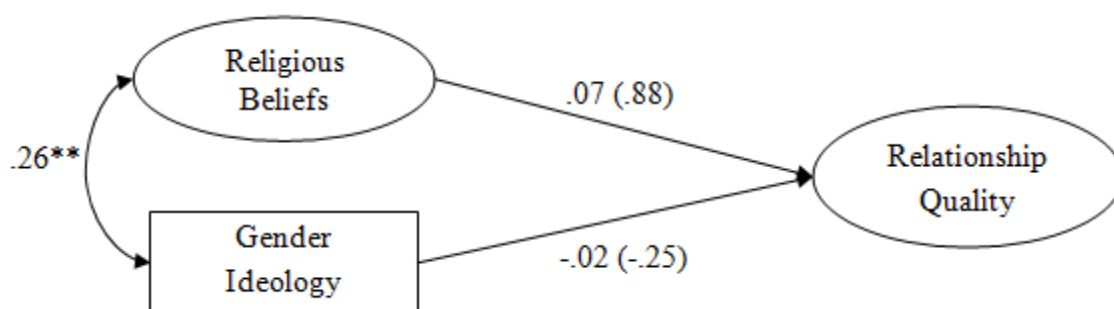


Figure 3.3. Model results: total effects model with religious beliefs as religiosity variable for women.

for men. In other words, women who reported more frequent religious attendance were observed to have better relationship quality. These findings provide partial support for Hypothesis 1a, that religiosity (attendance) predicts relationship quality.

Religious beliefs. As shown in Figures 3.3 and 3.4, neither religious beliefs nor traditional gender ideology were associated with relationship quality for men or women. Religious beliefs were correlated significantly with gender ideology for women ($r = .26, p < .01$), but not for men.

Although reported attendance was associated with observed relationship quality for women, gender ideology did not appear to significantly predict observed relationship quality for either men or women. The addition of the commitment dimensions may illuminate some interesting variance between gender ideology and relationship quality.

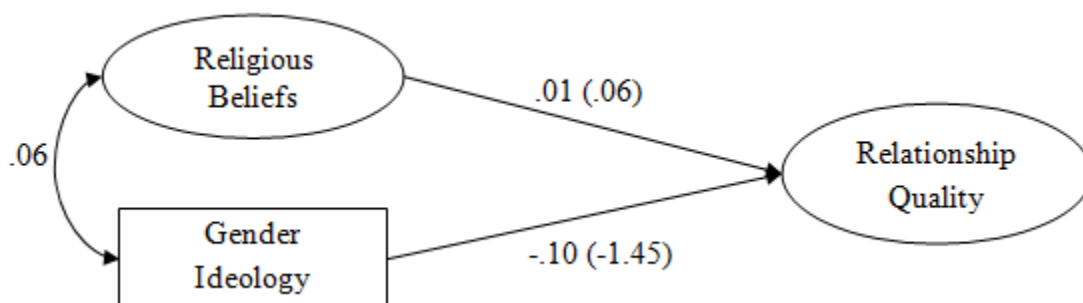


Figure 3.4. Model results: total effects model with religious beliefs as religiosity variable for men.

Mediating models: indirect effects

The first two mediating models show the results with attendance as the religiosity variable for women (Figure 3.5) and men (Figure 3.6). The last two mediating models show the results with religious beliefs as the religiosity variable for women (Figure 3.7) and men (Figure 3.8).

Attendance: women. After introducing the three commitment dimensions, the effect of women's attendance on relationship quality remained the same ($b = .16, p = .05$; see Figure 3.5). Women who reported more frequent attendance ($b = .39, p < .01$) and more traditional gender ideology ($b = .26, p < .01$) also expressed higher levels of moral commitment. Interestingly, traditional gender ideology was negatively associated with levels of personal commitment ($b = -.15, p = .02$). According to these results, women who endorsed a more traditional gender ideology also reported lower personal commitment.

There were no indirect paths from attendance to relationship quality for women. However, there was a significant indirect effect from gender ideology to relationship quality through personal commitment ($IE = -.06, p = .03$). Although women who reported more frequent attendance and endorsed beliefs in a traditional gender ideology also expressed greater moral commitment as hypothesized, the paths were not mediational, as expressed moral commitment was not significantly associated with observed relationship quality. Likewise, the significant path from attendance to relationship quality remained significant.

Attendance: men. Figure 3.6 shows results for men using attendance as the religiosity variable. Men who reported more frequent attendance also scored higher on all dimensions of commitment; this was especially true of moral commitment ($b = .53, p < .01$).

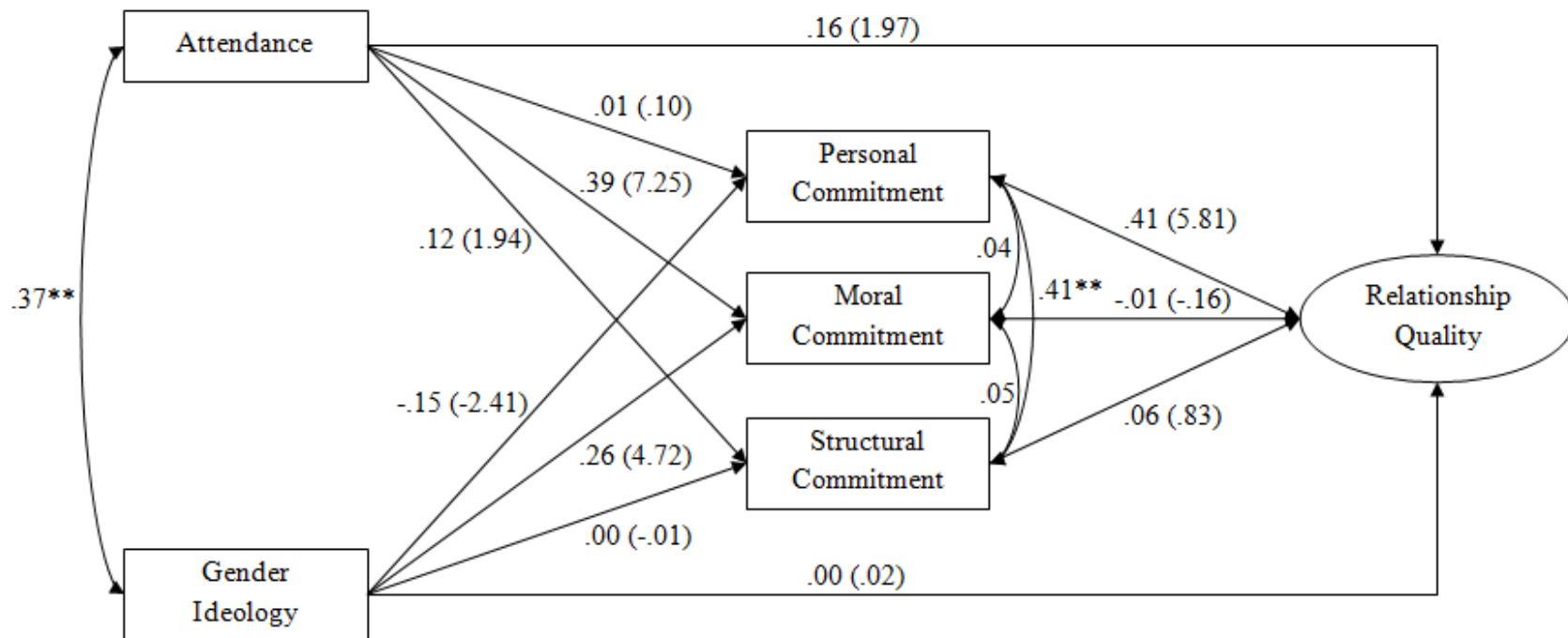


Figure 3.5. Model results: indirect effects model for women with attendance as religiosity variable.

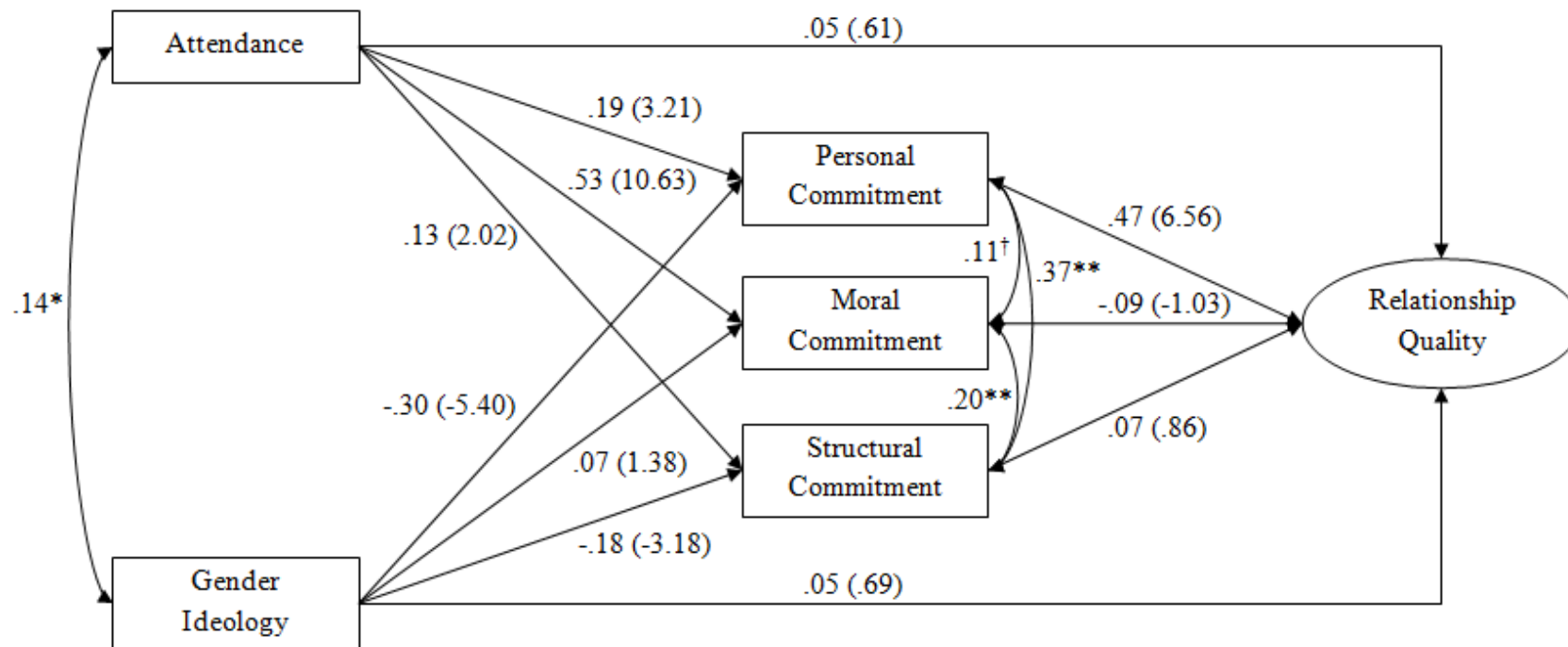


Figure 3.6. Model results: indirect effects model for men with attendance as religiosity variable.

Men who endorsed a more egalitarian gender ideology also scored higher on personal commitment ($b = -.30, p < .01$) and structural commitment ($b = -.18, p < .01$). However, only personal commitment was associated with relationship quality ($b = .47, p < .01$). Therefore, the only indirect paths to relationship quality were through personal commitment for both attendance ($IE = .09, p < .01$) and traditional gender ideology ($IE = -.14, p < .01$). Similar to women, endorsement of a traditional gender ideology was negatively related to scores on personal commitment for men ($b = -.30, p < .01$), although personal commitment was positively related to observed relationship quality ($b = .47, p < .01$).

Religious beliefs: women. Figure 3.7 shows results for women using religious beliefs as the religiosity variable. Women who endorsed religious beliefs to a greater degree also reported higher levels of all three dimensions of commitment, while greater endorsement of a traditional gender ideology was associated with higher levels of moral and structural commitment. Women who endorsed a traditional gender ideology reported lower levels of personal commitment ($b = -.19, p < .01$). Only reports of personal commitment were significantly associated with observed relationship quality ($b = .40, p < .01$). Therefore, there was an indirect effect of both religious beliefs ($IE = .06, p = .04$) and traditional gender ideology ($IE = -.08, p = .01$) on relationship quality through personal commitment.

