

After the break-up: How divorcing affects individuals at work

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Abstract

Divorce is one of life's most stressful events. By pairing two studies, using mixed-methods, and drawing on conservation of resources theory, we contribute new and previously unavailable information about three questions. How and to what extent does going through a divorce affect individuals at work? What factors differentiate a lower versus higher impact on work? Do work outcomes improve after a divorce has been completed? In Study 1, individuals currently in the process of divorcing report more negative mood at work, lower job performance, and lower health in comparison to employees recently divorced, divorced over 5 years ago, or never divorced. Qualitative findings illustrate vivid reports of intrusive negative affect and reduced focus at work. At the same time, nearly 39% of individuals reported that divorcing had a positive impact on their job, work, or career. Qualitative findings reveal that for some, divorcing frees up time and energy and amplifies motivation for work. Study 2 is a longitudinal survey study of individuals in the process of a divorce. Findings indicate that levels of divorce-related grief, quality of the dissolving marriage, the presence of children, and anticipated post-divorce financial stability differentiate between those with better and worse work outcomes. Individuals improve on work-related cognitive and

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physical engagement, job performance, and health after their divorces are completed. Our results extend empirical knowledge and theory with new insights about work outcomes associated with divorcing as well as the recovery of work outcomes over time.

KEYWORDS

conservation of resources, divorce, family-to-work spillover, stressful life events

1 | INTRODUCTION

In the United States, over 40% of first marriages result in divorce with 1.5 million individuals experiencing marital dissolution annually (BLS, 2013; CDC, 2022). The U.S. divorce rate is among the highest in OECD countries, with over one third of Americans in their prime working ages of between 25 and 65 years either having divorced or currently divorcing (Mayol-García et al., 2021; OECD, 2021). Although divorce is a personal and sometimes necessary choice for individuals, it is an extremely impactful life event. It is ranked being as stressful or nearly as stressful as experiencing the death of a spouse or another close family member or detention in jail (Scully et al., 2000). As compared to their married counterparts, divorced individuals report lower levels of psychological, physiological, and economic well-being (Amato, 2000). Such outcomes are a result of both persistent and temporary life strains that tend to accompany divorce such as reduced economic resources and social support, solo parenting and decision making, less attentiveness to health behaviors, and the need to re-establish one's identity (Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Patterson, 2002).

The divorce process and affiliated outcomes have been studied primarily by clinical, health, and social psychologists. Very little research has examined the ways in which divorcing may affect an individual at work, including in the work-family literature. When work-family scholars investigate the role of relationships at home, they tend to focus on intact marriages and work-to-family spillover (Byrne & Barling, 2017; Song et al., 2011; Westman et al., 2004). In contrast to work-to-family spillover, family-to-work spillover occurs when an experience in the family domain influences outcomes in the work domain (J. R. Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Netemeyer et al., 1996). Furthermore, investigations of crisis and stressful life events are insufficiently integrated into research on the work-family interface (Jaskiewicz et al., 2017; Ragins et al., 2014; Vaziri et al., 2020). Some research on divorce and work exists in the economics literature, emphasizing the effect of divorce on hours, wages, and disability leave. However, this research stream overlooks how the multitude of factors involved in the divorce process may affect individuals more broadly at work, why and how divorcing may be experienced differently across individuals, and psychological recovery. Given its prevalence and stressful nature, there is value in documenting how the experience of divorcing affects people's work lives, factors that differentiate the extent of disruption at work, and recovery over time.

Drawing upon conservation of resources theory (COR theory; Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018), we present two studies that examine the experience of divorcing and its intersection with work. In the first, mixed methods study, we use a cross-sectional comparison group method to compare individuals going through a divorce with those never or previously divorced in terms of mood, engagement, job performance at work, and general health. We also ask individuals for narrative accounts about whether and how divorcing impacts their work negatively and positively and inductively examine their qualitative responses.

In a second, longitudinal study based on Study 1's qualitative findings, we quantitatively examine divorce-related grief (i.e., the extent of psychological resource depletion accompanying relationship loss involving experiences of

sadness; pain; longing; rumination; lack of acceptance; and/or feelings of unfairness, anger, and bitterness; Emery, 2012; Prigerson et al., 1995) as a predictor of work outcomes (i.e., cognitive and physical engagement, job performance, and general health). We differentiate between individuals experiencing higher and lower levels of divorce-related grief (and work outcomes) by examining variability in three context-specific resources (quality of the dissolving marriage, presence of children, and anticipated post-divorce financial stability; Emery, 2012; Hobfoll et al., 1995). Finally, we examine recovery in work outcomes over time by following individuals from the point at which they undergo divorce to 1 year later. Multiple method investigations, longitudinal studies, and studies employing qualitative data are scarce in the work-family literature (Casper et al., 2007). The use of multiple methods allows for richer insights and corroboration of results (Gibson, 2017).

Our research offers empirical, theoretical, and practical contributions. Empirically, we provide previously unavailable insights into whether, how, and for whom divorcing affects work outcomes and through what mechanisms it does so. Our findings illuminate the negative consequences of divorcing and illustrate less intuitive and unstudied positive consequences of divorcing for work. Positive outcomes are rarely assessed within the divorce literature (Tashiro et al., 2006), which is consistent with a negativity bias that is prevalent in life events research (Mangelsdorf et al., 2019). We extend theory through several avenues highlighted by Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan (2007). We extend the examination of an important life event (i.e., the experience of divorcing) to the study of family-to-work spillover. We propose and examine a conceptual model to explain work outcomes while in the process of divorcing, illuminating new relationships and mechanisms involved in differentiating individuals' experiences. We contribute new insights into factors that can help explain how employees going through the same life event may have either negative or positive family-to-work spillover (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Finally, our study has important practical implications. Ragins et al. (2014) suggest that "organizations need to understand, acknowledge, and address the emotional upheaval, stress, and fear that their employees may experience as a consequence of events and crises outside of the workplace" (p. 765). This study provides insights aiding managers and practitioners to do so. Our results also suggest that it is important to avoid the assumption that all workers will be only negatively affected by such experiences. We begin with an overview of the individual outcomes of becoming divorced and describe the suitability of the COR framework for our inquiry.

2 | INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES OF DIVORCE AND COR THEORY

Divorcing, which refers to the process of dissolving one's marital status, is associated with compromised individual well-being (Clark & Georgellis, 2013; Luhmann et al., 2012; van Scheppingen & Leopold, 2020). Mental health challenges include depression (Kendler et al., 2003; Sbarra et al., 2014), alcohol abuse (Horwitz et al., 1996), and drug abuse onset (A. C. Edwards et al., 2018). Physiological afflictions include poor sleep quality (Krietsch et al., 2014; Meadows & Arber, 2015), heightened blood pressure (Sbarra et al., 2009), weight loss (Umberson et al., 2009), advanced cellular aging (Whisman et al., 2016), and poor self-evaluated health (Knöpfli et al., 2016; Wickrama et al., 2006). Becoming divorced also relates to decreased life satisfaction (Doré & Bolger, 2018; Luhmann et al., 2012) and greater social isolation (Kalmijn & Broese van Groenou, 2005; Nelson, 1995).

COR theory addresses resource loss, as well as the threat of resource loss, as a key source of stress and diminished well-being. Resources may be contextual (i.e., including objects such as a house or car or conditions such as employment or being married) or personal (i.e., cognitive energy, attention, and psychological resilience) (Hobfoll et al., 2018; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). According to COR theory, individuals with more resources are better able to navigate stressful situations. Resources are instrumental in helping individuals cope with stress. Resources ease the demands of difficult situations and facilitate the protection of resources and acquisition of additional resources (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). In contrast, resource loss, or the threat of resource loss, produces stress because it entails individuals losing something they need to fulfill their needs or goals (Hobfoll et al., 1995).

Marriage is characterized as a condition that allows spouses to acquire, invest, safeguard, and replace resources more successfully together than they can alone (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). As individuals undergo the divorce

process, they lose marriage as a contextual safeguard for many resources. This translates into the loss (or threat of loss) of myriad intertwined resources, including companionship, time with children, shared belongings, and financial assets. Personal resources are also tapped as individuals encounter loss from the ending of a relationship, help children to cope with the dissolution, make transition decisions, and/or navigate conflict while divorcing. Finally, the divorce process involves a multitude of daily stressors (Patterson, 2002; Pillow et al., 1996). Examples include moving into new housing, collecting information about finances, meeting with lawyers or mediators, sharing news about the divorce decision with others, and handling new household responsibilities independently.

