Influences on Father Involvement: Testing for Unique Contributions of Religion and Spirituality

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INFLUENCES ON FATHER INVOLVEMENT: TESTING FOR UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

by

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ABSTRACT
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The role of the father in children's development historically has been neglected. Studies examining family processes were primarily limited to mothers, under the assumption that mothers' influences encapsulated what (little) effects could also be attributed to the father. Although theory and research have begun to address fathers' roles in families in earnest, there is still much work to be done, particularly in regard to understanding the determinants of father involvement. One direction that has received attention from researchers is towards a conceptualization of environmental and contextual influences on fathers' interactions with their families. The goal of this study was to examine the influences of religion and spirituality on fathers' roles in the family system.

In this study, 174 fathers and their children ages 8-14 completed a battery of measures. Fathers reported on their personality, marriage quality, spiritual and religious lives, and involvement in parenting. Children also reported on fathers' involvement, marital conflict, and father-child attachment. Analyses were conducted to examine the extent to which more specific measures of spirituality (e.g., sanctification of parenting, religious coping) predicted father-child relations relative to global measures of religion (e.g., nominal measures of attendance, or one-item ratings of religiosity). Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to examine the relationships among fathers' personality, marriage quality, spirituality, father involvement, and father-child attachment. Results indicated that more specific measures tended to be better predictors of father-child relationships. However, spirituality was not found to predict father involvement or father-child attachment when marriage quality and fathers' personality were included in the model. The latter two constructs predicted both involvement and attachment, with spirituality as a covariate of marriage quality and personality. Therefore, spirituality may play a role in shaping marital quality and/or encouraging the manifestation of certain adaptive aspects of personality. Future research is called for that examines temporal relationships among these predictors. Further examination of how fathers' religious and spiritual lives are associated with their children's development will provide insight into how schools, churches, and families can best work to ultimately encourage positive family functioning.

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The role of the father in children's development historically has been overlooked in psychological research. As fathers were essentially believed to be largely unimportant, studies examining family processes were primarily initiated with mothers as either the sole reporter or the supposed 'proxy' for the father. It was assumed that mothers' familial influences encapsulated what (little) effects could also be attributed to the father (McBride, et al., 2005). Although theory and research have begun to address the father's role in families in earnest (e.g., Cassano, Adrian, Veits, & Zeman, 2006; Parke, et al., 2005; Lamb & Tamis-Lamonda, 2004), there is still much work to be done.

Initially, theoretical and empirical work examined fathers' involvement with their children in terms of time. The most well-known conceptual framework is the Engagement, Accessibility, and Responsibility (EAR) model, which highlights the amount of direct engagement fathers have with their children, the amount of time they are accessible to their children, and fathers' responsibilities taken for their children (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1985). However, this model is limited to measures of the amounts of paternal involvement. Objection to measures that are strictly temporal and observable (e.g., Hawkins and Palkovitz, 1999) led to questions about the *nature* of that involvement: while they may be involved in terms of presence, how psychologically or emotionally involved are these fathers? How do children perceive their fathers' involvement? Although some studies continue to focus on the *quantity* of fathers' involvement, research increasingly has moved from this narrow conceptualization

towards measurements that include a focus on the *quality* of that involvement (Pleck, 2010).

Another direction guiding current research is towards a conceptualization of ecological and cultural determinants of fathers' interactions with their families (e.g., Parke et al., 2005: Brown, McBride, Shin, & Bost, 2007). Understanding what motivates fathers to be involved with their children will provide a greater understanding of ways to encourage healthy father involvement. This study adds to this important body of work by examining the overlooked, but potentially important, influences of religion on fathers' involvement.

The Unique Role of Fathers

Although mothers and fathers have overlapping influences, fathers appear to play unique roles in children's development (Parke, et al., 2005; Parke 2002; Rohner, 1998; Goncey & Dulman, 2010; Flouri, 2010). Taking into account a variety of influences, including same-source bias, SES, and mother involvement, fathers' involvement has unique effects across child adjustment domains. These considerations are important, because fathers' involvement is reported differently by various family members (Lamb, Chuang, & Hwang, 2004), and they appear to be more susceptible than mothers to contextual factors. Some of these identified in research include income and education as well as mothers' involvement and mothers' limitations of fathers' interactions with children (i.e., mothers' "gatekeeping" of fathers based on their estimations of fathers' competence in aspects of child rearing) (McBride et al., 2005). After controlling for mothers' involvement, Amato and Rivera (1999) found a range of positive behavioral

outcomes in the children of involved fathers. Father involvement is shown in other studies to be associated with decreases in behavior problems in later childhood (Aldous & Mulligan, 2002), greater positivity towards school in adolescence (Flouri, Buchanan, & Bream, 2002), children's better mental health in adulthood (Wenk, Hardesty, Morgan, & Blair, 1994), and higher financial and educational attainments in adulthood (Harris, Furstenberg, & Manner, 1998; see Brown et al., 2007 for a review). For example, Amato & Rivera (1999) reported that when fathers' close, positive involvement and relational warmth with their children were considered along with mothers', the father-child relationship uniquely predicted child adjustment and behavior outcomes. These findings are underscored by a wide body of literature that indicates that fathers' emotional support, attachment relationship with their children, and financial caretaking are all associated with children's well-being, cognitive development, and social adeptness (e.g., Lamb, 2004; Amato & Rivera, 1999; Yogman, Kindlon, & Earls, 1995). These results agree with a growing body of literature (e.g., Brown et al., 2007) that underscores the importance of examining the *nature* or *quality* of paternal involvement, not simply how much time fathers spend around their children.

A recent theoretical perspective helps to identify a shift in thinking on fathers' roles in the family. This generative fathering perspective seeks to identify positive, growth-producing factors that contribute to overall family functioning, as opposed to a problem-oriented examination of the deficits fathers can create in families. Questions between the two perspectives vary greatly, with the generative perspective asking how to encourage fathers in their unique, important roles and deficit models examining the factors that predict poor and/or absentee fathering. Helping fathers to foster healthy

relational and self-care patterns that support positive, involved fathering are two steps in the right direction from this generative perspective (Brotherson, Dollahite, & Hawkins, 2005; Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). A specific interest for the present study includes whether helping fathers to find satisfaction and harmony in their marriages, working to encourage fathers' positive personality dimensions, as well as fostering healthy, adaptive spirituality, may be related to healthy fathering and secure father-child attachment.

Conceptualizing Father Involvement

Pleck's recent review (2010) found that researchers have operationalized father involvement in different ways, resulting in a wide variety of identified forms of involvement and implications for family and child functioning. Many studies have focused on understanding the nature, or quality, of fathers' engagement and responsibility behaviors with their children. For example, Hofferth (2003) found that fathers' involvement with their children was best conceptualized under four main constructs: 1) time spent with child, 2) warmth exhibited through actions such as hugging and verbally expressing love, 3) monitoring and control shown through actions including rule/limit-setting regarding food, homework, or social activities, and 4) responsibility shown through performing tasks such as enacting discipline, purchasing clothes, and making pediatrician appointments. Other studies examined more global or general measures of father involvement. For example, Carlson (2006) combined 7 items into a single scale, including talking about important decisions with father, having father listen to adolescent's feelings, father knowing whereabouts of adolescent, father missing events important to adolescent, father sharing ideas or talking about matters of importance to

adolescent, father spending enough time with adolescent, and adolescent's subjective perception of closeness to father. Here, a single construct of 'father-child closeness' was found to best predict adolescents' feelings of their relationships with their fathers.

Pleck utilized findings from these two studies (Hofferth, 2003; Carlson, 2006) to reconceptualize father involvement in terms of constructs found to consistently correlate with meaningful outcomes in children (Pleck, 2010). Specifically, this revised conceptualization of father involvement includes three main components. The main difference between this theoretical model and the EAR model (Lamb et al., 1985) is its focus on the *quality* of fathers' involvement with children. First, positive engagement differs from total engagement in that it is limited to activities that likely encourage healthy child development (e.g., caregiving activities, teaching). Second, warmth and responsiveness help to describe the quality of fathers' positive engagement activities. Last, control is the third primary dimension of father involvement. It is manifested primarily through monitoring and decision-making and is assessed through understanding fathers' knowledge of children's whereabouts as well as their participation in decision-making regarding their children. It is a modification of the original 'responsibility' dimension that allows for more specificity of the ways fathers' responsibility behaviors can impact children's outcomes. Pleck states that the last two dimensions theoretically map very closely onto positive engagement; all three are best conceptualized as a 'total package' that together allow for understanding fathering's positive effects on children. This reconceptualization has significant overlap with theory applied to study parenting more broadly (not just fathering); specifically, there are significant similarities with Baumrind's model of parenting styles. By drawing from qualitative characteristics of the

authoritative parenting style (Baumrind, 1967; Maccoby & Martin, 1983), these dimensions allow for better application to the broader field of parenting research.

A significant body of research has found meaningful effects on children's outcomes when examining fathers' involvement in terms of quantity *and* quality, in contrast to the original model that limited measures of involvement to time (Lamb et al., 1985). Moderate interrelatedness among the three constructs in Pleck's model has been consistently found (Carlson, 2006; Pleck & Hofferth, 2008, Coley & Medeiros, 2007), and 18 of 23 studies investigating these three dimensions' effects together on children's adjustment and well-being have found positive associations (Pleck, 2010). However, one recent study found that positive activity engagement and warmth-responsiveness were only weakly correlated (Brown, McBride, Shin, & Bost, 2007). These findings give overall support for considering the three dimensions of father involvement together. However, Pleck encourages caution in doing so, especially when considering the content and length of measurement items as well as demographics of a specific sample (2010).

Because there is much more to know about these three domains and because they are most likely to predict child outcomes, Pleck recommends that they receive primary focus in future research on father involvement. Accordingly, references to father involvement in the following pages will refer to paternal positive engagement activities, warmth and responsiveness, and control.

Predictors of Father Involvement

Conceptualizations of fathers' involvement with their children lead naturally to discussions of the predictors of involvement. Drawing from ecological systems theory

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the present study will seek to understand the broader context that may shape fathers' involvement with their children. Briefly, Bronfenbrenner's theory identifies various levels (micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-systems) in the environment that contribute to an individual's development. Specifically, microsystems intimately and immediately impact development; examples at this level include family, peer groups, classrooms, and places of worship. Exosystems include external networks that engage an individual, such as local government, educational, work, or medical systems. In the macrosystem, cultural values and political, social, and economic conditions are examined for their impacts on development. Finally, mesosystems allow for multidirectional interactions among the first three systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Berger, 2010). The social and cultural influences of religion can be examined at multiple levels (Spencer, Fegley, & Harpalani, 2003), and it is in the mesosystem that the contextual variable of religion may be understood to pervasively influence and be influenced by other surrounding cultural/contextual factors. For example, social conditions at the macro-level (such as favor or opposition towards gay marriage) impact local places of worship at the exo- level (for example, through policies, messages from religious leaders) that then directly affect family functioning at the micro- level (for example, direct acceptance or rejection by parents of lesbian daughter or gay son). A broad range of ecological factors remain to be studied that likely influence fathers' involvement. The microsystemic level will be of primary focus in the present study. However, one cannot fully understand the contextual influences of religion with fathers without considering the multiple ecological levels involved in ultimately disseminating a system of beliefs and behaviors that correspond to an individual's unique religious perspectives.

Consideration of the societal forces that encourage the formation and popularization of groups such as the Promise Keepers movement among evangelical fathers in the 1990's provides a reminder of the persistently contextual nature of this topic. Studies investigating evangelical fathers who were most likely to be actively involved in groups such as Promise Keepers found that they were higher than other fathers in parental supervision and affective, emotionally sensitive parenting (Bartkowski & Xiaohe, 2000). Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework supports the premise that fathering is best perceived as a *social construction* that is influenced by the dictates of societal beliefs and behavior patterns (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998), including those that come from the spheres of religion. Under this social construction assumption, fathers who embrace religion as an encompassing life philosophy are bound to manifest their experiences through everyday interactions with others, including family members. One example is that the values and teachings of the Promise Keepers movement, which advocates for involved, benevolent fathering and for fathers' roles as heads of their households (Hayford et al., 1994), would have tremendous impact on fathers' actual behaviors with family members.

A recent model of influences on father involvement is consistent with an ecological focus (Cabrera et al., 2007) and includes considerations for both contextual/environmental as well as father characteristics in predictions of father involvement. A range of possible father involvement predictors are described in this model, including: relationship with own parents, racial/ethnic background, biological background (such as psychopathology, alcoholism, depression, health factors), father characteristics (such as job status, age, education, styles of parenting, attitudes,

motivation, and personality), mother characteristics, context factors (marital quality, economic situation, time availability, family structure and behaviors, community support, work, and *religion*), and child characteristics (examples include age, sex, temperament, and status of disabilities). Cabrera and colleagues describe three goals for their heuristic model: 1) systematize the study of fathers so researchers can more clearly see connections with child developmental outcomes, 2) better understand the broad range of factors that predict father involvement, and 3) understand mediators and/or moderators of paths from father involvement to child outcomes.

Research has shown that fathers' roles are less circumscribed in general by the dictates of social convention in terms of mothers' and fathers' places within the family (e.g., Pleck, 1997; Parke, 2002; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999). This underscores the likelihood that their involvement in parenting is prone to be more heavily influenced by a variety of contextual factors than mothers'. Fathers' beliefs about paternal presence and involvement in the home are important predictors of fathers' roles in their children's lives (McBride et al., 2005; Palkovitz, 1984). With such beliefs predicting involvement behaviors, it is important to understand the internal traits and external contexts that influence fathers' positive views of parenting. These parenting views have consistently been shown to be more influenced by context, as well as personal characteristics, than mothers; a review of the relevant research on these areas follows.

Father characteristics. Evaluations of a broad range of fathers' personality characteristics and their influences on parenting school-aged children or adolescents were not found. However, in a longitudinal study of 184 fathers and their children (measured when their children were 6, 15, 24, and 36 months), fathers' personalities as measured by

low neuroticism, agreeableness and extroversion uniquely predicted greater participation in child caregiving activities (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2000). The authors cite previous work that coincides with this finding; fathers with higher self-esteems and lower levels of depression or hostility, as well as overall better life adaptation and psychological adjustment, have been found to similarly contribute more to these child caregiving tasks (Cox, Owen, Lewis, & Henderson, 1989; Grossman, Pollack, & Golding, 1988; Peterson & Gerson, 1992; Volling & Belsky, 1991).