Religious beliefs: men. Figure 3.8 shows results for men using religious beliefs as the religiosity variable. Men who endorsed religious beliefs to a greater degree also reported greater moral commitment ($b = .46, p < .01$). Men who endorsed a traditional gender ideology reported higher levels on all three commitment dimensions. Again, endorsing a traditional gender ideology was negatively associated with higher reports of personal commitment ($b = -.27, p < .01$), and higher reports of personal commitment were positively

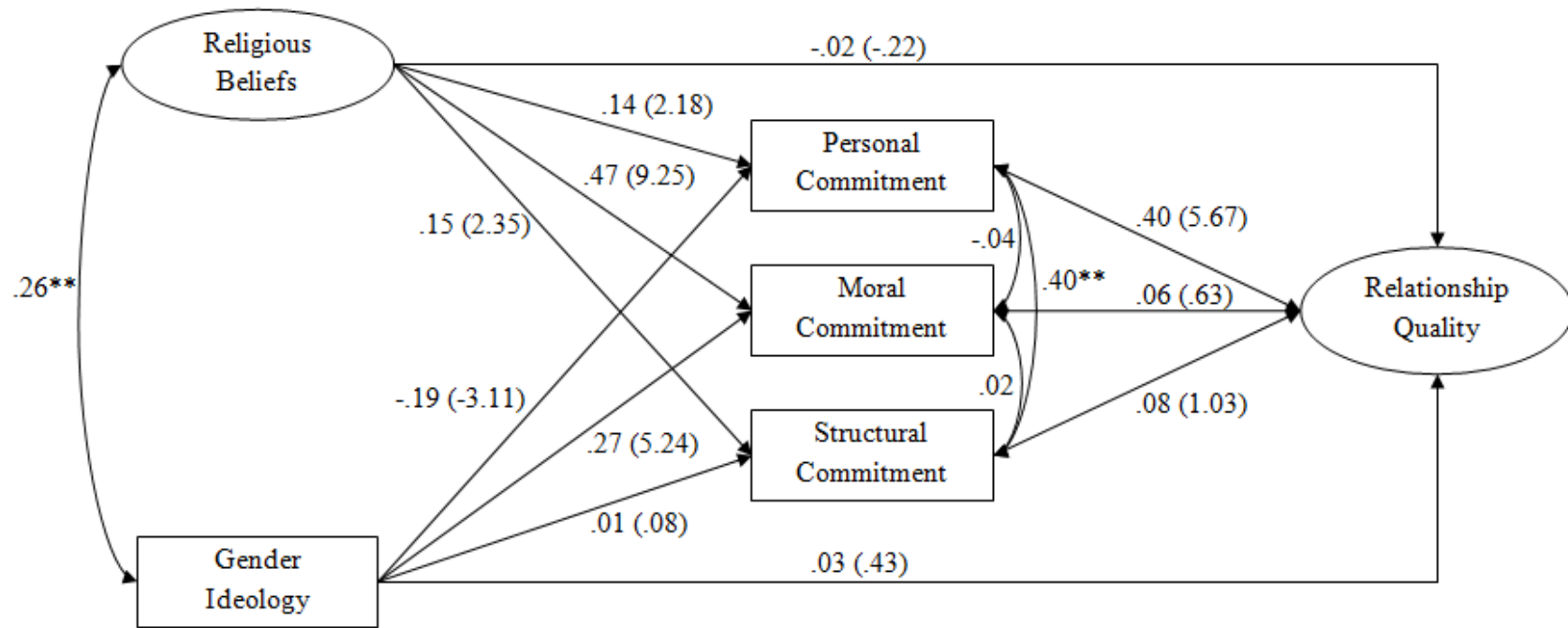


Figure 3.7. Model results: indirect effects model for women with religious beliefs as religiosity variable.

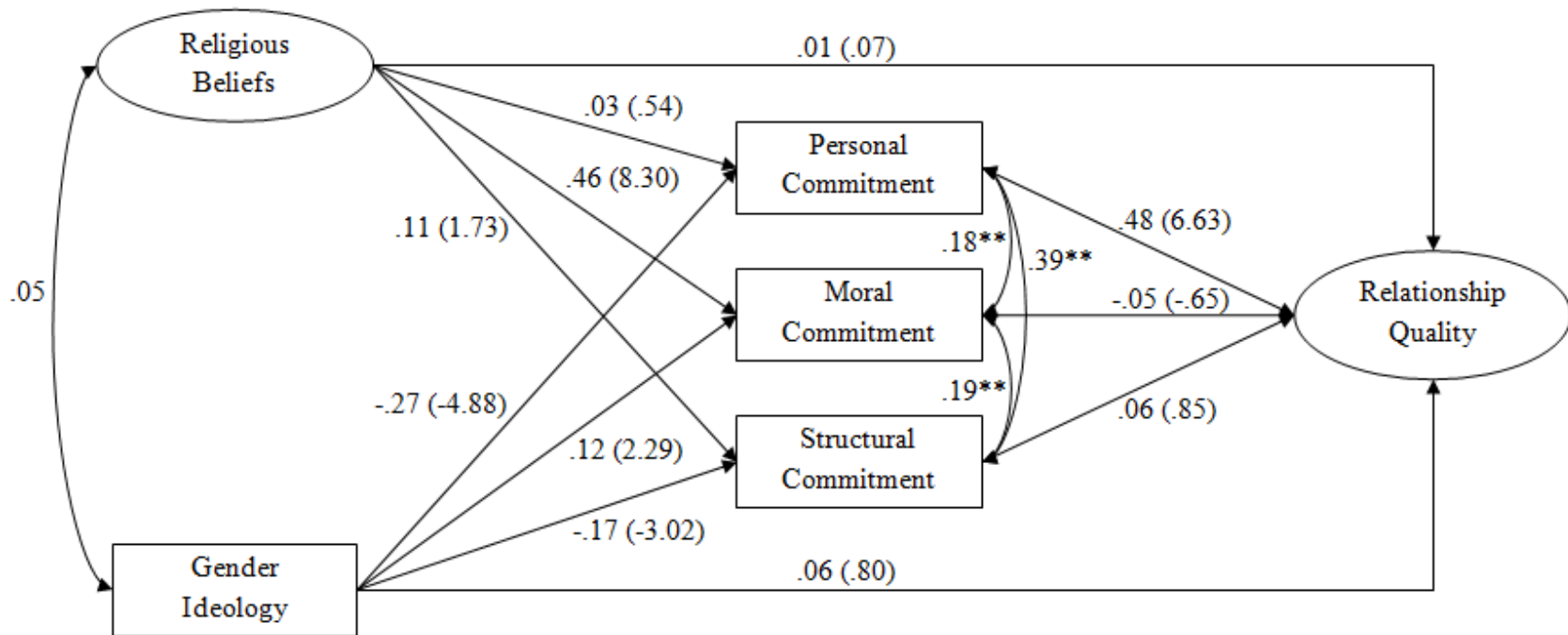


Figure 3.8. Model results: indirect effects model for men with religious beliefs as religiosity variable.

related to observed relationship quality ($b = .48, p < .01$). Therefore, there was a significant indirect effect of traditional gender ideology on relationship quality through personal commitment ($IE = -.13, p < .01$).

Chapter Discussion

Model results and implications are discussed in the order of model presentation. First, results from the total effects models are discussed, then indirect effects. Similarities and differences between the models for women and men are discussed within each section.

Total effects models

There was only one significant path in the total effects models. Although the religious beliefs factor was not predictive of relationship quality for either men or women, the couple's observed relationship quality was predicted by the frequency of women's attendance. In other words, couples in which women attended religious services more frequently were observed to have more positive relationship quality.

Indirect effects models

Two notable findings emerged from the indirect models. The first is that there were significant indirect effects of religiosity on relationship quality through personal commitment for men and women. However, the indirect effect was only significant for women in the model using religious beliefs, and in the model using attendance for men. Second, there was a significant indirect effect of traditional gender ideology on relationship quality through personal commitment, and this effect was negative for both men and women.

Indirect effect 1. In the second set of significant indirect effects, religiosity was associated with relationship quality through personal commitment. However, this effect was different for men and women. For women, the indirect effect held in the model using

religious beliefs as the religiosity variable; for men, the indirect effect held in the model using attendance as the religiosity variable. The effect was slightly stronger for men. Men and women who endorsed religious beliefs to a greater degree and who reported more frequent attendance also reported higher levels of personal commitment, which was positively related to observed relationship quality.

Indirect effect 2. The degree to which men and women endorsed a traditional gender ideology was associated with reported levels of personal commitment. Greater endorsement of traditional gender ideology was negatively associated with reported personal commitment for both men and women, an intriguing finding. This effect was stronger for men than for women. There are a number of potential explanations for this finding, although replication of the results would be beneficial in order to determine whether these results were an anomaly or an indication of an actual phenomenon.

First, it is possible that the effect is simply a statistical artifact. When two exogenous variables predict a third and the correlation between the exogenous variables is significantly large, as well as the effect of the first exogenous variable (x_1) on the response variable (x_3), the effect of the second exogenous variable (x_2) on the response variable may be negatively inflated if it is close to zero. This could be the outcome of the formula used to calculate a path coefficient – the correlation between the second exogenous variable and the response variable, subtracted by the correlation between the exogenous variables multiplied by the correlation between the first exogenous variable and the response variable, all divided by one minus the square of the correlation between the exogenous variables $[(r_{23} - r_{13} * r_{12}) / (1 - r_{12}^2)]$.

Second, it could be a valid phenomenon. It may be that endorsing a more traditional gender ideology actually does lead to lower personal satisfaction—a decreased personal

investment in the relationship. This result is counterintuitive because it would seem that more traditional individuals would be more committed to their relationships in general. However, this lack of commitment seems to have a compensatory commitment dimension of moral commitment in women. It may be that traditional women rely more on the standards of convention to maintain their relationships, rather than personal desire. In other words, they may maintain their relationships out of a sense of duty rather than personal preference. For men, the path to moral commitment was nonsignificant and the path to structural commitment was also negative, so there is not an equivalent interpretation.

For both men and women, only reported personal commitment was associated with more positive observed relationship quality. Moral and structural commitment dimensions were not related to relationship quality. Being personally committed to the relationship may lead an individual to feel that they are involved simply because they *want* to be. Because they are intrinsically motivated to remain in the relationship, it may be easier to be warm and intimate with their partners. Morally committed individuals may feel that it is their duty to remain in the relationship and be a good spouse or partner, so interpersonal behaviors may be more neutral and less overtly loving. Although those higher in moral and/or structural commitment may think of themselves as just as highly committed as those high in personal commitment, they may engage in fewer outwardly warm or affectionate behaviors that would be captured as observed relationship quality.

The significant paths from traditional gender ideology to personal commitment and from personal commitment to relationship quality formed a significant indirect effect for both men and women. Because the initial path from gender ideology to personal commitment was negative, the indirect effect of traditional gender ideology on relationship quality was also

negative. These findings suggest that individuals who endorse an egalitarian gender ideology report being more personally committed to their relationships, and are observed to have more positive relationship quality.

Conclusions

Partial support was found for Hypothesis 1a. Women's attendance significantly predicted relationship quality for the couple, and the effects of traditional gender ideology on observed relationship quality were nonsignificant. The men's attendance model did not have any significant total effects. Models with religious beliefs as the religiosity variable did not have any significant total effects.

No support was found for Hypothesis 2. This was largely due to the lack of significant relationships in the total effects models. Additionally, the one significant path from attendance to observed relationship quality for women remained stable upon addition of the relationship commitment dimensions.

However, for both men and women, there were multiple indirect paths by which religiosity and gender ideology impacted relationship quality. All indirect paths included personal commitment, as it was the only dimension that was significantly related to observed relationship quality. There was an indirect effect from traditional gender ideology to relationship quality through personal commitment. This effect was stronger for men than for women, although it was negative for both. According to these results, individuals that report more egalitarian gender ideology also report being more personally committed, and are seen as having higher relationship quality.

