
RESEARCH

A Higher Purpose: The Sanctification of Strivings in a Community Sample

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Most adults in a community sample ($N = 150$; ages 25-56) perceived their top 10 strivings as being connected to God (theistic sanctification) and having sacred, transcendent qualities (nontheistic sanctification), with highest ratings given to religious goals, family relationships, altruistic endeavors, and existential concerns. Greater sanctification of strivings correlated positively with the importance, commitment, longevity, social support, confidence, and internal locus of control of strivings. Based on 5 phone interviews about the prior 48 hr, people invested more time and energy in their 2 most highly sanctified strivings than their 2 least sanctified strivings. Greater sanctification of strivings related to a greater sense of life purpose and meaning and joy yielded by strivings but not fewer psychological or physical health difficulties.

Social scientists have begun to highlight the role of personal strivings in people's lives. Personal strivings refer to the typical or characteristic goals that individuals try to pursue in their everyday lives (Emmons, 1986). The capacity to

articulate specific goals in life and to develop effective ways to reach these destinations is a critical aspect of human functioning (Emmons, 1986; Karoly, 1999). Researchers from diverse backgrounds have adopted a goals orientation in an effort to better understand peoples' daily behaviors, motivation, personality, well-being, and maladjustment (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Emmons, 1999, Karoly, 1993). Studies indicate that a well-organized and coherent set of personal strivings lends a sense of meaning to peoples' lives and facilitates well-being (Emmons, 1999; Karoly, 1999; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995). Some types of personal strivings, however, appear to generate greater commitment and be more beneficial than others. Of relevance to this study, Emmons, Cheung, and Tehrani (1998) found that religious or spiritual strivings are marked by certain attributes that facilitate their pursuit (e.g., importance, investment, social support) and tend to be tied to a greater sense of meaning and psychological adjustment. This study extends this promising line of empirical research on how spirituality shapes goals by applying the concept of sanctification to personal strivings.

The importance of strivings is highlighted by two key assumptions embedded in theoretical models about strivings: (a) People organize their lives around the pursuit of strivings, and (b) strivings can influence peoples' behavior patterns, cognitions, and emotional reactions (Emmons, 1999). Other major assumptions are that strivings exist within a system of hierarchically organized superordinate and subordinate goals in which functioning in one aspect of the system has ramifications for other parts of the system and that strivings are accessible to conscious awareness, although there is no requirement that a goal be represented in consciousness while the person actively pursues it. Emmons also argued that strivings are important because they represent a middle-level perspective on understanding individual differences. An assessment of strivings offers a more ideographically sensitive description of individuals than traits but also reveals a more immediate and self-contained picture of personality than complex narratives that people construct of their entire life spans.

Empirical research verifies that personal strivings have important implications for many aspects of human functioning, including meaning and personal adjustment. Goals are an important source of personal meaning because they provide structure, unity, and purpose to people's daily lives (Baumeister, 1991; Reker & Wong, 1988). In addition, the underlying needs subsumed by goals are linked to psychosocial adjustment. For example, the degree to which personal strivings focus on intimacy in social relationships is linked to greater personal happiness and well-being (Emmons, 1991; Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser, & Deci, 1996). In contrast, a higher proportion of strivings focused on having power over others and extrinsically oriented values (e.g., status, image, money) is tied to poorer adjustment (Emmons, 1991, 1996; Sheldon & Kasser, 2001).

In attempting to uncover the influence of personal strivings on daily life, researchers have emphasized the motive dispositions that underlie strivings, or the

“why” of goals. This includes three core sources of motivation highlighted in psychological research: the desire for achievement, affiliation–intimacy, and power (Emmons, 1999). Other salient motives include establishing psychological independence from others, projecting a positive image of self internally and externally, and developing a generative stance toward others (Emmons, 1999). In contrast to the “why” of strivings, the implications of the “what” or the overt content of strivings appears to have received relatively little empirical attention. Despite this, scholars have argued that different types of strivings can differentially influence both the costs and benefits of their pursuit (Ryan et al., 1996). In other words, not all goals are equal. Some goals appear to be related to a greater sense that life is significant and valuable as well as to better personal adjustment. In addition, some goals appear to evoke greater levels of investment to their pursuit. For example, strivings that focus on developing interpersonal relationships seem to have a higher priority in peoples’ lives and to be linked to better psychological functioning than strivings focused on accumulating wealth (Emmons, 1999; Sheldon & Kasser, 2001).

Of particular relevance for this study, Emmons (1999) has highlighted “spiritual strivings” as a class of personal strivings that have powerful connections with investment, personal meaning, and psychological adjustment. According to Emmons, *spiritual strivings* refer to goals that involve self-transcendence and concern ultimate questions of meaning and existence. More specifically, Emmons, Cheung, et al. (1998) developed a coding system that categorizes spiritual strivings as those that reflect (a) increasing knowledge of a higher power (e.g., increase my knowledge of the Bible; seek God’s will for my life); (b) developing or maintaining an affective relationship with a higher power (e.g., learn to tune into a higher power throughout the day; increase my faith in God); (c) attempting to live or exercise spiritual beliefs in daily life (e.g., not be judgmental; witness to others); or (d) integrating the person with larger and more complex units of life, including humanity, nature, or the cosmos (e.g., achieve union with the totality of existence; immerse myself in nature and be part of it). Emmons, Cheung, et al. found that people who endorsed a higher proportion of spiritual strivings according to this definition also reported a greater sense of purpose in life, greater life and marital satisfaction, and lower levels of conflict between goals. Compared to nonspiritual strivings, people also described spiritual strivings as more important, less difficult to sustain, and pursued for intrinsic reasons. In another study, participants who endorsed goals pertaining to intimate relationships or spirituality were more likely to say they had found meaning in a personal loss experience (Emmons, Colby, & Kaiser, 1998). In addition, among the strongest correlates of recovery from loss were spiritual goals, such as achieving salvation, pleasing God, and engaging in religious traditions. Finally, Emmons (1999) posited that spiritual strivings facilitate a sense of coherence of personality because they help to regulate behavior based on higher order abstract principles of conduct.