According to COR theory, resource loss and the threat of resource loss produce a diversion of individuals' attention and time away from other important goals. Individuals must shift their focus of attention, reframe outcomes, and replace or substitute resources to cope, protect themselves from further resource loss, or gain resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 1989). Because of this, when important resources are compromised, individuals become vulnerable to additional resource losses. Stressful life events (or a constellation of stressful life events, such as that which occurs while divorcing) may instigate what is known as a resource loss spiral (Hobfoll et al., 2018). For example, divorcing can produce depression, which can lead to problems in concentrating and being motivated (Pillow et al., 1996). Each issue can bring about further problems, such as reduced concentration leading to making mistakes or forgetting appointments. Resource loss spirals tend to gain momentum and, consequently, when a resource loss spiral takes off, resource gain is slow and difficult (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

3 | STUDY 1: THE REVERBERATION OF DIVORCE-RELATED RESOURCE LOSS AND GAIN AT WORK

Research has documented changes in work hours, wages, self-employment, and disability leave that are attributable to becoming divorced. In terms of work hours and wages, becoming divorced is associated with increased work hours and earnings for women (Johnson & Skinner, 1986; Tamborini et al., 2015). Further, self-employed individuals tend to disproportionately return to waged employment for financial reasons (van Loon et al., 2020). In terms of disability, employed men and women who become divorced draw on sick leave and disability benefits more than continuously married individuals (Blekesaune & Barrett, 2005; Dahl et al., 2015). Most divorcing workers who take leave quickly return to work (Couch et al., 2015; Dahl et al., 2015). For a small percentage of workers, becoming divorced relates to enduring work-limiting disability (Couch et al., 2015; Tamborini et al., 2016). These results hold after accounting for selection effects, such as removing individuals who reported disability prior to divorcing.

Despite this interesting research, the ways in which divorcing may more broadly impact individuals at work has received only scant attention. A case study illustrated a decline in teaching ratings for an individual instructor while divorcing (Ludlow & Alvarez-Salvat, 2001). Another study not focused uniquely on work outcomes reported that 52.2% of 62 divorcing individuals had trouble concentrating at work (Huddleston & Hawkins, 1991). The highest quality study to date on work outcomes while divorcing revealed a 5.66% drop in the annualized fund performance of hedge fund managers during their divorcing time windows (Lu et al., 2016).

The purpose of Study 1 is to provide a broader examination of the work outcomes experienced by individuals as they go through the divorce process. First, we compare divorcing individuals to non-divorcing individuals on five work outcomes theorized to be affected by stressful life events (Bhagat, 1983). Specifically, *negative mood* at work captures the extent to which individuals experience undesirable affective states such as hostility, shame, distress, fear, and nervousness at work (Watson et al., 1988). Engagement refers to the extent to which employees feel "psychologically present, fully there" as well as attentive and focused on their work (Rich et al., 2010, p. 619). We assess *cognitive* (level of focus and concentration at work) and *physical engagement* (amount of intensity, energy, or effort exerted in one's work; Rich et al., 2010). *Job performance* captures self-evaluated quantity, quality, and accuracy of work. Finally, we assess *health* using a composite measure of mental and physical health, as well as sleep quality. This measure takes a

broad perspective on health and recognizes that sleep quality is closely linked to psychological functioning as well as physical morbidity (Sbarra et al., 2015).

Available findings and the application of COR theory suggest that divorcing individuals will have more negative values for these work outcomes in comparison to individuals not in the divorce process. As previously mentioned, resource loss and the threat of resource loss are sources of stress and produce a diversion of individuals' attention and time away from other important goals (Hobfoll, 2001; Hobfoll et al., 2018). In addition, the work-family literature has long established that family domain strain consumes psychological resources and can adversely influence affect, commitment, and performance at work (J. R. Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Nohe et al., 2014; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Based on the above, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 1: Divorcing individuals (in comparison to non-divorcing individuals) will report higher (a) negative mood at work; and lower (b) cognitive engagement, (c) physical engagement, (d) self-evaluated job performance; and (e) self-evaluated health.

Hypothesis 1 proposes an average effect that is consistent with COR theory and extant findings. That is, for the average person, COR theory and available research suggest that divorcing individuals will have more negative outcomes at work due to the myriad resources threatened or lost during the process of going through a divorce. At the same time, there have been recent calls for researchers to examine stressful life events data for evidence of positive experiences (Bonanno et al., 2011; Sbarra et al., 2012). Although a key tenet of COR theory is that resource loss is more influential than resource gain, resource loss may be less salient for some than for others. For example, divorcing may involve escaping from a difficult and stressful marriage. Even though there may be resource loss for these individuals, the resource loss is lessened by escaping from the stress of a bad marriage (Symoens et al., 2014; Tashiro et al., 2006). To the extent that resource loss is not so substantial that it prevents individuals from focusing on resource gain, work may be used as a form of resource investment or replacement (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

In Study 1, we also respond to calls for researchers to examine stressful life events data for positive experiences. We complement the examination of Hypothesis 1 with two supplemental data sources. First, we directly ask individuals about the extent to which going through a divorce is having negative as well as positive impacts on their work. We then report the distribution of responses. Second, we collect narrative accounts in which individuals explain in their own words how divorcing is negatively or positively impacting their work. Such descriptive and qualitative techniques are critical for advancing nascent research streams (Edmondson & McManus, 2007).

3.1 | Study 1 method

Consistent with models of adjusting to becoming divorced (Herz Brown, 1989, van Scheppingen & Leopold, 2020), logical comparison groups for divorcing individuals include those with proximal (i.e., within 5 years) versus distal (i.e., over 5 years) divorces as well as individuals married/cohabiting and never divorced. As such, Hypothesis 1 is examined via a cross-sectional comparison of work outcomes for divorcing individuals with three other groups: (1) individuals married/cohabiting with their partner and never divorced, (2) individuals divorced within the last 5 years, and (3) individuals divorced over 5 years ago. Our inclusion of individuals previously divorced reduces arguments of selection (i.e., that work outcomes among divorcing individuals may be due to unobserved characteristics of divorcing individuals) (Sbarra et al., 2019). For the part of our analyses examining descriptive and narrative accounts of the perceived impact of divorcing on work, we focus only on individuals in the process of divorcing.

3.1.1 | Participants and procedure

Participants were sought for a “Life Events and Work Study” (University of Minnesota IRB #1512E81604) through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) between April 2016 and February 2017. Eligible respondents were U.S. residents employed for wages for 30 or more hours per week. The study link was visible only to MTurk users with strong records (Sheenan & Pittman, 2016). We employed a quota-based sampling strategy using an initial screening survey to identify eligible individuals who were divorcing, never divorced, or previously divorced. The screening survey included irrelevant items to disguise the purpose of the study and counter self-misrepresentation regarding marital or divorce status (Aguinis et al., 2021). For example, respondents were asked to indicate their most common mode of transportation and inventory their experience of other life events within the last 6 months. An additional function of the screening survey was to minimize the risk of priming respondents to think about their divorce status while completing the surveys. A total of 8609 individuals took the screening survey and 637 individuals were eligible to participate. Validity (e.g., attention) checks (Aguinis et al., 2021) led to the removal of 95 cases.

Analyses included 542 respondents: 121 in the process of divorcing, 137 married or cohabiting and never divorced, 138 divorced within 5 years, and 146 divorced over 5 years. Fifty-five percent of participants were female, 84.9% were White, the average age was 39.15 years ($SD = 10.24$), and average occupational level was 2.09 or “team leader” ($SD = 1.22$; 45.4% of respondents were non-supervisors, 21.4% were team leaders, 16.1% were first level supervisors, 13.3% were higher-level management, and 3.9% were top executives). Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to assess the comparability of respondent groups in terms of gender, race, education, and occupational level, $F(12, 1415.77) = 3.75, p < .05$, Wilk's $\lambda = .92$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. There were no significant differences between the four groups in terms of education or occupational level. There were more women in the divorced over 5 years group (69%) compared to the married/cohabiting and never divorced (48%) and divorced within 5 years (45%) groups. The divorced over 5 years group had more White respondents (93%) than the divorcing (79%) and divorced within 5 years groups (82%).

3.1.2 | Measures

Divorce Status. Individuals were asked “Have you ever had a divorce or are you currently in the process of getting a divorce?” Individuals were categorized as divorcing (0 = no, 1 = yes) if they indicated “I am in the process of getting a divorce and it is not yet finalized.” This group was contrasted with individuals married/cohabiting and never divorced (0 = no, 1 = yes), divorced within 5 years (0 = no, 1 = yes), and divorced over 5 years (0 = no, 1 = yes).

Work Outcomes. Unless otherwise noted, work outcomes were assessed using the stem “at work during the past month.” *Negative mood at work* was assessed with the PANAS 10-item negative affect scale (Watson et al., 1988; $\alpha = .90$, 1 = very slightly or not at all, 5 = extremely). Example items included “jittery,” “afraid,” and “guilty.” *Cognitive engagement* (six items; $\alpha = .94$; e.g., “At work, I focused a great deal of attention on my job;” “At work, I concentrated on my job”) and *physical engagement* (six items; $\alpha = .94$; e.g., “I exerted my full effort to my job;” “I tried my hardest to perform well on my job”) were measured using Rich et al.'s (2010; 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) scales. *Job performance* was assessed using three items capturing the self-evaluated quantity, quality, and accuracy of work (Kim & Glomb, 2014; Welbourne et al., 1998; $\alpha = .89$, 1 = at a very low level compared to other employees with similar jobs, 11 = at a very high level compared to other employees with similar jobs). The use of anchors that ask participants to compare themselves to other employees with similar jobs clarifies the frame of reference, offsets self-enhancement bias, and improves the validity of self-evaluated job performance (Farh & Dobbins, 1989; Heidemeier & Moser, 2009; Wagner & Goffin, 1997).