There were two additional indirect paths, which were slightly different for men and women. In the women's model with religious beliefs as the religiosity measure, there was a

significant indirect path from religious beliefs to relationship quality through personal commitment. This pattern held for men, but for the model with attendance as the religiosity factor. Therefore, while reported traditional gender ideology indirectly affected relationship quality for both men and women, the effect of religiosity differed depending on whether the measure was behavioral (attendance) or cognitive (religious beliefs). For men, there was a significant indirect effect of attendance on relationship quality through personal commitment; for women, there was an indirect effect of religious behavior on relationship quality through personal commitment.

The following chapter explores the dyadic hypotheses. The same sample was used for both the individual and dyadic analyses. Measures used only in the dyadic analyses are discussed in Chapter 4; refer to the current chapter (Chapter 3) for demographic information. Model results and a short chapter discussion follow the dyadic analyses. Findings are integrated into a general discussion chapter following the dyadic chapter.

CHAPTER 4: STUDY 2: DYADIC EFFECTS

Study 2 addresses the second two hypotheses, which explore the associations between religiosity, gender ideology, relationship commitment, and relationship quality at the couple level. Hypothesis 3 states that the average levels of the couple's religiosity or gender ideology will better predict relationship quality, compared to the differences between the couple's religiosity and gender ideology. As in Study 1, religiosity is alternately operationalized as attendance or religious beliefs. The two religiosity variables may perform differently, so it is of scientific interest to examine the results of each dimension in separate models.

Hypothesis 4 states that the three dimensions of personal, moral, and structural commitment will mediate the relationship between religiosity and relationship quality. Religiosity is measured by two variables: the average level of the couple and the difference between romantic partners. Likewise, the three relationship commitment dimensions will mediate the relationship between gender ideology, also measured with average and difference scores, and relationship quality. Personal commitment captures the degree to which individuals want to be in the relationship, and moral commitment captures the degree to which individuals feel they ought to remain in the relationship. Structural commitment captures the number and amount of influence that situational factors constrain one to remain in the relationship. As with the previous analyses, religiosity is either operationalized as attendance or religious beliefs.

Method

Participants

Study 2 used the same sample as Study 1. See the Method section in Chapter 3 for a description of the participants and the procedure for data collection.

Measures

This study used the same measures of religiosity, gender ideology, relationship commitment, and relationship quality as in Study 1. Relationship commitment includes the three dimensions of personal, moral, and structural commitment. The exogenous variables of religiosity (attendance/religious beliefs) and gender ideology are constructed so as to capture the mean level of the construct for the couple as well as the difference between partners. For all difference scores, the man's score was subtracted from the woman's score, so higher scores represent couples in which the woman scored higher, and negative scores represent couples in which the man scored higher.

Average attendance. Average attendance was calculated by using a simple mean of the reported attendance responses. On average, higher scores represent couples in which both partners attend more frequently, and lower scores represent couples in which both partners attend less frequently.

Difference in attendance. Difference in attendance was calculated by subtracting the man's score on the single self-report item of frequency of religious attendance from the woman's score. Positive scores represent couples in which the woman reported attending religious services more often than the man, and negative scores represent couples in which the man reported attending religious services more often than the woman. Zero scores represent couples in which partners reported attending with the same frequency.

Average religious beliefs. Each partner's scores on the first four religious belief items were averaged to create a religious beliefs index for that person (see Appendix A). The items captured the degree to which they feel religion is important to them, from 1 (*very important*) to 5 (*not at all important*), as well as the degree to which religion helps them in their daily life, from 1 (*quite a bit*) to 4 (*not at all*). Two additional items captured the degree to which the participants feel it is important to be a religious person, and how confident they are that they will be able to be a religious person. Both of the latter questions were rated from 1 (*extremely important/confident*) to 5 (*not at all important/confident*). All items were reverse coded so higher scores represent greater endorsement of religious beliefs. Internal consistency estimates for both men and women were $\alpha = .90$. The single scores from each partner's scale average were then averaged within couples to create a measure of the average level of religious beliefs for the couple.

Difference in religious beliefs. The same scale average of the four items from the previous description was used to create a difference score. An average of the four items was calculated for each participant, and the man's score was subtracted from the woman's score to create a single value for the couple. Positive scores represent couples in which the woman reported greater endorsement of religious beliefs than the man, and negative scores represent couples in which the man reported greater endorsement of religious beliefs than the woman. Zero scores represent couples in which the partners reported equal levels.

Average gender ideology. The current analyses use the same average level of traditional gender ideology created from the 15-item scale used in the individual analyses (see Appendix C). The two values for the partners were used to create a simple mean value of endorsement of traditional gender ideology. Higher scores represent couples who reported

endorsing more traditional gender ideology on average and lower scores represent couples who reported endorsing less traditional gender ideology on average.

Difference in gender ideology. The difference between couple's levels of gender ideology was calculated by subtracting the man's score on gender ideology from the woman's. Positive scores represent couples in which the woman reported endorsing a more traditional gender ideology than the man, and negative scores represent couples in which the man reported endorsing a more traditional than the woman. Zero scores represent couples in which the partners reported equal levels of endorsement of traditional gender ideology.

Research Hypotheses

Religiosity was operationalized as either attendance or religious beliefs. Each model was run twice, once with the average and difference in attendance as the religiosity variables, and once with the average and difference in religious beliefs. The analyses followed the two dyadic hypotheses stated in Chapter 2:

H3a: The couple's average level of religiosity and gender ideology positively predict relationship quality.

H3b: The couple's differences between partners in religiosity and gender ideology negatively predict relationship quality.

H4: Personal, moral, and structural relationship commitment will mediate the relationships between the following constructs to different degrees:

- *average religiosity and relationship quality*
- *difference in religiosity and relationship quality*
- *average gender ideology and relationship quality*
- *difference in gender ideology and relationship quality*

Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics of model variables

Characteristic	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	range
Religiosity			
Average religious attendance	2.39	1.07	1–5
Difference in religious attendance	0.14	0.73	-2.0–3.0
Average religiosity	11.98	3.09	4.5–17.0
Difference in religiosity	0.87	3.79	-9.0–12.0
Gender ideology			
Average gender ideology	1.98	0.49	1.00–4.22
Difference in gender ideology	-0.35	0.65	-2.21–1.53
Relationship commitment			
(See Table 3.3)			
Relationship quality			
Relationship quality (marital)	5.83	1.85	1–9
Relationship quality (problem solving)	4.47	1.63	1–8

Note. Each couple ($N = 290$) has one score for each variable, so the same score applies to both the man and the woman in the couple. Descriptive statistics for the relationship commitment dimensions are reported in Table 3.3. Each relationship quality item is from a different observational task. The first is from a marital discussion task; the second is from a problem solving task.

Table 4.2. Correlations among dyadic model variables (N couples = 290)

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Mar/Coh	—																	
2. Income	-.08	—																
3. Weduc	.01	.16**	—															
4. Meduc	-.10	.25**	.44**	—														
5. AvgAtt	-.33**	.06	.16*	.28**	—													
6. DifAtt	.03	.07	-.04	-.14*	-.07	—												
7. AvgRelig	-.23**	.14*	.19**	.32**	.72**	-.13*	—											
8. DifRelig	.05	.00	-.10	-.06	-.01	.28**	-.08	—										
9. AvgGI	-.23**	-.03	-.19**	-.06	.34**	.03	.17**	.00	—									
10. DifGI	-.17**	.09	-.04	.07	.20**	-.01	.15*	.02	.09	—								
11. WPC	-.04	.10	.22**	.25**	.01	.01	.11	.05	-.16**	-.07	—							
12. WMC	-.28**	.15*	.06	.23**	.52**	.08	.52**	.22**	.33**	.28**	.02	—						
13. WSC	-.36**	.05	.01	.16**	.22**	.03	.18**	.07	.10	0.10	.37**	.19**	—					
14. MPC	-.15*	.13*	.19**	.19**	.24**	-.02	.20**	.07	-.16**	.20**	.39**	.16*	.29**	—				
15. MMC	-.24**	.11	.06	.24**	.58**	-.09	.51**	-.10	.27**	.18**	.04	.42**	.21**	.19**	—			
16. MSC	-.34**	.02	.06	.07	.20**	.04	.16**	.02	-.02	.15*	.16**	.14*	.29**	.42**	.23**	—		
17. RQ1	-.03	.09	.25**	.29**	.15*	-.04	.18**	.00	-.10	.09	.36**	.08	.11	.44**	.14*	.19**	—	
18. RQ2	-.04	.06	.26**	.23**	.18**	.02	.06	.02	-.09	.05	.39**	.08	.20**	.37**	.05	.13*	.51**	—

Note. Mar/Coh: 0 = *married*, 1 = *cohabiting*. Income = natural log of household income; Educ: 0 = *no Bachelor's degree*, 1 = *Bachelor's degree*, W = *women*, M = *men*; AvgAtt = average attendance; DifAtt = difference in attendance; AvgRelig = average religiosity; DifRelig = difference in religiosity; AvgGI = average traditional gender ideology; DifGI = difference in traditional gender ideology; PC = personal commitment; MC = moral commitment; SC = structural commitment; RQ1 = observed relationship quality from the marital task; RQ2 = observed relationship quality from the problem solving task.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Results

Refer to Tables 3.2 and 3.3 in Chapter 3 for descriptive statistics of participants.

Descriptive statistics of dyadic model variables are shown in Table 4.1.

Correlations

Correlations between model variables are reported in Table 4.2.

Marital status. Cohabiting couples were more likely to have different religious affiliations ($r = .22, p < .01$). They were likely to attend religious services less frequently ($r = -.33, p < .01$) and less likely to strongly endorse religious beliefs ($r = -.23, p < .01$).

Cohabiting couples were less likely to subscribe to traditional gender ideology, on average ($r = -.23, p < .01$). In cohabiting couples, men tended to be more traditional than women ($r = -.17, p = .01$). These results replicate earlier findings that showed that cohabiting couples tend to be less religious and generally less traditional (Smock, 2000; Thornton, Axinn, & Xie, 2007).

Education. Education was defined as whether or not participants received a Bachelor's degree and was included in the model as a covariate. Women's education was significantly correlated with the couple's average frequency of religious attendance ($r = .16, p = .01$) and endorsement of religious beliefs ($r = .19, p < .01$). Couples in which the woman had a Bachelor's degree tended to attend religious services more frequently and endorse religious beliefs more strongly. Women's education was negatively correlated with the couple's average level of traditional gender ideology ($r = -.19, p < .01$). Couples in which women had a Bachelor's degree tended to endorse traditional gender ideology beliefs to a lesser degree.

Men's education was also positively correlated with the couple's average frequency of religious attendance ($r = .28, p < .01$) and the couple's average level of religious beliefs ($r = .32, p < .01$). Couples in which the man had a Bachelor's degree reported attending religious services more frequently and endorsing religious beliefs to a greater degree. If the man had a Bachelor's degree, he tended to report attending religious services more often than the woman ($r = -.14, p = .02$).

In summary, more educated couples tended to report attending religious services more often and endorsed traditional religious beliefs to a greater degree. These findings are contrary to previous results showing that more educated couples tend to be less religious (Gallup, 2011). This effect may be due to the characteristics of the sample. Sampling families in the Midwest may have led to a sample that is more religious than the typical American. The tendency to be more religious overall may account for the positive association between education and religiosity. However, the findings regarding the association between education and traditional gender ideology are somewhat consistent with earlier results showing that more educated individuals tend to be less traditional (Myers & Booth, 2002).

Differences in religious affiliation. The similarity or difference in religious affiliation between partners was captured with a dichotomous item, where 0 = *partners have the same religious affiliation* and 1 = *partners have different religious affiliations*. Whether the couple reported the same religious affiliation was significantly associated with the majority of the religiosity variables. Couples with different religious affiliations tended to report attending religious services less frequently on average ($r = -.30, p < .01$). Consistent with our expectations, a difference in affiliations was positively correlated with a difference

in attendance ($r = .18, p = .01$). In couples with different religious affiliations, the woman tended to report attending religious services more often than the man.

