GENERATIONAL CURSE? SPIRITUAL APPRAISALS, SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES AND RISK FACTORS FOR THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF DIVORCE

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Utilizing religious coping theory, this study examined the impact of religion and spirituality on documented risk factors for the future divorce of adult children of divorce. Consistent with previous research, approximately one third of the 158 college students whose parents had divorced since they were 13 years old, viewed the divorce as the loss or desecration of something sacred at the time it happened, one fourth struggled spiritually in response to this divorce at the time it happened, and just under one third reported engaging in adaptive spiritual coping at the time of the divorce. After controlling for global religiousness, relevant demographics and non-spiritual struggle and coping, several links between these religious and spiritual constructs and risk factors for future divorce emerged. Specifically, significant relationships existed between the following variables: greater retrospective spiritual struggles and both lower current conflict resolution skills and greater current spiritual decline; higher current appraisals of marriage as sacred and current lower risky attitudes towards cohabitation and sexual intercourse, marriage and divorce as well as greater current spiritual growth; greater retrospective adaptive spiritual coping and greater current conflict resolution skills. Participants’ pattern of spiritual struggle across time was also related to some risk factors for future divorce and spiritual decline. Implications of these findings are discussed as well as other expected links that did not emerge.
To my husband, my treasured helpmate.
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INTRODUCTION

In the large body of literature on the effects of parental divorce, the intergenerational transmission of divorce is particularly robust (Amato & Keith, 1991). In fact, while the exact percentage varies, this body of research suggests that children of divorce are approximately 50% more likely to see their own marriages end in divorce than peers from intact families. Researchers are beginning to identify factors tied to this higher level of risk for future divorce for children of divorce. However, they are just beginning to explore the pathways which might explain why children of divorce report higher levels of these risk factors than children from intact families. One dimension of divorce-related events that has not been addressed is the role of the religious and spiritual context that the divorce occurs in. That is, do children’s religious and spiritual beliefs and responses to their parents’ divorce shape the trajectory of their own romantic relationships? This gap in the research is surprising given that divorce rates are only slightly lower among more religious families as compared to less religious or non-religious families (Mahoney et al., 2001). Therefore, children from more religious families are likely to experience their parents’ divorce within a theological framework that potentially exacerbates their difficulties in dealing with their parents’ divorce (Mahoney et al., 2003; Warner & Mahoney, 2009). In particular, Warner and Mahoney (2009) found that children of divorce who view their parents’ divorce as a violation of their own religious and spiritual principles are likely to face more difficulties making sense of and dealing with the divorce than their peers who do not view the divorce in these terms. Specifically, this study suggests that the more late adolescents view their parents’ divorce as a loss and violation of something they have held sacred and the more
they become caught up in religious struggles (i.e., negative religious coping) related to the divorce, the more vulnerable they are to experiencing both clinical and non-clinical types of psychological distress (Warner & Mahoney, 2009). At the same time, religious and spiritual beliefs can potentially offer a framework for healing and meaning that might protect against future divorce.

Warner and Mahoney’s (2009) findings raise the possibility that perceptions of parental divorce as a sacred loss and desecration, spiritual struggles tied to parental divorce and adaptive spiritual coping with parental divorce could also be linked to other domains of post-divorce functioning. This includes risk factors for the intergenerational transmission of divorce, such as greater acceptance of divorce as an option for their own future, more relationship anxiety, and poorer conflict management skills, and greater instability in dating relationships. This study assessed for these links in a number of ways. First, this study examined the degree to which young adults say they (1) viewed their parents’ divorce as a sacred loss and/or desecration both at the time of the divorce and at the time of the study, (2) struggled spiritually in response to the divorce, both in the past as well as at the time of the study, and (3) used adaptive spiritual coping strategies to come to terms with the divorce at the time the divorce occurred and at the time of the study. Second, this study examined links between retrospective accounts of these sacred loss and desecration, spiritual struggles, and adaptive spiritual coping and current risk factors for future divorce. Links between current beliefs in the sanctity of marriage and current risk factors for future divorce were also examined. Third, this study examined links between patterns of spiritual struggle over time related to parental divorce (i.e., pattern of change across retrospective spiritual struggles and current spiritual
struggles) and the participants’ own risk factors for future divorce. Finally, this study examined the role of salient characteristics of spiritual struggles (i.e., struggle meaning and resolution) as moderators for the direct relationships between retrospective spiritual struggles, and risk factors for future divorce.

Understanding the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce.

The intergenerational transmission of divorce is a well-documented outcome of parental divorce. Using meta-analytical techniques, Amato and Keith (1991) found that the effect size for links between parental divorce and offspring divorce was -.22 ($p < .001$). This finding was particularly robust as the fail safe N or the number of studies reporting null findings needed to negate this effect size was 1,995. While this finding is robust, it tells researchers very little about what is happening in family events surrounding the divorce and in children’s subsequent romantic relationships that leads to their increased rates of marital instability. In order to understand the intergenerational transmission of divorce, researchers have proposed and tested many different factors linking parental divorce with an increased likelihood of offspring divorce.

Attitudes towards Divorce and Marriage Related to Increased Divorce

Several studies suggest that adult children of divorce hold attitudes and beliefs about divorce and marriage that undermine the stability of their marriages (Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Amato, 1996). Children of divorce are more likely than their peers from intact families to be accepting of divorce, less committed to life-long marriage and more supportive of alternatives to marriage such as cohabitation (Axinn & Thornton, 1996; Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999; Cunningham & Thornton, 2005). In addition to holding more accepting attitudes towards divorce, adult children of divorce are also more likely to
engage in behaviors that are linked to instability in courtship relationships. Specifically, adult children of divorce are more likely to have had premarital sex and to be cohabiting than peers from intact families (Flewelling & Bauman, 1990; Jeynes, 2001; Booth, Brinkerhoff & White, 1984). When taken into marriage, these same attitudes and behaviors have been identified as risk factors for divorce. In a national, longitudinal study, Amato (1996) found that cohabitation and pro-divorce attitudes were among the factors that explained the increased risk of offspring divorce associated with parental divorce. These findings are consistent with other longitudinal research linking more favorable attitudes towards divorce (Booth, Johnson & White, 1985) and premarital cohabitation (Axinn and Thornton, 1992) with increased divorce rates. In an effort to untangle the causal relationship between attitudes towards divorce and divorce itself, Amato and Rodgers (1999) tested whether greater acceptance of divorce leads to lower marital quality and thus, increased likelihood of divorce directly or if greater acceptance of divorce is the result of a poor marriage that is already more likely to end in divorce. In their national sample of 2,033 adults in their first marriages, Amato and Rodgers found that greater acceptance of divorce leads to lower marital quality and thus increases the likelihood of divorce. While this study does not specifically address children of divorce, it indirectly suggests that their tendency to be more accepting of divorce plays a critical, causal role in the higher divorce rates that they experience.

**Problematic Interpersonal Behaviors**

Other researchers suggest that children experiencing their parents’ divorce are exposed to maladaptive relationship models that socialize these children to develop problematic interpersonal behaviors (Amato, 1996; Amato & DeBoer, 2001). These
problematic interpersonal behaviors then become risk factors leading to second-generation divorce. Specifically, Amato (1996) found that interpersonal behavior difficulties (e.g., gets angry easily, is jealous, is critical, has irritating habits and not home enough) accounted for the majority of the relationship between parental and offspring divorce. Other researchers have also found interpersonal behavior problems such as poor conflict management skills to be related to parental divorce. When observing couple’s communication during conflict, Sanders, Halford and Behrens (1999) found that parental divorce was related to higher rates of negative communication, and cognitions. In this study, when wives had experienced their parents’ divorce, couples used more negative communication during conflict discussions than couples who both came from intact families. There was no relationship between husbands’ experiences of parental divorce and couples’ communication problems. Similarly, Jacquet & Surra (2001) found that, in a random sample of 464 couples, young women from divorced families were less likely to trust their partners’ honesty, and reported more ambivalence, conflict and negativity than women from intact families. Couples in which the men were from divorced families did not experience these difficulties. Interestingly, the impact of parental divorce on couples’ relationship characteristics was strongest when couples classified themselves as “causally dating.”

Several studies have assessed attitudes towards divorce and marriage and problematic interpersonal behaviors as competing risk factors in the same study. The findings are mixed. For example, Amato (1996) found that though pro-divorce attitudes and premarital cohabitation predicted an increase in offspring divorce, interpersonal behavior problems were the most potent mediators between parental divorce and
offspring divorce. On the other hand, using a 17-year, longitudinal, national sample, Amato and DeBoer (2001) directly tested a relationship skills model against a commitment to marriage model as competing explanations for the intergenerational transmission of divorce. These researchers found that the most salient explanation for links between parental and offspring divorce was the undermining of marital commitment. They did not find support for the view that higher levels of parent conflict would socialize children of divorce in such a way that they developed interpersonal problems. Indeed, the transmission of divorce was higher when pre-divorce parental conflict was low suggesting that the break up of the marriage itself is particularly distressful. Although the socialization model can not be used to explain higher levels of interpersonal conflict for children of divorce, these relationship difficulties continue to place them at a higher level of risk for future divorce.

It is important to note that while parental divorce is linked with offspring divorce, children who experience their parents’ divorce are not necessarily anti-marriage. Indeed, studies show that college age children of divorce are just as likely to form long term relationships as peers from intact families (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984). At the same time, while children of divorce are just as likely to desire marriage as their peers, they tend to be less optimistic about achieving their ideal marriage (Amato, 1988). Similarly, students from divorced families (single and multiple divorces) were less optimistic about the quality of their future relationship than students from intact families though all three groups were equally optimistic about their personal chances for marriage (Boyer-Pennington, Pennington & Spink, 2001). In this study, students in all categories were more optimistic about their chances for success than they were about peers with
similar family backgrounds (Boyer-Pennington, Pennington & Spink, 2001). This last finding suggests that children of divorce might underestimate their own chances for divorce and might not have a clear understanding of the risk factors for divorce.

Religion and Risk Factors for the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce

Greater religiousness has been linked to lower levels of risk factors for relationship instability (i.e., less premarital sex, less cohabitation). Despite this link, researchers have yet to directly examine the role of spiritual and religious beliefs in the intergenerational transmission of divorce. A few studies examining the intergenerational transmission of divorce have included parental religiousness as a control variable with no notable change in statistical findings (i.e., Cunningham and Thornton, 2005). However, the single item measures of religiousness used in these studies are particularly poorly suited for addressing the complexity of religion in the context of marriage and thus, divorce (Mahoney et al., 1999). Additionally, such indices reflect parental religiousness, not the personal religiousness of the child experiencing the divorce.

Sanctification of Marriage

Understanding connections between religious and spiritual beliefs and the intergenerational transmission of divorce begins by examining the relationship between religion and marriage. The majority of world religions, including Christianity, view marriage as a holy or sacred bond. Specifically, Christian teachings emphasize marriage as a sacred covenant before God who is an active third agent. Put another way, the marriage relationship is thought to hold sacred character and meaning due to its relationship with the divine. This process of ascribing sacred character and meaning is referred to as sanctification. Individuals have been found to sanctify many aspects of life
including marriage (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). Most couples with young children view their marriage as being a manifestation of God and/or as having sacred qualities (Mahoney et al., 1999). Research examining the sanctification process suggests that people invest more energy into aspects of life they hold sacred and that they derive deep meaning, strength and satisfaction from the sacred dimensions of their lives (Pargament & Mahoney, 2002). Drawing from this research, children of divorce who attribute sacred qualities to marriage might be more likely than peers to invest energy into sustaining a marriage even during difficult times.

_Sacred Loss and Desecration as Negative Spiritual Appraisals_

When painful life events occur in which an aspect of life that was sanctified is hurt or damaged, individuals can be at risk to develop spiritual struggles. At the same time, painful life events such as parental divorce do not, in and of themselves, inherently lead to spiritual struggles. Drawing from Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) model of coping, it is the way an individual appraises or makes meaning of an event and how he/she assesses the resources available to manage the event that shapes his or her reactions. Mahoney, Krumrei and Pargament (2008) have recently extended this model of coping by suggesting that “events [which] severely disrupt an individual’s spiritual orienting system, which refers to a generalized set of spiritual beliefs, practices and relationships” can be viewed as a spiritual trauma. This concept is particularly salient as those who have appraised aspects of their every day life as sacred (i.e., sacred marriage or sacred family) appear to interpret negative events connected to sacred aspects of their lives as the loss or violation of something held sacred.
Appraisals of sacred loss and desecration are particularly likely to disrupt an individual’s orienting system as they reflect powerful beliefs that an event has threatened or harmed a sanctified aspect of life. (Pargament, Magyar, Benore, & Mahoney, 2004). Indeed, many types of events can be viewed as a sacred loss and desecration and these appraisals can have mental health consequences. For example, Pargament et al. (2005) found that community members’ ratings of a wide variety of negative events as a sacred loss or desecration were linked with higher levels of intrusive, trauma-related thoughts, avoidance, anxiety and depression. In this same sample, higher endorsement of desecration was related to increased anger while higher endorsement of sacred loss was related to more stress-related growth and positive spiritual change (Pargament et al., 2005). Additionally, in other studies, college students have reported that harm done in romantic relationships (Magyar, 2001) and the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center (Mahoney et al. 2002) were experienced as desecrations. In both studies, perceptions of desecration were linked with poorer mental health and more personal growth. And, as reported earlier, approximately one third of college student participants reported viewing parental divorce as a sacred loss and desecration and these perceptions were linked with negative psychological consequences as well as spiritual growth (Warner & Mahoney, 2009).

Spiritual Struggles

Spiritual struggles are defined as signs of a spiritual orienting system under stress (Pargament, Desai & McConnell, 2006). Spiritual struggles can be further understood as an individual’s attempts to reconstruct or reestablish their spiritual orienting system following a spiritual trauma. Indeed, Jewish and Christian scriptures describe many
examples of spiritual struggles that can be separated into three categories (Pargament et al., 2005). Interpersonal struggles reflect religious struggles between individuals and within communities. The Old Testament includes many examples of interpersonal struggles between the people of Israel and the Pharaoh of Egypt, between Moses, the leader of Israel, and the Israelites and even amongst the Israelites themselves. Even today, 65% of adult respondents indicated experiencing religious struggles that were primarily classified as interpersonal (Nielson, 1998 in Pargament et al., 2005).

Intrapersonal struggles refer to an individual’s difficulties with matters of faith and belief. Paul’s cry in the New Testament that “what I want to do, I do not do, but what I do, I hate” illustrates his inner turmoil with his sinful nature which conflicts with his desire to follow Christ (Romans 7:15). The identity of “Doubting Thomas,” one of the 12 disciples, is inextricably linked with his momentary struggle to believe in the resurrection of Christ. In a recent study of college students, respondents reporting on their spiritual struggles indicated that the majority of their struggles are intrapersonal (47.2%; Desai and Pargament, 2006). Finally, Divine struggles occur when individuals are experiencing tension in their relationship with God or the Divine. The Old Testament Psalms in which David, a King of Israel, cries in anguish to a God who appears to have abandoned him, illustrate the agony and pain that can accompany Divine struggles. Many times, struggles with the Divine occur when individuals question the benevolence and loving nature of a God that allows bad things to happen to good and innocent people. Amongst college students, Desai and Pargament (2006) found that questions about the loving nature of God in the face of world disasters was a common theme among those who reported divine struggles.
Spiritual struggles impact not only spiritual dimensions of life but physical and psychological aspects as well. Spiritual struggles have been linked with depression in college and clinical samples (Exline, Yali & Sanderson, 2000) and in clergy (Krause, Ellision & Wulff, 1998) and with greater traumatic impact of the event and more emotional distress in a community population (Pargament et al., 2005). Likewise, spiritual struggles have been linked with poorer physical health among hospital patients (Pargament, Smith Koenig & Perez, 1998) and, in a 2 year follow up, patients who had passed away had initially reported significantly higher levels of spiritual struggles at time one than the group who were alive at follow up (Pargament et al., 2004). At the same time, spiritual struggles have been related to spiritual growth both cross-sectionally (i.e., Pargament et al., 2005, Koenig, Pargament & Nielson, 1998) and longitudinally (Desai & Pargament, 2006). These links between both positive and negative outcomes raise questions about the pathways that lead to growth or decline. Consistent with Jewish and Christian teachings which view spiritual struggles as a necessary component of spiritual growth, research is beginning to explore the role of struggle characteristics on the spiritual growth and decline outcomes of spiritual strugglers (Desai & Pargament, 2006).

