

SPIRITUAL APPRAISALS AND RELIGIOUS COPING:  
EXPLORING NEW DIMENSIONS OF LATE ADOLESCENTS' EXPERIENCES OF  
PARENTAL DIVORCE

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## ABSTRACT

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This study examined the relationship between spiritual appraisals (i.e. sacred loss, desecration, manifestation of God) and individual psychological maladjustment (i.e. anxiety/trauma, depression), psychological distress (i.e. painful feelings about divorce), personal and spiritual growth (i.e. post-traumatic growth, spiritual growth and spiritual decline) and parent-child relationship quality (i.e. satisfaction with both mother and father and level of behavioral conflict with both mother and father.) This study also examined the mediation effects of religious coping variables (i.e., negative religious coping, positive religious coping, blessing in disguise and religious conversion) on the bivariate links between negative spiritual appraisals and criterion variables.

One hundred and nine undergraduates participated in this study. Analyses indicated that there was a strong correlation between negative spiritual appraisals and psychological maladjustment, psychological distress and personal growth. These relationships remained significant after taking into account global religiousness. Positive spiritual appraisals were correlated with increased anxiety/trauma and personal growth. Hierarchical regressions were used to control for secular appraisals of threat, harm and challenge and results showed that negative spiritual appraisals seem to trigger greater negative secular appraisals; some but not all of the links between negative spiritual appraisals and the criterion variables remained significant once controlling for secular appraisals. Spiritual appraisal variables were not related to any measures of parent-child relationship quality. Results of the mediation analyses suggest that negative religious

coping partially or fully mediated the link between negative spiritual appraisals and individual psychological maladjustment and psychological distress. Likewise, positive religious coping and blessing in disguise mediated the relationship between negative spiritual appraisals and post-traumatic growth. Religious conversion was not a significant mediator. Implications of the clinical application of these findings include exploration of emotional and spiritual implications of parental divorce on psychological adjustment and views towards marriage in both a secular and religious counseling setting. Future research should further investigate implications of spiritual appraisals on parent-child relationship quality and on romantic relationship dynamics.

Dedicated to Luke, my husband, for his constant encouragement, daily prayers and unwavering belief in me throughout this entire process.

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## INTRODUCTION

Parental divorce is a life changing experience in the lives of about one million American children every year (U.S. Census Bureau, 1987, 1998). Studies exploring parental divorce in the lives of children have suggested family break up is linked to greater psychological distress (e.g., Ross & Mirowsky, 1999; Zill, Morrison & Coiro, 1993), greater risk taking behaviors (e.g., Axinn & Thorton, 1996; Smith, 1997), economic hardship (e.g., Webster, Orbuch & House, 1995), lower educational attainments (e.g., Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Ross & Mirowsky, 1999) and a variety of difficulties in romantic and family relationships (e.g. Amato & Booth, 1991; Zill, Morrison & Coiro, 1993). However, while the majority of the literature consistently suggests divorce raises the likelihood of long-term distress for children and their families (e.g., Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale & McRae, 1998; Amato and Keith, 1991), most children from divorced families do not appear psychologically different than their peers from intact families. And, for those children coming from high conflict families, parental divorce can potentially be a positive event (Booth & Amato, 2001).

Researchers have taken a variety of theoretical positions in an effort to understand children's varying reactions to parental divorce, and all of the models have been shown to partially account for outcomes related to parental divorce (Amato, 1993). These theories focus primarily on environmental variables such as loss of noncustodial parent, adjustment of the custodial parent, interparental conflict, economic hardship, and the overall impact of stressful life changes. One limitation of these models is that they have interpreted parental divorce as an environmentally stressful event to be endured by youth without accounting for intrapersonal responses of children to the divorce. In other words,

researchers have by and large examined the impact of external stressful dimensions of the divorce experience on individual adjustment while neglecting to examine intrapersonal variables, such as youths' appraisals of meaning and their coping behaviors as predictors of their post-divorce functioning.

While the majority of mainstream research on parental divorce and youth's adjustment has focused on environmental variables, three specific studies highlight the relevance of children's use of specific appraisals of meaning and coping strategies to understand children's personal adjustment to parental divorce (Krazt, Clark, Pryn & Usher, 1985; Sheets, Sandler, & West, 1996; Sandler, Tein, & West, 1994). Stemming from Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) research on appraisals of meaning and coping, these three studies suggest that negative appraisals and both positive and negative coping techniques may be related to psychological symptoms over and above traditional measures of life stress (Krantz, et al., 1985; Sheets et al., 996; Sandler et al., 1994). Given these findings, probing more deeply into youth's intrapersonal experiences seems imperative to advancing the field's understanding of the impact of parental divorce.

Interestingly, none of the research on children's adjustment to divorce takes into account the role of religion in intrapersonal functioning, appraisal of and coping with life stressors or family dynamics. However, research over the past 20 years clearly suggests that for many Americans religion is an important factor in the way individuals understand their roles and the relationships within their family (for review see Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001). This research is consistent with the theological emphasis that all major world religions place on the sacred nature of family and marriage. Likewise, a robust body of literature shows that religion is often an important resource



for understanding and coping with crisis for both adults and late adolescents (Pargament, 1997; Lee, 2002). Despite the ample evidence that American families incorporate religious perspectives and values into the way they understand themselves and deal with crisis, the research examining adolescents' religious perspectives on parental divorce is sparse. Clearly, a tremendous gap exists in the field's understanding of the role of religion in interpreting and coping with parental divorce.

Recent research has begun to address this gap. Mahoney et al. (1999) have conducted research which suggests that the sanctification of family relationships is related to positive family interactions and this sets the stage for understanding how the dissolution of marriage may affect late adolescents who viewed the family unit as sacred prior to a divorce. This research represents an important theoretical step in the psychological study of religion because it addresses the psychological mechanisms by which religion operates instead of simply addressing global measures of religiousness such as degree of religious involvement and self-rated religiousness. Additionally, research examining the loss of the sacred and desecration of the sacred in other domains suggests that perceptions of sacred loss and the desecration of the marital relationship in family life can also be potent predictors of the adjustment of family members (Magyar, 2001; Pargament, et al., 2005). These spiritual appraisals represent an important bridge between existing research highlighting the importance of secular appraisals of meaning in understanding youth's adjustment to parental divorce, and the religious beliefs and practices espoused by many Americans.

And, while research examining specific spiritual appraisals of stressful events is relatively new, a large body of research suggests that religious coping techniques are

often utilized by individuals experiencing distress and that these techniques are related to personal adjustment (see Pargament 1997 for review). Again, in the context of the research cited earlier (Krantz, et al., 1985; Sheets et al., 1996 & Sandler et al., 1994), studying the spiritual appraisals and religious coping techniques employed by late adolescents seems particularly pertinent to understanding their adjustment to parental divorce as one third of those experiencing parental divorce do so after the age of sixteen. And, late adolescents are in the transition to adulthood and are making critical decisions about the values they hold regarding love, marriage and commitment.

The purpose of this thesis is to present a theory about the religious and spiritual dimensions of parental divorce and to test this theory with regards to late adolescents' experiences of parental divorce. More specifically, the present study's examination of late adolescents' religious and spiritual experiences of parental divorce represents an interface between four primary areas of research. The first is five decades worth of research examining children's experience of parental divorce and links to psychological maladjustment. The new construct of "psychological pain" associated with parental divorce is also carefully examined. The section concludes with an overview of five theories attempting to explain the links between parental divorce and psychological adjustment and makes the case of expanding these theories to include religious variables. The second area of research discussed involves links between religiousness and psychological adjustment of late adolescents. This section includes a descriptive picture of late adolescents' religiousness, and examines college students' use of religious coping in times of crisis. A third area of research covers the role of religion in marital functioning and provides a theoretical justification for examining late adolescents'

spiritual appraisals in the context of parental divorce. Specifically, the research examining the link between global religiousness of spouses (e.g., frequency of church attendance, and prayer) and marital functioning is reviewed, followed by a review of the research examining the links between positive spiritual appraisals (e.g., sanctification of marriage) and marital functioning. The fourth section makes the transition from the spiritual appraisals of marital life and discusses the vulnerability of families holding these sacred appraisals when the marriage is dissolved through divorce. It goes on to review the handful of studies examining secular appraisals and coping both in general and in the context of parental divorce. And, this section presents and defines several emerging constructs that could illuminate college student's interpretation of parental divorce and help account for individual variation in college student's long term post divorce adjustment. These constructs include sanctification of parental divorce, parental divorce as a sacred loss, parental divorce as a desecration and parental divorce as a blessing in disguise. This paper then goes on to discuss the convergence of these areas of research into a theoretical model and to present the methodology and statistical results of this study. The final section provides a discussion of the results section and concludes with suggestions for future directions of research.

#### Parental Divorce: Review of the Literature

Research on the impact of parental divorce on youth's psychological functioning presents a mixed picture. On one hand, youth whose parents divorce are more likely to display lower mental health, increased psychopathology, lower educational attainment, higher levels of anxiety and depression and increased levels of drug and alcohol use and sexual activity when compared with youths from households headed by their biological,

ever married parents (i.e. continuously married to same spouse) (e.g., Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Ross & Mirowsky, 1999; Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale & McRae, 1998; and Zill, Morrison & Coiro, 1993). However, the magnitude of these relationships have been a source of debate over the years. Amato and Keith (1991b) and Amato (2001) addressed this issue with two thorough meta-analyses of the effects of divorce on children from the 1950's through the 1990's. Both meta-analyses consistently "indicated that [on average] children with divorced parents scored significantly lower than children with continuously married parents on a variety of measures of achievement, adjustment and well-being" (Amato, 2001, p. 365). Yet, the authors suggest that since effect sizes in these meta-analyses are weak, they must be interpreted cautiously. That is, while these relationships hold true for some children experiencing parental divorce, the majority of children whose parents divorce are no more likely than their counterparts from intact families to experience serious psychological maladjustment (Zill, Morrison & Coiro, 1993). Specifically, the base rate of children between ages 12-16 who seek mental health care is 10 percent. This rate doubles to 20% for children of divorce. However, the remaining 80% of children experiencing parental divorce are indistinguishable from their peers in intact families in terms of psychological adjustment (Zill, Morrison & Coiro, 1993). Thus, post-divorce adjustment must be understood in light of the variability among these children as parental divorce does not inevitably produce maladjustment.

#### *Links between Parental Divorce and Youths' Individual Psychological Maladjustment*

In order to begin exploring links between psychological adjustment following parental divorce and religious and spiritual constructs, it is important to understand the well-documented links between psychological maladjustment and parental divorce.

Unfortunately, untangling the most salient of these variables from the plethora of research can be difficult. The following section provides a summary of the specific criterion variables linked consistently with children's experience of parental divorce that will be utilized in the current study.

As discussed earlier, research consistently documents that parental divorce is related to more impairment on such factors as psychological maladjustment and higher levels of both alcohol and drug use (e.g., Ross & Mirowsky, 1999; Cherlin et al., 1998; Axinn & Thornton, 1996; Amato & Keith, 1991a; Flewelling & Bauman, 1990). In terms of psychological maladjustment, Cherlin et al. (1998) cites the long-term effects of parental divorce on decreased mental health (i.e., increased levels of depression, anxiety, phobias and obsessions) in adults once pre-divorce family characteristics were accounted for. Also, Amato and Keith's (1991a, 1991b) meta-analyses document a relationship between parental divorce and decreased psychological adjustment (i.e., emotional adjustment, depression, anxiety, life satisfaction) for both children and adults. Interestingly, in Amato and Keith (1991a), studies examining the relationship between parental divorce and adult psychological adjustment yielded an effect size of  $-.32$  ( $p < .001$ ; fail safe  $N = 1,594$ ) second in size only behind the intergenerational transmission of divorce. In addition, greater use of illicit drugs has been linked to parental divorce and family structure (Flewelling & Bauman, 1990). Specifically, adolescents age 12 to 14 who had experienced parental divorce and were living in single parent or stepparent families were significantly ( $p < .01$ ) more likely to have ever tried alcohol, ever puffed a cigarette, and ever smoked marijuana than same-aged adolescents in intact families (Flewelling & Bauman, 1990). Interestingly, all odds-ratio values except one increased

slightly once age, gender, race, education level of parents and parent education level were controlled for though significance levels did not change. Given the strength of effect sizes yielded by psychological adjustment assessments reflecting depression and anxiety levels and illicit drug uses measures, these variables have been included as criterion variables in the current study. That is, while this study does not attempt to address all variables show to be related to parental divorce, those included have been chosen due to their consistent link to post-divorce adjustment.

#### *Links between Parental Divorce and Lower Quality Parent-Child Relationships*

In addition to the well-documented links between parental divorce and increased psychological maladjustment, parental divorce has also been linked with lower parent-child relationship quality. For example, some studies suggest that children from divorced families tend to experience less parental involvement in their schoolwork and lower parental participation in social activities by both their mothers and fathers (e.g., Astone & McLanahan, 1991). Amato and Keith's (1991b) meta-analysis further documents lower quality parent-child relationships with both mothers and fathers though effect sizes are small (mean effect size = -.19, -.26; Fail safe N = 212, 456 respectively;  $p < .001$  both). They also document that "the estimated effects of divorce are stronger for measures of parent-child relationships than for measures of child functioning" (i.e., academic achievement, conduct & psychological well-being; Amato & Keith, p. 31, 2001). Additionally, research also suggests that effects of parental divorce on the parent-child relationship continue into adulthood or, in some cases, might not be evident until adulthood. For example, Zill, Morrison and Coiro (1993) found "most grown children of divorce are alienated from at least one parent," leaving "many of these young people

...especially vulnerable to influences outside the family" (p. 101). White (1992) suggests that this parental alienation translates into reduced social support (e.g., listening and advising), reduced instrumental support (e.g., child care) and reduced financial support (e.g., monetary loan) to adult children. Specifically, ever-divorced fathers provide 20%-25% less total support (i.e. social, instrumental, and financial) to their adult children than do first-married fathers and ever-divorced mothers give 10%-15% less total support than their first-married counterparts (White, 1992). White (1992) found that limited financial resources available to post-divorce parents only partially explained the lower financial support they provided their children. Rather, the majority of the support deficit was explained by decreased parent-child solidarity. In other words, lower relationship quality between the post-divorce parents and their children explained the lower financial support the parents provided. This increased risk for distress in parent-child relationships after divorce emphasizes the importance of addressing family dynamics in research. One way this study contributes to current research is by examining how spiritual appraisals of parental divorce and religious coping with this experience relates to the quality of the post-divorce parent child relationship.

*Links between Parental Divorce Post-Childhood and Youths' Individual Psychological*

*Maladjustment*

While the emphasis in published research tends to be on the psychological adjustment of individuals who have experienced parental divorce in childhood, the literature also suggests that parental divorce that occurs after age 16 or "post-childhood" can also be related to negative psychological adjustment. Using a sample of 11,407 adults age 33 who had been followed since age 7, Furstenberg and Kiernan (2001)

examined the relationship between parental divorce that occurred during three time periods (childhood: age 7-16; transitional: 17-20; early adulthood: 21-33) and various measures of psychological well-being and overall functioning. The comparison groups for this study were same aged individuals from ever-married families. Of those experiencing parental divorce, one in three experienced it after age 16. They found that experiencing parental divorce post-childhood (i.e., both the transitional cohort and the early adulthood cohort) was associated with increased frequency of cohabitation and increased dissolution of partnerships compared to the children from intact families. This result held even after demographics assessed at child age 7 were controlled; this suggests that selection factors do not account for this finding (Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001). In addition, the men and women from the post-childhood divorce cohort were just as likely as individuals from early divorcing families to exhibit higher malaise scores at age 33 relative to those from never divorced families. Also, women in the early adulthood cohort were more likely to receive welfare benefits at age 33 than adults from intact families. Furstenberg & Kiernan (2001) concluded that, other than no significant difference in education and heavy smoking for males, "the effects are similar regardless of whether their parents divorced when they were children or "postponed" the breakup of their marriage until after they were grown" (p. 453). Furstenberg & Kiernan's (2001) research is particularly salient to the current study because it specifically delineates the effects of parental divorce for adolescents 17 and older. In the current study, 28% of the participants reported that their parents divorced when they were between ages 16-19. For them, their parent's divorce is relatively recently occurring event with the potential to



negatively impact both individual psychological adjustment and the quality of their relationship with their parents.

*Links between Parental Divorce and Non-Clinical "Psychological Pain"*

The literature reviewed above consistently shows that children experiencing parental divorce are at greater risk for psychological maladjustment as indicated in higher anxiety and depression levels, higher levels of risk taking behaviors such as drug and alcohol use and decreased quality of parent-child relationship. Yet, despite the consistency of this research, the effect sizes representing the differences in adjustment are, on average, small. In their meta-analysis, Amato and Keith (1991a) document an average mean effect size of 0.14 standard deviations. In other words, children from divorced families are more *similar* to their counter parts in ever-married households than they are different. However, "to suggest that divorce is an insignificant transition simply is insensitive" (Emery, 1999, p. 1). In fact, clinical observations of children with divorce parents suggest that reports of intense negative affect are common even if these children score within normal range on objective measures of maladjustment. Laumann-Billings and Emery (2000) have taken a unique approach to this apparent discrepancy by developing a measure assessing "the more subtle psychological distress or pain commonly noted by clinicians who treat people from divorced families" (p. 671-672).

Laumann-Billings and Emery (2000) developed the "Painful Feelings About Divorce" (PFAD) scale in order to examine some of the more subtle implications of parental divorce on the psychological adjustment of children. Specifically, this measure examined perceptions of loss, paternal blame, maternal blame, seeing life through a "filter" of divorce, acceptance and self-blame. Laumann-Billings & Emery (2000)

completed two cross-sectional studies as part of the initial development and validation of the PFAD scale. Study one sought to systematically assess “subjective ill-being and to provide empirical evidence for clinical observations [of more subtle psychological distress or pain]” (Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000, p. 673). In this first study, students from both divorced and ever-married families were recruited from undergraduate classes at a Midatlantic university. Students from the ever-married family group formed the comparison group. Adolescents in the second study were recruited from a community sample. No comparison group was recruited for the second study as the primary goal was to “replicate and generalize results from the divorced sample in Study 1 to a very different sample of young people from divorced families” (Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000, p. 679). Though all three groups scored primarily within non-clinical ranges on measures of depression and anxiety, significant differences between the divorced groups and the intact group were found on the subscales of the PFAD scale.

In their first study, Laumann-Billings and Emery (2000) found that though 80% of the young adults from divorced families indicated "Even though it was hard, divorce was the right thing for my family," only 48% indicated that "divorce relieved a lot of tensions in my family." Childhood seemed to be more distressful for the divorced cohort as they were over three times as likely to believe that "they had harder childhoods than most people" when compared to the intact family group (Laumann-Billings and Emery, 2000, p. 677). Additionally, about 75% of these young adults felt that they would be a different person if it had not been for the divorce and they were twice as likely as their cohorts from intact families to indicate that their childhoods had been foreshortened.

Laumann-Billings & Emery (2000) intentionally used a sample of youth who had

also experienced parental divorce but with markedly different demographic characteristics for Study 2. They did not include a control group for Study 2. While the parental divorce sample in the first study was primarily middle class to upper class and pursuing higher education, the sample in the second study were primarily from low-income families and experienced much chaos in their home lives including sexual and physical abuse, parental substance abuse and conditions of extreme poverty (Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000). However, despite these differences, this second cohort also scored in the non-clinical range on measures of depression and anxiety as did both groups from Study 1. And, despite the demographic differences, feelings of distress related to parental divorce were similar for the Study 1 divorce cohort and the Study 2 cohort. In both studies, late adolescents experiencing childhood parental divorce were 3 times more likely than their peers from intact families to wonder if their father loved them. Further, across both studies, feelings of loss, particularly paternal loss, were prevalent. Thus, Laumann-Billings and Emery have demonstrated that parental divorce is associated with significant levels of psychological distress, though the items do not tap into traditional items capturing psychiatric symptomatology. Psychological distress provides useful insight into children's experiences of parental divorce and holds significant implications for those interacting with children of divorce who do not exhibit more overt manifestations of distress. In the present study, the subscales of the PFAD scale will be used as criterion variables to evaluate the relationship between spiritual appraisals of parental divorce and more subtle interpersonal and intrapersonal reactions to that divorce.

*Five Theories Explaining Links between Parental Divorce and Children's Psychological Maladjustment*

Most efforts to explain the variability associated with children's adjustment to parental divorce have centered around five theoretical perspectives: the loss of the noncustodial parent, the adjustment of the custodial parent, interparental conflict, economic hardship, and stressful life changes (Amato, 1993). The parental loss perspective suggests that a two-parent family provides more social resources for children than does a single-parent family and thus, two-parent families offer the best environment for healthy socialization. That is, in divorced families, both parents are likely to be in the labor force, reducing the amount and quality of time spent with children. Amato (1993) also cites research suggesting single parent family structures provide a weaker authority structure that, when combined with a lack of parental supervision, increases children's risk of psychological distress. Evidence for this theory is modest as research results range from supportive to non-supportive (Amato, 1993). The second theory suggests that the psychological adjustment of the custodial parent accounts for post-divorce adjustment. This theory draws on existing developmental literature that links better parental mental health to more positive child adjustment. Given the stresses parents are likely to face after a divorce such as economic difficulties, residential change, and the loss of a life partner, this theory seems plausible. Research does support the link between parental post-divorce adjustment and children's post-divorce well-being but, due to methodological problems in these studies, caution is required in interpretation (Amato, 1993). According to the interparental conflict theory, marital conflict accounts for a significant portion of the negative psychological adjustment experienced by children

post-parental divorce. That is, marital conflict prior to and after the actual divorce is thought to be the culprit for children's maladjustment. This theory emphasizes that it is not the divorce per se but rather the presence of conflict that is important for understanding children's post-divorce adjustment. Thus, a marriage void of parental conflict that ends in a low conflict divorce is hypothesized as being a lower risk factor for child maladjustment than a high conflict marriage that ends in a high conflict divorce. Much research has examined children's experiences of parental divorce from this perspective and support for this theory is strong. The fourth theory highlights economic hardship as the mechanism by which children's negative psychological adjustment develops. In his review of the literature, Amato (1993) found few relevant studies and thus concluded more research is needed before this theory can be adequately evaluated. The final theory incorporates elements of the four previous theories; it suggests that it is children's cumulative experience of multiple life stressors that accounts for negative psychological adjustment. While support for this theory is promising, the small number of studies that address this multivariate perspective suggests additional research is necessary.

After examining the empirical support for each perspective, Amato (1993) concluded that though some support exists for each model, "no single model can account fully for the pattern of findings reported..." (p. 35). And, though the interparental conflict model has the strongest research support, he suggests that there is still evidence that "some other factor, other than marital conflict, is operating in some single-parent [due to divorce] families to affect children's well-being negatively" (Amato, 1993, p. 35). Given the complexities of divorced families' lifestyles, his conclusions are not surprising.

Indeed, it would be an injustice to these families to suggest that a single factor explains their experiences. At the same time, ignoring the difficulties that these families face would be insensitive. Amato and Keith (1991b) and Amato (2001) also suggest that current theories of the relationship between parental divorce and increased maladjustment are lacking in explanatory power. Increasing the breadth of research to include more subtle, non-pathological types of disturbance is one way to tap into additional variance (Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000). As religion is an important part of family life (Mahoney, et al., 1999; Mahoney, et al., 2001), variation in the psychological adjustment of youth whose parents have divorced may also be explained by religious and spiritual constructs.