Clearly, preliminary evidence suggests that strivings that tap into the spiritual realm have positive implications. Consistent with the bulk of research in the psychology of religion, Emmons' (1999) approach to spiritual strivings emphasized an individual's relationship with a higher power or personified divine being (i.e., God) and assumes that desirable behavior patterns promoted by monotheistic religious traditions reflect spirituality. From this perspective, goals with overtly spiritual content are differentiated from other types of goals. In this study, we take a different approach. Namely, we endeavor to extend empirical research on the intersection between personal strivings and spirituality by suggesting that virtually any personal striving could be perceived by its owner as having divine significance and character. In other words, we propose that a wide range of personal strivings could be invested with spiritual meaning, not just strivings that expressly discuss God, spiritual activities, or values that have been espoused in religious literature (e.g., humility, simplicity, altruism). Of course, some strivings may be sanctified more readily than others. However, rather than presuming that certain classes of strivings tap into peoples' spiritual life whereas other strivings do not, we directly assess the degree to which individuals attribute spiritual meaning to their personal strivings. Consequently, in this study, we extend the construct of sanctification to personal strivings.

As is explained more fully elsewhere (Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-Swank, 2003; Pargament & Mahoney, this issue), the construct of sanctification extends the psychological power of religion and spirituality to many aspects of life, including many seemingly secular objectives. Sanctification is defined as perceiving objects as having divine significance and character¹ (Mahoney et al., 1999, 2003; Pargament & Mahoney, this issue). Individuals may sanctify objects in nontheistic or theistic ways. In the former case, people may ascribe sacred qualities (e.g., holy, blessed, sacred) to specific aspects of their lives; in the latter case, people may view particular aspects of their lives as being a manifestation of God (e.g., I experience God through this striving). We have theorized that perceptions of sacredness in life are more than cognitive in nature. Sanctified objects also have motivational properties; that is, people are motivated to invest in preserving and protecting what they hold as sacred (Pargament & Mahoney, this issue).

The motivational character of sanctification may be particularly salient in the context of strivings. Consistent with prior research on spiritual strivings, we hypothesize that individuals may be more willing to invest time, effort, and money to preserve and protect personal strivings that they view as sanctified. In turn, as the

¹In previous articles on sanctification, we defined sanctification as perceiving an object or an aspect of life as having spiritual significance and character. In this article and others in this issue, we have refined the overarching definition of sanctification to make it more precise. Specifically, we have replaced the term *spiritual* with the term *divine* in the definition. We have come to realize that our initial definition of sanctification was too broad as it could be interpreted to include demonic elements of the spiritual realm.

spiritual significance of strivings increases, the strivings may yield more benefits to the self and others, including greater personal fulfillment from goals, improved mental and physical well-being, and more constructive outcomes for other people. Results from initial studies we have conducted on the sanctification of marriage (Mahoney et al., 1999), parenting (Murray-Swank, Mahoney, & Pargament, 2003), sexuality (Murray-Swank, Pargament, & Mahoney, this issue), the environment (Tarakeshwar, Swank, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2001), and the human body (Mahoney et al., this issue) are consistent with these hypotheses. Thus, preliminary evidence supports the theory that sanctification may shape the nature of personal strivings in ways that are likely to vary across people. For example, for more religious individuals, major life strivings may often be saturated with spiritual meaning, whereas this may not be the case for less religious individuals. In addition, strivings that some people may view as antithetical to some religious traditions may be perceived by others as having spiritual status (e.g., accumulating wealth).

One main purpose of this study was to identify the degree to which people invest various personal strivings with spiritual meaning. As indicated previously, the most obvious strivings that people are likely to perceive as being a manifestation of God or as having spiritual qualities are those that reflect explicitly religious entities (e.g., get closer to God) and behavior (e.g., engage in regular prayer). Nevertheless, most religions also encourage believers to view many other goals in life as connected to the spiritual realm or to reflect a calling from God (Mahoney et al., 2003; Pargament & Mahoney, this issue). Thus, sanctification of diverse types of strivings may be an unrecognized but pervasive psychological process. In addition to strivings that are explicitly religious in content, strivings likely to be sanctified include general existential well-being (e.g., having inner peace), altruism and helping others (e.g., charity work), and family life (Mahoney et al., 2003; Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Tarakeshwar, 2001; Pargament & Mahoney, this issue). Strivings that may be the least likely to be sanctified, at least in a predominantly Judeo-Christian culture, are materialism, careerism, and involvement in leisure or mundane daily activities. To better understand what strivings are sanctified, our first goal was to address the following descriptive questions: (a) To what degree do people generally perceive their personal strivings as being a manifestation of God or as having sacred qualities, and (b) what types of strivings are most likely to be sanctified?

The second major goal of this study was to determine whether the sanctification of strivings relates to desirable characteristics of the strivings themselves. Our theory of sanctification suggests that people may be more motivated to preserve and protect aspects of life that are sanctified. Thus, strivings that are sanctified may elicit greater investment because of the spiritual meaning attached to these goals. For example, people may devote more resources to personal strivings that they believe fulfill God's spiritual purposes and in which God plays a role. Likewise, strivings that are perceived as having transcendent qualities, such as sacred, holy,

and blessed, could be of more subjective importance, taking precedence over other goals and generating greater commitment. In addition, more highly sanctified strivings may evoke greater perceived social support from family, friends, and God. This may occur because sanctified strivings could be embedded in a religiously oriented social context in which people acquire and share similar goals with significant others. The sanctification of strivings may also be connected to a greater perceived confidence and intrinsic motivation because people who believe their daily endeavors fulfill spiritual purposes may be buffered from ambivalence, obstacles, self-doubt, and peer pressure.

The third main goal of this study was to examine whether there are benefits of the sanctification of strivings. Our theory of sanctification posits that greater benefits may be attached to personal strivings that are sanctified, such as (a) people may derive greater fulfillment, meaning, and joy in pursuit of strivings that they believe intersect with the spiritual realm; (b) strivings that are sanctified may be related to a sense of purpose in life and happiness, even if the strivings also involve sacrifice or effort; (c) greater sanctification may be connected to the degree to which the strivings are constructive for self and others; and (d) greater sanctification may be tied to better mental and physical health because these goals are more stable and more satisfying and provide deeper resources to draw on in times of trouble.

METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of 150 adults drawn from a midsized county in the Midwest and was representative of the demographic characteristics of the population in this geographical area based on recent Census data. The sample was 51% male, averaged 41.7 years of age ($SD = 8.2$, range = 25–56), and had a racial breakdown of 87% Caucasian, 9.5% African American, and 3.5% other. Sixty-two percent of the sample was married, and 38% was single, divorced, or widowed. The sample reflected the full socioeconomic spectrum of residents in the local community. The breakdown of annual family income in 1998 dollars was 11% less than \$20,000; 16% between \$20,000 and \$35,000; 23% between \$35,000 and \$50,000; 28% between \$50,000 and \$75,000, and 12% more than \$75,000. The highest level of education of the participants was 19% high school graduation, 25% some college, 13% two-year college degree, 27% college graduate, and 16% graduate or professional training. The sample was predominantly Protestant (53%) and Roman Catholic (26%), with 1% endorsing Jewish, 10% other, and 11% none. Participants' self-reported religiousness, based on four marker variables taken from the General Social Survey (1998), was consistent with recent national norms. Specifically, the breakdown of frequency of church attendance was never (11%), twice or less per year (28%), several times per year (13%), one to three times per month (13%),

weekly (29%), and several times per week (7%). The breakdown of frequency of prayer was 6.7% several times per week, 30% weekly, 13% one to three times per month, 13% several times per year, 28% twice or less per year, and 11% never. An item on self-rated religiousness yielded a mean of 2.6 ($SD = .87$), based on a 4-point Likert scale with anchors 1 (*not religious at all*), 2 (*slightly religious*), 3 (*moderately religious*), and 4 (*very religious*). A parallel item on self-rated spirituality yielded a mean of 3.0 ($SD = .88$). For primary data analyses, these four religious items were summed into one General Religiousness score ($\alpha = .79$).

Design and Procedure

To recruit participants, we purchased 5,000 names from a national polling company, along with corresponding addresses, telephone numbers, gender, and age. We targeted an equal number of men and women, ages 25 to 55. We randomly selected 800 names to form the initial pool of candidates for the study. An additional 217 names were later selected to ensure a representative sample. Specifically, we oversampled male participants and participants from zip code areas that corresponded to low income groups, minority racial groups, or both. All prospective participants were initially sent a postcard that briefly described the study, offered them \$50 to participate, and informed them that they would be contacted by phone. The research team then attempted to contact these people by phone to recruit them into the study.

Up to three phone calls were made to request participation. Of these attempts, 328 people were unavailable or not at home when called, and 261 people could not be reached because they were deceased or their number had been changed or disconnected. A total of 428 people were contacted by phone: 202 (47%) agreed and 226 declined to participate. Of the 202 people who initially agreed to participate, 150 actually returned their questionnaires and responded to the follow-up phone calls. Thus, the overall response rate was 35%.

The data were collected in three stages. The first stage involved a 10- to 20-min telephone interview in which the participants were asked to list their 10 most important personal strivings; interviewers used a standardized script to elicit the strivings.² This process was similar to an approach previously designed by Emmons (1986, 1999) with two modifications. Specifically, we assessed 10 strivings, whereas Emmons obtained 15 strivings, and we used telephone interviews rather than questionnaires to gather the list of strivings. We lowered the number of strivings because, when piloting the procedures, participants had difficulty identifying 15 strivings during an initial phone contact. The phone interviews

²To gather the 10 strivings, our interviewers were trained to use the following script: "Our research team is interested in learning about the things that you strive for in your life. Personal strivings are objectives that you are typically trying to accomplish or attain. Objectives also refer to things that you are trying to hold onto or accept. Personal strivings are not one-time concerns, but rather recurring or ongo-

were tape-recorded for later content analysis. The second stage involved a packet of questionnaires that was mailed to the participants, completed, and returned to the researchers by mail. This packet contained questions about demographics, general religiousness, and indexes of mental and physical health. In addition, each packet contained questions about the characteristics of each striving that the participant had identified during the phone interview, including items on sanctification and other attributes of strivings that have previously been studied. In the third stage, which took place over the 3 weeks following return of the questionnaire, participants responded to a series of five 10- to 15-min phone interviews about their activities during the past 48 hr in connection with the two strivings that the participants had rated as most sanctified and the two strivings rated as least sanctified. The phone interviewers were not informed of which strivings the participants had rated as more and less sanctified. Participants were paid \$25 after they returned their completed questionnaire. They received an additional \$25 after they completed the five follow-up phone interviews. All of the telephone interviewers were undergraduate or graduate students in psychology and were trained to follow standardized scripts and protocols. Audiotapes of the phone interviews with participants were randomly evaluated by the research team to ensure adherence to the protocols and the absence of leading questions or comments. In all cases, interviewer skills were judged to be adequate.

MEASURES

Sanctification of Strivings

The sanctification of strivings was assessed separately with two self-report measures adapted from Mahoney et al. (1999).³

Manifestation of God in strivings. Participants completed a 5-item Manifestation of God scale for each striving to assess the degree to which it was perceived to be an expression or manifestation of God. Participants used a 5-point

ing goals. Strivings may be something that you typically or characteristically are trying to do or not to do in your everyday behavior. They may also be ways you are trying to be or not to be in your everyday life. Strivings can be general things like trying to help others in need of help, trying to make more money, or trying not to be so stressed. Or strivings can be more specific things like spending time with family members each week, saving money to buy myself something special, or not smoking. Take some time now to think about the things you most strive for in your life and tell me about your 10 most important personal strivings. After you name each one, I'm going to ask you to pause a moment so I can repeat back what you said. This way, I'll be sure to correctly write down what you tell me. Then when we are finished I may come back and ask you more specific questions about each personal striving. Are you ready to start? What is one thing that you personally strive for in your life?"

³Each participant provided ratings about their perceptions of a particular striving before moving to the next striving. This included ratings on sanctification and questions about other qualities of each striving.

Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) to indicate the degree to which they agreed with the following five questions: God played a role in the development of this striving; God is present in this striving; this striving is a reflection of God's will; I experience God through this striving; this striving reflects what I think God wants for me. This theistically oriented scale was designed to assess the degree to which participants viewed a divine being as playing a role in the striving. To avoid confounding outcomes with this sanctification variable, the items were neutral about direction of influence of God on the striving (i.e., none of the items asked if God helped or hindered a striving). An Individual Manifestation of God score for each striving was obtained by summing the five items. A Total Manifestation of God of Strivings score was obtained by summing the 10 individual scores. The alpha coefficient of the Total Manifestation of God of Strivings score across the 10 striving scores was .96 (i.e., this alpha coefficient corresponds to the 50 summed items, namely 10 Strivings \times 5 Manifestation of God ratings).