Health was operationalized with a composite of self-evaluated *mental health*, *physical health*, and *sleep quality*. Mental and physical health were assessed with items from the World Health Organization Health and Work Performance Questionnaire (Harvard Medical School, 2005; Kessler et al., 2003). The two items were, “In general, how would you

rate your overall mental health during the past two weeks?" and "In general, how would you rate your overall physical health during the past two weeks?" (1 = *poor*, 5 = *excellent*). These indicators of self-assessed global health are prevalent in population surveys and demonstrate construct validity for nonclinical purposes (Bowling, 2005; Eriksson et al., 2001; Idler & Benyamini, 2001). Sleep quality was assessed with the item, "During the past month, how would you rate your sleep quality overall?" (Buysse et al., 1989) on a four-point scale (1 = *very bad*, 4 = *very good*). To create a composite health measure based on two items using five-point anchors and one item using a four-point anchor, we applied an algebraic transformation to sleep quality ($\alpha = .80$).

Individuals in the process of divorcing completed two items to provide a global assessment of how their divorce was affecting their work ("All things considered, in the last few months my divorce has had a *negative* impact on my job, work, or career" and "All things considered, in the last few months my divorce has had a *positive* impact on my job, work, or career"). These items were answered on a five-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) and were followed by open-ended fields asking participants to elaborate on their responses with narrative accounts.

Control Variables. We controlled for *gender* (0 = *male*, 1 = *female*) and *race* (0 = *person of color*, 1 = *White*) due to differences between comparison groups on these variables in our sample. Some studies have found divorcing women, especially women of color, to suffer greater declines in economic well-being than men (Leopold, 2018; Smock et al., 1999). We further included *age*, *educational attainment* (1 = *high school/G.E.D.*, 5 = *Ph.D./M.D./J.D.*), and *occupational level* (1 = *non-supervisor*, 5 = *top executive*) among controls. An individual's age may play a role in how the divorce experience affects them (Buecker et al., 2021; Sbarra et al., 2019). Educational attainment is an indicator of socioeconomic status, which is positively associated with access to resources and capacity to deal with stressful life events (Hobfoll, 2011). Higher occupational level may allow more flexibility at work and thus better work outcomes.

3.1.3 | Analytical strategy

Quantitative analyses were conducted in Mplus 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017). Confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were used to support construct distinctiveness. We report the Chi-square statistic, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean square Residual (SRMR) (Kline, 2016). We tested Hypotheses 1a-e using fully latent structural equation modeling (SEM). To elucidate the negative and positive impacts of divorcing on work, we used descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis. The authors and a research assistant content analyzed comments through trial, pilot, and main coding phases, allowing us to identify major themes, develop a coding frame, and systematically apply it to our data (Schreier, 2012). The authors reviewed, discussed, and reconciled a small number of discrepancies in initial coding applications. Several comments touched upon multiple themes and were thus included in multiple coding categories. After delineating the prominent emergent themes through coding, we aligned codes with relevant literature. Content analysis is well suited for inductively deriving themes from written responses and deductively situating codes within theoretical frameworks directing the researchers' inquiry (e.g., family-to-work resource transmission while divorcing; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

3.2 | Study 1 results

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations, and correlations. CFA showed that the hypothesized five-factor model (with negative mood at work, cognitive engagement, physical engagement, job performance, and health in one model) demonstrated adequate model fit, $\chi^2(334) = 953.81, p < .001$; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .06. To attain slightly better measurement model fit while considering only theoretically justified modifications, the error terms of six pairs of similarly worded, within-factor items were allowed to covary (Brown, 2006). Covaried error terms included "ashamed" with "guilty" from the negative mood scale and "I strived as hard as I could to complete my job" and "I tried my hardest to perform well on my job" from the physical engagement scale. Without any error term covariances

TABLE 1 Study 1: Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)	.55	.50														
2. Race (0 = person of color, 1 = White)	.85	.36	.01													
3. Age	39.15	10.24	.21**	-.10*												
4. Educational attainment	2.61	1.09	-.03	-.11**	.01											
5. Occupational level	2.09	1.22	-.10*	-.04	-.02	.06										
6. Divorcing (0 = no, 1 = yes)	.22	.42	.02	-.10*	-.19**	.08	.04									
7. Married/cohabiting and never divorced (0 = no, 1 = yes)	.25	.44	-.08	.00	-.19**	.00	-.11**	-.31**								
8. Divorced within 5 years (0 = no, 1 = yes)	.25	.44	-.12**	-.05	-.08	-.05	.07	-.31**	-.34**							
9. Divorced over 5 years (0 = no, 1 = yes)	.27	.44	.17**	.14**	.44**	-.03	.01	-.33**	-.35**	-.36**						
10. Negative mood at work	1.57	.60	-.17**	-.04	-.16**	.02	.08	.17**	-.10*	.03	-.09*	.90				
11. Cognitive engagement	4.24	.78	.07	-.03	.08	-.07	.13**	-.04	.00	-.04	.08	-.35**	.94			
12. Physical engagement	4.32	.74	.10*	-.03	.03	-.04	.13**	-.03	.03	-.06	.05	-.28**	.77**	.94		
13. Job performance	8.86	1.53	.02	-.06	.10*	-.07	.12**	-.10*	.01	.02	.07	-.25**	.41**	.41**	.89	
14. Health	3.14	.89	-.03	-.03	.04	-.06	-.01	-.15**	.14**	.02	-.01	-.36**	.33**	.22**	.28**	.80

Note. N = 542. Internal consistencies display on the diagonal.

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

TABLE 2 Study 1: Role of divorce status as a predictor of work outcomes

Predictor	Negative mood at work		Cognitive engagement		Physical engagement		Job performance		Health	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Control variables										
Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)	-.19**	.05	.09	.07	.17*	.07	.00	.12	-.07	.10
Race (0 = person of color, 1 = White)	-.01	.07	-.09	.09	-.08	.09	-.34*	.17	-.18	.13
Age	-.01**	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00	.01*	.01	.01	.01
Educational attainment	.01	.02	-.06	.03	-.04	.03	-.12*	.06	-.07	.04
Occupational level	.02	.02	.09**	.03	.10**	.03	.14**	.05	.01	.04
Divorce status										
Married/cohabiting and never divorced	-.32**	.08	.09	.10	.13	.10	.35*	.18	.61**	.14
Divorced < 5 years	-.17*	.08	.00	.10	-.02	.10	.28	.18	.35*	.14
Divorced > 5 years	-.20*	.08	.10	.10	.08	.10	.38*	.19	.32*	.15
R ²	.10**		.04*		.04*		.05**		.06**	

N = 542. Divorce in process served as the divorce status reference group. Coefficients are unstandardized.

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

included in the model, the CFA fit statistics were $\chi^2(340) = 1495.61, p < .001$; CFI = .90; RMSEA = .08; SRMR = .06 and SEM path estimates remained the same. The five-factor model demonstrated better fit than a theoretically alternative model in which the two engagement variables loaded onto a single factor ($\chi^2(338) = 1412.09, p < .001$; CFI = .91; RMSEA = .08; SRMR = .06, $\Delta\chi^2(4) = 458.28, p < .001$) and a model in which all items loaded onto a single factor ($\chi^2(344) = 4317.57, p < .001$; CFI = .65; RMSEA = .15; SRMR = .15, $\Delta\chi^2(10) = 3363.76, p < .001$).

Hypotheses 1a-e suggest that divorcing individuals will report compromised work outcomes in comparison to non-divorcing individuals. We conducted latent SEM with divorce status as a predictor (divorcing individuals were the omitted reference group); the work variables as outcomes; and gender, race, age, educational attainment, and occupational level as control variables (see Table 2). The structural model demonstrated good fit to the data ($\chi^2(518) = 1217.59, p < .001$; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .05). Divorcing individuals reported more negative mood at work than the three comparison groups: married/cohabiting and never divorced individuals ($B = -.32, SE = .08, p < .001$), those divorced within 5 years ($B = -.17, SE = .08, p = .02$), and those divorced over 5 years ($B = -.20, SE = .08, p = .01$). Divorcing individuals also indicated poorer self-evaluated job performance than married/cohabiting and never divorced individuals ($B = .35, SE = .18, p = .045$) and individuals divorced over 5 years ($B = .38, SE = .19, p = .04$). In terms of self-evaluated health, divorcing individuals reported worse health outcomes than respondents in all three comparison groups: married/cohabiting and never divorced ($B = .61, SE = .14, p < .001$), divorced within 5 years ($B = .35, SE = .14, p = .01$), and divorced over 5 years ($B = .32, SE = .15, p = .03$). Effect sizes across these models were small, explaining 10% of the variance in negative mood, 5% of the variance in self-evaluated job performance, and 6% of the variance in self-evaluated health. Overall, the results indicate support for Hypotheses 1a and 1e (negative mood and self-evaluated health) and partial support for Hypothesis 1d (self-evaluated job performance). No support was shown for Hypotheses 1b and c (cognitive and physical engagement).

