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The Workings of Admiration and Adoration in Contrast to Self-Interest Within Religious Families

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The Workings of Admiration and Adoration in Contrast to Self-Interest

Within Religious Families

Toshi Shichida

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract
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The workings of admiration and adoration within individuals and the family as attitudes against self-interest were investigated. Interviews with American families in two New England states from ten Christian denominations ($n = 20$) were analyzed qualitatively. As a result, admiration was observed among almost all the families. Three means-end structures emerged in regard to spouses’ configuration of the components of adoration, and these three groups of families indicated different features of family. The spouses of the Holistic Devotion (HD) group devoted all resources to God, rejecting the quest for self-interest, defining marriage/family as a coherent unit to serve God. The children participated in this attitude, expressing a similar devotion to God and rejection of self-interest. The spouses of the Personal God (PG) group perceived God as a meaning-maker and a benefactor who was involved in marriage, having multiple goals including spiritual growth and marital care and togetherness. The children expressed similar goals, including family togetherness and affirmation of satisfaction of self-interest. The spouses of the God-as-Benefactor (GB) group mentioned only admiration, and perceived that God was less involved in marriage; they valued marital care that functioned as mutual satisfaction of self-interest. The children similarly sought family togetherness, were centered in self-interest, and religion was instrumental to their self-interest. Six functions working in the family relationships of the HD group were elaborated, and the unique ontology behind these functions was analyzed.

Keywords: admiration, adoration, self-interest
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The Workings of Admiration and Adoration in Contrast to Self-Interest
within Religious Families

A number of scholars have identified and questioned the assumptions underlying social
science with respect to individual satisfaction and self-interest (e.g. Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan,
Swidler, & Tipton, 2008; Fife, 2015; Holley, 1999; Mansbridge, 1990; Van Lange, 2000).
Researchers have studied features of interpersonal and family relationships based on non-self-
interest ontology, including altruism, commitment, sacrifice, forgiveness, trust, or intrinsic
religiosity. However, I argue that most of these studies still view relationships as embedded in
the self-interest framework and only partially address the moral issues that accompany the
pursuit of human self-interest. I contend that unless we confront the haunting influence of self-
interest and we find an ontological basis that breaks away from self-interest, even theories that
support other-orientation (e.g., altruism, relationalism) will inevitably return to the mutual
satisfaction of self-interest as a primary means of understanding family dynamics.

Along the lines of the non-self-interest research orientation, recent studies have dealt with
admiration and adoration. These are emotions as well as attitudes to express individual’s highest
regard, praise, and fascination toward others who demonstrate moral goodness and moral
excellence (Haidt, 2003b; Schindler, 2013); therefore they take the form of other-orientation. I
argue that these emotions and attitudes could be associated with ontological bases other than
self-interest.

In particular, adoration centers on one’s life in God and voluntary renunciation of self-
interest; it marks a special and more thorough kind of other-orientation. Because it involves a
holistic internalization of God’s system of values, as well as voluntary renunciation of one’s own
self-interested orientation, it is likely to involve a different ontological basis. With this distinct
ontology, unique features of sacrifice or different kinds of relational features are expected to be seen in the family relationships of those who exhibit adoration. How exactly does this adoration make a difference in family relationships? No study has inquired into the workings of admiration and adoration within the family. Although adoration is observed only in a highly religious subculture, investigation of these exemplars should present insights into the relational features that bear ontological significance. Thus, I will inductively investigate a sample of religious families to see how their admiration and adoration affect their family relationships.

Self-Interest and Other-Orientation

Ontology is a philosophical subject of study that is concerned with the nature and relations of being or existence (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1995; Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 1998). For the present research, I relate the ontology regarding self-interest and other-orientation to the study of family relationships and psychology. I define self-interest to be an attitude or act of benefiting or satisfying desires pertaining to the secular life that are dear to oneself, exemplified by questions such as “What can I get?” or “What would I have to give up?” (Holley, 1999, p. 4). Self-interest includes self-exploration and quests for development when the purpose is ultimately to satisfy pleasure, social recognition, or status. However, as Holley pointed out, certain types of I or the self who are receiving or giving up things should be differentiated from the label of self-interest. For example, spiritual types of interest (e.g., becoming more saintly) could inherently suppress more secular, naturalistic, and immediate types of interest in the self. This present research regards the spiritual type as a non-self-interest.

Thomas Hobbes, the 17th century philosopher, is often regarded as the first modern advocate of the self-interest view of human nature, in which human beings always act from self-
interest (Sears & Funk, 1991; Schwartz, 1987). Hobbes (2008, p. 80) claimed in *Leviathan* that, “Felicity is a continual progress of desire, from one object to another.” This philosophical view of self-interest has dominated considerable theory in behavioral and social psychology (Miller & Ranter, 1996; Van Lange, 2000). In family science, as well, since the 1930s, the central framework for marital studies has been grounded in individual satisfaction (Knapp & Lott, 2010), and a similar trend is evident in the parenting literature (Knapp, 1999).

However, a number of researchers have noted that it is important to recognize that psychological models based on self-interest ontology are constructed within specific historical and cultural backgrounds (Hawkins, Fowers, Carroll, & Yang, 2007; Knapp & Lott, 2010), and have insisted that the self-interest assumption is too limited to account fully for social interaction (Hawkins et al., 2007; Van Lange, 2000). In fact, according to Schwartz (1987), the anti-Hobbesian view that people are selfish only under certain conditions has almost as long-standing a tradition as the Hobbesian view. For example, according to Holmes (1990), Adam Smith, who laid the foundations of the free-market economy, stated often that self-interest, however robust, is merely one motive among others. In Miller and Ranter’s (1996) view, there has been an exaggerated understanding among laypersons in particular of the extent to which self-interest motivates behavior. These researchers advocated including phenomena not related to self-interest into a model based on an other-oriented ontology. In fact, various other-oriented frameworks have already been examined, including altruism, commitment, sacrifice, forgiveness, trust, or intrinsic religiosity. Arguably, the quality and subjective meanings of family relationships might be different when they are based on self-interest compared to other-orientation.

Some researchers, however, hold that many seemingly altruistic or committed relationships are not clearly disentangled from a self-interest ontology, and accept them as such.
For instance, Elster (1990) described altruism in such a way that it remains embedded in self-interest ontology:

There is a sense, though, in which self-interest is more fundamental than altruism. The state of nature, although a thought experiment, is a logically coherent situation. But we cannot coherently imagine a world in which everyone had exclusively altruistic motivations. The goal of the altruist is to provide others with an occasion for selfish pleasures—the pleasure of reading a book or drinking a bottle of wine one has received as a gift. (p. 45)

Elster assumes that the receiver is always self-interested and that the underlying goal of giving acts is to satisfy the demands/needs of self-interest of the other. It is important to be aware that the kind of relationships Elster described, which may actually be prevalent, are often regarded as “altruistic” relationships and yet are not essentially different from models of mutual individualistic satisfaction (e.g. exchange theory [Homans, 1958]: for imagine that the giver and receiver take turns in roles over time; that is exactly exchanging).

Elster’s comment begs the question of what the fundamental ontological basis for interpersonal relationships that include the needs of the receiver may look like. In this case, Elster conceptualizes, that at best interpersonal relationships are an eclectic combination of self-interest and non-self-interest and that this combination forms the ontological basis of the whole relationship, but that self-interest is more fundamental. What this suggests is that there could be various meanings borne in relationships assigned according to the ontological bases behind them.

A closer look at Elster’s case shows that both the altruistic giver and receiver try to preserve materialistic/hedonistic desires of the receiver (and thus of the giver who will be a receiver in turn later) and make satisfying them a goal. However, as Sears and Funk (1991)
Materialistic hedonism is just one example of self-interest that is overlooked in seemingly altruistic frameworks for understanding interpersonal care. Another is the idea of self-exploration. In attachment theory, for example, a giver’s care may provide a support and resource for the receiver’s self-exploration, but this re-establishes a utilitarian framework, making mutual interpersonal care a means to an individualistic quest. Despite its potentially altruistic outlook, attachment theory framed as a safe haven is still based on a foundation of self-interest: relationships and socialization within this systems will, at best, sustain the self-interest of the members, but these could augment over time.

The problem with these models is threefold: these involve various mixtures of philosophical, epistemological, and methodological issues. First, isn’t there a possibility that humans have motivations and ultimate goals that are exempt from self-interest, and that these non-self-interested quests can take a central place within the person’s relationships? A system of family with such a foundation would nurture and develop other-orientation while fostering detachment from self-interest.
Second, these existing models provide limited coverage of self-interest. Alongside individualistic egoism, other forms of self-interest—such as seeking personal goals, preferences, or self-exploration—need to be included in the consideration. What does a logically possible form of family dynamic that is free from self-interest look like? I propose that at least the following points need to be considered: (a) when one seeks to support and provide resources for an “other,” whether or not that other is conceptualized as a representation of a personality whose ultimate quest is self-interest, including seeking personal goals; (b) as a matter of ultimate purpose, whether the other consumes the support and resources he or she has been given for the end self-interest, or directly or indirectly, channel them into some purpose that is also other-oriented; (c) for both the giver and the receiver, what are the functions of self-denial and shared marital or familial goals in the mutually supporting relationship? Do they prevent the self-interest from being the ultimate goal of the relationship or not?

Third, related with the second point, in considering the ontological base of the family relational model, unless the dyad or relationship as a system is taken into account, the other-orientation of one party could fail to establish itself as the basis of the whole model by functioning to promote the self-interest of members in the relationship, including the self-interest of the giver, who will take the role of receiver in a reciprocal role exchange.

In order to investigate the possibility of finding an ontology of other-orientation that is consistent across roles and situations regarding family interactions and that does not inherently perpetuate the self-interest of its members, it is necessary, first, to understand how self-interest is treated in a family. And moreover, I propose that it is essential to investigate the non-self-interested attributes and quests of humans. If such quests are central to the person to the extent
that it forms his/her ontological basis, they could necessarily work, directly or indirectly, to
control merely self-interested behavior. Are there such ontological bases?

Finding them would require an expansion of epistemology. To avoid a model that
perpetuates self-interest, social scientists who study other-orientation need to adopt a second-
order epistemological outlook, one that allows us to have a para-ontological view through which
non-self-interested orientation’s mastery over—or on the contrary, subordination to—self-
interest can be effectively captured. This might include, for example, a spiritual orientation over
a non-spiritual orientation. Offering one way of envisioning such a framework, the present study
focuses on admiration and adoration, both phenomena of moral/spiritual fascination that are also
particular forms of other-orientation based on intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and sees
how they work in the family relationships.

**Moral Fascination as a Counter Concept to Self-Interest**

Recently, studies of other-praising emotions have flourished (Muto, 2014). Although
different labels have been used, they are studying similar concepts. Table 1 and 2 summarize
their conceptual explanations and findings regarding admiration and adoration. Those concepts
with asterisks are reported with empirical results.

**Admiration & Adoration as Moral Fascination**

Admiration and adoration generally means positive evaluations of realities other than
those of the self. However, this literature especially focuses on wonder, fascination, praise, and
respect for the moral beauty and excellence of others. Admiration and adoration are considered
predominantly other-focused (de Rivera, 1977; Smith, 2000; Solomon, 1993) and other-directed
(de Rivera, 1977; de Rivera & Grinkis, 1986) as opposed to self-oriented (Van Cappellen &
Saroglou, 2012). Furthermore, they are categorized as other-praising (Algoe & Haidt, 2009;
Haidt, 2003b: Muto, 2014). Haidt (2000) coined the term elevation to describe a group of emotions that are other-praising that focus on moral aspects of the target. Similarly, studies of awe, especially religious awe, as also other-praising emotions that are often targeted to God also came to fore. Schindler (Schindler, Zink, Windrich & Menninghaus, 2013; Schindler, 2014; Schindler, Paech, & Löwenbrück, 2015) used labels admiration and adoration to differentiate and subcategorize two kinds of other-praising moral emotions and attitudes, of which admiration focuses on praising a trait of the target, while adoration focuses on the total personality of the target. I use Schindler’s two labels, especially specifying the range of the target to morality (that includes spirituality). Thus based on this literature, I regard and term the essence of the phenomena of admiration and adoration as moral fascination.

The common core emotions of admiration and adoration are wonder or elevation (Haidt, 2003b; Schindler, et al., 2013), which Haidt (2003b) explained as follows:

elevation appears to be the opposite of social disgust. Where social disgust is caused by seeing people blur the lower boundary between humans and non-humans, elevation is caused by seeing people blur the upper boundary between humans and God (i.e., saints, or people who act like saints). Where disgust makes people close off and avoid contact, elevation makes people open up and seek contact.

As they see the remarkable moral behaviors or qualities of others, individuals are motivated to praise and honor what is outstanding about them (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Ortony, Clore, & Collins 1988; Shindler et al., 2013 Turner & Stets, 2007). In turn, this evokes a desire to become a better person (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Freeman, Aquino, & McFerran, 2009; Haidt, 2000, 2003a, 2003b). In other words, in admiration, the individual wishes to actualize the ideal seen in the role model through emulation (Schindler et al., 2015).
The targets of admiration and adoration might include those in the spiritual/religious domain. In place of the interpersonal dimension of other-orientation, religious experience often involves a God-person dimension of other-orientation that may eventually influence the individual’s interpersonal other-orientation. Indeed, certain forms of religious- or God-orientation feature “a corresponding renunciation of the various expressions of self-seeking” (Wulff, 1991, p. 639). Thus, a spiritual or religious experience of moral fascination, especially if it is intrinsic, possibly includes a quest that is counter to that of self-interest at a fundamental, ontological level. For, besides its unique expression of other-orientation, it could include confrontation with one’s own self-interest.

As previously mentioned, moral fascination with a human being refers to one’s state of being attracted by saintly qualities or behaviors—in other words, “moral beauty” (Haidt, 2000, p. 1) or “moral excellence” (Freeman et al., 2009, p. 74). Next I define moral fascination with God and expound on its implications from the perspective of psychology of religion.

**Moral Fascination with God**

In *The Idea of the Holy*, Otto (1967) described fascination to Wholly Other (i.e., God) as an important constituent of human experience of the holy, or the *numinous* consciousness. Regarding this fascination, Otto argued:

> It is not only in the religious feeling of longing that the moment of fascination is a living factor. It is already alive and present in the moment of ‘solemnity’, both in the gathered concentration and humble abasement of private devotion, when the mind is exalted to the holy, and in the common worship of the congregation, where this is practised with earnestness and deep sincerity, as, it is to be feared, is with us a thing rather desired than
realized. It is this and nothing else that in the solemn moment can fill the soul so full and
keep it so inexpressibly tranquil. (pp. 35-36)

Then he continued:

It appears as a strange and mighty propulsion toward an ideal good known only to
religion and in its nature fundamentally non-rational, which the mind knows of in
yearning and presentiment, recognizing it for what it is behind the obscure and
inadequate symbols which are its only expression. And this shows that above and beyond
our rational being lies hidden the ultimate and highest part of our nature, which can find
no satisfaction in the mere allaying of the needs of our sensuous, psychical, or intellectual
impulses and cravings. The mystics called it the basis or ground of the soul. (p. 36)

This fascination with and longing for God that emanates from the inner most part of
humanity’s constitution was also mentioned by others and recognized as an essence of religion
(Kärkkäinen, 2004; Schleiermacher, 1988). James (1922) observes that religious converts
preliminarly tend to see (a) the present incompleteness or wrongness (i.e., sin) that they are
eager to escape from, and (b) the positive, righteous ideal they long to compass. Longing for the
perfection of an ideal being (just as children’s identification with their parents is an image
children see as an ideal) is considered a form of love (Josselson, 1992). What Schindler et al.
(2013) labeled as adoration overlaps with this type of moral fascination with God. The following
describes how adoration is discussed in the existing psychological literature.

**Adoration’s Unique Ontology**

Table 3 summarizes the features of admiration and adoration that the literature has
described. Compared to admiration, adoration has more features that correspond with its
underlying ontological uniqueness. A central feature that distinguishes adoration from
admiration is that admiration’s target is a limited trait of the exemplar whereas adoration’s target is the whole personality of the person or God (usually God). The summary of the literature (Table 1, 2, and 3) yielded three important categories of features pertaining to adoration. Although these three categories describe the multifaceted constitution of adoration, these features are also closely related to each other due to the holistic character of adoration.

1. The adored personality as a powerful meaning-maker. One’s fascination toward the moral beauty and excellence of the whole personality of God involves a sense of awe, not just of wonder and elevation. According to Schindler et al. (2013), in adoration one regards the targeted person with high respect as a superhuman or sacred meaning-maker who represents an entire framework of meaning that includes a perception of the target as some form of a benefactor. As a meaning-maker, the target person presents a frame of reference for the adorer’s values and ideals, such as their sense of what is good or evil, as well as their attitudes. The research on feelings of awe suggests that the perception of overwhelming power residing in the target toward whom one feels awe also evokes associated feelings of submission (Keltner & Haidt, 2003; McDougall, 1950; Otto, 1967). Thus, as Schindler et al. (2013) noted, the adored target serves as an ultimate or epistemic authority. The adorer holistically internalizes the framework of meaning as ideal that is attributed to the adored personality. Because of this total and deep relationship, the adorer’s praise takes the form of worship. Here, submission can take direct control over self-interest, including materialistic hedonism.

2. The adored personality as a gracious provider. Researchers of awe-related constructs like adoration have observed the importance of including consideration of the characteristics of graciousness that the target is believed to have. According to Otto (1967), fascination with the target is involved in the experience of awe in response to the overpowering
and uncanny aspects of the experience of holiness, and this fascination is associated with the ideas one holds regarding the graciousness of the wholly other (e.g., God) expressed in their perfect love, mercy, or salvation (see also Wulff, 1991).

In their study of awe, meanwhile, Keltner and Haidt (2003) showed that the uncanny, which is usually terrifying, can be experienced as glorious if the target is perceived as benevolent. Similarly, others have stated that the target of reverence (e.g., a deity or person who represents divine power) is not only perceived as great and mysterious, evoking awe and humility in the adorer, but is also benevolent and loving, working for their good, evoking their gratitude by sustaining and protecting them (McDougall, 1950; Stout, 1903). Ortony et al. (1988) held that one factor that affects the intensity of adoration and other attraction emotions, besides the degree of the appeal of the target, is the degree of the individual’s familiarity with the target. To summarize, these researchers seem to concur that if the individual does not feel familiar with or close to the target personality, the sense of awe can emphasize contrast and decrease fascination with the adored target.

Schindler’s psychological framework (Schindler et al., 2013; Schindler, 2014; Schindler et al., 2015) also emphasized aspects of a meaning-maker and a gracious “benefactor” (Schindler et al., 2013, p. 100) that are generally attributed to the adored target. The “benefit” that Schindler refers to, however, seems to be predominantly spiritual in nature. For example, “being uplifted and purified” (p. 107), experiencing “some greater good” (p. 91), or “acquisition of resources for future action” (Schindler et al., 2015, p. 293). All of these result from the adorer’s “connecting to greatness or sacredness” (Schindler et al., 2013, p. 107) or “pleas[ing] or unite[ing] with the adored other” (Schindler, 2014, p. 2).
3. Holistic internalization of the adored personality (self-renunciation & holistic devotion). The previous two features are the characteristics of the target of adoration. The last feature is resultant action tendencies of adoration. Rather than assimilating the entire other as part of oneself, in a state of holistic internalization, the adorer desires to “become a part of [targeted other’s] world” through affiliation (Schindler, et al., 2013, p. 102) and fully engages resources for the target (Sundararajan, 2002) or gives up resources to the target (Schindler, 2013). This also could be described as devotion. Of awe, which is the core emotion of adoration, Peterson and Seligman (2004, p. 542) noted, “Awe seems to reprogram people, making them more pious and more prosocial, with little concern for material wealth, reputation, or other petty concerns of daily life” (see also Bonner & Friedman, 2011; Van Cappellen & Saroglou, 2012).

As Kierkegaard (1962) claimed, adoring God necessarily corresponds to “self-renunciation” (p. 331). What he means by self-renunciation is close to the relinquishment of the quest for self-interest I defined above, or of making such a quest one of one’s ultimate goals. This concept, also called self-relinquishment (Wong-McDonald & Gorsuch, 2000), is found repeatedly in the New Testament:

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20: 24 King James Version; see also Matt. 16:25)

As defined above, the desire for joy here is not counted as self-interest.

The intense and extensive impact of adoration on the goals and worldviews of the adorer, through the holistic internalization of a personal God and self-renunciation, seems to involve an ontological turn from self-interest to God-centeredness. Further, a wide range of self-interest can
be subject to this voluntary subordination. Some researchers have expressed these states of adoration in terms of absorption (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Sundararajan, 2002), in which one tends to pay total attention to a target by fully engaging one’s perceptual and ideational resources. Patterned after Schindler et al.’s (2013) distinction of holistic internalization from selective internalization, I identify and term giving up all resources for the target (Schindler, et al., 2013; Sundararajan, 2002) as holistic devotion and distinguish it from a selective type of devotion (i.e., limited resource provision for the target considered as a characteristic of admiration) (Schindler et al., 2013).

**Contrast with admiration.** Admiration is more typical and more bounded than adoration. Researchers have underscored the segmented nature of admiration in referencing the target and selecting certain behavior and value (Kelan & Mah, 2014; Sandell, 1993). For example, according to Kelan and Mah (2014), Sandell (1993) observes that “[a]dmiration involves a splitting through which the object of identification is split into different aspects of a person, some of which one admires, others one feels indifferent about” (Kelan & Mah, 2014, p. 93). Yet the admired target does serve as a role model (Lam, 2010) who motivates the internalization and emulation of ideals that he or she embodies. Its selective internalization of a moral trait, however, does not generally feature a major renunciation of the resources in the pursuit of a moral goal. Rather, its ontology retains an orientation toward self-interest. In this regard, Schindler et al. (2013) commented as follows:

> However, in contrast to adoration, there is a clear limit to the amount of resources that people will invest. Therefore, while admiration readies people to acknowledge excellent others through praise and potentially even resource provisions, they will not go out of their way to do this. (p. 101)
In other words, drastic ontological reform that may involve devotion does not seem to be involved in admiration. But it does seem to have some controlling effects on self-interested orientation on a selective basis. Adoration, by contrast, is a highly religious state, and the study of an exemplary subpopulation (adorers), in comparison with mere admirers and with others who do not tend to exhibit moral fascination, can provide an effective contrast of the ontological grounds behind family relationships. The relationship of self-interest versus moral fascination, and that of admiration and adoration are illustrated in Figure 1.