### Religion in the Lives of Late Adolescents

#### *Religiousness Levels Among College Students*

While the importance of religion in the lives of most Americans is clearly established (cf. Pargament & Mahoney, 2002), the importance of religion for late adolescents in college is more tentatively understood. In fact, higher education is commonly understood as a primary factor leading to lower religiousness. However, a recent study raises questions about the legitimacy of this perspective. Using national longitudinal data from over 4,000 college students surveyed both freshmen and senior years of college, Lee (2002) found that almost 38% of college students experienced a strengthening in their religious beliefs during college and only 13.7 % experienced a weakening. One-half of the group reported no change. Lee (2002) suggests that while further study is needed, it does appear that suggesting higher education has a unilateral secularizing effect on students is an overstatement. Additionally, a national survey of

college students found that 77% reported being members of a church or synagogue or reported membership in a campus religious group while 85% of these same college students stated that religion is "very important to fairly important" to them (Gallup & Bezilla, 1992). Clearly, religion and spirituality are relevant issues for college students.

*Links between Late Adolescent's Religiousness and Psychological functioning*

Late adolescents in college may be more religious than conventional wisdom suggests, but do their religious beliefs and practices affect their decisions, behaviors or psychological functioning? The following section addresses this question by summarizing findings relevant to the current study. Namely, this section serves to paint a picture of religion's relationship with psychological functioning for college students and, in the process, further justify including specific criterion variables into the current study.

While some have suggested that higher levels of religiousness are related to decreased mental health in both adolescents and adults, a recent review of the literature by Koenig & Larson (2001) contradicts this perspective. These researchers point out that higher levels of religiousness are in fact related to higher levels of mental health for both populations. Additionally, Hackney and Sanders's (2003) meta-analysis found that the correlation between religiousness and mental health was stronger when both mental health and religious variables represented internal and personal beliefs and practices. More specifically, Hackney and Sanders (2003) found that the relationships between anxiety, depression and religion were particularly dependent on the type of religious measure used. When the religious variables used reflected "institutional participation" (i.e. frequency of church attendance and participation in church) links to psychological functioning were statistically significant but weak. However, when measures of

religiousness reflected internalized religious beliefs and practices, much stronger correlations were found with higher levels of psychological functioning. These results seem to hold true in college populations as Schaefer and Corsuch (1991) found that internalized religious beliefs were related with decreased anxiety and externally motivated religiousness was related with increased anxiety. Likewise, Watson, Hood, Foster & Morris (1988) found that pro-religious and internalized religious beliefs were related to lower depression while externally motivated religiousness was related to higher levels of depression.

Studies examining alcohol use and abuse in adolescents report similarly robust relationships between alcohol use and global religiousness. That is, researchers have concluded, "religiousness has consistently shown an inverse relationship with alcohol use" (Ham & Hope, 2003, pg. 742). More specifically, college students who report a belief that "religion is not very important" have a "much higher likelihood of binge [drinking] than other students" (odds ratio: 3.57; Wechsler et al., 1995). And, when compared to students affiliated with a religion, nonaffiliated students tended to drink more heavily and frequently (Patock-Peckham et al., 1998; Perkins, 1987). In their meta-analysis, Koenig & Larson (2001) found that "almost all reports finding less drug use among the more religious (42 of 48 effect sizes) again concerned adolescents or young adults" (pg. 72). Also, Miller, Davies & Greenwald (2000) utilized the National Comorbidity Survey to (NCS) to examine the relationship between religious personal devotion, personal conservatism and institutional conservatism, and substance use in a nationally representative population of adolescents. The study included adolescents age 15-19; the mean age was 17 years and 47% already had graduated from high school.



Miller et. al., found that while all three variables were related to lower alcohol use, only religious personal devotion and institutional conservatism were inversely related to use of marijuana and cocaine.

Clearly, religion can be a play a powerful role in shaping college students' emotional and behavioral functioning. And, research has repeatedly demonstrated that measures of internalized religious beliefs are more strongly related to higher levels of psychological functioning than global measures of religiousness. Yet, studies assessing the relationship between these “weaker” measures of religiousness and some types of psychological maladjustment still report statistically significant results. Taken together, these findings suggest that religion can be a potent influence shaping and directing individuals' behaviors and attitudes. However, with one area of exception, very little research has explored the mechanisms by which this shaping and directing takes place. Religious coping is the one area of exception and the following section reviews research on religious coping and the psychological functioning of college students. In the process, the following section provides the foundation for specific religious coping hypotheses discussed in detail in a subsequent section.

#### Religious Coping: Introduction to the Construct

Pargament's (1997) definition of religious coping has provided the framework for the majority of the empirical literature examining links between college students' use of religious coping and psychological adjustment during times of stress. He defines religious coping as “a search for significance in times of stress in ways related to the sacred.” In order to understand this definition, it is important to understand the three key phrases that have been melded together to form it. First, the phrase “search for

significance” reflects the innate pursuit of meaning or significance that humans engage in throughout the course of their lifetime. The phrase “in times of stress” reflects the precipitating negative event that often threatens individuals’ search for significance and initiates a struggle to integrate the stressful event into that individual’s paradigm of meaning. The final phrase “in ways related to the sacred” reflects the unique dimension of religious coping, namely the relationship with the sacred. The sacred refers to concepts of God, the divine and the transcendent that can, through association, be linked to any object or relationship. Thus, this definition allows researchers to examine the dynamic, ongoing processes through which the stressful events of life are understood in the context of the sacred.

Pargament’s (1997) definition of religious coping led to the development of the RCOPE, an instrument divided into 21 subscales each measuring particular methods of religious coping. Research with the RCOPE suggests that different methods of religious coping had different implications for psychological adjustment. For example, while “attributing the negative event to God’s will or God’s love is never associated with poorer outcomes, reframing the event as a punishment from God ... is tied to poorer outcomes 52% of the time” (Pargament, 1997, pg. 288). Subsequent factor analysis suggested that the 21 subscales could be classified as either “positive” or “negative” religious coping. That is, positive religious coping reflect adaptive religious coping practices linked with more positive psychological adjustment, while negative religious coping reflects maladaptive religious coping practices linked with greater psychological maladjustment. The following section describes late adolescents’ religious coping as measured by the RCOPE and other measures and links with psychological adjustment. This section serves

to both validate the importance of religious coping in a late adolescent sample and justify the specific hypothesis of the current study that will be described more fully later on.

*Religious Coping in Late Adolescents: An Overview of the Literature*

Park and Cohen (1993) studied the use of Pargament et al.'s (1990) religious coping strategies by college students and the impact that these strategies had on distress and depression following the recent death of a friend. Using Pargament et al.'s (1990) Religious Coping Activities scale as the primary measure of religious coping, Park and Cohen (1993) found that the ways in which college students deal with negative life events are complex processes that influence both personal growth and distress. On one hand, "greater religious pleading," a negative religious coping strategy assessing the degree to which individuals bargain with God or pleading with God for a miracle or divine intercession, was associated with increased distress as measured by both the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and the Impact of Events Scale (IES). On the other hand, "religious good deeds" coping ( $r = .22$ ), and "spiritual support" coping ( $r = .29$ ) which reflect trying to live a more religiously oriented life and seeking support from clergy and church members, respectively, were significantly related to personal growth ( $p < .01$ ; Park & Cohen, 1993).

Similar results were found when Pargament et al. (1994) examined college students' use of religious and non-religious coping techniques during the unfolding of the Persian Gulf War in February 1991. Using the Religious Coping Activities scale (Pargament et al. 1990), they found that positive religious coping variables were significant predictors of more positive affectivity, less negative affectivity and better general health at Time 1. Likewise, negative religious coping variables were significant

predictors of less positive affectivity, more negative affectivity and poorer general health at Time 1.

In another study, Maton (1989) examined the relationship between spiritual support and personal emotional adjustment and social adjustment in 68 undergraduate college students. He defines spiritual support as “the perceived, personally supportive components of an individual’s relationship with God” (p. 310). The sample was divided along the median of the life stressors scores into high stress and low stress groups based on self-reported experiences of 22 major life stressors. Maton (1989) found that spiritual support was a significant predictor of personal emotional adjustment in the high stress sample ( $\beta = .46$ ,  $t = 2.47$ ,  $p < .025$ ) but not in the low stress sample. He concluded that spiritual support seems to be an important coping resource for college students experiencing major life stressors.

Additional studies have found that religious coping is related to anxiety levels in college students. More specifically, increased use of prayer to provide acceptance and assistance as a way to cope with stress is related to lower anxiety levels (Harris, Schoneman, & Carrera, 2002), greater use of positive religious coping techniques is related to lower anxiety levels and greater use of negative religious coping techniques is related to increased anxiety (Schaefer & Gorsuch, 1991). Overall, it appears that both positive and negative religious coping are religious constructs that provide insight into the way college students cope with life crisis. The current study hypothesized that both positive and negative religious coping are used by college students to help make sense of their experiences of parental divorce. The specifics of these hypotheses are described in more detail in a subsequent section.

## Religion in Family Life

### *Religion and Divorce*

Examining the relationship between religion and psychological functioning at the marital level is the impetus for understanding youth's spiritual appraisals of meaning regarding their parents' divorce. And, in the context of marital functioning, studies have found that parental religious involvement serves as a protective factor against parental divorce occurring. For example, Shrum (1980) utilized the General Social Survey (GSS) 1972-1977 to examine the relationship between marital dissolution and religious commitment in a national sample (N = 7029). Using frequency of church attendance (FCA) as his indicator of religious involvement, Shrum found that 34% of those attending church once a year or less reported experiencing divorce or separation. For those attending church once or several times a year, 27% reported experiencing divorce or separation and 18% of those attending church monthly or more reported experiencing divorce or separation. This relationship remained significant even once education, family income, age at first marriage, age, and marriage cohort were controlled for. Using overlapping data from the GSS (1973-1980), Glenn and Supancic (1984) concluded that frequency of church attendance accounted for 3-5% of the variance associated with divorce/separation once age at first marriage, region, kind of community, education, job, job prestige, and income were controlled for. Additionally, church attendance was one of only three significant effects after controls. Glenn and Supancic (1984) also found that adults with no religious affiliation reported the highest divorce rates (37.8% male; 33.1% female) compared with the overall average of adults with religious preference (21.1% males; 23.5% females) (p. 567). One crucial weakness imbedded in the GSS data set is

the correlational, cross-sectional nature of the data. That is, it is not clear whether attendance patterns of those reporting a history of divorce have been stable since before the divorce or if the decline in church attendance was the result of negative post divorce experiences in a pro-marriage organization.

Clydesdale (1997) examined similar hypothesis utilizing a longitudinal data set with three data collection points (1965, 1973 & 1982). However, his longitudinal design allowed him to examine more specifically the temporal nature of the relationship between frequency of church attendance and marital status. Frequency of church attendance was assessed at all time points and marital status was assessed at time points 1 & 3. Divorce between time points 1 and 3 was significantly more likely to occur for consistent nonattenders and for those who discontinued regular attendance during the years of the study. Thus, it appears that patterns of church attendance hold predictive power for divorce rates ( see also Bahr & Chadwick, 1985; Heaton & Goodman, 1985). Call and Heaton (1997) also found that the wife's frequency of church attendance was a particularly robust factor predicting marital separation. Even when compared against six more proximal marital problems that have been linked with divorce (i.e., jealousy, moodiness, infidelity, irritating habits, spends money foolishly, drinking/drug use), church attendance remained a significant predictor of divorce ( $p < .001$ ) (Amato & Rogers, 1997). And, of these proximal factors, only infidelity was a statistically stronger contributor in the regression model than church attendance.

Religious affiliation has also been examined in light of marital separation and divorce. Some studies find significant differences in divorce rates across different denominations (e.g., Chan & Heaton, 1989), while other studies do not (e.g., Bahr &

Chadwick, 1985). However, the majority of studies have found that the difference between those affiliated with a religion and those not affiliated is statistically significant. In other words, being religiously affiliated is a protective factor for divorce regardless of denomination; those not affiliated with any religion are more at risk for divorce. Bahr and Chadwick (1985) reported that about 20% of nonaffiliated individuals report being currently divorce, separated or remarried compared with 8% and 15% of those affiliated with Catholic and Protestant churches, respectively. Bock and Radelet (1988) replicated this finding for men but not women in a national sample and Brealt and Kposowa, 1987 suggest that, after controlling for population change, urban-rural household status, income, unemployment rate, professional employment, education, race and age, church attendance remained a significant predictor of marital status ( $\beta = -.17$ ).

The links between frequency of church attendance and religious affiliation and lower levels of divorce are not unique to these specific studies. In a meta-analysis examining 46 quantitative studies of religion and marital functioning published since 1980, Mahoney, et. al. (1999) found that both frequency of church attendance and religious affiliation were consistently related to lower levels of divorce. For the six studies examining religious affiliation and divorce rates, the mean  $r$  was  $-.082$  ( $q_{total} = 121.8$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Rosenthal's fail-safe index indicated that 1,020 null effect sizes would be needed to negate this finding. Similarly, the mean  $r$  for the eight studies examining frequency of church attendance and divorce rates was  $-.125$  ( $q_{total} = 133.9$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). In this case, Rosenthal's fail-safe index was 2,630 effect sizes, indicating a particularly robust finding. Religion then, seems to be integrally related to marital life, specifically long-term marital life. However, this research does not suggest that religious

involvement inoculates marriages from divorce. Rather, it suggests an imperative for researchers to address the multiple faceted salience of religion in the context of marital dissolution. The first step in addressing the importance of religion for those experiencing their parents' divorce is to understand more clearly the way religion operates within the intact religious family. The following section discusses one mechanism by which the sacred impacts family life.

*Positive Religiously-Based Appraisals: The Sacred Family Life*

Religion in family life is clearly more complex and dynamic than simply a weekly outing to a church or synagogue. Rather, religion reflects individuals' "search for significance in ways related to the sacred" (Pargament, 1997, p. 32). Underlying this definition is the idea that religious individuals incorporate their perceptions of the sacred into areas of life that hold meaning and value (Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank & Murray-Swank, 2003). For many families, the sacred colors the lenses through which all family relationships, such as marriage and parent-child relationships are understood. This process of perceiving specific aspects of life as having divine significance and character is called "sanctification" (Mahoney et al., 2003, Pargament & Mahoney, 2002). Unfortunately, it is the richness of the sanctified family life that puts those experiencing parental divorce in a place of vulnerability. That is, for those imbuing family relationships with sacred qualities and/or as a manifestation of God, the separation and breakdown of those relationships has the potential to be spiritually devastating. Thus, the sanctification that occurs within family life is a vital factor in attempts to understand the spiritual significance of parental divorce. The following section details religious



dimensions of family life, forming the foundation for the current study's conceptualization of parental divorce as a spiritual crisis.

Mahoney et al.(2003) suggest that sanctification can occur in two forms. First, sanctification can occur when an individual perceives "an object (or relationship) as being a manifestation of one's images, beliefs, or experience of God and one's religious faith" (Mahoney et al., 2003, p. 221). This process is called "Manifestation of God." The second process of sanctification "can occur without reference to a specific deity" and is called "Sacred Qualities" (Mahoney et al., 2003, p. 221-222). Though moderately high correlations have been found between these constructs, each embodies a unique theological perspective. The first process is distinctly theistically while the second process is non-theistic and centers instead around qualities or attributions of the divine. This distinction is important because it acknowledges the real possibility that an individual who does not believe in a specific deity could perceive aspects of his or her life as being "holy" or "transcendent."

Research examining sanctification has found that this construct does indeed provide insight into religious dynamics in marital relationships. Mahoney et al., (1999) examined the relationship between perceptions of Sacred Qualities in marriage and of the Manifestation of God in marriage and multiple aspects of marital functioning. They found that both sanctification variables were positively correlated with multiple aspects marital functioning. Specifically, these perceptions of Sacred Qualities in marriage and Manifestation of God in marriage were related to higher personal benefits for both spouses, lower marital conflict as reported by wives, and higher frequency of joint religious activities as reported by husbands (Mahoney et al., 1999). Perceived Sacred

Qualities were an "especially strong correlate of general marital adjustment" (Mahoney et al., 1999, p. 329). Indeed, endorsement of sacred qualities was related to over 42% of the variance in husbands' and wives' ratings of marital satisfaction. Additionally, analysis showed that these sanctification variables were uniquely related to marital functioning in ways not accounted for by self-rated religiousness or church attendance (Mahoney et al., 1999). Thus, it appears that conceptualizing marital relationships in terms of the sacred is a particularly potent way for understanding marital functioning. And, knowing that religious families are not immune to experiencing divorce, appraisals of the sacred become particularly relevant to understanding the breakup of religious families. The following section provides a theoretical bridge between life in the sanctified, intact family to the crisis of divorce within that same family.

#### Divorce: A Spiritual Crisis in Sacred Family Life

##### *Spiritual Vulnerability: The Dissolution of the Sacred Family Life*

Mahoney et al., (1999) clearly demonstrate that perceptions of the sacred play an important role in understanding the dynamics of marital relationships. However, what happens when a marriage conceptualized by family members in terms of the sacred ends in divorce? This question is unfortunately relevant. Though divorce rates among religious couples are lower (49%) than among non-religious couples (62%), close to 50% of self-identified religious couples still experience divorce (Mahoney et al., 1999). And, despite the relative frequency of divorce among religious couples, divorce remains taboo within the majority of religious circles. Thus, religious couples and their children who experience divorce are potentially more vulnerable for a number of reasons. Because divorce is less common among religious communities, fewer resources are likely to be

available to help family members. For example, family members are less likely to know others who have experienced similar situations and who can provide interpersonal support, and references to legal, financial and counseling services. Also, divorce is likely to be in violation of religious community standards. As a result, family members might feel alienated from the church congregation, lose friendships and struggle to reconcile the divorce with their personal religious commitments. And finally, though the sacred can be a tremendous source of strength and meaning within a family system, it can also be a poignant vulnerability.

Theoretically, late adolescents could have imbued their parents' marriage with sacred qualities and, for these individuals, the dissolution of that marriage could be especially troubling. And, while the current study is the first to address the specific religious dimensions of this experience, apostasy research suggest that parental divorce could indeed be a spiritual crossroads. Specifically, research examining those who become apostates or, in other words, reject religious faith altogether suggests that experiencing parental divorce in both childhood and adulthood is related to increased apostasy (Lawton & Bures, 2001). Catholics, Moderate Protestants and Conservative Protestants experiencing parental divorce in childhood are more than two times as likely to become apostates as their peers from intact families. Additionally, Catholics and Conservative Protestants experiencing parental divorce in adulthood are also more than two times as likely to leaving their faith than adults from intact families (Lawton & Bures, 2001). It is important to note this research is simply correlational in nature and that life events such as parental divorce are unlikely, in and of themselves, to be sufficient to create a spiritual crisis. Rather, it is likely to be the person's perception or

"primary appraisal" of an event's meaning that determines the significance of that event (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). And, just as objects and values can take on spiritual meaning, specific life events can also be appraised in spiritual terms. In light of the role religion plays within intact families and the research on family structure and apostasy, it seems probable that the break up of a religious family through divorce could be, indeed is likely to be, appraised in terms of the spiritual and the sacred.

The current study makes the case that spiritual appraisals and religious coping are important psychological constructs because they address the process by which youth internally experience and make sense of their experiences of parental divorce. And, this study argues these internal experiences are critical to understanding and making sense of the plethora of data documenting maladjustment following parental divorce. That is, to say that an adolescent is depressed following their parents' divorce is to provide a simple description of their psychological status. However, to say that a youth is depressed and that this depression is linked to his thoughts that the divorce is the violation of something sacred to him is to understand more deeply the cause of that depression and the depth of his psychological and spiritual experiences. The following section introduces Lazarus's (1984) model of secular appraisals and coping which forms part of the theoretical foundation for understanding the dynamics of spiritual appraisals and religious coping. Additionally, this section reviews the few studies that clearly address secular appraisals of meaning and coping with parental divorce. This section sets the stage for understanding the specific constructs assessed in the current study.

*Secular Appraisals of and Coping with Parental divorce*

Ironically, the plethora of research examining children's psychological adjustment following parental divorce has paid very little attention to the meaning that children ascribe to the divorce. Only six studies to date have assessed children's interpersonal experiences (i.e. emotions, appraisals of meaning, coping strategies) of parental divorce and their subsequent psychological adjustment. And, of those six studies, only three directly address appraisals of meaning or coping strategies in a way that resembles the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) model followed in the current study. However, despite the fact that these three studies do not specifically follow the conceptual framework used in the current study, they provide a glimpse into the possible impact of children's appraisal and coping responses on psychological adjustment following parental divorce. The following paragraphs present the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) model utilized for the current study and then review these three articles.

Lazarus and Folkman suggest that the process through which humans make sense of everyday events involves an ongoing process of cognitive appraisals, and, if the event is appraised as stressful, coping mechanisms. The same event can be appraised by different individuals as having different meanings or different implications for well-being. More specifically, Lazarus and Folkman describe these primary appraisals of meaning as "the process of categorizing an encounter, and its various facets, with respect to its significance for well-being." When the event is categorized as a harm/loss, threat, or challenge, coping resources are mobilized. While initial appraisals of an event as stressful are the catalyst for the activation of coping resources, Lazarus and Folkman are careful to emphasize the organic nature of the appraisal/coping process. That is, "there is

an unfolding, shifting pattern of cognitive appraisal and reappraisal, coping and emotional processes” that may last for a short or long period of time (Lazarus & Folkman, pg. 142, 1984). In the current study, the initial perceptions of spiritual meaning were categorized simply as “spiritual appraisals” while later reappraisals of spiritual meaning were assessed as part of the religious coping process. This distinction is consistent with Lazarus and Folkman’s theory of secular coping.

Kratz, et al., (1985) published one of the first studies specifically examining children’s general appraisals of meaning and general appraisals of coping strategies with parental divorce. They define “appraisals of meaning” in a way consistent with the primary appraisals of the Lazarus model described above. Kratz et. al., have also chosen to highlight what Lazarus refers to as “secondary appraisals” or appraisals of available coping resources. In contrast, the current study addresses the actual coping strategies used by college students. However, despite this difference, the study described below provides a glimpse into the existing research on this topic and a starting point for the conceptualization of appraisals and coping in ways related to the current study.

For this study, a community sample of 26 boys and 26 girls ages 8.5 – 12 was given semi-projective measures to assess both primary and secondary appraisals of parental divorce in several ways. First, children responded to open-ended question after each of thirteen different divorce rated scenarios. Second, they were read thirty-six statements reflecting adaptive or maladaptive statements and asked to use a 5-point scale to indicate if they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements. Secondary appraisals or appraisals of available coping resources were assess by measuring the number of coping strategies generated in response to three

hypothetical problem situations. Researchers coded these responses as their “coping construct.” However, these participants were only responding to hypothetical divorce situations and not reporting their actual life experiences. For boys, less frequent use of adaptive appraisals and higher use of maladaptive appraisals were related to more undesirable behaviors at home. This finding held true for undesirable behavior that was both in the normal range of behavior and also in the clinical range of behavior. For girls, infrequent adaptive responses and greater endorsement of maladaptive appraisals were related to greater undesirable behaviors at home. However, this finding was only relevant for those girls whose level of misbehavior was in the clinical range. Additionally, boys who endorsed higher numbers of coping resources showed better behavior at both home and school. There was no relationship between females’ endorsement of coping appraisals and behavior. While this study is important as the first step towards understanding youth’s appraisals of parental divorce, it unfortunately only looks at general appraisals related to hypothetical divorce situations and not specific appraisals children make in the midst of their own personal experiences with parental divorce. Additionally, it only taps secondary appraisals or *appraisals* of coping resources and not actually coping behavior.

