

Influences on Father Involvement: Testing for Unique Contributions of Religion

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Abstract Models that incorporate environmental and contextual influences on parenting offer a promising perspective for understanding fathering. The goal of the present study was to examine the influences of religion on fathers' roles in the family system, and it addressed two questions: Do specific measures of religion better predict father involvement than global measures? Does religiosity predict levels of father involvement and/or the quality of father–child relationships after accounting for their personality and marital quality? One hundred seventy-four fathers and their 8–14 year old children completed measures of the quantity and quality of fathers' parenting, religious lives, personality and marital quality. Results indicated that more specific measures of religion were better predictors of father–child relationships than global measures. Fathers who viewed parenting as a sanctified role and identified religion as a source of support were more involved in their children's lives, even after accounting for their personality and marital quality. These findings call for further research to better understand the interrelations among individual, family, and contextual factors that shape fathers' involvement in parenting.

Keywords Father involvement · Father–child relationship quality · Influences of religion · Fathers' personality · Marital quality

Introduction

The importance of fathers' roles in children's development is well documented, and their ability to make significant, positive contributions is marked (Goncey and van Dulmen 2010; Parke et al. 2005; Rohner 1998). Fathers' caregiving is associated with decreased behavior problems in later childhood (Aldous and Mulligan 2002), greater positivity towards school in adolescence (Flouri and Buchanan 2002), and better mental health, occupational success, and educational attainment in adulthood (Brown et al. 2007; Harris et al. 1998; Wenk et al. 1994). These findings are underscored by research showing that fathers' emotional support, attachment relationship with their children, and financial caretaking are all associated with children's well-being, cognitive development, and social competence (e.g., Amato and Rivera 1999; Lamb and Lewis 2013; Yogman et al. 1995).

Advances in the study of fathers' involvement in parenting have been guided by conceptual frameworks (primarily Engagement, Accessibility, and Responsibility; Lamb et al. 1985) that inform an understanding of key dimensions of involvement that predict a range of children's positive outcomes by distinguishing the *quality* of fathers' relationships with their children from the quantity (e.g., time or amount of monetary support) of paternal parenting (Pleck 2010). A significant body of research has found meaningful effects on children's outcomes when examining fathers' involvement, whether measured in terms of quantity *or* quality. Research also has shown that fathers' roles in the family are less circumscribed by the dictates of social convention than are mothers' (e.g., Pleck 1997; Tamis-LeMonda and Cabrera 1999). Their parenting thus is prone to be more heavily influenced by a variety of personal and contextual factors than is mothers'. In contrast

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to the more stable social scripts and supports for mothers' parenting, Holmes and Huston (2010) found 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. Further, fathers' participation in childcare has consistently been shown to be more affected by qualities of the coparenting and marital relationships than has mothers' (e.g., Cabrera et al. 2006; Cummings et al. 2010; Stevenson et al. 2014).

Belsky's parenting process model (1984) was among the first to theoretically flesh out three domains of influence on parents' functioning, i.e., psychological resources, children's characteristics, and contextual sources of stress and support. In light of this greater susceptibility to personal and contextual factors' influence on fathers' parenting, (Cabrera et al. 2007) presented a model of influences on fathering that is consistent with an ecological focus (Bronfenbrenner 1979) and draws together the substantial literature on predictors of fathers' involvement. The model seeks to identify sets of factors that predict fathers' involvement (e.g., family characteristics such as the marital relationship), factors that interact to promote involvement, and factors that influence individual characteristics (e.g., personality) that, in turn, could predict fathering. This theoretical model informs and promotes complexity in empirical examinations, incorporating both contextual/environmental (e.g., marital and co-parenting quality) and individual characteristics (e.g., fathers' personalities). There is a significant body of empirical support for both sources' influence (e.g., McBride et al. 2005; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2000). For example, fathers with more "positive" or adaptive personality characteristics (low neuroticism, high agreeableness and high extroversion) were found to be more engaged in caregiving activities for their children, while qualities of the coparenting and marital relationships have been consistently identified as among the most influential contextual factors related to fathers' involvement (e.g., Rane and McBride 2000). This model of fathering also considers fathers' attitudes and beliefs about paternal presence and involvement in the home (Cabrera et al. 2007). Fathering attitudes have been shown empirically to be crucial predictors of fathers' roles in their children's lives (Palkovitz 1984); for example, fathers' reports of their investment in parenting are related to actual levels of involvement (e.g., financial caregiving; McBride et al. 2005).

This theoretical model includes a variety of factors that may impact fathering directly and indirectly (Cabrera et al. 2007). One potentially important factor that has received relatively little empirical attention is religion; this is likely due to a combination of factors including the general difficulty recruiting fathers into parent–child studies (Cochran

1997) as well as a relatively recent shift in research from focusing predominantly on the *intrapersonal* influences of religion to considering its *interpersonal* effects (Hood and Belzen 2005). A large majority of Americans describe themselves as religious (Mahoney 2010), and for many, religion plays an important role in shaping their core values and beliefs regarding family life. Fathers who embrace religion as an encompassing life philosophy are likely to manifest their values and beliefs through everyday interactions with others, including family members. In a seminal meta-analysis of studies on religion and families, religious involvement was significantly related to important outcomes in both marital and parenting arenas, including higher global marital satisfaction, lower rates of divorce, lower rates of interparental conflict, higher rates of family cohesion, and more authoritative parenting (Mahoney et al. 2001). Parental religiosity was found 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 et al. 2004).