**Domination among Moral Fascination and Self-Interest**

The following psychological and phenomenological accounts of religious conversion and internalization provide insights into how one can potentially experience a shift of ontological basis while adding information to the above review of literature on the possible domination of one ontological base over another, depending on whether one inclines toward self-interest or moral/spiritual fascination. In order to evaluate the possibility of authentic other-orientation, the possibility of a shift in one’s ontological base such as ones described below is crucial to consider.

William James (1922), in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, described the process of shifting the “centre” that he observed among people who had experienced a religious conversion as follows:

Let us hereafter, in speaking of the hot place in a man's consciousness, the group of ideas to which he devotes himself, and from which he works, call it the *habitual centre of his personal energy*. It makes a great difference to a man whether one set of his ideas, or another, be the centre of his energy; and it makes a great difference, as regards any set of ideas which he may possess, whether they become central or remain peripheral in him. To say that a man is “converted” means, in these terms, that religious ideas, previously
peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual centre of his energy. (p. 196, emphasis in original)

Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis (1993) offered a similar description of the religious internalization process:

Internalization involves transforming oneself, incorporating a new way of thinking and acting into one’s personality. The new way of thinking and acting is valued not as a means to gain reinforcements nor as a means to be like one’s idol; it is valued as an end in itself and can exist independent of reinforcement or what one thinks admired others would say or do. (p. 55)

Both James’s and Batson et al.’s models illustrate how the influence of robust orientations can be overcome as one commits to religious ideals and goals. One’s center or ground can wax or wane according to the (habitual) quest of the person, reorganizing means-end structures.

**Inferred Implication for Family Relationships**

Do admirers and adorers make a difference in family relationships? In other words, in a systems view of family relationships, how do individuals’ ontological grounds contribute to family relationships? For example, because religion and God are relevant to an individual’s ultimate concerns, at least for those who embrace adoration, perhaps commitments are made at the most basic level (Batson et al., 1993; Emmons, 1999). Regarding the commitments of this level, Barbour (1960, p. 210) describes as follows: “a man’s ultimate trust, his most basic commitments, what he bets his life on, the final basis by which he justifies all his other values.” The “other values” should include those regarding family relationships. Similar logic could apply to those whose central concern is self-interest. Thus, I argue that the various ontological stances
within individuals regarding self-interest versus moral fascination may also serve as ontological grounds for family relationships. Actual communications on a daily activity level is considered to take place on ontological grounds and moral inclinations of this level.

Previous studies (e.g. Schindler, et al., 2013; Schindler, 2014) have shown that adoration relates to relational cohesion among subjects. Researchers attribute this to subjects’ shared highest ideal. This shared ideal certainly involves an ontological significance. Instead of seeking his or her own self-interest, each party seeks the same moral goal (God). This goal, depending on the individual’s perception of God, is possibly other-oriented in its character. The moral purposefulness of the system as a whole is a distinct feature of this adorer-adorer relationship that accompanies the shared ontological ground.

How is the altruism in the relationship of adorers of God different from mutual self-satisfaction as in the exchange theory or individualistic-rewards model, in which economic, selfish motives are assumed and central (Sears & Funk, 1991)? As a more basic question, how does a moral fascination in general make a difference in family relationships? The effects of admiration and adoration in family relationships have not yet been investigated. I will conduct qualitative analyses of religious families from various denominations and focus on statements that capture the effects of admiration and adoration on their family relationships, focusing on their subjective meaning.

**Methods**

**Participants**

Family narrative data were taken from face-to-face interviews from the American Families of Faith project led by David Dollahite and Loren Marks (see http://AmericanFamilies ofFaith.byu.edu). To a certain extent the use of secondary data limited the scope and validity of
the questions that the present research targeted a priori to explore; secondary data lacked direct, rich descriptions of the concepts of admiration and adoration because the questions were not prepared for these purposes. However, the interviews included general open-ended questions regarding the nexus of family and religion that assisted the respondents to express and elaborate their prime concerns, views, and dynamics among the related concepts. The open-endedness and the setup of the categories of questions matched my research questions.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling (Berg, 2001; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). Religious leaders were contacted and asked to identify families in their congregations as potential participants. Leaders were asked to recommend families that they believed well represented their faith community. Typically, married couples were interviewed together (for about an hour) and then the couples and their youth were interviewed together (for about an hour). Most interviews took place in the families’ homes. Interview questions were open-ended, focusing on participants’ religious beliefs, religious practices, religious communities, marital and parent-child relationships, and family life. Some questions asked about the participant’s relationship with God.

The sample for this study is composed only of Christians for the following two reasons: (a) to hold certain core concepts constant (e.g., a faith in Christ and the Atonement) so as to legitimize potential interpretations of common patterns at a substantive as opposed to a formalistic level; (b) in the interest of time. Although the subject of the present research is broad enough to apply to other religions such as Islam or Judaism, the present research focuses on exploring the depth of substantive structures within one religion (Christianity) rather than the formalistic breadth that applies to various religions. Also in the interest of time, from the original sample containing forty Christian couples from two New England states (n = 22) and two
counties in Northern California (n = 18) who were interviewed in 2002 and 2004, respectively, I focused on the New England subsample. Two families were omitted because they did not have enough or whole interview for the family part, making the number of families to analyze in the initial pool of the interviews 20. These Christian families consisted of the following denominations: Catholic, Congregational, Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopal, Baptist, Seventh-Day Adventist, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Jehovah’s Witness, and Latter-day Saints.

The mean age of the husbands was 46.9 (SD = 6.0), the mean age of the wives was 45.2 (SD = 5.4), and the mean age of the youth was 16.3 (SD = 2.9). All the youth were under 18 years old, except for three who were 19, 21, and 25 years old respectively. There were 10 males and 13 females among the youth.

**Coding and Analysis**

As an approach to inductive analysis, I followed the methods of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). However, I need to provide further information on the analytical methods employed because of the characteristics of the research question. The research question for the present research is one of philosophical exploration regarding self-interest and other-orientation. It regards the problem of an inaccurate labeling of other-orientation for relational processes that end up contributing to others’ (and ultimately the giver’s) self-interest. More specifically, this perspective calls on differentiations of structures of orientation (among orientations of God, others, and self) that individuals and families exhibit. To achieve this purpose, the methods and operationalization of the present research need more than a typical inductive approach. In addition to a regular inductive method, the present research requires using techniques that assist to reveal individuals’ and families’ (a) configurations of variables of orientations and (b) relationships among orientations of God, others, and the self. To do that, I adopted a case-
A case-oriented approach. Differentiations of structures of orientation assume a case (individual, marriage, family) as a whole entity that has an ability and propensity to organize and configure varieties of orientations according to the entity’s purposes. Therefore, a unit of analysis needs to be a case rather than a variable or a theme. A case-oriented approach (Ragin, 1987), as used in qualitative comparative analysis (Ragin, 1994) or in analytic induction (Hicks, 1994), “sees cases as meaningful but complex configurations of events and structures, and treats cases as singular, whole entities” (Ragin, 1994, p. 300). This view of the cases contrasts with that of a variable-oriented approach. A case-oriented approach allows examining unique configurations (e.g., the presence or absence of concept components) and searching for integrated accounts within the case to see how different parts of the case fit together (Ragin, 1987, 1994).

In addition, I need to compare the cases with different structures of orientations in order to effectively reveal unique factors that contribute to the composition of each structure. To visually compare cases, I created a cross-case table (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of individual/family × concepts to determine the presence or absence of each concept and the configuration of the concepts in relationship to each other.

Furthermore, in a more micro level, the coding of adoration required special methodological consideration given its holistic and multifaceted character. Besides the hallmark concept of “praise to the whole personality of God” (which mainly indicates the facilitator of the adoring state), there are other features of adoration such as “meaning-maker,” “provider (benefactor),” or “holistic internalization,” as reviewed above. Although an ideal case would
result in all of these concepts being coded, some cases may lack reference to some concepts, due
either to the absence of the concepts in the individual’s framework or to a missed opportunity to
talk about them in the interview. If the absence is not due to a missed opportunity but to the
structural features of the person’s framework, the incomplete configuration may function as a
key factor that affects the character of the family relationship. A case-oriented approach also
contributed to dealing with the multifacetedness of the concept of adoration as well as to
observing the differential contributions of admiration and adoration to family relationships.

**Phenomenological analysis.** I also incorporated the method of interpretive
phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2009) in order to focus on the fundamental question
(van Manen, 1990) concerning self-interest versus other-orientation and to investigate their
subjective views with regard to relationships among orientations of God, others, and the self.

**Coding admiration & adoration.** The coding procedure for the present study consisted
of two parts: the deductive coding of predetermined concepts and the inductive coding of
unknown concepts that were used to explain family relations. I coded admiration and adoration
using a codebook (see Appendix) that I created based on the above literature, following the
codebook format of Bernard and Ryan (2010). Although most of the literature dealt with
admiration and adoration as emotions, some (McDougall, 1950; Ortony et al., 1988) observed
that they are rooted in attitudes. As Schindler et al. (2013) stated,

> The terms admiration and adoration, or variants like admirable and adorable, are very
> often used to indicate a disposition, attitude, or judgement rather than the actual
> experience of the respective emotion. An important difference between admiration and
> adoration is that the actualization of adoration as a state requires a corresponding
> dispositional attitude towards the other. (p. 93)
These observations justify coding of relevant statements of values and quests as indicators of admiration and adoration.

Although the selective character of admiration and the more holistic character of adoration are different states, there is a chance that in the interview, individuals who adore Christ may mention only a specific aspect of Christ in answer to a question. As long as the comment focused on a specific point and there was no other indicator of adoration in the context, the comment was coded as admiration. The determination of whether the participant is an admirer or adorer of Christ, then, depends on whether or not there is a comment suggesting adoration in the whole interview. I make the assumption that an adorer, with his or her view of a personal God as a target of adoration or with a holistic internalization of God, will tend to speak about these aspects of adoration more than once in a lengthy interview (averaging two hours for adults and one hour for a child) that includes a direct question about his or her relationship with God.

**Unit of analysis.** The specific units of analysis, in the present research are individual, marriage, and family. A code marked each of these units in a mutually exclusive manner. The report of the results mostly takes the form of case studies of each family unit. The analyses, necessarily, incorporate the assumption that each family was operating as a system (e.g., as seen in family systems theory: Bowen, 1993). The family dynamics were examined in order to discover whether the individual’s adoration for God influenced the marriage, or how couple’s configuration of goals and values associate with children’s engagement in the family’s faith. In order to better and more fully understand self-interest as it compares to various forms of other-orientation, including admiration and adoration, my analyses focused on the respondent’s stated purposes/goals, their stance toward God, their outlook on family relationships, and how these
related to each other to construct the structure of their values and attitudes. Because it is not part of my research question, I did not describe all processes transpiring within each family.

**Locus of habitual center.** In order to evaluate the children’s locus of habitual center (James’s concept above) within the self, their answer to one question regarding their stance with respect to the sacrifice requested by religion was used. If they expressed (a) a willingness to give what is normally regarded as sacrifice requested by religion or (b) refused to regard it as a sacrifice, then I regarded it as an indication of the center having a spiritual characteristic.

I used the qualitative software program NVivo 10 to assist with the coding procedure. Verbal pauses (e.g. um, well, you know, uh) that carry no meaning have been removed from quotations of participants.

**Results**

Some aspects of adoration had decisive roles in characterizing the family’s ontology and relationships. On the other hand, some forms of admiration were observed in many families regardless of the family’s patterns of ontology and goals. Among the multifaceted aspects of adoration, those who spoke about the perception of God as meaning-maker and benefactor tended also to talk about the involvement of God in marriage and family. But within this group there was a subgroup of spouses or couples who talked about their total devotions to God (hereafter called holistic devotion). These people had a further distinguishable ontological structure in the family. Their children indicated some unique concepts that were not indicated by children of the other groups: admiration for their parents, locus of habitual center in spirituality, and their holistic devotion to God.

In this section, I present the results and analyses according to three groups: a group in which at least one spouse spoke in ways that I coded as holistic devotion, and a group in which at
least one spouse mentioned a personal God—more specifically, a perception of God as both a meaning-maker and benefactor—but not in ways that reflected what I call holistic devotion, and a group in which no spouse mentioned either of the above, but most of them perceived God as a benefactor. Before I report these central qualitative findings, using a case-oriented table (Table 4) I will describe the general tendencies and characters of the whole sample, including how admiration and adoration were observed in the interviews, and the overall difference between the characteristics of the groups.

**Overall Tendency**

As seen in Table 4, God as a provider, pursuit of harmonious marital relationships (e.g., kindness, togetherness, and commitment), and pursuit of harmonious family relationships were seen among the spouses, regardless of group. The prevalence of these concepts indicates that the aspect of harmonious loving was valued by an overwhelming majority of participants. This is an important piece of information in analyzing their marriage and family relationships. If based on these comments alone, the picture is simple: most of them value a loving marriage and family.

However, there were variations in the presence or lack of other concepts, depending on the individual or family. I will describe them according to group membership. In order to explain how I adopted the current membership classification, I will next report on the composition of adoration.

**Adoration and Group Classification**

Certain sub-concepts of adoration were only referred to by limited number of spouses (see Table 4). More specifically, in addition to (a) Personal God, or the indicator of a personal God as an adored target (meaning-maker and benefactor), some of the participants spoke in ways that I codes as examples of other related indicators: (b) Praising/Emulating God, or directly
praising God as a personal moral target who has multiple moral attributes, and emulating or trying to become like God or Christ as an adored model; and (c) Holistic Devotion, or holistically giving up resources for God, that align with the concept of holistic internalization of or absorption into the personal moral target, which signifies a strong form of adoration.

Among these, spouses’ comments that were coded under (a) Personal God and (c) Holistic Devotion had notable associations with different ontological and other specific features of marriage and family relationships, respectively, as I describe below. Both of these two concepts served in this sample as key markers that delineated a specific ontological structure and associated relational features that differentiated individuals and families from those who did not address it.

In 14 of the 20 families interviewed at least one spouse spoke in ways I coded as a personal God. Among these 14, seven families had at least one spouse who spoke in ways I coded as holistic devotion (examples of comments coded as holistic devotion will be given in the group analysis section). I classified the seven families whose comments were coded holistic devotion as the HD group, the remaining seven as the PG (personal God) group, and the six families who did not speak in ways I coded holistic devotion or personal God, as the GB (God-as-Benefactor) group. The last group was named so because at least one spouse of most of the families in this group spoke in ways I coded as God as Provider (Benefactor). Age distribution among the adults was even across the three groups (husbands: HD 46.7, PG 46.0, and GB 48.4; wives: HD 44.6, PG 45.0, and GB 46.4). The mean age of youth in the HD group (18.6) was higher than the PG group (15.3) and the GB group (14.0). I will later elaborate on the characteristics and associated features of the families in each group.
Admiration

Husband and wife. Most participants in all three groups spoke of a family member or God in ways I coded as admiration: they praised a family member with admirable spiritual/religious/moral characteristics or spoke of wanting to emulate him/her, or they did the same to God focusing on one particular characteristic. However, when broken down by the moral targets of admiration, there were various unevenly distributed patterns among the groups. Praising and emulating spouses was mainly seen in the HD group and the PG group. Susan (all names are pseudonyms), who was categorized in the PG group, praised her husband’s commitment and persistence to his religious practices:

Larry is very good about his devotions, his daily devotions. He gets up really early, really, really early. And you know, does the daily readings, the readings that would be done in Mass. And he follows that through the year.

In the next example, Julia (HD group) praised her husband’s character:

The Bible says secondarily, I think because of the person that Harold is, that God made him to be. That he could tolerate all the stuff that I have thrown at him, all this time, is a large part of why we’re still married. ’Cause the man is amazing, I don’t know if it’s like a denial thing or whatever it is, but he’s just pretty darn terrific.

Julia was praising Harold’s tolerance of her. She also praised Harold’s personality overall. But this must be distinguished from the adoration in which one worships the moral target.

Next, Melissa (PG group) talked about how she and her husband emulate each other in terms of faith:

I think the fact that we’re that it’s a mutual thing, so we, there’s ways that we can encourage one another in the things we might be doing, or our walk with God, our relationship with God, or whatever. Because we’re both there, if one or the other wasn’t a Christian, then it wouldn’t be, you know, the ability to do that at all. So yeah, it can be an encouragement as well. Either by example or direct word or prayer. . .

Melissa reported that she and her husband were a role model for each other for living faith in God, and the spouse’s model encouraged and motivated the other to emulate this.
On the other hand, parents’ praising children was seen in all groups, as well as parents’ setting examples. As I demonstrate later, parents’ emphasis on setting examples was mostly accompanied by their hope of evoking a positive, moral motivation or sense of admiration in children so that the children would follow their example.

In the interviews, many made comments about their emulating one particular aspect of God, mostly the loving kindness shown by Christ for others. These comments made in the context of an interview may or may not represent selective internalization of the many traits of God: one could emulate any given trait of God or Christ as a consequence of one’s adoring God as a whole person (Schindler et al., 2013); it is impossible to discern selectivity from the comments alone. Therefore, as a matter of coding and of operationalization, as explained in the method section, as long as there was no indication in the immediate context of the comment that this emulation extended to other traits, comments on modeling after Christ’s (or God’s) loving kindness toward other individuals were coded as emulating a trait of God.

Emulating a trait of God was coded among members in all groups. On the other hand, as seen in Table 4, its distribution was clearly differentiated from holistic devotion’s. In other words, members of all groups talked about emulating the loving kindness aspect of Christ. For example, the first comment is from Stacy from the GB group:

Stacy: Yeah, I think, just like everyone’s different, I can’t . . . And not judging people. I always say, “Stacy, don’t judge, don’t talk about people.” You know, like trying to remind myself to follow the lessons, that are in the Bible that Jesus is trying to teach us, that you know, he loved Samaritans, he didn’t judge people, you know?

And the second example is an extract of a conversation between Keith and Ruby, a couple from the HD group:

Keith: We study together. Jesus’ life. And that is a lot of. And of course the Bible says Jesus has provided a model for us, is a model. So in that book, and of course, from the
scriptures, it shows us a lot of how we are to model our own character, and to follow Him. So that has helped a lot.

Ruby: He didn’t get impatient.

Keith: Especially husbands it’s said. “Be like Jesus.” How He deals with the congregation.

In the context of conversation, each comment refers to Christ’s aspect of interpersonal loving kindness and they all try to emulate his example: Both episodes were coded as Emulating a Trait of God. However, only the latter family made other comments in the interview that indicated that they adored God with a holistic type of devotion, while Stacy focused on the aspect of loving-kindness within God and her marital and familial relationships throughout the interview, and she did not indicate other signs of adoration (God as a meaning maker or holistic devotion).

It is legitimate to consider that emulating a trait of God (mostly modeling Christ’s loving kindness toward other individuals) has a conceptual affinity with the participants’ valuing harmonious marital/familial relationships. As I described above, almost all spouses interviewed commented on how they value kind interpersonal relationships, and it is understandable that many of them also remarked that they admired divine beings that were considered to treat others kindly. Because it is selectively focusing on one trait, this emulating a trait of God was categorized as admiration, rather than adoration.

This finding may be in conflict with Schindler et al.’s (2013) conceptualization that the target of admiration is limited to human beings. Or, some participants in the current research may have regarded Christ with a more humanized view: as a focused role model of excellent interpersonal love and brotherhood. With this idea of a humanized Christ, the participants may have assessed that they could also “attain similar levels of control” over the loving trait as Christ had (Schindler et al., 2013, p.97), which potential attainability Schindler et al. (2013) suggested
is a condition of admiration as opposed to adoration. In any case, the present research indicated a likeliness that selective admiration could be applied to a divine being in a similar manner.

**Children.** Children’s admiration for their parents (especially emulating and honoring) was seen only in the HD group, although praising parents was seen in two other families outside this group. Some of the comments about emulation were directed to more holistic descriptions of parents, exhibiting a quality that was closer to adoration than selective admiration. Concrete examples of these are shown in the analysis of the HD group below.

Next, I will provide detailed descriptions of the families resulting from the analyses. To illustrate the differential associations that each form of adoration has with the families’ relationships and ontologies, I will focus on what they pursued as individuals, in their marriage, or family. Specifically, to effectively compare the structures of their goals, I divide the reports from each group into two parts: adults and children. In the adult section, I will report on spouses’ individual faith, marriage, and views on family; and in the children’s, their faith and views on family. Particular attention was paid to how they regarded God and their self-interest. For children, I will report their comments that indicated the locus of their center within the self, or whether their “habitual centre” (James, 1922, p. 196) had its locus in spirituality or not. Several families were found to have a pattern that was regarded as exceptional compared with other families within that group. In these cases, I will describe the distinctive factors involved that were associated with the anomaly.

**The Holistic Devotion [HD] Group**

There were seven families in which either the husband or wife mentioned (as a matter of individual or of marriage and family) what is coded as holistic devotion, and in six of the families the children spoke in ways I coded as holistic devotion as a matter of individual child or
of the child’s family. The following is a description of these families with respect to holistic
devotion and family. I will first describe the spouses and their marriages, followed by the
children. Then I illustrate how childrens’ admiration for parents works, and finally, I describe
one family that showed a starkly different pattern from the other six families and explore distinct
factors involved in this family.

Marriages/spouses in the HD group.