Sheets, Sandler & West (1996) begin to address the methodological limitations of Kratz et al. (1985) by examining six specific dimensions of appraisals of parental divorce and their relationship with psychological symptoms in a sample of children between the ages of 8 and 12 ( $N = 256$ ) who had experienced their parents’ divorce. These researchers focused on appraisals that the negative event “threaten[s] the person’s ego identity or personal commitments, such as their self-or social esteem, moral values or well-being of

other persons” (Sheets, Sandler & West, 1996, p. 2167). This definition is consistent with the Lazarus (1984, 1991) model of secular appraisals and coping that forms the foundation for the spiritual appraisal and religious coping model of the current study.

In order to assess these appraisals, researchers asked participants to respond to interviews regarding their experiences and also completed the “What I feel” (WIF) scale. Responses to the interview were coded according to the six appraisal categories reflected in the WIF scale. Thus, both interviewer ratings of the six appraisal categories and self-reported use of the six appraisal categories were gathered. These six categories were harm to others, criticism of others, material loss, negative self-evaluation, negative evaluation by others and rejection by others. Psychological adjustment was assessed using the Children’s Depression Inventory, the Children’s Manifest Anxiety Scale and the Child Behavior Checklist. In the preliminary analysis, developmental differences were found between the younger children (age 8-9) and the older children (age 10-12). For the older children ( $n = 119$ ), unique effects were found for two of the six appraisals. Specifically, increased use of negative self-evaluations (i.e., “You [the child] had done something bad or wrong”) was related to higher levels of depression while the use of appraisals of material loss (i.e., “You [the child] might have to give up something you own”) was related to increased anxiety. For the younger children, aggregating the six appraisal categories into one factor was the best statistical fit to the data suggesting that higher levels of total negative appraisals of the divorce contributed unique variance to their psychological maladjustment; none of the six appraisal categories contributed uniquely for the younger children. And, the appraisal variables for both the younger and



the older group contribute unique variance over and above the direct relationship between the negative events and maladjustment.

Unfortunately, while the participants of this study have experienced parental divorce, the negative events that they are referencing for the interview and the appraisal (WIF) questionnaire, may or may not be divorce related – the researchers did not include descriptive information on the exact nature of the negative events children reported. So, while the ways in which children of divorce appraise non-specific negative events seem related in some ways to their psychological adjustment, additional research needs to be done on the exact nature of specific appraisals of the parental divorce itself and the relationship between these more focused appraisals with psychological adjustment. The current study addresses this weakness by explicitly addressing appraisals of parental divorce.

Using the same sample of children from divorced families, Sandler, Tein and West (1994) ran a similar study to Sheets et al. (1996) and examined coping behaviors and adjustment to parental divorce. For this study, they distinguished between four dimensions of coping: active coping, avoidance, distraction and social support (Sandler, et. al., 1994, p. 1745). These coping dimensions were drawn from a number of theoretical frameworks and are not an exact duplicate of the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. However, the study follows a model of analysis that is consistent with Lazarus's model of appraisals, coping and psychological adjustment. In their analysis, Sandler, et. al. found that avoidance coping (e.g. not thinking about event, fantasizing that it did not happen) mediated the relations between divorce related events appraised as "stressful" and higher levels of depression, anxiety

and conduct problems. Additionally, they found that active coping partially mediated the relations between stressful divorce related events and conduct problems. These active coping strategies included plan-full thinking, doing concrete things to make the situation better, trying to understand the divorce or find meaning in it, and positive cognitive reframing.

Sheets et al. (1996) and Sandler et al (1994) have demonstrated relationships between children's appraisals and coping, respectively, and post-divorce psychological adjustment variables in the context of parental divorce. However, neither simultaneously addressed the relationship between specific appraisals of the divorce and coping behaviors. The current study addresses this weakness by integrating aspects of the Lazarus and Folkman model into a spiritual and religious framework.

*Negative Religiously-Based Appraisals: Parental Divorce as a Sacred Loss and as a Desecration*

Despite the virtual absence of literature on children's appraisals of and coping with their parents' divorce, the abundant research generated by Lazarus and Folkman for other stressful events provides a framework for examining these constructs in the context of parental divorce. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model not only sets the context for understanding a secular theory of appraisals and coping but it provides one aspect of the theoretical foundation for assessing youths' spiritual appraisals of and religious coping with parental divorce. The following section discusses the application of recently developed spiritual appraisal constructs to the college students' experiences of parental divorce.

Individuals experiencing parental divorce could potentially appraise that event as either a violation of the sacred (i.e. desecration) or as a sacred loss. Specifically, desecration is defined as "the perception that a sacred object (or relationship) has been violated"; sacred loss is defined as "the perception that a sacred object (or relationship) has been lost" (Pargament, Magyar, Benore & Mahoney, 2005). To date, only a few studies have examined these constructs. For example, Magyar (2001) examined perceptions of desecration in romantic relationships with college students. Overall, based on a single desecration item, 88% of the sample said "desecration" reflected their experiences of a hurtful event in their romantic relationship to some degree. Further, using a detailed measure of desecration, she found that higher perceptions of desecration were related to increased negative affect, and more physical health symptoms, poorer mental health as well as more personal and spiritual growth. Additionally, desecration was more predictive of the criterion variables than both traditionally used measures of global religiousness (i.e., church attendance and self-rated religiousness) and perceived negativity of the event. Thus, it appears that perceptions of desecration are particularly salient to understanding college students' negative experiences in romantic relationships.

Likewise, a study of college student's reactions to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center linked increased perceptions of desecration to higher levels of post-traumatic symptoms and depression (Mahoney et al, 2002). However, higher levels of desecration were also linked to greater personal and psychological growth (Mahoney et al, 2002).

A third study examining perceptions of desecration and sacred loss in a community sample yielded similar results (Pargament et al, 2005). In this study,

community members were asked to think about "the most significant negative event that has taken place in the last two years." Reported events include death of a close family member, serious illness/injury of a family member, parenting/family relationship difficulty, job loss, personal illness and divorce or separation. They then rated that event in terms of perceived sacred loss and desecration. Over 38% of the sample reported, to some degree, perceptions of sacred loss while over 24% reported perceptions, to some degree of desecration. Pearson correlations between sacred loss and desecration revealed significant, positive relationships with traumatic impact of the event and emotional distress as measured by intrusive thoughts, avoidance, anxiety and depression. In other words, increased perceptions of sacred loss and desecration were related to increases in traumatic impact and emotional distress. Unlike Magyar (2000), no relationship was found between desecration and physical health. Additionally, higher perceptions of desecration were related to increased anger and higher perceptions of sacred loss were related to stress related growth and spiritual change. For individuals in the community, it appears that perceptions of sacred loss and desecration are relevant to understanding a wide range of negative life events.

These three studies suggest that perceptions of sacred loss and desecration are particularly relevant to the current study in a number of ways. Both Magyar's (2001) and Mahoney et al.'s (2002) studies utilized a late adolescent population and found that college students do utilize negative spiritual appraisals when experiencing stressful and traumatic events. Also, Magyar (2001) examined the dissolution of a significant relationship. Though her study focused on the break-up of romantic peer relationships, it is arguable that the dissolution of family relationships is a comparable, if not more

traumatic, experience. Results from the community sample further strengthen the importance of sacred loss and desecration to parental divorce by highlighting a wide variety of life events (of which 7% were divorce) appraised as sacred losses or desecrations. And, this study also suggests that spiritual appraisals can be linked to greater spiritual and stress-related growth. Thus, in light of the literature reviewed above, this study assessed the extent that college students appraise their parents' divorce in terms of sacred loss and desecration to determine how such appraisals may be tied to psychological functioning. Specific hypotheses will be discussed further in the goals section.

*Positive Religiously-Based Appraisals: Sanctification of Parental Divorce*

Negative spiritual appraisals of negative life events would seem to be the most relevant to parental divorce. However, it is also theoretically possible for individuals to view their parents' divorce as having positive spiritual attributes even when that event is viewed culturally as negative. Acknowledging that some individuals experience parental divorce as a positive event (see above review of parental divorce literature), the current study also assesses the extent to which college students reported having positive spiritual appraisals of parental divorce for the following reasons.

First, sanctification of parental divorce is likely to be an appraisal that a minority of college students endorse but, nevertheless, may be uniquely related to the criterion variables. Sanctification, as defined earlier, refers to the perception of an object as having spiritual significance and character. However, sanctification could also, when applied to a specific life event such as parental divorce, be understood as a positive primary spiritual appraisal. In this situation, parental divorce is initially viewed as having positive spiritual

attributes. By including measures of positive spiritual appraisals, the current study recognizes that some children do view their parent's divorce as a positive event and, potentially, a positive event related to the sacred. To reiterate, this study assessed the extent to which late adolescents appraised their parents' divorce as sanctified and the relationship between this appraisal and the criterion variables.

### *Religious Coping and Parental Divorce*

As discussed earlier, college students use religious coping strategies to deal with stressful events. Remarkably, however, only one study to date has examined how college students use religion to cope with parental divorce (Shortz & Worthington, 1994). This is shockingly given that around one million American children experience parental divorce each year. In the one study that exists on the interface of religious coping and divorce, Shortz and Worthington (1994) found that different causal attributions were uniquely related to use of positive and negative religious coping strategies. More specifically, for these undergraduates who had experienced their parents' divorce between the ages of 11 and 25, beliefs that God's anger caused the divorce were most strongly related to more frequent use of negative coping strategies: religious discontent and anger at the church (beta .21,  $p < .05$ ) and pleading with God (beta .37,  $p < .01$ ). On the other hand, beliefs that God's love caused the divorce were linked to less use of the negative religious coping strategy "pleading with God" (beta -.29,  $p < .01$ ). And, in contrast to those who view God's anger as the cause of the divorce, those who view their parents' divorce as being God's will were more likely to use positive, active methods of religious coping. Shortz and Worthington's (1994) study is unique among the parental divorce literature because it addresses the relationship between theoretically sophisticated constructs of

religious attributions of causality and religious coping. However, it does not address the link between these religious variables and psychological adjustment. Thus, the current study expands Shortz and Worthington (1994) by exploring the relationship between religiously based interpretations or “appraisals” of parental divorce and religious coping and psychological adjustment and parent-child relationships.

In the current study, the items from the Brief RCOPE were used in order to assess positive and negative religious coping. Pargament, Smith and Koenig (1996) created the Brief RCOPE (cited in Pargament, 1997) in order to provide a more efficient but still theoretically sound method of assessing religious coping. The scale was designed to reflect the two categories derived from the factor analysis of the original RCOPE: positive and negative religious coping. As elaborated in the goals section, the current study hypothesized that positive and negative religious coping would be individually related to the criterion variables and that these religious coping strategies will serve as mediators between spiritual appraisals and outcome variables.

In addition to using the Brief RCOPE, 31 additional items from the RCOPE (Pargament, Koenig & Perez, 2000) were included in order to assess a wider range of religious coping strategies. They were chosen due to their particular theoretical relevance to parental divorce. These 31 items represent the following 14 different subscales: benevolent religious reappraisal, punishing God reappraisal, demonic reappraisal and reappraisal of God’s powers, active religious surrender, self-directing religious coping, seeking spiritual support, spiritual connection, spiritual discontent, seeking support from clergy or members, interpersonal religious discontent, seeking religious direction, religious conversion and religious forgiving. Each of these subscales was aggregated

with the appropriate positive religious coping or negative religious coping subscale of the Brief RCOPE in order to retain the two factor model of religious coping.

Another way individuals can cope with divorce is through blessing in disguise reappraisals. This new construct seems particularly relevant as the divorce literature documents a parallel secular construct. That is, some children describe their parents' divorce as "being hard but for the best." From a spiritual perspective, this description could be understood as a religious coping technique reflecting blessing in disguise reappraisals. Blessing in disguise reappraisals occur when an event originally understood as a tragedy or desecration is transformed and takes on positive, spiritual characteristics. For example, a man experiencing business trouble could say "Though I first saw the bankruptcy as the end of my professional career, I can now see how that event was God's hand working in my life for the benefit my family and marriage." Clearly, what was once viewed as devastating is now seen as a blessing.

Blessing in disguise reappraisals occur through the process of positive spiritual reframing. Positive spiritual reframing occurs when a life stressor is reframed as a positive, spiritual event connected to the sacred. There are three key components to this definition. First, a *life stressor* is an event that is appraised by an individual as being a threat, a loss or a challenge. Life stressors stretch individuals to the bottom of their reservoirs, straining their coping resources. The second component is *reframe*. A reframe is the process through which an individual reinterprets a stressful event to align more closely with their orientation system. Thus, the event becomes less threatening and less stressful. The final key component is *positive, spiritual event connected to the sacred*. This element reflects the result of the reframe. Through the reframing process, an event



previously perceived as negative is redefined as positive and inherently different than originally conceived. Additionally, the event is viewed as spiritual and connected to the divine in such a way as to deem it sacred.

In many ways, blessings in disguise reappraisals are similar to the benevolent reappraisal subscale of the RCOPE (Pargament, Koenig & Perez, 2000). However, these constructs reflect different conceptions of a life stressor. Benevolent reappraisal refers to an individual's ability to see positive spiritual aspects of a bad situation. In other words, they can identify the "silver lining" of a negative event. However, the event is still generally perceived as negative. Blessing in disguise reappraisals reflect a fundamental shift in a person's understanding of an event. Rather than simply seeing the silver lining, a "weather shift" occurs. It is this transformation process that is paramount in understanding blessing in disguise reappraisals - the event itself becomes positive and related to the sacred. For this study, ten items assessing blessing in disguise reappraisals were assessed with the other items from the religious coping subscales. For the current study, Blessing in Disguise was analyzed separately from other religious coping subscales and was included in the hypotheses as a mediator variable.

In addition to proposing that spiritual appraisals of parental divorce and religious coping strategies would be individually related to psychological adjustment and the quality of the parent child relationship, the current study also proposed a model outlining the hypothesized relationship between spiritual appraisals and religious coping variables. Specifically, this model proposed that religious coping would partially mediate the relationship between negative spiritual appraisals and outcome variables. This mediation model was derived from Pargament et al.'s (2005) conclusions that religious coping

variables partially mediated the relationship between spiritual appraisals of sacred loss and desecration and outcome variables.

### Contributions of the Current Study

The current study contributes significantly to the field in a number of areas. First, this study explores the intrapersonal experiences of parental divorce by assessing the spiritual appraisals and religious coping methods utilized by college student's experiencing parental divorce. Second, this study is only the second study to look at proximal religious variables (i.e. spiritual appraisals and religious coping) in the context of parental divorce and only the first study to look at the relationship between these religious variables and psychological adjustment, personal and spiritual growth and parent-child relationship quality in this same context. Finally, this study explores the link between spiritual appraisals and parent-child relationship quality. To date, researchers have not examined links between spiritual appraisals and the quality of dyadic family relationships.

### *Goals and Hypotheses*

The primary purpose of this thesis was to investigate how spiritual appraisals and religious coping are tied to college students' psychological adjustment to delayed parental divorce. The following four goals and the corresponding hypotheses were proposed to assess this purpose:

Goal 1: The first goal was to generate descriptive data on the constructs of positive and negative spiritual appraisals of parental divorce and religious coping with parental divorce. Specifically, this entailed ascertaining the range, mean, standard deviation and frequency with which primary appraisals of the sanctification of parental

divorce, parental divorce as a sacred loss and parental divorce as a desecration were made with respect to parental divorce. This descriptive data was also collected for positive and negative religious coping strategies, including two elaborated religious coping subscales, Religious Conversion and Blessing in Disguise.

Goal 2. The second goal of this study was to investigate the bi-variate links between primary spiritual appraisals of parental divorce (i.e., manifestation of God, sacred loss and desecration) and individual psychological functioning, personal and spiritual growth, and parent-child relationships.

Hypothesis 2a. Adolescents' appraisals of sanctification of parental divorce, parental divorce as a sacred loss and parental divorce as a desecration were expected to be directly related to individual psychological adjustment, personal and spiritual growth and parent-child relationships. Specifically, greater perception of parental divorce as a sacred loss and/or desecration was expected to relate to poorer individual psychological adjustment, higher levels of personal and spiritual growth and poorer parent-child relationships, while greater perception of parental divorce as sanctified would relate to better individual psychological adjustment, less personal and spiritual growth and better parent-child relationship quality.

Hypothesis 2b. Sacred loss and desecration were expected to interact such that experiencing higher rates of both would contribute to poorer individual psychological adjustment, greater personal and spiritual growth and poorer parent-child relationship quality beyond the effects of each variable individually.

Goal 3. The third goal of the study was to evaluate whether spiritual appraisals contribute unique variance to individual psychological adjustment, personal and spiritual

growth and parent-child relationship quality after taking into account global religiousness and secular appraisals of harm, loss and challenge.

Hypothesis 3. Appraisals of parental divorce as a sacred loss, desecration, and as sanctified was expected to contribute uniquely to individual psychological adjustment, personal and spiritual growth and parent-child relationship quality even once the variance associated with global religiousness and secular appraisals of harm, loss and challenge was accounted for.

Goal 4. The fourth goal was to assess for mediating effects of positive and negative religious coping strategies on the relationships between the negative spiritual appraisals and criterion variables.<sup>1</sup> Baron and Kenny's (1986) criteria was used to determine which variables were included in the analysis.

Hypothesis 4: Religious coping strategies would partially mediate the relationships between appraisals of parental divorce as a sacred loss and as a desecration for individual psychological adjustment, personal and spiritual growth and parent-child relationship quality (see figure 1). More specifically, appraisals of sacred loss and desecration are likely to elicit positive and negative religious coping strategies and at least part of the relationship between the sacred loss and desecration appraisals and the criterion variables is likely to be explained by the effect of these religious coping strategies on the criterion variables. Negative religious coping strategies are likely to mediate the relationship between sacred loss and desecration and more negative psychological functioning. In addition, positive religious coping strategies are likely to mediate the relationship between sacred loss and desecration and growth variables but not the relationship between sacred loss and desecration and negative psychological functioning. Religious Conversion and Blessing

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Changes have been made to goal four and the corresponding hypothesis in order to increase clarity.

in Disguise were both expected to operate in similar ways to Positive Religious Coping. The mediation effects of the religious coping variables were expected to diminish but not fully explain the relationship between the sacred loss and desecration appraisal variables and the criterion variables. In addition to examining the mediation effects of the omnibus positive and negative religious coping scales, two specific positive religious coping scales were included in these analyses. These scales were Blessing in Disguise and Religious Conversion. These scales were hypothesized to function as mediators in the same way as the omnibus positive religious coping scale.

## METHOD

### Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 109 college students from a mid-sized state university in the Midwestern part of the United States. Of these students, 73% were female and most were in their freshmen or sophomore year of schooling (95%). Most of these students were between 18 and 22 years old (97%). While most of the students experienced their parents' divorce between the ages of 13-15 (72%), a significant number of them reported being 16-19 when the divorce took place (28%). Eighty-six percent of the students were Caucasian, 5% were African American, 5% were Hispanic and remaining subjects rated themselves in the "other" category.

### Procedures

Data for this study was initially collected from 137 students in both introductory and upper level psychology courses at Bowling Green State University who had experienced their parents' divorce at or after the age of 13. Students were recruited in two ways. The primary investigator visited all large sections of the introductory psychology classes and handed out flyers that described qualifications for the study and directed students to the online web survey. Students were also recruited through experimetrix, the department's web-based forum for psychology research that students involved in all levels of psychology classes are required to utilize for their research requirement. The web-based description of the study contained the same information as the recruitment flyers.

A colleague of the primary investigator also attempted to recruit students from two sociology classes on campus. She attended the class, provided a verbal description of

the study and handed out descriptive flyers. However, no students from these classes participated in the study. This is most likely due to the fact that the professors of these courses did not allow the students to receive extra credit for their participation.

All participants were informed that they had the opportunity to participate in a study of family experiences if their parents got divorce when they were thirteen years old or older and all participants received one hour worth of research credit for the completion of their survey. For the purposes of this study, parental divorce was defined as the legal divorce of biological and adoptive parents.

Twenty-eight subjects were dropped from the data set for two reasons. The majority of students ( $n = 19$ ) excluded from the study because they indicated that they had experienced their parents' divorce before the age of thirteen and so did not meet the participant criteria. The remaining 9 students were dropped for excessive missing data (defined as more than 20% unanswered questions in a single scale). Missing data for the remaining 109 subjects was replaced with the mean of the specific scale once reverse scoring was accounted for.

Of the 109 subjects retained for the study, only 80% of the subjects completed the Alcohol Use scale. Rather than dropping approximately 22 subjects and significantly reducing the size of the sample, this scale was dropped from the study. There seem to be two likely reasons for low response rate on this specific scale. First, this scale came at the end of the survey and subjects could have been tired and unmotivated to finish. Also, drinking alcohol is illegal for a majority of the subjects and they could have been hesitant to answer incriminating questions despite the anonymity of the survey.

Students who felt they met the inclusion criteria for the study were directed to the online survey. Before participants completed the online survey, they were presented with a brief written explanation of the project. Consent of the participants was indicated by their completion of the survey. Once students completed the online survey they were directed to a second web site that asked for the information needed to assign them credit through the experimetrix web program. The data from the research survey and the data from the extra credit site were stored in two separate files. Thus, the surveys remained anonymous, ensuring confidentiality of the participants.

### Measures

#### *Demographic Information and Global Religiousness*

Participants were asked to indicate their age, gender, answer additional questions regarding family structure (i.e., legal custody), and answer four items assessing global religiousness (i.e., frequency of church attendance, frequency of prayer outside of church, self-rated importance of religion and self-rated importance of spirituality; Mahoney et al., 1999). The breakdown on frequency of church attendance was 8.3 % never, 12.8% less than once a year, 17.4% about once or twice a year, 18.3% several times a year, 11.0% about once a month, 13.8% two – three times per month, 9.2% nearly every week, 6.5% every week and 1.8% several times a week. For frequency of prayer the breakdown was 10.1% never, 11.0% less than once a month, 1.8% once a month, 15.6% a few times a month, 2.8% one a week, 23.9% a few times a week, 20.2% once a day, and 14.7% once a day. An item on self-rated religiousness yielded a mean of 2.18 (SD = 1.17) on a 4 point likert scale with response options of 1 (not at all religious), 2 (slightly religious), 3



(moderately religious) and 4 (very religious). A parallel item on self-rated spirituality yielded a mean of 2.18 (SD = 1.21).

### *Spiritual Appraisals and Religious coping*

*Sacred Loss and Desecration Scale:* Two types of negative spiritual appraisals were measured using the 28 item sacred loss and desecration scale (Pargament, Magyar, Benore, & Mahoney, 2004). The sacred loss and desecration scale was designed to measure both theistic appraisals and non-theistic appraisals. That is, theistic sacred loss items reflect the perceived loss of an object or relationship directly connected to God while theistic desecration refers to the violation of an object or relationship directly connected to God. Thus, these items explicitly reference God (e.g., “My parents’ divorce involved losing a gift from God;” Pargament et al., 2004). 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., 2004). The sacred loss and desecration scale has demonstrated high internal consistency and adequate validity (Pargament et al., 2004). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement to each statement using a five point likert scale anchored at “1” Not at all and “5” Very much.