Specifically, Desai & Pargament (2006) found that the ability to derive meaning from a spiritual struggle was the strongest predictor of posttraumatic growth, spiritual growth and struggle resolution in college students (p. 41). Indeed, Park (2005) suggests that the ability to find meaning in a spiritually stressful event is one important aspect of religion and spirituality that might mediate the link between religion and spirituality and psychological adjustment. Interestingly, in Krause’s (2003) study examining religious meaning and subjective well-being in older African Americans and Caucasian adults,
religious meaning was predictive of life satisfaction, self-esteem and optimism beyond
church attendance and private prayer. Krause hypothesizes that religious meaning
functions by facilitating coping for these older adults. This research raises the possibility
that the presence or absence of meaning in a spiritual struggle could be an important
variable influencing the relationship between spiritual struggles and spiritual growth and
decline. In other words, an individual’s ability to find meaning could impact the spiritual
trajectory of their spiritual struggles. And, while Desai and Pargament (2006)
operationalized “resolution” as a struggle characteristic separate from meaning, it is also
possible to think of “resolution” as another facet of meaning. That is, one definition of
the word “resolution” is “an explanation of a problem or puzzle” (The American Heritage
Dictionary, 2003). Using this definition, individuals could arrive at an explanation for
the struggle while still in the midst of this struggle. Additionally, including struggle
resolution as a component of meaning is consistent with previous research (Park, 2006).
Together, both struggle resolution and struggle meaning could be important pathways
linking spiritual struggles with risk factors for future divorce and with spiritual growth.
This study examined these links through moderation analyses.

Adaptive Spiritual Coping

When spiritual trauma occurs, people often turn to methods of coping that draw
on religious and spiritual beliefs, practices and relationships. Some examples of these
adaptive spiritual coping strategies include turning to religious scriptures, praying
individually and with trusted others, meditating, seeking solace in nature or other sacred
settings and seeking guidance from religious leaders. These coping strategies serve as
additional methods of maintaining and sustaining a spiritual orienting system that has
been disrupted or challenged. In a recent meta-analysis, adaptive spiritual coping was shown to facilitate positive psychological adjustment despite cross-sectional links with higher psychological distress (Ano and Vasconcelles, 2005). Researchers have referred to this phenomena as a “stress-mobilizing effect” as individuals are motivated to engage in these adaptive spiritual coping processes during times of stress (Mahoney, Krumrei & Pargament, 2008). Despite the cross-sectional link with greater psychological distress, adaptive spiritual coping has also been related to greater psychological and spiritual growth even in the midst of a crisis. Based on of this research, an individual’s ability to make use of his/her spiritual resources in the midst of a spiritual trauma such as parental divorce is likely to facilitate positive post-divorce adjustment.

*Negative Spiritual Appraisals, Spiritual Struggles, Adaptive Spiritual Coping and Parental Divorce*

There is some evidence that divorce is particularly likely to be spiritually and psychologically distressing to youth who experience their parents’ divorce as a spiritual trauma. Warner and Mahoney (2009) found that just over one third of their sample of 274 late adolescents enrolled in a Midwestern university felt that their parents’ divorce was a sacred loss and desecration at the time it happened. Additionally, these participants reported struggling spiritually at the time of the divorce and using religious and spiritual resources to cope adaptively with the divorce as it was happening. Qualitatively, these participants reported struggling with beliefs about the sacred nature of marriage and with God’s role in their future marriage. Participants who recalled experiencing higher levels of struggle at the time of the divorce were more likely to be experiencing current psychological distress such as depression, intrusive thoughts, avoidant behaviors,
perceptions that their view of life is significantly shaped by the divorce and feelings of loss and abandonment. Their pattern of responses suggests that their spiritual struggles regarding the divorce mediated much of the relationship between higher levels of sacred loss and desecration appraisals and higher levels of current individual psychological maladjustment. In other words, sacred loss and desecration appraisals impacted clinical and non-clinical types of psychological maladjustment in a dynamic process that seemed to occur through the spiritual struggles that college students wrestled with in response to their spiritual appraisals of the situation. At the same time, Warner and Mahoney (2009) found that adaptive spiritual coping mediated the relationship between sacred loss and desecration and spiritual growth. This finding highlights the protective role adaptive spiritual coping can play even for individuals experience the loss or violation of something sacred.

**Present study**

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the impact of spiritual appraisals of sacred loss and desecration, spiritual struggles and adaptive spiritual coping tied to parental divorce on well-documented risk factors for the intergenerational transmission of divorce and on spiritual growth and decline. This study builds off of the application of religious coping theory to children’s post-divorce adjustment in Warner and Mahoney (2009). A set of constructs that have been tied to later divorce by children of divorced parents were used as criterion; these so-called “risk factors” for future divorce were drawn from the large body of literature on second generation divorce: relationship anxiety, handling relationship conflict, risky attitudes towards sexual behaviors, sexual behaviors, risky attitudes towards marriage, and risky attitudes towards divorce. More
specifically, these variables are defined as “risky” because they reflect variables which are empirically linked with higher rates of divorce. First, this study examined the degree to which college juniors and seniors appraised their parents’ divorce as a sacred loss and/or desecration as well as reported that they engaged in spiritual struggles and utilized adaptive spiritual coping both at the time of the divorce and at the time of the study. Current beliefs in the sacredness of marriage were also assessed. Second, this study assessed the bivariate links between retrospective sacred loss and desecration, spiritual struggles, adaptive spiritual coping with parental divorce and current beliefs in the sacredness of marriage and participants’ current risk factors for future divorce. The uniqueness of these bivariate relationships were further assessed by including relevant demographic variables, global religiousness and non-religious coping as control variables in hierarchical regression analyses. Third, this study examined links between participants’ pattern of spiritual struggle across time and risk factors for future divorce. Finally, this study assessed struggle meaning and struggle resolution as moderators between retrospective spiritual struggles and risk factors for participants’ own divorce. The following specific hypotheses were tested:

1. Higher levels of retrospective sacred loss and desecration about parental divorce will be related to: current higher levels of risky attitudes towards divorce and marriage, risky sexual behaviors, risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex, relationship anxiety, spiritual decline and spiritual growth; and lower levels of conflict resolution skills.

2. Higher levels of retrospective spiritual struggles will be related to: current higher levels of risky attitudes towards divorce and marriage, risky sexual behaviors, risky attitudes
towards cohabitation and premarital sex, relationship anxiety, spiritual decline and spiritual growth; and lower levels of conflict resolution skills.

3. Higher levels of retrospective adaptive spiritual coping with parental divorce will be related to: current lower levels of risky attitudes towards divorce and marriage, risky sexual behaviors, risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex, relationship anxiety, spiritual decline; current higher levels of conflict resolution skills and of spiritual growth.

4. Higher levels of current belief in the sacredness of marriage will be related to: current lower levels of risky attitudes towards divorce and marriage, risky sexual behaviors, risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex, relationship anxiety, spiritual decline; current higher levels of conflict resolution skills and of spiritual growth.

5. It is hypothesized that all links listed in 1-4 above will remain statistically significant after controlling for relevant demographic variables, global religiousness, non-spiritual coping and non-spiritual struggles using hierarchical regressions.

6. Chronic religious struggling over time will be related to: current higher levels of risky attitudes towards divorce and marriage, risky sexual behaviors, risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex, relationship anxiety, spiritual decline and spiritual growth; lower levels of conflict resolution skills compared with other patterns of spiritual struggle.

7. Struggle resolution over time will be related to current lower levels of risky attitudes towards divorce and marriage, risky sexual behaviors, risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex, relationship anxiety, spiritual decline; higher levels of
conflict resolution skills and of spiritual growth compared with other patterns of spiritual struggle.

8. Struggle meaning will moderate the relationships between retrospective spiritual struggles about parental divorce and risky attitudes towards divorce and marriage, risky sexual behaviors, risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex, relationship anxiety, conflict resolution skills, spiritual growth and spiritual decline. Specifically, at high levels of struggle meaning, spiritual struggles will be related to lower levels of risk factors for future divorce and higher levels of spiritual growth. At low levels of spiritual meaning, spiritual struggles will be related to higher levels of risk factors for future divorce and lower levels of spiritual growth.

9. Struggle resolution will moderate the relationships between retrospective spiritual struggles with parental divorce and risky attitudes towards divorce and marriage, risky sexual behaviors, risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex, relationship anxiety, conflict resolution skills, spiritual growth and spiritual decline. Specifically, at high levels of struggle resolution, spiritual struggles will be related to lower levels of risk factors for future divorce and higher levels of spiritual growth. At low levels of spiritual resolution, spiritual struggles will be related to higher levels of risk factors for future divorce and lower levels of spiritual growth.
METHODS

Participants

The participants in this study were 158 juniors (43%) and seniors (57%) enrolled in Bowling Green State University of which 69.6% were female and 86.1% were Caucasian. The participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 61 and most (78.5%) experienced their parents’ divorce between the ages of 13 and 18. Their average age at the time of divorce was 16.4 years. The majority identified their current religious affiliation as Protestant Christian (34.8%) or Catholic Christian (21.5%). Additionally, .6% identified as Hindu, 1.9% identified as Jewish, 1.3% identified as Buddhist, 28.5% identified no religious affiliation and 11.4% identified some other religious affiliation such as Agnostic, Atheist or Pagan. Regarding their own romantic relationship, 41.8% of participants described themselves as “single,” 45.6% indicated that they were dating, 7% reported being engaged, and 5.7% were married.

Procedures

Recruitment of sample. Participants were recruited for this study in two ways. All 10,203 juniors and seniors enrolled in Bowling Green State University for the 2007-2008 school year were informed that they have the opportunity to participate in a study of family and romantic relationship experiences via email. This email directed qualified students (i.e., experienced parents’ divorce at or after the age of 13 and who have been in at least one romantic relationship) to the online survey. Juniors and seniors were also recruited from upper level psychology courses at Bowling Green State University through experimetrix, the psychology department’s online research forum. The descriptive information on the experimetrix recruitment site paralleled the information
provided in the recruitment email. All participants had the opportunity to earn 1 research participation point or extra credit following their completion of the survey as well as participate in drawings for a $25 amazon.com gift card. One in every 10 participants was awarded a gift card from the first two hundred participants. Forty two percent of participants requested experimetrix credit and 53% indicated no interest in receiving experimetrix credit for their participation. The remaining five percent of participants did not respond to the question asking them if they would like research credit in a psychology class. Although 204 participants completed the survey materials, 46 were excluded from the study’s sample for the following reasons: Thirty students indicated that their parents’ divorce occurred before they were age 13 and thus didn’t meet inclusion criteria, four participants had already experienced a divorce or separation in their own marriage, and twelve additional participants had excessive missing responses.

According to statistics provided by the Office of Institutional Research at Bowling Green State University, 28% of freshman enrolling for the 2005-2006 school year reported their parents were both alive but divorced or separated (Bowling Green State University, Office of Institutional Research). In 2006-2007, 29% of incoming freshmen reported their parents were both alive but divorced or separated. Following a traditional college time line, the freshmen reporting in these surveys would be considered either juniors or seniors at the time of this study and would have been included in the recruitment email. Updated statistics based on drop out rates or transfers at BGSU were not available. Additionally, the BGSU survey did not ask or report statistics about students’ age of the time of their parents’ divorce. Thus, estimating first that 28% of the recruitment sample experienced their parents’ divorce and conservatively estimating that
half of those experienced their parents’ divorce at or after the age of thirteen, only 1,414 students contacted potentially qualified for this study. Using these estimates, the response rate for this survey was approximately 11%.

Completion of survey. Students who met participation criteria were directed to the online survey. Before potential participants began the online survey, they were presented with a brief, written explanation of the project that reiterated participation criteria and general information about the study. Participants’ consent to participate was indicated by their completion of the survey. Following the completion of the web survey, participants were directed to a second website asking for identifying information. This information was only used to document participation in the study, to assign participation credit for those who chose to receive credit through experimetrix and to contact winners of the gift cards. Answers to the survey and identifying information were saved to two separate files and there was no way to link subjects with their answers, thus ensuring anonymity.

Measures

The measures used in this study were organized so participants answered questions regarding non-religious demographics first. Then, they were asked to answer questions regarding beliefs about marriage and divorce, relationship anxiety, conflict management, and attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sexual intercourse and sexual behaviors. Again, these scales were scored so that higher scores reflected behaviors and attitudes that have been empirically linked with higher risk levels for future divorce. Next, participants were asked to answer questions regarding retrospective non-religious coping, spiritual appraisals, spiritual struggles, and adaptive spiritual coping tied to parental divorce. This section began with clear instructions for participants
to think back to the time of the divorce and to answer as they would have at the time of the divorce. After answering retrospectively, participants were asked to answer the same series of questions in a way that reflected their current religiously-based thoughts and beliefs about their parents’ divorce. Again, this section began with clear instructions specifying the time frame that the questions referred to. In addition, the instructions for each specific set of questions were changed to reiterate the reference time point. The final section of the survey assessed religious demographic questions and provided participants with an opportunity to qualitatively describe their appraisals of sacred loss and desecration and their spiritual struggles tied to parental divorce. The survey was organized in this way in order to help reduce potential response bias.

**Demographic Questions (Appendix A).** Participants were asked to indicate their age, age at divorce, gender, answer additional questions regarding family structure (i.e., who they lived with following the divorce, history of parental divorces and remarriages) and history of romantic relationship length.

**Individual Global Religiousness (Appendix B).** Participants were asked two items assessing global religiousness (i.e., frequency of church attendance and frequency of prayer; Mahoney, et al., 1999). Scores on these two items were combined to form an index of Global Religiousness ($\alpha = .73$)

**Negative Spiritual Appraisals of Parental Divorce: Retrospective and Current Perception (Appendix C).** Participants’ perceptions that their parents’ divorce was and is a sacred loss or desecration were measured using the 28 item sacred loss and desecration scale which has demonstrated acceptable convergent and discriminate validity (Pargament, Magyar, Benore, & Mahoney, 2005). They were asked to answer these 28
items both with respect to the time when the divorce happened and currently. In this study, the sacred loss and desecration scales were highly correlated at both time points \( r = .93 \), retrospective; \( r = .85 \), current) and so items were combined into one retrospective “sacred loss and desecration” scale \( (\alpha = .98) \) and one current “sacred loss and desecration scale” \( (\alpha = .97) \). The sacred loss and desecration scales were designed to measure both theistic appraisals and non-theistic appraisals. Theistic sacred loss and desecration items reflect the perceived loss or violation of an object or relationship explicitly connected to God (e.g., “My parents’ divorce involved losing a gift from God,” Pargament et al., 2005). Non-theistic sacred loss and desecration items reflect the perceived loss or violation of an object or relationship indirectly associated with belief in God, a higher power, religious faith, or spirituality (e.g., “My life lacks something that once gave me a sense of spiritual fulfillment,” Pargament et al., 2005). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement to each statement using a five point likert scale anchored at 1 (not at all) and 5 (very much).