A few studies (Jaffee, Moffitt, Caspi, & Taylor, 2003; DeGarmo, 2010) have examined the role of divorced fathers' personalities on their fathering. In his investigation of this father characteristic, DeGarmo (2010) found that recently divorced fathers' antisocial personality (ASP) moderated the effects of their contact with their 4-11 year old children over time: children whose fathers scored high on ASP went on to show higher levels of noncompliance themselves, while those children whose fathers were low on ASP showed reductions in noncompliance over time. These studies show promise for considering the influences of a broad range of personality characteristics in studies of resident fathers' parenting.

Marital relationship. A much larger body of literature exists on the role of the marriage relationship in fathering. In studies that have examined what predicts fathers' versus mothers' parenting, fathers' involvement has been consistently shown to be more heavily influenced by qualities of the coparenting and marital relationships than mothers' (e.g., Rane & McBride, 2000, Lynn & Grych, 2010). Additionally, fathers are susceptible to influences such as "maternal gatekeeping," or mothers' restrictions of

fathers' involvement with their children due to their beliefs about fathers' roles and competence within the home (e.g., McBride et al., 2005).

Cummings, Goeke-Morey and Raymond (2004; see also Cummings, Merrilees, & George, 2010) have proposed a "fathering vulnerability hypothesis," whereby the effects of marital conflict produce greater strains on fathering than mothering. Gender role theory (Thompson and Walker, 1989) may help to explain this difference; fathers look to and rely on a wide variety of environmental inputs for cues and supports in fathering. Mothers' gender role scripts are contrastingly more circumscribed, supported and expected by culture and therefore more impervious to environmental stressors that include marital conflict. In a recent study of coparenting and father involvement in married and unmarried coresident couples, cooperative coparenting was found longitudinally to predict father involvement across couple types (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011). Coparenting, interestingly, may serve as a 'third variable' that helps to explain associations between marital conflict and child outcomes, as high levels of couple conflict likely contribute to poor chances for shared perspectives on coparenting (Fuligni & Brooks-Gunn, 2004). The vulnerability hypothesis would support the observation that marital conflict and coparenting problems more greatly impact fathers' than mothers' involvement.

A substantial body of research spanning the past three decades supports the vulnerability hypothesis (e.g., Cummings & O'Reilly, 1997; see Cummings, Merrilees, & George, 2010, for a review), including one meta-analysis (Krishnakumar & Beuhler, 2000) that concluded that fathers' parenting suffered more than mothers' in the face of interparental conflict within the areas of control, acceptance, harsh discipline, and overall

quality of parenting. Cowan & Cowan (2009) have recently developed a group intervention that seeks to increase father involvement, and the highest rates of improvement were found for those fathers whose spouses consistently attended sessions (in contrast to fathers-only and control group conditions). Considering the powerful effects of marriage on fathering, more research is needed to further delineate how much, and in what ways, the quality of the marital relationship impacts fathering in light of other ecological factors. As in personality and marriage, fathers may be heavily impacted by other environmental influences, including religion, mental health, financial resources, and/or general social support. Indeed, one recent study (Holmes & Huston, 2010) shows that a variety of factors, specifically, fathers' parenting beliefs, children's language and social skills, maternal employment, and mother-child interaction quality each additively contributed to positive father-child interaction.

A series of three longitudinal studies examining the effects of low-income fathers' involvement quality on their toddler- to preschool-aged children's cognitive and emotional development helps shed further light on these contextual influences. These studies (Shannon, Tamis-LeMonda, London, & Cabrera, 2002: Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004; Cabrera, Tarkow, & Shannon, 2006, and see Cabrera, Shannon, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2007, for a review) employed a sample of 290 children when they were 2 and 3 years old, and 313 children when they were 4 years old. In order to assess the quality of fathers' engagement with their children, researchers utilized questionnaires and observed mother-child and father-child semi-structured free play in which toy choices allowed for both concrete and symbolic play styles. Researchers coded for positive parenting through observations of supportiveness (emotional support,

enthusiasm, responsiveness to child, and intentionality with teaching opportunities) and intrusiveness (excessive control and involvement in play affairs) when children were 2, 3, and 4 years old. Children's cognitive, language, social and emotional development were assessed through the use of mental and behavior rating scales (Bayley, 1993). Analyses sought to determine how both personal and contextual factors (i.e., financial, intrapersonal influences such as depression, and mother-child relationship qualities) influence father engagement. Influences of contextual factors were noted in two areas: fathers with more education and healthier relationships with their spouses showed higher levels of support and were less intrusive with their children. Limitations of this study include a lack of accounting for mothers' parenting in analyses; covariation between mothers' and fathers' parenting may have provided more clarity on factors predicting child outcomes. Further, no attention was given to contextual influences on mothering as a means to compare patterns of contextual influences on fathering.

Ecological factors. Few studies have investigated contextual factors outside the immediate family environment; research is needed that seeks to better understand other ecological contexts that influence fathers. As mentioned, little research has considered the influence of religion on fathers' beliefs or behaviors with their children; understanding religion's influence will help to expand this presently limited focus on predictors of father involvement.

Cabrera et al's theoretical model (2007) represents the movement towards examining the contexts in which father involvement occurs, what predicts that involvement, and what the results are in terms of child outcomes. While it is the first model to explicitly consider religion in a comprehensive theory of father involvement, it

does not describe the specific mechanisms by which religion may impact fathering. Examples of pertinent questions include, how do parents use religion to cope with life stressors? Do parents view their roles as a spiritual directive? If this is the case, how exactly does this look? Marital quality more strongly predicts fathers' than mothers' parenting (Cummings et al., 2010; Cabrera et al., 2006), but how might religion influence these associations? Mahoney and colleagues (Mahoney et al., 1999) have found that, for husbands and wives, religion strongly predicts greater global marital adjustment, more perceived benefits from the marital relationship, less marital conflict, more verbal collaboration, and less use of verbal aggression and stalemate in response to marital conflict. It is likely, therefore, that the positive contributions of religion to family life include greater positive fathering behaviors, but these two bodies of literature have yet to be effectively integrated. In the next section, potential effects of religion on fathering are described.

Religion, Spirituality and Parenting Processes

Park & Paloutzian (p. 551-552, 2005) affirm the value of studying religion, stating that it is "present in and intrinsic to human phenomena. Religion is big and seemingly burdensome at times, and yet often is enormously powerful in human affairs…it is perhaps the most important topic that could be studied by any psychologist, given what is happening socially and politically in the world." One limitation of research on religion is that most of the literature has focused on *intra*personal factors, such as how an individual makes personal meaning of their religion and deals with their own stress through the use of religion. Although myriad beneficial psychological outcomes have

been documented in individuals with strong religious backgrounds, research has neglected the equally important question of how religion influences *inter*personal functioning (Hood & Belzen, 2005), which will be critical to understand how religion affects domains such as parenting. Indeed, there is a paucity of research on the influences of religion on individuals' psychosocial functioning (e.g., Hill; 2005; Hood & Belzen, 2005; Mahoney & Tarakeshwar, 2005), and this clearly limits an understanding of how religion informs and impacts parenting.

To better understand the role of religion in fathering and family life, Zinnbauer & Pargament (2005) suggest that religious phenomena may be viewed through both *substantive* and *functional* lenses. A *substantive* lens is defined as "a system of beliefs in a divine or superhuman power, and practices of worship or other rituals directed towards such a power" (p. 100, Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi, 1975). This perspective is reflected in studies that rely on what are referred to as "global" ratings of religiosity. Global measures of religion typically rely on 1 or 2-item self-report measures of one's overall religiosity or attendance at religious services. In contrast, a *functional* lens examines specific purposes of religion in an individual's life (i.e., what religion means practically, on a day-to-day basis). The functional lens refers to the specific beliefs, emotions, practices, and experiences an individual has related to their religious involvement. It has been proposed that it is only these specific beliefs and processes from religion that impact daily life decisions (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005).

Recent work in the psychology of religion (e.g., Hill et al., 2000) has differentiated religion from spirituality by saying that the former trends towards the substantive, while the latter tends to require a functional lens. It is certainly possible for

substantive perspectives to utilize a specific measurement strategy (e.g., specific, in-depth explorations of one's theological beliefs), but this has not yet been attempted in the literature, nor does it make theoretical sense to do so. Researchers have recognized the merit in using a term that has come to help individuals describe their direct experiences of the sacred instead of a strict emphasis on beliefs, and for clarity's sake, have begun to recommend the use of 'spirituality' when referring to these direct experiences (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005; Hill et al., 2000; Hood, 2003).

While substantive religion has relied primarily on global measures that are theoretical and general (questions such as, "what is the sacred?" or "how religious are you?"), specific measures of functional spirituality can tap into these practical meanings (for example, "how does my relationship with the sacred impact my relationships with others?"). Zinnbauer and Pargament (2005) recognize the frequency with which researchers have used the terms "religion" and "spirituality" interchangeably and without clear description of their meanings. They also note that lay individuals do not find difficulty in differentiating the terms; instead, there seems to be a broad understanding among lay populations that religion would best fit into a substantive, and spirituality into a functional, lens. Interestingly, a review of the family psychology literature showed that "religion" was almost uniformly used, even in those studies that sought to examine the specific beliefs and behaviors that capture a functional perspective of the ways that spirituality impacts individuals. This study's review of past research uses the term "religion" where there is no clear distinction made between substantive and functional lenses. However, those studies that do directly refer to functional, versus substantive measurements, as well as the present study's design, are explained in keeping with this

helpful lens distinction. Where able, the "religion" term will be referred to when the design calls for measures of the substantive and global aspects of religion; the term "spirituality" will be used where functional, specific meanings of religion are explicitly referred to.

Research on Religion, Spirituality, and Parenting

In a seminal meta-analysis (Mahoney et al., 2001), religion was found to be significantly related to practical outcomes in both marital and parenting arenas. These include: higher global marital satisfaction, lower rates of divorce, lower rates of interparental conflict, higher rates of family cohesion with subsequent improvements in children's self-regulation, and more authoritative parenting (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001; see also Gunnoe, 1999). Further, in religious families, children's rates of prosocial behavior are higher (Gunnoe, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1999), and internalizing and externalizing problems are lower (e.g., Brody, Stoneman, & Flor, 1996). These children experiment less with marijuana (Dudley, Mutch, & Cruise, 1987), use alcohol less frequently and problematically (Burkett, 1993; Dudley et al., 1987; Perkins, 1987), are less antisocial (Elifson, Petersen, & Hadaway, 1983), and are less likely to become depressed (Miller, Warner, Wicknamaratne, & Weissman, 1997). Surprisingly, there are no studies showing that religiosity adversely impacts children (Mahoney et al., 2001; Mahoney, 2010). Rather, parental religiosity has been shown to be negatively associated with authoritarian parenting and positively associated with more effective parenting practices in the areas of communication, closeness, support, monitoring, conflict, and peer acceptance (Snider, Clements & Vazsonyi, 2004).

This research has largely been limited to considerations of mothers' parenting. Further, research has not adequately addressed whether non-religious intrapersonal factors such as baseline personality characteristics or psychological health better explain associations attributed to the influences of religion. This is an important consideration, as factors like personality may *predispose* individuals to different patterns of religious or spiritual expression. It may be the case that an individual who is highly extroverted will be more likely to join a religious community and to be more expressive with their children, while someone low on openness to experience may not be disposed to seek out a relationship with the divine.

Religion and Fathering

Knowing that fathers who adhere to a religious tradition are encouraged both by dogma as well as by their faith communities to espouse characteristics of responsible fathering (e.g., Marks & Dollahite, 2001), it is worthwhile to investigate how religion specifically influences fathers' involvement. Of the studies that have addressed the role of religion on fathers' parenting, the psychosocial effects of religion are found to predict above and beyond the influences of what Wilcox terms 'social convention,' or a general commitment to beneficent engagement with society. This is important because, similar to the issue with personality's influence raised above, sociologists in particular have raised the concern that the effects of religion are washed out when general civic engagement and responsibility are considered (Wilcox, 2002).

When measured longitudinally in broad and global ways (e.g., Wilcox, 2002), religion does appear empirically to play significant and unique roles in shaping fathers'

behaviors with their children. However, these conclusions are not consistent across studies and are likely due to limited measurement of the many facets of religion to a few items on a questionnaire (e.g., Bartkowski & Xu, 2000). What is missing are *personal meanings and interpretations* of religion, which will require the use of measures that examine specific meanings and interpretations derived by fathers about their spirituality (e.g., Mahoney et al., 1999; Volling, Mahoney, & Rauer, 2009). Understanding the specific mechanisms through which spirituality impacts fathers may be advanced by drawing from two constructs that may provide insights into how spirituality impacts fathers' parenting.

Sanctification. "Sanctification" refers to the ways in which spirituality is manifested in every-day interactions within marital, parent-child, and 'whole family system' relationships (Mahoney et al., 1999). Sanctification of parenting in particular refers to the extent to which parents view God as evident in their relationships with family members and view their roles to be imbued with religious and spiritual meaning. Mahoney conceptualizes sanctification as a 'psychospiritual' construct: *spiritual* because of the sacred qualities associated with family relationships and *psychological* because of its focus on individual perceptions of the sacred and the use of social science, not theological methods, to study this sanctification construct. Sanctification cuts across denominational boundaries and shows promise to capture the nuances of a range of influences of religion and spirituality on family life (Mahoney, et al., 1999). Sanctification has been studied in relation to marriage (including increased marital adjustment, more satisfaction, less marital conflict including verbal disagreements and stalemates, and more collaboration) and parenting (including more moral socialization,

higher conscience development, and greater healthy discipline practices) (Mahoney, 1999; Volling et al., 2009).

In one recent longitudinal study with mothers, fathers, and their infants (DeMaris, Mahoney, & Pargament, 20011), sanctification of parenting was not found to reduce the discrepancy between mothers' and fathers' contributions to the 'scut work,' or menial, day-to-day care tasks with infants. Mothers continued to give more time to these tasks than fathers. However, developmental differences between infants and children may draw out different patterns of father involvement, and sanctification could be a more salient construct for fathers with school-age children. In another recent example, Volling and colleagues (Volling, et al., 2009) investigated the impact of parental sanctification on preschool children's moral socialization and conscience development. They found that fathers and sanctification jointly play important roles in family processes. Fathers' use of praise was negatively associated with children's affective discomfort (comprised of items assessing guilt, apology, concern about good feelings, and empathy), but only when parental sanctification was high; this effect was stronger for fathers than for mothers. Additionally, sanctification of parenting was found to moderate the associations between fathers' use of inductive reasoning and children's moral development, such that fathers' use of induction was significantly associated with children's moral development only when they espoused high levels of sanctification. This interaction was not found for mothers. Volling and colleagues posit that fathers may view their household roles differently and invoke what is termed a "covenantal logic" with their children. Specifically, in some religious circles, these men have internalized beliefs that they play a dominant and caretaking/"shepherding" role in families, informing their interactions with

family members and justifying their emphasis on hierarchical, yet communal, relationships. As fathers are more influenced by contextual variables than mothers (e.g., Cabrera et al., 2007), the results may be explained by this "covenantal logic" in conjunction with the likelihood that religion holds more sway over fathers' involvement patterns.