As noted in Study 1 Method, individuals in the process of divorcing completed two items to provide a global assessment of divorcing on their work. As shown in the left column of the Study 1 bar graph in Figure 1, 43.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their work was negatively affected by divorcing (i.e., endorsed "agree" or "strongly

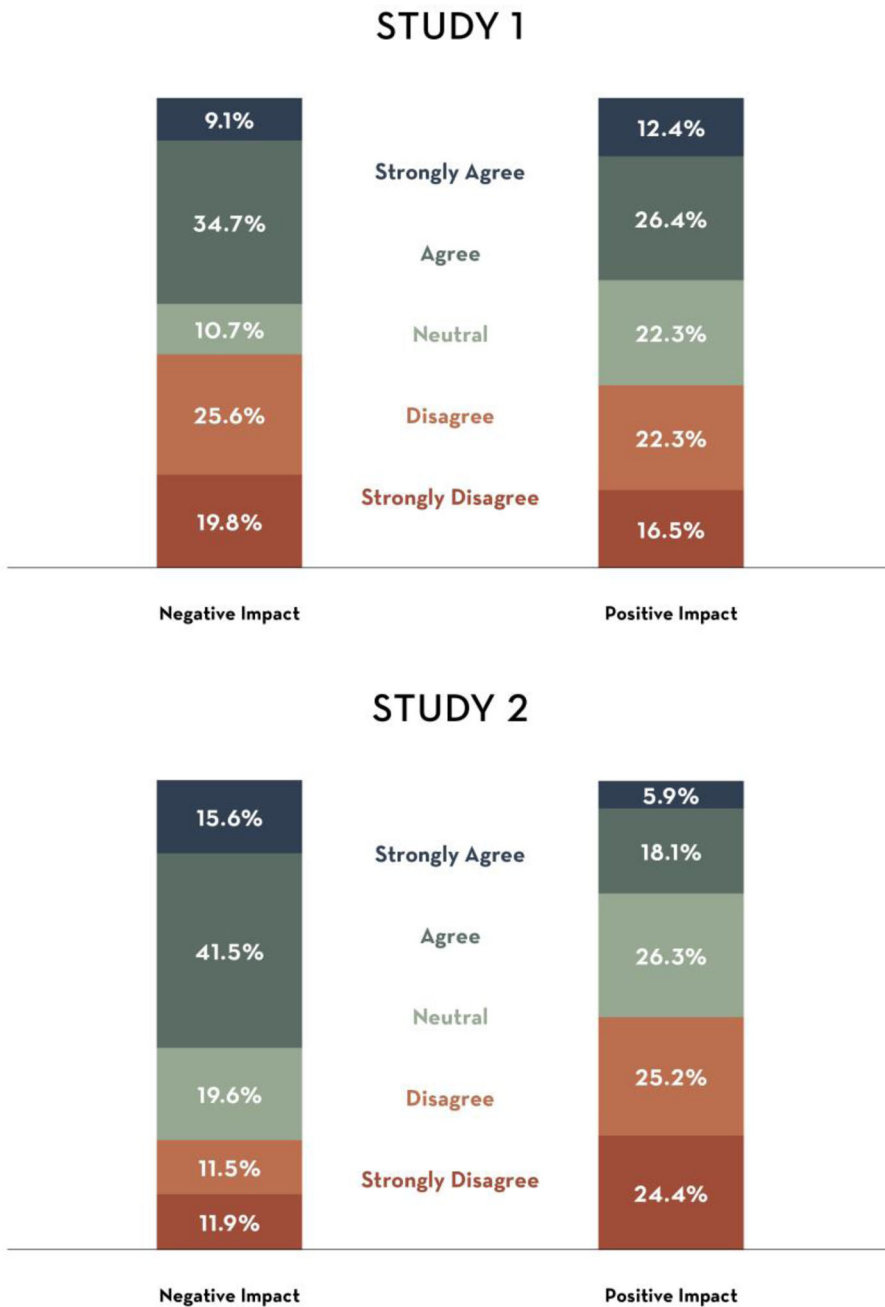


FIGURE 1 Percentage of divorcing individuals indicating negative and positive impact on their work. Note. Study 1 $n = 121$; Study 2, $n = 270$. Column 1 portrays responses to the item: “All things considered, in the last few months my divorce has had a negative impact on my job, work, or career.” Column 2 portrays responses to: “All things considered, in the last few months my divorce has had a positive impact on my job, work, or career.”

agree” for this question). As shown in the right column of the Study 1 bar graph, over a third of participants (38.8%) indicated that divorcing had a positive impact on their work.

To prompt for qualitative assessments of the impact of divorcing on work, we asked individuals two open-ended questions: (1) “Please use this space to share more about how and why your divorce has had a negative impact on your job, work, or career” and (2) “Please use this space to share more about how and why your divorce has had a positive impact on your job, work, or career.” We content analyzed responses for individuals who indicated at least a moderate negative ($n = 61$) or positive ($n = 63$) impact on their job, work, or career.

3.2.1 | Qualitative assessment of negative impact

Responses reflected two major themes and portrayed the vividness of the divorcing experience for these individuals (see Table 3 for illustrative comments). The most dominant theme was *intrusive negative affect at work* (represented in 66% of the negative comments). Individuals used several words and phrases to describe their mood states while at work, including sadness and disappointment; feeling depressed, inadequate, numb, stunned, or hopeless; being emotional, upset, or in emotional pain; worrying; crying; being irritable, angry, short-tempered, or in a bad mood; or being stressed out, exhausted, emotionally drained, or disengaged. Low-arousal emotions (sadness, hopelessness, disengagement, and exhaustion) were the most common (Watson et al., 1999). For example, one individual noted that they had to visit the restroom at work several times to cry:

There are times when I am sad and emotional. I work from home, but last month I had to go into the office. At that time, I saw proof of my spouse’s infidelity and it caused me to not be able to work and visit the restroom several times to cry.

High-arousal emotions (e.g., irritability, short-tempered) were less common, but some individuals indicated that divorcing made them more short-tempered with colleagues and customers. For example, a participant noted, “I’ve been a bit more short with coworkers.” Another key characteristic of these emotions was that they were difficult to regulate. Sample phrases used by participants included “I just can’t seem to get going/motivated,” “I can’t control it,” and “I try to remain professional on the job, but...”

Reduced focus and rumination at work was the second prominent theme (represented in 45% of the negative comments). Illustrative comments are shown in Table 3. Respondents used phrases such as “hard to focus,” “hard to concentrate,” “distracted,” “off my game,” “sidetracked,” and having to “miss work.” A participant noted, “My mind is in a different place; I would rather be home.” Two other respondents echoed the same sentiments, saying “I lose focus and dwell on my kids and my soon to be ex” and “It’s hard for me to focus because all I think about is my divorce.” Several comments specifically indicated that these difficulties in concentrating stemmed from negative mood states and rumination about the divorce, one’s estranged spouse, children, finances, or divorce details.

In interpreting the emergent themes, we noted that the intrusive negative affect and reduced focus and rumination mentioned by participants aligned with the cognitive-emotional experience of *grief* (longing, emotional pain, shock, lack of acceptance, anger, rumination, lack of interest/pleasure, depressed mood, and low energy), which commonly accompanies relationship loss (Emery, 2012; Prigerson et al., 1995). In addition, the comments illustrated resource loss spirals stemming from divorce-related grief, consistent with COR theory. For example, compromised mood at work often produced problems with concentration: “I’m depressed a lot, so I’m having some difficulty focusing on my day-to-day tasks.” Respondents also noted that their compromised mood, reduced focus, or rumination caused other performance issues such as making mistakes at work, socializing less, or losing or changing jobs. Example comments included “I’ve been more distracted causing mistakes and having to take more time with it” and “I would not have lost my job if it were not for the divorce and the stress.”

TABLE 3 Study 1: Negative impact of divorcing on work: Themes and example comments

Theme	Key characteristics	Example comments
Intrusive negative affect at work	Low emotional arousal (sadness, hopelessness, apathy, lower engagement, low energy, exhaustion)	<i>"Well I'm no psychologist, but I think crippling depression is slowing down my ability to socialize with my coworkers and supervisor. Normally the business is a friendly place and I feel like I'm sticking out like a sore thumb."</i>
		<i>"I still work as well as I can, but it feels a little hopeless."</i>
		<i>"I just can't seem to get going/motivated. I feel kind of numb."</i>
	High emotional arousal (irritability, being short-tempered)	<i>"Emotionally drained and no extra energy on my work."</i>
		<i>"I find myself being a little short with the customers and not as sympathetic towards their plights. I don't mean to be that way. I make an effort to cheer up but it is hard."</i>
		<i>"My divorce process has increased my irritability and I have taken days off to meet with my lawyer."</i>
		<i>"It makes me more short tempered and lowers my fuse."</i>
	Difficulty with regulation of emotions	<i>"I cry sometimes at work, I can't control it."</i>
		<i>"I try to remain professional on the job, but there have been times where I cry in the restroom at work."</i>
		<i>"Initially I was under so much stress not only would I break down and cry on a regular basis I was quick to lose my temper. My husband... constantly lies in court and is doing everything to prolong the divorce in an effort to bleed me dry of money... I can't sleep well and I have little energy to do things when I am off work. Even at work I would rather stay home and I have a job I love. The stress of the divorce... is taking its toll on me."</i>
Reduced focus and rumination at work	Loss of focus	<i>"I am less focused on the job."</i>
		<i>"I cannot think or even focus very long on much of anything except for my divorce and how my life has become chaotic and hectic and very slowly falling apart."</i>
		<i>"I haven't been able to fully concentrate at work and have been sidetracked because my life is so crazy right now."</i>
	Rumination and distraction	<i>"I've been worried and distracted so I don't think I did my best at work or anything else."</i>
		<i>"The things my ex-wife said during the divorce proceedings makes me so upset, I can't focus on anything else for weeks. It's like a constant ringing in my ears that makes me want to plot revenge rather than focusing on my well-being."</i>
		<i>"He cheated and it broke me. I have so many moments where I blame myself and my insecurities have increased, I'm hurting still and I know that I'm not at my best at work. It's hard to focus on my job at times. I'm dealing with a custody battle which has been the worst experience ever."</i>
		<i>"I find it hard to focus when there are so many things going on in my personal life. It definitely splits my focus."</i>