Sacred qualities of strivings. Participants completed a 5-item Sacred Qualities scale for each striving to assess the degree it was perceived as having qualities typically associated with transcendent phenomena. Participants used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*does not describe at all*) to 5 (*very closely describes*) to indicate the degree to which the following five words applied to the striving: sacred, holy, heavenly, blessed, and spiritual. The items on this nontheistically oriented scale made no direct mention of a divine being (e.g., God, higher power). An Individual Sacred Qualities score for each striving was obtained by summing the five items. A Total Sacred Qualities of Strivings score was created by summing the 10 individual Sacred Qualities scores. The alpha coefficient of the Total Sacred Qualities of Strivings index across the 10 striving scores was .93. (i.e., this alpha coefficient corresponds to the 50 summed items, namely 10 Strivings \times 5 Sacred Qualities ratings).

Objective Classification of Types of Strivings

To assess the overt content of the strivings reported by participants during the initial open-ended telephone interviews, a pair of raters coded each striving according to a categorical classification system we devised for this study. Whereas prior research on strivings has focused largely on college students from university settings or elderly samples (Emmons, 1999), this study involved strivings reported by young and middle-age adults (ages 25–55) from the community. We therefore created a classification system with 18 categories to capture the nature and diversity of strivings associated with the developmental tasks faced by this age group. To assess the reliability with which the two coders categorized strivings into the 18 groups, 32 cases were randomly selected for both coders to rate independently. Out of 320 strivings reported by these 32 participants, the two coders agreed on their

content codes for 275 strivings (i.e., simple percent agreement rate of 86%). To facilitate data analyses, these 18 content categories were collapsed into a smaller set of 8 categories: work and money, physical health, family, self-development, existential, religion/spiritual, helping others/community, and miscellaneous/other. See Table 1 for the frequency and examples of strivings in each category.

Level of Investment and Desirable Attributes of Strivings

Two methods were used to assess level of investment and other attributes of the strivings. One method involved participants completing a 10-item, self-report Striving Attributes Questionnaire (SAQ) for each striving.⁴ The second method of assessing investment in strivings involved a series of five phone calls to assess the behavioral investment exhibited by each participant during the previous 48 hr.

The SAQ was adapted from Emmons' (1986, 1999) work and included participants' evaluations of aspects of strivings that have been previously linked to important criteria. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale with appropriately worded anchors (i.e., 1 [*not at all important*] to 5 [*extremely important*]). Total scores for each item were obtained by summing the ratings across all 10 strivings, and separate data analyses were conducted for each score (i.e., identical items on the SAQ were collapsed across the 10 strivings). Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations, alpha coefficients, and intercorrelations of the total SAQ scores. The items on the SAQ represent four general constructs; each of these constructs and the corresponding variable are discussed below in more detail.

Subjective importance. Four SAQ items assessed the degree to which participants perceived a striving being of high priority and importance: "How important is this striving to you?" (importance); "how committed are you to this striving?" (commitment); "how long do you expect to have this striving?" (expected longevity); and "to what extent does this striving dominate your life to the exclusion of other things?" (dominates life).

Perceived social support. Two items on the SAQ assessed the degree of social support participants received in their pursuit of a striving: "How much support do you receive from family and friends in this striving?" (social support—others); and "to what extent to you experience a sense of support from God in this striving?" (social support—God).

Perceived confidence. Three items on the SAQ reflected the level of the participant's confidence associated with a striving: "How likely are you to succeed in this striving?" (likelihood of success); "to what extent do obstacles (e.g., limited

⁴Contact author for a copy of the SAQ scale.

TABLE 1
Range and Diversity of Strivings—Using All 18 Content Codes,
Divided Into Eight General Categories

<i>Eight General Categories</i>	<i>18 Subcategories</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Family		24.3%	
	Marriage	4.5%	Work hard at my marriage
	Romantic relations	0.7%	To stop and have fun with my significant other
	Parenting	8.1%	To be more involved with my kids
	Family unspecified	5.0%	Increase happiness for everyone in my family
Self-development	Extended family	6.0%	Maintain a good relationship with husband's family
		21.3%	
	Educ/Skill Development	4.4%	To keep on learning and pursuing my degree
Work and Money	Self-improvement	16.9%	To be more joyful; to be more patient
		17.2%	
	Financial	7.9%	Work harder so I can make more money
	Career-achievement	7.9%	To be successful at work; earn a medal at work
Physical health	Career-relationships	1.5%	Train people at work to understand programming
	Physical health	9.5%	To get needed exercise, ride the bike
	Existential	5.7%	To continue to have inner peace
Religion/spiritual	Religion/spiritual	5.7%	To work to have a closer walk with God
Help others/community	Help others/community	5.7%	To help other people and remember the less fortunate
Misc./Other		13.5%	
	Travel/leisure	4.7%	To plan travel and not be worried about expenses
	Home	4.9%	Re-doing my kitchen
	Pets	0.9%	Pick up stray cats and have them fixed
	Friends/neighbors	3.0%	Stay in contact with friends regardless of distance

time, money, opportunity, disapproval from others, and so on) interfere with this striving?" (obstacles); and "to what extent do you question or doubt whether you should have this striving?" (question or doubt).

Internal locus of control. One item on the SAQ captured the degree to which a striving was held due to pressure from others or because of one's own desire. Specifically, this item asked "to what extent do you have this striving only because other people want you to have it?" (locus of control). Unlike the scaling of other SAQ items that had anchors only at the ends of the continuum (e.g., 1 [*not at all*] to 5 [*a great deal*]), this item had three anchors: 1 (*only for others*), 2 (*partly for myself and partly for others*), and 3 (*only for myself*).