Although existing research on religion and parenting supports the view that religious values, beliefs, and practices all influence parenting, this literature has some notable limitations for understanding the impact of religion on fathers. First, prior research generally has utilized very brief and broad measures of religiosity that provide little insight into the specific ways that religion may influence parenting (e.g., Wilcox 2002). They typically involve 1 or 2 questions that inquire about one's religious affiliation, overall religiosity, or attendance at religious services (e.g., Bartkowski and Xu 2000). Although these global measures have been associated with fathers' parenting (e.g., Wilcox 2002), the findings are not consistent across studies, and their interpretation is limited by the reduction of the many facets of religion to a few simple questions (e.g., Bartkowski and Xu 2000). A relational spirituality framework (Mahoney 2010) emphasizes movement beyond general markers of religiousness to capture fathers' personal meanings and interpretations derived from religion that could inform their parenting; such efforts will help to elucidate the specific mechanisms through which religion impacts fathers' parenting, which could in turn better inform social policy and intervention strategies. Second, as noted above, fathers largely have been omitted from research investigating links between religion and parenting practices. Further, the few studies that have examined fathers' parenting typically relied on mothers' reports of fathers' parenting, rather than assessing fathers directly.

Finally, research rarely has considered whether religion has unique associations with fathering after accounting for related constructs that also may influence parenting. This is

an important consideration, given fathers' greater susceptibility than mothers to a range of influences on their social scripts for parenting (Holmes and Huston 2010). Individuals reporting greater religiosity also tend to report greater marital satisfaction (Mahoney et al. 2001) and greater warmth and affection toward children (Wilcox 1998), all of which predict more sensitive and involved parenting. In one of the only investigations to examine a "third variable" explanation for the association between religion and parenting, a measure of civic engagement, or "conventional" behavior (e.g., voting, maintaining one's lawn) was not found to significantly diminish the association between religious attendance and father involvement (Wilcox 2002). Examining the roles of other potentially important constructs linked to fathering, including marital relationship quality and fathers' adaptive personality characteristics (e.g., low neuroticism), is critical for understanding how religion may be related to other individual and contextual factors that shape fathering. There is little empirical work to provide a basis for hypothesizing which specific aspects of religiousness are related to fathers' parenting and father-child relationships, but two promising constructs that overlap within a relational spirituality framework (Dumas and Nissley-Tsiopinis 2006; Mahoney 2010) may be drawn from similar work with mothers: sanctification of parenting and religious coping.

First, "sanctification" refers to the ways that religion is manifested in everyday 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 parental roles to be imbued with religious and spiritual meaning; accordingly, sanctification captures the ways in which religion can serve as a key source of contextual support for many families (Mahoney et al. 2013). Sanctification cuts across denominational boundaries and shows promise for capturing the nuances of how religion may specifically influence family life (Mahoney et al. 1999). It has been studied in relation to marriage, where it is associated with greater marital satisfaction and less conflict, and maternal parenting, where it is associated with decreased conflict with children, increased investment and consistency in parenting, and constructive discipline practices, as well as children's increased moral socialization and higher conscience development (for a review, see Mahoney et al. 2013). Mahoney et al. draw particular support for its influence on parenting from Belsky's (1984) parenting process model, family systems (Holmes and Huston 2010) and stress-spillover (Almeida et al. 1999) theories, as fathers' specific values, priorities, and behaviors related to parenting may be informed by this particular "process through which aspects of life are perceived as having divine character and

significance" (Pargament and Mahoney 2005, p. 183). As a measure conceptualized within the Relational Spirituality framework, sanctification may be one way to identify how fathers draw from religion to "create, maintain, and transform their family relationships, thereby influencing the well-being of all family members" (Mahoney and Cano 2014; p. 737). Accordingly, as fathers view their parental responsibility as a sanctified expression of their religious faith, they may place a higher priority on spending time with their children and thus be more involved with caregiving; it may also lead to more sensitive and responsive parenting.

Religious coping is another potential mechanism for understanding specific religious influences on parenting. Religious coping reflects the ways that individuals utilize religion to work through life challenges (Pargament et al. 1999) and specific beliefs about God's role in times of distress. Use of religious coping has been found to account for variance in health and well-being outcomes above and beyond the influences of non-religious coping with acute traumatic events as well as with chronic psychosocial and/or medical stressors (for a review, see Pargament 1997). In addition, religious coping has been found to mediate the relationship between general religious orientation and the outcomes of major life events (Pargament 1997). As parents differ in both the extent and manner in which religion informs their parenting (Murray-Swank et al. 2006), a relational spirituality framework (Mahoney 2010) facilitates efforts to understand fathers' specific beliefs related to religious coping that may inform their patterns of behavioral response to daily parenting stressors. In one of the only studies that included religious coping in an examination of family functioning, (Dumas and Nissley-Tsiopinis 2006) found that global religiosity was not a significant predictor of children's and mothers' outcomes when religious coping was considered; further, mothers' religious coping was associated with a range of parenting outcomes including parental investment and satisfaction. In another study sample comprised predominantly of mothers, (Weyand et al. 2013) reported that both religious coping and sanctification of parenting accounted for differentiation between positive versus negative parental functioning. These results lend support for the consideration of religious coping within a comprehensive evaluation of how fathers' religiosity may relate to their parenting; fathers who utilize religious coping may be better able to manage the stress in their lives (including stress associated with parenting) and thus to remain more meaningfully and positively engaged with their children.