Religious coping. Religious coping is a construct identified by Pargament and colleagues (Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998) that describes the ways that individuals utilize religion to work through life challenges. This construct also appears to require a functional lens; it examines specific beliefs about God's role in times of distress and so can be referred to as a measure of one's spirituality (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). Factor analysis has revealed specific coping strategies that appear to have both positive and negative impacts on subsequent psychosocial functioning (Pargament et al., 1998); positive dimensions of coping include: religious forgiveness (i.e., using religion for help with releasing one's anger, hurt, or fear stemming from an offense), seeking of spiritual support (i.e., looking to God's love and care for comfort and reassurance), collaborative religious coping (i.e. viewing a challenge as something the individual and God are working through together), spiritual connection (i.e., valuing and sensing connections with transcendent forces), religious purification (i.e., an individual's search for forgiveness or grace extended from God), and benevolent religious reappraisal (i.e., using one's religion and spirituality to view the stressor as potentially good and helpful) .

Cognitions and behaviors that loaded onto a negative coping factor included: spiritual discontent (i.e., being confused and dissatisfied with God), reappraisals of God as punishing (i.e., viewing the stressor as a punishment from God for one's sins),

interpersonal religious discontent (i.e., expressing confusion and dissatisfaction with the religious leaders and/or community one hails from), demonic reappraisal (i.e., perceiving the Devil as the cause of the current stressor), and reappraisal of God's powers (i.e., questioning God's abilities to influence the stressful situation). Religious coping accounts for variance in health and well-being outcomes, above and beyond the influences of non-religious coping (for a review, see Pargament, 1997). Although rarely and inconsistently used to directly describe the *interpersonal* implications of spirituality, religious coping has been found overall to serve as a mediator between 'general religious orientation' and 'the outcomes of major life events' (Pargament, 1997). As with sanctification, the construct of religious coping is not limited to the Christian religion.

In the only study that included religious coping in an examination of family functioning, Dumas and Nissley-Tsiopinis (2006) present work that allowed for the consideration of global religion and specific spirituality measures in the same model. They considered mothers' global religiousness, sanctification of parenting, and positive and negative religious coping as predictors of parental and child functioning. Global religiousness was not a significant predictor of children's and mothers' outcomes when more specific measures of spirituality were considered. Further, sanctification was non-significant when one form of religious coping was examined: it was found that negative religious coping was significantly associated with low levels of parental investment. In other words, when mothers' maladaptive uses of spiritual coping were great, sanctification ceased to promote positive parenting. In general, negative religious coping was the strongest predictor of poor parenting outcomes (both in investment and in satisfaction). The negative coping style includes perceptions of God as angry and quick

to avenge; these parents appear likely to internalize these models and implement them in their parenting. This is concordant with a study by Ellison (1996) that found that parents who view God as authoritarian use parenting strategies with their children (such as strict discipline or low tolerance for child opposition to parental directives) that are in line with this view. These results reinforce the need for more examinations of the adaptive and maladaptive qualities of spiritual coping, given the potential for both positive and negative contributions to parenting and overall family functioning.

The Present Study

Research Questions and Hypotheses

By integrating largely separate bodies of literature on fathering and religion, this study drew from theory-based methodologies to examine religion's associations with fathering and attachment. It contributes to the field by offering more precise assessments of the constructs. By identifying the adaptive and maladaptive elements of spirituality for fathering and how they are associated with their children's development, this study provides insight into how fathers' interpretations of spirituality may be related both positively and negatively to family functioning.

The present study will seek to answer several questions not yet addressed in the literature. First, under the premise that individuals' personal interpretations relate to variations of religious coping and sanctification, this study will examine how specific, functional spirituality is associated with fathering and father-child attachment. A focus on the specific meanings found in fathers' spirituality could help to move this work from a focus on description to process (Sullivan, 2001) and to help to foster an understanding

of the contextual impacts of spirituality (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) on fathers' involvement with their children.

This study will also contribute to a need for comprehensive research on both substantive/religious measurements (i.e., more theological and general focus of religion) as well as specific elements defined by spirituality and how spirituality can be both helpful and/or harmful in family domains. Religion is not an "all-or-nothing" construct and rather can take on many different manifestations; the exclusive use of simplistic measures of religion does not allow for an adequate examination of the ways that certain religious beliefs or behaviors could cause *harm* within the family system. For example, the repercussions are not yet fully known of parents' blaming of God for parenting failures, or their characterizations of children's misdeeds as 'demonic,' or what happens in the family system when parents justify the use of harshness because "it's God's will." It is likely that these parenting patterns would contribute to significant, maladaptive outcomes in children. Studying indicators of religious beliefs and behaviors, such as poor religious coping or low views regarding the sanctification of parenting, will likely help to address this question (e.g., Mahoney et al., 1999; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005).

Second, this study integrates insights drawn from recent work on the measurement of fathering and spirituality. The dimensions of fathering chosen for this study reflect current theory and research and are sensitive to the developmental needs of school-aged children: fathers' attitudes about their roles within the family system, father involvement as conceptualized by positive engagement, warmth and responsiveness, and control (Pleck, 2010), and father-child attachment (e.g., Brown et al., 2007). Using specific measures of spirituality, this study seeks to understand how functional

spirituality is related both to father involvement and father-child attachment. This will facilitate examination of the *processes* by which religion affects children's functioning (Mahoney et al., 2001; see also Hill & Pargament, 2003 and Mahoney, 2010).

Most studies that have examined religion and parenting have used global, simplistic measures of religiosity, such as, "on a scale of 1 to 5, how religious do you perceive yourself to be?" or "how often do you go to church?". When studies rely on these measures, potentially vital information is missed about *how* parents specifically use religion in their day-to-day lives with children; do parents view their religion as inspiration and instruction for a warm, supportive relationship with their child? Can sense be made of parents whose global religious involvement may be high, but their parenting behaviors are linked to maladaptive outcomes in their child? Studies that exclusively use global measurements are unable to answer these questions. Notably, there is not much research that combines examinations of fathers' specific spirituality and global religiosity and uses both to understand its associations with fathering and child outcomes. It will therefore be helpful in this study to understand whether fathers' responses on a variety of measures assessing religion and spirituality map best onto one general or two specific constructs (i.e., distinction between substantive religion and functional spirituality)

Third, although research on attachment theory has focused more on the mother-child vs. father-child relationship (Brown et al., 2007), measuring the extent to which children feel secure and safe with their fathers could help to distinguish between fathers whose spirituality is harmful or helpful for their children. Understanding how a father's spirituality may affect the quality of their relationships with their children and how the

attachment relationship is then affected will help to explain children's subsequent psychosocial outcomes. It may be that negative religious coping has deleterious effects on fathering, and later on children's attachment relationships with their fathers. Conversely, it is not yet known whether constructs such as positive religious coping or sanctification have positive effects on fathering and attachment. One recent review underscores the need for more work to specify the spiritual mechanisms that motivate fathers to work to form high-quality father-child relationships (Mahoney, 2010).

Finally, this study draws upon Cabrera's model (2007) to investigate whether the influences of fathers' spirituality predict parenting after accounting for contextual influences of marital conflict but also for father characteristics identified in fathers' personality. One example of how these variables could prove to be highly influential is if fathers' baseline personality characteristics are found to explain more variance in children's outcomes than spirituality; it may be that individuals for whom spirituality is salient are characterized by different personality profiles than other fathers. This may be the primary influence on parenting outcomes. In addition to the earlier mentioned possible links between extraversion and religious involvement, another scenario may be that fathers who are high on agreeableness may be more prone to be religious. However, it is really their agreeable nature that is more predictive of parenting than spirituality. Until these constructs are included in one model, definitive answers on spirituality's associations with fathering are not attainable.

Hypotheses:

1. Specific, functional measures of spirituality will be significantly stronger predictors than global measures of fathers' religious/spiritual lives of fathers' involvement with their children, their perceptions of the role of the father, and children's attachment to their fathers.
2. After accounting for fathers' personality and marital conflict, these specific, positive measures will predict greater father involvement, greater beliefs that fathers play an important role in child development, and more secure father-child attachment (Figure 1).
3. Paternal involvement will mediate the relationships between fathers' spirituality and children's attachment to their fathers. Variations in religious coping and sanctification will predict variations in fathering behavior, which will predict father-child attachment security (Figure 1).
4. The quality of the marital relationship will partially mediate the relationship between fathers' spirituality and paternal involvement (Figure 2).

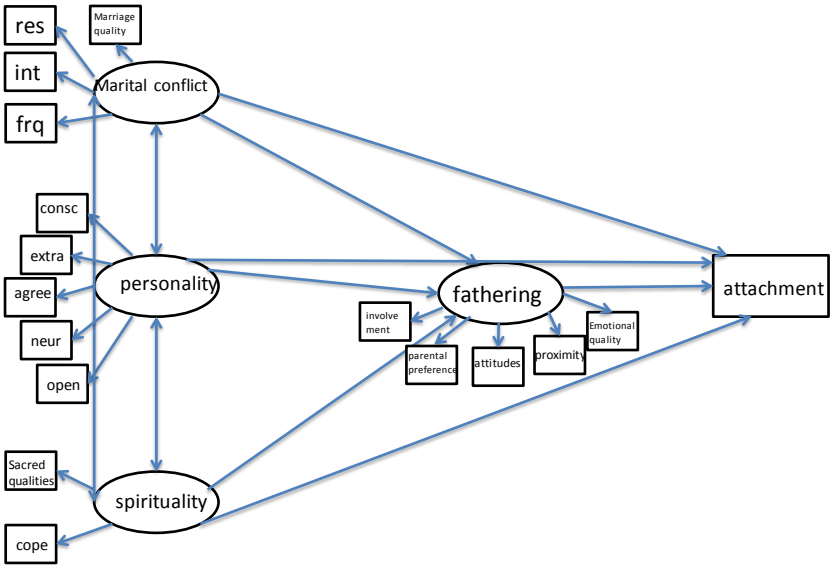

Figure 1. Hypothesized model testing contextual, fathering, and attachment variables

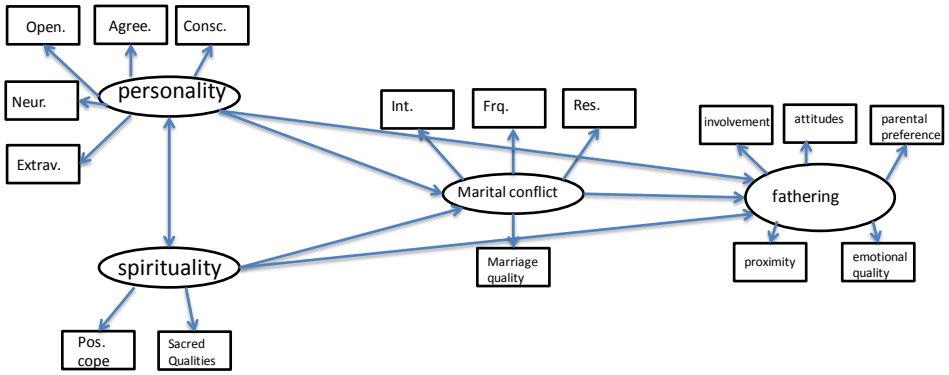

Figure 2. Hypothesized model testing contextual, marital, and attachment variables

Methods and Procedures

Participants

This study utilized self-report data from 174 father-child dyads. Fathers' mean age was 43 years (*SD* = 7.6) and children's was 11 (*SD* = 1.3; 52% male). Families were largely middle class and headed by two parents. See Table 1 for a full list of relevant demographic information.

An emphasis was placed on gathering data from a broad range of ethnicities, SES backgrounds, and Christian religious backgrounds. The targeted sample was fathers with children ages 8-12 who lived in the same household. This demographic was targeted in order to contribute to the relevant theoretical and empirical literature that has placed a primary focus on this age range, as cognitive development allows for more accurate self-reports relative to children of younger ages. Additionally, they are expected to be more heavily influenced developmentally by the family, rather than the peer context relative to adolescents.

Area churches and schools from diverse ethnic and SES backgrounds were targeted that represented a wide range of Christian religious perspectives (Catholic, variations of Protestant such as Lutheran, Methodist, evangelical; no exclusion criteria was applied to those of non-Christian religious backgrounds, and measures were worded such that a person of any faith background could complete them). Focusing on data collections at private religious and parochial schools allowed for an opportunity to

address a shortcoming in previous research with religious-affiliated populations that has neglected to measure religion and spirituality in more specific ways.

Table 1.

Characteristics of fathers

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Percentage
Basic demographics:			
Age	43.28	7.6	
Education	15.90	3.14	
Income	$55,000	$20,000	
Biological father			80%
Years with child if not bio	7.53	3.89	
Employed			89%
Years with current partner	15.30	7.04	
Marital Status:			
Married			88%
Single			5%
Living with partner			4%
Divorced			2%
Separated			1%
Ethnicity:			
Caucasian			68%
African American			26%
Asian			2%
Latino			1%
Other			3%
Religious Affiliation:			
Catholic			35%
Evangelical			21%
Baptist			8%
Lutheran			8%
Christian Dutch Reformed			6%
Christian			5%
None			3%
Protestant			3%
Atheist/agnostic			3%
Lutheran – WELS/ALCA			3%
Monotheist			1%
Christian Missionary Alliance			1%
Methodist			1%
Muslim			1%

Procedure. Data collection focused on parochial and private Christian schools in the greater Milwaukee, Wisconsin area; the principal investigator contacted appropriate school personnel in order to gain permission to recruit students and their fathers for participation in the study. Of nine schools contacted, seven took part. The principal of one predominantly Latino school voiced concerns about confidentiality, and the principal of a Fundamentalist Christian school expressed concerns about integrating scientific research with religious beliefs/practices. A total of 249 fathers and their children initially indicated interest in the study through parents' signed response letters that were distributed to students; 174 fathers and children completed the study, for a participation rate of 70%. Parents received 2 reminder/follow-up phone calls until packets were received. In follow-up phone calls to parents, the primary reason for not completing the study was lack of time.

The study collected self-report data from children and fathers on a variety of possible influences on father involvement, the levels and quality of fathers' involvement, and father-child attachment. More specifically, measures assessed fathering beliefs and behaviors, global religion as well as specific spirituality, fathers' personalities, marital conflict and quality, and father-child attachment and were distributed to children at school to bring home to fathers who indicated interest in the study. These packets included instructions that stressed that fathers and their children should complete the questionnaires independently. Self-addressed, stamped envelopes were provided for mailing in packets. Initial field testing with fathers and children in the community, as well as feedback from parents on follow-up phone calls, indicated that most fathers spent approximately 30 minutes on questionnaires, and

children spent approximately 10 minutes on their measures. Parents and children were financially compensated for their time. The study was approved by Marquette University's Institutional Review Board.