3.2.2 | Qualitative assessment of positive impact

Two major themes emerged reflecting ways in which other individuals in the sample felt that divorcing had a positive impact on their job, work, or career (see Table 4). The first theme was *spending more time, focus, and energy on work and career* (70% of the positive comments). For some individuals, sharing child custody (i.e., not always having to be home for childcare reasons or meals) and not being in a relationship meant that they had more time available. Others indicated that they were able to use work as an escape and distraction from the stress of divorcing (i.e., a chance to get away from the “negative stuff going on”). Many respondents noted that divorcing was a relief because their previous relationship was dysfunctional. For these individuals, divorcing signified the removal of relationship stress, having less on their mind, and less rumination about their relationship. This meant that they could focus their energies and time on work. One respondent noted that there was now “no need to worry about” whether their ex was “drunk at home with a lit cigarette.” Another individual added:

It has allowed me to get much more done. Prior to the divorce I spent a lot of time and energy trying to maintain and fix the relationship and that took away from work. Now, it's easier and I can focus on the job more.

The second theme was that of *renewed work and career motivation*, as represented in 29% of the positive comments. This theme is similar to the above in that there was now an increased focus on work. However, these comments also indicated a fresh and new resolve to do better at work, an *amplified* dedication and passion for career goals, and *using the divorce experience as a time of renewal or opportunity for change*. Words and phrases used to describe this renewed focus included “striving to be a better employee,” “liberated me,” and “helped me realize I want something more.” For example, in addition to the comments shown in Table 4, one participant remarked, “My divorce has turned my attention towards my career and allowed me to really focus my energy there. I am striving to be a better employee and further my career goals.”

In stark contrast to the reactions displayed in Table 3, the reactions in Table 4 were mostly absent of backward-focused divorce-related grief. Instead, these depictions were full of empowerment, positivity, and forward-looking thoughts and reactions. The lower levels of grief seemed to allow these individuals to avoid the negative outcomes at work that others were facing. Instead, the positive qualitative comments illustrated resource gain spirals, in which improvements in time, energy, focus, or renewed motivation produced a positive impact at work.

3.3 | Study 1 discussion

Supporting the common depiction of divorce as a stressful life event, Study 1 provides evidence that undergoing a divorce is related to negative spillover at work. Almost 44% of individuals undergoing divorce agreed or strongly agreed that being in the process of a divorce had a negative impact on their job, career, or work. Our quantitative findings illustrate that divorcing individuals reported more negative mood at work and lower self-evaluated health than individuals married/cohabiting and never divorced, those divorced within 5 years, and those divorced over 5 years. Divorcing individuals also indicated poorer self-evaluated job performance than married/cohabiting and never divorced individuals and individuals divorced over 5 years. Our qualitative findings shown in Table 3 and described in the results illustrate resource loss in association with the experience of grief (longing, emotional pain, shock, lack of acceptance, anger, rumination, lack of interest/pleasure, depressed mood, and low energy) alongside the ending of a relationship (Emery, 2012).

Extending the common depiction of divorce as a stressful life event, Study 1 provides new evidence that divorcing can have positive implications for individuals' work. Nearly 39% of individuals undergoing divorce agreed or strongly

TABLE 4 Study 1: Positive impact of divorcing on work: Themes and example comments

Theme	Key characteristics	Example comments
Spending more time, focus and energy on work and career	More available time, or more focus and energy, in general	<i>"I've had more time to focus on it and have become really great at it."</i>
		<i>"I have had more time to focus and work late."</i>
	Use of work as an escape	<i>"I'm able to focus all of my energy on work."</i>
		<i>"It has made me work more to keep myself distracted."</i>
Removal of dysfunction allows more time, focus, and energy at work	Use of work as an escape	<i>"I find myself avoiding some of the social aspects of my life and so I spend more hours working than normal, which IS beneficial."</i>
		<i>"I use work as a distraction from the negative stuff going on. I have been working long hours and even weekends at times."</i>
		<i>"Prior to the divorce I spent a lot of time and energy trying to maintain and fix the relationship and that took away from work. Now, it's easier and I can focus on the job more."</i>
		<i>"Because now I can be me. Less on my mind being in an unhappy marriage and now I can focus on my work and career. I can now get back in school and be successful in my job by furthering my education."</i>
Renewed work and career motivation	Amplified motivation and striving	<i>"There has been a weight lifted and I am working more. Due to the pressure being gone from the degrading relationship, I've been able to have a clear mind for work. There are some bad days too, but most days are productive."</i>
		<i>"I focused too much on my wife, I was working FOR her not me, I didn't do as good of a job because she was a distraction. She always played games with my head, often times ruining the mood for the entire day not even 10 minutes after I woke up. Some days at work I knew I would be doing better if my mind was clear and her constant harassment over my thoughts was gone, and these past few months have really confirmed that suspicion. I've been working so much more, so much better, and so much faster ever since. And I'm not even burned out like I was before while I wasn't even working as hard or as long as I am now."</i>
	New focus on self	<i>"I am striving to be a better employee and further my career goals."</i>
		<i>"My divorce has turned my attention towards my career and allowed me to really focus my energy there. I am striving to be a better employee and further my career goals."</i>
Stimulus for career change	New focus on self	<i>"It has honestly motivated me to be better."</i>
		<i>"I think the divorce has liberated me and given me a reason to pursue success even more."</i>
		<i>"It has helped me realize I want something more. It just seems like a good time for change."</i>
Stimulus for career change	Stimulus for career change	<i>"It has inspired me to get back out in to the 'working world' and find a job that would make me happy for me and not my 'family'."</i>
		<i>"My divorce process has had a healthy impact on my job and career because it inspired me to look for more challenging work, room for advancement, and a more positive and social work environment."</i>

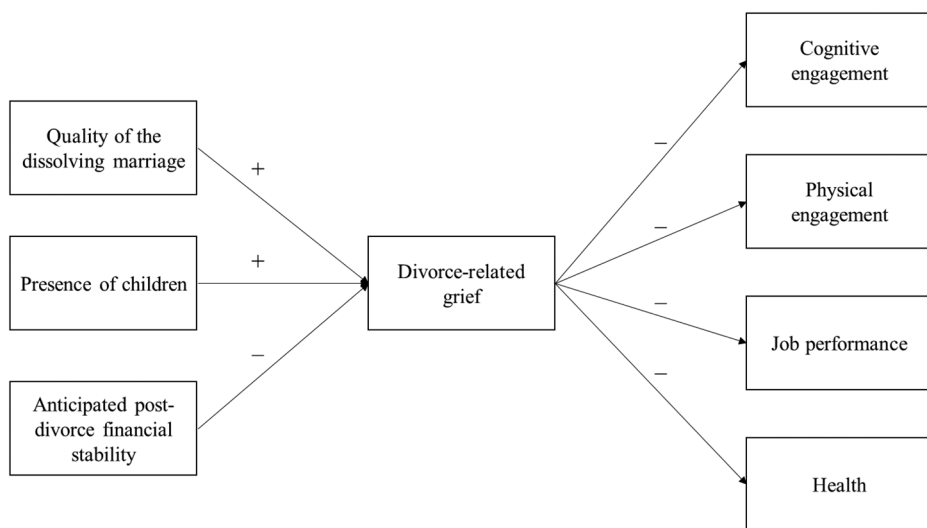


FIGURE 2 Study 2: Hypothesized context-specific resource loss model for divorcing individuals

agreed that divorcing had a positive impact on their job, work, or career. Our qualitative findings shown in Table 4 illustrate resource gains including spending more time, focus, and energy on work and career and renewed work and career motivation. Supporting previous findings that some individuals experience less grief following relationship loss (Bonanno et al., 2002), the positive qualitative comments shown in Table 4 were remarkably free of the backward-focused grief meta-theme permeating the negative comments in Table 3. Lower levels of grief accompany relationship dissolution when individuals do not mourn the relationship or when they are able to resolve, accept, or cope with their grief more quickly or easily (Emery, 2012; Pine, 1989).

No differences were found between divorcing and non-divorcing groups in terms of cognitive and physical engagement at work. It is likely that the tendency for some individuals to have negative spillover and others to have positive spillover explains the lack of significant findings for engagement. Specifically, if some divorcing individuals experience less engagement at work and others experience more engagement at work, there will be no discernable trend.