A difference in affiliations was also negatively correlated with the couple's average religious beliefs ($r = -.25, p < .01$). Couples with different religious affiliations tended to endorse religious beliefs to a lesser degree. In summary, couples who did not have homogeneous, or similar, affiliations tended to report attending religious services less frequently and endorsing religious beliefs less strongly. It may be that for couples for whom religious beliefs are more central, it is more important to find a romantic partner who shares the same religious beliefs, and to the same degree. Couples for whom religious beliefs are less important may attend religious services less frequently even before cohabiting or marrying their partners.

A difference in religious affiliation was negatively correlated with the couple's average endorsement of traditional gender ideology ($r = -.14, p = .03$). Couples with different religious affiliations tended to endorse less traditional gender ideology. It may be that couples who are more egalitarian rely less on religious affiliation as a factor in choosing a romantic partner, especially if religiosity is not their dominant worldview.

Similarly, a difference in religious affiliation was negatively correlated with a difference in gender ideology ($r = -.17, p = .01$). Couples with different religious affiliations tended to endorse different levels of traditional gender ideology—men tended to endorse more traditional gender ideology beliefs.

Average attendance. Couples who reported attending religious services more frequently tended to endorse religious beliefs to a greater degree ($r = .72, p < .01$). This finding shows that there was a positive relationship between religious beliefs and behavior.

This high correlation is one reason attendance and religious beliefs were run in separate models.

Couples who reported attending religious services more frequently tended to endorse more traditional gender ideology beliefs ($r = .34, p < .01$). For couples who reported attending religious services more often, women tended to report more traditional gender ideology than men ($r = .20, p = .01$). Past findings have shown that in general, men endorse a more traditional gender ideology than women (Myers & Booth, 2002).

Couple's religious attendance was correlated significantly with two of the three dimensions of relationship commitment for women (moral: $r = .52, p < .01$; structural: $r = .22, ps < .01$) and all three dimensions for men (personal: $r = .24, p < .01$; moral: $r = .58, p < .01$; structural: $r = .20, p = .01$). The couple's average frequency of religious attendance was also positively correlated with both relationship quality items ($rs = .15$ and $.18, ps = .01$ and $< .01$, respectively). In summary, couples who reported attending religious services more frequently on average tended to endorse religious beliefs to a greater degree and expressed more traditional gender ideology beliefs.

Difference in attendance. If the woman reported attending religious services more frequently than the man, the couple was more likely to endorse religious beliefs to a lesser degree on average ($r = -.13, p = .04$). Couples who were different in attendance, in which the woman reported attending more often, were also more likely to endorse religious beliefs to differing degrees, with the woman being more religious ($r = .28, p < .01$).

Average religiosity. Couples who endorsed religious beliefs to a greater degree also tended to have higher reports of relationship commitment for both women and men. For women, higher average endorsement of religious beliefs was positively correlated with moral

($r = .52, p < .01$) and structural commitment ($r = .18, p < .01$), although not with personal commitment. For men, higher average endorsement of religious beliefs was positively correlated with all three dimensions of relationship commitment: personal ($r = .20, p < .01$), moral ($r = .51, p < .01$), and structural ($r = .16, p = .01$).

In summary, moral commitment appears to be the dimension of relationship commitment that is most strongly associated with religious beliefs. This could be due to a tendency for a traditional worldview, whether religious or secular, to influence the way in which couples are committed to their relationships. Greater endorsement of religious beliefs was positively associated with higher observer ratings of relationship quality ($r = .18, p < .01$), although only for one of the relationship quality items.

Difference in religiosity. When the woman endorsed religious beliefs to a greater degree than the man, she tended to report being more morally committed to the relationship than if her partner was more religious than she ($r = .22, p < .01$). If men were more religious, the tendency was for men to be more morally committed to the relationship. However, this result was not significant ($r = -.10, p = .11$), so more support is needed to verify this finding.

Average gender ideology. Couples who endorsed more traditional gender ideology beliefs were actually *less* likely to be personally committed to the relationship ($r_{women} = -.16, r_{men} = -.16, ps < .01$). However, women ($r = .33, p < .01$) and men ($r = .27, p < .01$) were both *more* likely to be morally committed to the relationship.

Difference in gender ideology. When women endorsed more traditional gender ideology beliefs than their romantic partner, both partners were more morally committed ($r_{women} = .28, r_{men} = .18, ps < .01$). A difference in the level of traditional gender ideology beliefs was significantly correlated with men's, but not women's, personal ($r = .20, p < .01$)

and structural ($r = .16, p < .01$) commitment. Overall, in relationships in which women held more traditional gender ideology beliefs, men reported being more committed to the relationship. The effects for women held only for moral commitment.

Relationship commitment. Each of the relationship commitment dimensions tended to be positively correlated with the other dimensions for both men and women. Higher scores on personal commitment were significantly correlated with scores on moral commitment for men ($r = .19, p < .01$), but not for women. Higher scores on personal commitment were positively correlated with scores on structural commitment for both women ($r = .37, p < .01$) and men ($r = .42, p < .01$). Higher scores on moral commitment were associated with higher scores on structural commitment for both women ($r = .19, p < .01$) and men ($r = .23, p < .01$).

Personal commitment was more strongly correlated with the two relationship quality items than were either moral or structural commitment. This was true for both women ($r_s = .36$ and $.36$ respectively, $p_s < .01$) and men ($r_s = .44$ and $.37, p_s < .01$). For women, moral commitment did not significantly correlate with relationship quality, although structural commitment positively correlated with the problem solving relationship quality item ($r = .20, p < .01$). For men, moral commitment was positively correlated with the marital relationship quality item ($r = .14, p = .03$), and structural commitment positively correlated with both relationship quality items ($r_s = .19$ and $.13, p_s < .01$ and $.04$, respectively).

Relationship quality. The two relationship quality items correlated moderately strongly with each other ($r = .51, p < .01$). They were rated from two different interaction tasks, the first of which was from a marital task in which partners discussed their similarities,

differences, and relationships. In the second task, couples were instructed to solve a series of problems that they identified as pertinent for their household or relationship.

Structural Equation Models

Total effects models

The first total effects model shows the results with attendance as the religiosity variable (see Figure 4.1). The second total effects model shows the results with religious beliefs as the religiosity variable (see Figure 4.2). Findings from all dyadic-level models are discussed in the chapter discussion, following the model results.

Attendance. As shown in Figure 4.1, couples who reported attending religious services more frequently tended to endorse a more traditional gender ideology ($r = .35, p < .01$). In couples who reported attending religious services more frequently, the man was more likely to endorse a more traditional gender ideology than the woman ($r = -.21, p < .01$). Only the couple's average religious attendance was associated with observed relationship quality ($b = .17, p = .04$).



Figure 4.1. Model results: dyadic total effects model with average and difference in attendance as the religiosity variables. All difference scores are calculated by subtracting the man's score from the woman's score. For all models, standardized path estimates are reported with t -ratios. For correlations: $^{\dagger} = .05 < p < .10$. $* = p < .05$. $** = p < .01$.

Religious beliefs. As shown in Figure 4.2, couples who endorsed religious beliefs to a greater degree tended to endorse a more traditional gender ideology ($r = .17, p < .01$). In couples with stronger expressed religious beliefs, the man tended to endorse a more traditional gender ideology than the woman ($r = -.14, p = .02$).

None of the dyadic variables predicted relationship quality, although each estimate was in the same direction as in the previous model (Figure 4.1). According to these results, neither the couple's religious beliefs nor the couple's gender ideology predict relationship quality. Inclusion of the relationship commitment dimensions may shed more light on these relationships.

Indirect effects models

Figures 4.3 to 4.8 show the indirect effects of relationship commitment dimensions on the association between religiosity, traditional gender ideology, and relationship quality. The first three models included attendance as the religiosity variable, and the last three models included religious beliefs as the religiosity variable.

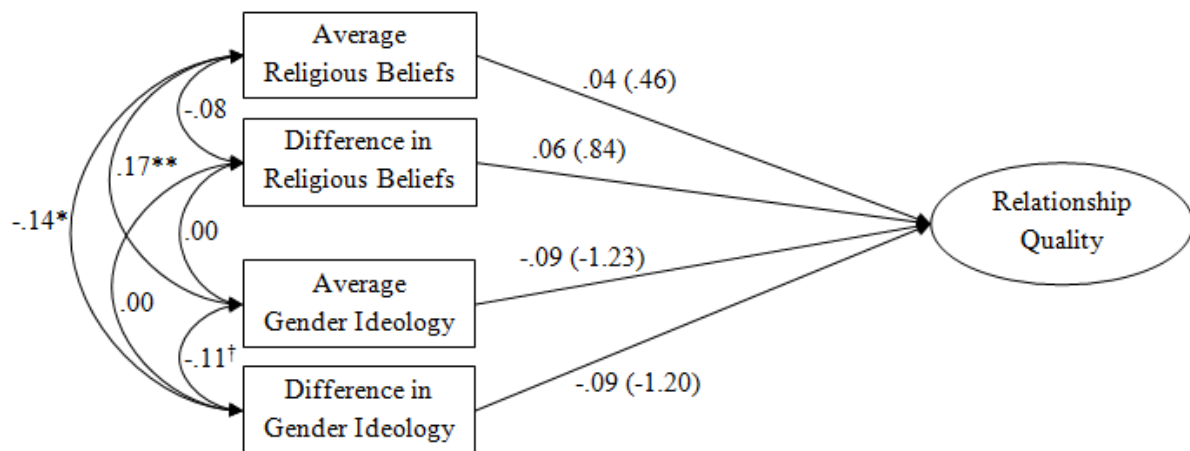


Figure 4.2. Model results: dyadic total effects model with average and difference in religious beliefs as the religiosity variables. For correlations: $^\dagger = .05 < p < .10$. $* = p < .05$. $** = p < .01$.

For all dyadic models with a relationship commitment dimension as mediator, the average level of religiosity, whether operationalized as attendance or religious beliefs, was significantly correlated with both average gender ideology and difference in gender ideology. Couples who were more religious, whether defined as attending services more frequently or endorsing religious beliefs to a greater degree, tended to endorse a more traditional gender ideology. Women were less likely than men to endorse a more traditional gender ideology.

The three models with attendance as the religiosity variable are discussed first, followed by a discussion of the three models with religious beliefs as the religiosity variable. Figures 4.3 through 4.5 show the results of the models including attendance as the religiosity variable.

Personal commitment as mediator. Couples who reported attending religious services more frequently on average also reported greater personal commitment ($b = .19, p = .04$; see Figure 4.3). However, couples who endorsed a more traditional gender ideology reported lower personal commitment ($b = -.33, p < .01$). Couples who expressed more personal commitment were rated as having more positive relationship quality ($b = .88, p < .01$).