*Manifestation of God Scale, selected items:* (Mahoney, et al., 1999) Ten items adapted from the Manifestation of God Scale were used to assess possible positive spiritual appraisals of the divorce. The additional three items were not used because one was antithetical to the definition of divorce (i.e. “my parents’ divorce is a holy bond”) and the other two suggest a non sequitur link between parental divorce and the participant’s internal spirituality (i.e. “my parents’ divorce is an expression of my

spirituality or religiousness” and “my parents’ divorce is consistent with my spiritual or religious identity.”) The five point likert scale used to assess sacred loss and desecration was also used to assess manifestation of God.

*Brief RCOPE, RCOPE, selected items:* The current study used the Brief RCOPE to measure positive religious coping (7 items) and negative religious coping (7 items) and hypothesizes that positive and negative religious coping will be individually and uniquely related to the criterion variables. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients estimates in a college sample were .90 and .87 for the positive and negative religious coping scales, respectively (Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998). In addition to the 14 brief RCOPE items, thirty one items reflecting 14 subscales of the full RCOPE (Pargament, Koenig & Perez, 2000) have been included as additional measures of religious coping methods. These items were selected because of their relevance to experiences of parental divorce and they represent the following scales: benevolent religious reappraisal, punishing God reappraisal, demonic reappraisal, reappraisal of God’s powers, active religious surrender, self-directing religious coping, seeking spiritual support, spiritual connection, spiritual discontent, seeking support from clergy or members, interpersonal religious discontent, seeking religious direction, religious conversion and religious forgiving. For these fourteen subscales, Cronbach’s alphas range from .78-.94 (Pargament et al., 2000). For analysis, all negative coping items were combined into a single negative religious coping scale. All positive religious coping items with the exception of the religious conversion subscale were likewise combined into a single scale “positive religious coping.”

Religious conversion was analyzed as separate scale due to its theoretical relevance to parental divorce. Specifically, the apostasy research described previously suggests that there is a link between experiences of parental divorce and religious conversion. Including religious conversion as a separate subscale allowed a more direct exploration of possible mediation effects of this specific subscale on the link between spiritual appraisals and outcome measures. On all religious coping items, participants were asked to respond to a four point likert scale anchored at “1” “Not at all and “4” A great deal.

#### *Blessing in Disguise Scale*

In addition to the items from the existing RCOPE, 9 items assessing a new form of religious reappraisal, Blessing in Disguise, were added. These items were developed in the several stages described earlier. To review, the primary researcher first consulted with a small number of colleagues and community members to judge the theoretical relevance of the construct to the experience of Parental Divorce. Then, approximately seventeen items were developed that reflected the construct. Third, the items were presented to the Spirituality and Psychology Research Team (S.P.i.R.i.T.) for feedback. This group specializes in understanding religious and spiritual constructs in psychological research and practice. Feedback from the group led to the inclusion of the current nine items in the scale (e.g. “I have come to see the divorce was a positive, divine turning point;” “ I have realized in the years since that the divorce was a divine intervention by God for the better;” “At this point in my life, I now see that the divorce was a positive fork in the road of my spiritual life.”) Participants were asked to respond to a five point likert scale anchored at “1” “Not at all and “5” A great deal.

*Intrapersonal Psychological Adjustment:*

*Painful Feelings about Divorce Scale:* (PFAD scale, Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000). The Painful Feelings About Divorce Scale contains 38 items representing 6 subscales and 5 items independent of any subscale. The scale was validated on two different populations and statistics from both study one and study two suggest that the six scales are internally consistent (Parental Blame  $\alpha = .88$  &  $.90$ , respectively; Maternal Blame  $\alpha = .90$  &  $.90$ ; Loss and Abandonment  $\alpha = .63$  &  $.76$ ; Filter of Divorce  $\alpha = .63$  &  $.64$ ; Self-blame  $\alpha = .75$  &  $.88$ ; Acceptance  $\alpha = .63$  &  $.69$ ). Additionally, all scales exhibited high to moderate test-retest stability and correlations between the six scales were generally low to moderate though there were some exceptions (See Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000 for full review). For the current study an additional question “I wish my mother had spent more time with me when I was younger” was added to the study. This item was added in order to parallel a similar question regarding the subject’s father and was included in the Loss and Abandon scale. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each item according to a five point likert scale anchored at “1” Strongly disagree and “5” Strongly agree. Participants were also provided with the option to chose “does not apply.”

*Center for Epidemiological Studies of Depression Scale:* The Center for Epidemiological Studies of Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) was used to assess depression. This 20 item measure is a widely used self-report of depression and has been used with a wide variety of populations including late adolescents. Research with the CES-D has demonstrated high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .84-.87$ ) and adequate test-retest reliability. Participants were asked to indicate how often they experienced each symptom

within the past month using a four point scale ranging from “1” None or rarely to “4” Most or all.

*Alcohol Use:* (Perkins, 1987). Alcohol use was measured with six questions regarding the frequency of heavy drinking, degree of heavy social drinking and frequency of intoxication, and social concern regarding drinking. These items were: “How many days during the past two weeks did you drink alcohol,” “How many drinks do you estimate you drank during the past two weeks,” “How many drinks do you estimate you drink on average during a party or social occasion,” “How often would you say that you get “smashed” or drunk as a result of drinking,” “Has anyone ever expressed concern over your drinking habits,” and “Have you ever thought that you might have a drinking problem while at college?” For the first three questions, participants were asked to fill in the blank. Participants used a five point likert scale anchored at “0” Never and “5” Always to indicate how often they get drunk. The final two questions were answered either “yes” or “no.”

*Impact of Events Scale:* The Impact of Events Scale (IES) uses 15 items to measure intrusive avoidant thoughts and behaviors often associated with anxiety disorders or stress response syndromes to traumatic events (Horowitz, Wilner, & Alvarez, 1979). It was used in the current study to assess trauma-related intrusive thoughts related to parental divorce. Both the split half reliability ( $r = .86$ ) and the internal consistency of the subscales (intrusion subscale  $r = .78$ ; avoidance subscale  $r = .82$ ; Horowitz, et al., 1979) are within acceptable ranges. Response choices were either “0” Not at all, “1” Rarely, “2” Sometimes, or “3” Often.

*Personal and Spiritual Growth:*

*Spiritual Growth and Spiritual Decline Items:* Participants were asked five items measuring spiritual growth after their parents' divorce. This scale 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." Participants will also be asked 5 items measuring Spiritual decline. Examples of Spiritual Decline items 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 this scale.

*Posttraumatic Growth Inventory:* The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) measures personal growth through positive change in five domains: relating to others, new possibilities, personal strength, appreciation for life, and spiritual change. The two spiritual change questions were not used in the current study as the spiritual growth scale described above will be used instead. Internal consistency is high ( $\alpha = .90$ ) and internal consistency on the five individual scales is acceptable ( $\underline{r} = .67-.85$ ; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Participants were asked to experience the degree to which they experienced change in a number of areas according to a five point ranging from "0" did not experience to "4" a very great degree.

*Parent and Child Relationship Quality*

*The Kansas Parent Satisfaction Scale:* The Kansas Parent Satisfaction Scale (KPSS: James, Schumm, Kennedy, Grigsby, Schectman, & Nichols, 1985) was used to assess parent-child relationship satisfaction for both mother-child and father-child dyads. Significant interrater agreement between youth and their mothers has been found in

clinic-referred families ( $r = .39, p < .05$ ). Participants rated their satisfaction with each parent according to a seven point likert scale ranging from “1” extremely dissatisfied to “7” extremely satisfied.

*Conflict Behavior Scale:* Participants completed the 20 item shortened version of the Conflict Behavior Scale (CBS: Prinz, Foster, Kent & O’Leary, 1979) in order to assess parental communication and conflict. Participants were asked to respond either “true” or “false” to specific questions regarding their relationships with both their father and mother. Scores relating to the mother and the father are summed separately yielding communication scores for each parent-child dyad from the child’s perspective. Higher scores suggest more negative communication; the short form summary score correlates .96 with scores from the longer version of the CBQ ( $\alpha \geq .90$ ; Prinz, et al., 1979).

Contrasting responses of clinic-referred and non-clinic families yielded discriminate and criterion-related validity.

## RESULTS

### Preliminary Analysis

The means, standard deviations, ranges and Cronbach's alpha for all measures used in the current study are presented in Table 1. Noteworthy results are presented below. Preliminary bivariate correlations and t-tests were run to determine if any demographic variables such as time since divorce, gender, year in school, or parental remarriage status were significantly correlated with any study variables and thus, would need to be controlled for during subsequent analyses. These analyses revealed that there were no significant relationships between the demographic variables and study variables and so the demographics were not included as control variables.

Initial analysis indicated that the Sacred Loss and Desecration scales were highly correlated ( $r = .88$ ,  $p < .000$ ) and so these scales were combined into a single variable referred to as "Sacred Loss and Desecration." Individually, the Sacred Loss and Desecration scales each yielded a slightly negative skewed response set with 10.1% of the population endorsing at least "somewhat" or higher on the scale. However, the magnitude of the negative skew was not sufficient to warrant transformation for the combined Sacred Loss and Desecration variable. Cronbach's alpha for the Sacred Loss and Desecration scale was .96.

Blessing in disguise scores were normally distributed with a mean score of 22.32 ( $SD = 9.03$ ) Interestingly, 26.6% of the sample endorsed at least "somewhat" or higher on the scale while 11.8% consistently endorsed items at high levels (i.e. endorsed at least a "4" or higher). The alpha coefficient for this scale was .92.



The Manifestation of God scale yielded a highly skewed response set and so was recoded to better reflect the apparent tripartite nature of the distribution. Specifically, after examining the overall distribution of scores and examining response choices, summary scores were recoded into either “1,” “2,” or “3”. Group 1 included students who scored between 10-15 indicating that their mode response was “not at all” ( $n = 56$ ; 51.4%). Group 2 included students who endorsed low to moderate perceptions of Manifestation of God (range = 16 – 29;  $n = 36$ ; 33%). Group 3 was comprised of students who indicated moderate to high levels of this positive spiritual appraisal by consistently endorsing “somewhat” or higher on the likert scale ( $n = 17$ ; 15.6%).

Both the Acceptance subscale of the Painful Feelings about Divorce scale and the Spiritual Growth scale were dropped from further analysis because of poor internal consistency (both alpha coefficients = .57). All other alphas for the remaining scales were within acceptable ranges (.72 - .96) as were means and standard deviations.

The inter correlations amongst all religious variables are presented in Table 2. Again, with only one exception (Blessing in Disguise with Negative Religious Coping,  $r = .12$ ,  $p \geq .05$ ) all measures were moderately to moderately-highly correlated (range .23 - .73) indicating overlap but not complete redundancy, thereby justifying treating all scores from religious measures as separate variables in subsequent analyses.

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlations between the criterion measures. Several of these measures were significantly correlated. These correlations were all within an acceptable range with the average correlation of .44 indicating overlap but not complete redundancy among the variables. All were retained because they did not correlate above .80.

## Hypothesis Analyses

*Hypothesis 2a: Adolescents' appraisals of sanctification of parental divorce, parental divorce as a sacred loss and parental divorce as a desecration would be directly related to individual psychological adjustment, personal and spiritual growth and parent-child relationships. Specifically, greater perception of parental divorce as a sacred loss and/or desecration would be related to poorer individual psychological adjustment, higher levels of personal and spiritual growth and poorer parent-child relationships, while greater perception of parental divorce as sanctified would be related to better individual psychological adjustment, less personal and spiritual growth and better parent-child relationship quality.*

Pearson correlations were calculated to examine the relationship between spiritual appraisals of parental divorce and indices of individual psychological adjustment, personal and spiritual growth and parent-child relationship quality. Results of these analyses are presented in Table 4 and they provide consistent support for the predictor of sacred loss and desecration with criterion variables with the exception of the parent-child relationship variables. Consistent support was also found with the predictor Manifestation of God with two exceptions (i.e. with Impact of Events Scale and Post-traumatic Growth Scale).

Specifically, higher levels of painful feelings about divorce such as paternal blame ( $r = .19, p \leq .01$ ), self-blame ( $r = .21, p \leq .01$ ), loss and abandonment ( $r = .27, p \leq .01$ ), and seeing life through a filter of divorce ( $r = .46, p \leq .001$ ) were related to higher endorsements of sacred loss and desecration as predicted. Also as predicted, greater perceptions of the parental divorce as a sacred loss and desecration were positively

related to intrusive and avoidant thoughts (IES) ( $r = .56, p \leq .001$ ), and depressive thoughts (CES-D) ( $r = .34, p \leq .001$ ). Sacred loss and desecration was not significantly related to maternal blame.

Appraisals of the parental divorce as a manifestation of God were not significantly related to depressive symptoms or to any types of painful feelings about divorce. And, contrary to the hypothesis, greater endorsement of Manifestation of God was related to higher levels of intrusive and avoidant thoughts (IES) ( $r = .33, p \leq .001$ ).

As predicted, higher levels of post-traumatic growth (PTGI) ( $r = .29, p \leq .01$ ) were significantly related to greater perceptions of sacred loss and desecration. Greater perceptions of the manifestation of God in parental divorce were also positively related to higher levels of post-traumatic growth ( $r = .36, p \leq .001$ ). This relationship between manifestation of God and post-traumatic growth was opposite of the one predicted. Neither the sacred loss and desecration variable nor manifestation of God were significantly correlated to Spiritual Decline.

Unexpectedly, measures of parent-child relationship quality were not significantly related to appraisals of sacred loss and desecration or manifestation of God. As a result, these measures were dropped from subsequent analysis.

*Hypothesis 2b: Sacred loss and desecration were expected to interact such that experiencing higher rates of both would contribute to poorer individual psychological adjustment, greater personal and spiritual growth and poorer parent-child relationship quality beyond the effects of each variable individually.*

This hypothesis was untestable due to the high level of inter-correlation between the individual scales measuring sacred loss and desecration and the subsequent creation

of the merged variable. This single variable will be referred to as “sacred loss and desecration”.

*Hypothesis 3: Appraisals of parental divorce as a sacred loss, desecration, and as sanctified would contribute uniquely to individual psychological adjustment, personal and spiritual growth and parent-child relationship quality even once the variance associated with global religiousness and secular appraisals of harm, loss and challenge are accounted for.*

First, partial correlations were run to control for the variance associated with global religiousness in the bivariate correlations. Second, hierarchical regressions were run with secular appraisals added in step 1 and spiritual appraisal variables added in step 2. Using hierarchical regressions allowed for a direct comparison between the beta weights of each secular appraisal and the independent variable.

Results of the partial correlation analyses using global religiousness are presented in Table 4. After taking into account the variance associated with global religiousness, the relationships between both sacred loss and desecration and manifestation of God and all originally significant criterion variables remained statistically significant.

Table 5 presents the hierarchical regression analyses and the standardized beta weights associated with each secular appraisal and the independent variable. For two of the criterion variables, the spiritual appraisals clearly retained unique predictive ability beyond the secular appraisals. More specifically, both sacred loss and desecration and manifestation of God remained significant predictors for both IES ( $\beta = .42, p \leq .001$ ;  $\beta = .29, p \leq .001$ , respectively) and PTGI ( $\beta = .28, p \leq .05$ ;  $\beta = .23, p \leq .01$ ). These findings are particularly robust considering that sacred loss and desecration remained a significant

predictor of IES and of PTGI despite the significant amount of variance associated with threat appraisals for IES ( $\beta = .26, p \leq .05$ ) and challenge appraisals for post-traumatic growth ( $\beta = .48, p \leq .001$ ). Likewise, manifestation of God remains a significant predictor for IES despite the significance of threat appraisals ( $\beta = .26, p \leq .05$ ) and for PTGI despite the significance of challenge appraisals ( $\beta = .48, p \leq .001$ ).

In other cases, the regressions also provide clear evidence challenging the unique predictive ability of the spiritual appraisals. For all of the painful feelings about divorce scales and for the CES-D scale, the beta weights for sacred loss and desecration in step two were all non-significant. However, seeing life through a filter of divorce almost reached statistical significance ( $\beta = .18, p \leq .10$ ).

Due to the theoretical interest in examining mediation relationships of religious coping variables between spiritual appraisals and criterion variables, all criterion variables that were significantly correlated with religious coping variables were included in the mediation analyses presented below regardless of the impact of secular appraisal variables.

*Hypothesis 4: Religious coping strategies would partially mediate the relationships between appraisals of parental divorce as a sacred loss and as a desecration for individual psychological adjustment, personal and spiritual growth and parent-child relationship quality. More specifically, appraisals of sacred loss and desecration are likely to elicit positive and negative religious coping strategies and at least part of the relationship between the sacred loss and desecration appraisals and the criterion variables is likely to be explained by the effect of these religious coping strategies on the criterion variables. Negative religious coping strategies are likely to mediate the*

*relationship between sacred loss and desecration and more negative outcomes while positive religious coping strategies are likely to mediate the relationship between sacred loss and desecration and growth variables. The mediation effect of the religious coping variables is expected to diminish but not fully explain the relationship between the sacred loss and desecration appraisal variables and the criterion variables. In addition to examining the mediation effects of the omnibus positive and negative religious coping scales, two specific positive religious coping scales were included in these analyses. These scales were the Blessing in Disguise Scale and the Religious Conversion subscale. These scales were hypothesized to function as mediators in the same way as the omnibus positive religious coping scale.*

Baron and Kenny (1986) suggest three criteria are necessary to establish a mediating effect. First, independent variables must be significantly related to dependent variables (see Table 4). Second, independent variables must be significantly correlated to the mediation variables (see Table 3). Finally, there must be a significant correlation between mediation variables and dependent variables. Table 6 presents Pearson correlations between dependent variables that met the first criteria (significantly correlated with the sacred loss and desecration variable) and the mediation variables.

Negative religious coping was significantly correlated with painful feelings about divorce subscales such as paternal blame ( $r = .27, p \leq .01$ ), loss and abandonment, ( $r = .30, p \leq .001$ ) and seeing life through a filter of divorce ( $r = .48, p \leq .001$ ). Negative religious coping was also significantly correlated with Impact of Events Scale ( $r = .57, p \leq .001$ ), Center of Epidemiological Studies – Depression ( $r = .43, p \leq .001$ ) and Post-traumatic Growth Inventory ( $r = .28, p \leq .01$ ). Positive religious coping was significantly correlated with seeing life through a filter of divorce ( $r = .24, p \leq .05$ ), the Impact of

Events Scale ( $r = .38, p \leq .001$ ), and the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory ( $r = .40, p \leq .001$ ). The Blessing in Disguise Scale was significantly correlated with the Post Traumatic Growth Inventory ( $r = .32, p \leq .001$ ) as was the Religious Conversion Scale ( $r = .25, p \leq .01$ ). Religious Conversion was also significantly related to Impact of Events Scale ( $r = .42, p \leq .01$ ), self-blame ( $r = .21, p \leq .05$ ) and seeing life through a filter of divorce ( $r = .25, p \leq .01$ ). Thus, a total of 14 mediation analyses will be run.

Series of three hierarchical regressions were run to determine if the direct effect ( $\tau$ ) of the independent variable on the dependent variable significantly decreases once the mediation effect ( $\alpha\beta$ ) is taken into account (Figures 2a & 2b; Baron and Kenny, 1986). First, the mediator is regressed on the independent variable ( $\alpha$ ). Second, the dependent variable is regressed on the independent variable to determine the direct effect ( $\tau$ ). Third, the dependent variable is regressed on both the independent variable and the mediator variable to determine both the indirect effect ( $\tau'$ ) and  $\beta$ , the effect of the mediator variable on the dependent variable while taking the independent variable into account. For all of these regressions, the unstandardized beta coefficient and its standard error were recorded. Sobel's z test (Baron and Kenny, 1986) was used to formally determine the statistical significance of the mediation effect. That is, this test formally tests whether the mediator reduces the amount of variance previously accounted for by a predictor to a statistically significant degree. Note, however, that this test does not determine whether the predictor variable remains a significant predictor after taking the mediator into account. Rather the Sobel z test allows one to determine if the amount of the reduction due to a mediator is statically meaningful or large. Results of the mediation regressions are recorded in Figures 3-16.

Another important component of understanding these mediation effects is presented in Tables 7a & 7b. More specifically, Tables 7a & 7b present the standardized betas for the series of regression equations according to the Baron and Kenny (1986) method described above. This method of reporting mediation results does not allow for formal testing of whether the decrease in variance attributed to the predictor is statistically significant like the Sobel z test discussed above. However, this approach does allow a direct comparison between the beta weights associated with the predictor variable both before and after the mediation variable is included in the equation. Namely, one can observe whether the resulting beta weight due to a predictor is reduced to non-significance or if it remains statistically significant (even if the mediator accounts for a relatively large portion of the variance). In combination with the Sobel z test described above, this direct comparison can be used to determine if a mediation effect is “complete” (i.e., reduce the link between the predictor and criterion to non-significance) or “partial” (i.e. the predictor continues to predict some unique variance in the criterion).

In general, the meditation hypothesis was supported for the Negative and Positive Religious Coping scales and the Blessing in Disguise Scale but not for the Religious Conversion Scale. Negative religious coping significantly mediated the relationships between the Sacred Loss and Desecration scale and paternal blame ( $z = 2.05, p \leq .05$ ), loss and abandonment ( $z = 3.21, p \leq .001$ ) and seeing life through a filter of divorce ( $z = 2.53, p \leq .05$ ). The standardized beta weights for sacred loss and desecration in the regression equations that included both the sacred loss and desecration variable and negative religious coping as predictors of both paternal blame ( $\beta = .17, p \geq .05$ ) and loss and abandonment ( $\beta = .15, p \geq .05$ ) were non-significant suggesting that negative religious coping fully mediates these relationships. However, the standardized beta for seeing life through a filter of divorce



( $\beta = .25, p \leq .05$ ) remained significant suggesting that negative religious coping is only a partial mediator in this case. Negative religious coping was also a statistically significant mediator for intrusive and anxious thoughts (IES) ( $z = 3.21, p \leq .001$ ), and depressive thoughts (CES-D) ( $z = 2.85, p \leq .01$ ). Negative religious coping did not mediate the relationship between post-traumatic growth and sacred loss and desecration ( $z = 1.52, p \geq .05$ ). The statistical significance of the standardized beta weight associated with sacred loss and desecration after accounting for the effect of negative religious coping on the relationship between sacred loss and desecration and IES ( $\beta = .32, p \leq .01$ ), suggests a partial mediation effect rather than a full mediation. For the CES-D, the non-significant standardized beta ( $\beta = .09, p \geq .05$ ) suggests that negative religious coping fully mediates the relationship between sacred loss and desecration and this criterion variable.

Positive religious coping was not a significant mediator for the relationships between sacred loss and desecration and either seeing life through a filter of divorce ( $z = .21, p \geq .05$ ) or anxious and intrusive thoughts and behaviors ( $z = 1.13, p \geq .05$ ). However, there was a full mediation effect for Positive Religious Coping between Sacred loss and desecration and the Post-traumatic Growth Inventory ( $z = 2.80, p \leq .01; \beta = .09, p \geq .05$ ). While the mediation effect was congruent with the hypothesis, the mediation was not expected to fully explain the relationship between these two variables.