Measures

Demographics. A demographic questionnaire was filled out by fathers in order to collect data on their age, ethnicity, years of education, income, occupation, hours worked/week, religious affiliation, marital status, years with partner, and number of total children in the household. Fathers also reported on children's age, ethnicity, and school grade.

Big Five Inventory (BFI-44, John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991). The BFI-44 was used to assess fathers' personality on each of the "Big Five" dimensions: openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and extraversion (John et al., 1991; John et al., 2008; Benet-Martinez & John, 1998). Items began with the root introduction, "I see myself as someone who…", and short responses such as, "can be tense" completed the items. Participants responded to each item on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly). Mean scores are computed for each dimension. Correlations among the dimensions have been found to be below .20 and rarely exceed .30 (John & Donahue, 1998). Convergent validity was found between the BFI and two other personality measures: the Costa McCrae and the Goldberg scales (mean *r*s = .75 and .80, respectively; Benet-Martinez & John, 1998). In the present study, reliabilities ranged across the five subscales from .78 to .85.

Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (Idler, 1999). Several scales from the Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality were administered to fathers in order to gather a broad range of information on fathers' religious and spiritual lives. This measure was comprised of 26 items for 8 scales (Table 2). First, 6 items regarding fathers' daily spiritual experiences were queried with response options ranging from 1 = many times a day to 6 = never or almost never, α = .88. Next, values and beliefs were assessed with two items with response options ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree; coefficient α = .64. Three items assessing forgiveness were then assessed, with responses ranging from 1 = always or almost always to 4 = never; α =.64. Five items assessed private religious practices, with responses ranging from 1 = more than once a day to 8 = never; α =.70. A religious support construct is next measured with four items, with response options ranging from 1 = a great deal to 4 = none; α = .88 for congregation benefits (2 items), and α = .69 for congregation problems (2 items). Religious/spiritual commitment is assessed with one scaled item with response options from 1=strongly agree to 4=strongly disagree and one item inquiring number of hours/week spent in activities on behalf of or inspired by religious/spiritual reasons. Organizational religiousness is assessed with two items, with 1 = more than once a week to 6 = never; coefficient α = .64. Finally, religious preference was queried with an open-ended question: "What is your current religious preference? And "If Protestant, what denomination?".

Religious coping. Fathers completed a 16-item questionnaire adapted from a previous study (Dumas et al., 2006) that includes two items assessing individuals' global ratings of spirituality and religiosity ("To what extent do you consider yourself a

Table 2.

Constructs drawn from the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality

Scale	Definition	Item example
1. Daily Spiritual Experiences	Spiritual experiences on a daily basis	"I feel God's presence."
2. Values/Beliefs	Values and beliefs related to religious/ spiritual lives	"I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world."
3. Forgiveness	Applications of forgiveness to daily life	"I have forgiven those who hurt me."
4. Private Religious Practices	Personal, done of own volition, religious practices	"Within your religious or spiritual tradition, how often do you meditate?"
5. Congregation Benefits	Support from religious community	"If you were ill, how much would the people in your congregation help you out?
6. Congregation Problems	Abuse from religious community	"How often are the people in your congregation critical of you and the things you do?"
7. Commitment	Commitment to apply religion to life	"I try hard to carry my religious beliefs over into all my other dealings in life."
8. Organizational Religiousness	Attendance at religious functions	"How often do you go to religious services?
9. Religious Preference	Religion, denomination (if Christian, non-Catholic)	Responses: e.g., Catholic, Presbyterian

religious person?" with 1 = very religious to 4 = not religious and all; "To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?" with 1 = very spiritual to 4 = not spiritual at all, internal consistency α = .76) along with the 14-item Brief R-COPE (Pargament et al., 1998). The R-COPE is considered a specific measure of spirituality in the present study. It was originally developed to assess the ways in which individuals cope with unique life stressors such as survivors working through the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing, university students coping with major adverse life events, and hospitalized patients dealing with the repercussions of their medical state. The Brief R-COPE represents an adaptation of the original measure that has been shortened through the use of both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses and is designed to measure two main factors: positive and negative religious coping. These constructs are assessed with items that are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*). Those who rate high on positive coping perceive God as loving and supportive, while those who rate high on negative coping regard God as punishing and rejecting. As these items have been modified and adapted to assess parenting, items that reflect positive coping examine the extent to which parents turn to God for support and guidance in their parenting, such as through seeking God's care and love or by asking God to help them through a difficult parenting situation. Seven items that assess for parents' negative religious coping examine the extent to which parents perceive a struggle with fear or anger because, for example, they are questioning God's power or are wondering if God has abandoned them. Internal consistency for positive coping items was α = .89 and α = .85 for negative coping items. Intercorrelation between subscales was low in this study

(.16). Both subscales have been shown to meaningfully predict physical and mental health outcomes in previous research (e.g., Pargament et al., 1998).

Manifestation of God in Parenting and Sacred Qualities of Parenting. Each parent completed two measures of specific spirituality that assessed sanctification of parenting. The 10-item Manifestation of God in Parenting Scale (Mahoney et al., 1999) is rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). It evaluates the degree to which spouses perceive their parenting to be manifestations of their beliefs and experiences of God (for example, "My parenting role is a reflection of God's will" and "God is a part of my parenting"; $\alpha = .97$). Responses were summed across items, resulting in a total score for the manifestation of God in fathers' parenting. In addition, parents completed the 10-item Sacred Qualities of Parenting scale, in which participants rate the extent to which certain religion and spirituality-related adjectives and statements apply to their work as parents. More specifically, ten items address parents' endorsements of adjectives such as "holy" and "sacred" in addition to statements such as "parenting reveals the deepest truths of life to me" on a 7-point Likert scale; $\alpha = .91$.

Father-child attachment security measure. Children completed the 15-item Security scale (Kerns et al., 1996) in order to assess the father-child attachment relationship. This measure was developed to capture children's perceptions of security in attachments with their caregivers and is particularly suited for use with children from middle childhood to early adolescence. Three broad domains are assessed together within this measure: 1) the child's perception of the degree to which a caregiver is responsive and available to them, 2) the extent to which a child will rely on that caregiver in times of distress, and 3) the degree to which the child feels comfortable telling their

caregiver about the thoughts and emotions that are associated with their distress. Items begin with a format that reads, "some kids…but other kids…" and ends with a statement regarding their parent, which children then rate on a 4-point scale from most insecure to most secure (Harter, 1982). For example, one statement reads, "Some kids find it easy to trust their dad BUT other kids are not sure if they can trust their dad." The child will first decide which statement is more characteristic of their experience (indicating either secure or insecure attachment) and then proceed to state whether this position is "really true" for them or "sort of true" for them. Total scores range from 15-60, with higher scores indicating greater attachment security. Internal consistency for this measure was $\alpha = .78$.

Parental Behavior (Involvement) Scale (Bruce and Fox, 1997; 1999). This is a 21-item self-report measure of parental involvement in child rearing and caregiving. It covers four domains of parental involvement that correspond with the recently reconceptualized model for the measurement of father involvement (Pleck, 2010). First, custodial caretaking functions are covered (i.e., assisting or supervising the child in bathing or personal hygiene) and may best be understood to tap positive engagement. The second and third domains address both positive engagement and warmth/responsivity, with the second covering socioemotional functions (i.e., joining the child in his or her favorite activities) and the third domain measuring teaching functions (i.e., sharing values with the child). The last domain concerns executive functions involved in parenting (i.e., making decisions that pertain to the child or assisting the child in making decisions) and manifests fathers' parental control. Items are rated regarding the level of involvement in tasks on a 4-point scale with 1 = *never or hardly ever* and 4 = *almost daily* and summed

to create a total Involvement score. This measure had good internal consistency, with α= .91 in the current study.

Relatedness measure (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1991). Children completed the Relatedness Questionnaire (RQ), which is a 17-item survey that is appropriate for children ages 8-17 and measures the emotional quality and closeness of a parent-child relationship. It was used in this study to augment the measurement of warmth/responsivity as referenced from Pleck's model (2010). The RQ was developed using items from the Rochester Assessment Package for Schools, a 261-item questionnaire that measures children's perceived autonomy, competence, and relatedness as they correspond to a child's functioning in school (Wellborn & Connell, 1987). Individuals are asked to rate statements on a four-point Likert scale that ranges from 1=*not at all true* to 4=*very true* (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1991).

The RQ is comprised of two subscales that measure children's feelings of relatedness with respect to (1) emotional quality and (2) psychological proximity seeking. The "emotional quality" scale consists of 11 items that assess positive and negative emotions that individuals experience when they are around a specific relationship partner. This scale includes questions such as "When I'm with my father, I feel relaxed." Other emotions that are targeted include feeling happy, bored, and scared. The "psychological proximity" scale consists of 6 items that assess the degree that individuals wish they were closer to a specific relationship partner. This scale includes questions such as, "I wish my father knew more about how I feel" (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997). The RQ is scored by first reverse-scoring the appropriate items and then calculating a mean value for each of the two subscales. Optimal patterns of relatedness are indicated by emotional quality

scores greater than three and psychological proximity seeking scores less than or equal to 1.75 (Cicchetti, Toth, & Lynch, 1995). The two subscales of the RQ, psychological proximity seeking, and emotional quality, have good internal consistency as indicated by Cronbach's alphas in the current study of .77 and .82, respectively. Validity for the RQ has been established through research demonstrating that the measure can differentiate maltreated and non-maltreated children (Toth and Cicchetti, 1996).

Parental Preferences Questionnaire (PPQ), Child Report. The PPQ (Hwang & Lamb, 1997) contains 10 items that ask the child which parent they prefer in certain situations, such as who children want to accompany them with to meetings at school. Children indicated on a 7-point scale whether they: (1) always prefer mother; (2) almost always prefer mother; (3) more often prefer mother; (4) prefer mother as often as father; (5) more often prefer father; (6) almost always prefer father; or (7) always prefer father. Responses to individual items are summed to obtain preference scores; $\alpha = .64$ in the present study.

Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict (CPIC). Children's reports of parental conflict were assessed with the Conflict Properties scale from the Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict questionnaire (CPIC; Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992). The Conflict Properties subscale consists of 19 items measuring the frequency, intensity, and resolution of the conflicts children witness. Children rate items such as "I often see my parents arguing" and "My parents get really mad when they argue" on a three-point scale (1 = false, 2 = sort of true, 3 = true); scores can range from 0-38. The Conflict Properties scale has been shown to correlate with parental reports of conflict (e.g., *r*s = .30 –.39; Grych et al., 1992) and with measures of child internalizing and

externalizing problems (e.g., *r*s = .19 –.33; Grych et al., 2003). Internal consistency reliability was good, at α = .92 in the present study.

Quality of Marriage Index (QMI). The QMI is a well-established six-item inventory that assesses marital quality using broadly worded, global items, such as, "We have a good marriage" (Norton, 1983). The respondent shows the degree of agreement with each of five items on a scale ranging from 1 (*very strong disagreement*) to 7 (*very strong agreement)* and with one item on a scale ranging from 1 (*very strong disagreement*) to 10 (*very strong agreement*). The QMI has high internal consistency in this sample, α = .97.

Role of the Father Questionnaire (ROFQ). The ROFQ contains 15 items and measures the extent to which a parent believes the father's role is important to children's development (Palkovitz, 1984). Subjects indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each item on a 5-point scale; total scores can range from 15 to 75, with higher scores reflecting attitudes that fathers are capable and should be involved with, and sensitive to, their children. A revised version of the ROFQ was successfully adapted for use with preschool-aged children (Christiansen, 1997; McBride & Rane, 1996). In this adapted version of the ROFQ, the word "infants" was changed to "young children," so the differences in the two measures were slight. In the present study, 'infants' was changed to 'children.' McBride and Rane (1996) have reported good internal consistency of the adapted measure with an alpha of .77 for fathers. Christiansen reported an alpha of .73 in his sample using the adapted version (n= 186); in the present study, α = .71. Construct validity has been indicated through the relationship between fathers' ROFQ scores and their sex role orientation. For example, androgynous fathers' ROFQ scores

were higher than undifferentiated and masculine fathers' ROFQ scores (Palkovitz, 1984). Construct validity is also indicated by statistically significant correlations between the ROFQ and fathers' level of involvement in child rearing (McBride & Rane, 1996, Palkovitz, 1984). Christiansen (1997) also found validity in their adapted ROFQ.

Results

Means, Variances, and Correlations among Observed Variables

Examination of the means of religious and spirituality scales shows that this sample is moderately to highly religious, as indicated by both global and specific measures. For example, with scales that ranged from 1-5, global measures of religion and spirituality showed moderate levels of both constructs (M = 2.93, SD = .77, and M = 3.01, SD = .78, respectively). Specific measures showed higher levels of positive than negative religious coping (M = 22.96, SD = 6.39, and M = 8.31, SD = 3.65, respectively), with possible scores ranging from 6 to 35. This sample showed high levels of sanctification of parenting, with possible scaled scores from 10–70 (sacred qualities M = 50.38, SD = 11.36, and manifestation of God in parenting M = 53.16, SD = 13.37).

In order to better understand this sample's religiosity and spirituality, the means from this sample were compared to prior published research. Overall, this sample appears to be comparable to previous studies with community samples of men and women that have used the same or very similar measures (see Table 3 for particularly relevant variables). This sample's global ratings of religiosity and spirituality were similar to an ethnically diverse, low-income, Midwestern community sample (Dumas & Nissley-Tsiopinis, 2006). Compared to a representative sample of the US population drawn for the 1998 General Social Survey, fathers' responses on scales from the Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (Idler, 1999) were slightly skewed towards greater religiosity and spirituality. Levels of negative and positive religious coping were similar to a recent sample (Dumas & Nissley-Tsipinis, 2006), and sanctification of parenting was similar in one respect (sacred qualities) and lower in the

Table 3.