Although the total effects models only showed an effect of average attendance on relationship quality, the indirect effects model using the dimension of personal commitment showed indirect effects of both the couple's average frequency of attendance ($IE = .16, p = .05$) and the couple's average traditional gender ideology ($IE = -.28, p < .01$) on relationship quality. These results suggest that more frequent average attendance has both a total and indirect effect upon relationship quality, while average traditional gender ideology has a negative effect on relationship quality through personal commitment. Upon addition of

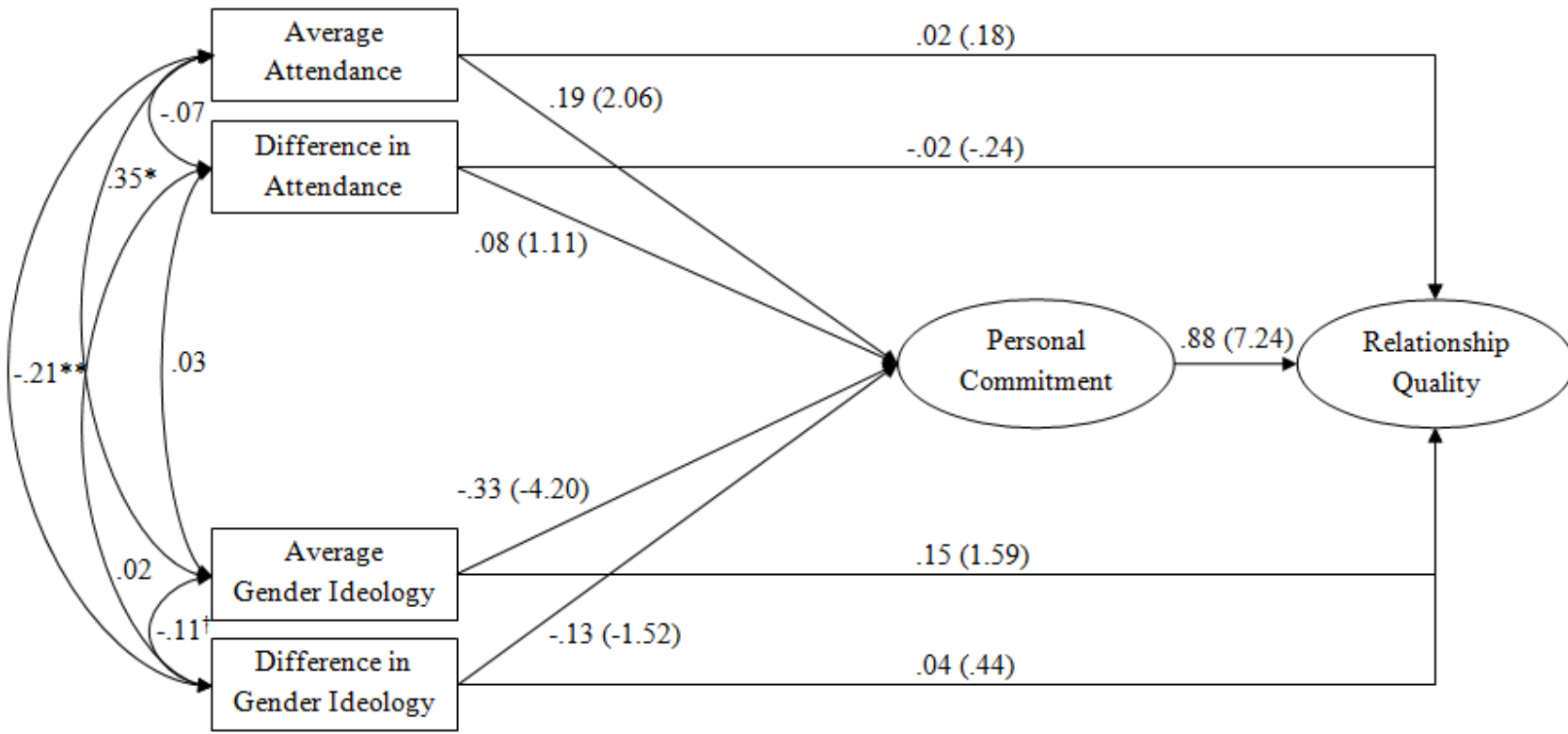


Figure 4.3. Model results: dyadic mediating model with average and difference in attendance as the religiosity variables and personal commitment as the commitment dimension. Difference scores are calculated by subtracting the man's score from the woman's score. Each commitment dimension is a latent factor comprised of women's commitment and men's commitment. Relationship quality is a latent factor comprised of two observed relationship quality items, one from a marital discussion task and one from a problem solving task. For correlations: † = .05 < p < .10. * = p < .05. ** = p < .01.

personal commitment to the model, the previously significant relationship between average attendance and relationship quality became nonsignificant, indicating complete mediation by personal commitment.

Moral commitment as mediator. Couples who reported attending religious services more frequently ($b = .68, p < .01$) and that endorsed a more traditional gender ideology ($b = .21, p < .01$) scored higher on moral commitment (see Figure 4.4). However, a greater difference between partners in traditional gender ideology ($b = -.18, p < .01$) was negatively associated with the couple's report of moral commitment.

Although most of the predictor variables significantly predicted moral commitment, moral commitment was not significantly associated with relationship quality, so there were no indirect effects or mediational effects in this model.

Structural commitment as mediator. Couples who reported more frequent religious attendance also scored higher on structural commitment ($b = .22, p = .02$), which was significantly associated with observed relationship quality ($b = .60, p < .01$; see Figure 4.5). Although the initially significant total effect of average attendance on relationship quality became nonsignificant with the addition of structural commitment, the indirect effect of average attendance to relationship quality through structural commitment was only marginally significant ($IE = .13, p = .10$).

Figures 4.6 through 4.8 show the indirect effects of the relationship commitment dimensions on the associations between religious beliefs, gender ideology, and relationship quality. The couple's average level of endorsement of religious beliefs was positively correlated with traditional gender ideology and negatively correlated with differences in gender ideology. Couples who were more religious, defined as endorsing religious beliefs to

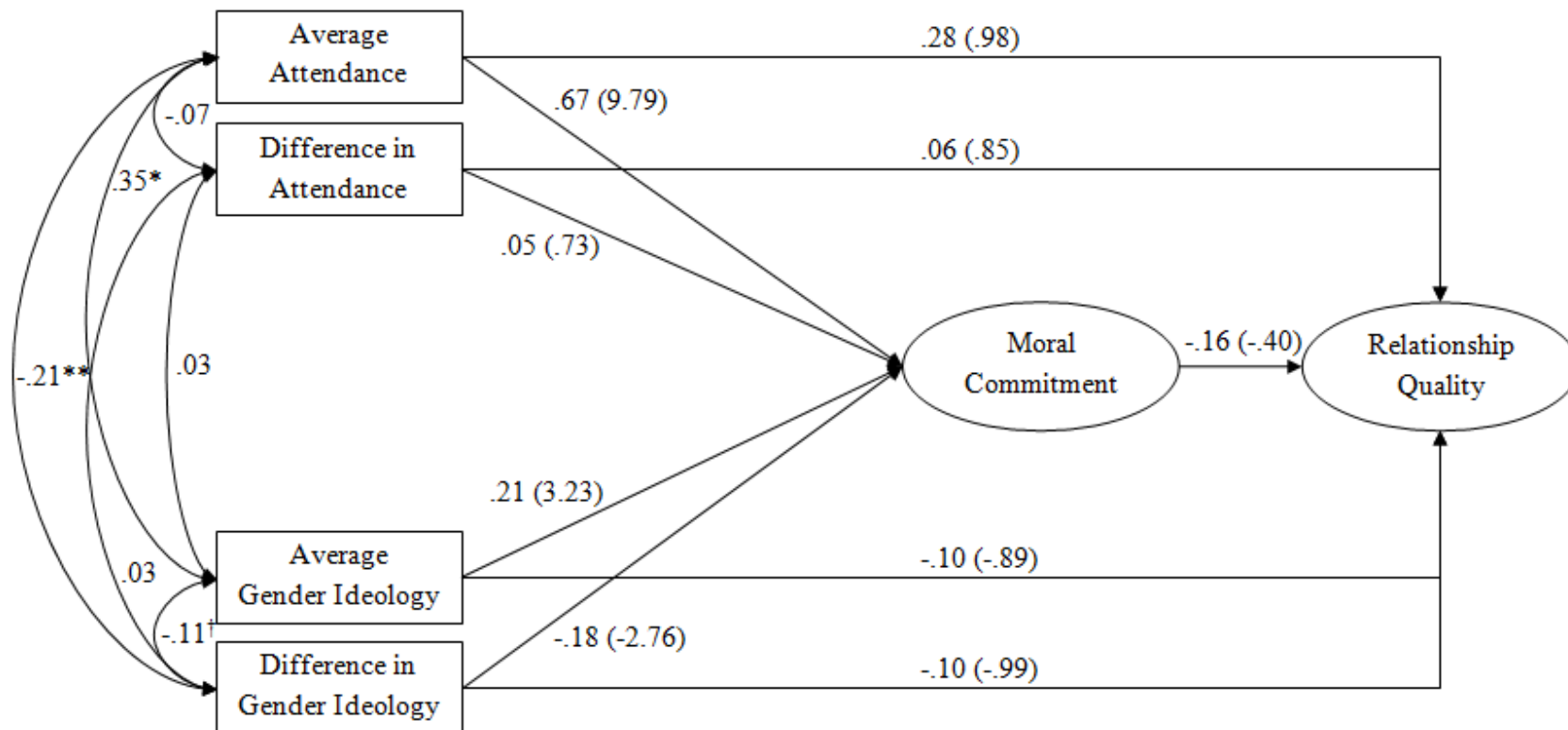


Figure 4.4. Model results: dyadic mediating model with average and difference in attendance as the religiosity variables and moral commitment as the commitment dimension.

For correlations: † = .05 < p < .10. * = p < .05. ** = p < .01.

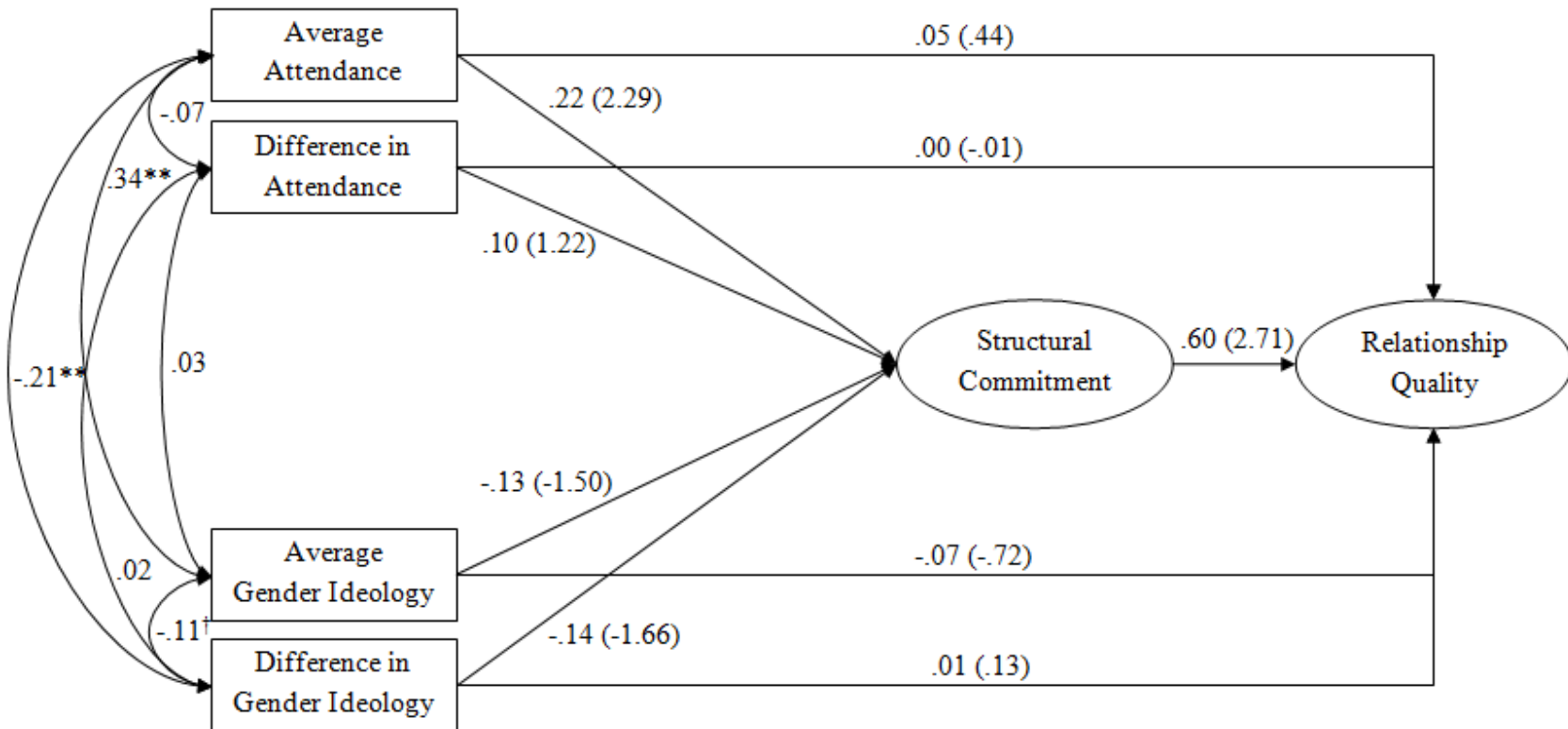


Figure 4.5. Model results: dyadic mediating model with average and difference in attendance as the religiosity variables and structural commitment as the commitment dimension.