**Current Beliefs in the Sacredness of Marriage (Appendix D).** Current beliefs about the sacredness of marriage were measured using one item from both the Marriage Attitudes scale and the Morality of Divorce scale. These items were chosen because they explicitly refer to the sacred nature of marriage (i.e., “A marriage is a sacred bond between two people that should not be broken” and “Marriage is a sacred act”). They were combined with a third item “Marriage is a holy covenant before God” to form the Sacredness of Marriage scale (3 items, \( \alpha = .84 \)).

**Spiritual Struggles tied to Parental Divorce: Retrospective and Current Perceptions (Appendix E).** Spiritual struggles at the time of the divorce and at the time of
the survey were assessed using a modified version of the Brief Negative Religious Coping scale and various subscales of the RCOPE (Desai & Pargament, 2006; Pargament et al., 2000). When this measure has been used in previous research, it has demonstrated strong reliability and validity (Pargament et al., 2000). In this study, the spiritual struggles scale (18 items) demonstrated adequate internal consistency both retrospectively ($\alpha = .97$) and at the time of the study ($\alpha = .95$). Items were chosen to reflect Divine and intrapersonal struggle and the item instructions asked participants to respond specifically about their parents divorce at each time point. These items were modified so that the wording tense was consistent with the time period being assessed. Participants indicated how much they have had/are having each struggle using the following scale: (1) not at all (2) somewhat (3) quite a bit (4) a great deal.

Patterns in Spiritual Struggle over Time: Assignment of Participants to One of Five Types. Additionally, the pattern of change in participants’ spiritual struggles reported retrospectively and currently was used to classify participants as belonging to one of five types of patterns of spiritual struggle with parental divorce over time. Comparing scores across time points to determine struggle pattern is consistent with previous research assessing struggles across time (Pargament, Koenig, Tarakeshwar, & Hahn, 2004). Participants’ pattern of struggle across time was calculated by first transforming the retrospective and current spiritual struggles variables into categorical variables. These variables were created by dividing participants into three categories at each time point. The first category was “no struggle” and reflected participants whose scores were “18” (i.e., all responses were “1 – Not at all”). The second category reflected “low” strugglers and included participants whose scores were between 19 and 27.
Conceptually, participants scoring in this range reported low levels of spiritual struggle with average responses at or below “2 – Somewhat.” The third category reflected “high” strugglers and included participants whose scores were between 28 and 72. Participant’s scores in this category averaged higher than a response of “2 –somewhat” on all items.

After creating the “No Struggle” (0), “Low Struggle” (1), and “High Struggle” (2) groups at each time point, the next step of the struggle pattern analysis was to create a classification variable of change over time based on both retrospective and current struggle scores. Participants who reported no spiritual struggle at either time point were categorized as “No struggle” (n = 43). Participants whose scores dropped (i.e., 2 to 1, 2 to 0, or 1 to 0) were classified as “resolved (n = 45).” Participants whose scores were consistently “low” (1) or “high” (2) across both time frames were categorized as “chronic, low” (n = 18) and “chronic, high” (n = 39) respectively. Participants whose score increased (i.e., 0 to 1, 0 to 2, or 1 to 2) were classified as “Increased” (n =13).

**Struggle Meaning and Struggle Resolution with Parental Divorce (Appendix F).**

Single items were used to determine if participants have found meaning in their struggles since the divorce and if they feel like the struggle has been resolved (adapted from Desai & Pargament, 2006). Meaning was assessed by asking participants to rate the degree of meaning they have derived from their struggles on a 4 pt. scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (a great deal). Resolution was assessed with a single item asking participants to finish the sentence “I feel like my spiritual struggles related to the divorce have ...” with the following responses: (1) been completely resolved, (2) been partially resolved, (3) not changed, or (4) become worse.”
Adaptive Spiritual Coping tied to Parental Divorce: Retrospective and Current Perceptions (Appendix G). Eighteen items representing six subscales from the Positive RCOPE scale were chosen for this study (Pargament, Koenig & Perez, 2000). Three items were chosen from each of the following scales: Benevolent Religious Reappraisals, Active Religious Surrender, Seeking Spiritual Support, Spiritual Connection, Seeking Support from Clergy or Members, Seeking Religious Direction. Research using these scales has demonstrated strong reliability and validity (Pargament, et. al., 2000). Cronbach’s alpha for these scales range from .81 to .94. For this study, the internal consistency for the items combined into one “adaptive spiritual coping” scale was .95 (retrospective) and .97 (current). Participants were asked to rate how much they made use of these coping strategies both at the time of the divorce and currently. As with the other measures assessed at two time points, the scale directions and individual items were modified to reflect the reference time period. Participants responded using the following 4 point likert scale: (1) not at all (2) somewhat (3) quite a bit (4) a great deal.

Non-spiritual Coping and Struggle tied to Parental Divorce: Retrospective Perceptions. (Appendix H). The Revised-COPE was used to assess retrospective non-religious coping (Zuckerman & Gagne, 2003). The Revised-COPE was created to address psychometric difficulties of existing coping assessment measures and is comprised of items modified and added to the COPE (Carver, Scheier, & Wientraub, 1989). The new five subscales have been show to have acceptable internal reliability and both convergent and discriminate validity. The five subscales are: Self-help, Approach, Accommodation, Avoidance and Self-punishment. Participants responded to each item using the same response format as the Positive Religious Coping Scale. These subscales have reliabilities
which range from .92 and .81. For the current study, five items were chosen from the
eight item subscales due to concerns about the length of the survey. Reliabilities for these
shorter five scales ranged from .73-.81. In order to parallel the format of the religious
coping variables, these five scales were divided into “retrospective adaptive non-spiritual
coping” (i.e., Self-help, Approach and Accommodation) and “retrospective non-spiritual
struggles” (Avoidance and Self-punishment) based on their tendencies to be related to
either adaptive functioning or maladaptive functioning. (Krumrei, Mahoney, and
Pargament, 2008). Cronbach’s alpha for Retrospective Adaptive Non-spiritual Coping
was .79 and .84 for Retrospective Non-spiritual Struggles.

Beliefs and Attitudes towards Marriage and Divorce (Appendices I & J). Both the
Marriage Attitudes Scale (23 items; Braaten & Rosen, 1998) and the Morality of Divorce
subscale (six items) of Stanley & Markman’s (1992) Commitment Inventory were used to
assess attitudes towards divorce and marriage. After removing items specifically referring
to the sacred nature of marriage, the remaining 22 items of the Marriage Attitudes Scale
had an internal consistency of $\alpha = .85$ while the five remaining items of the Morality of
Divorce subscale had an internal consistency of $\alpha = .80$. These scores are consistent with
previous research on the internal consistency of these scales both of which demonstrate
adequate validity and reliability. The items on these scales are worded both to reflect
support of marriage and support of divorce as a way of avoiding response bias. Examples
include: “I have doubts about marriage” and “Divorce is wrong (reverse scored). Pro-
marriage items are reverse scored so that higher scores on the morality of divorce scale
reflect a greater acceptance of divorce and higher scores on the marriage attitudes scale
reflect attitudes towards marriage which have been empirically linked with greater risk of
future divorce. Thus, higher scores on both scales reflect higher risk for future divorce. All items were scored on a 4 point likert scale ranging from (1) strongly agree to (4) strongly disagree.

*Relationship Anxiety.* (*Appendix K*). Relationship anxiety was assessed using the Relationship Awareness Scale – Anxiety which has been shown to have acceptable reliability and validity (Snell, 1997; Snell, 1998). These nine items (α = .94) reflect general levels of anxiety experienced during many types of intimate relationships. For this study, the word “intimate” was replaced by “dating.” This substitution was made to clarify the reference relationship that participants responded about. Participants used a 5 point scale ranging from (1) “not at all characteristic of me” to (5) “very characteristic of me” to describe how much each item was reflective of their experiences.

*Conflict Resolution Skills.* (*Appendix L*). Participants’ ability to handle conflict in their romantic relationships was assessed with the Conflict Management subscale of the Interpersonal Competence Questionnaire (ICQ; Buhrmester, Furman, Wittenberg & Reis, 1988). Originally designed to measure conflict management in a variety of relationships, the conflict management scale has demonstrated acceptable reliability (α = .85) and validity. The items were modified so that participants responded regarding “romantic partners” that they were involved with and rated their comfort and confidence in handling specific relationship difficulties. Participants responded to eight different statements according to a 5 point scale anchored at (1) “I’m poor at this; I’d feel so uncomfortable and unable to handle this situation, I’d avoid it if possible” and (5) I’m extremely good at this; I’d feel very comfortable and could handle this situation very well.” For example,
participants were asked to rate their comfort and confidence “Being able to take a romantic partner’s perspective in a fight and really understand his or her point of view.

Attitudes towards Cohabitation and Premarital Sexual behaviors (Appendix M). Attitudes towards premarital sex and cohabitation were assessed with four items used in a national longitudinal study (Axinn & Thornton, 1996) and a fifth question assessing participants’ belief that living together is a good way to determine if a couple should get married. This item was added because of research findings suggesting that premarital cohabitation as a method of determining a partner’s qualifications as a marriage partner increases the likelihood of future divorce. These items were scored so that higher scores reflect attitudes associated with a higher risk of future divorce. Chronbach’s alpha for this scale was .79.

Premarital Dating Behaviors (Appendix N). Sexual behaviors were assessed with four items assessing virginity status, age at first intercourse, number of dating partners and number of sexual partners. These items were initially summed to form a 4 item “sexual behaviors” scale. However, the internal reliability of this scale was low (α = .50) and below the cut off associated with acceptable internal reliability (α = .60 or greater) Because of this low reliability, no further analyses were done with these four items.

Spiritual Growth and Spiritual Decline (Appendix O). Participants were asked five items measuring spiritual growth and five items measuring spiritual decline after their parents’ divorce. Items were adapted from Pargament, 1990. The spiritual growth scale (α = .93) includes items such as “I feel a stronger sense of spiritual closeness to others,” “I have grown spiritually,” and “I have experienced a spiritual or religious
reawakening.” Examples of items on the spiritual decline scale ($\alpha = .94$) include: “I have grown more distant from God,” “In some ways I have shut down spiritually,” and “I no longer consider myself a spiritual person.” Respondents used a 7 point likert scale anchored at “1” strongly disagree and “7” strongly agree to complete each scale.

Qualitative Responses

Participants were asked to respond to two open ended questions in their own words. The first question asked them to indicate what they felt was lost or violated through their parents’ divorce. The second question asked them to share more about how their religious and spiritual beliefs impacted their understanding of their parents’ divorce and their own romantic relationships. These qualitative responses were collected to illustrate the nature of participants’ spiritual and religious experiences related to their parents’ divorce in their own words. Participants’ responses are compiled in Appendix P.

RESULTS

Preliminary Data Analyses

As described previously, preliminary analyses indicated that the sacred loss scale and the desecration scale were highly correlated for both for the retrospective version of these scales ($r = .93$) and current version ($r = .85$). Thus, a single “sacred loss and desecration” scale was created for each time frame. Descriptive information and Cronbach’s alphas for each scale can be found in Table 1. In order to determine which demographic variables needed to be included as control variables, preliminary bivariate correlations were run between retrospective sacred loss and desecration, retrospective spiritual struggles, retrospective adaptive spiritual coping, current belief in the sanctity of marriage, risk factors for future divorce and demographic items. Global religiousness was
related to a majority of the predictor variables and thus was include as a control variable during all hypothesis testing. Additionally, gender was related to spiritual growth; age at divorce was related to retrospective spiritual struggle; and mother’s history of previous divorce was related to retrospective sacred loss and desecration, attitudes towards marriage and spiritual decline. These variables were included as controls with the specific variables they were related to in the hierarchical regression analyses used to assess hypothesis 5.

Table 2 includes the correlations between all independent variables and global religiousness. The statistically significant correlations ranged from .19 to .77 which were low enough to not raise concerns about construct redundancy (i.e., lower than .80). Table 3 includes the correlations between all risk factors for future divorce, non-spiritual adaptive coping, non-spiritual struggle and spiritual growth and decline. Again, correlations were within an acceptable range to preclude concerns about construct redundancy (r range: .18 to .47) Thus, all independent, criterion and control variables were retained for further analyses.

**Spiritual Appraisals, Spiritual Struggles and Spiritual Coping and Parental Divorce**

The first goal of this study was to describe participants’ retrospective and current endorsement of negative spiritual appraisals, spiritual struggles, and adaptive spiritual coping. When referring back to the time of their parents’ divorce, 24% denied appraising the event as a sacred loss or desecration to any degree. This percentage increased to 40% at the time of the study. Additionally, 39% endorsed experiencing low levels of sacred loss and desecration appraisals with responses ranging from at least one “2” to an average response of “2” (29 to 56) at the time of the divorce with 37% reporting these levels
currently. Answering retrospectively, 23% of participants rated their negative spiritual appraisals between “57” (an average response just about “2”) and “84” (average response of “3 - somewhat”) indicating consistent endorsement of negative spiritual appraisals to some degree. At the time of the study, 16% indicated current levels of negative spiritual appraisals at this same level (between “57” and “84”). Retrospectively, the remaining 14% of respondents averaged from just above “3 –somewhat” to “5 – very much” (scores of 85-140) with 7% currently endorsing this same level of negative spiritual appraisals. A paired sample t-test between retrospective sacred loss and desecration and current sacred loss and desecration scores suggests that the decrease in participants’ retrospective and current spiritual appraisals was statistically significant ($t = 6.77, p < .001$).

Regarding spiritual struggles, 30.0% reported no spiritual struggles at the time of the divorce and 42% reported no spiritual struggles currently. Answering retrospectively, 44 % of participants reported some degree of spiritual struggles with an average response above “1 – none” to “2 –somewhat” while 42% of participants responded within this same score range regarding current spiritual struggles. Retrospectively, 26% of participants reported an average level of spiritual struggle from “2 – somewhat” to “4 – a great deal” with only 6% reporting this same level of spiritual struggle currently. A paired t-test between retrospective and current accounts of divorce-related spiritual struggles indicated a statistically significant decrease between retrospective and current scores ($t = 4.37, p < .001$).

At the time of the divorce, 23% of participants reported no adaptive spiritual coping and this percentage increased slightly to 24% currently. Low levels (scores from 19 -36) of adaptive spiritual coping were endorsed by 50% of participants retrospectively.
with 33% reporting this level currently. At the time of the divorce, 27% reported high levels adaptive religious coping strategies (scores 37 to 74) while 43% reported high levels currently. The paired sample t-test indicated a statistically significant increase from retrospective reports of engaging in adaptive spiritual coping to current use of adaptive spiritual coping strategies ($t = -5.60, p < .001$).

Based on the calculation of struggle pattern across time described previously, 27.2% ($n = 43$) of participants did not experience any spiritual struggles between the time of the divorce and time of participation, 28.5% ($n = 45$) reported resolved spiritual struggles, and 8.2% ($n = 13$) reported an increase in spiritual struggles. Additionally, 11.4% ($n = 18$) reported chronic low levels of struggles and 24.7% ($n = 39$) reported chronic high levels of spiritual struggles.

**Direct Relationships between Sacred Loss and Desecration, Spiritual Struggles, Adaptive Spiritual Coping and Risk factors for Future Divorce.**

The first four hypotheses were assessed through bivariate correlation analysis. All results are presented in Table 4.