This study addressed limitations described above by investigating two hypotheses. First, we hypothesized that specific religious influences would predict fathers' parenting better than global measures of religiosity. Drawing on prior theory and research, we focused on two dimensions

that may be particularly relevant to parenting: the belief that parenting is a sanctified, spiritual directive, and the use of religion as a means for coping with life stressors. Examining specific dimensions of religious influence on fathers may provide insight into the ways that religion affects their relationships with their children and therefore help move research in this area from a focus on description to process (Mahoney 2010; Sullivan 2001). Second, guided by ecological models of parenting and fathering (e.g., Cabrera et al. 2007), we examined if any associations between specific religious influences and parenting remain significant after accounting for fathers' personality and marital quality. As fathers' parenting has consistently been shown to be more influenced than mothers' parenting by contextual as well as personal characteristics (McBride et al. 2005), a range of factors that are typically included in ecological models of fathering were additionally considered, including racial/ethnic background, fathers' age and education, parents' marital status, and family income (Cabrera et al. 2007; Pleck 2010). In sum, we sought to gain a better understanding of the role of religion in fathering, within a broader context that included individual and family-level constructs that are known to promote positive parenting.

Method

Participants

This study utilized self-report data from 174 fathers and their children. Fathers' mean age was 43 years ($SD = 7.6$) and children's was 11 ($SD = 1.3$; 52 % male). Families were largely middle class ($M = \$55,000$, $SD = \$20,000$) and headed by two parents (88 %). Eighty-eight percent of fathers were married, 80 % were the children's biological parents, and those who were non-biological fathers had been living in the home an average of 7.6 years (range 2–12). Fathers' mean education was 15.9 years ($SD = 3.14$). The predominant ethnicity was Caucasian (68 %), followed by African American (26 %) and Asian (3 %). Religious affiliations were Catholic (36.8 %), Evangelical Christian (21.3 %), Lutheran (5.2 %), other mainline Protestant (7.5 %), atheist/agnostic (2.9 %), "other" (20.1 %), and 6.3 % did not answer the question.

Procedure

Data were collected at 7 religiously affiliated schools in a midsize city in the upper Midwest. Letters were sent home to parents of 4th–6th graders describing the study and inviting them to participate. A total of 249 fathers initially indicated interest in the study and received packets

containing consent forms, a set of questionnaires, and self-addressed, stamped envelopes for mailing back the packets. Instructions stressed that fathers and their children should complete the questionnaires independently. Of those receiving the packets, 174 fathers and children returned completed questionnaires and consent/assent forms. Only one child from each household participated, and there were no cases of multiple children within the target age range from the same family. Children and their parents were financially compensated for their time. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Marquette University.

Measures

Global Religiosity

The global measure of religion consisted of two questions commonly used in previous research (e.g., Dumas and Nissley-Tsiopinis 2006): "To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?" and "To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?" with a response scale ranging from 1 (very religious/spiritual) to 4 (not religious/spiritual at all). These items were highly correlated, $r = .76$. Consistent with past studies that focused on mothers, the two 1-item ratings of religiosity were computed together to form a global religiosity composite. Global religiosity in the current study was also similar to those reported in studies using nationally representative samples: the Fragile Families and Well-being Study, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, and the National Survey of Family Growth (National Center for Family and Marriage Research, retrieved September 2nd, 2015).

Specific Dimensions of Religion

Three measures of specific aspects of religion were used. The Brief R-COPE (Pargament 1997) assesses religious coping, with questions adapted to address struggles with parenting (Dumas and Nissley-Tsiopinis 2006). The items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*). The 7-item Positive Coping scale specifically examines 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. Those who rate high on positive coping perceive God as loving and supportive. Internal consistency in the present sample for positive coping items was $\alpha = .89$. Two scales 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 a parent perceives 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”). Responses were summed across items, resulting in a total score for the manifestation of God in fathers’ parenting ($\alpha = .97$). Finally, fathers completed the 10-item Sacred Qualities of Parenting scale, which asks participants to rate on a 7-point Likert scale the extent to which certain religion-related adjectives (e.g., “holy”, “sacred”) and statements (e.g., “parenting reveals the deepest truths of life to me”) describe their views of parenting; $\alpha = .91$. Overall, this was a moderately religious sample of fathers; the means and standard deviations of global religiosity and of specific religious influences (i.e., religious coping, sanctification, and manifestation of God in parenting) were all comparable to studies using community samples that were not recruited through religion-affiliated schools (Dumas and Nissley-Tsiopinis 2006; Idler 1999; Murray-Swank et al. 2006).