For correlations: † = .05 < p < .10. * = p < .05. ** = p < .01.

a greater degree, tended to also endorse traditional gender ideology to a greater degree. More religious partners tended to be more similar in their level of traditional ideology.

Personal commitment as mediator. Couples who endorsed a more traditional gender ideology on average also reported lower personal commitment ($b = -.29, p < .01$; see Figure 4.6). As in the model with attendance as the religiosity variable, couples who reported being more personally committed were rated as being higher on observed relationship quality ($b = .91, p < .01$).

The indirect effect of average gender ideology on relationship quality was significant and negative ($IE = -.27, p < .01$), indicating that couples who endorsed more traditional gender ideology reported lower personal commitment in their relationships, which in turn was associated with lower observed relationship quality. The direct path from average gender ideology to relationship quality was also significant and positive ($DE = .18, p = .05$), which meant that couples who endorsed a more traditional gender ideology were rated as having *better* relationship quality. The indirect and direct effects had opposite signs—the direct effect was positive and the indirect effect was negative—which helps explain why the total effect was nonsignificant (see Figure 4.2). The direct and indirect effects canceled out, obscuring any significant relationships in the total effects model.

Moral commitment as mediator. Average religious beliefs, the difference in religious beliefs, average traditional gender ideology, and the difference in endorsement of traditional gender ideology were all significantly associated with higher levels of moral commitment (see Figure 4.7). The couple's average religious beliefs, difference in religious beliefs, average traditional gender ideology, and difference in traditional gender ideology were all significantly related to moral commitment. However, moral commitment was not

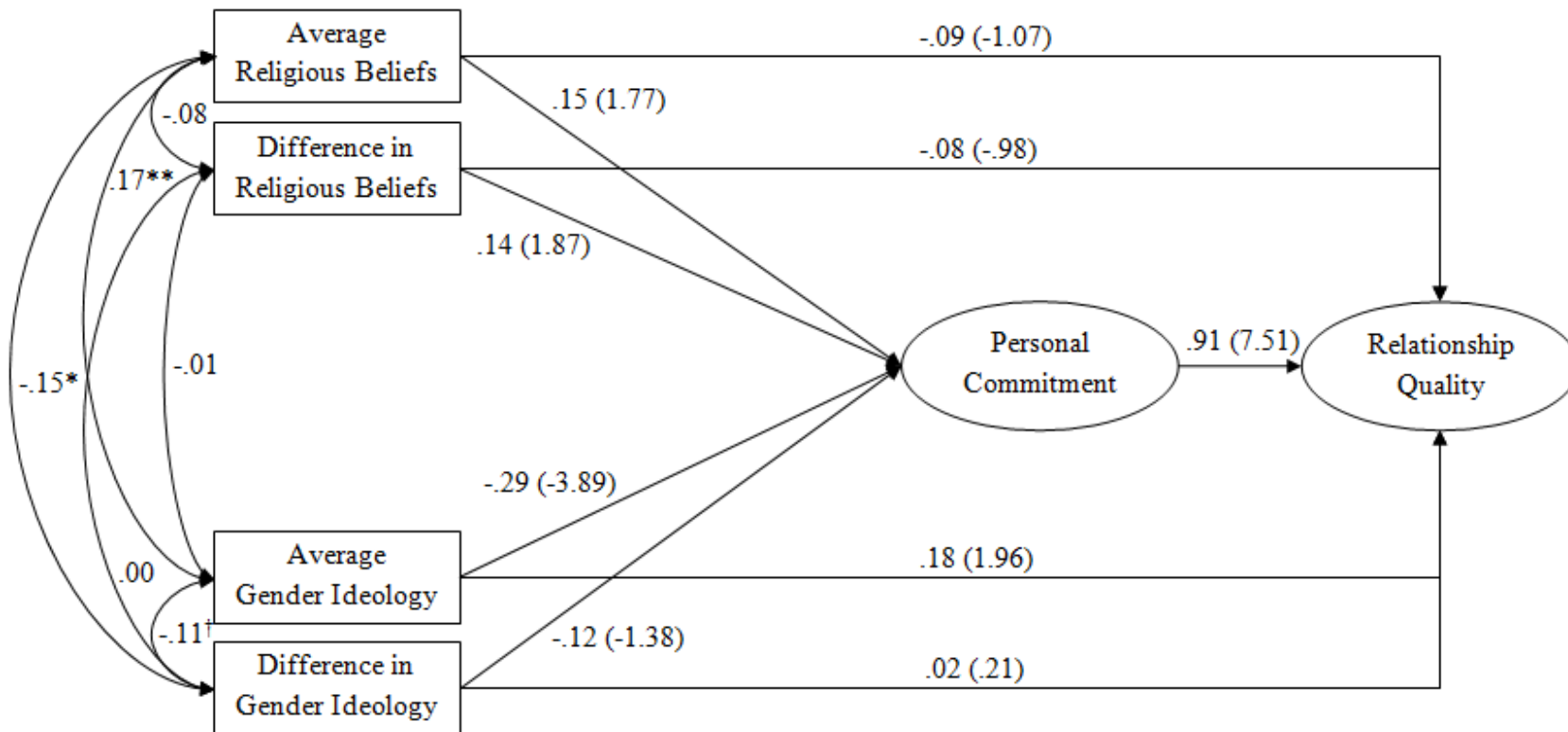


Figure 4.6. Model results: dyadic mediating model with average and difference in religious beliefs as the religiosity variables and personal commitment as the commitment dimension.

For correlations: † = .05 < p < .10. * = p < .05. ** = p < .01.

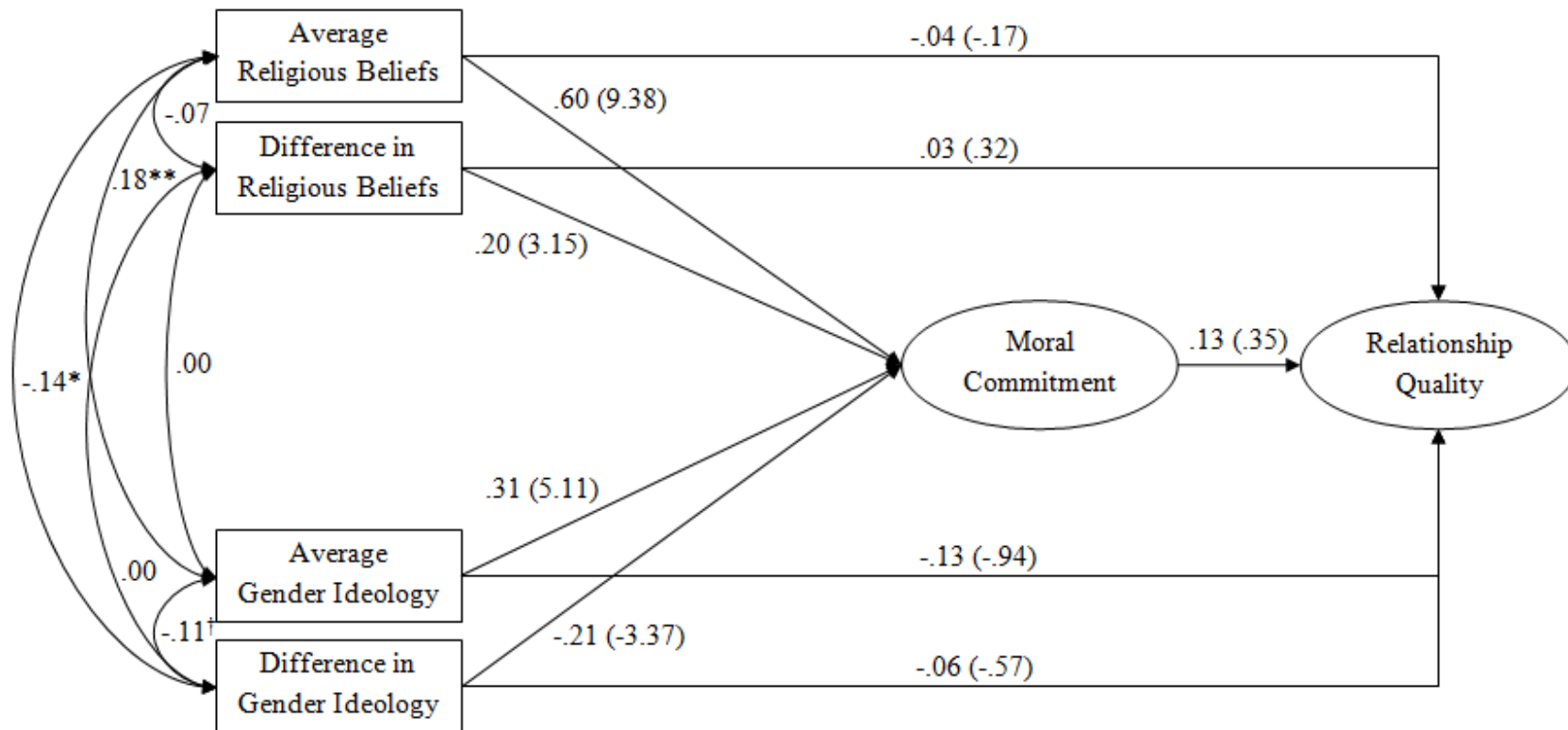


Figure 4.7. Model results: dyadic mediating model with average and difference in religious beliefs as the religiosity variables and moral commitment as the commitment dimension.

For correlations: † = .05 < p < .10. * = p < .05. ** = p < .01.

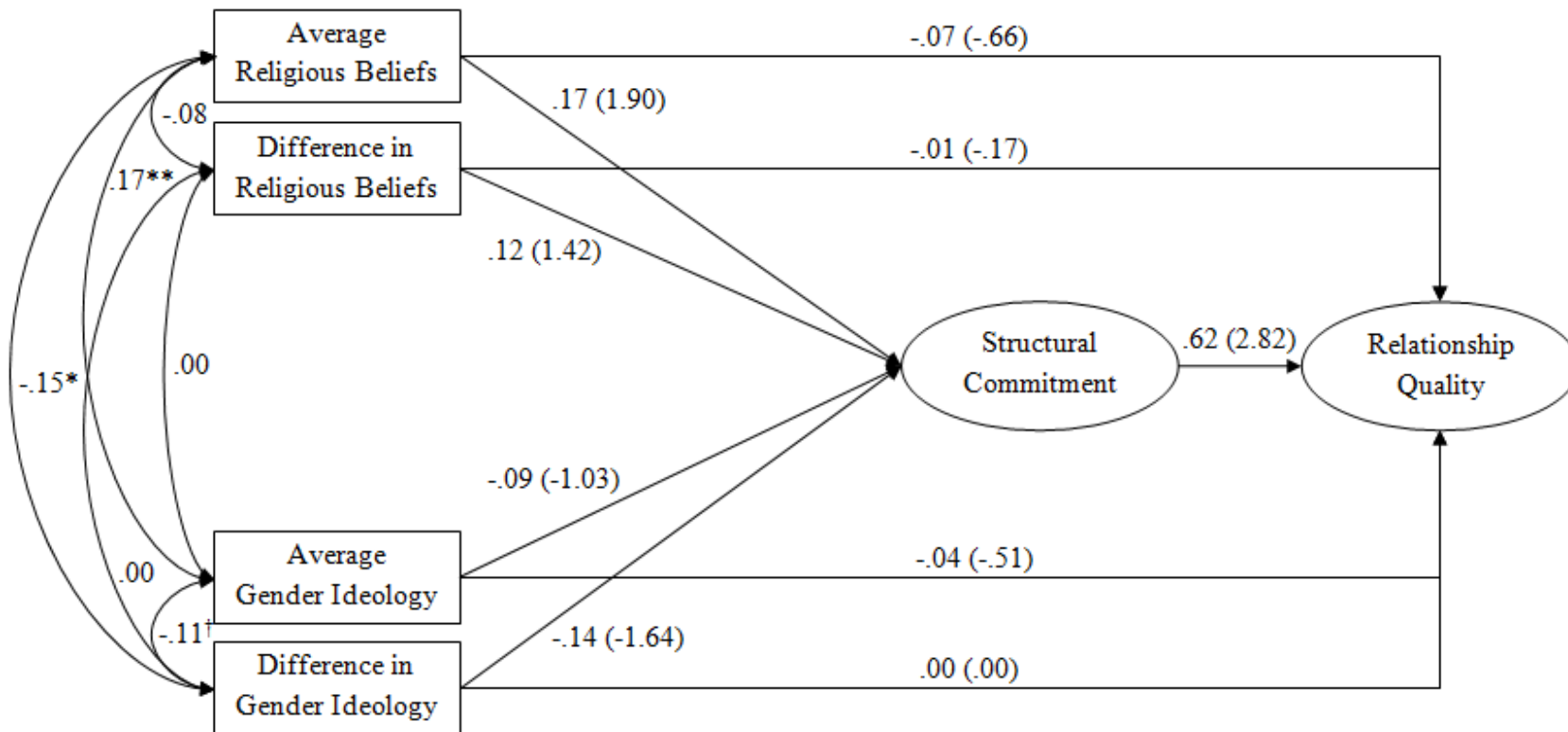


Figure 4.8. Model results: dyadic mediating model with average and difference in religious beliefs as the religiosity variables and structural commitment as the commitment dimension.