Family #1. As an individual, Sandra expressed her feeling of devotion to God with a
sense of self-renunciation:

I cannot stand displeasing Jehovah. I hate it. I get very upset with myself. And I know
when I . . . I want to make Jehovah happy. I want to make my husband happy, so I really
try to focus on what Jehovah would want from me. He’s, I mean, I talk to Him every day.
He’s that real, . . .

Sandra’s adoration for God is expressed in her desire to focus on making God happy. And with
that love and devotion for God, she wanted to renounce all of her own attributes and conduct that
were not pleasing to God. She expressed this feeling of self-renunciation with an emotion of
hatred. In relation to self-renunciation, she later commented regarding the idea of simplifying
their family life by staying away from possessing abundant material goods. With her detachment
from material possessions, Sandra said: “There’s so many families who have to really sacrifice.
And I’ve never . . . I don’t feel that I’ve sacrificed.” This indicates Sandra’s locus of center in
spirituality.

Ralph and Sandra shared their adoration for God, and Ralph expressed their shared trust
in God in the following way: “We have confidence that whatever God decides to do, that it’s
going to be fair, just, and ultimately for our good.” Sandra’s next expression of the couple’s
strong adoration of God again included thorough devotion to God and a sense of self-
renunciation:
And I just think loyalty is essential. Especially loyalty to Jehovah. Because if we’re not loyal to him, then we’re going to compromise in many other areas of our life. So really keeping Him first and thinking, you know, how would Jehovah view what I’m doing? Or, you know, He can see me. I know He can see everything, that nothing’s hidden from Him. And maintaining your relationship with Jehovah is only going to help you and encourage you to maintain your relationship with your loved ones.

For Sandra, everything in their marriage was in front of God and subject to his moral evaluation. Therefore, they loyally submitted to God in every area of their marital life without compromising God’s moral standard. Sandra’s next comment shows that this thorough dedication was contrasted, in her eyes, with their self-interests:

But it also, when we dedicate ourselves to Jehovah, that to me . . . When we say we want to live to serve Jehovah, we give up doing our own thing type of idea. And we want to please Jehovah. And by doing that, we’re going to apply what He tells us to in the Bible, everything. We’re not just going to side-track it, you know, if it’s not comfortable for us. But we’re going to really work at putting it in our marriage.

This comment illustrates how Sandra’s (or the couple’s) holistic devotion was closely bound with a sense of self-renunciation. She juxtaposed God’s will with their self-interest; and on this division, they together strove to embrace God and his will. Led by adoration for God, their emotional center seems to be in serving God. They strove to fulfill God’s will as their single purpose, renouncing all of “[their] own thing.” This God’s will includes moral standards of loving their spouse and their family. Ralph described it as follows:

Husbands, you ought to be loving your wife as Christ loved the congregation. And you think about the love that Christ showed was, I mean self-sacrificing is . . . You know, Jesus said that two commands, the whole law hangs. Love God with your heart, mind, soul, strength. I can’t remember the exact wording. And love your neighbor as yourself. But Jesus went a step further, he says, I’m giving you a new commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you. And he loved others more than himself. And that’s the role model that husbands have in the family.

Thus as a whole, both toward loving God and loving their spouse (and family), self-interest was considered as an object to control. Sandra also commented that she thought that marriage without their religion would be very self-centered and said “I see pursuits in different
areas that wouldn’t necessarily promote a strong family.” Without their religion, Sandra thinks she and her husband would pursue self-interests that include not only self-centeredness but also other forms of self-exploration that do not contribute to “a strong family,” which, interpreted from the whole interview, most likely means the family’s united cause of serving God and the family’s loving ties. This comment relates to a comment Sandra made previously, that referred to wanting to avoid making a moral “compromise in many other areas of [their] life.” Thus, the purpose of their marriage was centered in devotion to God, and Sandra repeatedly objected to the existence of other purposes of marriage that do not serve God.

In this adoration-led tightly bound marriage, their shared adoration spontaneously extended to the whole family, and involved their children in the same cause. Sandra mentioned her desire to involve the whole family, including her kids, in this devotion to God: “But serving Jehovah’s been my whole life. I would love it to be my whole family’s life. That unity thing forever is so important to me. And that’s just something that I pray we just keep working toward, forever.” She added: “And that as a family, we need to keep it simple; we need to live, if we have to, in a tent, but united serving Jehovah.” Her desire to unite the whole family in serving God and renouncing self-interest also seemed to be conceptually extended time-wise toward eternity.

**Family #2.** Doug expressed his adoration for Christ in trying to emulate his image: “What does it mean to be a godly person? What does it mean to be conformed to the image of Christ and not conformed to the image of this world?” He also remarked regarding their ideal of serving God as a couple:

God created people in His image, male and female as reflecting His image together. And so He purposed that in a marriage we would glorify Him. That we would be servants together. That we would help each other to follow His purpose for creation. And also
part of that is to produce offspring that will also live for His glory. . . . And serving Him together.

Doug perceived that the purpose of marriage (and of family) was to serve God together, and that this was what God requested of them. But, as the next comment indicates, for Doug, this shared devotion to God was not just a duty: “I mean, obviously I could have worshiped without you [referring to his wife], but there’s a sense of I really wanted to worship with you, to be together to worship.” This united service to God is what he desired. And he added an explanation of how this form of unified worship worked:

But I do believe that my marriage is a gift from God. That God brought us together, even in answer to prayer. As a gift to me, to many needs in our life. And I do believe that, our marriage is a gift to each other to help each other maybe enable each other to really follow God’s purpose for our lives. That there’s a way in which together we glorify and serve God . . . in an enhanced kind of a way.

Doug stressed not only the devotion aspect, but also the aspect of grace. But note that even the gifts and the mutual enhancement, as resources, were perceived as investments in serving God.

This desire for a shared devotion to God was shared by with his wife, Bonnie who said “I don’t think I’d want to be married and not both have a sense of seeking to live for God.” She continued:

when I think that we’re each individually seeking to understand God, and who He’s made us, and seeking to learn to live out a life that’s pleasing to Him. And that we bring that into the marriage so that the marriage is . . . strengthened I think by . . . we’re each different people, but we’re seeking to walk a life that’s pleasing to God: individually and together, so we have that common . . . I think having a common sense of direction and a sense of trying to see things in God’s perspective, not just our own individual take on life.

For Bonnie, their shared service to God introduced the perspective of God into their marriage.

Next, Doug talked about how their marital commitment to each other was subsumed within their dedication to God:

Because God is at the center of our life. I mean our lives are committed to Him to live for Him. And we have, really we’d say our life is from Him. And so because we both
have that commitment, then that means that how we live together, how we process things is centered around Him, our relationship with Him, our commitment to Him. And also . . . God is, so we would say that God is the center of our marriage. We purpose that God would be the center of our marriage, so that our commitment to each other is an outgrowth of our commitment to Him.

Doug explained that when both are devoted to God, their commitment to each other and other marital processes become embedded in this devotion to God, and is regarded as a result, or product, of it. This contrasts with the idea of marriage being about the mutual satisfaction of self-interest, where the receiver’s quest for self-interest does not necessarily serve the will of God.

The next comment adds to this point. It indicates how Doug perceived their marriage’s devotion to God as being holistic in what it covered:

Oh yeah, [faith] is totally central [to marriage] because we seek to live out our life with God as the center of our life, then He’s just the center of everything. So if there’s going to be a real integrity within our self, or integration of our relationship with God and everything, then . . . there’s no aspect of life where He isn’t central. And so . . . And I think again, because we would say that our relationship with God is the core of our identity, then that affects . . . I mean our marriage relationship is part of that. I mean, if, I can imagine if I were married to someone for whom the relationship with God was not central, then our lives would really be going different directions at the core. So because, specifically Jesus Christ is the center of our life. And that means, our marriage also . . . we’re walking on the same path.

For Doug, having no aspect of life where God was not central was an ideal. His claim for the thoroughgoing centrality of God in the couple’s life expressed how he perceived their commitment to God was all-encompassing-holistic. He denied the selective application of their faith to their life. Rather than viewing the marital relationship as the coordination of different self-interests, Doug summarized marriage as “walking on the same path.” This implies that in Doug’s view, the ultimate end of serving the spouse’s needs was not regarded as being to satisfy the self-interest of the spouse, but instead the fulfillment of the needs was viewed as something that was instrumental to serving God together.
Family #3. In another family, coded as belonging to holistic devotion (HD) group, Earl described the way that he adored Christ in the following way:

I mean the key verse for me or verses, has been the section of Romans 8 talking about . . . you need the tribulation. . . nothing will be able to separate you from the love of God and Christ Jesus. I tend to be kind of a real bottom line kind of person. And the understanding of that made me feel free to, not only to give my life to Christ, but also in my marriage to feel free to take risks. . . Emotionally, and to say, alright, you know, this is it. We’re hanging out here. You know, it’s God and it’s us and, you know, I don’t have any plan B. This is it.

Citing the Bible, Earl described his confidence in his bond with and love for God, and his willingness to devote his life to Christ as well as his commitment to fidelity to his wife. “Give my life to Christ” is interpreted here as holistically giving up resources to God.

Earl also indicated that this marital fidelity was not something that sidetracked from his devotion to God, but rather that the marriage was subsumed within his and the couple’s devotion to God:

And I remember early on that we started [a] my needs versus your needs kinds of thing. And I remember we got together pretty early on in that thing and sort of decided that we are now one unit. So there is no my needs versus your needs. There is what God is going to do through us as a couple. And we’re either going to sink together or we’re going to swim together, but there’s not going to be one’s going to be better and one’s going to be worse, ’cause then we’re both going to be worse. And at that point we made a real conscious decision that, you know, we do it together and there is no sort of competing thing, which I think speaks at the heart of it.

As Earl and his wife shared their devotion to God, the two were united as one unit of servant and any individualistic insistence on self-interests was controlled. This “shared servanthood” presents a very different picture from the idea of mutual satisfaction of self-interest, or the instrumental use of marriage for one’s own purpose. It involves rejection of the idea of it being “my needs versus your needs”—rejecting for the love of God the very ground of such an individualistically oriented structure. A spiritual process involving a shift of the habitual center of one’s being and purpose is implied in this experience; individualistic pursuits of self-interest
were objectified and renounced, and, as a result, a united devotee, as a new subject, seems to have been formed in their marriage.

**Family #4.** Regarding his devotion to marriage and how it tied to his giving up all his resources for God, Roy explained:

Yes, total . . . to me it means giving myself over totally. And the only One, capital “O” I mean, in the universe, that you can do that with is God. And so, because Helen is God’s chosen one for me, He has a destiny for both of us together. And it’s just a complete “Yes, Lord.”

Roy holistically gave himself to God, and therefore his marriage was subsumed within this devotion. With this superimposition, Roy completely dedicated his resources to his marriage, also, *in the spirit of submission to God.* This needs to be differentiated from the mutual satisfaction of individualistic self-interest. In the language of this study, Roy’s ontological stance toward marriage was shaped by his holistic devotion to God.

Roy and his wife Helen talked about how each one respectively placed God over, and at the center of, their marriage.

Twenty-three years later, we wouldn’t be together if it weren’t for the presence of God in our marriage. And I think, I just would add perspective. When we see others around us their marriages explode for one reason or another, it’s because they don’t have a confidence. Their focus is on being hurt or needing their way or whatever, but somehow when God is in the center of things, then it gives you perspective to carry you through the tough times.

By speaking of perspective or confidence, Roy illustrated an ontology contrasted with a position based on self-interest. In fact, Roy said, “personally I think probably the greatest obstacle [to marriage] is myself.” His marriage seems to be placed on the central contrast of God-orientation verses self-interest.

Regarding this issue, his wife Helen made a similar comment:

I mean what I find is that [long marital relationship] drives me to God, you know, especially during bad times. That's when you have to start looking. If things really start
dissolving, you have to look at yourself, face yourself, you have to face that . . . You know, we were talking about faith earlier: is your faith in God central at that time, or is yourself central at that time?

For Helen, too, the marriage arena was centered around the central contrast of what I call God-orientation verses self-interest. Both spouses were centered in God, as opposed to each of them being committed to different self-interests. Helen talked about this sharedness: “Well, we get along and being able to have common direction. I think those are the biggest things. Being able to work through problems as opposed to having them sort of take over us.” This suggests that their centering in God placed them on a different ontological ground, from which they could objectify their self-interests and have control over them. Again, the locus of center within the self is likely to be in spirituality, in order for this domination of God-orientation over self-interest to happen.

Roy called this marital state of theirs as “a holy relationship that can actually make a difference,” enabled by “attitude changes” that God gave them.

**Family #5.** In terms of as a couple, Donna talked about how she viewed that she and her husband served God in every facet of their life:

And just getting involved, you know, following God’s will and finding what our gifts are, and using them. We do in churches and communities that we’re in. So being in the church for us is not just going to church, but being part of it, and doing things for God there. And our lives also where we work. So, it’s just our whole life every day, [not] just a certain time through the day.

Donna perceived that they do “things for God” or serve God, their “whole life every day.” Donna also talked about how God was the prime goal of marriage: “Yep. I think we both agree that God should be number one, and then each other comes next, because otherwise it won’t work.” This is very similar to what Helen in Family #4 remarked: “That’s the biggest one, commitment to the Lord first and then each other. That is absolutely the biggest one.”
Family #6. Ruby, after mentioning that in her church there was no official doctrine to observe the Sabbath, mentioned that “And so the Sabbath, one day a week would not be enough.” She indicated that her commitment to God was the same regardless of the day of the week. Her husband Keith commented on the purpose of family: “Well, we believe that God created the family and that it should be a blessing to Him, should bring praise to Him.” Keith perceived the family as a unit to praise and bless God, rather than focusing on receiving benefits from God. Ruby had a similar view:

There is a nice scripture in Deuteronomy that says that you should speak of God with your family and your children when you get up in the morning, when you lie down, when you’re on the road, when you’re in the home. So it’s like, we’ve raised our children from the beginning to think of God as a real person. And our family as a unit that would want to make Him happy.

Ruby, just as her husband and others of the “holistically devoted” families, defined and explicitly spoke in ways about the family as a united group devoted to God as she said “our family as a unit that would want to make Him happy.”

Summary with respect to the marriages/spouses in the HD group. In all the families, the purpose of marriage was regarded as being to serve God (for Family #6, the purpose of the entire family was regarded as such). Even though marital love, support, and commitment were valued the same way as in the PG or the GB group, these interpersonal dimensions were subsumed within their shared devotion to God. More specifically, marriage was placed in a framework with a distinct ontological structure in which self-interest was objectified and controlled, and starkly contrasted with the will of God. On this narrowly defined moral axis, these devotees directed all their resources toward God. Fulfilling the spouse’s needs was likely to be seen, in the big picture, as providing support to the spouse’s or the marriage/family’s holistic dedication to God. An ongoing flow of providing support (as a means) and devoting to God (as the single ultimate end)
was formed. Quests for (from the view of a receiver), or fueling (from the view of a giver), self-interest as an independent and ultimate purpose would be an incompatible movement on this moral axis, for resources go the opposite way. This is a crucial point that affects the ontological character of the interpersonal relationship, which characterizes and differentiates this marriage/family relationship from the mutual satisfaction of self-interest, where the quest for self-interest is a sovereign goal.

Children in the HD group. In this section, I describe the children’s faith in God, their view of the purpose of family, and the locus of their center within the self. It turned out that every child, except a child in the family with a pattern distinctively different from the other families, expressed what was coded as holistic devotion to God, either devotion together with the family or as individual devotion.

Family #1. Two children, Lydia (age 19) and Vicky (age 16) both commented regarding the family’s devotion to God.

Lydia: We appreciate the fact that He’s our Creator and who better to give us guidelines for how to live our lives. He’s the one that created us, who knows how we work, who’s taken into account our emotions and . . . And so of course you want to be able to live our lives according to what’s going to make Him happy in appreciation for everything that He has done for us, and does for us now, and will do us. So besides the fact that it’s what makes us the happiest, it’s also showing appreciation for everything that we have and what has been done on our behalf.

Vicky: Well, it’s like the basis of our family life. Everything that we do is revolved around our God, Jehovah. And we really live our lives to please Jehovah. And it kind of sets the path of our life, like we do things according to what Jehovah would want us to do, and so, or what we should do.

Both children expressed their and their family’s commitment to pleasing God. As an indicator of the locus of their center, both of them said that they have never felt “deprived” when the family chose not to do something other people normally do for a religious reason. Lydia elaborated why this was the case:
If I wanted to do something, if I wanted to play sports on a team, or if I wanted to do this, or I wanted to do that, then I could have. But I would weigh the decision and I would say okay, it’s not for me. So it wasn’t a sacrifice because I knew that if I wanted to do it, then I could do it.

In other words, Lydia said she chose the religious options, and she did not feel a desire to do things that interfere with religion. Regarding her sense of identity, she said that that “a lot has to do with moral guidelines and how that forms” her. She internalized the moral guidelines that the family espoused.

Regarding her future career, Vicky’s sister, Lydia, mentioned:

But, so when I look at what I want to do in my life, it’s not like I’m looking for a career to make myself wealthy or make myself prominent. . . . I mean you still have to be practical and you still have to take into consideration, you know, living life as the means to do that [lifetime religious mission work].

Her desire was not to fulfill self-interests like achieving wealth or fame. Rather, work and finance were means for a religious end. She said she was aware that this way of thinking was different from how many less religious people think.

**Family #2.** Daniel (age 18) commented on his gift for music and on using that gift “to the best of the abilities that God had given” to him and giving himself to God in his effort.

Even if I . . . I just produced a CD, it comes out no one buys it . . . even if I don’t sell any copies, no one likes my music, you know, that somehow, if I’m really giving of myself to God, I can have satisfaction in the fact that I’m not successful by the standards of money or such. But there’s something, it’s something that’s greater than just about material wealth or being successful. It’s like, an inner peace with events, with things that happen, even if things go pretty wrong.

He expressed his ideal of giving up resources for God. Even though this was the only comment of his in the interview that reflected what I coded as holistic devotion, it is evident that Daniel took this ideal affirmatively.

**Family #3.** Dennis (age 17) commented that in his family, “everybody serves God.” His brother, Justin (age 21), elaborated his view of a united family in serving God:
Yeah, ’cause I mean even that, because even family, I mean it’s easy to . . . and if there was anything noble to hoard, if there was anything to make your own and say, yeah, yeah, God, you even kind of push God out of the picture and say, look, I’m just going to make this mine and stuff. And again it’s the whole . . . well we were talking about secular thinking versus religious. It would be possible to do that by all means, but it wouldn’t be right, and so that, I think . . . And that’s when crisis come, like you lose a family member, the reaction is very different for somebody who’s made family their own thing as opposed to somebody who’s already given it to God. I think you can see a huge difference.

Justin’s point was that the family should be dedicated to God, as opposed to it being instrumental to “their own thing.” He further talked about his vision of a potential future marriage and family from a similar viewpoint. After expressing his hope that the person he would marry would be a genuine Christian who practiced her faith, he continued to mention the reason why he felt this way:

Well, I think, again for reasons of trust, first of all, I think it would be the most pleasing to God. It’s what He would want. And for us it would be the best thing in our interest in that, and again, God would take precedence over the marriage itself or any ideas that we even have of what our marriage is supposed to look like. It’s, you know, and family the same thing. I think that I would raise my children as a father who, yeah, wants them to think for themselves, but would also give them a strong foundation with what I believe, and give them that taste and give them that, so that they’re brought up in it but they’re not brought up thinking that all their faith is about is just being brought up in it and stuff, but that it becomes more to them. And I think that, you know, with both those things that faith in God and following God and giving, entails giving marriage and family over to Him and not hoarding it for ourselves to make it something that it’s not designed to be. I think once that happens family and marriage become exactly what they were, or not exactly because there’s obviously, we struggle, but they become what they were entailed to be in terms of creation.

For Justin, God was the author of marriage and family, and Justin’s ideal was dedicating his marriage and family to God and renouncing the act of making marriage and family instrumental to one’s self-interests. He refused the utilitarian idea to use family support to satisfy one’s self-interest as an ultimate end. Notice that Justin not only defined the purpose of marriage/family as devotion to God, but he also referred to self-renunciation in relation to it. This whole attitude is
similar to what his father Earl described above, concerning how both Earl and Doris decided to
dedicate their marriage to God as one unit, renouncing individualistic self-interest.

At the individual level, too, Dennis and Justin both spoke about how their religious ideal
was dedication to God combined with self-renunciation. Initially, Dennis described his
commitment to serve God as follows:

I finally understood the true meaning of what serving God is really supposed to be about. Before then I’m just like, oh yeah, I serve God, you know, I go to church on Sunday, I go to Sunday School. It’s part of my identity somehow, you know, when people ask me, so what do you believe in? I say Christian, I say God. But now it’s like really that’s just, that changes my whole perception of everything because now I, it’s dying to yourself to live. So I mean, if I had to phrase it all in one sentence it would be dying to yourself so you can live.

What is significant about Dennis’s this comment is his vision of self-renunciation. He saw that commitment to serving God inevitably is accompanied by a denial of self-interest. Dennis said this understanding of Christianity “completely” changed his “life,” “the focus of [his] life,” and his “whole reality.” This suggests the potential ontological impact of self-renunciation in devotion to God. Justin made a similar comment:

I think for me though, the way that Dennis kind of touched on, is just kind of an attitude of instead of doing things based on routine, doing things so that you’re comfortable. Doing things . . . All the things that touch on self benefit are kind of suspended. Meaning, if they’re a by-product, yahoo. But there’s going to be times where God is going to call us to do things in our families and our relationships with our church. And really, if the benefit does not look good for us, if there was any evidence, I would say, well things that seem to, maybe long term do a lot of good, but in the short term, in terms of instant gratification.

Here Justin also talked about rejecting self-interest and temporary benefits. He said all self-interested ends were to be “suspended.” By suspending or rejecting in some way, selfish pursuits, serving God becomes a single purpose. Both Dennis and Justin had a robust and singularized moral standard that contrasted between serving God and satisfying self-interest. The whole family seems to share this standard and commitment, and they were united in this movement
becoming one in shared devotion. It is important to consider the potential influence of parental adoration of God on these self-renouncing effects with regard to purpose observed among children.