Comparisons of the present sample's religiosity and spirituality and previous study samples

Variable	Present sample*	Other sample	Characteristics of other sample
1. Global			
-religion	2.93/.77		Ethnically diverse, low-income, Midwestern community
-spirituality	3.01/.78		sample (Dumas & Nissley-Tsipinis, 2006)
-sum total	5.94/1.38	5.49/1.55	
2. Forgiveness	10.24/1.64		
-Forgiven self			1998 General Social Survey (Idler, 1999)
-Never	2%	6%	
-Seldom	17%	13%	
-Often	42%	36%	
-Almost/Always	37%	45%	
-Forgiven others			
-Never	1%	4%	
-Seldom	8%	10%	
-Often	42%	39%	
-Almost/Always	48%	47%	
-God has forgiven			
-Never	3%	5%	
-Seldom	5%	3%	
-Often	13%	18%	
-Almost/Always	79%	74%	
3. Sanctification of parenting			
-sacred qualities	50.38/11.36	49.8/7.5	Community sample of Caucasian mothers from Midwest; low-middle
-manifestation of God in Parenting	53.16/13.37	72.6/20.8	class (Murray-Swank, Mahoney, & Pargament, 2006)
4. Religious coping			
-positive	22.96/6.39	23.05/6.28	Ethnically diverse, low-income, Midwestern community
-negative	8.31/3.65	8.77/4.16	sample (Dumas & Nissley-Tsipinis, 2006)

Note: * Information presented are means and standard deviations unless noted as perecentage. Comparisons of means, standard deviations were taken, where necessary, from individual items that were measured in past studies. It is these items that are noted in the table.

other (manifestation of God in parenting) to another recent sample (Murray-Swank, Mahoney, & Pargament, 2006).

With regard to personality subscale scores that could range from 8 to 45, fathers reported relatively lower levels of neuroticism (M = 19.84, SD = 6.62), moderate levels of extraversion (M = 26.48, SD = 6.64), and higher levels of openness to experience (M = 35.53, SD = 6.49), agreeableness (M = 31.27, SD = 5.43), and conscientiousness (M = 35.49, SD = 5.60). Marriage quality was reported to be quite high (M = 35.16, SD = 7.4) on a scale with scores that could range from 6 to 42. In regard to fathering questionnaires, involvement scores that ranged on a scale from 21 to 84 were relatively high (M = 61.29, SD = 10.91), as were fathering attitudes with scores that could range from 15-60 (M = 53.48, SD = 4.68).

Child report measures indicated moderate levels of psychological proximity seeking (M = 12.79, SD = 4.31), with possible scaled scores ranging from 6 to 24. Children reported relatively high levels of emotional quality (M = 35.85, SD = 3.57), with scaled scores that could range from 11 to 44. Their ratings of parental preference were close to neutral, with a possible mean score of 40 (M = 37.77, SD = 6.82). Children reported on the nature of interparental conflict as measured by frequency (M = 8.57, SD = 2.87), intensity (M = 10.29, SD = 2.99), and resolution (M = 9.95, SD = 2.48); all of these scores were relatively low, as possible scores could range from 6-18. Finally, their reports of father-child attachment could range from 15 to 60 and were also relatively high in this sample (M = 50.11, SD = 5.62).

In summary, this was a moderately religious sample of fathers who reported high levels of paternal involvement and marital satisfaction. These fathers reported higher

levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, and they reported relatively lower levels of neuroticism. Children reported moderate levels of father involvement, low levels of interparental conflict, and high levels of attachment security with their fathers.

Correlations. Preliminary correlations, means, and standard deviations were computed to examine the nature of relationships between the hypothesized predictor, mediator, and outcome variables (Tables 4-7). Correlations among religion and spirituality variables indicated significant associations between global measures of religion and spirituality and other measures of religion as well as more specific measures of spirituality. Notably, all measures were almost uniformly intercorrelated with the exception of negative religious coping; although this variable was negatively associated with congregation benefits, it was not significantly associated with any other religion or spirituality variable (Table 4). All five personality variables were intercorrelated, with extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness positively correlated with each other; neuroticism was negatively associated with the four other personality variables (Table 5) and was reverse-scored for subsequent analyses. Positive associations were found among reverse-scored measures of frequency and intensity of marital conflict, resolution of marital conflict, and quality of marriage ratings (Table 6). Correlations with fathering variables indicated positive associations among involvement, children's parental preferences, and father-child attachment security. Notably, fathering attitudes was only associated with father involvement. Children's psychological proximity seeking was negatively associated with parental preferences, emotional quality, and

Table 4.

Correlations among religion/spirituality variables

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*
1. Religion	1											
2. Spirituality	.59**	1										
3. Spiritual Exp.	.48**	.55**	1									
4. Forgiveness	.39**	.41**	.59**	1								
5. Private Rel.	.38**	.39**	.45**	.34**	1							
6. Cong. Benefits	.32**	.36**	.39**	.43**	.40**	1						
7. Cong. Problems	.12	.18*	.33**	.18*	.20**	.13	1					
8. Org. Rel	.34**	.36**	.42**	.39**	.45**	.50**	.20**	1				
9. Pos. RCOPE	.43**	.39**	.68**	.50**	.28**	.21**	.28**	.40**	1			
10. Neg. RCOPE	.11	.01	-.08	-.12	-.01	-.27**	.03	-.08	.16*	1		
11. Manifestation	.47**	.53**	.72**	.66**	.50**	.48**	.21**	.56**	.72**	-.13	1	
12. Sacred Qualities	.30**	.44**	.55**	.37**	.35**	.36**	.11	.34**	.51**	-.06	.73**	1
M	2.93	3.01	19.72	10.24	14.98	6.66	3.23	7.82	22.96	8.31	53.16	50.38
SD	.77	.78	6.06	1.64	4.65	1.67	1.27	2.30	6.39	3.65	13.37	11.36

Note: Religion = Global measure of religiosity; Spirituality = Global measure of spirituality; Spiritual Exp. = Daily Spiritual Experiences, Forgiveness = Forgiveness; Private Rel. = Private Religious Experiences; Cong. Benefits = Congregation Problems/Religious Community Support; Cong. Problems = Congregation problems/Religious Community Abuse; Org. Rel. = Organizational Religiousness; Pos. RCOPE = Positive Religious Coping; Neg. RCOPE = Negative Religious Coping; Manifestation = Manifestation of God in Parenting; Sanctification = Sanctification of Parenting

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

Table 5

Correlations among personality variables

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
1. Extraversion	1				
2. Agreeableness	.18*	1			
3. Conscientious.	.21**	.35**	1		
4. Neuroticism	-.30**	-.49**	-.29**	1	
5. Openness	.20**	.40**	.21**	-.26**	1
M	26.48	31.27	35.49	19.84	35.53
SD	6.64	5.43	5.60	6.62	6.49

Note: Conscientious. = Conscientiousness; Openness = Openness to Experience

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

Table 6.

Correlations among marriage/partnership variables

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*
1. Mar. Qual	1			
2. CPIC-frq	.36**	1		
3. CPIC-int	.34**	.72**	1	
4. CPIC-res	.44**	.73**	.67**	1
M	35.16	8.57	10.29	9.95
SD	7.40	2.87	2.99	2.48

Note: (C) = child-report; (F) = father-report; Mar. Qual. = Marriage Quality (F); CPIC-frq = Marital conflict frequency subscale from the CPIC (C); CPIC-int = Marital conflict intensity subscale from the CPIC (C); CPIC-res =Marital conflict resolution subscale from the CPIC (C)

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

father-child attachment. Emotional quality and attachment were, in turn, positively associated (Table 7).

Factor analysis. Aside from sanctification and religious coping, this study gathered several additional measures of religion that could be classified into global and specific categories due to their content. This resulted in a total of 12 possible measures of religion and spirituality. Organizational religiousness and private religious practices (along with global measures of religion and spirituality) can be considered global measures of religion because they measure rates of participation/attendance at religious functions/activities. Forgiveness, daily spiritual experiences, congregation problems and congregation benefits can all be classified as specific categories (along with sanctification and religious coping measures), as they measure specific and personally meaningful ways of viewing religious phenomena and are therefore considered measures of spirituality. This rationale represents the conceptual case for considering these 12 particular variables to be measures of either religion or spirituality.

In order to determine empirically whether these variables represent different constructs, a factor analysis was performed to understand whether a 2-factor versus 1-factor structure best fit with the data. AMOS 19 software (Arbuckle, 2010) was used to perform two confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) with maximum likelihood estimation. Variables with non-significant parameter estimates or parameter estimates above 1.00 were trimmed, as these indicate unimportance to the overall model (Byrne, 2010).

Constructed models were evaluated for overall goodness-of-fit using the Chi Square Statistic (χ^2), Tucker-Lewis Index, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI). The χ^2 statistic represents a "badness of

Table 7.

Correlations among fathering variables

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
1. Involve	1					
2. Attitudes	.40**	1				
3. PPQ	.18*	.08	1			
4. Proximity	-.01	-.05	-.31**	1		
5. Emo. Quality	.15	.03	.13	-.29**	1	
6. Security	.18*	.16	.32**	-.59**	.57**	1
M	61.29	53.48	37.77	12.79	35.85	50.11
SD	10.91	4.68	6.82	4.31	3.57	5.62

Note: (C) = child-report; (F) = father-report; Involve = Bruce Fox Parenting Inventory (F); Attitudes = Role of the Father Questionnaire (F); PPQ = Parental Preferences Questionnaire (C); Proximity = Psychological Proximity-Seeking from Relatedness scale (C); Emo. Quality = Emotional Quality from Relatedness Adjectives Scale (C); Security = Attachment Security Scale (C).

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

fit" index, wherein higher values reflect poorer fitting models (Byrne, 2010); models that provide a good fit to the data are more likely to have a non-significant χ^2 value. Keeping in mind that this statistic is heavily influenced by sample size, however, the χ^2 degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) will also be used. More specifically, by convention, a χ^2/df of less than 3 will be considered reflective of an adequately fitting model with the data (Arbuckle, 2010).

The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) reports values ranging from .00 to 1.00, with values above .90 representing adequate goodness of fit (Byrne, 2010). An index that seeks to correct for the Normed Fit Index' (NFI) propensity to underestimate fit in small samples, the TLI allows for smaller samples' fit considerations by accommodating to values above .90. For larger samples, this index requires values above .95.

Third, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is considered. An incremental fit index, the CFI measures relative improvement in the hypothesized model fit over a baseline (independence) model (Kline, 2011). Similar to the TLI, the CFI has values ranging from 0 to 1.0, with values closer to 1 indicating good fit; specifically, values > .90 are considered to indicate good model fit.

Finally, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) operates opposite the TLI and CFI, with 0 indicating best fit. A parsimony-adjusted index, the RMSEA does not approximate a central chi-square distribution; rather, the RMSEA utilizes non-central chi-square distributions and favors computations of simpler models over other complex models that may share similar amounts of variance. Additionally, RMSEA does not require sampling variables to reflect perfect measurement (Kline,

2011). Conventionally, models with RMSEA values < .08 are considered to indicate acceptable model fit (Kline, 2011; Byrne, 2010; Schumacker, 2010).

First, a one-factor solution with all 12 religion and spirituality variables as observed variables was tested. Model fit was poor ($\chi^2(54) = 168.07$, $p = .00$; $\chi^2/df = 3.11$; TLI = .80, CFI = .86; RMSEA = .11), and examination of parameter estimates revealed that negative religious coping was a non-significant parameter. After dropping this variable, model fit did not improve ($\chi^2(44) = 127.78$, $p = .00$; $\chi^2/df = 2.90$; TLI = .84, CFI = .89; RMSEA = .11). Model output showed that manifestation of God in parenting indicated a parameter estimate above 1.00, and so this variable was dropped; although improved, the model fit was still not good ($\chi^2(35) = 89.43$, $p = .00$; $\chi^2/df = 2.56$; TLI = .85, CFI = .90; RMSEA = .10). Parameter estimates indicated that sacred qualities of parenting did not fit well into the model, but dropping this variable was not theoretically favored due to its close association, as a measure of sanctification, with the definition of a functional measurement of spirituality. The second highest parameter estimate above 1.00 was daily spiritual experiences; when this variable was trimmed, this model still did not provide good fit ($\chi^2(27) = 68.50$, $p = .00$; $\chi^2/df = 2.54$; TLI = .83, CFI = .90; RMSEA = .09).

Then, a two-factor CFA was considered. It initially showed poor model fit ($\chi^2(53) = 150.02$, $p = .00$; $\chi^2/df = 2.83$; TLI = .83, CFI = .88; RMSEA = .10), with a non-significant parameter for negative religious coping. After dropping this variable, model fit was improved ($\chi^2(43) = 109.83$, $p = .00$; $\chi^2/df = 2.55$; TLI = .87, CFI = .92; RMSEA = .10), with a large parameter estimate (> 1.00) for private religious practices. This variable was dropped, model fit was still not good ($\chi^2(34) = 97.51$, $p = .00$; $\chi^2/df = 2.87$;

TLI = .86, CFI = .91; RMSEA = .10), and organizational religiousness' parameter estimate was then found to be above 1.00. After this variable was dropped, model fit improved ($\chi^2(26) = 63.750$, $p = .00$; $\chi^2/df = 2.45$; TLI = .90, CFI = .94; RMSEA = .09), with manifestation of God in parenting's estimate above 1.00. This variable was also trimmed from the model, and overall model fit was then good ($\chi^2(19) = 32.21$, $p = .03$; $\chi^2/df = 1.70$; TLI = .94, CFI = .97; RMSEA = .06). This model indicates that religion and spirituality variables may best be understood under a two-factor structure, with global variables (1-item measures of religiousness and spirituality) under one factor and specific variables (daily spiritual experiences, forgiveness, congregation benefits, congregation problems, sacred qualities of parenting, and positive religious coping) comprising the other factor (Figure 3).

Hypothesis 1

Specific, functional measures of spirituality were hypothesized to be significantly stronger predictors than global measures of fathers' religious/spiritual lives of fathers' involvement with their children, their perceptions of the role of the father, and children's attachment to their fathers. Next, two composite variables were created using SPSS software (SPSS, version 19, IBM Corporation) that included those variables that were identified as global and those that were identified as specific. Standard multiple regressions examined the unique contributions of both composite variables to all five fathering outcome variables as well as to father child attachment. Results indicated that the specific measure of spirituality uniquely predicted father involvement as well as

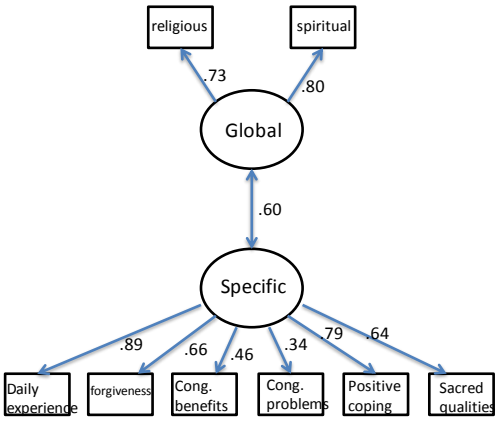

Figure 3. Two factor structure of global and specific variables

fathering attitudes, while global religion did not predict any of the outcome variables (Table 8).