For correlations: † = .05 < p < .10. * = p < .05. ** = p < .01.

significantly associated with relationship quality, so there were no indirect effects or mediational effects in this model.

Structural commitment as mediator. In this model, the only significant path was from structural commitment to relationship quality ($b = .62, p < .01$; see Figure 4.8). In other words, couples who reported greater structural commitment were rated higher on observed relationship quality. Because there were no significant paths from the predictor variables to structural commitment, there were no significant indirect or direct effects.

Chapter Discussion

In all dyadic models, the average religiosity variable was correlated with the couple's average endorsement of traditional gender ideology and the difference in the couple's levels of traditional gender ideology. This was true whether religiosity was conceptualized as attendance or religious beliefs. Couples who were more religious tended to be more traditional in their secular worldview as well. Consistency may be important to individuals—endorsing traditional views in religion and gender ideology may result from an overall tendency to prefer traditionalism or conventionalism over more liberal or progressive views. Being more traditional or conventional may precede endorsement of traditional beliefs in both the secular and sacred worldviews.

Therefore, the two worldviews may work together rather than competing in order to present a more cohesive view of the world—one in which roles and expectations are predetermined, and outcomes are more certain. However, the degree to which the secular and sacred approaches are applied to relationships may be different. Although the two tend to co-occur, the religiosity worldview was more influential in how relationships were perceived—the degree to which couples were committed to their relationships.

Likewise, there was a tendency in religious couples for the man to be more traditional than the woman. These results are not surprising, given previous findings. Although both men and women are becoming less traditional overall, men typically endorse more traditional gender roles than women do (Myers & Booth, 2002).

Total effects models

Only the total effects model including attendance showed any significant effects. Couples who reported attending religious services more frequently were also observed to have higher ratings on observed relationship quality. This result provided partial support for Hypothesis 3. When conceptualized as religious attendance, couples who reported higher levels of religiosity were observed to have higher relationship quality, while the difference between partners was not significantly associated with relationship quality. This could mean that similarity between partners is more important than differences. Alternately, it could mean that the couples were not that different from one another, so the difference score was not a strong predictor. There were no significant effects due to either average gender ideology or difference in gender ideology in the total effects models, so a comparison between level and difference in sacred or secular traditionality as an influence on relationship quality was not possible in these models.

Indirect effects models

There were three notable findings in the indirect effects models. First, the couple's average frequency of religious attendance was more strongly associated with the commitment dimensions than was the average endorsement of religious beliefs. Second, personal commitment was the strongest mediator of the three relationship commitment dimensions due to it having the strongest association with observed relationship quality.

Third, the couple's average endorsement of traditional gender ideology was both indirectly and directly related to observed relationship quality.

Average attendance as a predictor. The couple's average level of religious beliefs was not significantly associated with any of the commitment variables or observed relationship quality. However, couples who reported attending religious services more frequently also reported higher scores on all three dimensions of commitment. Likewise, couples who reported attending religious services more frequently were observed to have higher levels of relationship quality. This latter effect was mediated by personal commitment. Potential mechanisms are explored in the next section.

Personal commitment as mediator. Personal commitment was the only relationship commitment dimension to significantly mediate any associations in the models. It fully mediated the relationship between the couple's average religious attendance and observed relationship quality. In fact, the indirect effect of personal commitment on the relationship between average attendance and relationship quality almost completely accounted for the total effect of average attendance on relationship quality.

Whether individuals have a relational or independent self-construal (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000) may impact the effect of attendance on personal commitment. Those with a highly relational self-construal define themselves in terms of their relationships (Cross & Morris, 2003), which is an aspect of personal commitment. They tend to put more effort into maintaining existing relationships than those with an independent self-construal; these efforts include behaviors such as spending time together. More frequent social activity, such as religious attendance, may be an indication of more frequent time spent together as a couple in general.

Regarding the effects of personal commitment on relationship quality, it may be that the motivations inherent in each of the commitment dimensions may lead to different interpersonal behaviors in different situations. Personal commitment may be the best predictor of observed relationship quality in a discussion task because those who are personally committed may be more likely to actively engage in positive, warm behaviors with each other. These behaviors may include being physically affectionate or complimentary.

Effects of traditional gender ideology. Couples who endorsed more traditional gender ideology on average reported lower personal commitment than those who endorsed a traditional gender ideology to a lesser degree. However, couples who reported higher personal commitment were observed to have higher relationship quality. Therefore, the indirect effect of the couple's average endorsement of traditional gender ideology on observed relationship quality through personal commitment was negative. In contrast, in the model with religious beliefs as the religiosity variable, the couple's average endorsement of traditional gender ideology had a *positive* direct effect upon observed relationship quality.

There are a couple potential explanations for the negative indirect effect. First, it is possible that it is due to a statistical artifact. When two variables (x_1 and x_2) predict a third (x_3), the correlation between the first two variables is significantly large, and the effect of the first variable (x_1) on the response variable (x_3) is also large, the effect of the second variable (x_2) on the response variable may be negatively inflated if it is close to zero. This could be the outcome of the formula used to calculate a path coefficient – the correlation between the second variable and the response variable, subtracted by the correlation between the first two variables multiplied by the correlation between the first variable and the response variable,

all divided by one minus the square of the correlation between the first two variables $[(r_{23} - r_{13} * r_{12}) / (1 - r_{12}^2)]$.

Second, it could be a valid phenomenon. It could be that most couples have high relationship quality, regardless of level of traditionality. It may be that those who endorse more *egalitarian* gender ideology have higher relationship quality when *including* the influence of personal commitment, and when *excluding* the effects of personal commitment, couples who report more *traditional* gender ideology have higher relationship quality. Although both the direct and indirect paths were significant, the indirect effect through personal commitment was slightly stronger, which resulted in the negative (and nonsignificant) total effect of average gender ideology on relationship quality.

Conclusions

Some support was found for Hypothesis 3a, but none was found for Hypothesis 3b. Couples who reported attending religious services more frequently on average were observed to have higher levels of relationship quality. Some support was found for Hypothesis 4 as well. Personal commitment provided a significant indirect route for two of the predictor variables: average attendance and average gender ideology. The addition of personal commitment as a mediator uncovered a positive direct effect of average gender ideology on relationship quality. This effect was obscured in the total effects model due to competition from the indirect path, which was negative.

In the final chapter, results from the individual and dyadic models are reviewed and integrated. Limitations are discussed and future directions for research are proposed.

CHAPTER 5: GENERAL DISCUSSION

Religiosity and traditional gender ideology offer worldviews that shape perception and behavior, which in turn can affect relationship quality. These worldviews may provide a sense of meaning and order in how the world works, and may shape expectations for how one should behave. Gender ideology provides a secular worldview, while religiosity provides a sacred worldview. Both constructs reflect the degree of traditionalism one endorses, and they are related in that individuals and couples who endorse religious beliefs to a greater degree also tend to endorse a traditional gender ideology. Religiosity and gender ideology are both associated with relationship quality, albeit in different ways (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009; Willits & Crider, 1988). These associations were explored in the total effects models.

Although both religiosity and gender ideology have been linked to relationship quality, the mechanisms by which these associations exist have not been fully determined. Couples who report higher levels of religiosity tend to report higher relationship commitment (Giblin, 1997). According to Johnson, Caughlin, and Huston's (1999) theory of commitment, commitment also affects relationship evaluation through internal (personal and moral) and external (structural) influences. These potentially mediational paths were explored in the indirect effects models.

The first study examined the total effects of religiosity and traditional gender ideology on observed relationship quality at the individual level, and then incorporated dimensions of relationship commitment as potential mediators. The second study examined the total effects of religiosity and gender ideology on observed relationship quality at the dyadic level, and incorporated the three dimensions of relationship commitment as potential

mediators. Refer to Chapter 3 for detailed results of the individual models and Chapter 4 for detailed results of the dyadic models. In this chapter, the individual and dyadic results are compared and contrasted. Then, limitations of the current study are examined. Finally, future directions for research are proposed.

Integration of Results

In the next two sections, similarities and differences in the individual and dyadic total effects models are discussed first, followed by a discussion of the similarities and differences in the individual and dyadic indirect effects (mediating) models.

Total effects models

In the models estimating total effects, there was some overlap between the individual models and the dyadic models. Some results that were significant for men or women in the individual models were also significant in the dyadic models, while some were not.

In the individual total effects model, women who reported attending religious services more frequently also were observed to have higher relationship quality. Although this result was not found for men, it was found in the dyadic model. Couples who reported attending religious services more frequently were observed to have higher relationship quality. The lack of significant associations between traditional gender ideology and relationship quality was consistent across individual and dyadic total effects models.

Indirect effects models

Each commitment dimension performed differently in the indirect effects models. Although religiosity and traditional gender ideology strongly predicted moral commitment, moral commitment was not associated with observed relationship quality. The indirect effect of the couple's frequency of attendance on observed relationship quality was only marginally

indirectly affected by structural commitment. Personal commitment was the strongest (and only significant) indirect influence between predictor and outcome variables.

Gender ideology. Although traditional gender ideology did not appear to be associated with observed relationship quality in the total effects model, addition of the commitment dimensions uncovered significant indirect effects. Personal commitment provided an indirect route by which egalitarian gender ideology was associated with higher levels of observed relationship quality when examined for men, women, and at the dyadic level.

In the dyadic model that included religious beliefs as the religiosity variable, there was a significant direct effect of couple's endorsed traditional gender ideology on observed relationship quality in addition to the indirect effect through personal commitment. The direct effect was positive, while the indirect effect was negative. This could be due to a statistical artifact—how the regression coefficients are calculated—or to an actual phenomenon. Replication of the current results could provide some insight into the phenomenon.

Religiosity. In the individual models, there was an indirect effect of religiosity on relationship quality through personal commitment for men and women. For men, this effect was true for frequency of religious attendance; for women, this was true for religious beliefs. It may be that for men, the time spent together at religious services influences their perceptions of commitment, while women are more influenced by the resulting doctrine. Having one's relationship be approved of or supported by religious doctrine may provide validation or confirmation that one is doing the correct or expected thing. It is unknown whether these effects are originally due to existing religious beliefs, or whether these

religious beliefs and resulting relationship commitment are influenced by frequency of attendance. Religious beliefs may actually be a mediating or moderating variable in the association between attendance and relationship evaluation.

In the dyadic model, the religious beliefs variable did not have a significant indirect effect on relationship quality. Only the attendance on relationship quality path was significant in the dyadic model—there was an indirect effect of the couple’s average frequency of religious attendance on observed relationship quality through personal commitment. It would be interesting to parcel out the influence of men and women’s attendance and beliefs separately. While religiosity had an effect on relationship quality for both men and women, these effects were due to different religiosity variables. When men and women were combined in the dyadic model, only the effect that originally held for men was significant.

These findings elaborate the associations that have been previously found regarding religiosity, gender ideology, and relationship quality. The majority of research has focused on a global commitment scale; including Johnson and colleagues’ (1999) dimensions of commitment as potential mediators sheds some light on why these associations exist. The personal commitment dimension appears to be the mediational variable that helps explain the associations between religiosity, gender ideology, and relationship quality. These effects may be due to recent trends that emphasize the importance of personal investment or rewards in relationships, rather than emphasizing a religious or secular duty to create and maintain a family, independent of one’s own desires.