**Family #4.** Gina (age 18) first mentioned that sharing a perspective among the family that family members were all children of God, despite individual character differences, served as “the common bond” that helped unite and deal with each other within the family. And then she described the family’s united devotion as follows:

I guess it [faith] kind of give us a common standard, like you said before. You said it was a terms of measuring yourself up against and seeing how you’re doing but we can also keep each other accountable and all work towards it together.

Concerning her own faith as an individual, Gina expressed her idea of self-renunciation in relation to serving God. She talked about the sacrifice she made due to her faith:

Well, I guess mostly the whole way of living in this community. I feel like I’ve really just not had a very active social life, because almost everything that most of my friends at school are doing is something that I don’t feel would be glorifying God. . . . but on the one hand while we’re I guess sacrificing everything in the eyes of the world, I think because that’s what God, that’s God’s best for us, we’re actually really gaining everything, so while it’s a sacrifice it’s actually not a sacrifice. So, I feel like, I don’t feel like my life has been empty, and I feel like there are definitely a lot of things that I don’t do, or that I do because of my faith. And even though a lot of people might look at that and say: Oh man, do you have any fun, or like . . . and it might seem like a sacrifice to a lot of people who don’t understand, that don’t know us.

Gina disengaged from things that she thought do not glorify God, but she said she gained “everything” that came because of choosing what was “God’s best for [them].” Later she added that:

But it seems like, I mean it’s mostly stuff that maybe would seem fun for now, but in the long run, I think that, you know when God’s best is in mind for me and that doesn’t include things that I have to sacrifice, so.

Similar to Justin in Family #3, Gina seems to have an orientation toward the future, based on her belief regarding the religious/spiritual benefits that would be forthcoming. The following
comment about her future view of marriage indicates Gina’s way of centering her life in God: “I think that if God’s the center of my life, and I marry someone who has something else as the center of his life, I think it’s just not going to work.”

**Family #5.** Tracy’s (age 15) giving up resources for God was expressed in the following two comments:

Yeah, just knowing that you’re God’s child has helped me with my identity. To know that I’m the way I am because God wanted me that way. And . . . meaning on this earth is just to tell people about Jesus. Live a life that he’d be proud of.

Well, again that . . . I’m God’s child and so He put me on this earth for a specific reason. And to try and find out what that reason is. But knowing that . . . there’s nothing wrong with me in God’s eyes, so there’s no reason to think badly about myself. And not to care what other people think. And to only care that I’m pleasing God.

Tracey wanted only to please God and Christ, and did not engage in things that were not pleasing to God, which might have come from other people. What these comments indicate are not exactly the same as dedication to God combined with renunciation of self-interest, as seen in some other youth, but the structure is similar to it.

**Family #6.** Elina (age 25) described the family’s purpose as being “a support system internally and to serve God in joy.” And she said “our love of God definitely compels us, everything that we do.” What urged her family, according to Elina, was their inner desire of love toward God. In other words, their adoration for God motivated their daily actions in a way that meant that the purpose of these actions was serving God. Elina’s description regarding her own faith elaborated on this point:

I learned from a very young age that the decisions I made either would please God or displease God. . . . It’s more important to me that I make my Creator happy, that I make Jehovah happy. So it wasn’t a matter of, you know, of well my parents said I can’t do this, I’m one of those Jehovah’s Witnesses, I can’t do this. It was, I can’t do this because my relationship with God is more important.
She said it was not blind acceptance of the standard of her parents or her church that compelled her to not engage in some of the things that other people were doing; but rather it was her choice, based on pleasing God as opposed to displeasing him. As she said in the previous comment, it was her “love of God” that drove her from the inside. In order to please God, she wanted to renounce things that would displease God. In the next comment, Elina affirmed this point:

And I think I touched on it before too, that it’s important to understand that it’s not a matter of being afraid of punishment, it’s again viewing that relationship as something really important. Just like I would be afraid of doing something that would hurt my family, just like I’d be afraid of doing something that would hurt a good friend. I have a healthy fear of doing something that would somehow sadden God. So it’s not a morbid fear like, “You’re going to be punished forever and ever.”

Elina’s point was that her motive came from adoration of God and a desire to build a good relationship with a personal God. Her desire to please God and dedicate herself to God also appeared in her choice of career:

I hadn’t felt that pressure tremendously, because I really have no interest in being successful in the world’s eyes, so to speak. I’m more concerned about being successful in Jehovah’s eyes.

Summary with respect to children in the HD group. The children in the HD group expressed a desire for holistic devotion to God, either as an individual or a family. They also showed signs of their center located in spirituality and they expressed purposes of a spiritual/religious character more than the children in the other groups. Further, when they talked about receiving support from the family, they often referred to this support as instrumental to their spiritual ends (e.g., their spiritual growth, spiritual happiness, building a relationship with God, or serving God). Gina, in Family #4, illustrated this:

I think God desires families to help each to just strengthen each other because we’re all going, we’re walking the same path. . . . I think it’s encouragement to keep up with the work and just growing stronger in our beliefs. I know that my parents . . . pray with me. Sometimes they might quote me a part of the Bible if I’m having a certain struggle or if I’m going through something. And I don’t know how much they learn from us, but I
think that God intends families to really be a support network and a way for us to learn and grow closer to Him.

Gina referred to receiving family support as an instrument to striving for family spiritual/religious goals, as if these were two sequences of a single process. This signifies her deep level of commitment to the family’s spiritual/religious quest and contrasts with the children in the PG group and the GB group who did not relate receiving family support with spiritual or religious ends. They referred to family support as if support itself was an end.

**Children’s admiration for their parents.** Observations of children showing admiration for their parents were concentrated in this group. Because it provides additional insights in understanding the workings of moral fascination within the family, I quote these comments in this section. I also quote the parents’ comments with regard to setting examples for their children, since they effectively illustrate how parents rely on this method to cultivate positive moral quests in their children.

**Family #1.** In her comment, Lydia described how her parents made the most difference in her with respect to strengthening her faith:

I’d have to say you couldn’t really put it better than what my dad said. It’s definitely example, because nobody likes a hypocrite. And if somebody’s telling you what to do and you’re just, you’re looking at them and saying, “What do you mean? You’re not doing it yourself. Why are you telling me to do it?” So but, it’s, it’s very important for me, is it’s just kind of like this is how it is. And I don’t have to sit here and I don’t have to preach it to you. I’m going to let you observe, observe me, . . . I’ll show you how to do it. And you can decide if you want to do it. But this is how you do it. But I’m not going to sit here and I’m not going to yell at you for not doing it this way. But it’s definitely . . . the most important thing is example.

Lydia’s father Ralph made a remark regarding how he transmits his faith:

Probably the biggest thing that’s been stressed to us in good parenting is by example. Actions speak louder than words and not preaching, you know, do as I do, “Do as I say, but not as I do.” And so, I think by example is probably one of the primary things.

Ralph regarded setting an example as a primary method for transmitting faith. What stood out
most for Lydia was also the example of her parents. How the parents are doing the things that they are teaching motivated her to incorporate the things in her life. Although Lydia did not overtly express fascination, she alluded to her positive view (e.g. “definitely”) toward a parental model that exhibits consistency in thoughts and deeds.

**Family #2.** Daniel commented on his history of changing from merely conforming to his parents’ requests to positively honoring his parents:

> Following what God’s plan for children respecting their parents. Learning from my family and from my parents. Recognizing the authority of Mom and Dad. So that . . . there’s sort of a shift that happens right about this time, where it becomes more honoring my parents as opposed to agreeing with them about everything.

It sounds like some desire to honor his parents developed in him. He seems to have started seeing parental authority in a more positive light. Daniel later criticized parents in other religious families he knew who were forceful to their children rather than sitting down and talking with them, and said “I definitely hope I’ll bring my kids up like my parents brought me up.”

The following comments are Daniel’s parents answer to a question about the most important things they attend to as a parent:

**Bonnie:** I think to be a person of integrity, and genuine, and honest with myself and with my God and with my family members about issues of life and to see, to grow. I think being willing to grow and learn and change is really important, within the framework of what God really wants us to be. How he’s made us, and what he has in store for us and . . . But, as I’m seeking, as a mom, to live that out, I want to be honest with my kids, you know. I struggle; I’m learning; I’m trying. This is what I know of God. I want you [Daniel] to know what I’ve learned and to learn too.

**Doug:** Yeah, probably in a similar way, really to be a[n] authentic, genuine Christian myself, so kind of a model mentor. Not an example of perfection, ’cause that’s already by the board. But I think to be genuine and authentic as someone who has a walk with Jesus, [a] living faith. And then, out of the context of my own relationship with God, to seek to influence and encourage, and nurture a real living walk of faith with Jesus.

Both parents said that the most important thing as a parent was being a model of living their faith in God, striving to grow according to God’s will, and building a relationship with God. They
focused on being an active model of faith. Although whether or not there was a direct causal relationship between the parents’ effort to be examples and the fact that Daniel’s honor to these parents grew is not clear from the interview, it is notable that they coexisted.

**Family #3.** Justin answered a question regarding the roles God plays in his life as a child in the family as follows:

I think in terms of what role God plays with me as a child, and this is only as a child, He plays the parent role as well. And in a sense, I feel like, the kind of thinking that goes on with a decision like that reflects my attitude towards God. You know, so my honoring towards God as my Father is the same as honoring my mom and my dad. So it’s kind of reflective.

Justin considered himself a child of God as well as of his parents, and Justin’s attitude of honoring God as a parent overlapped with that of honoring his parents. That this honor was based on what I call “moral fascination” was implied in his next comment. In talking about his future marriage/family, Justin expressed his admiration for his mother and his parents:

The first thing I want to do is say that, the first thing that I would do, because I think it’s founded on faith, is looking at my mom, my parents’ marriage and building off that. Building off the witness of that and saying, okay, I want it to be . . . maybe not just like this, but I want it to be very, very similar. You know. Obviously in terms, again honoring them.

Justin admired and modeled himself after his parents’ marriage, which was founded on faith, and wanted to emulate it in his future marriage. His brother, Dennis said he “definitely” agreed with what Justin said. In the previous section, Justin expressed his adoration for God by expressing his desire to please God. Thus he expressed his adoration for God, his admiration for his parents’ marriage, which was based on faith, and the overlap of his honoring God and his parents. There is a chance that mutual or one-sided influence exists between the adoration for God and the admiration for parents of faith in Justin.
Family #4. As Gina answered the question regarding the roles God played in her life as a child in the family, she touched on a self-motivated desire to admire her parents and to obey God:

The Bible says “children obey your parents,” but I don’t feel like I have to... I guess God has really given me a love and respect for my parents. So it’s less like following like what He commands in the Bible, even though I would... Sometimes if it’s a little difficult you can, you know, recall that. (Laughter) I think what God has given me is just like a desire to, just by the way of relationship with my parents, to obey what He has commanded. So it doesn’t feel so much like I’m obeying all the rules, it actually feels like the right thing to do. And... I want to do it.

Gina said she was given a love, respect, and admiration for her parents that were welling up inside, and “by the way of relationship with [her] parents,” she was given a willing desire to do what was pleasing to God. Rather than by something that was enforced on her, her adoration for God was motivated by her admiration for her parents. She was feeling something “given” that encouraged her to revere her parents and God. And she continued to talk about this inner desire and where it came from in the next two comments:

I can’t really trace where that has come from, that desire, ’cause I know most of my friends couldn’t care less about... well, maybe not most, but a number of them just want to do their own thing and they don’t think their parents really understand them, and they don’t really desire to, you know, follow all their rules or whatever.

So I think that God has given me that respect just through, I don’t know, through something in my parents to make me respect them and doing something I need... I can’t really trace where that’s come from but I just believe that it’s something that I’ve gotten.

She thought “something in [her] parents” triggered her admiration for parents, which in turn helped her having a desire to do good and to serve God.

Curiously, her father Roy also made a comment that alludes to an overlap of admiration and adoration.

You know, ultimately I believe God has given Helen and me, but me as the father, authority to make this place, make this family holy ground. And I think the way we ultimately want to live that out is transparently, openly... you know, not like laying
Roy emphasized living out the divine responsibility to make the family holy by inviting children—along with whole family—into seeking God. A positive invitation implies evoking some fascination with “the presence of God” or a “God hunt,” and he did that “transparently, openly.” According to Roy, this invitation or evocation seems to involve a spiritual presence that was experienced together as a family (Helen confirmed that this was the case). Helen said she complemented the teaching and discipline parts more. “Something in [her] parents” that gave moral appeals to Gina might be the combination of these.

**Family #5.** In this family, both the parents emphasized the importance of setting an example for their children. Gerald addressed how he shared his faith with children: “We try not to generally, you know, obviously we’re not perfect, but to try and all live a righteous and a life that God would be happy that we’re living.” Donna agreed with that. Also, about the most important things as a father, after availability, Gerald said: “To try and be, you know, an example, like Jesus was. To be that kind of an example. Not to really push things too much, but to try and live the life.” Donna, regarding the most important things as a mother, said in addition to providing love, discipline, guidance and support, and availability, said: “and to be good examples, that was another . . . what I agree with Gerald on. To walk the walk, and not just talk the talk.”

**Family #6.** Regarding how her parents shared faith with her, Elina talked about parental examples: “Speaking from a child’s point of view, I think that the example is something that impacted me most, in addition to the other things. So that definitely was a way that it was shared.” Notice that she said “impacted [her] most.” Both of her parents also intended to set an example. First, Ruby’s answer to the question regarding the most important thing to do as mother of faith:
And if I stay faithful forever, or till the end of, till I die, what a good example I’ve set. And if I show my kids that I’m happy this way, any sacrifices have been well worth it, then they, not only will they think: What does God think, but they’ll say, you know what, this makes Mom and Dad happy too. Let’s do this too.

Ruby expected that parental examples would entice the child in a positive way. Keith also valued setting an example by saying “Yeah, the other things would become worthless if the example wasn’t there.” Keith said this concerning how to share faith with their children. As regards to other ways to share faith, he said relating all actions to God at all times, family Bible study, and going to church together. To the question regarding the most important thing to do as a father of faith, Keith said:

Set a good Christian example for my family, to apply what the scriptures say I should be as a head, do it in a loving, kind way. To provide, make sure that my family is provided for both spiritually and physically. Those are my responsibilities.

Setting an example of loving leadership was the most important thing he did as a father.

**Summary with respect to the children’s admiration for their parents.** Children’s modeling after parents and the parents’ setting examples seemed to play a central role in the transmission of faith from parents to children in the HD group. All parents emphasized setting examples as a means of transmitting their faith and related attitudes. Setting an example as a means of providing a positive influence was often referred as being the antithesis of forcing. Directly or indirectly, the parents expressed their intention to entice and evoke intrinsic motivation to follow in a positive way—through incurring moral fascination or admiration in their children. Interestingly, families #3 and #4 expressed, and some others hinted, a correspondence of adoration for God and admiration for parents from the viewpoint of the children.

**A case of disintegration.** In this section, I describe one family from the HD group who serves as an exception to the patterns described above. They had a notable discrepancy between
the pursuits of the husband and the wife and the children. Although the husband tried to direct resources to God, the family members’ quests were not integrated with it, with a sense of complaints and disharmony being expressed with regard to the marital and parent-child relationships.

This case illustrates a variation in which, despite one spouse’s engagement in adoration for God, other relational factors can inhibit the formation of shared ideal at the marriage or family level. The purpose of this section is to explore the factors that are associated with this case’s being an exception to the common patterns of the families of the HD group.

**Family #7.** First, I quote a comment of Glenn, the husband, which qualifies to be coded as holistic devotion. After talking about his seeking and trusting God’s guidance, he expressed his quest for making sacrifices for God:

> You know, you wake up every day and you put your day in God’s hands and you seek His guidance, and have faith that He’s going to work out the day for you. So every day to me is a result of the walk of faith. You know, you just [con]tribute what you have, the blessings you have, whatever it might be that come your way, children, things that bring you happiness in marriage.

Glenn wants to offer to God “whatever it might be that come [his] way,” something of marriage and children as well. The “whatever it might be that come [his] way” part is coded as a holistic devotion at an individualistic level. The “something of marriage and children as well” part is distinguished from the holistic devotion at the marriage or family level, for it does not connote giving up the resources of the whole unit to God. Next, I examine their comments regarding the purpose for marriage.

> Glenn: Well, from my perspective, I feel that marriage is really a training ground for the kingdom of God and what, the relationship that God wants to have with His people. Kind of a closeness, a oneness. And we are given this physical opportunity to obtain that ideal, that desire of His.
Ann: It’s definitely character building; and it’s to train us as well as training the children. There’s roles that we have that we need to follow. Stay in the right roles and keep . . . For me it’s challenging sometimes.

Both capture the idea of marriage as training. In the following comment, Ann asserted and criticized the tendency of husbands in general to abuse authority which she thought was based on selective interpretation of the scripture. In the comment following it, she said more explicitly that their marital relationship got tough sometimes.

I think that there are many times when men have taken advantage of the scripture that they can be the authority in the family and they’ve neglected the scripture about loving your wife and . . . I mean He gave His life for the church, so there’s a whole perspective, and there’s the scriptures about being submissive and you know . . . Sometimes men just [say], “You’re supposed to be submissive,” and not thinking about being submissive to each other to some extent. . . . Humans look for their way to get what they want.

And my relationship between him and I sometimes makes it harder, harder to get along with God. And other times I can look at the things that he does that are more in line with what I think God wants from us, and say “thank you for sending down an example for me.”

In the latter comment, she indicated that she experienced the positive (and admirable) and negative sides of her husband.

Glenn admitted that he was sometimes inattentive to his wife’s needs: “It’s very easy, for me, to forget what my wife’s needs are and be happy with the world’s definition, you know, what a husband ought to do and what his responsibilities are.” His world’s definition of husband included focusing on a breadwinner’s function for he said “I do know that there are times where I get engrossed in my work.”

Their son, Mark (age 18), also complained about some of the family’s religious policies. Regarding the effects of the practice of fasting, Mark expressed his view cynically: “I think, make your family get closer, ’cause you’re all, basically just complaining.” To which Glenn advocated the cause of fasting: “you’re dependent upon God for your sustenance.” Regarding the
family’s disengagement from cerebrating the Christmas holiday for a religious reason, Mark’s complaint was particularly strong:

Christmas is an extremely miserable day for us. Number one, nothing is open, so you can’t do anything. . . . And everyone’s busy, you can’t do anything. You basically have to stay home and just . . . It’s like everyone else is doing it and we’re not doing it.

Then, in response to a question concerning potentially harmful religious practices in general, Mark said:

In some places [in the Bible] it says, “Above all things you should do this.” And I think some people would interpret that, even at the cost of your family. Like you have to go here, even if your family will not go with you, or if this will cause major problems in your family. I wouldn’t think that God would want that to happen, but to a certain extent, depending upon your family I would think.

Mark’s criticism was against the act of applying overarching commandments from the scripture to the family forcibly, because of the scriptural emphasis. Mark also expressed his request for there being room for questions during the family scripture study time.

I mean, the ones that, I actually like that [scripture study time]. Where the ones that you actually get to ask the questions and learn more about what you’re talking about. Sometimes, the rest of the kids are like shut up. And sometimes the parents are like, yeah, we should study that again sometime, or let’s go on. But it’s like an agenda, yet you never really dig to the point where you’re actually getting the whole picture. I think that would help a lot, to strengthen at least faith . . .

Here, Mark expressed his complaint that sometimes his asking questions was discouraged. He added: “We want to know what we want to know.”

Ann supported Mark’s view as a mother and added:

That’s something that I think I’ve learned a lot from [a religious teacher or leader] is his, that’s his style of teaching. You know, his style is always discussing it, and it’s . . . You know, he’ll ask questions that cause you to think and it’s very, very helpful. And the kids enjoy it. They enjoy [him] and doing things with him, because of that. And that’s something we need to do more of.

Ann endorsed Mark’s request by citing a case of someone else who was good at causing children’s interests in learning.
Throughout the interview, Mark did not express a willingness to serve God. This contrasts with the pattern seen in the other families of the HD group. Regarding the purpose of family, Mark said, “there’s always some place where you feel comfortable,” pointing to the familiarity and comfort of family relationships. When asked about what sacrifices he makes for faith, he said: “Sports, sleepovers, Friday night party.” The last one was due to their Sabbath day being on Saturday. After a discussion about their staying together as family for the Sabbath observance on Friday nights and Saturdays, Mark said: “And sometimes that means doing stuff fun, sometimes that just means fighting over why you can’t do something.” A shift in the center of self does not seem to be observable in Mark’s case. His focus was more on his self-interest, association with friends, as well as security in the family relationship. This is very different from the other children of the HD group.

Summary with respect to the case of disintegration. The interview suggests that in this family, although the father was trying to be faithful and willing to sacrifice resources for God, he could not provide enough care and listening to his wife and children; as a result, the family’s dissatisfaction with him and his exercise of authority was formed. The husband’s ideal was not shared in a united fashion with wife or his son. The child did not seem to develop a sense of adoration for God or of admiration for family under this family dynamic. In that sense, the positive motivation of moral fascination was weak in the hearts of the children.

The God-As-Benefactor [GB] Group

Marriages/spouses in the GB group. By definition, no person in this group mentioned adoration for God, either at the individual or marriage level. They also perceived God as more impersonal and less involved in marriage. In this section, to show how marriage is viewed in terms of God and self-interest, as well as what they see as the purpose of their marriage, I have
included some quotes regarding their perception of God. I do this because it is helpful in understanding how their faith plays a role in marriage in contrast to the adoration found in the HD group.

**Family #15.** Aaron described his image of God as follows: “I think I also see God in terms of nature and creation. And the wonders of the world, even the weather.” To a question what roles God plays in marriage, Aaron and his wife Tricia answered as follows:

Tricia: What role does God play? God, God, God. That’s a toughy.