To investigate whether individual variables measuring specific indices of spirituality predicted fathering and attachment better than global measures, correlations were calculated among global measures of religion and spirituality, specific measures of spirituality, and fathering and attachment security variables. Fisher's *r* to Z transformations were used to determine whether specific measures were stronger predictors of fathering variables than global measures (refer to Table 9).

Overall, specific spirituality measures only partially had stronger associations than global measures. These tests indicated that the association between father involvement and positive religious coping was statistically stronger than the association between a global measure of spirituality ("to what extent do you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?") and father involvement ($Z = 1.60$, $p < .05$). Further, sacred qualities of parenting was a statistically stronger predictor of father involvement than this global measure of spirituality ($Z = 1.70$, $p < .05$).

However, manifestation of God in parenting was not a stronger predictor of father involvement than globally measured spirituality ($Z = 1.20$, $p = .11$), nor were positive religious coping, sanctification, or manifestation of God in parenting stronger predictors of fathering attitudes than organizational religiousness ($Z = .09$, $p = .46$; $Z = 1.06$, $p = .14$; and $Z = .86$, $p = .39$, respectively). Sacred qualities of parenting was not a stronger predictor of attachment security than a global measure of spirituality ($Z = .76$, $p = .22$), yet sacred qualities of parenting was a significantly stronger predictor of attachment than a global measure of religiosity ($Z = 1.77$, $p < .05$).

Table 8.

Global Religion and Specific Spirituality with Fathering and Attachment

			Specific spirituality		Global religion	
Outcome variable	R^2	*F*	*B*	95% CI	*B*	95% CI
Father involvement	.13	10.02**	.21**	.11, .31	-.66	-2.14, .83
Fathering attitudes	.11	8.32**	.08**	.04, .13	-.35	-1.00, .29
Parental preference	.01	.59	-.02	-.08, .05	.54	-.45, 1.53
Psychological proximity	.02	1.38	.03	-.01, .07	-.47	-1.09, .15
Emotional quality	.01	.74	.02	-.02, .05	.03	-.49, .55

* $p < .001$.

Table 9.

Correlations among global and specific variables and fathering and attachment

	Specific				Global			
	Pos. cope	Neg. cope	Sacred Qual.	Manifest	Religiosity	Spirituality	Org. rel.	Private
Involvement	.33**	.10	.34**	.29**	.08	.16*	.08	-.08
Parental preference	-.06	-.01	-.02	-.03	.08	.09	-.01	-.06
Proximity seeking	.15	.01	-.08	-.02	-.04	-.06	-.10	.03
Emotional Quality	.05	.06	.11	.09	.05	.10	.07	.01
Fathering attitudes	.23**	.09	.33**	.31**	.09	.11	.22**	.13
Attachment	-.02	-.14	.17*	.09	-.04	.08	.00	.05

Note: (G) = global measure; (S) = specific/intrinsic measure; Global Pos. cope = positive religious coping (S); Neg. Cope = negative religious coping (S); Sacred Qual. = sacred qualities of parenting (S); Manifest. = manifestation of God in parenting (S); Religiosity = global indicator of religiosity (G); Spirituality = global indicator of spirituality (G); Org. Rel. = organizational religiousness(G); Private = private religious practices (G).

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

Hypotheses 2 and 3

It was hypothesized that, after accounting for fathers' personality and marital conflict, specific measures of spirituality would be associated with both fathering and attachment. Further, paternal involvement was hypothesized to mediate the relationships between fathers' spirituality and children's attachment.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS software (AMOS 19; Arbuckle, 2010) with maximum likelihood estimation was used to examine the final three study hypotheses. SEM allowed for simultaneous examination of all pathways in the proposed models (Figures 1 and 2): contextual and father characteristic factors and their associations with father involvement, father role attitudes, and father-child attachment security were all considered together. This analytic strategy also allowed for error-free estimations of the relationships between constructs designated as latent. Accounting for the correlations among predictor, mediator, and criterion variables, mediation analyses could be subsequently used where applicable within the SEM models to examine hypotheses. In addition to hypothesized mediations, SEM allowed for an examination of indirect effects of exogenous variables on attachment. Identification of indirect effects servers to elucidate more precisely the relationships between predictor (i.e., marital conflict, personality) and outcome (i.e., attachment security) variables; although a direct relationship may not be identified, indirect relations may exist.

For hypotheses 2-3, two structural regression models were computed to test hypothesized relationships for adaptive and maladaptive (i.e., low levels on spirituality measures or high levels of negative religious coping) spirituality, due to negative religious coping's non-significant parameter identified in analyses for hypothesis 1.

First, a model was computed that tested the influences of high levels of adaptive forms of spirituality on fathering and child attachment, while including personality and marital conflict variables. In the initial model, all hypothesized variables (as presented in figure 4) were entered except for negative religious coping. This initial model was computed

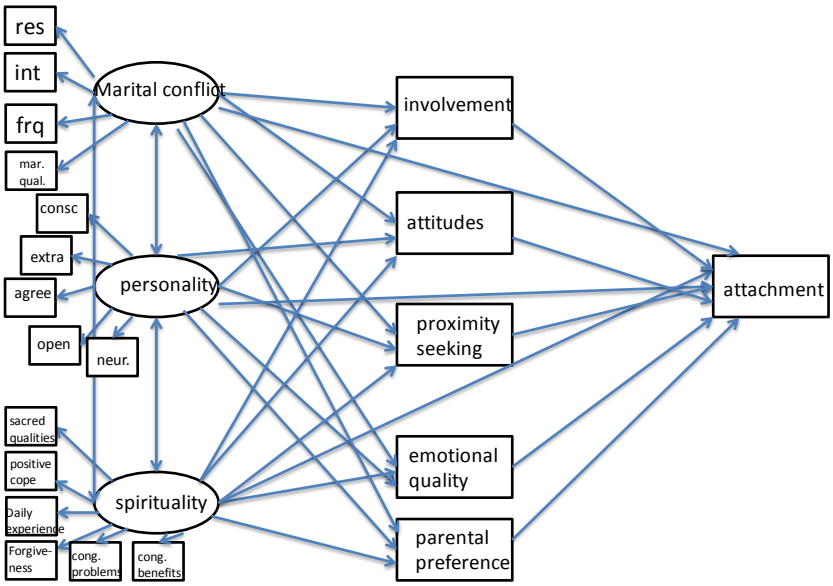

Figure 4. Revised model testing contextual, fathering, and attachment variables

with a mixed latent and manifest structural model, with marital conflict, personality, spirituality, and father involvement designated as latent variables and attachment security as a manifest variable.

The full hypothesized model did not indicate adequate fit ($\chi^2(169) = 318.15$, $p = .00$; $\chi^2/df = 1.88$; TLI = .80, CFI = .86; RMSEA = .07). Identification of specific areas contributing to poor model fit showed that father involvement variables are best identified as observed/manifest variables in the three models. This contrasts with previous findings that these variables were all intercorrelated. However, this makes conceptual sense insofar as the four measures of involvement target different fathering domains that include behavior, attitudes, emotional warmth, and estimations of psychological proximity; while related, they did not appear to empirically correlate strongly enough to be considered one, encompassing construct. (see Figure 4, which portrays fathering as 5 observed variables). Additionally, although they covaried with other exogenous father-report variables, marriage quality and neuroticism's parameter estimates were above 1.00, and these paths were also trimmed. Subsequent model fit was good ($\chi^2(132) = 208.53$, $p = .00$; $\chi^2/df = 1.58$; TLI = .88, CFI = .92; RMSEA = .06) (see figure 6).

Low levels of marital conflict were associated with fathers' positive personality characteristics ($\beta = .27$, $p < .05$), less psychological proximity-seeking ($\beta = -.37$, $p < .001$), and greater emotional quality ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$). Personality was additionally positively associated with: spirituality ($\beta = .44$, $p < .001$), father involvement ($\beta = .70$, $p < .001$), and fathering attitudes ($\beta = .61$, $p < .001$); it was marginally, positively associated with attachment ($\beta = .32$, $p < .07$). In turn, psychological proximity-seeking

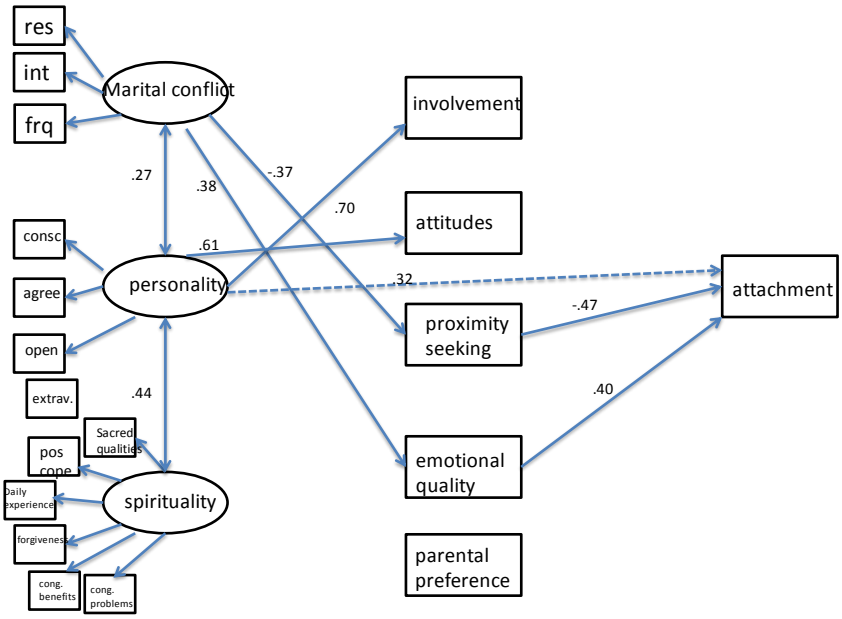

Figure 6. Results of model testing hypotheses 2 and 3

was negatively associated and emotional quality was positively associated with father-child attachment security (β = -.47 p < .001 , and β = .40, p < .001 , respectively) (Figure 6). Indirect effects of personality, spirituality, and marital conflict on attachment were also computed, with βs = .06, -.07, and .33 respectively; the last indirect effect indicates that father involvement is related to attachment quality through the emotional quality of the father-child relationship and children's (decreased) need for proximity.

In order to investigate the roles of maladaptive spirituality on fathering and attachment, a model including negative religious coping was computed. As empirical results from both correlation and factor analyses indicated negative coping was unassociated with other spirituality and religion variables, and because all other spirituality variables used in the previous model loaded together, this model separately examined the observed variable of negative coping.

An initial model including all hypothesized paths (Figure 7) indicated good fit ($\chi^2(70) = 104.48$, p = .01; $\chi^2/df = 1.49$; TLI = .91, CFI = .95; RMSEA = .05). A familiar pattern of results was found (Figure 8), with exceptions for negative religious coping, which was found in this model to be positively associated with father involvement (β = .24, p < .05) and fathering attitudes (β = .19, p < .05). Similar patterns included personality's positive association with marital conflict (β = .26, p < .01). Low marital conflict was associated both with less psychological proximity-seeking (β = -.39, p < .001), and increased emotional quality (β = .37, p < .001). Personality was additionally, positively associated with father involvement (β = .58, p < .001) and fathering attitudes (β = .48, p < .001). Finally, psychological proximity-seeking was negatively associated

with father-child attachment security, while emotional quality was positively associated with attachment (β = -.45, p < .001 , and β = .42, p < .001, respectively).

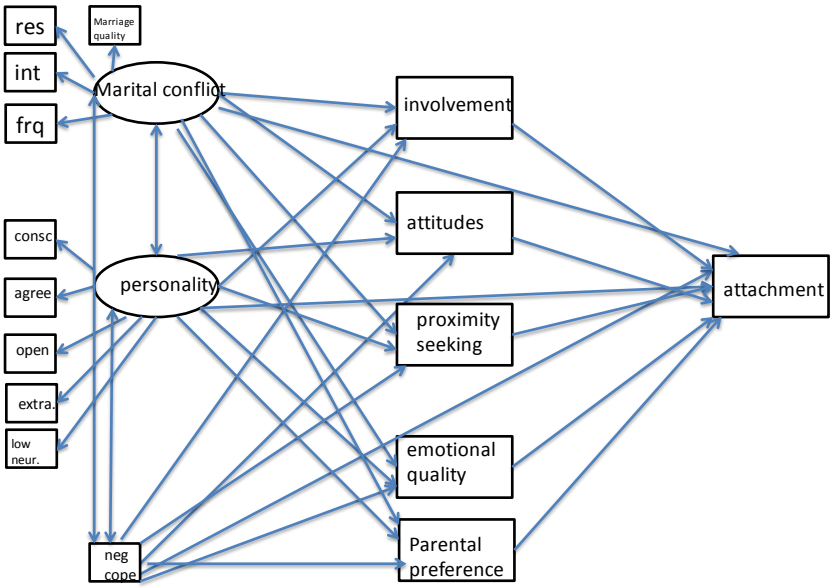

Figure 7. Model testing with negative coping

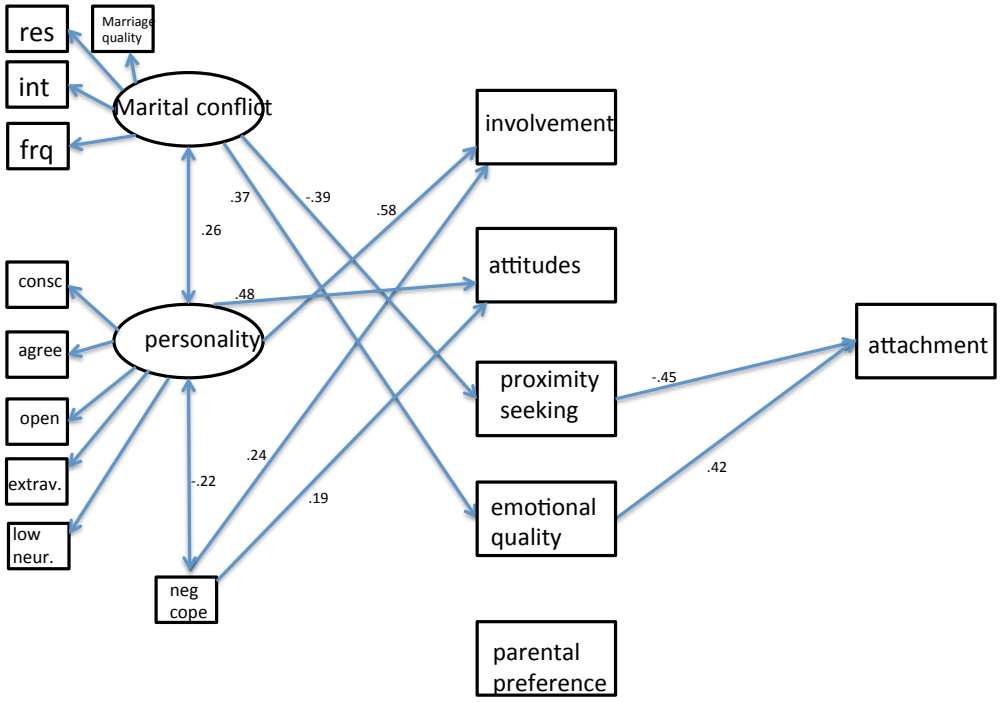

Figure 8. Significant paths for model with negative coping

Hypothesis 4

The last model that was computed tested the associations among spirituality, personality, marital conflict and father involvement; it was hypothesized that the quality of the marital relationship would partially mediate the relationship between fathers' spirituality and paternal involvement. An initial model was created in SEM, reflecting hypothesized associations and adjusted for findings from hypothesis 1 that 6 spirituality variables load onto one construct, as well as the previous finding that fathering variables are better designated as observed variables rather than as one latent factor (Figure 5). The initial model fit was not adequate ($\chi^2(157) = 263.80$, $p = .00$; $\chi^2/df = 1.68$; TLI = .85, CFI = .88; RMSEA = .06). Parameter estimates indicated no significant paths associated with the endogenous variable parental preferences, and this variable was trimmed from the model. Model fit subsequently was good ($\chi^2(141) = 224.11$, $p = .00$; $\chi^2/df = 1.59$; TLI = .88, CFI = .91; RMSEA = .06).