An important next line of inquiry is to empirically examine what factors explain whether divorcing has negative or positive spillover at work. Based on the qualitative findings from Study 1, we propose that divorce-related grief is a dominant form of psychological resource depletion experienced by divorcing individuals at greater or lesser levels, and that the extent of experienced grief will differentiate (at least in part) those with more negative versus more positive family-to-work spillover. Whereas other possible focal variables may differentiate individuals' experiences (a point we return to in the Discussion), we focus on divorce-related grief in Study 2 given its dominant presence among those experiencing compromised work outcomes and its absence or low presence among those experiencing positive work outcomes.

4 | STUDY 2: WHAT FACTORS DIFFERENTIATE THE DIVORCING EXPERIENCE AT WORK? DO INDIVIDUALS SHOW SIGNS OF RECOVERY?

In Study 2, we draw upon COR theory to develop a grief-based family-to-work spillover model (see Figure 2) and test our proposition using quantitative methods and a new sample. Specifically, we assess the experience of divorce-related grief and use it as a predictor of reported cognitive and physical engagement at work, job performance, and general health (i.e., all Study 1 outcomes minus negative mood at work which conceptually overlaps with the experience of divorce-related grief).

Further extending the findings of Study 1, our model examines the role of key resources in the divorcing context that may be threatened or lost, triggering higher or lower levels of grief. COR theory denotes the importance of understanding the role that context-specific resources play in stressful life events. When studying specific stressful events that are “outside of the realm of everyday experiences,” it is useful to examine the loss or gain of resources that are specific to that context (Hobfoll et al., 1995, p. 29). When salient resources are removed, reduced, or threatened, feelings of loss and grief are typically elicited (Emery, 2012). In the divorcing context, the extent of losing a valued lover and companion, concerns about one’s children and seeing them, and financial stability are depicted as particularly salient resources (Emery, 2012). These three resources have also been highlighted as relevant to family-to-work spillover (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Ragins et al., 2014). We delineate more about these resources and their theoretical linkage to experienced grief while divorcing and to family-to-work spillover below. Finally, in Study 2 we also examine recovery in work outcomes by assessing changes from when individuals are in the process of divorce and after their divorce has completed.

4.1 | Divorce-related grief and context-specific losses as predictors of work outcomes

Divorce-related grief refers to the cognitive-emotional reactions that frequently accompany divorcing, including longing, emotional pain, shock, lack of acceptance, anger, rumination, a lack of interest/pleasure, depressed mood, and low energy (Emery, 2012; Papa et al., 2014). We portray divorce-related grief as an experience originating in the family domain. Despite little empirical evidence as to the influence of divorce-related grief on work outcomes, research suggests that the extent of divorce-related grief varies across individuals. Divorcing is associated with more intense psychological reactions for some individuals than others, with commensurate difficulties in adapting and self-regulating (Krumrei et al., 2007; Papa et al., 2014). Although not focusing on grief stemming from divorcing, scholars have highlighted that the experience of grief invades numerous aspects of peoples’ lives, including their subjective well-being, social networks, and work (Hazen, 2008; Kanov, 2021). For example, non-work morning grief (arising from a loss such as a death or identity) spills into the workday, ultimately resulting in burnout (Stillwell & Duffy, 2021). Individuals with higher levels of grief after the death of a loved one may be more preoccupied and withdrawn while working and experience lower productivity and mental health (Eyeteमितan, 1998; Maitlis & Petriglieri, 2019; Stein & Winokuer, 1989). For some, the experience of divorce-related grief can be as impactful as death-related grief, encumbering day-to-day functioning (Papa et al., 2014; Yárnoz-Yaben, 2017).

Integrating these findings with insights from COR theory, divorce-related grief represents psychological resource depletion in the family domain which makes individuals vulnerable to negative spillover in their work domain (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Psychological resource depletion strains individuals’ capacity to invest resources, reducing the ability to be absorbed in and dedicated to multiple spheres of life including work (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Hobfoll, 2011). Psychological resource depletion signifies reduced individual vigor, mental resilience, and ability to initiate required activities (Hobfoll, 2011). In contrast, individuals with greater psychological resources are safeguarded from negative spillover, as they are more capable of resource protection and investment, facilitating task absorption, dedication, and vigor. Based on available research as well as COR theory, we expect that divorcing individuals experiencing higher (vs. lower) levels of divorce-related grief will report more negative (vs. positive) outcomes at work (e.g., lower cognitive and physical engagement, job performance, and lower general health).

COR theory emphasizes the utility of digging deeper into stressful life experiences to understand context-specific resource losses that contribute to the resource depletion experienced during specific life events (Hobfoll et al., 1995). It is the experience of actual or threatened loss, not an event or experience per se, that triggers resource loss spirals (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018). As reviewed above, divorcing can involve many resource losses. In this initial examination, we examine the role of three context-specific resources while divorcing—quality of the dissolving marriage, the presence of children, and anticipated post-divorce financial stability. These three variables

have been highlighted in theory as especially relevant for explaining elicited levels of divorce-related loss and grief (Emery, 2012), as we elaborate further below.

The *quality of the dissolving marriage* is reflective of the extent to which a divorcing individual perceives that their marriage was characterized by more positivity rather than negativity. A good marriage, explicitly named as a contextual resource by COR theory, provides an umbrella of valued benefits enhancing one's broader-life emotional support, companionship, and intimacy (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). During times of stress, higher quality marriages provide proximal and consistent social support during the ups and downs that can occur in life (Cutrona, 1996), containing negative family-to-work spillover (Byron, 2005). As such, being in a high-quality marriage promotes positive work outcomes such as job satisfaction and creativity at work, as well as higher mental and physical health (Heller & Watson, 2005; Robles et al., 2014; Tang et al., 2017). In contrast, marriages perceived to be of lower quality can be a deleterious draw on resources, especially if they involve tension, conflict, criticism, and other indicators of poor communication and lack of love (Rettig & Bubolz, 1983).

Given its multifaceted psychologically insulating attributes, the *unraveling* of a higher quality marriage is more likely to be associated with psychological resource depletion than the unraveling of a lower quality marriage. When the quality of the dissolving marriage is higher, the loss of companionship, intimacy, and support, as well as one's identity as a spouse, can each spark grief. When these losses occur together, the incidence of grief is particularly likely. Consistent with this logic, Carr et al. (2000) reported the extent of grief due to becoming widowed to be greater for individuals with higher quality dissolved marriages. We also expect that the quality of the dissolving marriage is associated with reduced ability to be absorbed in and dedicated to other spheres of life. Research suggests that the dissolution of higher quality marriages is associated with declines in happiness, whereas the dissolution of lower quality marriages is associated with increases in happiness (Amato & Hohmann-Marriot, 2007). Taken together, we expect perceptions as to the quality of the dissolving marriage to be positively associated with divorce-related grief and, consistent with negative family-to-work spillover, indirectly (negatively) impact work outcomes.

Hypothesis 2: The quality of a divorcing individual's dissolving marriage will be indirectly negatively related to their (a) cognitive engagement, (b) physical engagement, (c) self-evaluated job performance, and (d) self-evaluated health through higher levels of divorce-related grief.

The *presence of children* in the lives of divorcing individuals is another context-specific resource that may influence the experience of divorce-related loss or the threat of loss and thus grief (Emery, 2012). Within COR theory, children's health, a good relationship with one's children, and time with loved ones are listed as key contextual resources (Hobfoll, 2001). Divorcing individuals with children are more likely to encounter threats to or actual loss of these resources. In describing key sources of grief during divorce, Emery (2012) notes: "Divorce makes many parents fear they will lose their children; it most certainly means lost time and experiences with them. Divorce also may feel like the loss of your children's childhood, a shattering of dreams of giving children a loving, carefree, and innocent upbringing" (p. 40). Ruminating over, witnessing, and potentially contributing to the deterioration of one's children's well-being is psychologically painful and a source of experienced grief (Emery, 2012). In addition, children of divorce experience their own grief process, potentially amplifying the grief of the parent (Emery & Dillon, 1994; Sbarra & Borelli, 2019). Engaging in an exchange of children with one's previous spouse can also trigger a grief spiral stemming from having to interact with one's ex-partner (Emery, 2012).

Although some scholars have suggested that having children may protect against grief intensity upon the passing of one's spouse, parent, or child, empirical evidence has not supported this contention (Bonanno et al., 2002, 2004). Specific to the divorcing context, research has found that parents take more paid sick leave and report lower levels of mental health and subjective well-being while divorcing than childless individuals (Blekesaune & Barrett, 2005; Leopold & Kalmijn, 2016; Williams & Dunne-Bryant, 2006). More general work-family research suggests that the presence of children can produce negative family-to-work spillover (Byron, 2005) as well as reduce positive family-to-work

spillover (Lapierre et al., 2018). Taken together, we expect the presence of children to be positively associated with divorce-related grief and to indirectly (negatively) impact work outcomes.

Hypothesis 3: The presence of children in the life of a divorcing individual will be indirectly negatively related to their (a) cognitive engagement, (b) physical engagement, (c) self-evaluated job performance, and (d) self-evaluated health through higher levels of divorce-related grief.