Involvement

In line with theoretical distinctions between the quantity of fathers involvement and the quality of fathers’ parenting (e.g., Pleck 2010), the following measures were utilized to assess the amount of time fathers spend parenting. Fathers completed the Parental Behavior Scale (Bruce and Fox 1997, 1999), a 21-item self-report measure of parental involvement in child rearing and caregiving. It addresses domains that correspond with a recently reconceptualized model of father involvement (Pleck 2010): custodial care-taking (e.g., teaching practical life skills such as cooking), socioemotional functions (i.e., joining the child in his or her favorite activities), teaching functions (i.e., sharing values with the child), and executive functions involved in parenting (i.e., making decisions that pertain to the child or assisting the child in making decisions). 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 then summed to create a total Involvement score. This measure had good internal consistency, with $\alpha = .91$ in the current study. Fathers also completed the Role of the Father Questionnaire (ROFQ; Palkovitz 1984), a 15 item measure of the extent to which a parent believes the father’s role is important for children’s development. Higher scores are predictive of actual involvement (e.g., McBride et al. 2005) and reflect attitudes that fathers are capable and should be involved with, and sensitive to, their children. This measure was originally designed for parents of preschoolers but was revised to be appropriate for older children as well (McBride and Rane 1996). Reliability in the present study was $\alpha = .71$. To assess children’s

perspectives on fathers’ involvement, children reported on the extent to which they preferred fathers’ involvement versus mothers’ in a range of situations with the Parental Preferences Questionnaire (PPQ). The PPQ (Hwang and Lamb 1997) contains 10 items that ask questions such as who children want to accompany them 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 this study, which is comparable to the reliability reported in the original article (Hwang and Lamb 1997).

Father–child relationship quality

The following measures were employed to assess the quality of fathers’ parenting. Children completed two measures. The Relatedness Questionnaire (RQ; Lynch and Cicchetti 1991) 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. 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 and 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 parent. This scale includes questions such as “When I’m with my father, I feel relaxed.” The “psychological proximity” scale consists of 6 items that assess the degree to which children wish they were closer to their fathers. This scale includes questions such as, “I wish my father knew more about how I feel.” The two subscales of the RQ have good internal consistency as indicated by Cronbach’s alphas in the current study of .77 and .82, respectively.

Children also completed the 15-item Security scale (Kerns et al. 1996) to assess the father–child attachment relationship. Demonstrating satisfactory validity above and beyond similar, established measures (e.g., Van Ryzin and Leve 2012), 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 decided which statement was more characteristic of their experience (indicating either secure or insecure attachment) and then proceeded to state whether this position was “really true” for them or

“sort of true” for them. Higher scores indicate greater attachment security. Internal consistency for this measure was $\alpha = .78$.

Personality

The Big Five Inventory (BFI-44, John et al. 1991) 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). 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. In the present study, reliabilities ranged across the five subscales from .78 to .85.

Marital Quality

Fathers completed the Quality of Marriage Index (QMI), 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, $\alpha = .97$. Children's reports of marital quality also were assessed using the Conflict Properties scale from the Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict questionnaire (CPIC; Grych et al. 1992), which consists of 19 items measuring the frequency, intensity, and resolution of the conflicts children witness; higher scores on the CPIC reflect higher frequency and intensity but lower resolution of interparental conflict. 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). Scales for frequency, intensity, and resolution were summed separately. Internal consistency reliability was good, $\alpha = .92$ in the present study.

Demographics

A demographic questionnaire was completed by fathers to collect data on their age, ethnicity, years of education, income, religious affiliation, marital status, biological father status, years with partner, and number of total children in the household. Fathers also reported on children's age, ethnicity, and school grade.

Data Analyses

After inspecting basic descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations, we estimated a measurement model to ensure measurement coherence of the theorized latent constructs. Then, we tested fathers' global religiosity and specific influences of religion as unique predictors of father–child relationship quality and father involvement to address our first research hypothesis. In the next step, we conducted a baseline model in which potential covariates (father age, non-biological father status, father education, father income, father ethnic minority status, and child gender) were tested as predictors of father involvement and father–child relationship quality. To conserve statistical power, only demographic variables that demonstrated a statistically significant association with at least one outcome were advanced to the predictive model.

The predictive model was computed to evaluate the unique relations of parent personality, specific religious influences, and marital quality with father–child relationship quality and father involvement. To further test these variables, global religiosity and any statistically significant demographic factors were included as covariates in the predictive model. As a final test, we tested whether there were interactions among the predictors (e.g., personality and religious influences on parenting, marital quality and religious influences on parenting) to evaluate whether our hypothesized, main-effect model was the best characterization of the data.

Results

Overall, fathers reported moderate religious involvement; correlations, means, and standard deviations are presented in Table 1. All measures of religious involvement were moderately to highly correlated, with specific measures of religion (manifestation of God in parenting, sacred qualities in parenting, religious coping) especially highly correlated and less strongly related to global religiosity measures than to each other. Most measures of parenting were also significantly associated. Fathers' reports of involvement were positively associated with their attitudes about parenting and children's reports of attachment security. Children's desire for closer proximity to fathers was negatively associated with emotional quality and attachment; emotional quality and attachment were positively associated with each other.