Behavioral investment in strivings items. During the five follow-up phone calls, participants were asked to report on the frequency of behaviors and

TABLE 2
Means, Standard Deviations, Alpha Coefficients, and Intercorrelations of the SAQ Scores

	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>Imp</i>	<i>Com</i>	<i>Long</i>	<i>Dom</i>	<i>S-O</i>	<i>S-G</i>	<i>Suc</i>	<i>Obs</i>	<i>Qst</i>	<i>Int</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Joy</i>
Striving attributes													
Importance	43.7 (4.0)	(.71)											
Commitment	41.0 (4.6)	.76****	(.72)										
Expected longevity	42.5 (7.4)	.35****	.28****	(.80)									
Dominates life	24.7 (7.3)	.19*	.11	.00	(.86)								
Social support-others	34.5 (7.6)	.28****	.43****	.19*	-.12	(.84)							
Social support-God	33.5 (11.9)	.45****	.42****	.11	.20*	.27****	(.96)						
Likelihood of success	39.0 (5.0)	.49****	.68****	.24**	.09	.48****	.38****	(.76)					
Obstacles	28.4 (7.6)	-.09	-.19*	-.21**	.29****	-.27****	-.07	-.27***	(.79)				
Question or doubt	16.9 (7.0)	-.13	-.23**	-.13	.21*	-.13	-.10	-.34****	.19*	(.83)			
Internal Locus of Control	39.4 (6.1)	.24**	.30***	.16	-.12	.05	.20	.17*	-.17*	-.14	(.82)		
Striving benefits													
Meaning	40.3 (5.2)	.78****	.65****	.36****	.29***	.28****	.51****	.51****	-.14	-.02	.16	(.72)	
Joy	37.8 (6.2)	.54****	.57****	.32****	.08	.50****	.45****	.70****	-.22**	-.19*	.03	.60****	(.78)

Notes. SAQ = Striving Attributes Questionnaire. Imp = Importance. Com = Commitment. Long = Expected Longevity. Dom = Dominates Life. S-O = Social Support Others. S-G = Social Support God. Suc = Likelihood of Success. Obs = Obstacles to Success. Qst = Question or Doubt. Int = Internal Locus of Control. Mean = Meaning. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. **** $p < .0001$.

TABLE 3
Sanctification of Eight Categories of All Strivings: Means on Manifestation of God and Sacred Qualities

	<i>Reli/Spirit</i>	<i>Help Others</i>	<i>Exist</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Self</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Work/Money</i>	<i>Misc./Other</i>
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Manifestation of God	23.2 ^a (3.8)	19.9 ^b (5.8)	18.7 ^{b,c} (6.2)	18.6 ^b (6.9)	16.9 ^{c,d} (7.0)	14.9 ^{d,e} (6.7)	15.2 ^c (6.9)	13.9 ^c (6.9)
Sacred Qualities	19.6 ^a (5.6)	15.4 ^b (6.8)	14.2 ^{b,c} (6.4)	14.2 ^b (6.4)	12.3 ^{c,d} (6.7)	10.6 ^{d,e} (6.1)	10.5 ^c (6.0)	10.3 ^c (5.8)

Note. Means with different subscripts are significantly different at $p < .05$.

amount of time invested in four of their strivings. (It was not feasible to collect this kind of data about all 10 strivings.) The four strivings selected were based on the participant's ratings on the Sacred Quality and Manifestation of God scales. Specifically, the two strivings with the highest sanctification scores and the two strivings with the lowest scores were identified. For each of these four strivings, participants responded to six items that measured the degree to which the participants invested energy into each striving over the past 48 hr. First, participants estimated the amount of time they had spent on each striving for three types of activities: (a) reading or studying in connection with the striving, (b) doing things by themselves with regard to the striving, and (c) doing things with others or talking with others. Second, participants answered one question about how much money they had invested in each striving. Third, participants reported their satisfaction with the amount of time and energy spent on each striving. Fourth, as an overall summary measure of investment, they were asked to count all the times they had done things or thought about things related to the striving. To facilitate data analyses, scores on each variable for each striving were summed across the five phone calls for analyses. Then, the scores on the same question for the two most sanctified strivings were collapsed together as were pairs of the same item for the two least sanctified strivings.

Benefits of Strivings

Two measurement methods were used to assess benefits associated with strivings: coders' ratings of initial phone interviews and participant's responses to questionnaires.

Objective coding of benefits for self and other people. A team of three coders rated each striving on two dimensions related to benefits for self or other. One dimension consisted of the degree to which each striving had constructive, positive, and altruistic consequences for other people. Raters used a 5-point scale with anchors of 1 (*neutral/not constructive for others*) to 5 (*equal to very constructive for others*). Interrater agreement was assessed by computing a Cronbach alpha coefficient on the three raters' ratings of the 1,500 strivings identified by participants (i.e., 10 Strivings \times 150 Participants). The resulting interclass correlation coefficient was .96 for this rating. Another dimension assessed the degree to which the striving had constructive and positive implications for the participants themselves. Raters again used a 5-point scale, with anchors of 1 (*neutral/not constructive for self*) to 5 (*equal to very constructive for self*). Interrater agreement was satisfactory, with an interclass correlation coefficient of .89. For data analysis purposes, the three raters' scores on each dimension (other or self) for each striving were averaged. Total scores were created by summing across the 10 strivings. The

means were 23.6 ($SD = 6.2$) for the variable of constructiveness for others and 40.2 ($SD = 3.7$) for constructiveness for self.

Benefits derived directly from strivings. With the exception of the two SAQ items created for this study that asked participants about the degree of happiness and the meaning derived from each striving, the self-report questionnaires used in this study are widely used measures with well-established psychometric properties.⁵

To directly assess participants' perceptions of the benefits they derived from pursuit of a striving, two benefit items were embedded in the SAQ: (a) "To what extent does this striving give meaning to your life?" (meaning) and (b) "how much joy or happiness do you experience in the pursuit of this striving?" (joy). Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale with appropriately worded anchors. Total scores for each item were obtained by summing the ratings across all 10 strivings. The means were 40.3 ($SD = 5.2$) for the total meaning score and 37.8 ($SD = 6.2$) for the total joy/happiness total score.

General meaning. General meaning was assessed using the eight-item Purpose scale from Reker's (1992) Life Attitude Profile-Revised. This scale assesses the degree to which the individual has life goals and a sense of direction in living and does not include items that are explicitly religious in content (e.g., no mention of divine beings or transcendent qualities).

Global life satisfaction. Global life satisfaction was assessed by the five-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).

Depressive symptomatology. Depressive symptomatology was assessed with the 20-item Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (Orme, Reis, & Herz, 1986).