Beyond interpersonal loss, divorcing also often results in a decline in material resources. *Anticipated post-divorce financial stability* refers to an individual's self-assessed ease or comfort living on the household income they will have after divorce. Within COR theory, financial stability and having adequate income are listed as key resources (Hobfoll, 2001). Although individuals with chronically lower incomes experience more financial difficulties due to financial vulnerability (Hobfoll, 2011; Hogendoorn et al., 2020), assessing one's perceived congruence between financial resources and needs and wants entails a subjective calculation (Meuris & Leana, 2018). From a COR theory perspective, when a crisis event is accompanied by an acute loss of financial resources, it may produce distress even among affluent individuals who do not have chronic material shortages (Ennis et al., 2000; Wanberg et al., 2020). Because people tend to adapt to their material circumstances, relinquishing previously available financial resources can be psychologically painful (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002). The relationship between anticipated post-divorce financial stability and divorce-related grief has not been previously studied, but lower perceived instrumental resources (including financial support) following the death of a spouse is related to more intense grief responses (Bonanno et al., 2002, 2004). Financial instability, reflecting lost or threatened material resources, is also associated with negative family-to-work spillover (Ragins et al., 2014). Based on the premises of COR theory and the work-family literature, we expect that lower anticipated post-divorce financial stability will elicit divorce-related grief and bring about negative family-to-work spillover. In contrast, higher anticipated post-divorce financial stability represents a larger resource left over once divorcing completes and is expected to be related to less grief and family-to-work spillover. Thus, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 4: A divorcing individual's anticipated post-divorce financial stability will be indirectly positively related to their (a) cognitive engagement, (b) physical engagement, (c) self-evaluated job performance, and (d) self-evaluated health through lower levels of divorce-related grief.

4.2 | A longitudinal resource perspective of divorce and recovery

We now turn our attention to the process of recovery. Longitudinal studies of recovery for individuals following divorce have been scarce and limited to the examination of well-being and life satisfaction (Clark & Georgellis, 2013; Luhmann et al., 2012; van Scheppingen & Leopold, 2020). Investigators have contemplated whether divorcing impacts individual well-being and life satisfaction only in the short term (i.e., representing a crisis with only short-term effects) versus the long term (e.g., representing a chronic strain due to the permanent loss of certain resources). Findings suggest that individuals achieve at least partial recovery from divorcing. For example, an analysis of eight longitudinal studies illustrated an upward trend in well-being following divorce completion (Luhmann et al., 2012). Another examination showed that life satisfaction of divorcees declined before divorce and further during the divorce process, with gradual increases following divorce completion (van Scheppingen & Leopold, 2020). The conclusion of a divorce provides relief from acute uncertainty, navigating negotiations, accommodating divorce meetings, and covering divorce-related expenses (e.g., setting up a new home, attorney fees). From a COR theory perspective, strains on mood, energy, attention, time, and money are at least partially relieved, unleashing "energies" resources (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). In addition, some recovery may occur due to individuals adapting to the stressors of the divorce process and developing new coping strategies (van Scheppingen & Leopold, 2020). As the

substantial ambiguity, uncertainty, and accompanying threat of resource loss dissipates, individuals can increase their focus on acquisition, investment, and recovery of resources (Hobfoll, 2011). Such processes are consistent with reduced divorce-related family-to-work negative spillover and increased positive spillover. Thus, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 5: Individuals will show signs of recovery on work outcomes after divorce completion, as demonstrated by increases in (a) cognitive engagement, (b) physical engagement, (c) self-evaluated job performance, and (d) self-evaluated health.

4.3 | Study 2 method

4.3.1 | Participants and procedure

Upon enrollment, the participants in Study 2 were divorcing, working full time, and residing in the U.S. or Canada. A total of 1723 study invitations were mailed to divorcing individuals based on court records in three Minnesota counties, with supplemental invitations sent through community outreach (e.g., lawyers gave invites to eligible clients and we attended a conference for individuals going through a divorce) ("Divorce and Work Outcomes" [University of Minnesota] IRB #1511S80702). Individuals completed up to three online surveys. The Time 1 survey, assessing quality of the dissolving marriage, presence of children, anticipated post-divorce financial stability, divorce-related grief, and demographics, was completed by 281 individuals. Times 2 and 3 surveys were repeated assessments of work outcomes. The survey of work outcomes while divorcing (Time 2) was distributed 2 weeks after the Time 1 survey to minimize common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003) and received 275 responses (97.9%). One year later (Time 3) 248 (88.3%) participants self-rated work outcomes again.

Participation was incentivized with an e-gift card for each survey and entry into a drawing for a \$300 e-gift card. Of the 281 participants included in analyses, 70.3% were female, 86.8% were White, the average age was 42.45 years ($SD = 9.34$), and 70.3% had a bachelor's degree or higher. The average occupational level was 2.07 or "team leader" ($SD = 1.25$; 46.3% of respondents were non-supervisors, 22.8% were team leaders, 14.2% were first-level supervisors, 11.0% were higher-level management, and 5.7% were top executives. On average, respondents had been married 13.26 years ($SD = 8.92$) and divorcing for 8.04 months ($SD = 8.99$).

4.3.2 | Measures

Time 1 Measures. *Quality of the dissolving marriage* was measured with six items from Brim et al. (2010; 1 = never, 5 = almost always, $\alpha = .83$). Items were reverse scored so that high scores indicated a dissolving marriage perceived as higher in quality. Respondents were asked to consider the course of their overall marriage, responding to items such as "how often did your spouse criticize you?" and "how often did he or she let you down when you were counting on him or her?" The *presence of children* was measured with a dummy variable indicating child(ren) younger than 18 years (0 = no, 1 = yes). *Anticipated post-divorce financial stability* was assessed with the item "How difficult do you think it will be to live on your total household income after your divorce?" (1 = extremely difficult or impossible, 5 = not at all difficult), adapted from Vinokur and Caplan (1987). *Divorce-related grief* over the past month was measured with nine items adapted from Prigerson et al. (1995) and two supplemental contextualized items (1 = never, 5 = always; $\alpha = .93$) (see Appendix). Finally, and consistent with Study 1, individuals completed two items on 5-point Likert scales to self-report the impact of divorcing on their work.

Repeated Measures (Times 2 and 3). Cognitive and physical engagement, self-evaluated job performance, and self-evaluated health were assessed using scales from Study 1.

Control Variables. Control variables were assessed at Time 1. Consistent with Study 1, we incorporated *gender* (0 = male, 1 = female), *race* (0 = person of color, 1 = White), *age*, *educational attainment* (1 = high school/G.E.D., 5 = Ph.D./M.D./J.D.) and *occupational level* (1 = non-supervisor, 5 = top executive) into our tests of Hypotheses 2–4. In these hypothesis tests we also controlled for the number of *months divorcing*, in order to hold constant the time that individuals were undergoing divorce, as well as *initiator status* (0 = not sole initiator, 1 = sole initiator). Evidence is mixed in terms of the influence of initiator status on divorce outcomes (Steiner et al., 2011; Sweeney & Horwitz, 2001; Wang & Amato, 2000). However, we expected that initiator status may be related to our proximal outcome of divorce-related grief and thus controlled for it to attempt ruling it out as an alternative explanation for observed effects.

4.3.3 | Analytical strategy

As in Study 1, quantitative analyses were conducted in Mplus 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). We used CFAs to assess construct distinctiveness. We report the Chi-square statistic, CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR model fit indices (Kline, 2016). We tested Hypotheses 2–4 using fully latent SEM. We assessed Hypothesis 5 with latent change score (LCS) analysis (McArdle, 2009).

4.4 | Study 2 results

4.4.1 | Descriptives and CFAs

Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations of Study 2 variables are presented in Table 5. To corroborate the findings of Study 1, Study 2 participants were also asked to evaluate the negative and positive impact of divorcing on their work (see Figure 1 bottom panel). In response to the question “All things considered, in the last few months my divorce has had a negative impact on my job, work, or career,” 41.5% agreed and 15.6% strongly agreed. In response to the item “All things considered, in the last few months my divorce has had a positive impact on my job, work, or career,” 18.1% agreed and 5.9% strongly agreed. A larger percentage of this sample reported a negative impact of divorcing on work than in Study 1 and fewer participants agreed that there was a positive impact. At the same time, these results lend further support to our claim that there are positive, as well as negative, impacts of divorcing on work.

To demonstrate construct distinctiveness, we conducted CFA with all multiple-item constructs assessed at Time 1 (quality of the dissolving marriage and divorce-related grief) and Time 2 (cognitive engagement, physical engagement, job performance, and health). To improve measurement model fit while considering only theoretically justified modifications, we allowed the error terms of six pairs of similarly worded, within-factor, items to covary (Brown, 2006). Covaried error terms included “I feel stunned or dazed over the breakup” and “I feel disbelief over the breakup” from the divorce-related grief scale and “I strived as hard as I could to complete my job” and “I tried my hardest to perform well on my job” from the physical engagement scale. The resultant six-factor model demonstrated good fit, $\chi^2(539) = 987.10, p < .001$; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .06. Without any error term covariance included in the model, the CFA fit statistics are $\chi^2(545) = 1366.49, p < .001$; CFI = .89; RMSEA = .07; SRMR = .06 and SEM path estimates remain the same. The six-factor model demonstrated superior fit to an alternative model with the two engagement variables (i.e., the most highly correlated factors) loaded onto a single factor: $\chi^2(544) = 1417.49, p < .001$; CFI = .88; RMSEA = .08; SRMR = .07, $\Delta\chi^2(5) = 430.39, p < .001$.