As portrayed in Figure 9, no significant hypothesized mediation was found. Fathers' personality characteristics were associated with low marital conflict ($\beta = .33$, $p < .01$), father involvement ($\beta = .56$, $p < .001$) and fathering attitudes ($\beta = .54$, $p < .001$). Positive personality characteristics additionally covaried positively with spirituality ($\beta = .40$, $p < .001$). Low marital conflict was, in turn, negatively associated with psychological proximity seeking ($\beta = -.38$, $p < .001$) and was positively associated with emotional quality ($\beta = .40$, $p < .001$). Indirect effects of personality and spirituality on fathering were also computed, with βs ranging from -.04, to .01, indicating no significant indirect effects between the exogenous and endogenous variables; instead, the above identified direct effects best account for associations among variables.

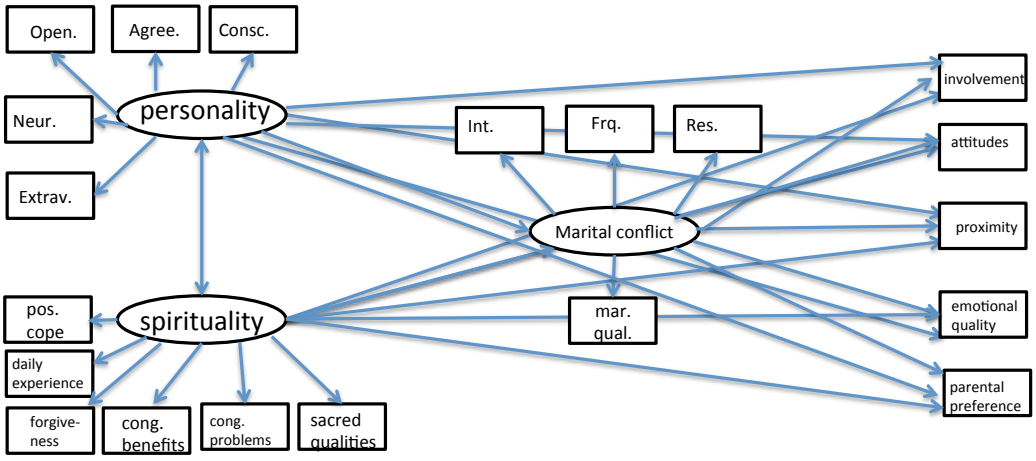

Figure 5. Revised model testing contextual, marital, and fathering variables

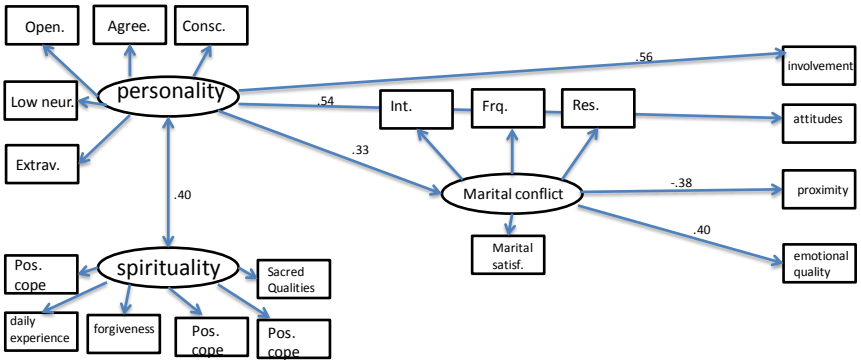

Figure 9. Significant paths for model testing contextual, marital, and fathering variables

Discussion

The central goals of this study were, first, to understand whether specific measures of spirituality are stronger predictors of fathering and father-child attachment than global, single-item measures of religion and spirituality, and second, to examine relationships among spirituality, fathering, and father-child attachment, after accounting for contextual and father characteristics that may impact paternal functioning: marital conflict and fathers' personality. This study contributes to an understanding of Cabrera's framework of predictors of father involvement (Cabrera et al., 2007) that considers factors including marital conflict and fathers' religiosity. Specifically, it elevates the importance of the marriage relationship and raises questions on how to best examine religion as a hypothesized contextual factor related to fathering.

Findings indicated that it is possible to distinguish "religion" from "spirituality" at the measurement level, and that specific measures of spirituality better predict fathering than global measures. However, once fathers' personality and marital conflict were accounted for, spirituality was no longer related to parenting, whereas both personality and marital conflict retained unique associations. Prior associations found between spirituality and fathering do suggest that a relationship exists, but it appears that relations are more complex as personality and marital conflict reduce that association. Implications are for a greater focus on fathers' personalities and marriages while seeking to better understand the mechanisms by which spirituality may interact with these factors in studying associations with parenting practices as well as father-child attachment.

Support was found for the use of specific measures of spirituality; examination of twelve measures of fathers' religious and spiritual lives indicated that global religiosity

can be distinguished from specific measures of spirituality. Global, one-item measures of individuals' religion and spirituality are better viewed as one construct, separate from a specific construct that includes these five measures: daily spiritual experiences, forgiveness, congregational benefits and problems, positive religious coping, and sacred qualities of parenting. These constructs differ conceptually insofar as the former addresses global and substantive measures of religiosity while the latter measures functional, day-to-day lived expressions of individuals' spiritual involvement. When analyzed together, spirituality was associated with father involvement and fathering attitudes, but not with parental preference, psychological proximity, or emotional quality; religion was not associated with any fathering outcomes. Examined individually, fathers' positive use of religious coping and belief that parenting is a holy and sacred endeavor were both better predictors of father involvement than globally measured spirituality. Additionally, fathers' ratings of sacred qualities of parenting were a greater predictor of attachment than fathers' global ratings of religiousness. These findings are concordant with previous research (Mahoney, 2010) that identifies functional measures of spirituality as more likely to be more strongly associated with family outcomes than global measures of religion. However, fathers' ratings of manifestation of God in parenting did not predict father involvement behaviors better than a global rating of fathers' spirituality. Further, fathers' positive uses of religious coping, sacred qualities of parenting, or manifestation of God in parenting were not stronger predictors of father-child attachment than attendance at religious services and activities. These findings may differ for several reasons. First, fathers' reports of the manifestation of God in their parenting was not found in this sample to load onto a latent 'spirituality' construct, so it makes empirical

sense that it would not be more strongly associated than a global measure in this sample. Second, the measure of attendance at religious services and activities included two items. The first addresses how often an individual attends religious services, but the second measures rates of participation at places of worship above and beyond weekly religious services. This may tap into a construct that more closely describes personal, functional commitments to religion, as those who attend places of worship more than once a week may be more likely to have made personal commitments to functionally make religion a core piece of their activities and, therefore, identity. It notably did not load onto a latent 'global religion' construct, which further helps to explain the lack of significant difference in association.

These findings indicate that caution should be exercised when interpreting findings from studies that are limited by the use of global measures of religion, as previously argued (e.g., Mahoney et al., 1999). This is particularly supported by findings in the present study that fathers' religious coping and views of the sacred in parenting are more strongly related to fathering and attachment than globally measured spirituality. However, it remains that the use of conceptually global measures of religion were, at times, as strongly associated with fathering and attachment as specific measures of spirituality. This stands in contrast to a body of research (e.g., Mahoney, 1999; see Mahoney, 2010 for a review) that advocates for measures of specific, personal aspects of spirituality to better capture spirituality's influence on interpersonal relations. The finding that global measures may not necessarily be inferior to specific spirituality measures is encouraging to those who rely on datasets that globally measure religiosity (e.g., national datasets). Researchers of spirituality and families should continue to

utilize specific measures where they are able. If only global assessments are available, researchers are advised to exercise caution with their conclusions. In the meantime, seminal research in the area of religion and parenting (e.g., Bartkowski & Xu, 2000; Wilcox, 1998 & 2002) that relied on global measures, yet still found significant associations with family functioning, may not be as inferior to specific measures of spirituality as has been thought. Although it makes theoretical and, to some extent, empirical sense to continue pursuing an understanding of intrinsic spiritual dynamics and their effects on family functioning, results from studies that rely on global markers should continue to receive some degree of attention and confidence.

One interesting consideration here is that those criticizing the use of global measures have based their arguments on empirical work that has focused either on mothers or general population samples. It may be that available measures of spirituality do not tap into spiritual processes that are more male and father-specific. For example, in line with findings from Volling et al. (2009) that fathers may use a "covenantal logic" to inform their caretaking/ "shepherding" patriarchal roles, fathers whose spirituality contributes to patriarchal attitudes and perceptions of being 'head of the household' could focus much more on a spiritual motivation to 'patriarchal responsibility' instead of a 'sanctification of parenting' perspective drawn by mothers. Qualitative studies should address this question to better determine how fathers' functional spirituality is most closely experienced and expressed.

The findings that relations between spirituality and fathering disappeared when marital conflict and personality were entered into SEM models were unexpected. Fathers' personalities were also related to marital conflict, such that higher levels of

agreeableness, openness to experience, extroversion, and conscientiousness were related to lower levels of marital conflict.

Past work on religion and fathering (e.g., Dumas et al., 2006) has not accounted for father characteristics such as personality, and so results may be misleading. Additionally, even those studies that have controlled for such factors as mental health have relied on isolated analyses, including correlations and hierarchical multiple regressions, that do not allow for error-free estimations among constructs. Particularly with the recent push to test for a variety of variables' relationships with fathering (Cabrera et al., 2007), these isolated analyses do not allow for full consideration of factors that may coalesce and interact in a global, ecological model of father involvement. The conclusion to be drawn here is that, considered altogether, spirituality is not a strong, direct contributor to fathering or attachment in this sample. Rather, spirituality's association with personality and personality's association with marital conflict indicate that, while spirituality does not lose a degree of prominence or importance in this model, it appears to take a back seat in the complex interplay of these other factors found to be directly associated with fathering.

The findings are concordant with a recent longitudinal study (DeMaris, Mahoney, & Pargament, 2011) that examined the influences of fathers' religiosity through measures of global religion, religious conservatism, and sanctification of parenting on the 'scut work' of infant care. It was hypothesized that fathers' greater religiosity scores would predict a smaller discrepancy in mothers' versus fathers' contributions to various day-to-day care tasks with their infants. However, little evidence was found for enhanced father involvement due to influences of religiosity. Higher religiosity instead predicted a

greater gender discrepancy, with these mothers contributing more over time than fathers to infants' care. Follow-up analyses revealed that the association of religiousness with biblical conservatism may best explain this finding; increases in biblical conservatism, including greater conservative sex-role attitudes that implicate mothers as primarily responsible for child care, were associated with greater gender discrepancies in child care. Across developmental periods and pertinent fathering tasks across these periods, it may simply be that spirituality is not a significant predictor of fathering.

These findings do lead to questions of spirituality's place of importance in family research, but it also may indicate alternative explanations. It may be that fathers' spirituality is simply not being measured accurately. Although this study used measures thought to measure more specific meanings of spirituality in parenting, fathers could, as mentioned above, internalize their spirituality in ways that differ from the present measures that have been originally used with mothers. The use of qualitative and mixed methods (e.g., observational or interview, as well as quantitative) is indicated to better understand these issues; fathers may be able to explain their spiritual and parenting lives in ways that are unavailable using current quantitative measures and thus help to re-route the understanding of the roles of spirituality in fathers' parenting.

Another possibility is that spirituality does not affect parenting in the ways that are thought. At least in the context of factors that are more proximal (i.e., the day-to-day struggles in marriage or the intricately involved influences of personality), religion and spirituality are not as influential as fathers' individual characteristics. Religion and spirituality could be seen here as distal variables that depend on the 'situation on the ground;' for example, homilies or sermons on love could meet deaf ears with those who

have adverse personality characteristics or poor, conflict-ridden marriages. Future work should examine these possibilities.

While challenging assumptions of spirituality's role in fathering, this study adds to a small body of research that emphasizes the importance of considering associations between fathers' personality and father involvement. Support has been found for personality's influence as a direct predictor of fathers' caretaking with infants (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2000) and as a moderator between involvement and children's non-compliance (DeGarmo, 2010). One longitudinal study serves as a reminder of the complexity of relations among the present study's variables. In Sullivan's work with 172 newlyweds (2001), husbands' religiosity only impacted subjective marital satisfaction if they were psychologically well adjusted; if they were emotionally fragile, religiosity served to increase marital distress. Personality factors can contribute to the development of psychological problems (Coker & Widiger, 2005). This study underscores the importance of examining personality in studies of fathering by showing that *positive* personality factors (specifically, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience, and extraversion) are associated with increased father involvement, more favorable fathering attitudes, and to some extent, secure father-child attachment.