According to the results of the individual and dyadic analyses, the relationship commitment dimensions provide a more thorough understanding of the mechanisms by

which religiosity and gender ideology influence observed relationship quality. Because the current analyses have not been tested before to my knowledge, replication is necessary to provide support and evidence of their validity.

Potential Limitations

Despite their contributions to the field, these studies have some potential limitations. First, the way some variables were measured may have led to unique effects. A different formulation of a factor may lead to different results. Second, using different measures or scales may also provide different results. Third, the design is cross-sectional, which does not allow for the exploration of the effects of change in the variables. Each of these potential limitations is discussed briefly in the following sections.

Calculation of differences

First, it is possible that an absolute value of the difference score may lead to different effects. The current conceptualization subtracted men's score from women's, so any predictions would be interpreted with specific directional effects. A positive relationship between a difference score and either commitment or relationship quality indicated that couples in which the woman was higher in that variable were more committed or had higher relationship quality. A negative relationship indicated that couples in which the man was higher in that variable were more committed or had higher relationship quality. Therefore, scores in the middle represent more similar scores for men and women. With an absolute value of the difference, it is the difference itself that is emphasized rather than which partner is higher or lower on that particular factor.

Measure selection

Second, utilizing different measures or scales than the ones in the current analyses, such as using relationship instability rather than observed relationship quality, may produce different results. The subjective participant may report internal thoughts or motivations that the observer is not able to capture. Likewise, an alternate gender ideology measure, such as the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974) may also lead to different results. The current conceptualization focuses mainly on women's roles in the household, while the BSRI characterizes personality as masculine, feminine, or androgynous. The BSRI may capture more of the variance in gender ideology or gender roles due to the inclusion of masculine and androgynous characteristics.

Cross-sectional design

Third, the existing data set does not contain full measures of each factor at each of the six years that participants were assessed. Therefore, the models were of a cross-sectional design, which did not allow for the examination of overall change in perceptions or behavior. It is also difficult to completely determine the direction of causation between variables in a cross-sectional design. However, an examination of the order of influence in a cross-lag analysis between gender ideology and attendance showed that neither gender ideology nor attendance clearly predicted the other variable better. Therefore, including gender ideology as a predictor variable along with religiosity was appropriate.

Future Directions

Behavioral and cognitive measures of religiosity have been shown to be related to traditional gender ideology. However, researchers have not disseminated the direction of influence; it is unclear whether religious behavior leads to religious cognition, whether

religious cognition leads to religious behavior, or whether the two influence each other equally. Future research could explore these relationships in a longitudinal design to help determine the direction of influence.

A longitudinal design may also uncover effects of external influences on relationship commitment over time. Moral commitment is likely due to influences that are relatively unchanging, such as holding an ethical viewpoint or having a desire for stability and continuity. Structural commitment likely increases with the duration of the relationship, becoming more influential as external influences like the presence of children and shared mortgages become more of a constraint against leaving the relationship. Personal commitment may be the least stable of the three commitment dimensions because it is dependent upon internal motivation to remain with the partner and in the romantic relationship. It is possible that personal preferences are more changeable than continuous external influences such as the presence of children.

There could be moderating factors in the model that have not been captured. The knowledge that couples have committed to a lifetime together may influence their behavior towards their partners. They may be more likely to engage in behaviors that contribute to higher relationship quality if they are married rather than cohabiting, so marital status may be a moderator.

The average religiosity variable was almost always correlated with the couple's average level of endorsement of traditional gender ideology. This implies that those who endorsed religious beliefs to a greater degree tended to be more traditional in their secular worldview as well. Endorsing traditional views in religion and gender ideology may result from an overall tendency to prefer traditionalism or conventionalism over more liberal or

progressive views. Being more traditional or conventional in general may precede endorsement of traditional beliefs in both the secular and sacred worldviews. This may be captured by the Need for Closure scale (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), which assesses the degree to which individuals prefer predictability, order, and structure. These three characteristics may be closely related to traditionality, and may also be related to moral commitment.

One of the most meaningful ways of capturing the evaluation of a relationship is the degree of instability. Prior to relationship dissolution, the way in which one thinks about or evaluates the relationship is associated with the actions taken to maintain or end the relationship. Whether individuals have thought about or taken action toward ending the relationship speaks volumes about whether they are satisfied with and interested in maintaining the relationship. Future research should explore how these effects of religiosity, gender ideology, and relationship commitment influence the stability of the relationship, or how likely the relationship is to dissolve. Exploration and discovery of how these factors influence relationship maintenance and potential dissolution would provide a great deal of benefit in contributing to the understanding of the way relationships work, and possibly, ways to improve them.

APPENDIX A. RELIGIOSITY MEASURE

1. On average, how often do you attend church or religious services?

<i>More than once a week</i>	1
<i>About once a week</i>	2
<i>1 to 3 times a month</i>	3
<i>Less than once a month</i>	4
<i>Never</i>	5

2. In general, how important are religious or spiritual beliefs in your day-to-day life?

<i>Very important</i>	1
<i>Fairly important</i>	2
<i>Not too important</i>	3
<i>Not at all important</i>	4

3. How much do your religious beliefs help you handle troubles or problems in your life?

<i>Quite a bit</i>	1
<i>Some</i>	2
<i>A little bit</i>	3
<i>Not at all</i>	4

4. How important is it to you to be a religious person?

<i>Extremely important</i>	1
<i>Very important</i>	2
<i>Somewhat important</i>	3
<i>Not very important</i>	4
<i>Not at all important</i>	5

5. How confident are you that you will be able to be a religious person?

<i>Extremely confident</i>	1
<i>Very confident</i>	2
<i>Somewhat confident</i>	3
<i>Not very confident</i>	4
<i>Not at all confident</i>	5

APPENDIX A. (continued)

Changes in Religious Practices

6. During the past year, have the following things happened to you? Have you...

Yes.....1
No.....2

- a. Gone to your place of worship more often
- b. Had an increase in faith or spirituality
- c. Had a decrease in faith or spirituality
- d. Become "born again"

APPENDIX B. RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION CATEGORIES

Vaaler, Ellison, and Powers (2009) grouped religious affiliation into six categories:

Evangelical Protestant

Assembly of God (or Assemblies of God), Baptist, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Christian Reformed, Church of God-Anderson, IN, Church of God-Cleveland, TN, Church of God (no affiliation specified), Church of the Brethren (Brethren), Church of the Nazarene (Nazarene), Church of Christ, Evangelical Covenant Church, Evangelical Free Church, Full Gospel Fellowship, International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (Foursquare Gospel), Mennonite Pentecostal or all churches with Pentecostal in title, Pietist Family, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventists, Wesleyan, Holiness Family, Pentecostal Family, European Free Church Family (Mennonites, Amish, Brethren, Quakers), Independence Fundamentalist Family, Adventist Family, those who report that they are “born again Christian,” or “Charismatic.”

Mainline Protestant

Church of God in Christ (Black Protestant), Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Church—any modifier such as First, Eastside, Community, etc., Christian- Disciples, Christian—not including “just a Christian” or “Christian-no affiliation,” Christian Congregation, Christian Reformed Church of North America (Christian Reformed), Churches of Christ subfamily—Restoration “Christian” (no other description given, could be “just a Christian” or member of Christian Church), Christian Church, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist Reformed Church (Reformed), Presbyterian Reformed Church (Reformed), United Church of Christ (Congregational), all other Reformed- Presbyterian Churches, Protestant (no affiliation given).

Catholic

All other Western Catholic Churches, Roman Catholic

Conservative Nontraditional

Church of Christ, Scientist (Christian Scientist), Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormon, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Reorganized Mormon), and Latter-day Saint Family Protestant (Unspecified affiliation).

Liberal Nontraditional

Community churches (Interdenominational; nonsectarian), communal groups, New Thought Family, Psychic Group, Ritual Magick Groups, Personal churches (e.g., my own, practice at home, studying different churches; believe in Supreme Being), Unitarian.

Other Religion

Jewish, Orthodox Churches (any Eastern, Greek, Russian, Serbian, or Ukrainian Orthodox, Orthodox Church in America, American Orthodox Church, Non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches, including Armenian, Assyrian, Syrian, Coptic, and Ethiopian), Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Shinto and Taoism, all miscellaneous religious bodies.

APPENDIX C. GENDER IDEOLOGY MEASURE

People often have different feelings about the roles of men and women. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

<i>Strongly agree</i>	1
<i>Agree</i>	2
<i>Neutral or mixed</i>	3
<i>Disagree</i>	4
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5

- a. Women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to men
- b. Most women who want a career should not have children
- c. A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works outside the home
- d. Having a job means having a life of your own
- e. A girl proves she is a woman by having a baby
- f. A woman should not let having and raising children stand in the way of a career if she wants one
- g. Except in special cases, the wife should do the cooking and house cleaning, and the husband should provide the family with money
- h. A woman should have exactly the same job opportunities as a man
- i. Women are much happier if they stay at home and take care of their children
- j. A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who doesn't work
- k. Women should be concerned with their duties of child-rearing and house tending, rather than with their careers
- l. Although women hold many important jobs, their proper place is in the home
- m. I approve of a woman providing the financial support for the family while the husband does the household chores
- n. Men and women should be paid the same money if they do the same work
- o. I could not respect a man if he decided to stay at home and take care of his children while his wife worked
- p. A woman should realize that, just as she is not suited for heavy physical work, there are also other jobs for which she is not suited because of her mental and emotional nature

APPENDIX D. RELATIONSHIP COMMITMENT MEASURE

Personal Commitment

1. I can depend on my partner to help me if I really need it

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

2. How happy are you, all things considered, with your relationship?

Extremely Unhappy.....0
Very Unhappy.....1
Unhappy.....2
Happy.....3
Very Happy.....4
Extremely Happy.....5

3. My relationship with my partner makes me happy

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

4. All in all, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

Completely Satisfied.....1
Very Satisfied.....2
Somewhat Satisfied.....3
Not Very Satisfied.....4
Not At All Satisfied.....5

APPENDIX D. (continued)

Moral Commitment

1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about marriage?

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

- a. When couples are having marital troubles, divorce may be an acceptable solution to their troubles
 b. My religious beliefs would keep me from getting divorced
 c. My family has strong feelings against divorce

Structural Commitment

1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your relationship with your partner?

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

- a. I could not find another spouse or partner if my current partner and I separated or divorced
 b. Even when there are problems in my relationship, it is better than being single
 c. There are many people who find me physically attractive
 d. If my relationship failed, I could easily find someone else to be with

APPENDIX D. (continued)

2. If your relationship with your partner ended, would you agree or disagree that...

<i>Strongly agree</i>	1
<i>Agree</i>	2
<i>Neutral or mixed</i>	3
<i>Disagree</i>	4
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5

- a. You could get a better partner
- b. You could get another partner as good as she/he is
- c. You would be quite satisfied without a partner
- d. You would be able to live as well as you do now
- e. You would be able to take care of yourself
- f. You would be better off economically
- g. Your prospects for a happy future would be bleak
- h. There are many other men/women you could be happy with
- i. You could support yourself at your present level
- j. Your life would be ruined

3. How many of your close friends are couple friends, that is, people who are also friends of your partner?

<i>None of them</i>	1
<i>Some of them</i>	2
<i>Most of them</i>	3
<i>All of them</i>	4

APPENDIX E. RELATIONSHIP QUALITY MEASURE

This scale assesses the observer's evaluation of the quality of the dyad's relationship. A low score indicates an unhappy, emotionally unsatisfying, or brittle relationship. A high score indicates the observer's impression that the relationship is warm, open, happy, and emotionally satisfying.

<i>Negative</i>	1
<i>Between a '1' and a '3'</i>	2
<i>Somewhat negative</i>	3
<i>Between a '3' and a '5'</i>	4
<i>Mixed or no evidence</i>	5
<i>Between a '5' and a '7'</i>	6
<i>Somewhat positive</i>	7
<i>Between a '7' and a '9'</i>	8
<i>Positive</i>	9

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