Aaron: I don’t know if it does.

However, when asked if their faith is central to marriage, they answered as follows:

Aaron: Well it’s central to my life. And my marriage is a big part of my life. And one of the ways that I define it is in terms of being trustworthy and sincere and honest and responsible. And channeling my energies into this particular person and this particular family.

Tricia: And I think, you know, my belief in the power of love and that putting other people first, at least part of the time, and also standing up for myself. That’s one thing I’m learning from my faith tradition, that it’s important for justice that everybody gets their share . . . That’s sort of something from our faith experience.

For Aaron and Tricia, God was not reportedly involved in their marriage, but their faith was, and their faith focused on interpersonal well-being within marriage. Notice Tricia’s description of interpersonal love involved the mutual satisfaction of self-interest. Betty elsewhere explicitly expressed her desire for her own needs of also being cared for by her husband.

Regarding the purpose of marriage, Tricia said it was commitment to each other, and Aaron said:

And I think that part of the way I define God is being concerned about people other than oneself. And I think that’s part of what marriage and parenthood is all about. And I find myself coming back to my faith, when I start thinking more about myself than about other people.
For Aaron, caring for a spouse, someone other than oneself, was the purpose of marriage; and he was going back and forth between self-interest and caring for his wife. Notice that the resource is being given to spouse or oneself, not directly to God.

**Family #16.** In this family, Henry, although he considered God to be more of a personal God, did not speak about God being directly in his marriage:

I don’t think [religion] is central other than the fact that, I think the basic core for both of us is that we are capable of looking at ourselves and seeing and being able to admit that we’re wrong, and that we basically know the difference between good and bad. I do think that a religious background and a belief in God have an effect on that.

For Henry, his and his wife’s conscience was the central moral force in their marriage, with which religion and God were not directly involved. Henry also expressed his view of the idea of marriage being about the mutual satisfaction of self-interest.

Hopefully you have two people that are in love with each other, and that that stays the whole time, even if they don’t like each other at times. . . . I just think personally that it’s real easy to think of yourself first and foremost and think of . . . how it affects you instead of thinking about the other person. And having some balance in there, so I think that it can be very important.

Henry viewed balancing of his own self-interest with the self-interest of his wife’s as being important. That he did not necessarily reject his quest for self-interest was also observed in the next comment:

Henry: And I tend to believe that as long as I’m not hurting somebody else, I don’t see anything wrong with trying to better ourselves or our lives. Because we are generous with the money that we make, but as Maggie always points out, we’re also very lucky to make good money.

To a question concerning the purpose of marriage, Henry’s wife Maggie answered, “to share love” and “build a sense of connection.” She viewed this marital love as part of God’s distributing love, saying: “That exists in the world because God is there.” To the same question, Henry answered: “But I do think that, that marriage is probably part of not being as self-centered
and not just thinking of yourself and deciding to share things with people, be flexible.” For both Maggie and Henry, marriage is about caring for their spouse, but Maggie sees it more as God’s work of love, and Henry sees it as work of his own conscience. Again, resources are directed to each other and, especially in Henry’s case, to himself; it is not directed to God.

**Family #17.** For Billy and Nicole, God was in play when they needed him or were benefited by him. They talked about what God did to their marriage:

Billy: Blessing it.

Nicole: Getting us through the hard times, I think. Faith that, that God always loves us, and so if God always loves us, then we should be, feeling like we could love ourselves and love our spouse . . . So I think, for me it’s a, not only an active part of, the joyous parts of marriage, but also help in the hard parts of marriage.

Both viewed God predominantly as a benefactor. And as Nicole felt that God supported her, she felt she and her husband should/could mutually support each other.

As for the purpose of marriage, Nicole said, “marriage would be the vehicle that God has for taking care of each other.” Billy said “take care of children” and “take care of each other.” For them, the resource was directed to their spouse and children. God was a provider (benefactor), but not a person to direct resources to in their marriage.

**Family #18.** Natalie said her image of God was “much more of a power,” and her husband, Louis said: “just supreme knowledge or something. Some force.” Natalie and Louis also did not think God was directly involved in their marriage: Natalie said “I would actually say marriage is a human construct, and God doesn’t have any purpose in it. Not a God-made thing.” And Louis followed “Yeah.” Concerning their marriage vows, Louis said “I did feel like it was a public pronouncement. Like we were saying this in front of people that, our families,” to which Natalie added: “Yeah, I think that I sensed, at least then, more as a public decoration than as
something between me and God idea.” For both, the vows were more directed to the social public than to God.

But the same Louis said that he needed God sometimes when their marriage got difficult:

Unfortunately I’m probably, I utilize God, or I think about God when I’m feeling my weakest. When I need some strength. That’s when I start thinking about God, when it’s beyond me; when it’s beyond my capabilities. Then I start thinking about my religion, and what I believe and that.

For Louis, God was a helper in times of need and a means for achieving his goals. Louis and Natalie focused more on interpersonal caring than on God. Natalie said about that:

I guess for me, I don’t think of my relationship with God as being, as directly influencing. It more has to do with, just, so because of my faith, you know, I am a certain way, and I have a certain way of kind of viewing life, that it’s not pointless, that caring about other people matters, things like that, globally. And that leads over into every relationship. But I don’t think of anything like specifically about marriage.

Caring about other people, not just within marriage, was important for Natalie. Furthermore, concerning the most important values, she clearly referred to interpersonal care: “I think sort of like the selflessness.” Louis followed: “Yeah, the selflessness. I think you know, just thinking about the other person.” With respect to their marriage, both Louis and Natalie agreed that “selflessness” was an important value.

To look deeper into Natalie’s sense of the value of caring for her spouse and others, it is helpful to analyze her following two comments: “I would say our main strength is just sort of a mutual respect. And this business of not fighting, cause we’re sort of always taking care of the other and not wanting to . . .” and then:

Well, actually I think that one [of religious practices that if misapplied could be harmful to marriage] is sort of this issue of sacrifice and guilt. You know, I think if a person feels like they have to always have to give in to what the other person wants, or always kind of crucify themselves for the sake of the marriage, that that’s not going to lead to long term health.
For her, “selflessness” did not necessarily mean sacrificing self-interest. Her ideal rather seemed to be the mutual satisfaction of self-interest. Her “selflessness” was more about awareness of other’s needs or self-interests, avoiding preoccupation with one’s own self-interest, and rather supporting other’s interests and needs as well as one’s own. This is distinguished from a form of self-renunciation in which one goes out of one’s way to give up resources for another being (like God).

**Family #19.** Another couple, Edward and Stacy also said that God was not deeply involved in their marriage; they focused on interpersonal care in their marriage. As for the purpose of marriage, Stacy said, “mate for life and have children.” To the question of whether faith in God helped them to be more kind in marriage, they answered:

Edward: Yeah, it does, but I don’t think of it so much as faith in God. I think it’s important to be a loving person. And that helps me be more selfless. And that helps our marriage. And I think that brings up the god in all of us, or you know, the part of us that connects with God. So I don’t look at it that way.

Stacy: No, we definitely have conflict, but we’re not yellers. But we’re not people who are mad and say, let’s sit down and pray about it, ’cause we’re not able to pray. . . . usually I go for a run, then I come back and talk about it. But, I don’t know, we just talk it through, and then I’ll think about it later. But I think our background through faith helps us be better communicators. I think that’s what you’re trying to say. The people we are is so much, because of the faith that we’re going to be kind and understanding and compassionate, because that’s what we’re supposed to be doing. That’s what we’re taught to do from our faith.

Rather than relying on the effects of faith in God, Edward and Stacy relied on communication influenced by their faith and focused on becoming more loving and caring in their marriage, according to what their faith informed them of.

**Summary with respect to marriages/spouses in the GB group.** The spouses of the GB group did not view God as playing a significant role in their marriage, and focus of their faith was on interpersonal care. The stated purpose of their marriage was almost exclusively about this
care and marital commitment. Some expressed this care somewhat explicitly in the form of the mutual satisfaction of self-interest. God was predominantly viewed as someone that benefited them, not someone to be devoted to or serve. Selfishness, or a preoccupation with self-interest, was avoided, but a certain level of self-interest was assumed and positively preserved. Marriage was seen as the coordination and mutual satisfaction of such self-interest. The comment of Teresa from Family #20 may represent this mode of marital relationship: “you can work off of each other to be happy and to grow and to love each other.” Thus, under this approach, the purpose of interpersonal care stands parallel to that of self-interest. This structure of purposes and quests observed among the spouses of the GB group were notably different from those in the HD group who holistically gave up resources for God.

**Children in the GB group.** The children of this group invariably did not express an intention to serve God or show signs of a spiritual center of the self. Probably because of disengagement from religion or because the characters of these children’s values and orientations did not match with the questions regarding the nexus of God, faith, and family, their comments were relatively short and did not go into depth, compared to children of the other groups, or they talked about some other topics that were irrelevant to the present research. With this relative simplicity and the relative invariance of their valuation tendencies, in this section, I report their comments collectively by topics. I first report their remarks regarding the purpose of family and how they viewed God’s involvement in their family. And then I report on the children’s attitudes toward sacrifice in order to examine their locus of center in the self.

*The purpose of family and their view of God’s involvement in their family.* The purpose of family was discussed exclusively in light of interpersonal love and togetherness. Jennifer (age 12, Family #17) said that it was “just to like love each other and stuff and be together.” Alyson
(age 11, Family #19) said “to bring more, people together and stuff.” Similarly, Wendy (age 15, Family # 18) commented:

Because living with a person definitely makes you be closer to them, and definitely love them a lot more. I think that’s really true. By living with somebody, you really get a lot closer than you would just if you lived in different houses.

Although these children emphasized the togetherness dimension, these answers paralleled with their parents’ answer to the same question regarding marriage.

Regarding God, the children also predominantly talked about the aspect of benefactor, such as their view on the involvement of God in their family; this was basically similar to the answer their parents gave. Todd (age 15, Family # 20) answered the question regarding how God is involved in their family: “Like sports maybe, ’cause if you want to win badly and pray to God [to] give me strength or whatever.” Todd saw God as being instrumental to his personal goals or the goals of the family. Alyson (Family #19) similarly mentioned, regarding her faith, that it was instrumental and help support her in solving her personal problem situations:

Well, yeah. The faith helps you get through your problem. If you have a problem at school or something, it’ll help you overcome it. And if you’re having a fight with your friend, it’ll get you to have the confidence to go back and apologize or something to overcome your problem.

Religion influenced her to mend social relationship and helped her overcome obstacles. However, throughout the interview, she did not talk about serving God. Tim (age 16, Family #15), who stopped going to church, talked about how he viewed he was loosely related with God: “My relationship to God is kind of like, we know of each other. Kind of like, we’re in the same school and we acknowledge each other’s presence.” Tim kept a certain distance from God, and he added that this relationship with God did not influence how he related to his parents. His view of the non-involvement of God in the family relationship was similar to how his parents viewed God as not being involved in their marital relationship.
Unlike children in the HD group, when the children in the GB group were asked about what sacrifices they make for religion, they affirmed it as a sacrifice, not expressing any willing desire to do it. For example, concerning what was sacrifice to them, Jennifer (Family #17) said “my Sunday mornings”; Todd (Family #20) said “Yeah, my time basically.”

Gary (age 15, Family #16), who commented that “I don’t necessarily say that I’m Christian,” talked about his weekly going to church: “Yeah, because that’s what I have to do. And I know all, everything that we say by heart. . . . I don’t necessarily believe in everything that the Bible says. . . .” Gary’s father, Henry, regarding Gary’s going to church remarked that “you usually say ‘because you make me.’” For Gary, as long as he didn’t feel willing to go there, going to church was a sacrifice; in that regard, his center was at his self-interest. In fact, he said: “Yeah, I’ve missed a lot of cartoons Sunday morning.”

When Alyson (Family #19) was asked if she considered getting up early and going to church on Sunday a sacrifice, she said:

I kind of do. But I don’t stay up late. And if we want to like have a sleep-over or something the night before, we can’t, ’cause we have to get up early for church. So it can be, but it usually isn’t.

Going to church was a sacrifice for her especially when it conflicts with sleepovers with her friends, but it is not that she always felt going to church was a sacrifice. However, Alyson’s answer is still distinguished from the answers of the children in the HD group who refused to view giving up resources for God as a reluctant sacrifice.

Wendy (Family #18) said, “I’m proud to say that I’m religious. I’m really proud of that.” She said her friends know her as a religious person. However, Wendy commented on her perception of religion as follows:
Well, [religion] is something that I think about daily. But, I don’t know how much it influences what I do. I talk about it a little bit with my friends, but I want what God says we should do to influence me more, but it doesn’t influence me or teach me to do the right things like I think I should.

Religion contributed to her social identity, but did not actually powerfully guide her inner life. This at least suggests that her religion did not lead her to control self-interest or to strive for ideals. And Wendy talked about the sacrifice she thought she made for religion: “And I couldn’t have sleepovers either. I couldn’t have sleepovers ’cause we had church in the morning, and I hated that.” Wendy, like Alyson, preferred sleepovers with friends to going to church. Although youth’s love of sleepovers may be a prevalent phenomenon, as a matter of comparison, this does contrast with the answers of the children in the HD group.

**Summary with respect to the children in the GB group.** In accordance with their parents’ marriage purpose, their family purpose focused on interpersonal relationship and togetherness. God was perceived as less involved in their personal or family life, and religion was viewed in a more instrumental way. Confronting and overcoming self-interest was not their major concern. Rather than objectifying their self-interest, self-interest was the seat and the subjective center of their selves.

**Grand summary with respect to the GB group.** For both the adults and the children, God was not viewed as playing a significant role in their marriage/family and personal life, and religion focused predominantly on interpersonal relationships within the family (and with others). Although selfishness was avoided, the quest for their own interest was taken for granted and not rejected. Viewed on the whole as a family, evidence suggests, their interpersonal kindness, in large measure, meant the coordination and mutual satisfaction of self-interest. Especially with regard to preserving self-interest, this summary presents a sharply contrasting ontological structure of family and religion with the HD group, whose members’ primary quest was for what
I call holistic devotion, renouncing self-interest since they were committed to dedicate themselves to God.

**The Personal God [PG] Group**

In order to understand how holistic devotion is involved in marriage and family, the analysis of the PG group and detecting the differences between the PG and the HD groups, however subtle, is a key. Despite my focusing on the differences, it is important to emphasize that there is also much commonality between these two groups, which I do not devote as much space to. The structure, the character, and the shape of their family and their quests were clearly different between the HD group and GB group. However, the PG group and the HD group both consist of families who have at least one member who adores God in some form, and thus more similarities exist. Because of the nature of the task, to find fine but clear differences between the two groups, I will make particular reference to the concepts that compare with the concept of holistic devotion.

**Marriages/spouses in the PG group.** In response to the question about the purpose of marriage, the couples in this group mentioned growth, interpersonal relationship or kindness in marriage, eternal marital relationship, religiously defined marital roles, embodying God’s image, or happiness/joy. In this section, I draw on several families’ comments of their marital purposes and how they view their faith in God, in order to exhibit the similarities or differences of these couples compared to those in the HD group or GB group.

Just as the couples in the HD group, many of the husbands and wives in this group talked about God’s involvement in marriage in the forms of (a) transcendent self-reflection in marriage, (b) shared obedience to God, and (c) a God-strengthened marital bond. Since the elaborations of these concepts are provided in Shichida, Dollahite, and Carroll (2015), I omit the details here. It
is not surprising that these concepts are present in this group, because similarly to the participants who perceived God as a transcendent moral authority in Shichida et al.’s study, the individuals in the adoration group and most of this group perceived God as a meaning-maker who molded their life. These three ways of God being involved were basically not seen among the husbands and wives in the GB group (see Table 4). Now, in this section, I will focus on what the respondents talked about concerning their marital purposes and how they view their faith in God.

*Family #8.* In response to the question regarding the purpose of marriage, Amanda and Ryan said the following:

Amanda: Necessarily as to what He wants of us, although in our church, . . . we’re taught that eternal marriage is what we’re striving to have, an eternal life together. And so I guess that’s what He wants of us is to have an eternal life together that we’ll be with Him. And that’s what we’re striving to do is to live together in a way that we can be together forever with Heavenly Father.

Ryan: The other thought I had was, you know, man is that he might have joy and one way to fill the joyfulness of it all is have a, a good family relationship, a good marriage.

Their marital purpose focused on interpersonal relationship, both current and future (eternal), joy, and presence with God. Then they talked about how these goals are shared as a couple:

Ryan: Well, I view marriage as a partnership. Both working towards common goals. And in my first marriage, that wasn’t the case. It was more disjointed and more at odds and going in different directions. And that’s one of the real positive things about Amanda’s and my marriage is that we’re, we tend in one direction until Amanda’s Irish gets up and then we have [inaudible]. But that’s a common goal that’s important and working together as a team, you know supplementing or complementing each other’s . . . One’s maybe stronger in one area, and feeding off each other. So that, I think, is important.

Amanda: Spiritually, I think having experienced two marriages, you know, one that didn’t work and one that’s working, I just think the commitment is deeper because we have a stronger basic foundation, which is faith. We have a Father and that’s that common goal we have together, to be together forever, as I mentioned earlier, to keep that promise we made to each other: to be committed to each other and to be together forever.
Both of them talked about the shared goals and about supporting each other in the pursuit of them. After this, they again referred to the eternal family as the target of their commitment, this time in regard to the purpose of family, which indicates their level of concentration on these relational goals. Notice that these goals are primarily focused on the interpersonal (marital or familial) relationship, conceptualized with God’s involvement. It is distinguished from some members of the HD group, who also said the present or eternal marital relationship is a goal, but regarded it as assimilated to the purpose of dedicating their marriage or all things to God. The relationship between husband and wife seems to be the ultimate goal for Ryan and Amanda, at least at a conscious level. Although the eternal marital relationship may be a spiritual goal, unlike the members of the HD group, no higher purpose that this marital relationship served was indicated in their interview.

**Family #9.** Betty and Alan talked about their views of the purpose of marriage.

Betty: Obviously to bring children into the world, in a safe and happy environment, in a good learning environment where they can be guided by their parents. But marriage also, I think, is a way to learn selflessness and how to cooperate and be close with another individual.

Alan: Well, I guess I see it as, you know, an essential part of life in that a husband and wife together become equal partners. And in order to progress after this life, you know they need each other and that’s part of God’s plan as well.

They spoke about the purposes of marriage in terms of raising children, mutual relationship, and growth. Alan’s reference to “[p]rogress after this life” was something not found in the couples of the GB group. Regarding how religious practices help marriage, Betty said: “It’s a reminder of the promises that we made, and it’s a concrete, maybe reaffirmation, of the importance that we place on the relationship and also our relationship with God.” Thus, she has added their relationship with God to her marriage goals. However, in the entire interview, nowhere is
evidence found of holistic devotion to God with respect to the meaning of this relationship with God. In that regard, the marital relationship and growth could be their final, endmost goals, regardless of whether or not these goals may be connected to each other. Although the growth goal (presumably spiritual in nature) is distinguished from self-interest, the structure of these goals is something different from that of the couples of the HD group.

**Family #10.** Jack and Melissa responded to the question regarding the purpose of marriage.

Jack: Purpose for marriage is, well biologically it’s to have the species survive. Spiritually it is for, just the basic, social unit. It’s, at least I see it as the basic social unit for culture, for societies. And everything else seems to be modeled off of that, even the church is modeled off of the family structure. So that puts the family structure at a pretty high place.

Melissa: I guess, in addition to that, I’d say that, in terms of companionship and relational connection that is different and separate from other kinds of relationships. Have a connection or a bonded-ness that isn’t there with people outside of the family unit, and then outside of marriage. And, I think, there’s ways that it represents, for me, kind of as individuals are created in God’s image. But I see God as both male and female, so in the marriage unit, there’s a completeness in that in terms of how I see God. I don’t know if that explains itself.

Jack described the purposes of marriage from sociological and evolutionary perspectives, and viewed the marriage/family structure as influential in shaping societies and cultures. Melissa talked about the special quality of marital companionship and of embodying God’s image in marriage. From different angles, both placed a high value on the marital relationship. Later, she reemphasized that “being a team, unity, working together” was the most important value in marriage. Melissa praised God in one part of interview:

But I think that my faith, and again believing in a God that loves my kids more than I could begin to, ’cause His love is perfect, and that He is sovereign and those kinds of things, is really affecting how I am,
Melissa’s understanding of God was affecting her identity, and she elsewhere said her faith permeates all aspects of her life. But despite her high praise of God and her joy of being a beneficiary of the love she receives from God, she never spoke of having a holistic devotion to God, or giving all resources to God, at the individual, marital, or familial level.

Jack also mentioned that “[faith] has a huge impact on what we do” and said, “we’re each striving to serve God.” But this was not with a statement of self-renunciation, nor of holistically giving up resources for God as being an overarching purpose of the individuals or of the marriage, as was spoken of by the spouses in the HD group. Conservatively interpreted, Jack’s case is that, alongside this goal to serve God, the marital bond itself seems to be one of the purposes that Jack (as well as Melissa) sees as ultimate, with their faith in God being tightly involved in it. Although the difference may seem to be slight, it is distinguished from what that HD group indicated, because the logic of the interpersonal relationship as an ultimate end still leaves room for allowing and advocating the mutual satisfaction of self-interest whereas the logic of holistic devotion to God does not. If the marriage is dedicated to God, for example, it warrants, at least in logic, that the self-interest of the giver and the receiver is viewed as being controlled or made instrumental to serving God—a higher, other-interest purpose. In that scheme, the act of providing for the spouse is not supposed to nourish self-interest, but is expected to be conducive to both parties’ devotion to God.