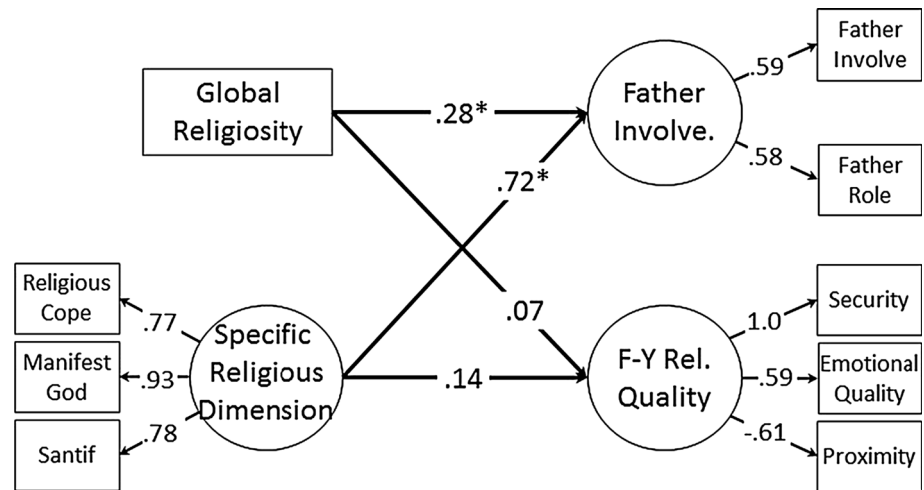
We then turned to structural equation models, which were computed in Mplus 7.3 (Muthén and Muthén 2013) using Full Information Maximum Likelihood Estimation procedures. As a first step, we computed a measurement model for the hypothesized latent variables: specific

Table 1 Correlations, means, and standard deviations for all study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Education																									
Income	.59																								
Non-bio father	-.33	-.40																							
Father age	.31	.31	-.13																						
Ethnic minority	-.51	-.70	.49	-.21																					
Child gender	-.06	-.10	.07	.07	.10																				
Global religion	-.07	.01	-.16	.05	.09	.02																			
Positive RCOPE	-.11	-.29	.11	-.21	.15	.03	-.46																		
Manifest.	-.02	-.11	-.02	-.07	.00	.03	-.57	.72																	
Sanctif.	-.02	-.12	.03	-.02	.10	-.02	-.42	.51	.73																
Marital quality	-.04	.09	.03	-.09	-.04	-.03	-.17	.04	.20	.26															
Freq.	.05	.16	-.12	.03	-.16	.04	.00	-.08	.00	.16	.36														
Int.	.06	.10	-.04	-.03	-.04	-.05	-.07	-.06	.02	.13	.34	.72													
Res.	.04	.21	-.11	-.08	-.15	-.04	.00	-.10	-.04	.16	.44	.73	.67												
Extra.	-.08	-.10	.12	-.19	.17	.10	.00	.23	.18	.28	.19	.09	.02	.12											
Agree.	-.16	-.17	.15	-.05	.16	.04	-.19	.22	.34	.32	.28	.20	.13	.10	.18										
Consc.	-.08	-.10	.14	.05	.12	.06	-.18	.26	.27	.21	.22	.16	.11	.11	.21	.35									
Open.	.01	-.04	.07	.00	.02	.16	-.02	.05	-.03	.24	.12	.17	.03	.12	.20	.40	.21								
Neurotic.	-.09	-.01	.08	-.06	.09	-.09	-.10	.08	.20	.23	.26	.15	.11	.09	.30	.49	.29	.26							
Involvement	-.18	-.17	.14	-.08	.19	-.05	-.13	.33	.29	.34	.20	.06	-.01	.08	.20	.39	.34	.19	.19						
ROFQ	-.07	-.07	.10	.04	.10	.21	-.03	.19	.28	.30	.28	.09	.04	.01	.15	.28	.24	.17	.15	.34					
PPQ	.04	.06	-.05	.08	-.05	-.21	-.08	-.06	-.03	-.02	.11	.11	.14	.10	-.14	.18	-.03	-.04	-.05	.18	.07				
Psych. Prox.	-.29	-.32	.32	-.22	.28	.05	.07	.15	-.02	-.08	-.15	-.32	-.34	-.29	.011	-.07	.07	.02	-.04	-.01	-.03	-.31			
Emo. Qual.	-.06	.11	-.15	.05	-.16	.03	-.07	.05	.09	.11	.17	.40	.31	.37	.03	.18	.06	.16	.02	.15	.06	.13	-.29		
Security	.09	.11	-.22	.11	-.09	.11	-.02	-.02	.09	.17	.15	.39	.37	.30	.06	.25	.12	.07	.17	.18	.17	.32	-.59	.57	
Mean	15.90	10.35	1.20	43.28	.32	1.47	4.06	22.9	53.16	50.38	35.16	8.57	10.29	9.95	26.48	31.27	35.49	35.53	28.16	61.29	49.59	37.77	12.79	35.45	50.11
SD	3.14	3.96	.40	7.59	.47	.50	1.38	6.39	13.37	11.36	7.40	2.87	2.99	2.48	6.64	5.43	5.60	6.49	6.62	10.91	4.20	6.82	4.31	3.57	5.62

Non-bio father non-biological father status, *Positive RCOPE* positive religious coping scale, *Manifest.* manifestation of god in parenting, *Sanctif.* sanctification of god in parenting, *Freq.* frequency scale from CPIC, *Int.* intensity scale from CPIC, *Res.* resolution scale from CPIC, *Extra.* extraversion, *Agree.* agreeableness, *Consc.* conscientiousness, *Open.* openness to experience, *Neurotic.* neuroticism, *Involvement* brace fox involvement measure, *ROFQ* role of the father Questionnaire, *PPQ* parental preferences Questionnaire, *Psych. Prox.* psychological proximity from relatedness scale, *Emo. Qual.* quality emotional quality from relatedness scale, *Security* father-child emotional security