In support of the first hypothesis, greater perceptions of the divorce as a sacred loss and desecration at the time it happened were related to current self-reports of higher levels of spiritual growth triggered by the divorce ($r = .18, p < .05$). However, contrary to the first hypothesis, higher levels of sacred loss and desecration appraisals at the time of the divorce were unexpectedly related to lower current levels of risky attitudes towards divorce ($r = -.28, p < .001$). This relationship was opposite of the one hypothesized. In addition, appraisals of sacred loss and desecration at the time of the divorce were not significantly related ($p > .05$) to reports of current conflict resolution skills ($r = -.03$),
relationship anxiety \( (r = .12) \), risky attitudes toward cohabitation and premarital sex \( (r = -.07) \), risky attitudes towards marriage \( (r = -.02) \), or spiritual decline \( (r = .09) \).

Likewise, support for the second hypothesis was mixed. As expected, greater spiritual struggles at the time of the divorce were related to lower current conflict resolution skills \( (r = -.20, p < .05) \), and greater spiritual decline \( (r = .20, p < .01) \). But, in contrast to expectations, greater retrospective spiritual struggles were related to lower current risky attitudes towards divorce \( (r = -.16, p < .05) \). There was no statistically significant relationship between retrospective spiritual struggles and relationship anxiety \( (r = .15, p > .05) \), risky attitudes toward cohabitation and premarital sex \( (r = .06, p > .05) \), risky attitudes towards marriage \( (r = .09, p > .05) \) or spiritual growth \( (r = -.01, p > .05) \).

The third hypothesis received moderate support. Specifically, greater endorsement of adaptive spiritual coping at the time of the divorce was related to reports of current lower levels of risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex \( (r = -.28, p < .001) \), lower levels of risky attitudes towards marriage \( (r = -.20, p < .01) \), lower levels of risky attitudes towards divorce \( (r = -.25, p < .01) \), lower levels of spiritual decline \( (r = -.23, p < .01) \), and greater endorsement of spiritual growth \( (r = .34, p < .001) \). However, contrary to expectations, no statistically significant relationships emerged for conflict resolution skills \( (r = -.02, p > .05) \) or relationship anxiety \( (r = -.03, p > .05) \).

The fourth hypothesis also received moderate support. That is, as hypothesized, greater current perceptions of marriage as sacred were related to current lower risky attitudes towards cohabitation and sexual intercourse \( (r = -.38, p < .001) \), lower risky attitudes towards marriage \( (r = -.47, p < .001) \), lower risky attitudes towards divorce \( (r = -.64, p < .001) \), higher spiritual growth \( (r = .36, p < .001) \) and lower spiritual decline \( (r =
However, no statistically significant relationships emerged between current perceptions of marriage as sacred and either current conflict resolution skills ($r = -.03, p > .05$) or current relationship anxiety ($r = .09, p > .05$).

Hierarchical Regression Equations Predicting Risk Factors for Future Divorce

Hypothesis five was assessed through hierarchical regression analyses. In step 1 of the analyses, demographic variables that were significantly correlated with either the independent or criterion variables were entered. Global religiousness was entered in step 2 and non-spiritual adaptive coping and non-spiritual struggle were entered in step 3. The respective independent variable was entered in step 4. Results of these analyses are presented in Tables 5a-5c and provide mixed support for hypothesis five.

Despite the initial bivariate correlation between greater appraisals of sacred loss and desecration and greater spiritual growth, this relationship became statistically non-significant after entering control variables. It appears that the significant predictive ability of global religiousness ($\beta = .39, F_{change} = 27.64, R^2_{change} = .15, p < .001$) in step 2 impacted the predictive ability of retrospective sacred loss and desecration ($\beta = .08, F_{change} = .70, R^2_{change} = .00, p > .05$) in step 4. Likewise, after including global religiousness in step 2 ($\beta = -.34, F_{change} = 19.95, R^2_{change} = .11, p < .001$), retrospective sacred loss and desecration was no longer a significant predictor of risky attitudes towards divorce when entered in step 4 ($\beta = -.17, F_{change} = 3.56, R^2_{change} = .02, p > .05$).

Greater spiritual struggles at the time of the divorce continued to be related to lower current conflict resolution skills ($\beta = -.25, F_{change} = 6.73, R^2_{change} = .04, p < .01$) and greater spiritual decline ($\beta = .26, F_{change} = 8.33, R^2_{change} = .04, p < .01$). However, the relationship between retrospective spiritual struggle and risky attitudes towards divorce
became non-significant ($\beta = -.06, F_{change} = .44, R^2_{change} = .00, p > .05$) apparently due to the contribution of global religiousness ($\beta = -.37, F_{change} = 24.98, R^2_{change} = .14, p < .001$).

The significant relationships between retrospective adaptive spiritual coping and criterion variables were altered after including demographic variables, global religiousness, non-spiritual coping and non-spiritual struggle. Specifically, retrospective adaptive spiritual coping no longer predicted risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex ($\beta = -.09, F_{change} = .77, R^2_{change} = .00, p > .05$), risky attitudes towards marriage ($\beta = -.10, F_{change} = .87, R^2_{change} = .01, p > .05$), risky attitudes towards divorce ($\beta = -.04, F_{change} = , R^2_{change} = .00, p < .05$), spiritual growth ($\beta = .12, F_{change} = 1.36, R^2_{change} = .01, p > .05$) or spiritual decline ($\beta = .14, F_{change} = 1.75, R^2_{change} = .01, p > .05$). In each instance, global religiousness was a significant contributor to the regression equation with $\beta$s ranging in significance from $p < .05$ to $p < .001$. In addition, mother’s marital status was a significant contributor to the regression equation for risky attitudes towards marriage ($\beta = -.19, F_{change} = 5.94, R^2_{change} = .04, p < .05$) and non-spiritual adaptive coping and non-spiritual struggle were significant predictors in the regression equation for spiritual decline ($\beta_{nscope} = -.15 (p < .05), \beta_{nstruggle} = .19 (p < .01), F_{change} = 4.88, R^2_{change} = .05, p < .01$).

Very little change occurred in the relationships between current beliefs in the sacredness of marriage and criterion variables after including demographic variables, global religiousness, non-spiritual adaptive coping and non-spiritual struggle. Specifically, current beliefs in the sacredness of marriage remained a significant contributor in step 4 of the regression equations for risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex ($\beta = -.25, F_{change} = 8.28, R^2_{change} = .04, p < .01$), risky attitudes towards...
marriage ($\beta = -.49$, $F_{change} = .16$, $R^2_{change} = 32.19$, $p < .001$), risky attitudes towards divorce ($\beta = -.63$, $F_{change} = 70.42$, $R^2_{change} = .27$, $p < .001$), and spiritual growth ($\beta = .20$, $F_{change} = 5.35$, $R^2_{change} = .03$, $p < .05$). Current beliefs about the sacredness of marriage remained a significant predictor in these equations despite the statistically significant contribution of global religiousness in step 2 of each equation ($\beta$s ranged in significance from $p < .05$ to $p < .001$). However, current beliefs about the sacredness of marriage were not a significant predictor for spiritual decline. In this equation, global religiousness was a significant predictor ($\beta = -.40$, $F_{change} = 29.68$, $R^2_{change} = .16$, $p < .001$) as were non-spiritual adaptive coping and non-spiritual struggle ($\beta_{scope} = -.15$ ($p < .05$), $\beta_{struggle} = .19$ ($p < .01$), $F_{change} = 4.88$, $R^2_{change} = .05$, $p < .01$).

**Struggle Pattern and Risk factors for Future Divorce**

Hypotheses six and seven were assessed through one-way ANOVAS. Post-hoc Bonferroni calculations were used to assess mean differences between groups for statistically significant ANOVA results. Table 7 presents the results of these analyses.

Hypotheses six and seven were partially supported. Initial ANOVA analyses indicated that there were statistically significant differences between pattern of spiritual struggles and risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex ($F = 3.17$, $p < .05$), risky attitudes towards divorce ($F = 3.33$, $p < .01$), spiritual growth ($F = 2.63$, $p < .05$) and spiritual decline ($F = 6.88$, $p < .001$). There was no statistically significant relationship pattern of spiritual struggles and conflict resolution skills ($F = .59$, $p > .05$), relationship anxiety ($F = .93$, $p > .05$), or risky attitudes towards marriage ($F = .24$, $p > .05$).
Bonferroni comparisons indicated that participants experiencing chronic, high levels of spiritual struggle associated with parental divorce reported significantly higher levels of risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex than participants who reported resolved struggles ($p < .05$). This finding was in support of the hypotheses. Additionally, “resolved” strugglers reported significantly less risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex than those who reported increases in spiritual struggle ($p < .05$). There were no significant differences in risky attitudes towards cohabitation and premarital sex between the chronic-high group and either the chronic-low, no struggle or increase groups, between the no struggle group and any other group or between the chronic-low group and the resolved group.

Post-hoc analysis also indicated that participants who were categorized as “resolved” strugglers reported significantly lower current ($p < .01$) risky attitudes towards divorce than those who reported no spiritual struggles across both time points. This relationship was also in the direction hypothesized. No other Bonferroni between group comparisons were statistically significant regarding mean levels of risky attitudes towards divorce. Bonferroni comparisons between group means for spiritual decline suggest that chronic-high strugglers reported higher mean levels of spiritual decline than either the “no struggle” group ($p < .01$), the “resolved” group ($p < .001$) or the “chronic-low” group ($p < .001$). These findings were consistent with those hypothesized. There was no difference in mean level of spiritual decline between the chronic-high and the increase groups of spiritual struggle. Additionally, both the chronic-low group ($p < .05$) and the resolved group ($p < .01$) showed significantly current lower levels of spiritual decline than the increase group.
Despite the overall significance of the ANOVA assessing the relationship between struggle pattern groups and spiritual growth, no between group differences were statistically significant at $p < .05$ in the Bonferroni post hoc analysis.

*Struggle Meaning and Struggle Resolution as Moderators of Spiritual Struggles*

Hypotheses eight and nine were assessed through regression analysis. Analyses were completed separately for the two variables that captured participants’ subjective views of any spiritual struggle they may have experienced (i.e., perceived struggle meaning and struggle resolution) and results are presented in Table 8. Based on Baron and Kenny (1986) and Holmbeck (2002), moderation analyses were completed by first centering the mean of the predictor variable and the moderator at zero. This is done by subtracting the mean of the scale from all scores. Centering the variables does not change the significance of the interaction and it reduces multicollinearity between predictor variables and interaction terms. After centering the variables, an interaction term was created by multiplying the struggle characteristic variable by the predictor variable. Then, regression analyses were completed by entering relevant control variables in step one and entering the predictor variable, the moderator variable, and the interaction term into step 2. Moderations were considered statistically significant if the standardized beta weight for the interaction term was statistically significant at $p < .05$. Based on these analyses, hypothesis eight was supported in one case and hypothesis nine was not (see Table 6). That is, regarding hypothesis eight, the interaction term for spiritual struggles and struggle meaning was significance for spiritual decline (i.e., $p < .05$). Because this term was statistically significant, the moderation relationship was examined through post hoc analysis. The interaction term for spiritual struggles and struggle meaning was not
statically significant for the remaining criterion variables \((p > .05)\). In contrast to hypothesis nine, there were no statistically significant moderation effects for struggle resolution and the relationships between spiritual struggles and criterion variables.

Post hoc probes into the nature of how struggle meaning moderates the relationship between spiritual decline and spiritual struggles was completed according to the method described in Holmbeck (2002). This method allows for the direct comparison of the slope of regression lines for each level of the moderator to zero via statistical tests. Thus, this method is less likely to yield false positives regarding the significance of a moderator than methods of graphing moderations that do not include tests for significance. Regression lines for each level of the moderator were found by first creating two new variables. One variable is created by subtracting the standard deviation of struggle meaning from the centered struggle meaning variable (high struggle meaning equal to zero) and the other is created by adding the standard deviation of struggle meaning to the centered struggle meaning variable (low struggle equal to zero). These new variables are then used to create a second set of interaction terms by multiplying “low struggle meaning” by “spiritual struggles” and “high struggle meaning” by “spiritual struggles.” Two regression equations were run with control variables in step one and the predictor (spiritual struggles), the moderator (either high struggle meaning or low struggle meaning) and the respective interaction term in step two. These analyses are then used to create separate regression equations for low and high levels of struggle meaning. These equations are reported and graphed in Figure 1. Results of post hoc analysis suggest that retrospective spiritual struggles and current spiritual decline are positively correlated when participants also endorse low levels of current struggle
meaning ($t = 3.91, p < .001$). However, there is no correlation between retrospective spiritual struggles and current spiritual decline when participants also endorse high levels of struggle meaning ($t = .87, p > .05$).
DISCUSSION

This study examines the salience of a spiritual coping paradigm for young adults who have experienced their parents’ divorce and the impact of this paradigm on their own risk factors for future divorce. While support for the majority of the hypotheses was limited, some significant links and patterns were observed. Examining these findings more closely offers a starting point for better understanding the intersection of parental divorce, spirituality, and romantic relationships for these young adults.

Experiencing Parental Divorce through a Spiritual Lens

Comparable with Warner and Mahoney (2009), over one third of the young adults in this study endorsed viewing their parents’ divorce as a sacred loss and desecration to a low degree at the time of the divorce with an additional 24% reporting moderate levels of these appraisals at the same time period. The percentage of participants reporting moderate levels of sacred loss and desecration appraisals dropped to 16% at the time of the study. While the percentage of low level sacred loss and desecration was relatively stable across time periods, the percentage of those reporting no negative spiritual appraisals raised from 24% at the time of the divorce to 40% at the time of the study. These shifts seem to suggest that, following their appraisal of their parents’ divorce as spiritually traumatic via sacred loss and desecration, these young adults reassessed the meaning of the divorce as part of the reworking of their spiritual beliefs. Put another way, in the process of readjusting their spiritual orienting system to encompass this spiritually traumatic event, many seem to have adjusted the traumatic nature of the event through a reappraisal process. That is, as time passed, some young adults could have
experienced their parents divorce as a blessing in disguise by deciding that what they initially thought was a sacred loss or desecration was actually a blessing. This reappraisal process could be particularly salient for those who experienced higher conflict families in which conflict decreased post divorce or in which a problematic parent was no longer able to negatively impact the rest of the family.

Consistent with previous divorce research from both adult and child perspectives, sacred loss and desecration were highly correlated (Krumrei & Mahoney, 2008; Warner & Mahoney, 2009). The high prevalence of seeing divorce as both a sacred loss and desecration reflects the complex role that marriage plays in creating and maintaining the sacred family life. Given the predominantly Christian sample, these responses are likely to reflect Christian teachings which highlight the sacred nature of a family headed by married parents. Not only is marriage itself considered sacred, but married parents are considered an essential component of sacred family life (Warner & Mahoney, 2009). This sacred family is the context in which children are taught religious values and is thought to reflect God’s love and commitment to his people. The breakup of a family due to divorce thus has the potential to represent the violation of sacred vows, loss of sacred family relationships, and the loss and violation of a representation of God’s love and commitment to his children.

Participants’ responses to the qualitative question asking them to identify what they felt was the loss or violation of something sacred through the divorce reflected the multi-faceted nature of sacred family life. Many participants noted that the value of family or their “family bond” had been lost or destroyed. Another noted that “the whole concept of marriage was broken” and others described losing their ability to trust either
family or their own romantic partners. One participant said that, “any hope of a successful marriage” was lost. The diversity of these responses illustrates the uniqueness of each person’s spiritual experiences related to the divorce and is particularly relevant given the critical developmental tasks that these young adults are facing. That is, regardless of family background, college is a time when young adults individuate from their families of origin and consider beginning their own intimate relationships and families. Young adults navigating these developmental tasks with experiences of divorce related spiritual trauma are likely to experience unique challenges and questions that peers without these experiences might not face.