Past work has examined the influences of divorced fathers' antisocial personalities on parenting, and the present study sheds light on the influence of broadly defined personality on fathering of school-aged children within intact families. Specifically, fathers' adaptive personality characteristics (low neuroticism, extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience) are together uniquely

associated both with father involvement and fathering attitudes. However, questions remain regarding why *specific* personality characteristics may be found to best predict fathering and children's outcomes. Past studies (e.g., DeGarmo, 2010) that have investigated unique aspects of personality have illuminated specific interpretations related to a certain personality characteristic, and future work on fathers and spirituality that examines in-depth, individual aspects of personality such as openness to experience will be informative. Additionally, considerations for personality characteristics not included in the Big Five such as the generative personality (e.g., de St. Aubin, McAdams, & Tae-Chang, 2004) will help to provide a broader and more complete picture of associations among these constructs. Further, clarity is needed on longitudinal examinations of ecological, contextual predictors of positive father-child interaction (Holmes & Huston, 2010). This study could support the idea that personality may predispose fathers to certain patterns of spirituality, which further may impact the marital relationship; fathering and attachment outcomes could then be subsequently affected.

It may be that spirituality encourages positive aspects of personality, which in turn decrease chances for marital conflict; again, a longitudinal design would help to show whether these strong patterns of association among contextual and personality variables are identified directionally, over time. Conversely, another scenario may be that a father who is highly agreeable and conscientious is drawn to a religious community where he can both participate and lead. Because of his repeated exposures to others in the religious community who espouse strong views of the sacred role of parenting, he would also score high on measures of specific spirituality. Fathers without agreeable, conscientious personalities may not have been drawn to life in that religious community

in the first place. The model in the study would also identify this father's personality as a primary predictor of marital conflict. Here, high agreeableness and conscientiousness would help to explain reduced levels of fathers' participation in marital conflict. It is then, when that marital conflict is low, that children's reports of father involvement improve.

Marital conflict was related to children's proximity-seeking behaviors and emotional quality with their fathers, with lower levels of marital conflict predicting lower levels of children's proximity seeking and higher levels of high-quality emotion expression. This draws attention to the importance of low-conflict marriages for anticipating children's ratings of fathers' involvement as measured through higher emotional closeness and warmth. These children's low levels of proximity seeking, a construct that taps children's desires for closer relationships with their fathers (e.g., "I wish my father knew me better), indicates that low marital quality is related to children's perceptions of an already-close relationship with their fathers. Past work that has cited the importance of the marriage relationship for healthy father involvement (e.g., McBride et al., 2005) draws attention here to the need for healthy marriages that encourage fathers' involvement with their children. Specifically, the health of the marriage is proposed to most strongly impact the warmth/emotional closeness dimension of fathering involvement in the Pleck model (Pleck, 2010). These findings are all the more salient when considering the indirect relationship found between marital conflict and attachment. This relationship underscores that the mechanism by which marital conflict and attachment are associated lies in these direct fathering behaviors, as manifested by children's ratings of relational warmth and emotional closeness to fathers. Although

causality cannot be determined from this sample, the idea that these fathering dimensions would not be positively related to attachment if marital conflict were high is consistent with a wide body of literature (e.g., McBride et al., 2005) that underscores fathers' reliance on external cues and supports, particularly the marriage relationship, to motivate involved fathering.

No associations were found between spirituality, including sanctification of parenting, and marital conflict. The true impact of spirituality might lie not within fathers' parenting but in its impact on the marriage relationship. Instead of examining sanctification of the parental role, sanctification of *marriage* may be a critical variable to examine, given the profound influences of the marital relationship on fathering. Mahoney's sanctification construct (Mahoney et al., 1999) was initially applied to married partners, with higher levels of 'sanctification of marriage' tied to higher marital quality than associations between global religiosity and marital quality (Mahoney, Pargament, & DeMaris, 2009; Lichter & Carmalt, 2009). It follows that fathers whose marriages are strengthened by their spirituality would likely benefit in their parenting as well. Indeed, sanctification of parenting has been shown more often in the literature to predict mothers' parenting than fathers' (e.g., Murray-Swank, Mahoney, & Pargament, 2006) and may simply represent a more salient, influential construct for mothers. Instead, the marriage relationship has been shown to be one of the strongest predictors of fathers' involvement with their children (Cummings, Goeke-Morey, & Raymond, 2004).

Neither personality nor interparental conflict were related to father-child attachment (although positive personality characteristics were marginally, positively associated). Attachment was related to proximity seeking and emotional quality, with

low ratings of proximity seeking associated with high levels of attachment and high ratings of emotional quality related to high levels of attachment. This fits with attachment theory in two ways. First, it shows the need for parents' direct interactions with children to foster secure attachment (Bowlby, 1988); contextual factors are only important insofar as they influence the parent to different patterns of engagement with their child. Second, this pattern shows that the warmth and responsiveness dimension of fathering fosters secure attachment; this is also cited as important for attachment development (Bowlby, 1983). Another measure of father involvement that may be seen to tap positive involvement and monitoring dimensions, without direct considerations for the important warmth/responsivity dimension, did not predict attachment in this study. It is also notable that marital conflict, psychological proximity, and emotional quality were all reported by children. Its patterns of association with attachment were unique from the parent-report measures of personality, father involvement, and fathering attitudes; parent report measures were not associated with attachment. The salience of children's perspectives on marital conflict and fathering with the important outcome of attachment, in contrast to associations found among father report measures, underscores the importance of a focus on children's perspectives in future work that identifies predictors of fathering.

A separate model was created to examine the ways that expressions of maladaptive spirituality may impact fathering and attachment. Although relationships were largely similar, several unexpected differences were noted. Specifically, fathers' negative religious coping was associated with their involvement such that greater negative coping related to greater levels of reported father involvement. Additionally,

negative religious coping was positively associated with fathers' high ratings of the importance of fathers in children's lives. This pattern of findings contradicts past theoretical and empirical work that suggests this form of coping is maladaptive for parenting and children's psychosocial outcomes (Pargament et al., 1997; Dumas & Tsiopinis, 2006). However, negative coping was negatively and marginally associated with father-child attachment. It may be that fathers who ascribe to maladaptive, guilt-ridden, fear-based perceptions of God (i.e., the negative coping construct) are more prone to 'talk the talk.' These fathers know the importance of giving the 'right answers,' lest they be shunned from God and their religious communities. If these communities place a high value on fathering (e.g., the Promise Keepers movement among evangelical churches), they may be drawn to save face, even on an anonymous questionnaire. Importantly, although fathers using negative coping rated their involvement more highly, children did not rate their fathers as more highly involved. Both fathers and children would be expected to report high quality involvement if it is indeed present.

Further, negative coping was *negatively* associated with positive personality characteristics of openness to experience, extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and low neuroticism. Because positive personality is associated with low marital conflict, a variable that is associated with *children's* ratings of paternal involvement, the interpretation that these fathers may not be accurately reporting is bolstered. Instead, specific aspects of personality such as neuroticism may predispose an individual to interpret God as vengeful. Individuals high on neuroticism may have thought patterns such as, "if God is vengeful towards me, I am justified in being vengeful with my family members." On a deeper, more speculative level, a characteristic such as low openness to

experience could impede fathers' abilities to move beyond painful experiences of not being loved unconditionally in the past. These parents may not be receptive when presented with religious teachings such as unconditional love and forgiveness. Inability to receive love would predict an inability for these fathers to express love to family members, thus contributing to higher chances for marital conflict. Qualitative and mixed methods in studies of father involvement would help to answer questions without the confines of pre-existing quantitative measures on the roles of spirituality in marriage and the potential impacts of personality on fathers' spiritual lives. They could also help to elucidate whether different research methodologies can help to parse complex associations to see whether spirituality has a direct role in fathering.

Finally, marital conflict was examined as a potential mediator of the relationship between fathers' spirituality and father-child attachment. Fathers' spirituality was not related to marital conflict or to any of the fathering variables, and so no hypothesized mediation was found. This is in line with the general theme across findings that spirituality is not associated with the fathering and attachment domains in question. Although this hypothesis was developed to integrate past work on spirituality and fathering with marital quality and fathering, it reiterates the primacy of the marriage relationship and does not show possibilities for direct effects of spirituality.

Future studies can draw insights from recent qualitative work that provides a model for what to continue in terms of methodology and what to avoid. One fifteen-month qualitative study of British evangelical fathers and their families bolsters the present findings by describing contextual influences that more greatly predict fathering than religious involvement. Aune (2010) followed a group of evangelical families for

two years and utilized material from the religious organization's public discourse as well as observation and qualitative interviews with fathers. Aune observed that highly religiously involved fathers often appeared to incorporate values related to paternal involvement from the larger society while maintaining that traditional values from their religion were the primary motivation for that involvement. Aune neglected to consider a substantive versus functional lens distinction, however, and, the roles of specific spirituality may become clear when this study design directly considers the influences of, for example, religious coping or sanctification.

This work with fathers could also consider when spirituality may make toxic contributions to the marriage relationship or encourage maladaptive personality patterns in response to stressors. In one recent qualitative study drawing on interviews with Catholic couples, Mahoney (2010) focuses on the marital relationship, not fathering *per se*. Participants' responses indicated that a partner's use of private prayer can be detrimental if they use that prayer to detour anger toward a spouse onto God as a maladaptive avoidance strategy (Marsh & Dallos, 2000). Another study (Gardner, Butler, & Seedall, 2008) shows the maladaptive uses of religion in the form of 'Deity triangulation,' or bringing God into the relationship in order that She/He may align with one partner's attempts to win verbal disagreements with the other. Findings from the present study also encourage questions about personality factors that may predispose individuals to these examples of poor/maladaptive uses of spirituality.

Clinical implications. Applied interventions with fathers can draw clarity from findings on the importance of the marriage relationship. Programs, public policy, and clinical practitioners aiming to promote healthy, positive fathering can target the unique

strengths of marriage partners (Hohmann-Marriott, 2011) and emphasize early interventions with high-conflict couples as a means to discourage negative spillover into the father-child relationship. Further, results show the general importance of identifying and fostering contextual and father characteristic factors that influence positive fathering behaviors and attitudes. Encouraging strong and supportive father-child relationships that foster secure attachment will certainly have positive benefits on children's later development (Bretherton, 2010). Although causation has not yet been established, interventions with fathers should additionally be mindful of the ways that negative religious coping's association with maladaptive personality characteristics could impact parenting practices. Motivating religious fathers' functional, adaptive spiritualties in conjunction with fostering healthy marriages and encouraging positive personality characteristics will help to decrease the risks of poor parenting and child outcomes.

Limitations. This study makes unique contributions to the study of religion, spirituality, and father involvement. However, limitations are noted in the study design as well as in the conclusions that may be drawn. First, the lack of a longitudinal design limits a causal understanding of whether personality, spirituality, and marital conflict play a predictive role in relationships with fathering and child outcomes. Another limitation is the lack of consideration in this study design for child characteristics that may be shown to strongly associate with fathering and attachment. Including measures of child characteristics would help to build on work drawing from Cabrera et al.'s contextual theory of fathering predictors (2007) and will be important to include in future studies. Additionally, while this study design helped to increase the likelihood of involvement of a broader range of fathers than previous samples, the use of

questionnaires to measure deep, personal, and involved processes (particularly, religion, involvement, and attachment) may have inhibited an accurate picture of these constructs. Further, a potential risk with questionnaire-based studies is their inability to ascertain whether certain participants completed questions with below-ideal engagement. True ecologically-minded studies will incorporate measurements from all members in the family; the lack of mothers' participation in the present study is another limitation, as measures of mothers' involvement and cooperative coparenting could provide a backdrop for understanding fathers' participation in the family system.

Generalizability of this study's findings appears to be good, based on similar levels of religiosity and spirituality in past research that utilized broad-based community samples. Further, its improved ethnic diversity from past studies examining religious coping and sanctification is an added strength that increases generalizability. However, this is still a middle-income sample, and its participants are still primarily White. Further, one could argue that this study, similar to previous work, utilizes a convenience sample that may preselect fathers with higher levels of religiosity and spirituality for participation; until future work shows otherwise, this is a fair assumption and critique to make of this study. The same concern is identified for father involvement; fathers who participated in this project may be more involved as a whole with their children than those who did not choose to take part in this study. Additionally, the coping and sanctification constructs were developed in the first place with predominantly White samples. It is unclear whether there are additional constructs that can more clearly define the spiritual experiences and expressions of minority groups in the United States. Until a broader range of work with diverse, ethnic minority families is given primary focus, true

and meaningful generalizability is not known. Further, this research contributes to a body of literature that has only examined these questions with predominantly Christian samples. Future theoretical and empirical work must seek to begin to understand the impacts of religion and spirituality on fathers from diverse faith backgrounds (e.g., Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Islam, as well as Christian).

In summary, to build upon the present study, future work should emphasize longitudinal, mixed method, as well as qualitative research programs that seek to identify precise spiritual mechanisms that help to motivate fathers in their parenting (Mahoney, 2010). There is evidence for the benefits of examining specific forms of spirituality, and more work is needed to understand the exact mechanisms that they play in fathering. Certainly, one promising direction is a focus on spirituality's potential impacts on personality characteristics as well as the marriage relationship; this will lead to needed clarity on where spirituality best factors into an understanding of predictors of father involvement.

A broader question for future work is whether psychology and spirituality can be considered together in scientific research models. Although past work indicates that they likely can, researchers will need to continue to be thoughtful and creative in eliciting how spirituality can best be seen to play a role in fathering. The integration of psychological and spiritual constructs is controversial, with some (e.g., Myers, 2000) insisting that the two domains operate on separate, incompatible levels and others (e.g., Mahoney, 1999) maintaining that they can be studied together. Similar to the four workers who only fixate on certain parts of an elephant (e.g., trunk, tail, ear, leg) and then each separately conclude with confidence their knowledge of what an elephant is (Nouwen, 2006),

researchers who desire integration should avoid a sole focus on specific spiritual constructs without considering the broader picture. Again, two ways to avoid this problem and answer critical questions are through a focus on both mixed method and qualitative study designs; both would work towards a closer understanding of fathers' actual spirituality (measured both quantitatively and qualitatively) and its effects on fathering behaviors.

Conclusion. This study draws on theory to empirically answer questions about the roles of both contextual and father characteristic factors for understanding fathering and attachment outcomes. Theoretical understanding of the roles of religion and spirituality in fathering is challenged, and the primacies of fathers' personalities and marital conflict on parenting are emphasized. An important contribution is made in line with the premise of a "generative fathering" perspective versus a deficit model for understanding men's roles in families (Brotherson, Dollahite, & Hawkins, 2005; Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). Specifically, it contributes answers to questions regarding which factors best relate to positive fathering, which, in turn, is associated with secure attachment. Contributions are made to understanding how personality, marital conflict, and spirituality are associated with each other as well as how they relate to fathering and attachment. This study additionally provides an impetus for future work to examine more precise predictors of father involvement and a variety of children's healthy developmental and psychosocial outcomes. With implications for applied settings, this knowledge will help to inform much-needed interventions that will be both individual and systemic, serving the primary goal of encouraging healthy contexts that foster positive fathering and healthy, thriving children.

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