Fig. 1 Testing unique effects of global religiosity and religious parenting. Model fit: $\chi^2(23) = 41.53, p = .01; \chi^2/df = 1.81; CFI = .96, TLI = .94; RMSEA = .07$ * $p < .05$



religious influences (using religious coping with parenting, manifestation of God in parenting, and sacred qualities of parenting scales as indicators), fathers' personality (using the BFI neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscientiousness scales as indicators), marital quality (using the CPIC frequency, intensity, and resolution subscales and the marital quality questionnaire as indicators), father involvement (using the PPQ, ROFQ, and Parental Behavior scales as indicators), and father-child relationship quality (using the RQ and Security Scale as indicators). In the first measurement model, in which only latent constructs were allowed to correlate, fit was marginal [$\chi^2(125) = 223.47, p = .00; \chi^2/df = 1.79; TLI = .88, CFI = .90; RMSEA = .067$]. In this model, PPQ did not fit well on the latent factor for father involvement, with a factor loading of .20 ($p > .05$). In addition, there was some evidence of within-reporter covariance that was not accounted for. Thus, a new measurement model was estimated in which PPQ was dropped from the model, and indicators were allowed to correlate within reporter. This final model yielded better fit with the data [$\chi^2(106) = 153.35, p = .00; \chi^2/df = 1.45; TLI = .94, CFI = .95; RMSEA = .051$]; all factor loadings exceeded .30 and were statistically significant. Thus, these latent constructs were used for subsequent analyses.

Global versus Specific Measures of Religion as Predictors of Parenting

We then tested the unique associations of global religiosity and specific influences of religion with father involvement and father-child relationship quality. We estimated a structural equation model in which global religiosity and specific religious influences were tested as unique predictors of father involvement and father-child relationship quality. This model is presented in Fig. 1 and had

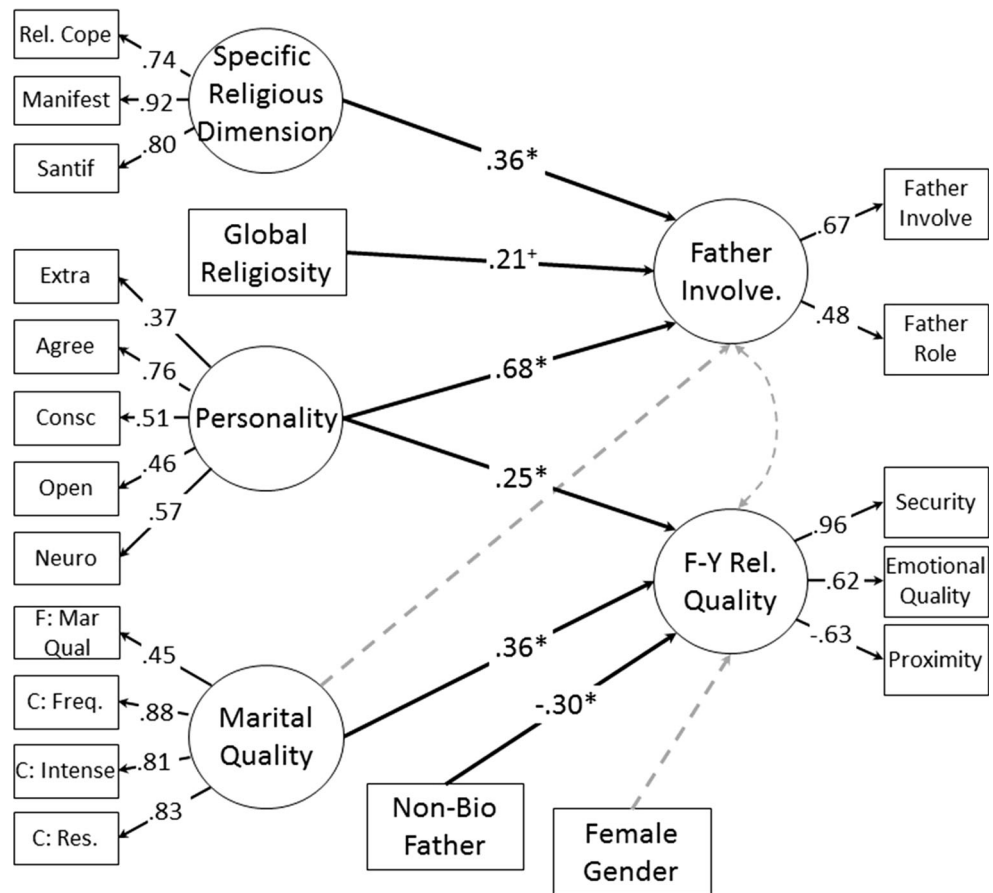
acceptable fit with the data [$\chi^2(22) = 36.78, p = .03; \chi^2/df = 1.67; TLI = .95, CFI = .97; RMSEA = .062$]. Both global religiosity ($\beta = .28$) and specific religious influences ($\beta = .72$) were associated with higher levels of father involvement, with the magnitude of the specific measures nearly three times larger than the global measures. Neither of these predictors was associated with father-child relationship quality.