**Family #11.** Brian and Rose spoke on the purpose of marriage as follows:

Brian: We believe that our Heavenly Father has outlined divine roles through the scriptures, . . . regarding the roles that we play in our relationship and our marriage, as a father, as a husband, as a wife, as a mother, and regarding eternal relationships, with not only our children, but with each other. . . . Help each other out through the trials of life that we face, to strengthen one another, to improve on the type of person we are, to become more like our Heavenly Father. And we help each other do that in a family unit. And we believe that our Heavenly Father is in a similar relationship. And where man is, there is woman also. And so we go together in terms of that relationship in striving to be
like Heavenly Father. And we have children, like He had children, in the sense that He’s a Father, we’re a father, mother. And so we can return back to His presence.

Rose: I think God’s purpose in marriage is to bring children into this world under the covenant. And for us, that’s a very important thing to be able to bring children in with the chance and the opportunity to teach them about God’s plan for them, and their, the plan for Him to, for them to be able to return and live with their Heavenly Father and to make good choices. And so His purpose in marriage is also to bring us happiness, to help us not to have to do that alone. To help us to be able to have a support system, to be able to have that intimacy, that helps you through the trials of life and helps your children through those trials, and brings you great happiness. And through trials you gain strength.

Their purposes of marriage are enacting the God-defined marital/familial roles, teach and support striving to become like God, being with God in the future, and happiness. These are predominantly religious or spiritual goals, and distinguished from self-interest. However, since Brian and Rose never spoke about devoting all things to God, there is no evidence to support considering these religious and spiritual goals as a case of holistic devotion. Becoming more like God as Brian’s emulation goal may or may not mean a selective admiration. The goal of being with God that Rose mentioned is different from that of being for God, for the former does not necessarily warrant one’s commitment to channeling all of one’s resources (including oneself) or instrumentalizing one’s self-interest to the interest of God.

In terms of the purposes of marriage, other families of this group also talked about happiness, growth, embodying God’s image, enacting God-defined marital roles, relationship with God, eternal relationship, and raising children.

**Summary with respect to marriages/spouses in the PG group.** In order to analyze the patterns and structures of their purposes, and thus of resource allocation, I take into consideration all the primary purposes and pursuits illustrated in this section, as well as those in Table 4. One important purpose category was their marital relationship, current or future. Various ways of seeing God’s involvement in it were mentioned by the couples of this group. In relation to this
being a purpose of marriage, seeking marital guidance from God, transcendent self-reflection in marriage, or a God-strengthened marital bond are described as processes that are instrumental to bringing about an ideal marital relationship. Another big purpose was the growth of the individuals through marriage. Spiritual progress and God’s plan with respect to it was often implied in these goals. Therefore, the marital relationship and individual spiritual progress were two articulated areas for investing resources for the husbands and wives of this group, and God was closely involved in both. The husbands and wives often shared these goals. Despite the fact that having a kind marital relationship and achieving “selflessness” in marriage were referred to as purposes of marriage in a way similar to what the GB group indicated, the members of the PG group perceived involvement of God in their making efforts to become selfless in marriage. The spiritual growth purpose also differentiates them from the GB group.

On the other hand, the couples of the PG group can also be distinguished from the HD group, in which the members purposed the resources of their marriage/family as a unit to be thoroughly given up to God. Directing resources to God (e.g. praying to God for guidance for marriage/family) may be instrumental to, or indirectly involved in, the goals the couples of the PG group mentioned, or some goals to obey God that they mentioned can be their independent end; but unlike the HD group, devotion to God was not perceived by them as a primary end or holistic in character. Furthermore, there was no mention of self-renunciation in order to direct the resources to God. Although there were only a few explicit insistences on pursuit of self-interest among these adults (this is distinguished from the adults in the GB group), no comments exhibited a logic of controlling all of one’s self-interest or of making one’s pursuits for self-interest instrumental to serve the interest of God. In fact, in the next section, I will show the
related fact that their children were sometimes reluctant to give up certain self-interests as they were requested to meet religious or moral standards of the family.

The structure of purposes and resource allocations within the marriages of the PG group does not seem to have a single moral axis of God-orientation versus self-interest, as seen in the couples of the HD group. Although not explicitly spoken of, the possibility was open for a moral axis that allows self-interest to coexist. And as much as self-interest is a spontaneous tendency of mankind, there is no legitimacy in assuming that the couples and spouses of the PG group do not have a moral structure in which the pursuit of self-interest is allowed, or in which the mutual satisfaction of self-interest is advocated, implicitly or explicitly. However, even though the husbands and wives in this group did not refer to obedience to God (a form of giving resources to God) as a response to a question regarding the purpose of marriage, they spoke of or implied it elsewhere in the interviews (e.g. see shared obedience to God in Table 4).

Children in the PG group. As the children of this group responded to the question about the purpose of family, they talked about comfort, support, togetherness, and parents’ teaching or raising children to walk in the faith. The latter part, the parents’ teaching faith, was something not mentioned by the children in the GB group. Compared to the children in the HD group, the children in the PG group did not mention the family serving God, and when they talked about support and care, they spoke of these more as ultimate ends, not as being instrumental to spiritual ends.

Family #8. The most frequently observed answer by the children of this group was that the purpose of family was providing support. Erin (age 16) stated as the purpose “[l]ike a mom and dad and kids and staying together.” To a question why she thinks God created families, she replied “[s]o that they can be there for each other and have a support system instead of...
individuals.” Notice that togetherness and support are mentioned as purposes on their own; an end for which the family is a support is not expressed. This is different from the typical answers given by the children of the HD group, where support was spoken of as being instrumental to spiritual ends or to serving God.

To the question of whether she willingly is giving up activities on Sundays (as opposed to feeling it a sacrifice to her) or not, Erin said: “Yes and no, like sometimes I want to and sometimes I don’t.” Her answer suggests that even though she sometimes feels a spiritual desire, self-interest is not always seen as an object to control. But in response to the question what role God plays for her in the family, she said:

Well, like everyday, I don’t pass a minute without thinking about Him. Everything I do . . . I always feel that He affects everything I do. I always think about Him, no matter like whatever choice I make. . . . just think about Him all the time, whatever choice I make.

She constantly remembers God and sees God as affecting her decisions; that is very different from the children in the GB group. However, taking all the comments above into consideration, even though the last comment is somewhat related to (e.g. as a necessary condition to) holistic devotion, the other evidence does not support applying this label to her mode of faith.

**Family #9.** As another example, Emily (age 13) also focused on the interpersonal aspect as a purpose of family. She said “[s]o we can experience love and kindness in things. But it’s easier when you’re with your family.” Instead of giving up resources to God as a family, she described God’s involvement in family as: “Usually, just when we’re together we can feel just like a special family thing. And I think that God has something to do with that. That He’s a part of it.” Emily feels God in the family togetherness. She also expressed her belief concerning the eternally lasting family relationship:

I think that if there wasn’t a real purpose, and I didn’t really know anything about like
families and how we’re all going to be together forever and everything, then I wouldn’t really care as much, and I would be more . . . I would want to pay more attention to all the stuff, like that the world has to offer and not my family. And I wouldn’t pay as much attention.

Emily’s faith centers on family togetherness, now and in the future. Concerning religious sacrifice, she mentioned:

Emily: Well we pay tithing. They do, and we do. . . . But, and then there’s, even just sacrificing time, like on Sundays, that’s kind of a long time, plus we keep the Sabbath day holy, so that’s sacrificing the whole Sunday for just being with family and reflecting on God. And we sacrifice the time for family night, just for being together.

Alan: You sacrifice your Monday night TV shows [for the family night].

Emily: Yep.

These are sacrifices for her and she did not deny that they were. And she indicated that even a great part of this sacrifice was for the purpose of family togetherness. Finally, regarding how faith influences her sense of identity, she said:

Emily: I think it helps make me stronger, just in everything. Just helps me to fit in a little bit. But, I mean, it does bring me away, but it makes up for it.

Betty: With friends you mean?

Emily: Well with friends and just with the whole idea of what will happen after you get through the trials.

Although sacrifice brought her away (which she is not fond of) from what she wanted, including her relationships with her friends, she had faith in some form of return for the sacrifice that may come in the future, and that way she felt she was strengthened. These comments suggest that Emily affirmatively went with a family faith that centered on togetherness; yet she also spoke from the view of her self-interest, in some measure. Throughout the interview, she did not mention holistically giving up resources for God.
Family #10. Jean (age 17) responded to a question regarding the purpose of family as follows:

Jean: Let’s see. I think one of the main reasons is to, I don’t know, like in any circumstance like the children at a very young age, you know, raise the children, that means take care of them. You know, like devout parents, children of God on their own. So in that way, when you’re really young, parents take care of you and teach you what you should do. . . . Help you understand the world around you, and how you fit in. And help you grow in your interests. And I think that’s kind of what God had in mind. I guess more, also, like for parents to teach their children about God and about the Bible and faith and issues and relating to culture.

In addition to parents’ caring for her and teaching her what she should do and about faith/God, she mentioned the family’s assistance for developing her interests. No mention was made of her using these interests for God or the family devoting resources (including the interests to be grown) to God, as was the case in the HD group. Instead, regarding how faith strengthens family, Jean remarked:

I think it gives a very unique perspective on situations that may occur, like if someone gets angry at someone. The Bible says to forgive one another, but it’s more than just saying it, because it’s part of our life, and part of our faith. And . . . integrated into a way of life that makes communication easier. And it’s a larger goal to strive for, is like communicating well and working together, and appreciating one another. . . . Really, just in how we live our lives, which does relate to our faith, makes family life better, in that way.

For Jean, her family’s faith worked particularly to better the mutual relationship and communication. Regarding her perception of sacrifice, she commented:

I think, mainly like when I forget to set aside tithe, or just in ways like that, that I’ll just be going about my daily business and just forgetting about things like that, or forgetting to pray about something, or forgetting to think about some angle that God would want me to come out of a situation with. I think that they [parents] remind me, which can be a sacrifice, because a lot of times, I just want to do what I want to do.

These occasions can be a sacrifice for her, because she often tended to engage in her self-interest. This is again distinguished from the concept of holistic devotion.

Family #11. Lisa (age 14) talked about the purpose of family as follows:
They help, well we’re all down here for a purpose, you know, to be here, to be tested, and families just help you, give you support and help you get through it. And usually they believe the same thing you do and try to bring you up in that faith and just tell you the right things to do and stuff.

Her view of the purpose of family was to support her getting through trials and growing, and also to teach faith to her. Throughout the interview, she didn’t directly express her faith in God, except in the following comment:

When I see how much my parents love me and care about me, I can’t even imagine how much Heavenly Father loves me, because it’s probably like three times more than how much they love me; and it’s just a great feeling to know that He loves me so much, and they do.

Lisa focused on the love she received from her parents and compared that with God’s love. It is distinguished from giving resources for God. Many times in the interview, Lisa asserted her rights and expressed frustrations based on her self-interest. For example, the next comment was her response to a question about her making sacrifices for faith:

And with me not being able to, obviously, not see rated-R movies, but then even see some PG-13 movies. My parents have to like evaluate them first. And it kind of bugs me sometimes, but I guess it’s for the good. ’Cause people at school . . . there’s a huge variety, there’s an extreme like of me, a church girl, and then the totally opposite extreme and there’s a bunch of people in the middle.

Lisa was frustrated with the standard her parents expected of her and viewed it as extreme in the context of what others at her school were privileged to do. She said “I can understand how they want to be protective over me, . . . But I wish that they would just let me do my own thing.”

Unlike the children in the GB group, Lisa’s vision of the purpose of family had a religious tone, and she mentioned God’s love that she received. However, her stance centered on her self-interest in a way that was similar to the children in the GB group. Lisa’s stance on God is distinguished from the children of the HD group, who sought to give up resources for God.
Family #12. Although there was no child in this group who spoke of their desire for holistically giving up resources for God, out of the eight families of this group, there was one child, Anthony (age 16), who expressed a locus of habitual center more in spirituality/religiosity. I omitted quoting his parents’ comments on marital purpose and their stances on God in the previous section, for they were similar to one of the other families. Later, I surmise possible family factors that may be associated with the existence of this exception in this group. Anthony responded to the question of sacrifice due to religion as follows:

When you said that, I immediately thought of the sports things, stuff like that. I mean, although I wouldn’t call it sacrifice, it kind of is, it’s nice to not do sports on Sunday. But I think that’s definitely one of the ways that they [parents] have asked me to sacrifice. I don’t really think that I sacrifice, spending too much time with my friends. I don’t know if they’ve really asked me to sacrifice, like not going out and partying, be a part of a different crowd, you know, in a crowd that they’d like me to be in. I don’t think they’d really ask me to do that. ’Cause I’m not sure that I’d like to do that either.

He did not have a desire to engage with friends going against the family standard, and he was willing to go without sports on Sundays. In that regard, the locus of his habitual center was more away from what is normally considered self-interest. Anthony described the purpose of family as follows:

I don’t know about these two [his parents] and the rest of the family, but I’d like to live with them for eternity, and God is a pretty big part of that, because, pretty much it wouldn’t be possible without Him. So I don’t know if these guys feel the same way.

Anthony described his desire to have a long-lasting family relationship. Despite these comments, throughout the interview, a quest for giving up resources for God was not mentioned by him; however, Anthony described his willingness to serve some spiritual purpose: “It’s just nice to be able to share that bond with my father, that we can together provide that service and that opportunity for [others].” Anthony said this regarding his family’s shared spiritual experience, and he was referring to his engaging in a religious ordinance for others together with his father.
“That’s a big one, I’d say,” he said, showing his positive regard for this shared experience. The attitude behind these comments suggests his locus of habitual center in spirituality.

One possible family factor that might be associated with this spiritual center is positive feelings of moral fascination for their spiritual role models, feelings that were expressed by them multiple times, and which was salient compared with the rest of the families of this group.

Anthony made several comments that showed his honoring of and admiration for his parents:

I’d say a lot of the same things, that we’re together a lot. A lot of my friends aren’t ever home with their family. And they don’t seem to care much that they’re not home with their family. They don’t really respect or want to call their parents to tell them where they’re at.

Anthony felt close to his family and honors his parents. Then he respected his parents’ having experiences and leadership:

I think also, as like a child and also the last child, so my parents have had a lot of experience. They can offer advice that really helps in certain situations, and that is just general advice, but applies to a lot of different places that I’m in, or that I don’t want to be in, or find myself in. And I think that the experiences they’ve had before, and I’m lucky, ’cause I’m the last one, I think, what the other three kids helped them to be able to guide me better.

Lastly, Anthony respected his parents’ spiritual insightfulness. He talked of religious practices he wanted to do more in the family:

I think I’d say scripture reading as a family, a discussion. I think we need to do it more often. I think that might be a good, big part . . . Mom and Dad both have great ideas and they bring up things and discuss things well. So I think it would be a pretty awesome thing.

Anthony loved his family’s religious discussion times. His parents, in turn looked up to God as a moral role model. They made comments multiple times on how they emulated God and Christ.

Randy (father) said:

For me it [the image of God] really is a Father figure, a Father type. And the more I’ve learned about Him, the more I’ve learned about His Son, it just takes on even a stronger kind of a crystallization of being a Father type, in the very essence and the best sense of
the word. Of someone who you model yourself after. You think what would they do in this situation? Same thing with the Savior.

Judy, Randy’s wife, said “I try modeling God” and remarked how she models after Christ. And then she and Randy talked about the motivation to model Christ:

Judy: I think we look at Him as a third party in our marriage. Somebody who we go to for advice, somebody who we use as an example. I just feel like He’s always there. We have a picture in our family room of Christ where we tried to hang it someplace where we would see it the most, because He’s there all the time, and you would like to conduct your life, your marriage . . . even though we don’t sometimes. . . . Having his picture right there, does help you remember. You know, like if Christ were here, sitting at your dinner table with you, would you be arguing over such petty little things. . . you just feel like he’s always there in the back of your mind.

Randy: It’s a real, it’s a real self-corrector. I find, you know . . .

Judy: It’s out of love rather than guilt or . . . to me anyway.

Randy: Yeah, than to be driven . . . yeah, it’s a positive kind of drive and reminder. And almost like a ballast, but it brings you back or reminds you where you can come back to. You know, sometimes that center shifts, and I think that’s usually progress.

Judy and Randy constantly tried to remember Christ as being the model. And their referencing him as a model, and the self-correction that followed, were motivated by positive motivations, love, or moral fascination. Randy even mentioned that as a result of this positive modeling his “center shifts.” He added an explanation of what happens as this center-shifting occurs:

[Christ] said, I own a bigger picture, a bigger vision that doesn’t get stuck with “their office is better than my office” or whatever the kind of thing might be. . . . I hear other people complaining about those kinds of things. And I said, “Well what difference does that make, in terms of the bigger picture?” And then Christ’s life, to me, always brings me back too . . . I guess I’d term it, this eternal kind of thing versus . . .

One of the effects of Randy’s modeling after the life of Christ was a change of perspective, taking Randy away from a comparison of his status in the world with others and leading him to a perspective more grounded in the eternal. As much as Randy says “center,” it must involve more than just a cognitive change of perspective, something that has to do with taking him away from
the desire for self-interest.

Thus, there was the parent’s moral fascination for God as well as the child’s moral fascination of the parents of this family. These positive movements might play a role in forming their habitual center in spirituality.

**Summary with respect to children in the PG group.** To summarize, there were various modes of faith observed in the children in the PG group. Many valued togetherness and support in family relationship; some regarded this as a core of their faith and often these were themselves the ultimate ends. No children mentioned ideas that I believed were/are consistent with the concept of holistic devotion, either with respect to the individual or the family, but they mentioned other forms of faith in God. On the other hand, in most cases, the pursuit of self-interest was also preserved. Thus, overall, the pursuits of self-interest, interpersonal togetherness/kindness, and other spirituality or religiosity existed alongside each other. With this structure, in which self-interest is sought among other pursuits, there is no legitimate logic that denies that their valuation of interpersonal kindness or togetherness has room to entail the mutual satisfaction of self-interest. Overall, to the extent that their quest for self-interest was more spoken of more overtly than their parents, the children’s faith exhibited a kind of compartmentalization of faith.

**Grand summary with respect to the PG group.** There was a certain similarity between the couples’ and the children’s structure of purposes in the PG group. In fact, intergenerational similarity was observed in all groups, whatever the purposes were. But, in this group, a big difference was that the children were more explicit in affirming the quest for self-interest than the couples. The couples’ goals were especially focused on spiritual and interpersonal goals. Both the couples and the children of this group expressed more faith and religious aspects of
their family life compared to the GB group, such as how they viewed regarding various ways of God’s involvement in the marriage/family. And some spiritual goals, like striving to achieve an eternal family in the future, were shared within the family. However, neither the couples nor the children had a structure of purposes and pursuits in which a single moral axis of God-orientation versus self-interest exists in its center, as seen in the couples of the HD group. The structures seen in the couples and children were alike in that they had multiple final ends (including obedience to God) without having a holistic devotion to God as a primary end.

An especially important implication of this formulation was that the quest for a certain kind of self-interest could still be an ultimate goal—by definition, the couples in the PG group indicated neither a rejection of purposes that do not serve God nor a purpose to devote to God as a purpose that subordinates self-interest. An inclination or affirmative attitude toward some aspects of self-interest was more directly manifested in the responses of the children of this group than the parents. The parents were more inclined toward religious/spiritual and relational ends, and the children were more toward relational and self-interest ends: however, both basically had a collateral structure of the ends, meaning multiple ends that included self, others, and God.

**Grand Summary of Results**

Forms of admiration other than children’s admiration for parents were seen across the three groups, and these brought moral motivations to the individuals’ faith and interpersonal care. As the literature suggested, holistic devotion was a resultant tendency of adoration that involved one’s distinct ontology. As Table 4 indicates, there are seven families in which giving up all resources for God was mentioned by a husband or wife either at the individual, marriage, or family level—in other words they perceived or intended that the whole individual, marriage, or
family was given to God. These seven were classified as the HD group for analysis. Of this seven, one of them was an exception where they had disharmony in marriage and family. However, the other six families exhibited a common pattern in which they shared the goal of devotion to God; they were, among the whole sample, the only families whose children mentioned giving up resources for God at the family level—in other words the child perceived that the whole family was given to God and the child participated in this—or the child himself/herself was committed to giving up all resources for God. Furthermore, some of these children exhibited signs of locus of habitual center in spirituality. Moreover, it was mostly these children who expressed admiration for their parents (i.e., honoring and emulating them). The analysis of one family who served as an exception suggested that harmonious marriage/family relationships prompting care and listening seemed to be a necessary prerequisite for holistic dedication at a marriage, family, or child level.

On the other hand, there were six families in which neither spouse made comments that could be coded as holistic devotion or personal God, but some of them viewed God as a provider or benefactor to them, and they were classified as the God-as-Benefactor (GB) group. God was not viewed as deeply involved in their lives, and self-interest, as long as one is able to care for their spouse, was basically not rejected. Therefore, despite their marriage purposes being predominantly marital care and commitment, this largely meant coordination and mutual satisfaction of self-interest. The children also expressed their commitment to self-interest more explicitly.

Finally, there were another seven families in which at least one spouse mentioned the perception of God as meaning maker and benefactor, without any indication of a holistic devotion to God. These families were classified as the Personal God (PG) group. These spouses
mentioned their growth, marital care and commitment, and other various goals related to spirituality or child-rearing as their primary purposes of marriage. They also viewed that God was involved in marriage in various ways, including their willing obedience to God, and expressed other forms of faith and spirituality. In this group, their children likewise mentioned certain spiritual goals. However, the children did not mention devoting themselves to God as his/her or their family goal; furthermore, they did not express admiration for their parents, nor did they indicate the locus of center in spirituality (except for one whose parents made multiple remarks about adoring God and the child made multiple comments on honoring and admiring the parents).