Contrary to the hypothesis, the Religious Conversion scale was not a significant mediator between sacred loss and desecration and any of the criterion variables analyzed (self-blame:  $z = 1.21, p \geq .05$ ; seeing life through a filter of divorce: IES:  $z = 1.82, p \geq .05$ ; PTGI:  $z = 1.20, p \geq .05$ ). On the other hand, blessing in disguise did have a partial mediation effect between sacred loss and desecration and post-traumatic growth ( $z = 2.18, p \leq .05; \beta = .20, p \leq .05$ ). The effect was consistent with the hypothesis.

## DISCUSSION

When examining research related to parental divorce, it is important to remember that the divorce of ones' parents is not itself inherently "bad" nor does this event necessarily have intrinsic religious meaning. Rather, the meaning of parental divorce depends on the way in which the young people involved appraise that event and struggle to cope with it in light of their own personal frameworks of the world. Remarkably, previous research on the impact of parental divorce has largely ignored both the spiritual dimension and intrapersonal perspectives of the children experiencing their parents' divorce. The current study is the first to look at the spiritual appraisals and religious coping strategies of young adolescents who have experienced their parents' divorce.

The results of this study suggest that a small but significant number of adolescents experience their parents' divorce as the loss or violation of something they have held sacred (10.1% endorsed moderate to high levels) or even as an event that God is directly involved in (15.6% endorsed moderate to high levels). Both types of appraisals have direct consequences for the psychological functioning of these adolescents in their early college years. It also seems as if these appraisals and religious coping responses are both part of a dynamic process linked with a variety of mental health outcomes. In addition, this study demonstrates that the new religious coping construct "blessing in disguise" is a salient religious coping construct for understanding the link between sacred loss and desecration appraisals and post-traumatic growth in the context of parental divorce. The following section provides an in-depth discussion of the emotional, psychological, and clinical implications of this study and suggests directions for future research.

Negative Spiritual Appraisals as a Single Variable

Despite the conceptual distinction between sacred loss and desecration, the high, positive correlation between these two constructs made it necessary to combine them as a single scale. That is, students who gave higher ratings to one construct also strongly tended to give higher ratings to the other construct, and conversely, students who gave lower ratings to one construct also strongly tended to give lower ratings to the other. The fact that participants tended to consistently endorse the two sets of items in a similar manner indicates that students had a hard time seeing the divorce as either just a sacred loss or as just a desecration. Thus, the scale is referred to as “sacred loss and desecration” in order to accurately represent the statistical overlap that exists in the current study.

These findings suggest that the more a child views a divorce as a major sacred loss, the more he or she will view one or both parents as being in a position where they could or should have prevented the divorce by avoiding serious wrongdoings that violated the marital covenant, even those that could justify a divorce on religious grounds (e.g., adultery, domestic violence, homosexuality). Alternatively, the more a child views end of the marriage as the ending of something that was sacred, the more he or she may believe one or both parents simply violated their sacred commitment to preserve and protect the marriage under any circumstances. For example, a child who views the end of the marriage as a profound sacred loss may also deeply resent the one or both parents who were unable to live up to Biblical and church teachings to use religious/spiritual resources (e.g., religious forgiveness) to heal the marriage when difficulties arose and instead violated their promises to God to persevere even in rough times. Conversely, however, the students who did not tend to perceive their parents’ divorce as the loss of

something sacred or connected with God also did not hold the parents as spiritually accountable for serious wrongdoings or a lack of commitment. Such findings are consistent with many Christian teachings about the necessity of an intact marital unit being the core characteristic of a sacred family as opposed to non-traditional family structures (e.g., unmarried partners living with children, single parent households), and the responsibility of parents to protect both the marriage by being faithful to core marital religious vows as well as working through typical relationship struggles.

#### Spiritual Appraisals as Predictors of Psychological Distress and Post-traumatic Growth

##### *Sacred Loss and Desecration and Psychological Maladjustment*

Developmentally, college is a time for young people to move out on their own, develop romantic relationships, and begin their lives as adults. While this time tends to be filled with a roller coaster of emotions in general, the relationship between mood difficulties and the negative spiritual appraisals highlights the salience of the sacred loss and desecration construct. More specifically, greater endorsement of sacred loss and desecration appraisals in connection with a parental divorce that had occurred sometime within the past five to seven years was related with higher levels of current intrusive thoughts as well as depression symptoms. Thus, it seems that college students who recall that they viewed their parents' divorce as the loss or violation of something sacred are more at risk to experience current mood difficulties. These difficulties are likely to have a negative impact on the student's ability to adapt to college life and the demands of adulthood.

In addition, the relationship between sacred loss and desecration appraisals and intrusive, trauma related thoughts and depression could be a reflection of a more indirect relationship between college students' experiences with the "violation" of their parents' sacred marriage covenant and the developmental and religious pressures they might feel to form life long marriage commitments themselves. One young woman was particularly poignant in her description of how the divorce has affected her view of marriage:

When my parents divorced, I was 18 but it still hurt and it has affected me in my relationships as far as trusting people, giving my all to someone, and believing in marriage. For a long time afterward I would say to others that I never plan on getting married because every marriage that was around seemed to fail. I had my last hope in my parents and they failed at it too. I now have fearful feelings about marriage and it negatively affects my emotions towards my boyfriend but I am trying to deal with it. He has asked me twice to marry him after a five-year relationship but it is still hard to accept. So hopefully marriage counseling with my pastor will help.

Clearly, this young woman is experiencing a great deal of distress as she struggles to reconcile the influence of her parents' divorce on her perspective of marriage, the relationship she has with her boyfriend and her desire to "deal with" her fears. Her decision to see a pastor suggests that there is a religious and spiritual dimension to her struggles and that this dimension is also her hope for healing. For the pastor working with this young lady and for helping professionals working with others in similar situations, understanding the spiritual aspect of her distress over the divorce and over her own difficulties "dealing with" her anxieties about marriage seems crucial to helping her successfully cope with her internal conflicts regarding marriage.

When controlling for the secular appraisals of harm, threat and challenge, the relationship between sacred loss and desecration appraisals and anxiety remained statistically significant but the relationship with depression did not. It seems then that the

spiritual dimension of the sacred loss and desecration appraisals was particularly potent in relation to current trauma-related anxiety and intrusive thoughts but not necessarily as powerful in regards to depression once perceptions of the overall negativity of the divorce are taken into account. However, more exploration is needed to understand these findings more clearly. That is, the statistical analysis used in this study does not clarify the directionality of the relationship – either negative spiritual appraisals or negative secular appraisals could be predictive of the other. In either case, the bivariate correlation between sacred loss and desecration and depression remains of interest for the current study. Future research is needed to determine the exact nature of the relationship between spiritual and secular negative appraisals.

#### *Manifestation of God and Psychological Maladjustment*

The relationship between appraisals that God was directly involved in the divorce and psychological maladjustment was much more complex than initially hypothesized. Rather than higher perceptions of God's involvement being related to less depression and fewer intrusive thoughts, statistical analysis revealed that higher perceptions of God's involvement were actually related to higher levels of intrusive, trauma related thoughts at statistically significant levels even after taking into account secular appraisals. There are many possible explanations for this relationship.

It is possible that students' use of manifestation of God appraisals could reflect a tendency for stressful situations to be understood as the hand of God. In this scenario, the positive spiritual appraisal would be considered a type of coping appraisal – when faced with high levels of distress such as those reflected in the IES scale, individuals may chose to believe that God is somehow involved in the event as a way to bring purpose and

meaning to the event. From this perspective, the higher levels of intrusive thoughts and trauma related symptoms that the individual is feeling would lead to appraisals of God's hand guiding the divorce. However, due to the cross sectional design of this study, this degree of directionality and causality cannot be determine through the statistical analysis of the current study.

Given the limited ability of the current study to speak to causality, it is also possible that appraisals of God's involvement in the divorce might lead to trauma related intrusive, anxious thoughts. A closer look at the Manifestation of God measure reveals that this measure does not specifically state the "good/positive" or "bad/negative" implications of God's involvement with the divorce. Unfortunately, the hypotheses related to this measure did not adequately take into account the neutral construction of the scale. A more accurate interpretation of the measure would suggest that an individual's own perception of God and his exact role in the divorce – positive or negative – would influence the type of relationship between Manifestation of God endorsements and current psychological functioning. Indeed, for individuals with a negative God image, God's direct involvement could perpetuate a view of God that is punitive, and punishing. And, it is possible that the experience of God's direct involvement could even change a positive understanding of God and his involvement in human activities into a negative perspective. A negative God image could lead to an increased sense of anxiety related to additional "bad things" caused by God. And, even if one did view God's involvement as an answer to prayer, it might potentially be difficult to reconcile God's involvement in a divorce with the view of the major world religions that marriage is a sacred, life long covenant before God. One participant described her perspective in this way saying, "I

can't really say I regret my parents' divorce because in a way, I prayed for it to happen."

She went on to say that

I appreciate my parents' divorce...but I also regret the picture of men and relationships that it has formed in my mind. Most of the time I've never looked at relationships as a lasting thing and I highly doubt that I'll get married. But, I'm trying to change that [perspective on marriage].

For this young woman, knowing that God answered her prayers did not protect her view of marriage from being damaged. While she was not explicit about a possible sacred component to her idea of marriage, it seems probable that her religious experiences would have fostered belief in the sacred nature of marriage. As her story clearly suggests, she is wrestling with a picture of men and relationships that seems to be at odds with the way she would like to view marriage.

Initially, a therapist or counselor might be tempted to suggest that a religious client who presents her parent's divorce as an answer to prayer increase her use of religious coping strategies such as talking with a pastor, reading literature on the nature of marriage from a biblical perspective or praying. However, for an individual whose very idea of God has been challenged, participating in these activities might cause more emotional harm than healing. In this case, a thorough assessment of the client's beliefs about God, spiritual resources and the spiritual nature of her struggles would be paramount for developing an accurate case conceptualization and effective treatment plan.

#### *Sacred Loss and Desecration and Painful Feelings about Divorce*

The positive relationship between increased endorsement of sacred loss and desecration appraisals and more frequent reporting of painful feelings related to the divorce highlights the impact of negative spiritual appraisals on non-clinical indices of distress and emotional pain. Of the 4 subscales positively related to more frequent



endorsement of sacred loss and desecration appraisals, seeing life through a filter of divorce was most robustly related to sacred loss and desecration and was the only variable to even approach statistical significance after controlling for secular appraisals of harm, challenge or threat. This specific scale emphasizes the change in life perspective that students link directly to their parents' divorce. These findings suggest that appraisals of sacred loss and desecration are particularly relevant to the perspective that these subjects form on important life issues (e.g. romantic relationships, marriage and family of origin ties) following the divorce. These findings also support the research described previously which argues that youth may experience unpleasant and problematic thoughts and feelings tied directly to the divorce while still being resilient enough not to experience the types of severity of psychological symptoms that are associated with diagnosable mental health disorders such as PTSD or depressive symptoms (Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000).

Additionally, the significant positive relationship between sacred loss and desecration and paternal blame, self-blame, and loss and abandonment suggests that there are other areas of non-clinical distress that could be linked with negative spiritual appraisals. Interestingly, these relationships became non-significant after controlling for secular appraisals. Unfortunately, as discussed earlier, the nature of the analyses does not allow for a clear understanding of the relationship between spiritual appraisals and secular appraisals. Interestingly, the statistically significant link between sacred loss and desecration appraisals and parental blame but not maternal blame seems particularly intriguing. Is there something about the nature of father-initiated divorce verses mother-initiated divorce that resonated more closely with sacred loss and desecration? Is the

maternal blame construct simply irrelevant to the participants? Closer examination of the specific nature of the parental divorce and the differences between mother and father initiated divorce is likely to be helpful in understanding this difference.

*Manifestation of God and Painful Feelings about Divorce*

The hypotheses of this study suggest that there would be a negative relationship between more frequent manifestation of God appraisals and higher levels of non-clinical forms of psychological distress such as seeing life through a filter of divorce, self-blame or feelings of loss and abandonment. However, there was no relationship between the subscales of the PFAD scale (i.e. paternal blame, maternal blame, self-blame, loss and abandonment, seeing life through a filter of divorce or acceptance) and manifestation of God.

*Sacred Loss and Desecration, Manifestation of God, and Post-traumatic Growth*

Sacred loss and desecration and manifestation of God appraisals were both related to post-traumatic growth in the same manner. That is, greater endorsements of either appraisal type were related to greater levels of post-traumatic growth. This pattern of results was different than what was hypothesized. Manifestation of God was not expected to be related to growth as the initial assumption was that viewing God as having a direct hand in the divorce would not be a stressful event that would set the context for growth. However, it would seem that the relationship between post-traumatic growth and manifestation of God has implications for the conceptualizations of manifestation of God appraisals discussed earlier. If seeing God's involvement in the divorce is a way to cope with the parental divorce, it is logical to assume that manifestation of God appraisals would be related to growth. And, as discussed earlier, God's involvement in the divorce

of one's parents has the potential to create tension with a view that God is benevolent and caring. It is the resulting struggle to either transform one's perspective or conserve it that sets the context for growth (Pargament, 1997).

Interestingly, controlling for secular appraisals did not reduce the statistical significance of bivariate links between either spiritual appraisal variable and post-traumatic growth to non-significant levels. A closer look at these statistics paint a particularly powerful picture of the spiritual appraisals as the secular challenge appraisal was related to post-traumatic growth at a statistically significant level of  $p \leq .001$ . This statistic bears repeating as it highlights the potency of the spiritual appraisal variables even in the context of the statistically significant secular challenge appraisal. It would seem as if viewing your parents' divorce the loss or violation of something sacred or as an event guided by the hand of God triggers a spiritual struggle sets the stage for personal growth. The process leading from these spiritual appraisals to a point of growth will be discussed in more depth in a subsequent section.

The statistical significance of the secular challenge appraisal raises the question of the relevance of a parallel spiritual challenge appraisal. This concept would be consistent with Christian teachings that highlight the need for believers to go through suffering because suffering produces spiritual growth (Romans 5:3-5). In fact, the trials that a believer is presented with are often viewed as the vehicle to a deeper relationship with God. Far from just being a theological abstraction, the idea of spiritual challenges resonates with the way one subject described her view of her parents' divorce saying "I believe that this was an experience that God wanted me to go through to help mold me as a person." Appraisals of spiritual challenge could potentially be significant predictors of

spiritual growth following a difficult life situation. Additionally, therapy focused on working within a client's spiritual framework to re-appraise an event as a spiritual challenge instead of a sacred loss or desecration could facilitate personal and spiritual growth. Research addressing this topic should carefully examine both the theological foundation for such beliefs as well as the real life experiences of people who hold a "spiritual challenge" perspective.

Religious Coping Strategies as Mediators Between Sacred Loss and Desecration  
and Indicators of Psychological Distress and Post-traumatic Growth

*Negative Religious Coping and Psychological Maladjustment*

Negative religious coping functioned as a partial mediator between sacred loss and desecration and intrusive thoughts. In relationship with intrusive, trauma like symptoms, it seems that both the negative spiritual appraisal of the event and subsequent negative religious coping techniques set up students for more distress. This finding is consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theory that understanding both appraisals and coping strategies is important for understanding an individuals' reaction to the event. It is important to note that the statistical analysis performed in this study did not allow for a pathway analysis. That is, it is statistically impossible to determine whether appraisals preceded coping. Rather, these statistics suggest that the two variables, regardless of order or time, both contribute to higher levels of intrusive thoughts. In many ways, these statistics mirror our experience of the world – it is often difficult to tease out whether appraisals or coping happens first or even simultaneously.

There appears to be a different relationship between depression and negative religious coping in this study. Rather than operating as a partial mediator, negative

religious coping fully explained the relationship between sacred loss and desecration and depression symptoms. Interestingly, the bi-variate relationship between sacred loss and desecration and depression also became non-significant after controlling for secular appraisals. It would seem then, that the impact of negative spiritual appraisals on psychological well-being is not implicitly the most proximal component of psychological maladjustment. But, given the robust bivariate correlations, sacred loss and desecration may be a powerful trigger for appraisals of harm, threat, or challenge and negative religious coping methods which do not bode well for an individual.

*Negative Religious Coping and Painful Feelings of Divorce*

In a similar pattern to the one described above, negative religious coping partially mediated the relationship between seeing life through a filter of divorce and sacred loss and desecration and fully mediated the relationship between sacred loss and desecration and the other painful feelings of divorce subscales. Again, this pattern parallels the results found after controlling for secular appraisals - the filter subscale was the only one that approached statistical significance following these analyses.

The consistent potency of sacred loss and desecration appraisals in relation to seeing life through a filter of divorce and anxious and intrusive thoughts and behaviors suggests that there might be a common thread between these two indices of psychological distress. Looking more closely, both seem to deal with a pervasive, daily awareness of the divorce and its' impact on everyday life. And, as discussed earlier, the developmental stage of college students puts them at a specific vulnerability regarding the future of their own romantic relationships and their own adult identity. Taken together with negative religious coping strategies, it seems as if sacred loss and desecration appraisals can

potentially set young people up for spiritual struggles as they attempt to re-orientate their beliefs about themselves, the world and their future.

*Negative Religious Coping and Post-traumatic Growth*

Theoretically, negative religious coping should not mediate a relationship between a negative spiritual appraisal and a positive outcome such as growth. Thus, no relationship was hypothesized for the current study. As expected, negative religious coping was not a mediator between sacred loss and desecration and post-traumatic growth.

*Positive Religious Coping and Psychological Maladjustment and Distress*

Likewise, positive religious coping was not expected to mediate the relationship between sacred loss and desecration and either psychological maladjustment or psychological distress. This hypothesis was supported through the statistical mediation analyses.

*Positive Religious Coping and Post-traumatic Growth*

Positive religious coping fully mediated the relationship between sacred loss and desecration and post-traumatic growth. This finding helps explain the confusing bivariate relationship between sacred loss and desecration appraisals and post-traumatic growth. That is, it seems as if the young people reacted to their negative spiritual appraisals of the event by utilizing religious coping resources. Positive religious coping is likely to lead to post-traumatic growth and, as discussed earlier, negative religious coping is likely to lead to higher levels of intrusive thoughts and seeing life through a filter of divorce.

Some might argue that the full mediation suggests sacred loss and desecration appraisals are irrelevant to understanding post-traumatic growth following parental

divorce because positive religious coping fully explained the relationship. And, on paper, this seems to be the case. However, for the real life practitioner or pastor who works with children of divorce, the theological and spiritual implications of spiritual appraisals are difficult to ignore. For those trying to facilitate greater use of positive religious coping strategies, understanding the spiritual meaning of the parent's divorce seems foundational for navigating road blocks in counseling and appropriately addressing issues of faith. Rather than minimizing the role of negative spiritual appraisals, these results suggest that there is hope for the young adult struggling to reconcile the loss or violation of sacred beliefs about their family and their own future marriages

*Religious Conversion and Psychological Maladjustment, Psychological Distress and Post-traumatic Growth*

Religious conversion was initially hypothesized as a potential mediation variable between sacred loss and desecration and measures of psychological maladjustment and distress. This hypothesis was based on a small but substantial body of research suggesting that there is a link between religious conversion or “apostasy” and parental divorce. However, religious conversion was not a statistically significant mediator. It seems that religious conversion does not help explain the link between sacred loss and desecration appraisals and either psychological maladjustment, psychological distress or post-traumatic growth. However, given the low base rate of religious conversion experienced in this study, these results should be interpreted with caution. That is, the religious conversion subscale assesses the degree to which subjects use religious transformation as a coping mechanism. The items used were “Looked for a total spiritual reawakening,” “Prayed for a complete transformation of my life,” and “Tried to find a completely new

life through religion.” In order to better understand the religious conversion experiences of the subjects in this study, a “religious change” variable was created to reflect changes in religious affiliation. In this study, 89.9% (n = 98) of the study reported no change in religious affiliation between growing up years and the time of the study. The subjects who did report a change primarily reported changes from either Catholic or Protestant to “none” (n = 8). Only three students reported a change in affiliation from Catholic to Protestant (n = 2) or “none” to Protestant (n = 1). It seems then that, for the participants of this study, endorsement of religious conversion items did not reflect a more literal understanding of “conversion” that reflects movement from one religious group to another. Thus, it is not clear if the relationship between religious conversion would change with a larger, more specific sample of individuals who had changed their religious beliefs and affiliations or if there is actually no underlying process connecting negative spiritual appraisals and religious conversion with the outcomes measures used in this study. Further research targeting a more specific population of “religious changers” is needed to better understand the link between apostasy and parental divorce.

#### *Blessing in Disguise and Post-traumatic Growth*

Blessing in disguise is a new religious coping subscale as it represents a complete, specific reappraisal of the initial interpretation of the parental divorce. It is important to clarify that blessing in disguise does not reflect simply “seeing the silver lining.” One young woman described a silver lining experience saying, “It [the divorce] is still difficult to accept but I realize without it, I would not appreciate life and love as much as I do now.” From her perspective, the divorce was still bad but good came of it. In contrast, one student shared:



In the beginning, I was very upset because he [father] did that to our family, but then I realized that it was his outlet from the insanity of our household. During the divorce proceedings I found out that my parents only got married because my mother was pregnant with me. This answered a lot of questions... Their divorce was a blessing in disguise.

Not only does this subject explicitly use the words “blessing in disguise” to describe her experiences, but she describes the transformation process that her perspective on the divorce went through. It is this transformation process that makes Blessing in Disguise unique among the existing positive religious coping scales. Indeed, the items in the scale were explicitly designed to include a transformational component (e.g. “I have come to see the divorce was a positive, divine turning point;” “I have realized in the years since that the divorce was a divine intervention by God for the better;” “At this point in my life, I now see that the divorce was a positive fork in the road of my spiritual life”).

The participant described above was not the only subject to endorse “blessing in disguise as a relevant construct – 26.6 % endorse moderate to high levels. Additionally, blessing in disguise partially mediated the relationship between post-traumatic growth and sacred loss and desecration appraisals. These statistics strengthen the claim that blessing in disguise is a new, relevant religious coping construct. For many young people, it seems as if the divorce of their parents can take on new meaning in the years following the divorce. At the same time, the partial mediation suggests that blessing in disguise is not necessarily the only coping strategy that young adults use to cope with their parents divorce. Rather, it seems that students who make use of a wide variety of positive religious coping resources are best able to learn and growth from the experience.

### Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations to the current study. First, the generalizability of this study may be limited due to the homogeneity of the sample. The majority of the sample was Caucasian, Christian, and female. Also, all subjects were enrolled at a midsized college located in the Midwestern United States. It is unlikely that the experiences and processes of these students are representative of all youth from other parts of the country. The current sample was also restricted to young adults who had experienced their parents' divorce during early adolescence. It is possible that their experiences are markedly different from those who experienced their parents' divorce at a much younger age.

Additionally, the study was cross-sectional and correlational in design. A more robust design that is longitudinal in nature and includes more sophisticated statistical analyses would be required for a more complete modeling of the relationships between appraisals, coping and outcome variables. In addition, the study was retrospective in nature. That is, students were asked to think back to the time when their parents' were divorced in order to answer a number of questions. These responses have the potential to be biased as students' current perspectives on the divorce might influence their memories of their thoughts and behaviors at the time the divorce happened. It is also possible that subjects were sensitive to the religious nature of the questions and felt compelled to answer a more positive way than if the religious variables were not present. In the future, presenting the secular constructs first and ending the survey with the religious constructs could address this potential for bias.