Spiritual Struggles and the Path to Risk Factors for Future Divorce

Just as the participants’ endorsement of sacred loss and desecration decreased over time, 26% of participants reported moderate levels of spiritual struggle at the time of the divorce and only 6% reported this same level of spiritual struggles at the time of the survey. Again, the percentage of low level spiritual struggle remained relatively unchanged but the percentage of those reporting no spiritual struggle rose 12% to 42% across time. The t-test between retrospective and current spiritual struggle also suggested that the drop in spiritual struggle across time was statistically significant ($p < .05$). At the most basic level, these changes across time highlight the dynamic nature of post-divorce struggle for these young adults.

While spiritual struggles were not unilaterally related to risk factors for future divorce, findings suggest that spiritual struggles at the time of the divorce impact at least one risk factor for future divorce. Indeed, the relationship between higher levels of retrospective spiritual struggles tied to parental divorce and lower conflict resolution
skills in romantic relationships was the only statistically significant relationship with specific risk factors for divorce. This relationship begs further exploration. It is possible that those wrestling with their spiritual beliefs about marriage and family could be more prone to arguments as minor grievances trigger fears about their own future. Or, those struggling spiritually could be experiencing other types of emotional distress not measured in this study which could negatively impact conflict resolution skills. This explanation is consistent with previous research linking divorce related spiritual struggles with greater levels of psychological maladjustment (Warner & Mahoney, 2009). It is also consistent with the relational distress qualitatively reported by participants. For example, one participant said “I am scared to death that God is going to curse me the same way he cursed my parents’ relationship.” Anticipating a cursed relationship could negatively impact this young woman’s ability to navigate romantic relationships. This struggle is not likely unique to this young woman and suggests that spiritually oriented intervention to help her and others like her address this struggle would be particularly useful and life changing.

The link between the chronic nature of struggle and risk factors for divorce offers further support for spiritually oriented interventions addressing spiritual trauma and parental divorce. In this study, those who reported chronic levels of high spiritual struggle as well as those who reported increased spiritual struggle reported more risky beliefs towards cohabitation and premarital sex than those whose pattern of struggle was identified as “resolved.” And, these same participants who reported high levels of chronic struggler reported less spiritual growth compared to resolved strugglers. Thus, it is not just the presence of spiritual struggles that can be problematic, but rather the nature of
these struggles across time. Conversely, finding some level of resolution to divorce-related spiritual struggles bodes well for future romantic relationships.

Resolved strugglers were also less likely to report risky attitudes towards divorce than those who reported no struggles. Those reporting no struggle at both time points might have experienced their parents’ divorce as consistent with their personal orienting system and hold those same views for their own future. Qualitative responses support this perspective. One participant stated “I didn’t feel anything was lost or violated… Marriage should last forever but it doesn’t and that’s a fact that was an option in my upbringing.” For this person, his parents’ divorce was not a spiritual trauma as his orienting system allows for divorce. And research has consistently shown that those who view divorce as a possible option in their future are more likely to exercise this option in the face of marital distress (Amato, 1996; Amato and Rogers, 1999).

**Struggle Meaning as a Moderator between Spiritual Struggles and Decline**

One of the consistent patterns in this study was the relationship between spiritual struggles, and spiritual decline. Moderation analyses suggested that the link between these two constructs is best understood by looking at levels of struggle meaning. When participants reported finding low levels of meaning in their spiritual struggles, these struggles were related to greater spiritual decline. When participants reported high levels of meaning, there was no relationship between spiritual struggles and spiritual decline. Clearly, post-divorce spiritual outcomes are not simply determined by the amount of spiritual struggle that an individual faces. Specifically, young adults’ ability to draw upon their spiritual orienting system to find meaning even in the midst of spiritual struggles seems to change the trajectory of their spiritual life away from spiritual decline. Working
with young adults to understand their spiritual struggles and place their struggles in a developmental context is likely to facilitate their ability to find meaning regardless of struggle level.

Global Religiousness and Predictors of Risk Factors for Future Divorce and Spiritual Outcomes

Interestingly, while previous studies describe the “stress mobilizing” effect of events appraised as a sacred loss and desecration for adaptive spiritual coping (Mahoney, Krumrei & Pargament, 2008), adaptive spiritual coping was not significantly related to most risk factors for future divorce or any spiritual outcome variables following the hierarchical regression analyses. Indeed, all five statistically significant correlations in the bivariate analyses dropped to non-significant levels during hierarchical regression analyses. This is in direct contrast to wide body of literature which links adaptive spiritual coping with spiritual growth as well as higher levels of positive psychological outcomes (Ano and Vasconcelles, 2005).

The hierarchical regressions used in this study offer some insight into the change in these relationships. That it is, in each case in which there was a significant bi-variate relationship between adaptive spiritual coping and a risk factor for future divorce, global religiousness was a statistically significant variable in the hierarchical regression equation at step 2 and adaptive spiritual coping was not statistically significant in step 4. Similar patterns were also evident for the relationships between retrospective sacred loss and desecration and spiritual growth and risky attitudes towards divorce and between retrospective spiritual struggle and risky attitudes towards divorce. In each instance, the significant bi-variate relationship dropped to non-significance after including global
religiousness at step 2 of the hierarchical regression and the predictor variable in step 4. 
These findings are an anomaly in a large body of literature that highlights the salience of proximal religious variables (i.e. spiritual struggle, adaptive spiritual coping, spiritual appraisals) as predictors of psychological adjustment and physical health above and beyond more distal variables such as global religiousness (Pargament, 2007; Mahoney, et al., 1999).

Further exploration into these two constructs and the context of this study suggests at least two reasons for these results. First, global religiousness, as measured in this study, reflects participants’ personal prayer life and involvement in religious organizations. Given the nature of adaptive religious coping strategies (i.e. prayer, seeking support from religious community) controlling for the effect of prayer and church attendance seems to be controlling away essential aspects of this spiritual variable. And, for many people, faith and belief in the Divine is primarily expressed through prayer and church attendance. Thus, it is theoretically difficult to separate the expressions of faith through prayer and the community that fosters faith from the cognitive appraisals and coping strategies that are themselves reflective of a person’s spirituality. While global religiousness has been traditionally included as a control variable as a way to isolate more specific spiritual and religious constructs from general religious practices, the conceptual overlap with adaptive spiritual coping suggests that this practice be reconsidered.

Second, an underlying premise of this study is that family life is imbued with sacred qualities that are harmed or lost through parental divorce. This premise is based on the teachings of major world religions that marriage and family life are connected to the sacred (Mahoney, et al., 2003). And, one primary mechanism by which these teachings
are transmitted to families is via regular church attendance and exposure to church
doctrine. Prayer for family members and collective prayer in private are also central
practices of sacred family life. Thus, it seems as if the sacred family life is intertwined so
closely with what has been classified as more “superficial” measures of religiousness and
spirituality (i.e. church attendance and prayer) that they can not be theoretically or
statistically separated. Subsequent research that addresses the unique conceptual overlap
between the proximal religious and spiritual variables, the sacred family life and global
religiousness is likely to find different results.

Sanctification of Marriage and Risk Factors for Future Divorce

Beliefs in the sacredness of marriage seem to hold protective effects against risk
factors for future divorce. Young adults in this study who endorsed greater current beliefs
in the sacred nature of marriage reported significantly less risky attitudes towards
cohabitation, premarital sex, marriage and divorce. While there is potentially some
conceptual overlap between attitudes towards divorce and beliefs that “marriage is a
sacred bond between two people that should not be broken” (item 3, beliefs in the
sacredness of marriage scale), there is no such overlap with risky attitudes towards
cohabitation and premarital sexual intercourse and marriage. Belief in the sacredness of
marriage was also the only construct other than struggle type related to spiritual growth.
These findings are particularly important as they highlight the hope that beliefs in the
sanctification of marriage can provide even as it makes families initially more vulnerable
in the face of divorce. Young adults who are able to retain belief in the sacredness of
marriage and separate their own spiritual and relationship pathways from that of their
parents seem likely to experience more successful marriages. This likelihood of success
is supported by previous research which suggests that people invest more energy into aspects of life they hold sacred (Pargament & Mahoney, 2002). Of course, these beliefs also raise the risk for future spiritual trauma if these young people do indeed experience their own divorce. That is, young adults might retain beliefs in the sacredness of marriage without fully exploring the impact of their parents’ divorce on other risk factors for divorce such as conflict resolution skills, relationship anxiety or communication skills. This lack of insight into negative relationship patterns could sabotage even a sanctified marriage.

Clinical Intervention

The significant findings of this study suggest that clinical interventions designed to address the intersection of parental divorce, spiritual trauma and age appropriate developmental tasks may be helpful. Specifically, the role of struggle meaning in the relationship between spiritual struggles and spiritual decline is particularly intriguing. Given the chronic nature of spiritual struggles for almost one third of the participants, interventions designed to facilitate finding meaning in struggle are likely to be particularly helpful. A recently developed intervention designed to work with college students experiencing a wide variety of struggles has been shown to facilitate positive psychological and spiritual outcomes (Gear et al., 2008). This intervention yielded positive psychological and spiritual outcomes despite intentionally avoiding struggle resolution as a goal of the intervention. Drawing from this program, interventions could be designed that allow young adults to explore the nature of their divorce and marriage related struggles, address need to separate their spiritual path of relationship/marriage from that of their parents and seek meaning in the midst of relationship uncertainty. This
type of intervention would be particularly salient for this age group as individuation from family of origin and the internalization of religious and spiritual beliefs are already developmental tasks that these young adults wrestle with. Interventions could be adapted for a variety of settings including college counseling centers, community based religious counseling groups and religious/spiritual organizations.

Finally, one of the most common themes in the qualitative responses was a loss or violation of the sacred family life. Research addressing the impact of divorce on family life as a system from within a spiritual coping framework would further illuminate the experiences of these young adults. One such construct that might be particularly relevant is “religious triangulation” in which one parent claims God’s blessing for his/her actions over the other parent. Additionally, the spiritual responses of family members might vary and these differences in themselves might cause conflict. Research addressing these issues would provide needed insight for professionals and lay people working with families in the midst of a spiritually traumatic divorce. This research could also inform family interventions designed to help families navigate the spiritual aspects of the divorce or pre-divorce conflict and provide guidance for young adults as they create their own families.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Given previous research linking appraisals of sacred loss and desecration with psychological maladjustment following parental divorce, it is not clear why this construct was unrelated to any risk factors for future divorce. And, despite the significant relationships previously discussed, spiritual struggles were not related to the majority of the risk factors for future divorce. There are a number of reasons that might explain these
results. Most simply, the null hypothesis could be true. In other words, young adults’
beliefs that something sacred has been lost or violated and their attempts incorporate this
traumatic event into their spiritual worldview could have minimal impact on their own
romantic relationships or on other risk factors for their own divorce. While this
hypothesis cannot be completely abandoned, several other areas of research suggest that
further exploration is warranted.

First, not only are young adults likely to underestimate their chances of divorce
(Boyer-Pennington, Penningtion & Spink, 2001) but relationship researchers note that
young adults demonstrate a positive response bias in their own romantic relationships
(Gagne and Lydon, 2004). Because of their tendency to underreport problematic
qualities about their significant other, participants might have underreported relationship
conflict difficulties or relationship anxieties. In order to explore and address these biases,
researchers have relied on observational data and structural interviewing that allows more
intensive exploration of relationship patterns. Incorporating these research methods into
future research would allow researchers to explore the impact of this spiritual coping
model more fully.

Second, research on the impact of parental divorce describes the remarkable
resiliency of these young adults to mental health difficulties. In fact, the vast majority are
indistinguishable from their peers on measures of psychological distress (Zill, Morrison
& Coiro, 1993). What researchers are also finding is that many of these “resilient” young
adults report low levels of non-clinical psychological maladjustment (Laumann-Billings
& Emery, 2000). These lower levels of psychological maladjustment were directly
related to appraisals of sacred loss and desecration, spiritual struggles and adaptive
spiritual coping (Warner & Mahoney, 2009). It seems probable that similar “low grade” relationship difficulties are present for those experiencing their parents’ divorce as a spiritual trauma. Utilizing the research methodology described above is likely to capture these more nuanced relationship difficulties. Previous research as well as the qualitative responses from this study suggest that issues such as trust, commitment, and communication patterns also merit further exploration.

Third, this project examined philosophies and beliefs about marriage and divorce that are related to greater risk of future divorce. However, it is possible that some young adults might continue to embrace pro-marriage philosophies while other, more subtle risk factors continue to be present. Indeed, research suggests that children of divorce are no less likely to desire marriage than their peers from intact families and show tendencies to underreport their own risk factors for future divorce (Boyer-Pennington, Pennington & Spink, 2001). Expanding beyond self-report measures as data collection methods in future research could address this issue.

Fourth, this study relied on retrospective data to assess links between spiritual appraisals, spiritual struggles and adaptive spiritual coping at the time of the divorce with current risk factors for future divorce. Including data on the presence of the risk factors for future divorce at the time of the divorce would have allowed for a more thorough evaluation of the impact of these spiritual constructs on the risk factors across time. Ideally, a true longitudinal study would eliminate many of the weaknesses inherent in a retrospective study. By following young adolescents who experienced their parents’ divorce into early adulthood, a longitudinal study would be able to capture the spiritual dimensions of young adults’ responses to the divorce as it was happening without relying
on participants’ memory. This design would also allow for more sophisticated assessment of the impact of spiritual appraisals, spiritual struggle and adaptive spiritual coping constructs on risk factors for future divorce across time.