Alcohol use. Alcohol use was assessed by the 10-item Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test created by the World Health Organization for screening general population samples for problem drinking (Saunders, Aasland, Amundsen, & Grant, 1993; Saunders, Aasland, Babor, de la Fuente, & Grant, 1993).

Physical health. Physical health was assessed by 17 items from the Physical Health Questionnaire (McIntosh, Keywell, Reifman, & Ellsworth, 1994).

⁵Due to space constraints, please contact first author for more details on the reliability and validity of the Life Attitude Profile-Revised, Satisfaction with Life Scale, Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale, Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test, and Physical Health Questionnaire.

Control Variables

Social desirability. The Marlow–Crowne Scale was used to assess social desirability (Crowne & Marlow, 1960).

Demographic questions. Demographic questions (e.g., gender, race, socioeconomic status) were taken from the General Social Survey (1998).

RESULTS

Preliminary Data Analyses

Preliminary data analyses were conducted to detect links between the two sanctification measures and indexes of general religiousness, demographics, and social desirability. The Total Manifestation of God of Strivings and Total Sacred Qualities of Strivings scores were both robustly linked at $p < .0001$ to the composite general religiousness variable (r s of .73 and .61, respectively) as well as to the four variables that made up this index (respective r s of .53 and .45 for frequency of prayer, .72 and .59 for frequency of church attendance, .50 and .34 for self-rated religiousness, and .58 and .53 for self-rated spirituality). These findings offer evidence of convergent validity of the two sanctification measures. The only demographic variable that was related to the measures was race, with non-White participants endorsing higher levels of sanctification of strivings ($r = .27, p \leq .001$ and $.21, p \leq .01$). Neither sanctification index was associated with the tendency to respond to questions in a socially desirable manner, which provides divergent validity for both measures.

Descriptive Findings on the Sanctification of Personal Strivings Overall and By Type

The mean Total Manifestation of God of Strivings (i.e., score across all 10 strivings) was 170.1 ($SD = 59.5$; range = 50–250), and these scores were skewed upward (i.e., median = 183.5). This indicates that most participants' responses to the questions fell midway between "neutral" and "strongly agree." The mean Total Sacred Quality of Strivings (i.e., score across all 10 strivings) was 126.6 ($SD = 51.3$; range = 50–250; median = 115). This indicates that most participants' ratings corresponded to the anchor point of "somewhat describes" when asked whether a sacred quality described a striving. The Total Sacred Quality of Strivings and Total Manifestation of God of Striving scores were correlated at r equal to .76 ($p < .0001$).

These results indicate that participants generally perceived their strivings as being moderately sacred. However, we anticipated that some types of strivings might be perceived as more sacred than others. To gain insight into this question, we conducted two one-way analyses of variance. In these analyses, each striving was

treated as a separate observation, the content of each striving was used as an independent variable with eight levels (religious/spiritual, existential, family, help others, self, health, work/money and other), and the dependent variable was the level of sanctification of striving. A significant effect for content emerged for both the analysis of variance conducted for Manifestation of God ratings, $F(7, 1492) = 29.1, p < .0001$, and the analysis of variance conducted for Sacred Qualities, $F(7, 1492) = 31.8, p < .0001$. To illuminate these results, Table 3 (this issue, p. 250) displays the means of Manifestation of God and Sacred Qualities for each of the eight content categories. Follow-up pairwise Tukey comparisons of the degree of sanctification associated with different content areas were conducted. Means with different subscripts attached were significantly different at $p < .05$, and the pattern of results was the same for both Manifestation of God and Sacred Qualities scores. Overall, the results indicate that strivings that are perceived to be self-focused or materially oriented were rated by participants as less sacred than those that involved religious or spiritual concerns, existential issues, family members, and helping other people in the community. Strivings that were overtly spiritual or religious in focus uniformly yielded higher ratings than other strivings.

Links Between the Sanctification of Strivings With Investment and Striving Attributes

The second major goal of this study was to determine whether the sanctification of strivings relates to level of investment and desirable characteristics of the strivings themselves.

Table 4 displays the correlations between sanctification indexes and participants' self-reports of various attributes of their personal strivings. Consistent with expectations, higher levels of sanctification on both measures were tied to attributions of: greater importance of strivings; greater commitment to strivings; stronger belief that the striving dominates the individual's life to the exclusion of other things; more perceived support from family, friends, and God to pursue strivings; and higher expectations of success. Higher Manifestation of God of Strivings was also related to greater internal locus of control, whereas greater Sacred Qualities of Strivings was tied to length of time participants planned to pursue their strivings. To ensure that these findings were not merely attributable to the overlap between sanctification and marker variables of general religiousness, we calculated partial correlations of the sanctification measures after controlling for the composite general religiousness index of prayer, church attendance, and self-rated religiousness and spirituality. With the exception of social support from other people, the bivariate links between sanctification of strivings and desirable attributes remained significant after taking into account general religiousness.

TABLE 4
 Correlations of Sanctification of Strivings With Criterion Measures:
 Bivariate and Partial Correlations Controlling General Religiousness

	<i>Sanctification of Striving Scores</i>			
	<i>Bivariate r's</i>		<i>Partial r's</i>	
	<i>Total</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<u>Manifestation of</u>	<i>Total Sacred</i>	<u>Manifestation of</u>	<i>Total Sacred</i>
	<u>God</u>	<u>Quality</u>	<u>God</u>	<u>Quality</u>
Striving attributes (self-report)				
Importance	.42****	.46**	.27**	.34****
Commitment	.37****	.36****	.20*	.21**
Expected longevity	.15	.19*	.14	.18*
Dominates life	.22**	.29****	.06	.18*
Social support-others	.19*	.21*	.09	.14
Social support-God	.92****	.74****	.82****	.54****
Likelihood of success	.32****	.32****	.17*	.19*
Obstacles	.02	-.05	.02	-.07
Question or doubt	-.14	-.04	-.23**	-.07
Internal locus of control	.19*	.12	.21**	.11
Striving benefits (self-report)				
Pursuit gives meaning to life	.51****	.53****	.35****	.39****
Pursuit gives joy or happiness	.39****	.39****	.31****	.30****
Psychosocial benefits				
Constructive for self (coder ratings)	.21****	.29****	.13	.24**
Constructive for others (coder ratings)	.22****	.17*	.09	.04
General meaning in life (self-report)	.26**	.18*	.10	.03
Physical health (self-report)	.09	.18*	.11	.21*
Life satisfaction (self-report)	.04	-.04	.03	-.08
Depressive symptoms (self-report)	.00	.02	.03	.06
Alcohol use (self report)	-.17*	-.15	.05	.03

Note. General religiousness is partialled out in columns 4 and 5.
 * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. **** $p < .0001$.