Finally, this study could be strengthened through the revision and addition of a number of constructs. For example, the lack of results with the parent-child relationship variables could be counteracted by exploring the moderating effects of causes of divorce as mentioned earlier, or by recruiting parental participation in the project. Additionally, this study did not address the role of secular coping. Including this construct would allow for a direct commentary on the nature of religious coping variables beyond that of secular appraisals.

Despite these limitations, this study provides ample evidence that the vast literature on children's experiences with divorce has been ignorant to the spiritual and religious dimensions of this experience. And, families of faith who experience a divorce might be particularly vulnerable if they struggle to make sense of the violation and loss of something held sacred. This study provides important insight into the way in which young adults who have experienced their parents' divorce as a sacred loss and desecration utilize religious coping to deal with that divorce and the psychological adjustment associated with these processes.

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## APPENDIX A

## Demographic Items

1. Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female
  2. Age:  years
  3. Race: ☐ White ☐ Black ☐ Hispanic  
☐ Asian American ☐ Native American  
☐ Multi-racial/ethnic ☐ Other, Please Specify
  4. Age at which your parents separated:
  5. Age at which your parents divorce was final/will be final
  6. If you were under 18 when your parents' divorced, what custody arrangements were made?  
☐ joint legal custody ☐ legal custody, mother  
☐ legal custody, father
  7. Have your parents remarried since the divorce?  
☐ yes, my mother has remarried ☐ yes, my father has remarried
  8. Which parent(s) or guardian(s) did you live with all or most of the time following the divorce? If your time was/is divided 50% in both homes, check here ☐.
- Female Guardian with whom you lived most of the time (circle one):  
 Biological Mom      Stepmom      Adoptive Mom  
 Girlfriend of Father      Fiancée of Father      None  
 Other:
- Male Guardian with whom you lived most of the time (circle one):  
 Biological Dad      Stepdad      Adoptive Dad  
 Boyfriend of Mother      Fiancé of Mother      None  
 Other:
9. Classification: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior
  10. At the time of your parents' divorce, what kind of impact did it have on your life? Please mark one response choice:  
☐ extremely negative ☐ moderately negative  
☐ somewhat negative ☐ slightly negative  
☐ not at all negative.

## APPENDIX B

## Global Religiousness Items &amp; Religious Descriptive Items

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

☐ Protestant      ☐ Catholic      ☐ Jewish  
☐ Muslim      ☐ Other (please specify)      ☐ None

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

☐ Protestant      ☐ Catholic      ☐ Jewish  
☐ Muslim      ☐ Other (please specify)      ☐ None

3. When it comes to your religious identity, how would you rate yourself on the following scale? (please circle one)

None	Traditional/ Fundamental		Mainline/ Moderate		Liberal
0	1	2	3	4	5

4. 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

5. How often do you pray privately in places other than church or synagogue?

☐ 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

6. Which of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about the Bible or Religious Scripture?

☐ The Bible or religious scripture is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word.  
☐ The Bible or religious scripture is the inspired word of God, but not everything should be taken literally.  
☐ The Bible or religious scripture is an ancient book of fables, legends, history and moral precepts recorded by people.

7. To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person? Are you...

☐ Very religious      ☐ Moderately religious      ☐ Slightly religious  
☐ Not religious at all      ☐ Don't know      ☐ No answer

## APPENDIX B, CONTINUED

8. To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person? Are you...

<input type="checkbox"/> Very spiritual	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderately spiritual	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly spiritual
<input type="checkbox"/> Not spiritual at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> No answer

9. How important is religion or spirituality to you?

<input type="checkbox"/> Not important	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Important	<input type="checkbox"/> Important
<input type="checkbox"/> Very Important		



## APPENDIX C

## Sacred Loss and Desecration Scale

To what extent does each of the following statements describe the way you feel about your parents' divorce? Please circle the number of the response that most closely describes your feelings.

- | Not at all  |   | Somewhat |   | Very Much |
|---|---|----------|---|-----------|
| 1   | 2 | 3        | 4 | 5         |
| 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.                                  |   |          |   |           |
| 13. A source of spirituality became absent in my life.                                |   |          |   |           |
| 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

## Manifestation of God Scale

To what extent does each of the following statements describe the way you feel about your parents' divorce? Please circle the number of the response that most closely describes your feelings.

Not at all		Somewhat		Very Much
1	2	3	4	5

1. I thought God played a role in my parents' decision to divorce.
2. God was present in my parents' divorce.
3. My parents' divorce was a reflection of God's will.
4. My parents' divorce was symbolic of God and what I believe about God.
5. God was part of my parents' divorce.
6. My parents' divorce reflected my image of what God wants for our family.
7. My parents' divorce was influenced by God's actions in our lives.
8. My parents' divorce represents God's presence in my family's life.
9. The divorce was an answer to prayers to God
10. Even when it happened, the divorce was a blessing from God.

## APPENDIX E

## Brief R-COPE

The following items deal with ways you coped with your parents' divorce. 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. Circle the answer that best applies to you.

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

1. Looked for a stronger connection with God.
2. Sought God's love and care.
3. Sought help from God in letting go of my anger.
4. Tried to put my plans into action together with God.
5. Tried to see how God might be trying to strengthen me in this situation.
6. Asked for forgiveness for my sins.
7. Focused on religion to stop worrying about my problems.
8. Wondered whether God had abandoned me.
9. Felt punished by God for my lack of devotion.
10. Wondered what I did for God to punish me.
11. Questioned God's love for me.
12. Wondered whether my church had abandoned me.
13. Decided the devil made this happen.
14. Questioned the power of God.

## APPENDIX F

## RCOPE, selected items

The following items deal with ways you coped with your parents' divorce. 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. Circle the answer that best applies to you.

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

1. Looked to God for strength, support, and guidance.
2. Saw my situation as part of God's plan.
3. Thought that some things are beyond God's control.
4. Prayed to find a new reason to live.
5. Looked for spiritual support from clergy
6. Voiced anger that God didn't answer my prayers.
7. Took control over what I could, and gave the rest to God.
8. Asked God to help me overcome my bitterness.
9. Trusted that God would be by my side.
10. Sought a stronger spiritual connection with other people.
11. Asked others to pray for me.
12. Did my best and then turned the situation over to God.
13. Made decisions about what to do without God's help.
14. Tried to find a lesson from God in the event.
15. Believed the devil was responsible for my situation.
16. Tried to make sense of the situation without relying on God.
17. Looked for a total spiritual reawakening.
18. Realized that God cannot answer all of my prayers.
19. Disagreed with what the church wanted me to do or believe.
20. Felt the situation was the work of the devil.
21. Prayed to discover my purpose in living.
22. Did what I could and put the rest in God's hands.
23. Prayed for a complete transformation of my life.
24. Tried to deal with my feelings without God's help.
25. Thought about how my life is a part of a larger spiritual force.
26. Decided that God was punishing me for my sins.

## APPENDIX F, CONTINUED

27. Felt dissatisfaction with the clergy.
28. Looked for love and concern from the members of my church.
29. Asked God to help me find a new purpose in life.
30. Tried to find a completely new life through religion.
31. Sought God's help in trying to forgive others. .

## APPENDIX G

## Blessing in Disguise Scale

To what extent have you had the following thoughts about your parents' divorce in the years since it took place?

Not at all		Somewhat		Very Much
1	2	3	4	5

1. I have come to see that the divorce was a positive, divine turning point.
2. I have come to see that the divorce was an act of kindness by God.
3. I have realized in the years since that the divorce was a divine intervention by God for the better.
4. It has become clear in the years since the divorce that the divorce was an answer to prayer.
5. At this point in my life, I now see that the divorce was a positive fork in the road of my spiritual life.
6. My parents' divorce turned out to be a blessing in disguise.
7. My parents' divorce seemed like a tragedy at the time but now I see it as a blessing.
8. It turned out that my parents' divorce was a miracle though I did not think so at the time.
9. It has become clear that the divorce was God's hand working in my life

## APPENDIX H

## Painful Feelings about Divorce Scale

For the following statements, rate your responses from 1 to 5 with "5" meaning you strongly agree with the statement and "1" meaning you strongly disagree with the statement. Circle "9" if the statement does not apply to you. The questions referring to "your father" or "your mother" should be understood as your biological or adoptive father and biological or adoptive mother, even if you spend more time with a step-parent or other caretaker.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree
- 9 = Does Not Apply

1. My father is still in love with my mother.
2. If my father had been a better (nicer, stronger) person, my parents would still be together.
3. My friends seem to have happier lives.
4. My parents' divorce/separation relieved a lot of the tensions in my family.
5. My parents' divorce/separation still causes struggles for me.
6. I probably would be a different person if my parents had not gotten divorced/separated.
7. Before my parents' divorce/separation, it was my father who usually made my family unhappy.
8. My mother caused the breakup of my family.
9. My mother caused most of the trouble in my family.
10. I still think a lot about the time around my parents' divorce/separation.
11. Sometimes I feel angry at my father for my parents' divorce/separation.
12. I sometimes wonder if I could have prevented my parents' divorce/separation.
13. Sometimes I feel angry at my mother for my parents' divorce/separation.
14. I feel comfortable talking to my friends about my parents' divorce/separation.
15. I feel doomed to repeat my parents' problems in my own relationships.
16. I wish I had tried harder to keep my parents together.
17. I sometimes dream that my parents will get back together.
18. If I had been an easier child, my parents might not have gotten divorced/separated.

## APPENDIX G, CONTINUED

19. My parents eventually seemed happier after they separated.
20. If my mother had been a better (nicer, stronger) person, my parents would still be together.
21. I really missed not having my father/mother around.
22. I sometimes feel that people look down on me because my parents are divorced.
23. I often wonder how life would be different if my parents were still together.
24. My father caused most of the trouble in my family.
25. My childhood was cut short.
26. I still haven't forgiven my mother for the pain she caused our family.
27. My mother is still in love with my father.
28. A lot of my parents' problems were because of me.
29. I feel like I might have been a different person if my father (mother) had been a bigger part of my life.
30. I had a harder childhood than most people.
31. I worry about big events, like graduations or weddings, when both of my parents will have to come.
32. Before my parents' divorce/separation, it was my mother who usually made my family unhappy.
33. I still haven't forgiven my father for the pain he caused my family.
34. My father caused the breakup of my family.
35. I often wish that my family could be like it was before my parents' separation.
36. I wish my father (mother) had spent more time with me when I was younger.
37. Even though it was hard, divorce was the right thing for my family.
38. I sometimes wonder if my father really loves me.



## APPENDIX I

## Center for Epidemiological Studies of Depression Scale

Using the scale below, circle the number which best describes how often you felt or behaved this way DURING THE PAST MONTH.

1 = None or Rarely

2 = Some or a little

3 = Occasionally

4 = Most or all

1. I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me.

2. I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.

3. I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help from my family or friends.

4. I felt that I was just as good as other people.

5. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.

6. I felt depressed.

7. I felt that everything I did was an effort.

8. I felt hopeful about the future.

9. I thought my life had been a failure.

10. I felt fearful.

11. My sleep was restless.

12. I was happy.

13. I talked less than usual.

14. I felt lonely.

15. People were unfriendly.

16. I enjoyed life.

17. I had crying spells.

18. I felt sad.

19. I felt that people disliked me.

20. I could not get "going."

## APPENDIX J

## Alcohol Use

Please answer each of the following questions by typing in the correct answer or by choosing from one of the provided answers.

1. How many days during the past two weeks did you drink alcohol?
2. How many drinks do you estimate you drank during the past two weeks?
3. How many drinks do you estimate you drink on average during a party or social occasion?
4. How often would you say that you get “smashed” or drunk as a result of drinking?  
☐ Never      ☐ not often      ☐ frequently      ☐ most times  
☐ always
5. Has anyone ever expressed concern over your drinking habits?”  
☐ Yes      ☐ No
6. Have you ever thought that you might have a drinking problem while at college?  
☐ Yes      ☐ No

## APPENDIX K

## Impact of Events Scale

Please circle your response to each item, indicating how frequently these comments were true for you and thoughts about your parents' divorce. DURING THE PAST WEEK. If they did not occur during this time, please mark the "not at all" column.

0 = Not at all

1 = Rarely

2 = Sometimes

3 = Often

1. I thought about it when I didn't mean to.
2. I avoided letting myself get upset when I thought about it or was reminded of it.
3. I tried to remove it from memory.
4. I had trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, because of pictures or thoughts about it that came to my mind.
5. I had waves of strong feelings about it.
6. I had dreams about it.
7. I stayed away from reminders of it.
8. I felt as if it hadn't happened or wasn't real.
9. I tried not to talk about it.
10. Pictures about it popped into my mind.
11. Other things kept making me think about it.
12. I was aware that I still had a lot of feelings about it, but I didn't deal with them.
13. I tried not to think about it.
14. Any reminder brought back feelings about it.
15. My feelings about it were kind of numb.

## APPENDIX L

## 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.*

0 = I have not experienced this change as a result of the divorce.

1 = I did experience this change to a very small degree as a result of the divorce.

2 = I did experience this change to a small degree as a result of the divorce.

3 = I did experience this change to a moderate degree as a result of the divorce.

4 = I did experience this change to a great degree as a result of the divorce.

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 M

## Post Traumatic Growth Inventory

Read each item and indicate how much each change has occurred as a result of experiencing your parents' divorce

- 1 = I have not experienced this change as a result of the divorce.
- 2 = I did experience this change to a very small degree as a result of the divorce.
- 3 = I did experience this change to a small degree as a result of the divorce.
- 4 = I did experience this change to a moderate degree as a result of the divorce
- 5 = I did experience this change to a great degree as a result of the divorce
- 6 = I did experience this change to a very great degree as a result of the divorce

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

- 1. My priorities about what is important in life
- 2. An appreciation for the value of my own life.
- 3. I have developed new interests.
- 4. A feeling of self-reliance
- 5. Knowing that I can count on people in times of trouble.
- 6. I have established a new path for my life.
- 7. A sense of closeness with others.
- 8. A willingness to express my emotions.
- 9. Knowing I can handle difficulties.
- 10. I'm able to do better things with my life.
- 11. Being able to accept the way things work out.
- 12. Appreciating each day
- 13. New opportunities have become available which wouldn't have existed other wise.
- 14. Having compassion for others.
- 15. Putting effort into my relationships.
- 16. I'm more likely to try to change things which need changing.
- 17. I have discovered that I'm stronger than I thought I was.
- 18. I have learned a great deal about how wonderful people are.
- 19. I accept needing others.

## APPENDIX N

## Kansas Parenting Satisfaction

Please indicate how satisfied you are with your relationship with your mom/your dad.  
Please note that these questions ask you to give a rating from “1” (extremely dissatisfied)  
to “7” (extremely satisfied).

1. Extremely dissatisfied
2. Very dissatisfied
3. Somewhat dissatisfied
4. Mixed
5. Somewhat satisfied
6. Very satisfied
7. Extremely satisfied

## Mother Rating:

1. How satisfied are you with your mom as a parent?
2. How satisfied are you with yourself as a son or daughter?
3. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your mom?

## Father Rating:

1. How satisfied are you with your dad as a parent?
2. How satisfied are you with yourself as a son or daughter?
3. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your dad?

## APPENDIX O

## Conflict Behavior Scale

Think back over the last year. The statements below have to do with you and your mother and you and your dad. Read the statement, and then decide if you believe that the statement is true. If it is true then circle TRUE, and if you believe the statement is not true, circle FALSE. You must circle either True or False, *but never both for the same item*. Please answer all items. Answer for yourself, without talking it over with anyone. Notice that answers on *the left side refer to you and your mom* and answers on *the right side refer to you and your dad*.

1. My mom/dad doesn't understand me.
2. My mom/dad and I sometimes end our arguments calmly.
3. We almost never seem to agree.
4. I enjoy the talks we have.
5. When I state my opinion, s/he gets upset.
6. At least three times a week, we get angry at each other.
7. My mother/father listens when I need someone to talk to.
8. My mom /dad is a good friend to me.
9. My mom /dad says I have no consideration for her.
10. At least once a day we get angry at each other.
11. My mother/ father is bossy when we talk.
12. My mom/dad understands me.
13. The talks we have are frustrating.
14. My mom/dad understands my point of view, even when s/he doesn't agree with me.
15. My mom /dad seems to be always complaining about me.
16. In general, I don't think we get along very well.
17. My mom/dad screams a lot
18. My mom/dad puts me down.
19. If I run into problems, my mom/dad helps me out
20. I enjoy spending time with my mother.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of All Variables

<u>Scale (# items)</u>	Scale Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Spiritual Appraisals						
Sacred Loss (14)	14 – 70	14	55	25.30	11.29	.93
Desecration (14)	14 – 70	14	57	25.53	11.23	.93
Sacred loss and Desecration (28)	28 – 140	28	109	50.83	21.83	.96
Manifestation of God (10)	10 – 50	10	50	18.87	10.03	.97
Religious Coping						
Positive RCOPE (24)	24 – 96	24	90	46.51	18.24	.96
Negative RCOPE (18)	18 – 72	18	58	27.04	9.12	.90
Blessing in Disguise (9)	9 – 45	9	45	22.32	9.03	.92
Religious Conversion (3)	3 – 12	3	12	4.58	2.09	.81
Individual Psychological Adjustment						
Impact of Events Scale (15)	15 – 60	15	52	29.46	10.62	.93
Center of Epidemiological Studies – Depression (20)	20 – 80	21	80	39.30	12.71	.94
Paternal Blame for Divorce (6)	0 – 30	0	30	18.07	7.34	.92
Maternal Blame for Divorce (6)	0 – 30	0	27	12.29	5.37	.86
Self-blame for Divorce (4)	0 – 20	0	18	8.57	3.85	.78
Loss and Abandonment due to Divorce (7)	0 – 35	0	35	19.94	5.87	.72
Seeing Life through a Filter of Divorce (7)	0 – 35	0	33	21.88	6.12	.78
Acceptance of Divorce (4)	0 – 20	0	20	14.78	3.09	.57
Personal and Spiritual Growth						
Post-traumatic Growth Inventory (19)	19 – 114	19	114	69.81	22.55	.96
Spiritual Growth (5)	5 – 35	5	35	20.47	7.68	.57
Spiritual Decline (5)	5 – 35	5	35	15.70	7.92	.93
Parent-Child Relationships						
Kansas Parent Satisfaction – Mom (3)	3 – 21	3	21	16.97	3.91	.87
Kansas Parent Satisfaction – Dad (3)	3 – 21	4	21	13.64	4.55	.78
Conflict Behavior – Mom (20)	20 – 40	20	40	23.23	4.22	.90
Conflict Behavior – Dad (20)	20 – 40	20	40	26.06	5.93	.93
Global Religiousness (4)	0 – 23	2	23	11.80	5.60	.81



Table 2: Intercorrelations between Spiritual Appraisal Measures, Religious Coping Measures and Global Religiousness

	Global Religiousness	Sacred Loss	Desecration	Sacred loss and Desecration	Manifestation of God	Negative Religious Coping	Positive Religious Coping	Blessing in Disguise	Religious Conversion
Global Religiousness	---								
Sacred Loss	.23*	---							
Desecration	.28**	.88***	---						
Sacred loss and Desecration	.26**	---	---	---					
Manifestation of God	.47***	.37***	.39	.39***	---				
Negative Religious Coping	.03	.66***	.65***	.68***	.25**	---			
Positive Religious Coping	.67***	.56***	.53***	.58***	.56***	.30***	---		
Blessing in Disguise	.47***	.31***	.34***	.34**	.63***	.12	.53***	---	
Religious Conversion	.43***	.48***	.51***	.51***	.43***	.33***	.73***	.39***	---

\*p ≤ .05  
\*\*p ≤ .01  
\*\*\*p ≤ .001

Table 3: Intercorrelations between Individual Psychological Adjustment Variables, Personal and Spiritual Growth Variables and Parent-Child Relationship Quality Variables.