Conclusion

While overall results were mixed, this study is an important step in addressing the relevance of a spiritual coping model for understanding young adults’ risk factors for future divorce. Spiritual trauma related to parental divorce seems particularly salient to young adults navigating their individuation from their family of origin and beginning to develop their own intimate relationships. By specifically addressing the spiritual dimensions of these developmental tasks through more sensitive research methodologies and spiritually oriented interventions, young adults are likely to be better equipped for long term relationship success.
REFERENCES


Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Retrospective and Current Spiritual Appraisals, Spiritual Struggles and Coping Measures and Current Risk Factors for Future Divorce, Spiritual Growth, Spiritual Decline and Global Religiousness

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<td><strong>Control variables:</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>10-40</td>
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<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global Religiousness (2)</td>
<td>2-17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.70</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.73</td>
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</table>
Table 2: Intercorrelations between Retrospective Spiritual Appraisals, Spiritual Struggles, Adaptive Spiritual Coping, Non-spiritual Coping and Non-spiritual Struggles; Current Spiritual Appraisals, Spiritual struggle, Beliefs in the Sacredness of Marriages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2. Retrospective Spiritual Struggles</td>
<td>.55***</td>
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<td>3. Retrospective Adaptive Spiritual Coping</td>
<td>.39***</td>
<td>.15</td>
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<td>4. Retrospective Adaptive Non-Spiritual Coping</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Retrospective Non-Spiritual Struggles</td>
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<td>.60***</td>
<td>.19*</td>
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<td>6. Current Sacred Loss and Desecration</td>
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<td>.53***</td>
<td>.28***</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.46***</td>
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<td>7. Current Spiritual Struggles</td>
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<td>.63***</td>
<td>.06</td>
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<td>.39***</td>
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<td>8. Current Adaptive Spiritual Coping</td>
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<td>.24**</td>
<td>.72***</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td>.27***</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Current Beliefs in the Sacredness of Marriage</td>
<td>.41***</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.47***</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.37***</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.57***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Global Religiousness</td>
<td>.36***</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.65***</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.79***</td>
<td>.57***</td>
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</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
Table 3: Intercorrelations between Conflict Resolution Skill, Relationship Anxiety, Attitudes towards Cohabitation and Premarital Sex, Marriage and Divorce and Spiritual Growth and Decline Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1.</th>
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<th>6.</th>
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<th>8.</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>2. Relationship Anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Risky Attitudes: Cohabitation &amp; Sex</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Risky Attitudes: Marriage</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.31***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Risky Attitudes: Divorce</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.47***</td>
<td>.41***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Spiritual Growth</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.26***</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.27***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Spiritual Decline</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.18*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Retro Non-Spiritual Struggles</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.28***</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.18*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Retro Adaptive Non-Spiritual Coping</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Global Religiousness</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.43***</td>
<td>-.21**</td>
<td>-.37***</td>
<td>.43***</td>
<td>-.40***</td>
<td>.23**</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05;  **p < .01;  ***p < .001
Table 4: Bivariate correlations between Retrospective Sacred Loss and Desecration, Spiritual Struggle, Adaptive Spiritual Coping and Current Beliefs in the Sacredness of Marriage and Current Risk Factors for Future Divorce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Variables</th>
<th>Retrospective</th>
<th>Current Beliefs in the Sacredness of Marriage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sacred Loss &amp; Desecration</td>
<td>Spiritual Struggles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Resolution Skills</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.20*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Anxiety</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risky attitudes: Cohabitation &amp; Premarital Sex</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risky attitudes: Marriage</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risky attitudes: Divorce</td>
<td>-.28***</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Growth</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Decline</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.20**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^p < .10; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
Table 5a: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Retrospective Sacred loss and Desecration and Retrospective Spiritual Struggles Predicting Scores on Outcome Variables above Demographics, Global Religiousness, Non-Spiritual Adaptive Coping and Non-Spiritual Struggle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Divorce</th>
<th>Spiritual Growth&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>β</td>
<td>R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
<td>F for R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Divorce</th>
<th>Spiritual Growth&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>β</td>
<td>R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
<td>F for R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Religiousness</td>
<td>-.34***</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 3</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Divorce</th>
<th>Spiritual Growth&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>β</td>
<td>R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
<td>F for R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Spiritual Struggle</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Spiritual Adaptive Coping</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 4</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Divorce</th>
<th>Spiritual Growth&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>β</td>
<td>R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
<td>F for R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retro Sacred Loss &amp; Desecration</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Divorce</th>
<th>Spiritual Decline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>β</td>
<td>R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
<td>F for R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>.05</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Divorce</th>
<th>Spiritual Decline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>β</td>
<td>R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
<td>F for R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Religiousness</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Spiritual Struggle</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Spiritual Adaptive Coping</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.02</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 4</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Divorce</th>
<th>Spiritual Decline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>β</td>
<td>R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
<td>F for R&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retro Spiritual Struggles</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Mother’s marital status prior to marrying participants’ fathers included as a control.

<sup>b</sup> Gender included as a control.

<sup>b</sup> Age at Divorce

<sup>p < .10</sup> *p < .05;  **p < .01;  ***p < .001
Table 5b: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Retrospective Adaptive Spiritual Coping Predicting Scores on Outcome Variables above Demographics, Global Religiousness, Non-Spiritual Adaptive Coping and Non-Spiritual Struggle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Cohabitation &amp; Sex</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Marriage</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Divorce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$R^2 \Delta$</td>
<td>$F$ for $R^2 \Delta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Demographics $^b$</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demographics $^a$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Global Religiousness</td>
<td>-.44***</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Non-Spiritual Struggle</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Spiritual Adaptive Coping</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Retro Adaptive Spiritual Coping</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|        | Spiritual Growth $^b$ | | | | | | | | |
|        | Spiritual Decline | | | | | | | | |
| Step 1 | Demographics $^b$ | .19 | .04 | 5.68* | -.07 | .01 | .74 |
| Step 2 | Global Religiousness | .41*** | .16 | 31.03*** | .40*** | .16 | 28.63*** |
| Step 3 | Non-Spiritual Struggle | -.06 | .00 | .30 | .19** | .05 | 4.88** |
|        | Non-Spiritual Adaptive Coping | .02 | -.15* | | | | | | |
| Step 4 | Retro Adaptive Spiritual Coping | .12 | .01 | 1.36 | .14 | .01 | 1.75 |

$^a$ Mother’s marital status prior to marrying participants’ fathers included as a control.
$^b$ Gender included as a control.
$^p < .10$ *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$
Table 5c: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Current Beliefs in the Sacredness of Marriage Predicting Scores on Outcome Variables above Demographics, Global Religiousness, Non-Spiritual Adaptive Coping and Non-Spiritual Struggle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Cohabitation &amp; Sex</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Marriage</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Divorce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>R² Δ</td>
<td>F for R² Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Religiousness</td>
<td>-.43***</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>35.45***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Non-Spiritual Struggle</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Spiritual Adaptive Coping</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>- .09</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Current Belief in Sacred Marriage</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Spiritual Growth</th>
<th>Spiritual Decline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
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<td>R² Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Global Religiousness</td>
<td>.41***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Non-Spiritual Struggle</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Spiritual Adaptive Coping</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Current Belief in Sacred Marriage</td>
<td>.20*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Mother’s marital status prior to marrying participants’ fathers included as a control.

b Gender included as a control.

^p < .10  *p < .05;  **p < .01;  ***p < .001
### Table 6: ANOVA Struggle Pattern across Time and Risk factors for Future Divorce and Spiritual Growth and Decline with Bonferroni Post Hoc Analyses

Statistical Significance of the Mean Difference between groups for each Criterion Variable based on Bonferroni Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Struggle Pattern (F)</th>
<th>Conflict Resolution Skills</th>
<th>Relationship Anxiety</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Cohabitation &amp; Premarital Sex</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Marriage</th>
<th>Risky Attitudes: Divorce</th>
<th>Spiritual Growth</th>
<th>Spiritual Decline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resolved: No struggle</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>3.17*</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>3.33**</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.63**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-- (-)*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>(-)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic, Low:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-- (***)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic, High:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-- (***)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic-High:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-- (***)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Struggle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-- (***)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-- (***)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic, Low:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-- (***)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Struggle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-- (***)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-- (***)</td>
<td>--</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

**Note:** "--" indicate non-significant Bonferroni comparisons.
Table 7: Struggle Resolution and Struggle Meaning as Moderators between Retrospective Spiritual Struggles and Criterion Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moderator Variable</th>
<th>Struggle Meaning ($\beta$)</th>
<th>Struggle Resolution ($\beta$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Moderator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Resolution Skills $^{a,c}$</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Anxiety $^a$</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risky Attitudes: Cohabitation and Premarital Sex $^c$</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.15^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risky Attitudes: Marriage $^{a,c}$</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risky Attitudes: Divorce $^c$</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Growth $^{b,c}$</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.31***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Decline $^c$</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>-.29***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Spiritual Struggle was the independent variable in all analyses. Relevant Demographics, global religiousness, non-spiritual adaptive coping and non-spiritual struggle were included as controls in Step 1. The Independent, Moderator and interaction term were added in Step 2. All $\beta$ are standardized. $^a$ Mother’s marital status prior to marrying participants’ fathers included in Step 1. $^b$ Gender included in Step 1. $^c$ Age at Divorce included in Step 1.

$^p < .10$  *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$
Figure 1:

Correlation between Spiritual Struggles and Spiritual Decline Moderated by Struggle Meaning

- **High Struggle meaning**: $t = .87, p > .05$
- **Low Struggle meaning**: $t = 3.91, p < .001$
APPENDIX A

Demographic Items

Gender: _____ Male       _____ Female

What is your age in years? ___

What was your exact age when your parents divorce? ___

What is your birth date? Month ___ Day ___ year ___

What was the date of your parents’ divorce: mm/yyyy _____

Race: ______ White    ______ Black     ______ Hispanic
      _____ Asian  ______ Native American
      _____ Multi-racial/ethnic   _____ Other, Please Specify

Had your mother been married before she met your father? If so, how many times?
____ no  ___ yes, ___ times

Had your father been married before he met your mother? If so, how many times?
____ no  ___ yes, ___ times

Has your mother remarried since the divorce? If so, how many times?
____ no  ___ Yes, she has been remarried _____ times

Has your father remarried since the divorce? If so, how many times?
____ no  ___ yes, he has been remarried _____ times

Which parent or guardian did you live with all or most of the time following the divorce?
Please choose one:
Biological Mom    Both equally    Biological Dad    Other_____

Classification: __ Junior    __ Senior

Your current marital/relationship status:
____ single   __ dating  __ married  __ separated/divorce    __ widow/widower

Are you currently in a relationship? Yes No
If yes, how long has this relationship lasted?

If no and you are not currently in a relationship, how long was your longest meaningful relationship? _________________________
APPENDIX B

Global Religiousness Items & Religious Descriptive Items

Which of the following categories best describes your religious affiliation growing up:

_____ Protestant (Christian)  _____ Hindu  _____ Jewish  _____ None
_____ Catholic (Christian)  _____ Muslim  _____ Buddhist  _____ Other

Which of the following categories best describes your current religious affiliation:

_____ Protestant (Christian)  _____ Hindu  _____ Jewish  _____ None
_____ Catholic (Christian)  _____ Muslim  _____ Buddhist  _____ Other

How often do you attend religious services?

___ Several times a week  ___ 2-3 times a month  ___ About once or twice a year
___ Every week  ___ About once a month  ___ Less than once a year
___ Nearly every week  ___ Several times a year  ___ Never

How often do you pray?

___ More than once a day  ___ Once a week  ___ Less than once a month
___ Once a day  ___ A few times a month  ___ Never
___ A few times a week  ___ Once a month
APPENDIX C

Sacred Loss and Desecration Scale

Retrospective instructions: Think back to when your parents were first divorced. To what extent does each of the following statements describe the way you felt about your parents’ divorce at the time that it happened? Please circle the number of the response that most closely describes your feelings.

Current Instructions: Think about how things are in your life right now. To what extent does each of the following statements describe the way you feel about your parents’ divorce when you think about it now? Please circle the number of the response that most closely describes your feelings.

Not at all   Somewhat   Very Much

1. My life lacks something that once gave me a sense of spiritual fulfillment.
2. I suffered the loss of something that was given to me by God.
3. A part of my life that God made sacred was attacked.
4. Something that gave sacred meaning to my life is now missing.
5. I lost something I thought God wanted for me.
6. A violation of something spiritual to me occurred.
7. In this event, something central to my spirituality was lost.
8. Something from God was torn out of my life.
9. The Divine in my life was intentionally harmed through this event.
10. Something of sacred importance in my life disappeared when this event took place.
11. Something evil ruined a blessing in my life.
12. Something symbolic of God was purposely damaged.
14. Something sacred that came from God was dishonored.
15. Something that connected me to God is gone.
16. A sacred part of my life was violated.
17. This event involved losing a gift from God.
18. Something symbolic of God has left my life.
19. The event was a sinful act involving something meaningful in my life.
20. This event ruined a blessing from God.
21. Something that was sacred to me was destroyed.
22. This event was an immoral act against something I value.
23. A part of my life in which I experienced God's love is now absent.
24. Something that contained God is now empty.
25. This event was a transgression of something sacred.
26. Something I held sacred is no longer present in my life.
27. This event was both an offense against me and against God.
28. Part of the pain of this event involved the loss of a blessing.
APPENDIX D
Beliefs in the Sacredness of Marriage Scale

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding marriage and divorce?


1. Marriage is a sacred act. ¹
2. Marriage is a holy covenant before God.
3. A marriage is a sacred bond between two people that should not be broken.

¹ Items 1 is from the Marriage Attitudes Scale, Item 2 is from the Morality of Divorce Scale, and Item 3 was added for this study as an additional indicator of beliefs in the sacred nature of marriage.
APPENDIX E
Spiritual Struggles Scale: Modified Negative RCOPE

Retrospective Instructions: Think back to the time the divorce happened. Different people respond to situations in a wide variety of ways and we are interested in know if you experienced any of the feelings listed below. These are feelings that individuals may experience concerning their faith or their relationship with God and the distress that these feelings may cause. Using the scale below, please circle the number that best describes how much you experienced each item at the time of the divorce. (Note: the tense of the items will be changed accordingly for the retrospective version of the scale.)

Current Instructions: Think about how things are going for you now. The following items are the same items we asked you about earlier but this time we want to know if you are experiencing any of these feelings currently. These are feelings that individuals may experience concerning their faith or their relationship with God and the distress that these feelings may cause. Using the scale below, please circle the number that best describes how much you experience each item currently, in your every day life.

1= Not at all  2 = Somewhat  3 = Quite a Bit  4 = A Great Deal

At the time of the Divorce, I was…
I am currently…

1. Wondering whether God has abandoned me.
2. Feeling punished by God for my lack of devotion.
3. Wondering what I did for God to punish me.
4. Questioning God’s love for me.
5. Questioning the power of God.
6. Wondering if God really exists.
7. Feeling angry that God is not there for me.
8. Questioning if religious scriptures are really the inspired word of God.
9. Questioning the teachings of my faith.
10. Doubting the religious scriptures of my faith.
11. Questioning core beliefs of my church (synagogue or temple).
12. Confused about my relationship with God.
13. Frustrated with God.
15. Feeling isolated from God.
16. Wishing that God was here for me.
17. Shaky and nervous when thinking about God.
18. Become tense when thinking about God.
19. Questioning my beliefs in the sacredness of marriage.
20. Wondering if God will take my marriage from me.
21. Questioning if God will be able to help my marriage be a success.
22. Feeling that I am on my own without God’s support when it comes to having a good marriage.
23. Feeling that it is safer for my spiritual life to avoid marriage.

2 Items 19-23 reflect spiritual struggles directly related to the spiritual nature of marriage. They were developed specifically for this study and formed the “Marriage Related Spiritual Struggles” scale.
APPENDIX F
Struggle Meaning and Resolution

Please choose the response choice that best fills in the sentence to make it true for you.

I feel like I have found ______ meaning in the spiritual struggles I have had since the divorce.

1. no
2. some …
3. quite a bit of…
4. a great deal of

I feel like my spiritual struggles related to the divorce have ______.

1. been completely resolved,
2. been partially resolved,
3. not changed
4. become worse.”
APPENDIX G
Positive Religious Coping, Select Subscales

Retrospective Instructions: The following items deal with ways you coped with your parents’ divorce at the time that it happened. There are many ways to try to deal with problems. These items ask what you did to cope with this negative event. Obviously different people deal with things in different ways, but we are interested in how you tried to deal with it. Each item says something about a particular way of coping. We want to know to what extent you did what the item says. How much or how frequently. Don’t answer on the basis of what worked or not – just whether or not you did it. Use these response choices. Try to rate each item separately in your mind from the others. Make your answers as true FOR YOU as you can.

Current Instructions: Think about how things are going for you right now. The following items ask what you are doing to cope with your parents’ divorce currently. Obviously different people deal with things in different ways, but we are interested in how you tried to deal with it. Each item says something about a particular way of coping. We want to know to what extent you did what the item says. How much or how frequently. Don’t answer on the basis of if it is working or not – just whether or not you are doing it. Use these response choices. Try to rate each item separately in your mind from the others. Make your answers as true FOR YOU as you can.