Another set of analyses addressed whether participants invested more time, energy, and resources into the two strivings they rated as most sanctified as compared to the two strivings they rated as least sanctified. As can be seen from Table 5, the results generally support the notion that people tend to place a higher priority on strivings that are sanctified. Specifically, participants spent more time thinking, reading, studying, and doing things or talking with others about their most sanctified strivings. Participants also reported that they derived significantly greater satisfaction from the time and energy they put into their most sanctified strivings in comparison to their least sanctified strivings. These results are important because they augment and reinforce participants' subjective

TABLE 5
Most and Least Sanctified Strivings: Differences in Investment of Resources Based
on Daily Phone Calls

	<i>Highest Two Sanctified Strivings</i>		<i>Lowest Two Sanctified Strivings</i>		<i>Paired t-test</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Sanctification Ratings					
Manifestation of God	40.4	12.1	26.6	12.5	$p < .0001$
Sacred Quality	33.7	12.3	18.9	9.5	$p < .0001$
Investment Variables					
Thinking, reading, or studying—min. over 10 days	1191	921	890	761	$p < .0001$
Doing things alone—min. over 10 days	800	644	813	639	ns
Doing things or talking with others—min. over 10 days	972	844	682	687	$p < .0001$
Investment of money—total for 10 days	124	137	105	129	ns
Freq. of doing things or thinking—no. times in 10 days (global self-rating)	156	442	82	124	$p < .0001$
Satisfaction with amount of time/energy spent	47.2	10.9	44.8	11.4	$p < .05$

Notes. This analyses uses the combined scores for highest 2 and lowest 2 strivings. The dependent variables consisted of the sums of the variables across five phone calls that asked participants about the past 48 hours.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. **** $p < .0001$.

reports that more sanctified strivings are associated with higher levels of commitment and importance.

Links Between the Sanctification of Strivings and Benefits

The third major goal of this study was to determine whether the sanctification of life strivings is related to interpersonal or intrapsychic benefits. As can be seen Table 4, greater sanctification of strivings for both indexes was associated with self-reports of more meaning derived from the pursuit of strivings and more joy or happiness experienced from strivings, even after taking into account levels of general religiousness. Participants' views of strivings as being connected to God covaried positively with strivings being judged by coders as more constructive for others and the participants. However, these links did not remain significant after taking general markers of religiousness into account. Greater sacred qualities were also related to higher coder ratings of interpersonal and intrapersonal constructiveness; the latter link persisted after taking general religiousness into account. Finally, both forms of sanctification were associated with self-reports of a greater sense of meaning and purpose in life. Contrary to expectations, greater sanctification of strivings was not consistently related to better psychological or physical health. The only exception was that lower alcohol use was associated with greater degree of belief that God was expressed through or experienced in strivings. One significant association emerged in a direction opposite to what was expected.

Namely, the more participants perceived their strivings as having sacred qualities, the more likely they were to report having health-related symptoms. Neither of these correlations remained significant after controlling for general religiousness.

DISCUSSION

The major aim of this study was to investigate the implications of the sanctification of personal strivings. This study's sample of 25- to 56-year-old adults, who were representative of a mid-sized urban/suburban community, rated their top 10 personal strivings as moderately sacred. That is, the majority of participants viewed their most salient strivings as involving God or as possessing sacred qualities to some degree. This finding is consistent with other research that indicates the relevance of spirituality to concrete aspects of life such as marriage (Mahoney et al., 1999), parenting (Murray-Swank et al., 2003), the environment (Marks & Dollahite, 2001; Tarakeshwar et al., 2001), and daily life more generally (Underwood, 1999).

Although people generally sanctify their personal strivings, the results of this study make clear that not all strivings are equally likely to be viewed as sacred. Not surprisingly, participants tended to rate strivings that explicitly involved religious and spiritual issues as more sanctified than other strivings. In addition, strivings focused on altruistic activities, family life, and existential concerns were more highly sanctified than all other strivings, except for overtly religious endeavors. In contrast, strivings focused on self-development and work or financial affairs were sanctified to a lesser degree than family life and other strivings. Health-related strivings were also perceived as less sacred than other strivings. Overall, it appears that adults are generally less likely to imbue self-focused or materially oriented strivings with spiritual meaning or significance. Instead, personal strivings that take an individual beyond oneself are more likely to be perceived to involve God's presence, will, or actions as well as to be characterized in sacred, transcendent terms.

On the other hand, our findings also show that strivings that are not expressly religious or spiritual in content can be imbued with spiritual character and significance. For example, the goals of "working on a marriage" or "helping others who are less fortunate" are often sanctified, even though they do not directly refer to God or other spiritual phenomena and could be pursued for reasons entirely unrelated to spirituality. In addition, our results indicate that wide individual differences occur in how much each striving is perceived as sacred. That is, sizable standard deviations exist in sanctification ratings across different types of strivings (with the exception of religious/spiritual strivings). Though relatively uncommon, some people do report experiencing self-care, work, and physical health as having a spiritual dimension. Thus, diverse personal strivings can be invested with spiritual meaning, not just strivings that expressly involve God, spiritual activities, or values that have been espoused in religious literature. By asking about sanctifica-

tion of strivings, researchers can examine the creative ways people integrate spirituality in their daily life and assess the spiritual dimension of different strivings as a collective whole (i.e., obtaining an overall index of sanctification of strivings across multiple, salient strivings).

Consistent with the proposition that people may be more motivated to preserve and protect aspects of life they sanctify, greater sanctification of personal strivings was linked to greater investment of psychological and pragmatic resources in the pursuit of life goals. First, adults' subjective reports of their level of psychological investment in their personal strivings covaried with how much they perceived their strivings to intersect with the spiritual realm. Specifically, higher levels of sanctification were tied to participants' subjective attributions of greater importance to strivings, greater commitment to strivings, and greater belief that their top 10 strivings dominated their life to the exclusion of other things. This pattern of results emerged for the belief that God was manifested in personal strivings as well as the belief that personal strivings possessed transcendent qualities (i.e., sacred, holy, heavenly, blessed, and spiritual). A stronger belief that strivings were characterized by sacred qualities was also tied to a longer length of time that participants planned to possess their strivings. The greater personal attachment people appear to have to sanctified strivings is underscored by the fact that these associations remained salient after taking into account a composite index of the frequency of church attendance, prayer, and self-rated religiousness and spirituality. Thus, although more generally religious individuals are more likely to sanctify their personal strivings, the link between greater investment and sanctification of personal strivings operates beyond the impact of general religious involvement and devotion.