Dependent Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10	11.	12.	13.
1. Impact of Events Scale	--												
2. Center of Epidemiological Studies – Depression	.42***	--											
3. Paternal Blame for Divorce	.28**	.31***	--										
4. Maternal Blame for Divorce	.15	-.06	-.18	--									
5. Self-blame for Divorce	.54***	.24*	.05	.37***	--								
6. Loss and Abandonment due to Divorce	.45***	.37***	.44***	.31***	.46***	--							
7. Seeing Life through a Filter of Divorce	.70***	.44***	.28**	.62***	.51**	.62***	--						
8. Post-traumatic Growth Inventory	.33***	.20*	.16	.10	.23*	.30**	.42***	--					
9. Spiritual Decline	.11	.42***	.32***	-.13	-.02	.18	.18	-.04	--				
10. Kansas Parent Satisfaction – Mom	-.08	-.15	.06	-.28**	-.16	-.30***	-.14	.09	-.11	--			
11. Kansas Parent Satisfaction – Dad	.00	-.28**	-.47***	.35***	-.02	-.24	-.02	.08	.29*	.19*	--		
12. Conflict Behavior – Mom	.14	.19*	-.03	.45***	.20*	.28**	.20*	.02	.08	-.49***	.04	--	
13. Conflict Behavior – Dad	.18	.43***	.67***	-.25**	-.04	.44***	.16	.14	.38***	-.14	-.64***	.14	--

\*  $p \leq .05$   
 \*\*  $p \leq .01$   
 \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

Table 4: Bivariate Correlations between Spiritual Appraisal Variables and Dependent Variables and Partial Correlations between these Same Variables after Accounting for Global Religiousness

Dependent Variables	Sacred loss and Desecration		Manifestation of God	
	r	r <sub>global religiousness</sub>	r	r <sub>global religiousness l</sub>
Individual Psychological Adjustment				
Impact of Events Scale	.56***	.54***	.33***	.30**
Center of Epidemiological Studies – Depression	.34***	.39***	.10	---
Paternal Blame for Divorce	.19**	.22*	.07	---
Maternal Blame for Divorce	.01	---	.10	---
Self-blame for Divorce	.21**	.19*	.10	---
Loss and Abandonment due to Divorce	.27**	.28**	.09	---
Seeing Life through a Filter of Divorce	.46***	.44***	.10	---
Personal and Spiritual Growth/Decline				
Post-traumatic Growth Inventory	.29**	.21*	.36***	.26**
Spiritual Decline	.00	---	-.17	---
Parent-Child Relationships				
Kansas Parent Satisfaction – Mom	.07	---	.17	---
Kansas Parent Satisfaction – Dad	-.12	---	.01	---
Conflict Behavior – Mom	-.01	---	-.05	---
Conflict Behavior – Dad	.18	---	.03	---
Note: The partial correlation, r <sub>global religiousness</sub> , represents the correlation between the Independent and Criterion variable after accounting for Global Religiousness				
^ p ≤ .10				
* p ≤ .05				
** p ≤ .01				
*** p ≤ .001				

Table 5: Bivariate Correlations between Control Variables, Spiritual Appraisals, and Dependent Variables

	Global Religiousness	Harm	Threat	Challenge
Spiritual Appraisals				
Sacred loss and Desecration	.26**	.54***	.61**	.47***
Manifestation of God	.37***	.12	.07	.23*
Individual Psychological Adjustment				
Impact of Events Scale	.16	.41***	.44**	.37***
Center of Epidemiological Studies – Depression	-.12	.36***	.33***	.26**
Paternal Blame for Divorce	-.08	.14	.25**	.16
Self-blame for Divorce	.11	.23*	.09	.08
Loss and Abandonment due to Divorce	.01	.37***	.22*	.23*
Seeing Life through a Filter	.13	.45***	.47***	.50***
Personal and Spiritual Growth				
Post-traumatic Growth Inventory	.20*	.39***	.10	.39***
* $p \leq .05$				
** $p \leq .01$				
*** $p \leq .001$				

Table 6: Standardized Beta weights for Control Variables and Spiritual Appraisals when Predicting Individual Psychological Adjustment and Personal and Spiritual Growth

Predictor Variables	Impact of Events Scale	CES-Depression	Paternal Blame for Divorce	Self-Blame for Divorce	Loss and Abandonment due to Divorce	Seeing Life through a Filter	Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory
	Standardized $\beta$	Standardized $\beta$	Standardized $\beta$	Standardized $\beta$	Standardized $\beta$	Standardized $\beta$	Standardized $\beta$
<b>STEP 1</b>	$\Delta R^2 = .24^{***}$	$\Delta R^2 = .15^{***}$	$\Delta R^2 = .07^{\wedge}$	$\Delta R^2 = .06$	$\Delta R^2 = .14^{***}$	$\Delta R^2 = .32^{***}$	$\Delta R^2 = .17^{***}$
Harm	.19	.24*	-.02	.28*	.35**	.19 <sup>^</sup>	.04
Threat	.26*	.16	.25*	-.05	-.02	.18 <sup>^</sup>	-.20
Challenge	.12	.04	.03	-.03	.06	.29**	.48***
<b>STEP 2</b>	$\Delta R^2 = .10^{***}$	$\Delta R^2 = .01$	$\Delta R^2 = .00$	$\Delta R^2 = .02$	$\Delta R^2 = .01$	$\Delta R^2 = .02^{\wedge}$	$\Delta R^2 = .05$
Sacred loss & Desecration	.42***	.16	.07	.19	.11	.18 <sup>^</sup>	.28*
<b>STEP1</b>	$\Delta R^2 = .24^{***}$	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	$\Delta R^2 = .17^{***}$
Harm	.19						.04
Threat	.26*						-.20 <sup>^</sup>
Challenge	.12						.48***
<b>STEP 2</b>	$\Delta R^2 = .07^{***}$						$\Delta R^2 = .07^{**}$
Manifestation of God	.28***						.23**

Note: All reported  $\beta$  are standardized

<sup>^</sup>  $p \leq .10$

\*  $p \leq .05$

\*\*  $p \leq .01$

\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

Table 7: Bivariate Correlations between Mediator variables and Dependent Variables

Dependent Variables	Negative Religious Coping	Positive Religious Coping	Blessing in Disguise	Religious Conversion
Individual Psychological Adjustment				
Impact of Events Scale	.57***	.38***	.12	.42**
Center of Epidemiological Studies – Depression	.43***	.04	.04	.14
Paternal Blame for Divorce	.27**	-.08	-.03	-.07
Self-blame for Divorce	.17	.14	.05	.21*
Loss and Abandonment due to Divorce	.30***	.06	.04	.12
Seeing Life through a Filter of Divorce	.48***	.24*	.05	.25**
Personal and Spiritual Growth				
Post-traumatic Growth Inventory	.28**	.40***	.32***	.25**
* $p \leq .05$				
** $p \leq .01$				
*** $p \leq .001$				

Table 8a: Hierarchical Regressions assessing the Mediation Effects of Religious Coping Variables on the Relationship between Sacred loss and desecration and Painful Feelings about Divorce Subscales

(Mediator) Predictor Variable	Dependent Variables									
	Mediator		Paternal Blame for Divorce		Self-Blame for Divorce		Loss and Abandonment due to Divorce		Seeing Life through a Filter of Divorce	
	Beta	$\Delta R^2$	Beta	$\Delta R^2$	Beta	$\Delta R^2$	Beta	$\Delta R^2$	Beta	$\Delta R^2$
<b><u>(Negative Religious Coping)<sup>a</sup></u></b>	.68***	.46***								
Sacred loss and Desecration <sup>b</sup>			.19*	.04*	Not Applicable		.27**	.07**	.46***	.21***
Sacred loss and Desecration and Mediator <sup>c</sup>			.02	.07*			.12	.10**	.25*	.26***
<b><math>\Delta</math> Beta</b>			<b>.17</b>				<b>.15</b>		<b>.21</b>	
<b><u>(Positive Religious Coping)<sup>a</sup></u></b>	.58***	.33***								
Sacred loss and Desecration <sup>b</sup>			Not Applicable		Not Applicable		Not Applicable		.46***	.21***
Sacred loss and Desecration and Mediator <sup>c</sup>									.48***	.21***
<b><math>\Delta</math> Beta</b>									<b>-.02</b>	
<b><u>(Religious Conversion)<sup>a</sup></u></b>	.51***	.26***								
Sacred loss and Desecration <sup>b</sup>			Not Applicable		.21*	.05*	Not Applicable		.46***	.21***
Sacred loss and Desecration and Mediator <sup>c</sup>					.14	.06*			.45***	.21***
<b><math>\Delta</math> Beta</b>					<b>.07</b>				<b>.01</b>	

Note: (a) Mediator regressed on independent variable; (b) Dependent variable regressed on independent variable; (c) Dependent variable regressed on independent variable and the mediator; all reported  $\beta$  = standardized beta coefficient for Sacred loss and desecration;  $\Delta\beta$  = change in the standardized beta from regression equation two (b) to regression equation three (c); Not Applicable = initial criteria for mediation were not met;

\* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

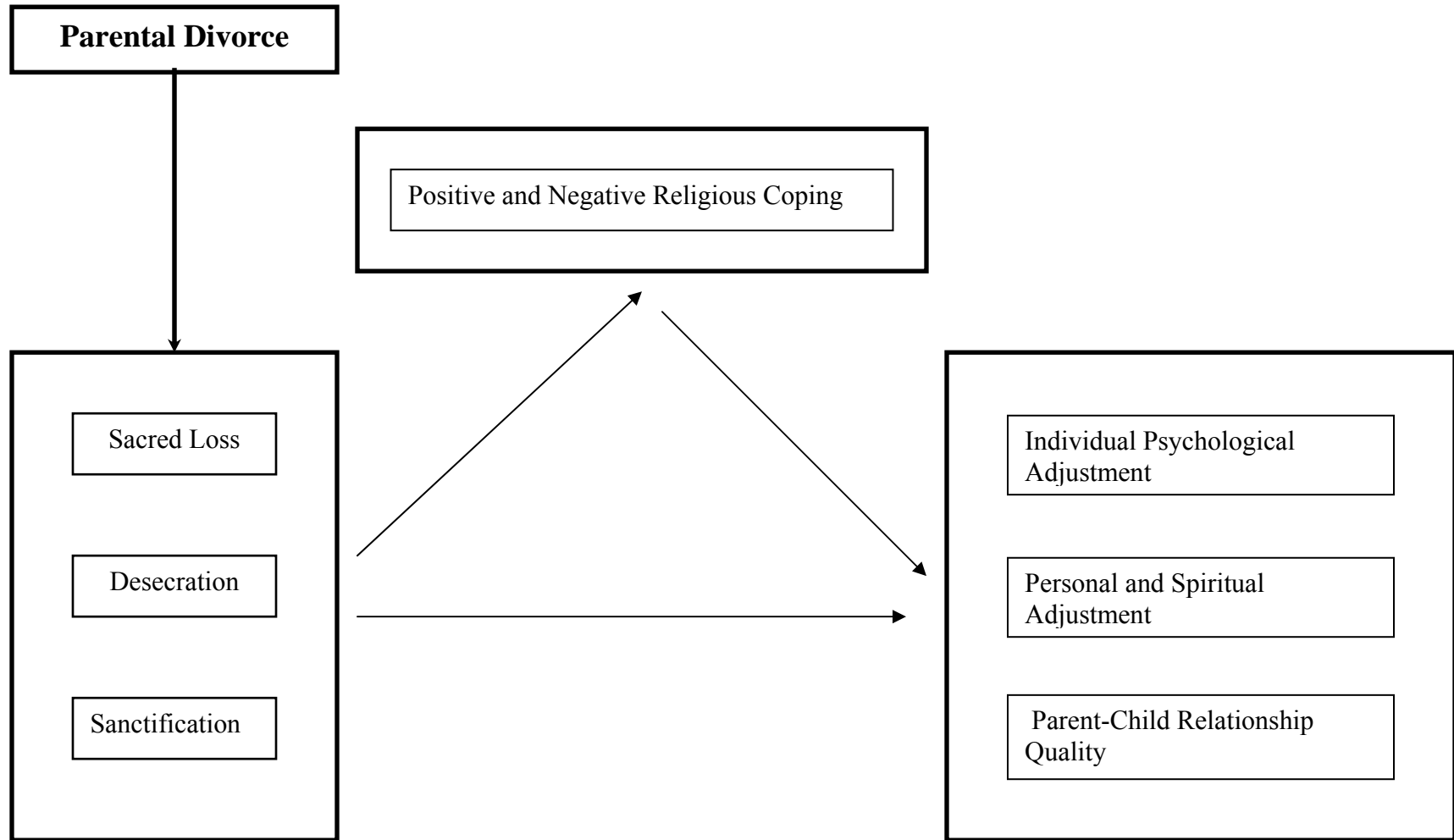
Table 8b: Hierarchical Regressions assessing the Mediation Effects of Religious Coping Variables on the Relationship between Sacred loss and desecration and Individual Psychological Adjustment and Personal Growth Variables

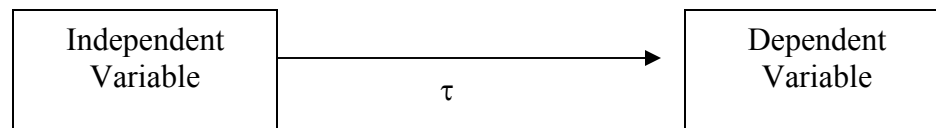
(Mediator) Predictor Variable Predictor Variable and Mediator	Dependent Variables							
	Mediator		Impact of Events Scale		CES – Depression		Post-traumatic Growth Inventory	
	Beta	$\Delta R^2$	Beta	$\Delta R^2$	Beta	$\Delta R^2$	Beta	$\Delta R^2$
<b><u>(Negative Religious Coping)<sup>a</sup></u></b>	.68***	.46***						
Sacred loss and Desecration <sup>b</sup>			.56***	.31***	.34***	.12***	.29**	.08***
Sacred loss and Desecration and Mediator <sup>c</sup>			.32**	.38**	.09	.19***	.19	.09**
<b><math>\Delta</math> Beta</b>			<b>.24</b>		<b>.25</b>		<b>.10</b>	
<b><u>(Positive Religious Coping)<sup>a</sup></u></b>	.58***	.33***						
Sacred loss and Desecration <sup>b</sup>			.56***	.31***	Not Applicable		.29**	.08***
Sacred loss and Desecration and Mediator <sup>c</sup>			.50***	.32***			.09	.16***
<b><math>\Delta</math> Beta</b>			<b>.06</b>				<b>.20</b>	
<b><u>(Religious Conversion)<sup>a</sup></u></b>	.51***	.26***						
Sacred loss and Desecration <sup>b</sup>			.56***	.31***	Not Applicable		.29**	.08***
Sacred loss and Desecration and Mediator <sup>c</sup>			.47***	.34***			.22*	.10
<b><math>\Delta</math> Beta</b>			<b>.09</b>				<b>.07</b>	
<b><u>(Blessing in Disguise)<sup>a</sup></u></b>	.34***	.11***						
Sacred loss and Desecration <sup>b</sup>			Not Applicable		Not Applicable		.29**	.08***
Sacred loss and Desecration and Mediator <sup>c</sup>							.20*	.14***
<b><math>\Delta</math> Beta</b>							<b>.09</b>	

Note: (a) Mediator regressed on independent variable; (b) Dependent variable regressed on independent variable; (c) Dependent variable regressed on independent variable and the mediator; all reported  $\beta$  = standardized beta coefficient for Sacred loss and desecration;  $\Delta\beta$  = change in the standardized beta from regression equation two (b) to regression equation three (c); Not Applicable = initial criteria for mediation were not met;

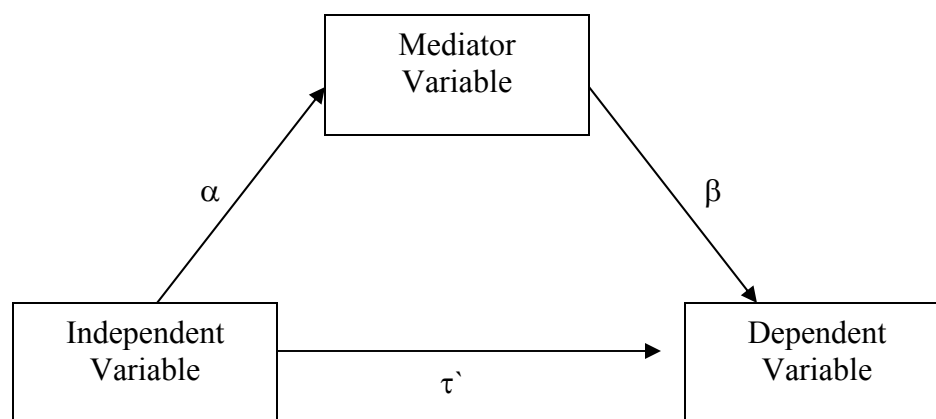
\* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .



*Figure 1: Study Model*

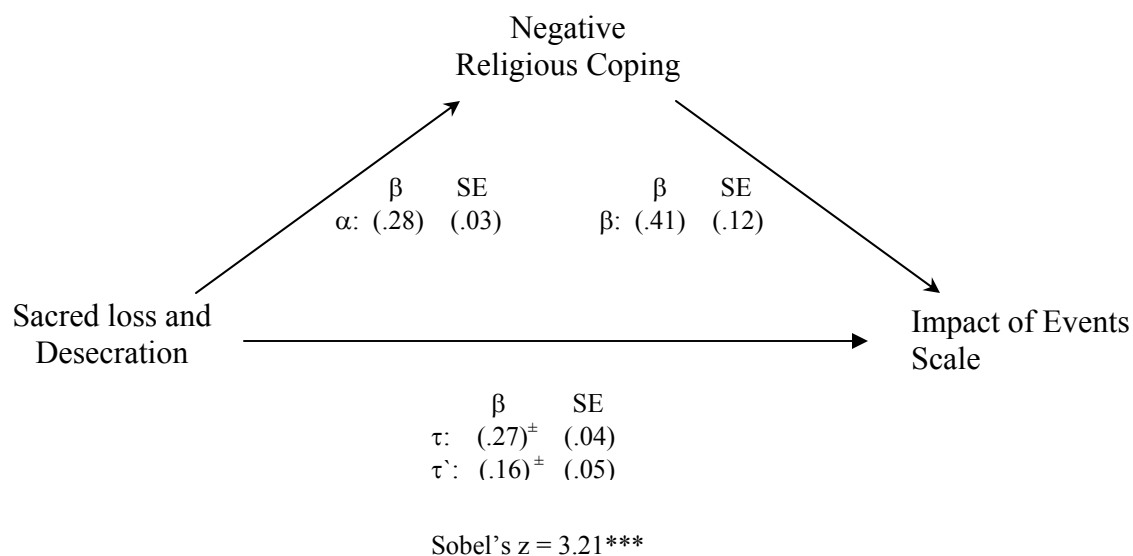
*Figure 2a: Direct Effect Model*

Direct Effect =  $\tau$

*Figure 2b: Indirect Effect Model*

Mediator Effect =  $\alpha\beta = \tau'$

*Figure 3: Negative Religious Coping as a Mediator between Sacred loss and desecration and Impact of Events Scale*



<sup>±</sup> Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at  $p$  is at least  $\leq .05$

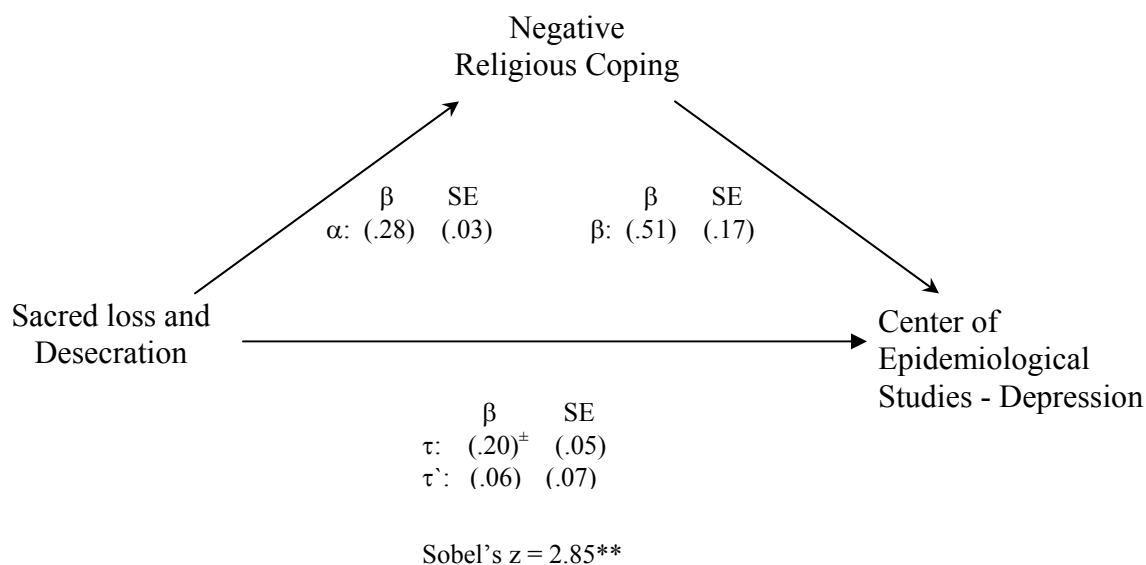
NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's  $z$  and standardized beta  $\tau'$  are statistically significant.

Full mediation occurs when Sobel's  $z$  is statistically significant but the standardized beta  $\tau'$  is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

*Figure 4: Negative Religious Coping as a Mediator between Sacred loss and Desecration and Center of Epidemiological Studies - Depression*



<sup>±</sup> Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at  $p$  is at least  $\leq .05$

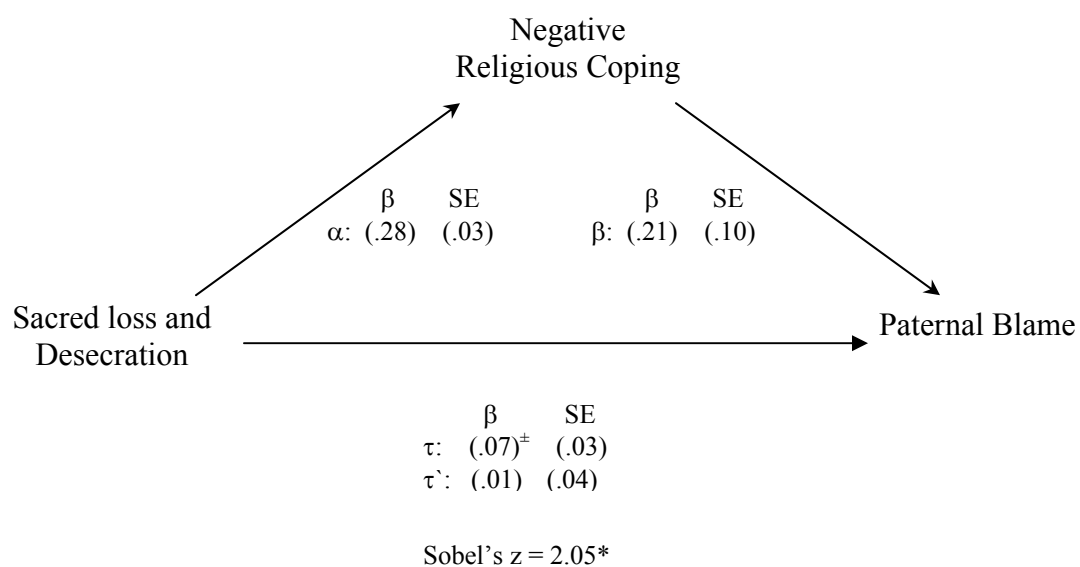
NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's  $z$  and standardized beta  $\tau'$  are statistically significant.

Full mediation occurs when Sobel's  $z$  is statistically significant but the standardized beta  $\tau'$  is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

*Figure 5: Negative Religious Coping as a Mediator between Sacred loss and Desecration and Paternal Blame for Divorce*



<sup>$\pm$</sup>  Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at  $p$  is at least  $\leq .05$

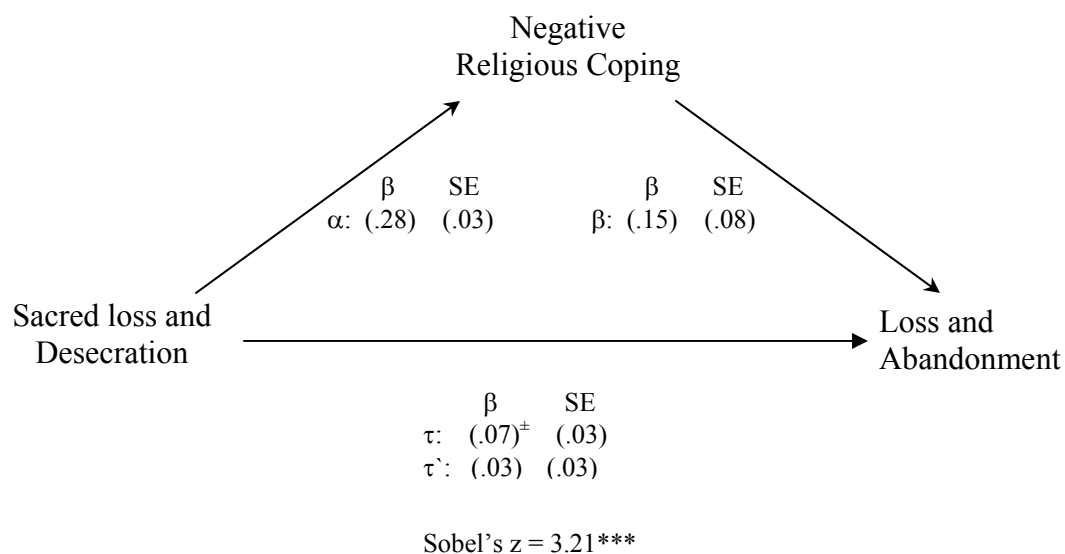
NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's  $z$  and standardized beta  $\tau'$  are statistically significant.