1= Not at all 2= Somewhat 3= Quite a Bit 4= A Great Deal

1. Saw my situation as part of God’s plan
2. Did my best and then turned the situation over to God.
3. Prayed to discover my purpose in living.
4. Tried to find a lesson from God in the event
5. Sought God’s love and care
6. Looked for a stronger connection with God.
7. Prayed to find a new reason to live
8. Sought a stronger spiritual connection with other people.
9. Thought about how my life is part of a larger spiritual force.
10. Took control over what I could, and gave the rest up to God.
11. Looked for spiritual support from clergy
12. Trusted that God would be by my side
13. Tried to see how God might be trying to strengthen me in this situation
14. Asked others to pray for me.
15. Did what I could and put the rest in God’s hands.
16. Looked for love and concern from the members of my church
17. Asked God to help me find a new purpose in life.
18. Looked to God for strength, support and guidance.
Revised-Cope, Select Subscales

Retrospective Instructions: The following items deal with ways you coped with your parents’ divorce at the time that it happened. There are many ways to try to deal with problems. These items ask what you did to cope with this negative event. Obviously different people deal with things in different ways, but we are interested in how you tried to deal with it. Each item says something about a particular way of coping. We want to know to what extent you did what the item says. How much or how frequently. Don’t answer on the basis of what worked or not – just whether or not you did it. Use these response choices. Try to rate each item separately in your mind from the others. Make your answers as true FOR YOU as you can.

Current Instructions: Think about how things are going for you right now. The following items ask what you are doing to cope with your parents’ divorce currently. Obviously different people deal with things in different ways, but we are interested in how you tried to deal with it. Each item says something about a particular way of coping. We want to know to what extent you did what the item says. How much or how frequently. Don’t answer on the basis of if it is working or not – just whether or not you are doing it. Use these response choices. Try to rate each item separately in your mind from the others. Make your answers as true FOR YOU as you can.

1= Not at all 2 = Somewhat 3 = Quite a Bit 4 = A Great Deal

Note: The following items are arranged by subscale but will be mix in the survey.

Non-spiritual Adaptive Coping
1. I take time to express my emotions
2. I allow myself to show how I feel about things
3. I discuss my feelings with someone
4. I try to get emotional support from friends or relatives
5. I talk to someone to find out more about the situation
6. I concentrate my efforts on doing something about it
7. I take direct action to get around the problem
8. I try to come up with a strategy about what to do
9. I think hard about what steps to take
10. I try hard to prevent other things form interfering with my efforts at dealing with this
11. I try to be optimistic in spite of what happened.
12. I work on staying positive even when things look bad.
13. I accept the reality of the fact that it happened
14. I try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.
15. I look for something good in what is happening

Non-spiritual struggles
16. I say to myself “this isn’t real”
17. I refuse to believe that it has happened
18. I admit to myself that I can’t deal with it and quit trying
19. I blame someone or something for what happened to me
20. I accuse someone of causing my misfortune
21. I blame myself
22. I criticize or lecture myself
23. I see that I am at the root of the problem
24. I just think about my problem constantly
25. I relive the problem by dwelling on it all the time
APPENDIX I
The Marriage Attitudes Scale

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding marriage and divorce?


1. People should marry.  
2. I have little confidence that my marriage will be a success.
3. People should stay married to their spouses for the rest of their lives.*
4. Most people are either unhappy in their marriage or are divorced.
5. I will be satisfied when I get married.*
6. I am fearful of marriage.
7. I have doubts about marriage.
8. People should only get married if they are sure that it will last forever.*
9. People should feel very cautious about entering into a marriage.
10. Most marriages are unhappy situations.
11. Marriage is only a legal contract.
12. Most marriages aren’t equal partnerships.
13. Most people have to sacrifice too much in marriage.
14. Because half of all marriages end in divorce, marriage seems futile.
15. If I divorce I would probably remarry.*
16. When people don’t get along, I believe they should divorce.
17. I believe a relationship can be just as strong without having to go through a marriage ceremony.
18. My lifelong dream includes a happy marriage.*
19. There is no such thing as a happy marriage.
20. Marriage restricts individuals from achieving their goals.
21. People weren’t meant to stay in one relationship for their entire lives.
22. Marriage provides companionship that is missing from other types of relationships.*

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3 Reverse scored items are designated with a “*”. 
APPENDIX J
Morality of Divorce Scale

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding marriage and divorce?


1. Except when a spouse dies, marriage should be a once in a lifetime commitment.\(^4\)
2. People should feel free to end a marriage as long as the children are not going to be hurt.
3. Divorce is wrong.*
4. If a couple works hard at making their marriage work but find themselves incompatible, divorce is the best thing they can do.
5. It is all right for a couple to get a divorce if their marriage is not working out.

\(^4\) Reverse scored items are designated with a “*”. 
APPENDIX K
RAS – Relationship Anxiety

The items listed below refer to people in a close relationship – i.e., a relationship between two partners in a dating relationship. Please read each item carefully and decide to what extent it is characteristic of your feelings and behaviors. Give each item a rating of how much it applies to you by using the following scale:

1. Not at all characteristic of me
2. Slightly characteristic of me
3. Somewhat characteristic of me
4. Moderately characteristic of me
5. Very characteristic of me

1. I usually feel quite anxious about my dating relationships.
2. It takes me time to get over my shyness in a new close relationship.
3. Dating relationships make me feel nervous and anxious.
4. I am somewhat awkward and tense in dating relationships.
5. I feel nervous when I interact with a partner in a dating relationship.
6. I am more anxious about dating relationships than most people are.
7. I feel uncomfortable when I think about talking with a person I am dating.
8. I would feel inhibited and shy in a dating relationship.
9. I would feel anxious in a new dating relationship.
APPENDIX L
ICQ – Conflict Management

Please rate how competent and comfortable you would feel handling each of the following situations using the following scale:

1. “I’m poor at this; I’d feel so uncomfortable and unable to handle this situation, I’d avoid it if possible”
2. I’m only fair at this; I’d feel uncomfortable and would have lots of difficulty handling this situation
3. I’m OK at this; I’d feel somewhat uncomfortable and have some difficulty handling this situation
4. I’m good at this; I’d feel quite comfortable and able to handle this situation.
5. I’m extremely good at this; I’d feel very comfortable and could handle this situation very well.”

How competent and comfortable are you at…

1. Being able to admit that you might be wrong when a disagreement with a romantic partner begins to build into a serious fight.
2. Being able to put begrudging (resentful) feelings aside when having a fight with a romantic partner.
3. When having a conflict with a romantic partner, really listening to his or her complaints and not trying to “read” his/her mind.
4. Being able to take a romantic partner’s perspective in a fight and really understand his or her point of view.
5. Refraining from saying things that might cause a disagreement to build into a big fight.
6. Being able to work through a specific problem with a romantic partner without resorting to global accusations (“you always do that.”)
7. When angry with a romantic partner, being able to accept that s/he has a valid point of view even if you don’t agree with that view
8. Not exploding at a romantic partner (even when it is justified) in order to avoid a damaging conflict.
APPENDIX M
Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither disagree or agree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

1. Premarital sex is all right for a young couple planning to get married.
2. Young People should not have sex before marriage.
3. It’s all right for a couple to live together without planning to get married.
4. A young couple should not live together unless they are married.
5. Living together is a good way to figure out if a couple will be compatible in marriage.
APPENDIX N
Sexual Behaviors

Please answer each of the following questions by selecting from the answers provided.

1. Age at which you first had sexual intercourse:
   _____ Before 13  _____ 14-16  _____ 17-19
   _____ After 20  _____ I have not yet had sexual intercourse

2. Are you currently sexually active?
   _____ yes  _____ no

3. How many sexual partners have you had in the last year?
   _____ 0-1  _____ 2-4  _____ 5-7  _____ 8-10  _____ More than 10

4. How many people have you been in a dating relationship with in the past year
   (i.e., how many people have you called your boyfriend or girlfriend)?
   _____ 0-1  _____ 2-4  _____ 5-7  _____ 8-10  _____ More than 10
APPENDIX O
Spiritual Growth and Decline Scales

Read each item and indicate how much each change has occurred as a result of experiencing your parents’ divorce. Note: Spiritual Decline items are in italics.

1. Strongly agree
2. Moderately agree
3. Agree
4. Neither agree or disagree
5. Disagree
6. Moderately disagree
7. Strongly disagree

As a result of experiencing my parents’ divorce....

1. I have grown more distant from God.
2. Spiritually, I am like a new person.
3. I have grown spiritually.
4. Spirituality seems less important to me now.
5. My experience of God has changed in a positive way.
6. I have grown closer to God.
7. I no longer consider myself a spiritual person.
8. Spirituality has become more important to me.
9. In some ways I have shut down spiritually.
10. My experience of God has changed in a negative way.
APPENDIX P

Descriptions of Sacred Losses and Desecrations

Qualitative responses to the following prompt:
*The previous set of questions asks about whether you feel the divorce of your parents involved the loss or violation of something sacred. As you were reading those questions, what specifically did you feel was lost or violated (if anything) as a result of your parents’ divorce?*

MEANING OF FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

- My feeling of belonging to a whole family had been taken away and I felt that now my family was just another statistic. When my parent's were married, I felt like they had beaten the odds when divorce rates were up so high. It helps me deal with fighting or breaking up to tell myself God has a specific plan for me and that everything happens for a reason so that His plan for me can fall into order.
- Marriage itself was the sacred thing nothing else. My parents aren't religious so they never viewed their marriage as anything more than a secular contract.
- My family was very religious growing up and when the divorce happened, I lost that religious framework in my life. I saw my family as a sacred entity and then it was shattered.
- I felt like I lost something sacred not in the sense of religious sacredness but more along the lines of a bond that connected the family. A closeness, a support system that was lost.
- The loss of our family unit.
- Loss of a typical family
- The idea of marriage didn't seem that important anymore for fear that I will give my all to someone only to be left for someone else.
- My outlook on love between a man and a women
- Having a happy "normal" family
- Just the security of seeing two people in love, first-hand.
- My parents (both Mormon again or so I've heard), claim their marriage was literally made in heaven. It was a marriage made in hell. So though I value marriage short of the point of calling it sacred, nothing was lost in the particular case of my parents. They're both lost causes in every aspect of they're lives anyway.
- The bond they are supposed to have forever, for better or worse
- I felt as though the meaning of family and marriage was violated.
- The whole concept of marriage seemed broken, now that it had actually happened to me.
- A sense of FAMILY
- I was sad that I lost a home with my mother and father together.
- I just felt my entire family was lost as well as all of my childhood memories.
- The only thing I felt was lost from my parents divorce was my family...my family as a whole.
• the essence of my family
• the comfort of a home
• close relationship with both parents together, not just both parents separately at different times
• Family
• I feel that we had a tight family bond and god just took it from me when I wasn't aware. I know my parents were, but I was blind sided.
• The bonding love between all of us, in our home, was lost when the divorce occurred
• How close my family was
• Sometimes I feel like I am not part of a family anymore, because everything is so different now and we do not do anything together anymore.
• my feelings of a safe spiritual home were lost, but no blame is on me, rather it was due to the violation of one parent toward another.
• I felt that a sacred bond was broken, but not that it had anything to do with God or his plans for mine or my parents life. I think it is just natural, and just happens sometimes.
• I felt the vows that they made before their families and God were violated and they now meant nothing.
• I felt the loss of the value of marriage and the ability to trust.
• marriage as a sacred act not to be unbroken
• My family bond was lost. For example, we weren't a true family after the divorce and that I had to prove my family to people.
• My home was sacred. My home was where I was safe, and then they were no longer together in one home.
• Seeing both sides of my family. I think about how this will affect my marriage.
• The sacred things that were lost because of my parents' divorce were 1): A marriage, any marriage no matter whose it is, is sacred; and 2): A parent's, or parents', duty to his/her/their children to keep them out of harm's way. A divorce is one of the worst things a child can go through, psychologically, and parents’ divorcing without a real reason is telling the children that they are not important enough to protect. Because of the divorce, I was able to understand how the hobbits in "The Hobbit" felt when the wizard was not with them - they could make it on their own, but it was very difficult. Every once in a while, I would feel as though I were on my own - I could do it, but it was difficult. The only reason I was able to make that connection was because we were reading "The Hobbit" in my English class when my parents were divorcing.

CHILDHOOD
• I felt like I lost a lot of my childhood though my parents divorce. I had to grow up faster and take on more responsibilities when my parents divorce. When they got divorced, I stopped believing in god.

SACREDNESS OF MARRIAGE
• Just the sacredness of marriage in God's eyes.
• Just the sanctity of marriage. All my life I have been waiting to get married and their divorce made me question just for a second whether or not I wanted to.

EMOTIONAL LOSS/ABSTRACT
• The happiness and love we held dearest
• It felt like a loss of that was important to me. It was like something I knew being suddenly changed.
• A sense of belonging and loss of emotional foundation
• The loss of something that was at the center of my life for 14 years. I didn't see a divorce coming at all and something solid in my life vanished over night.
• A sense of comfort and peace was lost.
• I felt like my stability was lost but I did not feel like they were braking off anything that amazing because they did have a really bad marriage and I knew that they did need to get divorced.
• the time we all spend together, the loss of togetherness

TRUST IN FUTURE RELATIONSHIPS
• My father cheated on my mother for at least 10 years, for what we know, of their 30 year marriage. I feel like I lost the ability to trust someone in a relationship because how do you really know who th
• Any hope of a successful marriage. I thought my parents were very happy, then they got divorced.
• Maybe trust and commitment of significant other. ability to get close to someone special.

TRUST IN/LOVE FROM PARENTS
• I felt that my 'parents' had vanished. Although they are both biologically my parents I often don't actually see them that way any more.
• I feel was lost of love from my parents
• My trust for my dad
• trust between my father and I
• I felt like a part of the relationship I had with my mom increased and with my dad, decreased.
• sense of trust
• I feel that the trust was violated.
• I felt that I lost a father, who ideally would have been my source of a "right of passage" into manhood, but he would not have been that for me anyway.
• I felt like my relationship with my Dad was lost. Also my sense of a family was lost. I no longer had what I had known and grown up with. It was almost like I felt no one could relate to me. I also lost respect for my father due to the fact he cheated on my mother and left us. I think that my parent's divorce has taught me that no matter what at the end of the day you always have God to turn to. I have learned that God does not judge someone only tries to guide them on the right path.
• Trust
• My closeness with my parents has changed a lot. My dad is not around like he used to be and I feel like that I’m not on his mind anymore, even though I should be the first thing on his mind
RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD/BELIEF IN GOD

- Things felt lost before, like my connection with god, but they have all improved now. It was just a rough time then.
- my belief in the existence of god.
- I felt my love for God had decreased to where it used to be.
- my innocence, my faith in God
- I felt that the belief of the church and God was violated. The act of marriage is a promise to God and for God. That was violated and that to me is a sin. But I don’t feel sinning will tear you away from God if you live the life he wants you to live and you are sorry.