Although caring and commitment in marriage or love and togetherness in the family were mentioned by families in all groups, how God and self-interest were involved in the relationship was different from one group to another. No evidence that rejects mutual satisfaction of self-interest as a form of interpersonal care was found among the PG and GB groups. The families of HD group more focused on support for each other in the marriage/family that fueled their devotion to God. Also notably, it was predominantly the children in the HD group who were vocal on honoring and admiring their parents, and they, like their parents, expressed what could be coded as their holistic devotion to God at the individual level, or mentioned participation in the parents’ (and thus the family’s) devotion. Another noteworthy finding was that, in addition to the children in the GB group, the children in the PG group did not indicate any sign of locus of habitual center in spirituality, except for one case.

An important implication of these results is that a system of family in which interpersonal relationship (care, support, commitment, and togetherness) is pursued as the ultimate purpose, not accompanied by a purpose to holistically devote self and resources to God, may sustain
degrees of self-interest of the family members, and may not work effectively for children’s controlling self-interest and cultivating desires for religious commitment. In the discussion, I will extract from the interview six functions working within the system of the families in the HD group that may have played roles in forming the family members’ unique perspective on relationship and in cultivating children’s desire to dedicate themselves to God. Then I will state how holistic devotion as a strong form of adoration relates to or modifies existing theories of family and religion.

Discussion

The admiration that was seen throughout the sample apparently contributed to the betterment of the marital and family relationships and to the encouragement and support of the family members’ faith. However, no comment was found indicating that admiration had the power to motivate one to go out of one’s way to provide resources to the target (God) (Schindler et al., 2013).

Some subconcepts of adoration, on the other hand, had an association with the ontological features of a family’s faith and relationships. First, the perception of the target of adoration as a personal God having the aspects of a meaning-maker and benefactor was associated with their view of several ways of involvement of God in their marriage that is similar to what was elaborated in Shichida et al.’s (2015) study. This could be explained by the common notions in the perception of God as a transcendent moral authority (Shichida et al., 2015) and God as a meaning-maker examined in the present research. However, the present research revealed that the concept of a meaning-maker is not necessarily connected with holistic devotion, another subconcept of adoration. Schindler et al. (2013, p. 99) explained the meaning of meaning-maker: “[a]s an entire person, the adored other embodies an ideal conception of being
or a framework of meaning rather than just a few isolated ideals and values.” However, the evidence in the present research suggests that the mere concept of a personal God as an elicitor of adoration does not seem to be powerful enough to induce one to holistically internalize the framework and renounce self-interest for it. Room for selective internalization still remained in the families of the PG group and the children in this group expressed their affirmative stance on their self-interest.

Holistic devotion was one of the action tendencies of adoration that served as a seemingly robust marker of several ontological features of the families. I argue here that holistic devotion can be an indicator of the existence of the extremely powerful positive motivation of the moral fascination elicited by God. By definition, a desirable goal involves a positive affect, and “the primary reason that goals influence and guide behavior is because the positivity associated with them is inherently motivating” (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007, p. 492). If the devotion was led by negativity (e.g., dreadful fear of the consequence of not being devoted), one’s highest purpose could not be devotion to God; rather, it would be exceeded by the quest for the protection and security of the self, and thus, the devotion could not be holistic, and it would be a means to another end.

In order for the families in the HD group to reorganize a means-end structure whose ends converge in serving God, the individuals and the marriage/family as a whole need to have and share the positive affect of moral fascination with God or with the act of serving God. In consideration of the human tendency to persist in one’s own self-interest, the level of energy it takes to reorganize the means-end structure likely is tremendous. Six of the seven families in the HD group in the present research must be considered uncommonly exemplary cases, in view of the total population of the world. As this secondary data set did not contain a question asking
them to describe their emotions of adoration, it was not openly articulated in most cases.
However, I argue that, if what the participants said was genuine, only a positive affect can
explain their motivation to seek such a thorough sacrifice.

The foregoing analyses and the comparisons in the results section revealed the following
six functions that were taking place at the levels of the individual and the marriage and family
among the members of the HD group: (a) formation of a moral axis on which the will of God-
orientation versus self-interest are polarized, (b) means-end formation along with this axis, (c)
focusing on serving God by renouncing other pursuits, (d) interpersonal love subsumed within
serving God, (e) a shared ideal of holistic devotion, and (f) child’s admiration and adoration as
spiritual development. I will give the main points of each of the six functions, most of which
seem to be peculiar to an exemplary sample like the HD group in the present research. The
elaboration of these functions as they work in the holistic devotees will provide an additional
picture to the studies of adorers led by Schindler. Especially, these functions will add
explanations to how “adoration serves to create and maintain social cohesion through shared
ideals” which Schindler et al. (2013, p. 86) maintained.

**Six Functions of the System of Families with Holistic Devotion**

1. **God-orientation versus self-interest as a moral axis.** The families in the HD group
frequently juxtaposed self-interest with pleasing or serving God. Helen in Family #4 said, in
relation to marital conflicts in a self-reflective way: “[I]s your faith in God central at that time, or
is yourself central at that time?” Also, many said in their self-reflections that “myself” was an
obstacle to an ideal marriage. Rather than living according to spontaneous self-interest, which
many children in the GB group and the PG group affirmed and the spouses of the GB group
assumed, the spouses of the HD group regarded natural self-interest as an object to control. At
that time, their subject was located in the striving and the quest for serving God. This active axis was robustly present as they engaged in marriage/family processes and laid the ontological foundation of the whole framework.

**2. Means-end formation.** Throughout the interview, the spouses and most of the youth in the HD group regarded themselves as individuals who had the identity and function of a server or servant of God. Rather than seeking the gratification of their self-interest as an end, they made their resources and themselves an instrument of the will of God. Self-interest that was regarded by them as legitimate, such as developing their talents, was led by their higher purpose of advancing the work of God. Thus, the moral axis of God-self bore the dynamics of an end and the means to it. The quests and activities of the self were subsumed (absorbed) within the will of God.

**3. Focusing on serving God by renouncing other pursuits.** Quests that go against the flow of this means-end, such as the pursuit of self-interest as an end in itself, were checked, as the children in Family #3 said: “dying to yourself to live” and “all the things that touch on self-benefit are kind of suspended.” For the members of the HD group, not only were tendencies toward living for self-interest (self-end) fought with and controlled, but the whole means-end structure was subject to constant reorganization, so that their whole quest was to please God, or moreover, so that they could live for God. Here, too, only a positive motivation can provide an adequate explanation for this peculiar phenomenon, namely why they desire to renounce self-interest and choose to be single-minded. Because they love and adore God so extensively, it is their joy to be holistically absorbed in God, and it appears to be less painful to renounce the self-interest that deviates from this adoration. Only through this rejection and deterrence of the quest for self-interest as an end in itself can all of their resources be, directly or indirectly, directed to
God. This function, along with means-end formation and the identity of servant of God, uniquely impacts and defines the composition of the self.

4. **Interpersonal love subsumed within serving God.** As all of the quests of the members of the HD group are subsumed within their service to God, so are their acts of care in marriage and family. In the GB group, mutual satisfaction of self-interest was observed. They focus on the *application* of treating the self to the other being, which is to some extent, independent of the inner composition of the self. The final destination of the resource in this movement is the self-interest of the receiver: In the view of reciprocity, it includes the self-interest of the giver.

On the contrary, in the HD group, one is more motivated to dedicate one’s gain (means) to God (end). As this means-end moral axis is shared in the marriage/family, the final destination of the resources the receiver obtains is God. The commandment of interpersonal care (“application”), rather than being practiced independently, is embedded in the larger structure of devotion to God with self-renunciation that permeates the individuals, the marriage, and the family. Thus application to others is imbued with a unique perspective of *self-composition*. With this order of structure, the receiver within the family seems to try to direct the gain toward God. Rather than boosting self-interest, interpersonal support seems to fuel and encourage the receiver’s devotion to God in this system by providing what the receiver regards as a means for devotion.

This fact was illustrated in Doug’s (Family #2) comment, as I cited above:

But I do believe that my marriage is a gift from God. That God brought us together, even in answer to prayer. As a gift to me, to many needs in our life. And I do believe that our marriage is a gift to each other to help each other maybe enable each other to really follow God’s purpose for our lives. That there’s a way in which together we glorify and serve God in a way that . . . in an enhanced kind of a way.
With regard to “God’s purpose for our lives,” Doug previously said: “And so He purposed that in a marriage we would glorify Him. That we would be servants together. That we would help each other to follow His purpose for creation.” These comments show that he envisioned that, in their marriage, the gain in mutual support served as a resource and means to serve God. Thus, holistic devotion, together with its moral axis of the God-orientation versus self-interest, subordinates and permeates the quests and movements of interpersonal care, instead of the latter working independently of the former. This subordination, I argue, was motivated by their reverential affect of adoration for God that was alive in dealing of their interpersonal relationship.

Among the spouses in the PG group, as stated above, some degree of the quest for self-interest that is not instrumental to serving God is allowed. Also, in these groups, interpersonal love within marriage or family was pursued as a sovereign, ultimate end. This structure that allows multiple final ends also allows room for their interpersonal support (one final end) to be aimed at filling self-interest (another final end) of receivers, although they may use the logic that interpersonal love is a commandment of God. Thus it would allow them to engage in mutual satisfaction of self-interest. Even though whether the spouses actually do it or not is speculative, the fact that the children of the PG group affirmed more explicitly their own self-interest and exhibited less of a locus of center in spirituality than the children of the HD group provides supporting evidence for this possibility. The system of this type of family allows fueling self-interest as a final end, and thus retaining a certain level of moral selectivity where ends for spiritual interest and self-interest compete. A shift of center does not seem to accelerate in a framework of moral tug-of-war.

5. Shared ideal of holistic devotion (united servants). Schindler et al. (2015, p. 293) stated that “an adored other is a meaning-maker and benefactor with the power to unite a
community in pursuit of shared ideals and values.” The analyses of the PG group and the HD group in the present research confirmed that this is the case. However, the families in the HD group presented more specific and unique insights concerning shared ideals.

The aforementioned comments by Doug illustrate the family identity that the members of this group bore in their hearts. It is that of “servants,” or more precisely, united loyal servants of God. Not only did the families in the HD group pursue shared ideals and values, they also shared the whole functions above (1-4). As they did this, they formed a group identity as servants, and the marriage was viewed as a coherent unit to serve God.

As Earl of Family #3 said: “really there is no my needs versus your needs. There is what God is going to do through us as a couple,” in this unity, they perceived themselves as a marriage dedicated to God. They formed a new, united, collective subject as we=servants of God. This particular form of shared ideals had a high level of coherence, in which the resources they received from God, each other, or from outer sources were unitedly devoted to God. This serves as a counter-model to the mutual satisfaction of self-interest. It is noteworthy that this unity (function 5) occurs closely working together with the structure in which interpersonal love is subsumed within serving God (function 4). This form of marriage contrasts with a marriage whose ultimate purpose is marital relationship itself where exchanged resources are finally consumed within each other. And as Family #7, as an exception in the HD group implied, this devotion to God needs to accompany a sufficient level of interpersonal care, in order for both spouses to participate in the devotion.

6. The child’s admiration and adoration as spiritual development. With the marriage dedicated to God (united servants), the parents invited their children to participate in their devotion by means of evoking the children’s admiration of their faith and supporting relationship
through setting examples. Further, the children did admire the parents. Thus, as an extension of
the marital cohesion, the children were also involved in it, and together, they seem to have
formed a family dedicated to God. As I cited before, some of the children of the HD group
described how their family served God together, and most of them expressed individual holistic
devotion to God.

It is considered that the same affective structure in the marriage dedicated to God,
together with parental care, guidance, discipline, and the evocation of admiration for parents,
provided the children with the motivation to join the parents in their devotion. The same moral
axis, the end-means structure, and the ideal of self-renunciation seemed to be shared by the
children. Noticeably, therefore, in this structure, parental care and support were not likely to be
conceptualized as instruments to extend their self-interest. Rather than their self-interest, the
peculiar spiritual development they exhibited, which was not seen in the other two groups,
included the locus of the habitual center in spirituality and the adoration for God. Their self-
motivated admiration for the faith and love of parents, which might have served as a medium of
the children’s devotion, and which were apparently based on moral fascination, could well be
also a sign of spiritual development.

**Philosophical Implications**

Schindler and her colleagues (Schindler et al., 2013, 2015) asserted that shared ideal was
a main function of adoration. The six functions that the interviews of the families in the HD
group suggested seem to have a close conceptual connection to each other, illustrating and
elaborating one type of shared ideal. The family systems composed of these functions seem to
have greater strength to evoke a religious desire within children compared to the other types of
systems studied here. A relationship based on holistic devotion to God presents a more consistent
other-orientated model compared to the model of altruism that Elster (1990) presented which essentially involves the mutual satisfaction of self-interest. These two orientations are difficult to discern by mere behaviors. One of the central philosophical issues in discerning between these seemingly related forms of other-orientation is differentiating the definitions of selflessness: selflessness can serve as an application to others before self-composition (which allows for utilitarian self-interest) or it can serve the function of self-composition (devotion to God with self-renunciation) before application to others. Even though both forms of selflessness are moral and create meaningful connections within marriage and family, the latter seems to provide a moral basis for an especially unique form of cohesion in marriage and family as well as for a greater development of religious desires in children.

**Relation with Existing Theories**

The sample used for the present research provided descriptions of how different components of adoration and admiration work within the marriage and the family. Adoration and admiration provided individuals and families with identity, motivation, and relational processes that were distinct from those with ideals and relationships based more on self-interest. Especially significant was that those individuals and families who practiced holistic devotion, a sub-category of adoration, presented their relationships as based on a unique ontology and self-composition that contrasted with coordination and mutual satisfaction of self-interest, concepts that currently lead the science of marriage and family. Some of these concepts are expressed only among few highly religious sub-populations. However, their effects on marriage, family, and human development, as found here, are predominantly positive, and they have the potential to provide remedies for various vexing problems within the family. In this final section, I examine
how the concepts made known in the present research add to or modify existing theories of family science and psychology.

**Social exchange theory.** Social exchange theory (Lawler & Thye, 1999) is a utilitarian theory that understands self-interest in a positive light; by contrast, self-denial is a substantial part of holistic devotion. Elster’s view (1990) that altruism fuels self-interest (as cited in the introduction) seems to adopt the same utilitarian assumption underlying exchange theory. Just as social exchange theory proposes, marriages and families with holistic devotion do practice interdependence to meet the needs of their members. However, in exchange theory, the resources exchanged are consumed for the sake of self-interest, whereas in holistic devotion they are made a means of expressing devotion to God. The two underlying basic assumptions about human nature and self-interest are starkly different.

**Attachment theory.** Although attachment plays a vital role in the sound development of a child and in the smooth functioning of family relationships, attachment theories, with their emphasis on providing a safe haven for the child’s and the spouse’s self-exploration formulated in the child (Bowlby, 1969) and the adult (Fraley & Shaver, 2000), describe only a part of the family process cut off from the whole. In families of holistic devotion, members not only provide support for the child or the spouse but also influence and encourage them so that the recipients will direct their resources to God with adoration. Even forms of self-exploration, such as developing talents, are directed to God’s purposes. Attachment theory typically avoids dealing with this ontological and moral aspect and assumes quest for self-interest as a robust human nature.

**Moral therapeutic deism.** Smith and Denton (2005) provided a sociological view called *moral therapeutic deism* that suggested many teenagers believe “a widely shared, largely
apolitical, interreligious faith fostering subjective well-being and lubricating interpersonal relationships in the local public sphere” (p. 169). According to Smith and Denton, under moral therapeutic deism, the youth’s central life goal is to feel good, satisfied, or fulfilled. The youth’s view of God is that God is not demanding but rather solves their problems, makes people feel good, and is usually not very involved in their lives. The youth avoid the challenging elements of religion. This description of disengagement matches well with the comments of the youths in the GB group and some of the PG group.

To this idea of deism, the present research provided a view that the quest for self-interest and mutual satisfaction of self-interest may be the ontology underlying this phenomenon. To the widening influence of this therapeutic deism across denominations (Dean, 2010; Smith & Denton, 2005), the group comparisons of the present research provided an insight regarding the structure of the ideal of selflessness that ends up perpetuating self-interest (application before self-composition). The concept of moral fascination as a counter-concept to self-interest, practiced in the families of the sample in the present research, suggests a counter example.

**Intrinsic religious orientation.** The most salient theory of religious self-motivation is intrinsic religious orientation (Allport & Ross, 1967). Intrinsic orientation is conceptually linked with religion as an end (Batson, 1982) as opposed to merely as a means (extrinsic religious orientation). Since, in holistic devotion, individuals orient toward God as their end, there is a conceptual similarity between them. Moreover, the concept of intrinsic orientation includes the relevance of religion to all aspects of life (Hunt & King, 1971; see also Hoge, 1972), which is one of the essential characteristics of holistic devotion.

However, holistic devotion, as a form of adoration, deals with direct aspects of one’s faith (namely, one’s attitude toward God) and adopts a negative attitude toward making self-
interest an ultimate goal. Insofar as God and self-interest are two of the central aspects of ontology, holistic devotion deals directly with the composition of the self and family that underlies intentions and relations. As there are various forms of religion, it is important to attend to this ontological aspect in conducting research. The scales used to measure intrinsic religion use the word “religion,” instead of God—formulated that way under the intention to include various types of religion. However, only one’s attitude toward a personal God can express the unique ontology of a “servant” that respondents classified as the HD group exhibited. And it was this servanthood that was at the center of their family relationships. The concept of holistic devotion may be useful for research asking, for example, why devotion persists even among religious people, or why premarital sexual activities permeate among youth in Christian families.

**Elevation.** Haidt (2000, 2003a) proposed that elevation (feeling lifted up by witnessing a moral beauty) include aspects of positive psychology with regard to morality because its central affect is that of praise. Similarly, holistic devotion to God, combined with admiration among family members, as some of the families in the present research expressed, can introduce positive views, feelings, and attitudes among the family. And positivity does contribute to coherence in relationships (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006). However, as one exception in the sample illustrated, if one’s holistic devotion to God does not accompany adequate care for the members of the family, it can introduce disharmony and resistance into the family dynamic. Although Haidt focuses on charitable acts as a target characteristic, holistic devotion is toward the total person of God.

**Sanctification of marriage and family relationships.** Further, holistic devotion is different from the sanctification of the marriage/family proposed by Annette Mahoney and colleagues (Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-Swank, 2003). The concept of
sanctification is the perception that marriage/family is sacred, or that God is involved in it. Though related, holistic devotion refers more directly to one’s attitude toward God, especially to how individuals holistically give up resources for God. It is possible for one to perceive God’s involvement while preserving self-interest, without giving up all resources for God.

**Transcendent moral authority.** Holistic devotion is also different from perceiving the transcendent moral authority of God (Shichida, et al., 2015). The transcendent moral authority of God is behind the concept of a meaning-maker, which is one of the defining characteristics of the adored target. However, the present research showed that not all people who perceive God as a transcendent moral authority engage in holistic devotion, but that those who did so experienced unique qualities within their family structures. Those who regarded God as a meaning-maker in the present research did express what I coded as the three marital concepts found in Shichida et al.’s (2015) study: transcendent self-reflection in marriage, shared obedience to God, and a God-strengthened marital bond. This link found between the perception of God as a meaning-maker and these three concepts adds a confirmation to the findings of Shichida et al. Also, it is noteworthy that those who engaged in holistic devotion in the present research also perceived their marriage as being strengthened by the grace of God, for it shows that the devotees perceived how they related to God as more bidirectional, rather than their unidirectional devotion to God.

**Admiration & adoration.** Finally, the present research provided findings that add to studies of admiration and adoration, including those conducted by Schindler and her colleagues (Schindler et al., 2013; Schindler, 2014; Schindler et al., 2015). In particular, the present research has elaborated on how adoration and admiration work in the context of family and clarified that holistic devotion as an active tendency of adoration had associations with ontologically
significant features of family relationships. To the claim of Schindler and her colleague that adoration’s main function is to bring about social cohesion through shared ideals, the present research suggests that there are variations in the modes of shared ideals and cohesion depending on whether or not the parties engage in holistic devotion.

**Consideration for the Age of the Youth**

Although the group classification was based on the spouse responses, the youth of the families classified as the HD group were older on average than those of the other groups. Determining whether age-related factors influenced the outcome requires a replication of the study using another sample. However, it is important to carefully consider possible effects of the children’s ages by using information from previous studies and the present research. First, a difference in the youths’ levels of articulation is legitimately expected. However, whether articulation matters for expressing the kinds of faith I treated in the present study is an issue of debate. Then there is the more direct question: was the kind of faith the youths of the HD group expressed due to their age? There are several facts to examine.

Empirical studies indicate that late teenage and young adulthood years are usually not associated with a rise of religiosity. In the National Study of Youth and Religion, both cross-sectional (Smith & Denton, 2005) and 3-year longitudinal results (Denton, Pearce, & Smith, 2008) indicated that as teens grew their religiosity dropped slightly. Regarding the cross-sectional results, Smith and Denton (2005) claimed, “We do witness modest drops in religiosity between the age of 13 and 17 for most measures. And the religiosity of teenagers older than 17 may drop significantly” (p. 280). They found that those who felt God as extremely close to them dropped from 16% at 13 years old, 12% at 14 to 15 years old, to 9% at 16 to 17 years old. Regarding the longitudinal results, Denton et al. (2008) said, “Over the three-year period, more
adolescents reported they were unsure about their belief in God, fewer reported belief in a personal, involved God, fewer reported belief in a judgment day, and fewer reported belief in angels or some form of afterlife” (p. 3).

The percentage of adolescents who attended religious services once a week or more declined by 13% in the 3-year time period. The national study collected this data about the same time Dollahite collected interview data.

Gunnoe and Moore (2002) observed that “Comparisons of religiosity across the life span suggests that religiosity declines during high school and stabilizes (at least temporarily) at relatively low levels during late adolescence” (p. 613). Nelson (2010) stated, “Religiousness shows small decreases during adolescence and young adulthood to a midlife low point” (p. 276). A similar decline was observed in Europe (Goosen & Dunner, 2001; Kay & Francis, 1996).