A Predictive Model of Father Involvement and Father-Child Relationship Quality

A baseline model was first estimated with 6 demographic variables to determine which were statistically significantly associated with the outcomes of interest. The model yielded a marginal to poor fit with the data [$\chi^2(22) = 52.269, p = .00; \chi^2/df = 2.46; TLI = .84, CFI = .71; RMSEA = .092$], indicating that these demographic variables were generally poor predictors of the fathering outcomes. Inspection of the coefficients indicated that non-biological father status ($\beta = -.21, p < .05$) and female child gender ($\beta = .14, p < .05$) were related to father-child relationship quality, but the other demographic variables were not significantly related to the outcomes. Thus, only child gender and non-biological father status were included in the predictive model.

We then computed the predictive model. Father involvement was regressed on our three hypothesized predictors (specific aspects of religion, personality, and marital quality) and global religiosity. Father-child relationship quality was regressed on the three hypothesized predictors, as well as the two demographic variables, non-biological father status and female gender. The model is presented in Fig. 2. Model fit was acceptable, where $\chi^2(146) = 212.04, p = .00; \chi^2/df = 1.45; CFI = .94, CFI = .92; RMSEA = .051$.

Fig. 2 Note model fit: $\chi^2(147) = 215.01, p = .00; \chi^2/df = 1.45; CFI = .94, TLI = .92; RMSEA = .052$
 Dashed lines were not statistically significant. * $p < .05$; + $p < .10$



We first inspected the covariates. Non-biological father status was associated with lower levels of father–child relationship quality ($\beta = -.30$), but child gender was uncorrelated with relationship quality. Global religiosity was marginally associated with higher levels of father involvement ($\beta = .21, p = .09$). Then, we examined they hypothesized predictors. Fathers’ personality variables were a robust predictor in this model: more positive personality characteristics were associated with higher levels of involvement ($\beta = .68$) and higher father–child relationship quality ($\beta = .25$). Marital quality was uniquely associated with father–child relationship quality ($\beta = .36$), but not with their levels of involvement. Finally, specific influences of religion were uniquely associated with father involvement ($\beta = .36$) but not with relationship quality.

We then conducted sensitivity analyses for facets of specific influences of religion, by re-computing the structural models with one variable included at a time. These models indicated a consistent pattern in which these facets were consistently linked with father involvement but not father–child relationship quality. Specifically, positive religious coping was associated with father involvement ($\beta = .27, p < .05$), as was sanctification of parenting ($\beta = .32, p = .01$). The second subscale within the

Sanctification measure, manifestation of God in parenting, was not significantly correlated with involvement ($\beta = .11, p = .15$). In a subsequent structural model, all three variables were entered as unique predictors, but none remained statistically significant correlates of father involvement. These findings seem to support a broader conceptualization of specific influences of religion on parenting that includes these three facets.

We then explored the possibility of interactions among our hypothesized predictors, and estimated a model with three, 2-way interaction terms between marital quality, specific influences of religion and father personality. None of these interaction terms were statistically significant. This was repeated for interactions with global religiosity, marital quality, and father personality. Again, none of these interaction terms were statistically significant. Thus, our originally hypothesized, unique effects model was upheld as the best representation of the data (Fig. 2).

We then conducted some post hoc group comparisons to evaluate whether this model was a good representation of the full sample. First, we considered the possibility that the magnitude of relationships among the variables in this model might differ for fathers of different religious backgrounds. We conducted a Box’s test, and found that

covariance matrix differed across religious groups (Box's $M = 908.62$, $p < .001$) and discriminant analyses indicated that fathers who identified as evangelical differed from other fathers, as did fathers who identified as Catholic. We then conducted multiple group invariance tests for the structural model to determine if the pattern of associations tested in the model was different when comparing each group to the rest of the sample. Multiple group invariance tests were conducted by estimating a model in which the path coefficients were freely estimated across groups (e.g., evangelical fathers vs. all other fathers), and compared to a model in which the hypothesized structural paths were constrained to be equal across the two groups, using a Chi Square comparison test. We first compared evangelical fathers to the rest of the sample. This comparison indicated no overall differences in the hypothesized paths when the groups were constrained to be equal to a model with paths freely estimated across groups [$\chi^2(7) = 5.84$, $p = .56$]. We then compared Catholic fathers to the rest of the sample. Again, no differences were found when the two groups were constrained to be equal or when freely estimated [$\chi^2(7) = 8.14$, $p = .32$].

Second, we explored whether this model might differ for boys and girls. First, child gender was dropped as a predictor from the model. Then, a multigroup invariance test was computed. The model in which paths were constrained to be equal for boys and girls did not differ from the model in which paths were freely estimated [$\chi^2(6) = 8.25$, $p = .22$]. Thus, taken together, the model was representative of the full sample, when considering possible difference by religious affiliation or by child gender.

Discussion

This study had two central goals. The first goal was to test whether specific aspects of religiosity were a better predictor of father involvement and father–child relationship quality than global religiosity. The second goal was to examine relationships among religion, father involvement, and father–child relational quality after accounting for contextual and personal characteristics known to impact father involvement and father–child relationship quality. This study continues a line of work that fills important gaps in the literature by utilizing a representative community sample to draw from both fathers' and children's perspectives on parenting, including child reports of the quality of the father–child relationship. The findings from this study support recent models of fathering (Cabrera et al. 2007; Pleck 2010) that emphasize the need to incorporate predictors from multiple levels of analysis.