MISC

- Its different at holidays but the fighting remains the same.
- I remember being surprised at the way my then step-father would speak to my mother and to my brother and I. And I didn’t understand why God would let someone tell me not to say those things in that tone
- The blessing of being one of the only one of my friends with married parents
- The act of marriage in general is not a sacred or religious thing to me.
- The divorce happened because of an affair, i think i answered most of the questions in regards to the act of the affair, and not the divorce. The divorce was just a consequence that naturally stemmed from the affair which I would call a violation of something sacred. A divorce doesn’t necessarily imply something sacred being lost. I don’t think I blamed god or thought god had anything had anything to do with the divorce or any relationships, though I’m not sure what initiated my loss of faith
- The result of marriage
- I think marriage should be a sacred event but I do not feel something is lost if it does not work out. People are not perfect and should not stay trapped in a bad marriage; this would only cause more d
- Violated. They were my parents, and were supposed to be married forever like everyone else's parents. When I found out I hadn’t even thought about the word divorce, let alone applied it to my family!
- I felt it was unfair but not necessarily a violation of something sacred.
- Stability was taken away as I knew. Home was no longer home with things divided like they were. Holidays now are chores to spend time together.
- Happy memories.
- Marriage is a gift from god to man. The bond between husband and wife is supposed to be eternal
- The rock solid foundation my parent shad built crumbled before my eyes
- I felt hurt all over again....the pain from the divorce became relevant to me once again.
- Perhaps a little naivety and lingering innocence. That’s about it.
- The only loss was of poor parenting. I am certain that God intended for me to have loving parents, but the fact of the matter is that I came from a rather abusive home in which my dad was unfaithful with multiple other women and my mother
has a long history of mental illnesses. I was sexually abused by seven different men in my 21 years of existence, SEVEN, some of which are related. My parents never did a thing about it. That’s just the sexually related abuse. That number does not even begin to reflect the emotional, verbal, and physical abuse I endured for years on end. My parents separated in November of 2000. This was after my dad has pushed me to the ground, yelled and cussed, spit on my and burnt my on the chest with cigarette ashes all because I was sitting on the arm of a chair and did not get off when he first asked me to. My parents divorce was finalized the summer after my junior year of high school, so June or July of 2003. My mother and I moved more than 13 times from November 2000 to April 2004 when I moved out of my mother's house not even a week after I turned 18 years of age. Part of that time we were even in a homeless shelter. My mother is manic depressant severe bipolar disorder. She would leave before I got up for school and not be home until 10 or 11 at night, sometimes later. She to this day will not tell me where she was. I have dealt with PTSD, depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies. by the Grace of God I am still alive, by the Grace of God I have overcome all of that and am trying to do something with this life He has given to me. If it was not for faith and my church family who knows where I would be. Certainly not a senior in college. (after not even one semester they asked if I was done and ready to come home, not even a semester!) The Lord Jesus Christ is why I am alive, is why I live each and everyday. Yeah, I have never been in a dating relationship and I am saving myself sexually for my husband, but that is because the Lord putting that desire in my heart for my future mate. I began praying for him in seventh grade, so more than eight years ago, and although most days it is a constant inner struggle, I know that the Lord is preparing him for me and that our relationship will edify God, unlike my parent's divorce.

NO SACRED LOSS OR DESECRATION

- I had no feelings one way or the other
- I didn't feel that anything was lost or violated because we were never a very religious family. Marriage should last forever but it doesn't and that's a fact that was an option in my upbringing
- Nothing. I really wasn't religious before or during the divorce, and don't see myself becoming more or less religious as a result of my parents' divorce.
- I do not believe the divorce had a spiritual effect on me at that time or at this time - my spiritual life is quite separate from my parents'
- Nothing, I felt like it was there problem and I was happy it happened.
- Nothing was lost, except a parent not being in the house.
- I didn't feel like anything scared was lost or violated as a result of the divorce.
- I think there was a slight distrust of my father, but never of any spiritual element of my life. I had to trust that things would work out in the end, and that with time, my family could move on.
- Nothing (15)
- Nothing. I don't believe that marriage is sacred because I am not a religious person-- I was brought up not going to church.
- I don't feel like anything sacred was lost. I feel like my parent's divorce was for the best honestly. It probably should've happened a lot sooner than it did.
Nothing. My parents’ marriage was horrible (I'm really not sure what they saw in each other in the first place - they had nothing in common). Their divorce meant everyone was much much happier.

I am not a spiritual or religious person, so it had no play on my feelings.

I do not feel like there was any violation of something sacred as a result of my parents' divorce.

No - they needed to get a divorce, my dad was cheating on my mom.

My parents were not really a blessing to my life when they were together. So I didn't feel like a violation had happened.

I never thought of it as sacred i guess.

My parent's divorce seemed like an earthly matter, unrelated to my spirituality.

No. I felt this survey was somewhat lacking, because my parents splitting up made the situation better as my father was emotionally abusive and my parents fought constantly. I was GLAD they got divorced.

I did not connect divorce and god together at the time.

Nothing was lost or gained. The on thing I did notice was my dad’s immaturity.

we are on good terms now

Not much but anger

I felt no loss or violation. They are losing more than I am. I didn't get to choose my parents.

In all honesty, I was incredibly happy that my parents had gotten a divorce. They did not have a very good marriage, and I had been hoping for a divorce from a very young age. The only difficulties I faced when dealing with the divorce were not my own, but my learning to cope with how my family members were handling the divorce. I was more than ready for the event.

I don't think anything was really lost. they couldn't get along and fought more than they were friends. sometimes divorce is needed.

I never really saw marriage as a sacred act. I believed in God, but I didn't believe in the Christian God as my parents do. At a very young age (6 or 7) I had the religious view of an agnostic. My parents had both been married before. It didn't surprise me in the least when they got divorced.

I felt that nothing was violated spiritually in my life since my parents are happier and better off being separated.

In my situation, nothing sacred was lost because my parent's marriage was not sacred.
Impact of Parental Divorce on Spirituality and Romantic Relationships

Qualitative responses to the following prompt:
The previous set of questions asks about ways that you tried to handle your parents’ divorce in a religious and spiritual context. If you feel comfortable, please share more about the ways your religious and spiritual beliefs have impacted the way you understand your parents divorce and your own future relationships.

IMPACTED SPIRITUALITY
- Spirituality is something I find now completely devoid of god. Feeling a greater connection to people, events and this planet are all great things but have nothing to do with god, divine intervention, or an omniscient omnipotent figure for me.

IMPACTED FUTURE RELATIONSHIPS/VIEW OF MARRIAGE
- I've vowed that I will never do the same to my children and yet I still fear the chance that the marriage will go wrong. I've decided to leave the whole thing to God in that I don't trust myself to find the "right" partner for life.
- I grew up believing the 10 Commandments; my father had an affair which caused my parents divorce. This shook my principles to the bone and to this day I have commitment issues. I fear marriage and commitment because I feel I cannot trust myself with such things.
- I am scared to death that God is going to curse me the same way he cursed my parent's relationship.
- It’s like learning that Santa is not real. the sacred marriage is a myth now a days.
- We were never a very religious family; my parents weren't even married in a church. So it wasn't a big deal to me that the marriage ended, it was the behavior leading up to, during and after the divorce that really impacted my own future romantic relationships.
- My brother and I were raised Jewish while my step-father was maybe, Christian? I didn't feel as if there was any connection there at all...actually, I can't remember if he came to my Bat- Mitzvah or not? There wasn't any tension because of the differences of religion or belief. My mother and biological father (who divorced when I was in 3rd grade) were married by a Rabbi. My mom converted to marry my dad. And now that I'm a young adult, I've been trying to decide how important religion is to me, what it means to be Jewish and how important it is or isn’t that I marry someone else Jewish or willing to convert? It seems that in past relationships guys don’t understand two things: having divorced parents, and being Jewish. Though most have an understanding that religion plays a very small part in my life and respect that. My mom has been married 5 times...yeah, I know. My biological father was the 3rd, and was remarried (4) then divorced in 2003 and was recently remarried this past summer and had a Thai ceremony. She's become religiously eclectic. My current step-dad has no religious affiliation and prides himself on it so he didn't have many opinions on who performed the marriage. My biological dad is Jewish but doesn't practice. I do worry about how my eventual marriage will turn out. I don't want to end up like my mom.
I was brought up Catholic and went to a Catholic School all my life - religion was jammed down my throat for years. I guess with my parents divorce and other events that have happened in my life I have a very negative outlook on things, and feel as though people are hypocrites - and until I think I can let go of a lot of my anger - I will continue to have unsuccessful romantic relationships.

I always thought marriage was the 'right way' to go, normal and accepted, and now I question whether marriage even makes sense to being happy in life, or whether it creates a sense of dependence that is negative.

PURPOSE FOR DIVORCE/BLESSING IN DISGUISE

- I think that God has a plan for everything and for them it just wasn’t meant to be. That doesn’t scare me or anything. they were 19 and 23 when they had me so I know that they were young and they didn’t know what they were getting into.
- I feel as thought my parents' divorce happened for a reason, there were other issues behind it, I feel as though God saw that and knew that it would be best for all of us if the marriage ended. My parents are still close to each other and I am thankful for that, they both still care for each other. This has shown me that no matter what the future holds for my relationships, there are many different kinds and that he will help me find the relationship that is right for me.
- I just feel that God has a separate plan for everyone and just because my parent's marriage didn't work, doesn't mean that mine won't.
- It helps me deal with fighting or breaking up to tell myself God has a specific plan for me and that everything happens for a reason so that His plan for me can fall into order.
- I am Catholic and I believe in god. I went through a divorce when I was 5 years old with my real dad and now I am going through another with my mom and step father at age 20. I believe God has a plan but it is hard to convince yourself that at such tragedy.
- I have learned through my beliefs that my parent's divorce was never meant to be, but God made the best of a very bad situation. My mom was able to survive her marriage by living for her kids. For my future relationships, there is a lot I would do differently my mom didn't do such as having God at the center of my relationship and making sure God wants me to be with this man for the rest of my life through much prayer.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- God has been a big part of my life and my mothers. God is not part of my dad’s life at all. He has never been religious. Though the church says divorce is always wrong, I do not believe that. I believe it should be honored but I believe in some relationships it’s needed. I have grown closer to God and started going to church more to look for answers.
- My spirituality really helped me through the struggles of my parents divorce. I drew some strength from it, and often sought the counsel of a minister. Since then I have adopted a greatly skeptic set of beliefs, to the extent of being agnostic or possibly atheistic, although this shift of religious feelings came as a result of maturation and logic (around the time of entry into college), rather than as a result of my parents divorce.
• I think that my parent's divorce has taught me that no matter what at the end of the day you always have God to turn to. I have learned that God does not judge someone only tries to guide them on the right path.
• Mostly, my spiritual beliefs after the divorce have helped me understand that God meant for that to happen (the divorce) and that there were positive outcomes.
• My spiritual beliefs have grown through this
• It helped me cope better because my spirituality helped assure that everything was going to be okay.

MULTI-DIMENSION RESPONSE
• I know that everything happens for a reason and my mother is happily remarried and I have a step-father there for me when my own father walked out. I grew deeper spiritually through seeing my mother and his relationship because God was actively apart of it. I struggle with certain aspects of my own romantic relationships but am comforted to know that my own marriage does not have to be like that of my parents.

MISC
• I understand that certain things happen for a reason and that if one relationship doesn’t work than that means there is someone else out there that is meant for you.
• God is a forgiving God and people are human and make mistakes. I don't think people intend to divorce but it happens. Although I don't believe people hold the commitment sacred or of religious importance, I do but I don't really think people are made to be married.
• I was grown up in church and my dad was a pastor. That is what made the divorce so hard because I was always taught that divorce was not good.
• I want to have someone with strong religious convictions.
• My father left my mother for another woman. I learned from this and vowed to be vigilant and not to ever dishonor my wife in this way.
• My mother is way more spiritual and in turn taught me more about being spiritual and finding someone I can positively share my spirituality with.
• As I've stated my parents were by no means spiritual and had no religious affiliation. I found all of this on my own. Knowing what I know now, I see that my parents divorce was wrong. Divorce itself is wrong. There is never a reason to get a divorce. The one good thing I have found from this experience is the trying to find the right person. It is essential to make sure someone has found the right one. Otherwise marriage will be very unhappy.
• I think it's ok that my parents got a divorce. I don't see marriage as a sacred bond (even though this view was forced upon me in Catholic school which I attended for K-8th grades). I feel that this schooling didn't really let me decide on anything religion related. Rather it forced it upon me. Now that I am grown and able to see things from many views, I feel that divorce is ok if the marriage isn't a happy one, where both partners are miserable. As for my future relationships, religion isn't important. Both of my siblings have married people who belong to different religions, and had non-religious weddings. Religion doesn't play a role in my selection of a partner, (my last girlfriend was of a different religion) and won't
play a role in my decision process to get married. If she wants it to play a role, that is fine with me, but if not, that is also ok, and we can get married in a non-religious ceremony.

- My spiritual beliefs, NOW, affect how able I am to forgive my parents of many & other much greater transgressions than the divorce - in MY nuclear/original family's life, the divorce was very much THE LEAST of our problems. My mother experiencing psychotic breaks during that time, my father being hospitalized for PTSD brought on my a tour in Nam and my own near-fatal struggle with eating disorders, all around that time (of the divorce) far surpassed any spiritual effects the divorce may have had. In fact I would say I HAD NO SPIRITUAL LIFE whatsoever; prior to or during the divorce, despite that I was raised in the church. My relationship with God came later.

- I suppose if I had religious beliefs more in line with those of my parents, I would maybe lose respect for them because they violated the sanctity of marriage. I do not, however, have those beliefs. I haven't believed in the Christian God for a very long time even though my entire family is devoutly religious (Irish catholic). My Dad was clinically depressed and tried to commit suicide. My Mom couldn't deal with it so they divorced. I blame God and I blame myself to this very day. As an adolescent I held myself personally responsible for my Dad leaving. I still feel like it was in my power to help him and I failed him.

- My spiritual views were not changed by the divorce at all. My dad was a fuck that could not keep it in his pants. That is what it came down to. I blamed him and his slut for everything my mom and the rest of us had to go through. It took five years before I could even stand to talk to that fuck, and even today I think my dad is a fuck up.

- I feel spiritual but do not believe I have to attend church to be spiritual.

NOTHING TO DO WITH GOD

- I don't think I blamed god or thought god had anything had anything to do with the divorce or any relationships, though I’m not sure what initiated my loss of faith.

- I feel like the divorce has not effected my religious beliefs being that they were never strong in the first place.

- I don't really follow any one religion. I have a mishmash of my own beliefs that aren't really all that traditional, but they do have some traditional ideas.

- I am an atheist. I don’t believe in god...or have a religion

- no impact (4)

- I am not very religious at all.

- I'm agnostic. This stuff does not affect me.

- I haven't been religious in a long time, so it's hard to define things in that context. the divorce didn't change my view because I had given it up years before.

- I do not believe that religious or spiritual beliefs have impacted my parents' divorce. In my current/future romantic relationships I know that there could be a challenge to overcome my views (atheist) with another’s religious views. I know that as long as both me and my partner respect each other and can accept each other there will be little problem.
The divorce had little to do with God. My father went mentally insane and divorced my mother. He went into a depression for a lack of communication.

I've never thought about relationships and religion as being related until now. I do not believe divorces are a punishment for ones lack of spirituality/religiosity. Religion (church member) might help a couple resolve issues and guide a couple but at the end of it all the relationship as about the chemistry and how much respect and values a couple has in common. In all 22 years my parents have been religious and we used to pray as a family but in those 22 years I have never seen a year or even a month in which all was "rosey" and happy times. They however stayed together because they were catholic and for them divorce was not an option--until they decided they could no longer deal with the situation.

I am Catholic. It didn't really effect my spiritual connection. I was mad a little at God but I was very young and in the "it's not fair" situation. I did pray to God but I'm not sure it made me any closer to Him or anything in that matter. God has always been a part of my life, I did pray to Him to help me and my family get through the situation.

I don't believe in God, so spiritual beliefs haven't had an effect on the way my parents' divorce has impacted my life.

I don't feel that the divorce had much if anything to do with spirituality

From the start I was ok with my parents divorce. I knew that it was coming and was able to prepare myself when it actually happened. I was able to forgive them and move on rather quickly. I still have a good relationship with both parents and I am still adjusting to their single lives.