Hood, Hill, and Spilka (2009) reported that “Broad-based survey studies suggest that disengagement from religion is most common for people in their late teens and early 20s” (p. 131). They also noted that this trend was found in many denominations including Catholics (Hoge, 1981), Latter-day Saints (Albrecht, Cornwall, & Cunningham, 1988), Presbyterians (Hoge, Johnson, & Luidens, 1993), and other broader religious groupings (Albrecht & Cornwall, 1989; Caplovitz & Sherrow, 1977; Hadaway & Roof, 1988; Schweitzer, 2000). I could find only one study (Argue, Johnson, & White, 1999) that found a gentle rise of religiosity after 18 years old.

This evidence goes against a hypothesis that the highly religious claims of the youths in the HD group (including two in their early 20s) were age-related. In fact, when comparing 15- and 16-year-old youth from each of the three groups of the present research, there were still relevant differences. That indicates that the differences observed among these 15- and 16-year-
old youth were at least not due to effects of their age. In the framework of the present research, the point of considering the presence of an age factor regarding holistic devotion is to ask whether the youth raised by the parents of the PG or GB group expressed something that would be coded as a holistic devotion when they get a few years older, despite their parents’ not having expressed it. In other words, it is to test the possibility of independence between children’s and parents’ faith, as opposed to correspondence between them (Boyatzis, Dollahite, & Marks, 2006).

Considering the particular form of faith a holistic devotion takes (e.g., its unique means-end formation, renouncing living for one’s own self-interest), I argue that adolescents’ formation of this total form of faith (i.e., an ontological formation) independent from their parents’ direct influence is somewhat an unlikely scenario, unless they experience a strong religious conversion. In the interview, all the youth in the HD group who expressed what was coded as holistic devotion had at least one parent who indicated the same concept. Besides, structural similarity between the orientations of parents and of youths across the three groups was virtually evident. A hypothesis of correspondence between parental faith and the child’s faith as well as a hypothesis of continuous development (i.e., that the attitude toward greater religiosity established early in life may continue to develop [Hood et al., 2009]) seem to have a stronger ground for explaining the phenomena of holistic devotion among the youths than a hypothesis of independence of the child’s faith does.

**Potential Risks of Holistic Devotion**

Besides interpersonal care and loving-kindness, holistic devotion features a committed vertical orientation. Because of that, holistic devotion may present potential risks that need to be addressed.
Submission and self-renunciation. Holistic devotion that involves self-renunciation is a strong form of religious self-sacrifice and submission. Some may assert that such religiosity is harmful to mental health (Ellis, 1986). However, research has shown that intrinsic religious motivation (Donahue, 1985), high religious internalization (Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993), and internal integration of religious elements—as opposed to fragmentation—(Pargament, 2002) are linked to better mental health and decrease anxiety, depression, and social dysfunction.

Six of the seven families of the HD group match these descriptions of religiosity. Regarding internal integration, Pargament, Steele, & Tyler (1979) found that out of four groups (frequent church attendance and high religious commitment, frequent attendance with low commitment, infrequent attendance and high commitment, and infrequent attendance and low commitment), only the group with frequent church attendance and low religious commitment manifested significantly lower levels of mental health than the others. Members of the six families seemed to have a strong internal integration of religious elements including actions. It was the wife and children in Family #7 and the youth of some families in the PG group who may not have enjoyed the internal integration. Similar results were found in self-sacrifices in marriage (Whitton, Stanley, & Markman, 2007). As long as the sacrifice is intrinsically motivated, committed, and integrated within the self, research has indicated no significant sign of pathology.

Marital equality. When a vertical quest of God takes a central place in marriage, and when it is coupled with the couple’s adoption of religiously-ordained marital roles (see Table 4), one logically potential risk of marital relationship is inequality. When asked about potential harm of religion when misunderstood or misapplied, all couples in the HD group referred to the potential of a husband’s abusive exercise of authority over the wife. They were aware of the risk,
and some explained their marriage avoided that risk by integrating the principle of loving-kindness. Ruby of Family #6 said interpreting the whole Bible together (as opposed to selective taking of it) would avoid this problem. Gerald of Family #5 claimed a potential bias or stereotype:

A lot of the practices and beliefs that we have together are pretty mutual. That we’ve come to a middle ground where we’ve had differences that we can agree on. So I don’t think there’s too many of them, with ourselves, that are really harmful that, you know. Other people could see them as being harmful maybe.

No evidence in the interviews suggested that the wives in the HD group viewed their husbands as perfect beings, like God. However, similar to their view of God as holding authority and a loving character, attribution of authority to their husbands was coupled with the expectation for loving-kindness. Although most of the couples in the HD group adopted religiously-ordained marital roles (husband’s “lordship”), they also valued equality within marriage (see Table 4). However, the wife of Family #7 seemed to suffer marital inequality despite the husband’s similar valuation of authority coupled with marital loving. The interview did not provide underlying factors that might have caused the husband’s practices leading to the wife’s dissatisfaction that are distinguishable from the rest of the husbands in the HD group. Detecting such factors can be a subject for future study.

Guiding and disciplining the child. Similar risks apply to how parents treat children. The parents’ strong devotion to God may lead to requesting the same level of devotion in children who are not ready for it, it turning into over-demanding or authoritarian practices. Some parents and children of the HD group spoke about parental abuse of authority in discipline. As described above, the parents of these families tried to avoid the risks of authority abuse by setting examples as a main method of transmitting faith. As seen in Table 4, some children of
the HD group valued agency in a positive light. Of the children in the HD group, only the youth of Family #7 identified agency of children as lacking in the family.

The comment by Daniel of Family #2 partly cited above is helpful to understanding this differentiation:

I’ve seen some of my friends have acted, where parents are slamming Bible verses in their face, and really not loving them, not helping them grow. It’s a forceful thing, at unnecessary times. When it really would have been helpful just for them to sit down and talk with their kid. And I definitely don’t want that to happen, ‘cause I’ve seen too many friends just go off the deep end, so to speak, and try to live lives for themselves. . . . but I definitely hope I’ll bring my kids up like my parents brought me up.

Daniel is the youth who mentioned that he recognized parental authority and shifted from merely agreeing with parents to proactively honoring parents. Daniel differentiated good (not forceful) authority of his parents from malicious authority. This contrasts with the forcefulness of the father in Family #7 implied by his teenage child. The difference found from their descriptions was an authority with a listening attitude and one without. The former was admired, and the latter, according to what the youth indicated, was not.

**Integrated personality of the moral model needed for sound adoration and admiration.** Some in the GB group criticized authority and engaged in egalitarian pursuits. In contrast, the couples and children in the HD group acknowledged good authority and sought loving-kindness in God. In a similar way, some sought husbands’ kindness and equal treatment of their wives, and others sought parents’ listening attitudes while recognizing their authority. Bonnie of Family #2 articulated this crucial difference regarding authority in general. Just as her son acknowledged good parental authority, Bonnie distinguished what she thought was bad authority from good authority.

People in the general culture don’t appreciate that idea [of submitting]. But I find it actually a very . . . understood in the right way, in a healthy way, I think it’s a very good thing, and a natural thing for us. If God is who He says He is. And we’re His creatures,
then we should submit to Him. And likewise, we submit in different relationships that we’re in between people, so . . . but that can be abused. The whole submitting piece can be abused, not just in a marriage, but in any other setting, I think; it can be abused . . . I think it’s good to have authority, used the right way. Authority is a good thing. And being under authority can be a very good thing, but it can be mishandled.

This valuation of certain authority is crucial to understanding the ideals of those who exhibit holistic devotion. Their central identity is that of servants, and a major portion of their marriage/family structure hinges on this identity. Previous literature did not invest enough research in the moral differentiation of authority some religiously devout individuals seem to hold. When these people are fascinated with and adore God, they accept the whole personality (omniscient/omnipotent loving authority) of God as good (Shichida et al., 2015).

Avoiding the risks presented to those who engage in holistic devotion hinges on the perception of an integrated personality image of God and the implementation and realization of similar integration in husbands and parents who exercise authority. The question, then, is whether holistic devotion is intricately connected with the holistic internalization (Schindler et al., 2013) of God described in the Bible. In his book, Laws of Imitation, Tarde (1903) warned of a preoccupied form of fascination to an unintegrated model that creates “polarisation of love and faith” (p. 80) among the hearts of the followers of the model, which he believes happened very often throughout history.

**Potential strengths of the PG and GB models.** The parallel structure of ultimate goals in the PG group, though this structure may involve a system to promote self-interest, seems to alleviate the potential risks in marriage and parenting described above: If one family member pursues self-interest as one of the ultimate goals, it does not necessarily conflict with that family’s religious goals. The same idea applies to members of the GB group who employ egalitarian and autonomy-promoting structure: Democratic processes may be their strengths, and
so are acceptance and forgiveness. However, as shown by my coding and analysis, loving-kindness was mentioned by members of all three groups. Only salient concept among the GB group in this line, though I omitted reporting it due to irrelevance to the research question, was their emphasis on connections in church community.

Other Limitations

Because I alone conducted the coding process for the present research, I disclosed the quotes that led to the findings as much as possible to improve the study’s validity and reliability. The present research used secondary interview data that did not include questions regarding spiritual feelings and emotions. Although the participants mentioned their attitudes, goals, and values, they rarely expressed how they actually felt, such as in their devotion to God. Keltner and Haidt (2003) defined awe as a moral, spiritual, and aesthetic emotion. Schleiermacher (1988) claimed that the essence of religion is a feeling that accompanies intuition, a feeling that transcends usual human affectivity (Roy, 2001). James (1922) proposed that it is a higher spiritual emotion that forms the habitual center of the personal energy of a saintly character. I consider the attitude of adoration, especially holistic devotion, to be motivated by a feeling of reverential, moral, and spiritual fascination and love toward a personal God. The interview data contained attitudinal information, but a description of this deep spiritual feeling is largely missing from the present research.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The present research shows an example of a form of family that bears the order of self-composition before application. Do the families who practice holistic devotion have a particularly high engagement to each other, other than engagement to God? Do they have a spiritual type of positive fulfillment (individually or collectively) that is not self-satisfying in
immediacy, as they try to renounce self-interest in their orientation as a family? Some of the respondents claimed to do so. These questions are largely unanswered because the present research focused on exhibiting differences of orientation structures. Future studies need to seek more articulation on these aspects of family welfare pertaining to holistic devotion as well as potential pitfalls, if there are any. Moral fascination (i.e., admiration and adoration) as an intrinsic motivation has a substantial heuristic value in searching potentially ontologically optimum relationships, not only within family, but also in communities that are embedded in a self-interest-laden society. The expansion of epistemology seems to be one of the most difficult hurdles in seeking this academic direction.

Several concepts in the present research challenge the ontological concept of self-interest that is robustly assumed in the field of psychology and family studies. The present research is intended to initiate applying admiration and adoration to the study of the family.
References


Wong-McDonald, A, & Gorsuch, R. L. (2000). Surrender to God: An additional coping style? 

   *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 28*, 149-161.

Appendix

Codebook for Adoration and Admiration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Personal God (Perception of Adoration Target)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Description</td>
<td>Perceiving a personal God as a meaning-maker and benefactor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed Description</td>
<td>Perceiving the following two concepts regarding God. Code the two concepts separately. After coding all the comments, if both concepts are present, code this combination as Personal God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning-maker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• God who directs the person’s life (not just one or some events)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• God who shapes the person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider (“benefactor”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Benevolence, love, tenderness of God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Grace, spiritual/temporal blessing, greater good provided by God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Benefits from God that are associated with various ideals (power, love, knowledge, genius, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Benefits from God that are associated with positive emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion Criteria</td>
<td>Both Meaning-maker and Provider are referred to, with God perceived as a personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical exemplars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• God as a master who directs one’s whole life, or who has a plan for one’s life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• God’s intervening help in the times of crisis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Comfort felt by the presence of God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atypical exemplars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Constantly evaluate oneself by imagining what one would do if Christ was present (Meaning-maker)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Husband’s positive change attributed to God (Provider)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion Criteria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• God imagined as impersonal force</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Either meaning-maker or provider aspect is absent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close but No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Relationship with God”: although personal God is assumed, this may vary in meaning by individuals and may not mean adoration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An episode of being guided by God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td><em><em>Praising/Emulating</em> God (A Resultant Tendency of Adoration)</em>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Short Description</strong></td>
<td>Expressing God as one’s ideal, or modeling after the ideal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Detailed Description</strong></td>
<td>Revering or expressing the highest regard for a personal God (as an entire person, or integrated character)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusion Criteria</strong></td>
<td>The perfect personality of God spoken positively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typical exemplars</strong></td>
<td>• Listing excellent qualities/attributes of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atypical exemplars</strong></td>
<td>• Trying to become like God, modeling after God image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exclusion Criteria</strong></td>
<td>Rather than personal God, a partial attribute of God is selected to emulate or to be spoken highly of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Close but No</strong></td>
<td>• Emulating kindness (as single attribute) of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Praising Christ’s obedience to God the Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Husband perceived to embody or reflect God’s authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *Although Schindler et al. (2013) mentioned that adoration of the divine target involves affiliating with the target, but not emulating the target, four spouses from three different denominations in the sample did speak about emulating God as a total personality; categorizing it together with praising God is considered to be relevant for the affinity between the two concepts.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th><strong>Holistic Devotion (A Resultant Tendency of Adoration)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Short Description</strong></td>
<td>Holistically giving up resources for God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Detailed Description</strong></td>
<td>A subcategory of holistic internalization. Either one of these:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (Readiness for or actually) giving up whole resources for God; if it’s marriage or family, the purpose of the whole unit represented as devotion to God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-renunciation: denying other purposes that do not serve God; if it’s marriage or family, denying other purposes of the unit that do not serve God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusion Criteria</strong></td>
<td>Offering the whole of the self, marriage, or family to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typical exemplars</strong></td>
<td>• “Family’s purpose is to serve God”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Every minute, trying to please God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dedicate marriage to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atypical exemplars</strong></td>
<td>• Ready to die for God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hate to live for oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exclusion Criteria</strong></td>
<td>Sense of giving the whole is missing; Possible selectivity in offering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Close but No</strong></td>
<td>• Obedience or submission to God (chance of partial offer of resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Read scripture everyday (chance of partial offer of resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Couple live for the church (not necessarily devoting to God; it could be for people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do best at tests to please God (one episode)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Admiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Description</td>
<td>Expressing a high regard for other’s virtue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed Description</td>
<td>Feeling lifted up by seeing other’s virtue or moral/spiritual beauty. Wishing or striving to actualize a particular ideal virtue seen in the similar other (emulation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion Criteria</td>
<td>The target of respect is a trait or behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical exemplars</td>
<td>• Feeling uplifted by an exemplary attitude of wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Praise the faith of the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Modeling after a family member’s behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atypical exemplars</td>
<td>• Praising or emulating kindness of Christ*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion Criteria</td>
<td>• Whole person being a model for one’s life providing a total framework of meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Praising non-moral quality (e.g. academic ability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close but No</td>
<td>• Motivated to study seeing other’s hard work (irrelevant to morality/spirituality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Showing respect to people’s agency although one does not agree with the other’s choice (not lifted up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Always reference to someone’s words in many aspects of life (adoration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mere liking someone (weak; not necessarily lifted up)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Although Schindler et al. (2013) describes that the target of admiration is human, there are occasions in which one selectively praises an aspect of divine being, Christ, for example. I contend that even if the target is a being that is usually categorized as supernatural, the selectivity, if consistent across contexts, may signify the admirer’s important ontological stance, similar to the case in which the target is human.
Table 1
**Summary of Studies Regarding Admiration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Elicitor</th>
<th>Resultant Tendencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elevation (Haidt, 2000)</td>
<td>Acts of human moral beauty or virtue</td>
<td>Emulation; seek to become a better person; Affiliate with, love, and help (general) others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevation (Haidt, 2003a)</td>
<td>Witnessing good deeds*</td>
<td>Triggers desires of doing good deeds*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevation (Haidt, 2003b)</td>
<td>Moral beauty (disinterested elicitors); Acts of charity, kindness, loyalty, and self-sacrifice; manifestations of humanity’s higher or better nature; Seeing people blur the upper boundary between humans and God (i.e., saints, or people who act like saints).</td>
<td>Desire to become a better person; open heart to (general) others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevation (Algoe &amp; Haidt, 2009)</td>
<td>Moral exemplars, acts of moral beauty; strong display of virtue</td>
<td>Emulation; Try to be prosocial and less selfish*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral elevation (Freeman et al., 2009)</td>
<td>An act of moral excellence by others</td>
<td>Emulate the moral exemplar, act prosocially; Desire to become a better person and to open one’s heart to (general) other; Override/neutralize the negative effects of status/social dominance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect-respect (as opposed to ought-respect) (Li &amp; Fischer, 2007)</td>
<td>Moral/virtuous qualities</td>
<td>Emulate the target; seek to be like the target; acquire the qualities the target possesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admiration (Schindler, et al., 2013)</td>
<td>Goodness of specific acts; Outstanding role model</td>
<td>Become and aspirant; uphold and pursuit of the ideal (marvel at, seek to investigate); Imitate to actualize ideal (emulation), but not going out of one’s way; selective internalization; Seek affiliation with the target;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admiration (Schindler, et al., 2015)</td>
<td>Goodness of specific acts; Outstanding role model</td>
<td>Imitate to actualize ideal (emulation)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2

**Summary of Studies Regarding Adoration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Elicitor</th>
<th>Resultant Tendencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awe as other-praising emotion (Haidt, 2003)</td>
<td>Certain kinds of beauty and perfection; Moral perfection/Presence of God (disinterested elicitors)</td>
<td>open their hearts and minds; receptive to religious teachings;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awe of God (Krause &amp; Hayward, 2015)</td>
<td>Vastness of God’s creations, power, wisdom, and timelessness</td>
<td>Connectedness with others* \ Greater life satisfaction* \ Effort to assimilate these experiences into new mental models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Awe (Andersen, 1999)</td>
<td>Manifestation of God Generative goodness within the otherness of the other</td>
<td>Enlarge reflective self-awareness; Increased gratitude and wishes to be a good presence for others; wish to give and help others*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Awe (Sundararajan, 2002)</td>
<td>God as beyond all predicates and categories (Williams, 2000); Overwhelming Other, an overpowering, absolute might of some kind (Otto, 1967); an entity from beyond the borders of natural experience (Otto, 1967)</td>
<td>Praise the divine, subordinating self to the target, devotion Absorption, contemplation; Self-reflexivity; Self-annihilation, self-depreciation, feeling of own nothingness in contrast to the supremacy (Otto, 1967); The failure of assimilation that leads to radical accommodation; Need for accommodation as negation of mental structures; reconciliation &amp; healing (Otto, 1967)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awe and related self-transcendent emotions (admiration, wonder, and elevation) (Peterson &amp; Seligman, 2004)</td>
<td>Beauty and excellence Physical beauty, skill/talent, virtue/moral goodness God, exemplary, exceptional, and virtuous people Any manifestation of God, God’s power, or God’s goodness, revealed in any aspect of creation</td>
<td>A desire to improve the self and the greater good (Keltner &amp; Haidt, 2003); Submissiveness or openness to the divine will; Become absorbed in the target other than the self; Reprogram people, making them more pious and prosocial, with little concern for material wealth, reputation, or other petty concerns of daily life (Keltner &amp; Haidt, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoration (Schindler, et al., 2013)</td>
<td>Goodness of the entire person who is regarded sacred/divine and has access to special insights, representing ideal being/framework of meaning (meaning-maker &amp; benefactor); A person representing a set of the highest ideals shared within a community</td>
<td>Become an adherent; submission; worship as an act of bonding/uniting with the target; readiness to give up resources for the target; assure the good will/favors of the target; Become a part of the target’s world; holistic internalization; Imitate to relate to the target; regard the target as a holistic reference and an ultimate/epistemic authority; Sharing the highest and most important ideals within a community; create and maintain social cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoration (Schindler, et al., 2015)</td>
<td>Superhuman personality with excellence or virtue</td>
<td>Affiliate oneself with the target*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

*Short Conceptual Summary of Admiration & Adoration*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target (Elicitor)</th>
<th>Admiration</th>
<th>Adoration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral beauty of others (trait)</td>
<td>Moral beauty/excellence of God (personality: meaning-maker – benefactor)</td>
<td>Praising God, Giving up resources for God, Self-renunciation, Absorption, Holistic internalization; Creating social cohesion through shared ideals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emulation</td>
<td>Selective internalization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4
Cross-Case Table for the Three Groups by Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>H D</th>
<th>P G</th>
<th>GB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family #</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4</td>
<td>5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband/Wife</td>
<td>H W</td>
<td>H W</td>
<td>H W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Ralph Sandra Doug Donnie Earl Doris Roy Helen Gerald Donna Keith Ruby Glenn Ann Ryan Amanda Arian Betty Jack Melissa Brian Rose Randy Judy Larry Susan Harold Julia Aaron Tricia Henry Maggie Barry Nicole Louis Natalie Edward Stacy Samuel Teresa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God as Meaning-maker</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God as Provider (Benefactor)</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal God</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praising/Emulating God (total personality)</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Devotion (Individual)</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Devotion (Marriage/Family)</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admiration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praising/Emulating God (a trait)</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praising/Emulating Spouse</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praising Children</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting Examples for Family/Children</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Unity</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Equality</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God/Religion-Ordained Marital Roles</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eternal View on Marriage</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shichida et al.'s Concepts in Marriage</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trencendent Self-Reflection in Marriage</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Obedient to God (Marriage)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>God-Strengthened Marital Bond</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Unity</td>
<td>+ +</td>
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<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. The plus sign indicates the presence, and the blank indicates the absence of the concept. The concepts are mutually exclusive.
Figure 1. Conceptual map of moral fascination, admiration, and adoration. Self-interest and moral fascination goes against each other, for moral fascination is, in its characteristics, other-praising and giving up resources. Admiration and adoration both belong to the movement of moral/spiritual fascination. However, admiration is selective in the nature of the target and in giving up resources while adoration is more holistic.