The results indicate that specific measures that reflect how fathers incorporate religion into their views of

parenting better predict their involvement with their children than do global measures of religiosity. Fathers' positive use of religious coping and belief that parenting is a sanctified activity imbued with religious significance were more strongly associated with their engagement in parenting. These findings are concordant with previous research with mothers (Mahoney 2010) that identifies specific measures of religion as being more strongly associated with family outcomes than global measures of religiosity, and they underscore the importance of measuring influences of religion in specific ways that reflect fathers' intrinsic beliefs and experiences. These findings broaden and strengthen the literature on two specific influences of religion, sanctification of parenting and religious coping, by moving from examining whether fathers' religious lives are correlated with their parenting to examining how fathers' religious involvement relates to other intra- and interpersonal constructs known to be associated with parenting.

Second, the results showed that the association of these specific aspects of religion with fathers' involvement in parenting was significant after accounting for other constructs that could explain paternal engagement. The current study thus expands on previous work linking religion and father–child relationships (e.g., DeMaris et al. 2011; Dumas and Nissley-Tsiopinis 2006) by including other constructs that may explain why indices of religion are associated with fathers' parenting of middle-aged children. We included measures of personality and marital quality, and it is notable that both specific aspects of religion and fathers' personality accounted for unique variance in fathers' involvement in parenting, while personality and marital quality uniquely predicted the quality of parent–child relationships. These constructs were correlated as expected: fathers who reported higher levels of religious coping and sanctification of parenting also reported more satisfying marriages and were more likely to report higher levels of conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability. These personality characteristics were also associated with higher marital quality.

Although these findings suggest that fathers' religious involvement may play a key role in promoting greater levels of involvement with their children, religious coping and sanctification of parenting were not associated with the quality of father–child relationships. Most religions emphasize the importance of the father's role in the family and view fathers as having a responsibility to raise healthy, moral children, and these belief systems can be supported through practical, day-to-day experiences with like-minded parents (Zinnbauer and Pargament 2005). However, involvement does not necessarily translate into sensitive and responsive parenting in the absence of other individual and contextual factors. Fathers with more adaptive

personality characteristics (e.g., greater emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness) may be generally oriented toward developing close relationships with their spouses and their children, and a satisfying marriage further sustains and supports a strong father–child bond. These findings are in line with past work showing that parenting involvement has somewhat different sets of predictors (e.g., NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2000) that together help to explain the nature of fathers' parenting. Future work should further explore the possibility of moderating variables such as religious affiliation (e.g., evangelical Christian); although the current findings are robust, further work is needed to better understand whether complexities within specific religious groups indicate caution with overgeneralizations of all fathers' parenting, across all religious groups.

These results illuminate how religious influences must be viewed within a complex web of interrelated constructs, such as the marital relationship and aspects of fathers' personality, that together can influence fathering outcomes. When fathers' religious lives specifically influence or inform their parenting, when they have adaptive personalities (e.g., are stable, agreeable), and when they experience support in their marriage, the *collective* outcome is that these fathers are more likely to be involved in parenting as well as to demonstrate close and secure relationships with their children. However, direct and unique associations with parenting outcomes suggest that it would be incomplete to consider what promotes fathers' close, nurturing relationships with their children without understanding factors that support fathers' engagement/involvement in the first place. For example, contextual stressors such as marital distress and maladaptive personality characteristics (e.g., neuroticism) relate to poor father–child relationship quality, independent of fathers' specific religious influences. Although there may be fathers who view parenting as a sacred responsibility and invest time in the relationship, tensions in their marriage or aspects of their personality appear to carry the day when it comes to understanding what undermines the quality of that time.

Limitations

Although this study offers new data on the role of religion in fathering, it has a number of limitations as well. A cross-sectional design limits the ability to determine if personality, religious involvement, and marital conflict play causal roles in fathering outcomes. Longitudinal designs are needed to explicate how the nature of the interrelationships among parenting, religiosity, personality, and marital quality unfold over time. While a standard measurement of global religiosity was utilized (e.g., Wilcox 2002), this brief, 2-item scale was treated as a manifest

variable in a latent model; although in keeping with results from previous research with less analytically complex designs (e.g., Dumas and Nissley-Tsiopinis 2006), appropriate cautions can be taken when interpreting the findings related to global religiosity. Further, although not a focus of this study, negative influences of religion on parenting have been identified in specific subsamples such as families who are high in Biblical conservatism (Murray-Swank et al. 2006). Future work is needed to better understand specific mechanisms by which fathers' religious involvement may have adaptive as well as maladaptive impacts on parenting. While this study's utilization of fathers' and children's self-report information is an important start, observational data and structured interviews (e.g., related to attachment/relationship security) as well as qualitative study designs could promote a further-nuanced understanding of the differences and similarities among religious groups and individual fathers' specific parenting patterns. A final limitation in this study design is the lack of attention to child characteristics (e.g., temperament, behavior) and additional environmental stressors that may influence fathers' engagement in parenting and the quality of their relationships with their children. Viewing parenting as a sacred responsibility may be particularly valuable when children have characteristics that make them more difficult to parent or when fathers are under greater stress.

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