The relevance of sanctification for investment in goals was further substantiated by the results from a series of five phone interviews about the amount of time and energy that participants recalled putting into their two most highly sanctified and two least sanctified strivings in the previous 2 days. In comparison to their least sanctified strivings, participants said they spent more time thinking, reading, studying, and doing things or talking with others about their most sanctified strivings. Participants also reported that they derived significantly greater satisfaction from the time and energy they put into their most sanctified strivings in comparison to their least sanctified strivings. The results from these behaviorally anchored interviews add convergent evidence to global, subjective self-reports that greater sanctification of strivings is tied to greater effort and investment of resources in the pursuit of personal life goals.

In addition to level of investment, sanctification was also associated with the desirable characteristic of social support for personal strivings. Specifically, participants' perception of greater support from family, friends, and God in the pursuit of their personal strivings covaried with greater sanctification of their strivings. Such social support is likely to facilitate persistence in trying to accomplish goals. Such links may occur because sanctification of strivings may develop within a reli-

giously oriented social context in which people acquire and share similar goals with significant members of their social life. Indeed, when general religiousness is controlled, the link between the sanctification of strivings and social support from family and friends diminishes. Interestingly, however, the association between sanctification and support from God strongly persists after taking into account global markers of religiousness. Thus, although social integration into religious groups may facilitate the extent to which people receive support from other people for sanctified strivings, people may still be able to derive a sense of support from God for sanctified goals outside the context of a religious community.

A sense of self confidence is another resource that was tied to sanctification. Stronger convictions that God is manifest in personal strivings or that strivings are imbued with sacred qualities were tied to greater confidence in achieving strivings. In addition, those who reported a stronger belief that God was manifested in their strivings were more likely to say they selected their strivings because of their own desires, rather than because other people wanted them to pursue the strivings (i.e., greater intrinsic motivation). In short, religious faith in personal strivings appears to translate into greater ownership and sense of self-efficacy in life goals. Contrary to expectations, the degree to which individuals believe that daily endeavors fulfill transcendent purposes was unrelated to how much people question and doubt the wisdom of their goals, or how many obstacles they encounter along the way that could interfere with strivings. Thus, the perception that life goals reflect sanctified destinations does not necessarily alleviate difficulties in their pursuit. Overall, these findings suggest that sanctification has important implications for the ways people approach the goals they strive for in life and their commitments to those strivings.

The third main goal of this study was to examine the theory that the sanctification of personal strivings is related to psychological benefits. Consistent with expectations, the more that participants believed their personal strivings reflect the spiritual realm, the more they reported deriving joy, happiness, and a sense of meaning in pursuit of their strivings. Greater sanctification was also connected to the degree to which strivings were judged by external coders as constructive for the participants and for other people. However, contrary to expectations, greater sanctification of strivings did not have positive implications for physical health and mental health, with the exception of decreased alcohol use. This latter link disappeared, however, after taking into account general levels of religiousness. This set of findings is inconsistent with research conducted by Emmons (1999) who found that individuals with a higher proportion of spiritual strivings had better physical and mental health than those with a lower proportion of spiritual strivings. This may be due, in part, to the contrasting types of samples. Whereas Emmons' research was conducted primarily with college students, this project involved a community sample of adults ages 25 to 55. Clearly, additional research is needed to explore the sanctification of strivings across di-

verse cultures and communities. It is also possible that sanctification sometimes operates as a coping variable. That is, stressful events could elicit greater psychological distress as well as new ways of viewing goals and priorities, including the perception that some strivings are sacred. Consistent with this interpretation, we found that greater sanctification was tied to more health symptoms. However, longitudinal studies are needed to tease out the causal connections among stress, sanctification, and personal distress.

Our discussion has thus far emphasized desirable implications of the sanctification of major life strivings. It is important to recognize, however, that a "dark side" of sanctification is likely to exist (Mahoney et al., 2003; Pargament & Mahoney, this issue). Greater sanctification of strivings could be linked to greater inflexibility, rigidity, intolerance, or defensiveness when events occur that call for an adjustment in one's priorities in life. Given that greater sanctification is linked to greater investment, confidence, and determination, letting go of sacred goals could be all the more difficult. Likewise, people may suffer more emotionally when a sacred striving is irrevocably lost (e.g., death or divorce ends a relationship) or become more angry and vengeful when other people violate and obstruct a striving that an individual believes has a spiritual dimension (Magyar, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2000; Pargament, Magyar, Benore, & Mahoney, 2003).

In summary, the general pattern of the findings in this study suggests that spirituality and religion may help people persist in pursuing meaningful goals, but this does not necessarily free people from possible costs that may arise in the pursuit of sacred strivings. In other words, this study raises a potentially important distinction between the underlying ultimate objectives emphasized by Western science and psychology (i.e., attain individual and personal well-being) and other ultimate objectives valued by world religions (i.e., commitment and fulfillment via sacrifice). Although the sanctification is tied to greater commitment, joy, and meaning in connection with goals, the added investment is not linked to greater life satisfaction, lower depression, and better physical health. Although this contrasting pattern of results was not anticipated, the findings reflect a core message found in many world religions. Namely, many world religions encourage people to move beyond goals that are only personally gratifying and to pursue goals that may involve sacrifice and considerable effort. In other words, individuals may happily persist in and find fulfillment in strivings they believe have transcendent purposes, even if this sometimes exposes them to stressful situations that can trigger sadness, compromise physical health, and foster life circumstances that are personally difficult. Such exposure may offset the self-enhancing or protective benefits that occur at other times when people strive for goals they believe are connected to God and the sacred realm. Paradoxically, religion's answer to the question of what makes life goals meaningful, valuable, and purposeful does not necessarily guarantee personal life satisfaction and psychological well-being.

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