Full mediation occurs when Sobel's  $z$  is statistically significant but the standardized beta  $\tau'$  is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

*Figure 6: Negative Religious Coping as a Mediator between Sacred loss and Desecration and Loss and Abandonment due to Divorce*



<sup>$\pm$</sup>  Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at  $p$  is at least  $\leq .05$

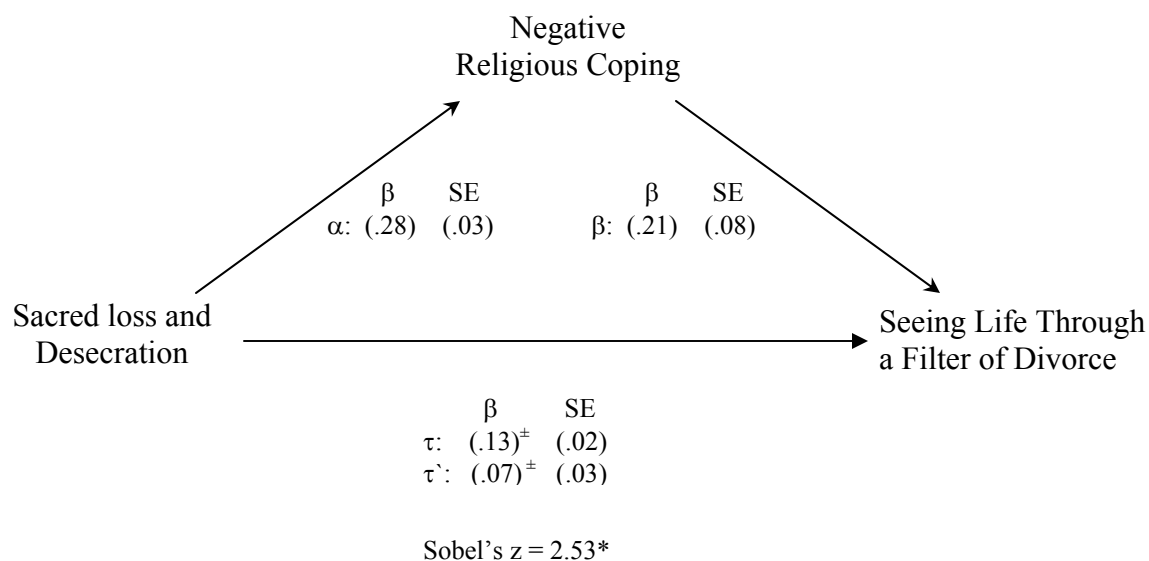
NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's  $z$  and standardized beta  $\tau'$  are statistically significant.

Full mediation occurs when Sobel's  $z$  is statistically significant but the standardized beta  $\tau'$  is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

*Figure 7: Negative Religious Coping as a Mediator between Sacred loss and Desecration and Seeing Life Through a Filter of Divorce*



<sup>±</sup> Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at  $p$  is at least  $\leq .05$

NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's  $z$  and standardized beta  $\tau'$  are statistically significant.

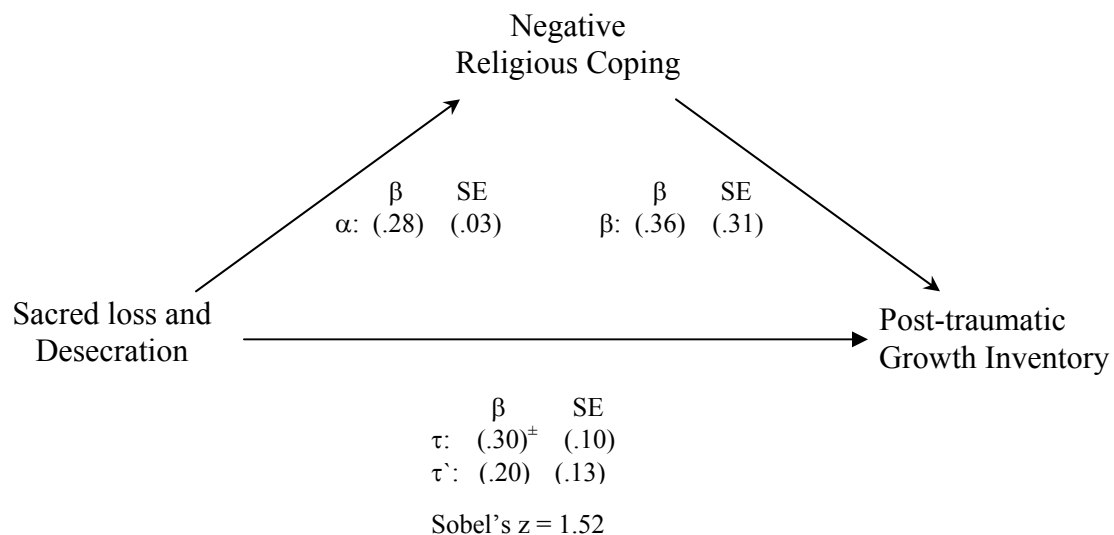
Full mediation occurs when Sobel's  $z$  is statistically significant but the standardized beta  $\tau'$  is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

Figure 8: Negative Religious Coping as a Mediator between Sacred loss and

Desecration and Post-traumatic Growth Inventory



<sup>±</sup> Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at p is at least  $\leq .05$

NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's z and standardized beta  $\tau'$  are statistically significant.

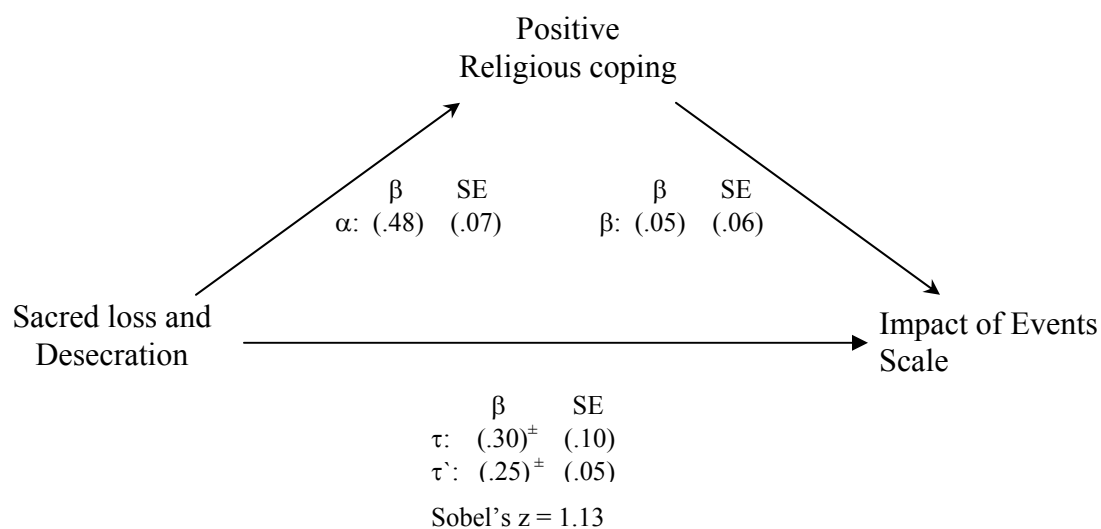
Full mediation occurs when Sobel's z is statistically significant but the standardized beta  $\tau'$  is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$



*Figure 9: Positive Religious Coping as a Mediator between Sacred loss and Desecration and Impact of Events Scale*



<sup>±</sup> Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at p is at least ≤ .05

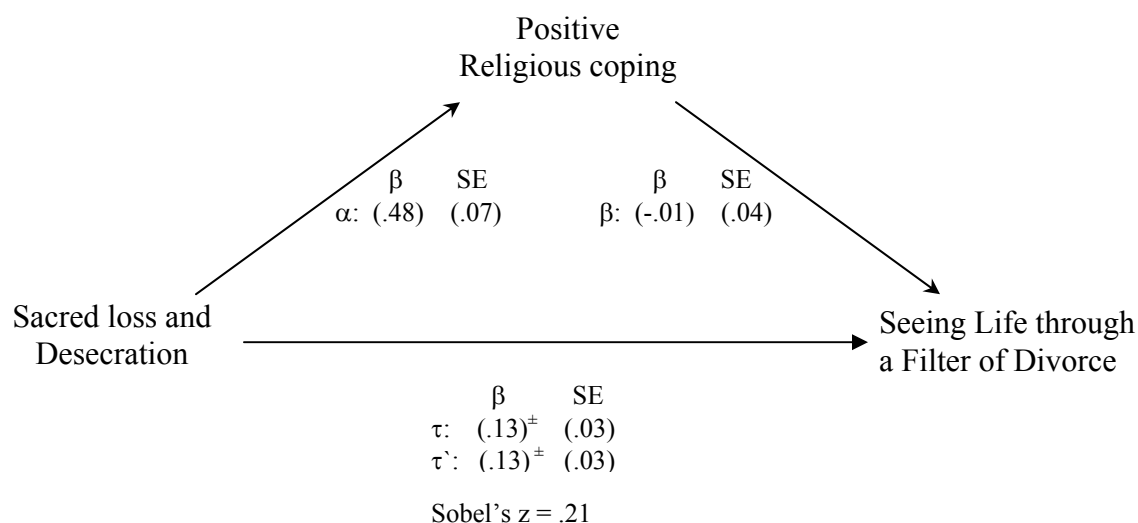
NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's z and standardized beta τ' are statistically significant.

Full mediation occurs when Sobel's z is statistically significant but the standardized beta τ' is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\* p ≤ .05; \*\* p ≤ .01; \*\*\* p ≤ .001

*Figure 10: Positive Religious Coping as a Mediator between Sacred loss and Desecration and Seeing Life through a Filter of Divorce*



<sup>±</sup> Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at  $p$  is at least  $\leq .05$

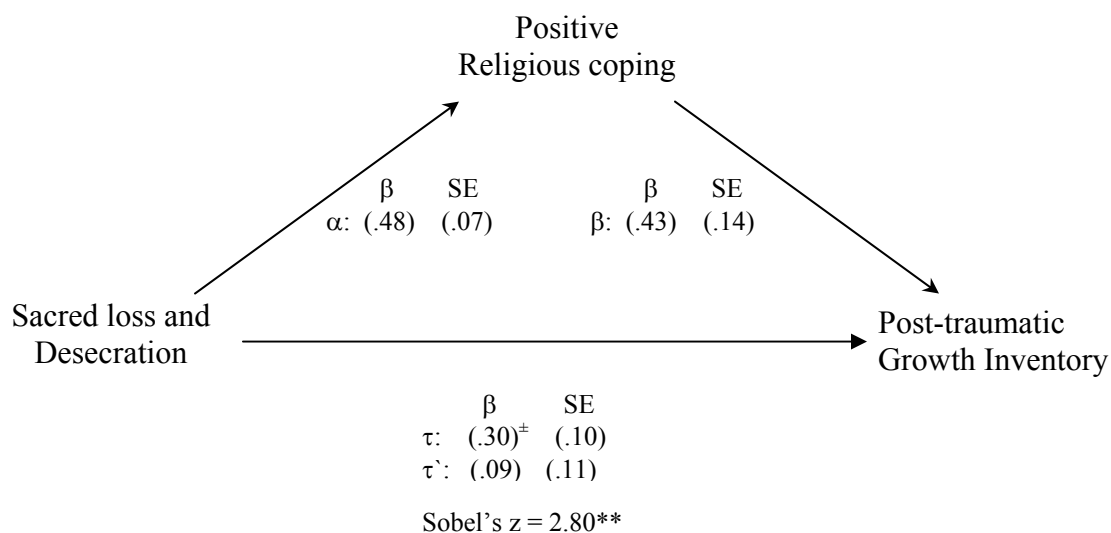
NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's  $z$  and standardized beta  $\tau'$  are statistically significant.

Full mediation occurs when Sobel's  $z$  is statistically significant but the standardized beta  $\tau'$  is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

*Figure 11: Positive Religious Coping as a Mediator between Sacred loss and Desecration and Post-traumatic Growth Inventory*



<sup>±</sup> Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at  $p$  is at least  $\leq .05$

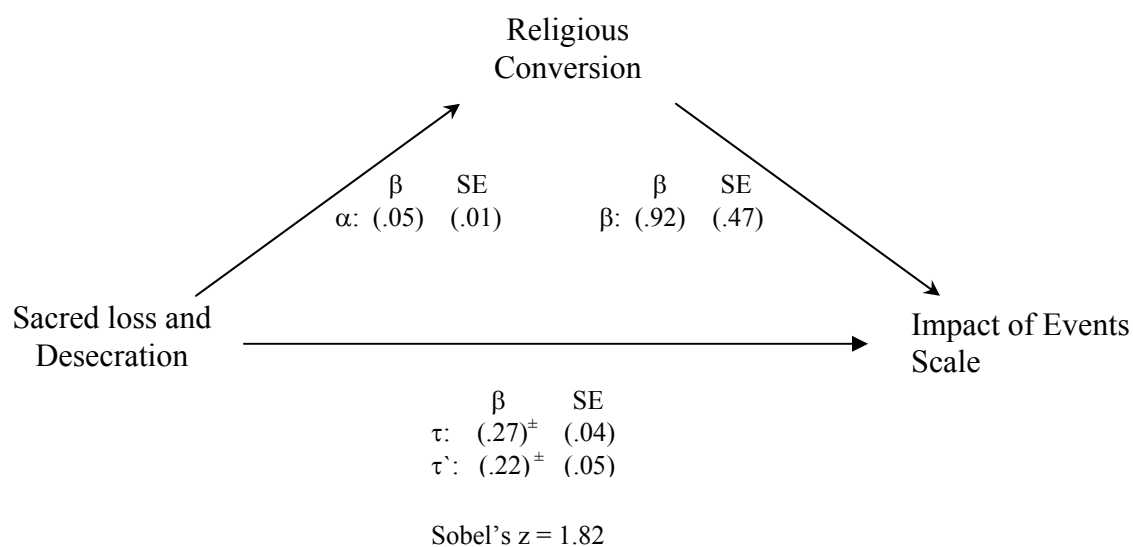
NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's  $z$  and standardized beta  $\tau'$  are statistically significant.

Full mediation occurs when Sobel's  $z$  is statistically significant but the standardized beta  $\tau'$  is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

*Figure 12:* Religious Conversion as a Mediator between Sacred loss and Desecration and Impact of Events Scale



<sup>$\pm$</sup>  Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at  $p$  is at least  $\leq .05$

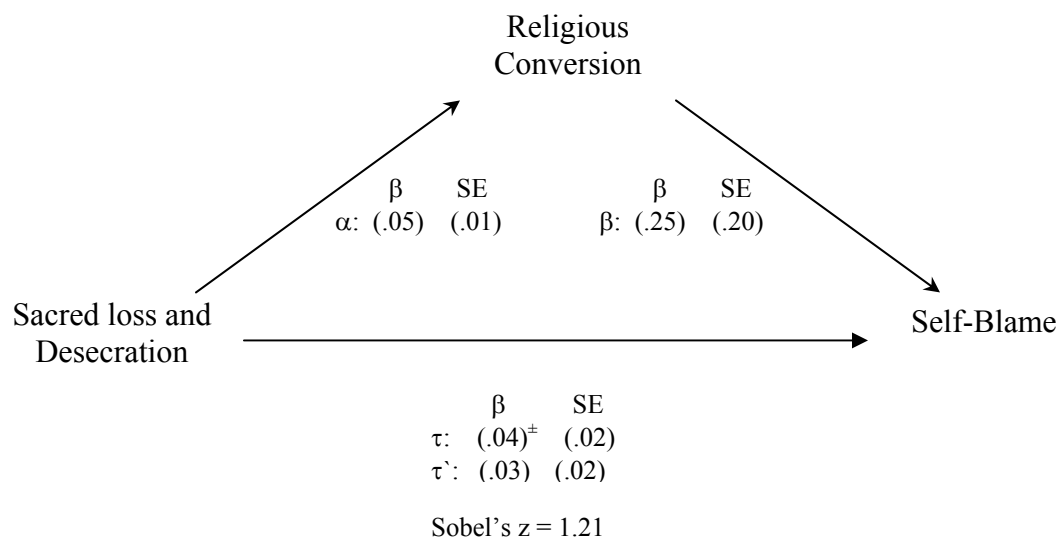
NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's  $z$  and standardized beta  $\tau'$  are statistically significant.

Full mediation occurs when Sobel's  $z$  is statistically significant but the standardized beta  $\tau'$  is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

*Figure 13:* Religious Conversion as a Mediator between Sacred loss and desecration and Self-Blame for Divorce



<sup>±</sup> Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at  $p$  is at least  $\leq .05$

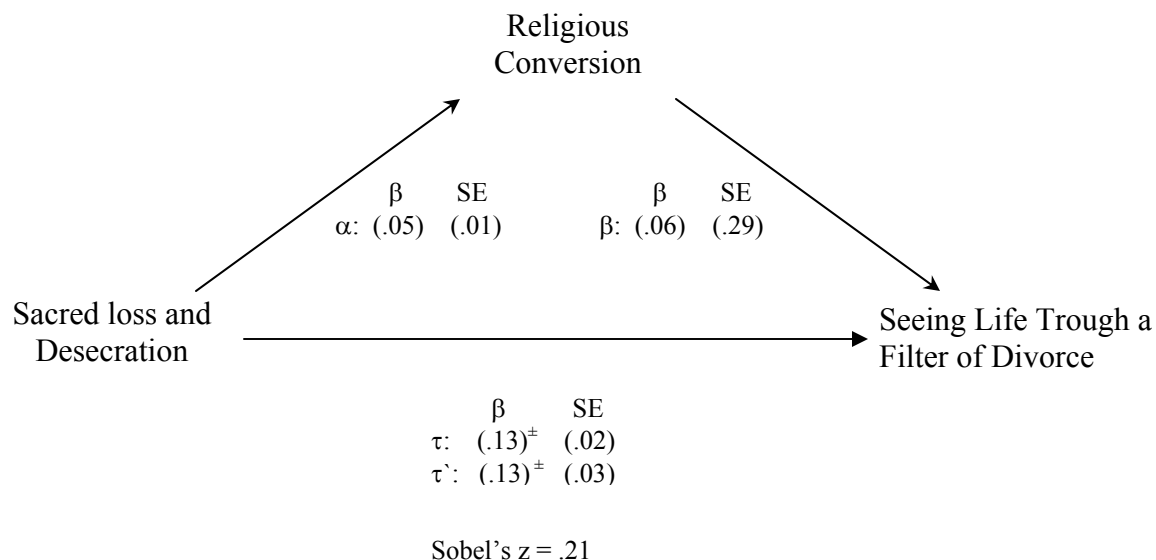
NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's  $z$  and standardized beta  $\tau'$  are statistically significant.

Full mediation occurs when Sobel's  $z$  is statistically significant but the standardized beta  $\tau'$  is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

*Figure 14: Religious Conversion as a Mediator between Sacred loss and Desecration and Seeing Life Trough a Filter of Divorce*



<sup>±</sup> Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at  $p$  is at least  $\leq .05$

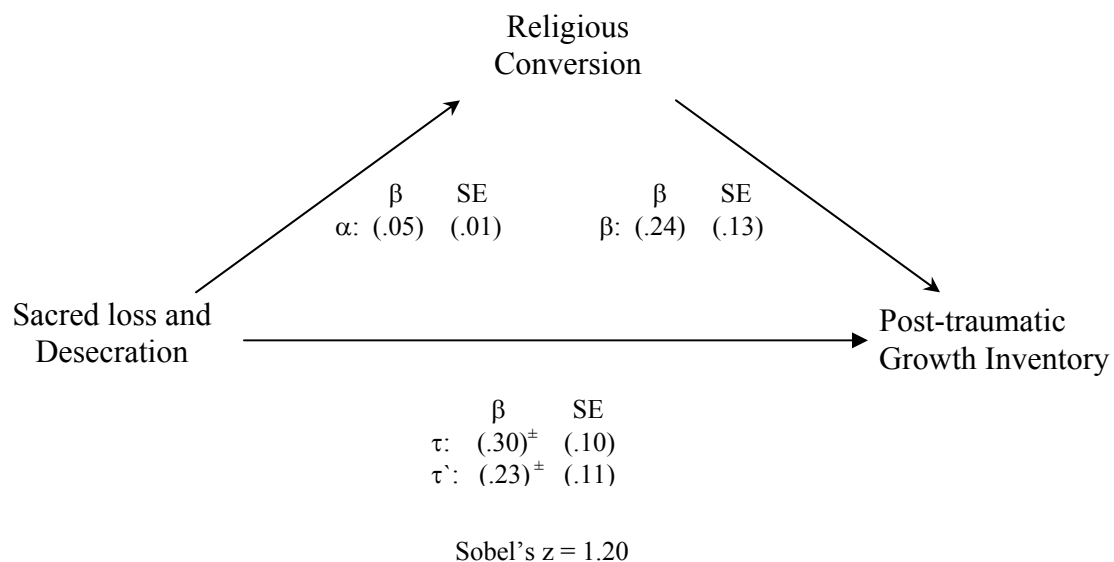
NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's  $z$  and standardized beta  $\tau'$  are statistically significant.

Full mediation occurs when Sobel's  $z$  is statistically significant but the standardized beta  $\tau'$  is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

*Figure 15: Religious Conversion as a Mediator between Sacred loss and Desecration and Post-traumatic Growth Inventory*



<sup>±</sup> Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at  $p$  is at least  $\leq .05$

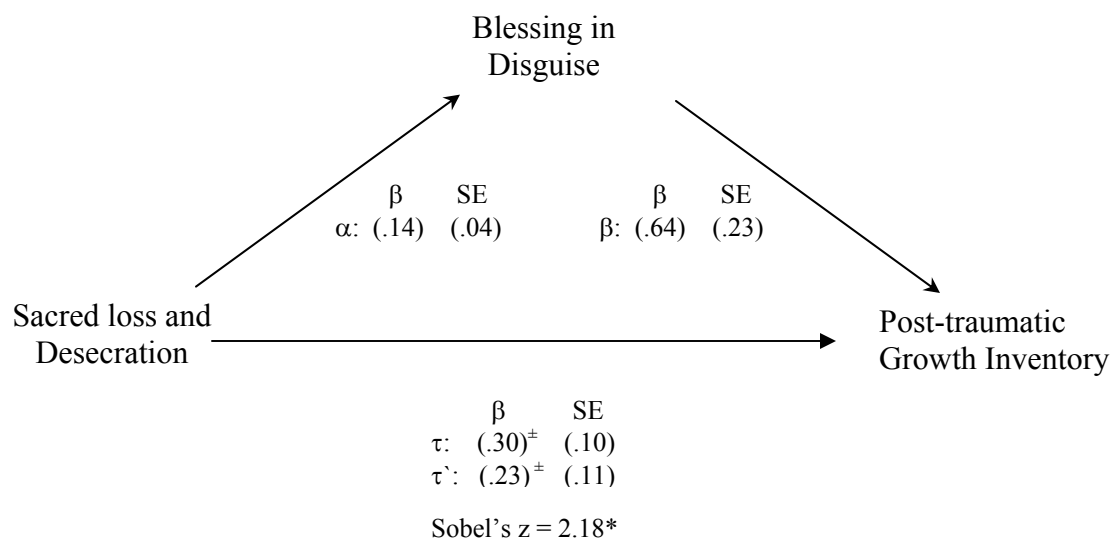
NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's  $z$  and standardized beta  $\tau'$  are statistically significant.

Full mediation occurs when Sobel's  $z$  is statistically significant but the standardized beta  $\tau'$  is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

*Figure 16:* Blessing in Disguise as a Mediator between Sacred loss and  
Desecration and Post-traumatic Growth Inventory



<sup>±</sup> Indicated that the Standardized Beta is statistically significant at p is at least  $\leq .05$

NOTE: Partial mediation occurs when both Sobel's z and standardized beta  $\tau'$  are statistically significant.

Full mediation occurs when Sobel's z is statistically significant but the standardized beta  $\tau'$  is not.

Reference Tables 8a & 8b for standardized beta information.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$