TABLE 5 Study 2: Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)	.70	.46												
2. Race (0 = person of color, 1 = White)	.87	.34	.00											
3. Age	42.45	9.34	.12*	.09										
4. Educational attainment	2.93	1.01	-.04	.10	.05									
5. Occupational level	2.07	1.25	-.14*	-.04	.21**	.10								
6. Months divorcing	8.04	8.99	.05	.01	.13*	-.03	-.01							
7. Initiator status (0 = not sole initiator, 1 = sole initiator)	.56	.50	.23*	-.12	.02	.01	-.08	.06						
8. Quality of the dissolving marriage	2.44	.75	-.12	.13*	.09	.12*	.12*	.00	-.26**	(.83)				
9. Presence of children (0 = no, 1 = yes)	.72	.45	-.01	-.01	-.30**	.06	-.01	.00	.06	-.21**				
10. Anticipated post-divorce financial stability	3.70	1.02	-.02	-.13*	.04	.09	.14*	-.01	.02	.17**	-.18**			
11. Divorce-related grief	2.42	.93	-.06	.10	.08	.05	.02	-.05	-.35**	.18**	-.14*	-.13*	(.93)	
12. Cognitive engagement (T2)	3.33	1.03	.05	-.13*	.08	.07	.04	-.06	.10	.06	-.13*	.11	-.27**	(.95)
13. Physical engagement (T2)	3.84	.92	.04	.01	.07	.10	-.01	-.04	.13*	-.04	-.11	.03	-.22**	.71**
14. Job performance (T2)	8.12	1.78	.10	-.19**	-.03	.04	.00	-.06	.02	.00	-.06	.07	-.18**	.54**
15. Health (T2)	2.58	.88	-.08	-.03	-.07	.06	.11	.09	.01	.13*	.09	.21**	-.37**	.38**
16. Cognitive engagement (T3)	3.71	1.05	.09	-.07	-.08	.07	.00	-.08	.00	.07	-.18**	.11	-.14*	.39**
17. Physical engagement (T3)	4.09	.92	.17**	-.05	-.03	.09	-.01	-.05	.06	-.01	-.12	.09	-.13*	.33**
18. Job performance (T3)	8.35	1.95	.15*	-.03	-.04	.04	.05	-.02	.02	.06	-.03	.10	-.13*	.26**
19. Health (T3)	3.02	.92	.04	.00	-.07	.03	.14*	.01	.07	-.07	.06	.16*	-.25**	.20**

(Continues)

TABLE 5 (Continued)

Variable	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)							
2. Race (0 = person of color, 1 = white)							
3. Age							
4. Educational attainment							
5. Occupational level							
6. Months divorcing							
7. Initiator status (0 = not sole initiator, 1 = sole initiator)							
8. Quality of the dissolving marriage							
9. Presence of children (0 = no, 1 = yes)							
10. Anticipated post-divorce financial stability							
11. Divorce-related grief							
12. Cognitive engagement (T2)							
13. Physical engagement (T2)		(.92)					
14. Job performance (T2)	.57**	(.92)					
15. Health (T2)	.26**	.31**	(.78)				
16. Cognitive engagement (T3)	.36**	.34**	.12	(.95)			
17. Physical engagement (T3)	.42**	.37**	.07	.80**	(.94)		
18. Job performance (T3)	.17**	.42**	.19**	.53**	.53**	(.92)	
19. Health (T3)	.05	.19**	.49**	.40**	.22**	.40**	(.81)

Note. $N = 281$, specific N 's vary for reasons such as participants responding to only one of Time 2 or Time 3 surveys. Internal consistencies display on the diagonal.

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

4.4.2 | Hypothesis tests

Hypotheses 2–4 suggest that divorce-related grief mediates the relationship between three context-specific resources (quality of the dissolving marriage, presence of children, and anticipated post-divorce financial stability) and work outcomes. The corresponding structural model fit the data well, $\chi^2(809) = 1395.26, p < .001$; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .06. As displayed in the first column of Table 6, quality of the dissolving marriage ($B = .13, SE = .06, p = .04$), the presence of children ($B = -.18, SE = .09, p = .04$), and anticipated post-divorce financial stability ($B = -.09, SE = .04, p = .01$) were significantly related to divorce-related grief. As detailed in columns 2 through 5, divorce-related grief was significantly negatively related to cognitive engagement ($B = -.57, SE = .13, p < .001$), physical engagement ($B = -.40, SE = .11, p < .001$), self-evaluated job performance ($B = -.65, SE = .20, p = .001$), and self-evaluated health ($B = -.70, SE = .12, p < .001$).

The estimated indirect effects of quality of the dissolving marriage, presence of children, and anticipated post-divorce financial stability, through divorce-related grief, on cognitive engagement, physical engagement, self-evaluated job performance, and self-evaluated health are reported in Table 7. We estimated indirect effects following Shrout and Bolger (2002). An indirect effect is significant when the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (95% BCB CI) excludes zero. In support of Hypothesis 2, the estimated indirect effects and their 95% BCB CIs of the quality of the dissolving marriage, through divorce-related grief, on work outcomes were $-.08 [-.18, -.01]$ for cognitive engagement, $-.05 [-.13, -.01]$ for physical engagement, $-.09 [-.24, -.01]$ for self-evaluated job performance, and $-.09 [-.20, -.01]$ for self-evaluated health. With respect to Hypothesis 3, the estimated indirect effects and their 95% BCB CIs of the presence of children, through divorce-related grief, on work outcomes were $.10 [.01, .23]$ for cognitive engagement, $.07 [.01, .17]$ for physical engagement, $.12 [.01, .28]$ for self-evaluated job performance, and $.13 [.003, .27]$ for self-evaluated health. These results support mediation but in a positive direction from the presence of children to work outcomes, which contradicts our prediction. In support of Hypothesis 4, the estimated indirect effects and 95% BCB CIs of anticipated post-divorce financial stability, through divorce-related grief, on work outcomes were $.05 [.02, .11]$ for cognitive engagement, $.04 [.01, .08]$ for physical engagement, $.06 [.02, .14]$ for self-evaluated job performance, and $.07 [.02, .13]$ for self-evaluated health. Our process model explained 19% of the variance in divorce-related grief, 16% of the variance in cognitive engagement, 10% of the variance in physical engagement, 11% of the variance in self-evaluated job performance, and 30% of the variance in self-evaluated health.

Hypothesis 5 posits that individuals who complete their divorces will show recovery at work, as demonstrated by increases in cognitive and physical engagement, self-evaluated job performance, and self-evaluated health. To test this hypothesis, we focused on those respondents with a completed divorce at Time 3. Tests of measurement equivalence showed good fit to the data and supported configural and metric ($\Delta\chi^2 = 14.19, \Delta df = 14, p = .436$) but not scalar invariance ($\Delta\chi^2 = 87.48, \Delta df = 18, p < .001$). In other words, the factor structure and loadings of work outcomes were equivalent from Time 2 to Time 3 but intercepts were not. This is consistent with our expectations that work outcomes would increase from the time of being in the divorce process to 1 year later. We followed Grimm et al. (2017) in specifying a null LCS model to assess whether changes in work outcomes had occurred. A latent change score as applied to our model represents the difference between Time 2 and Time 3 (Time 3 = Time 2 + change). The fit for this model was acceptable ($\chi^2[638] = 1281.39, CFI = .91, RMSEA = .07$). As shown in Table 8, on average, individuals reported significant increases in cognitive engagement (mean change in cognitive engagement [$\mu_{\Delta Cog}$] = $.45, SE = .07, p < .001$), physical engagement ($\mu_{\Delta phys} = .33, SE = .06, p < .001$), self-evaluated job performance ($\mu_{\Delta jobp} = .42, SE = .14, p = .004$), and self-evaluated health ($\mu_{\Delta health} = .44, SE = .06, p < .001$) after divorce completion. Thus, Hypothesis 5 was fully supported.

TABLE 6 Study 2: Coefficient estimates of the SEM model

Predictor	1. Divorce-related grief		2. Cognitive engagement T2		3. Physical engagement T2		4. Job performance T2		5. Health T2	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)	.04	.08	.12	.14	.01	.13	.48	.24	-.08	.13
Race (0 = person of color, 1 = white)	.03	.10	-.41*	.19	.02	.16	-.99*	.38	-.03	.19
Age	.00	.01	.01	.01	.00	.01	-.01	.01	.00	.01
Educational attainment	.03	.04	.10	.06	.12*	.06	.14	.11	.03	.05
Occupational level	-.01	.03	-.01	.05	.00	.05	.01	.09	.04	.05
Months divorcing	.00	.00	-.01	.01	-.01	.01	-.02	.01	-.01*	.01
Initiator status (0 = not sole initiator, 1 = sole initiator)	-.41**	.08	-.07	.14	.04	.13	-.35	.23	-.19	.13
Quality of the dissolving marriage	.13*	.06	.22*	.10	.02	.09	.16	.19	.23**	.09
Presence of children (0 = no, 1 = yes)	-.18*	.09	-.35*	.14	-.31*	.12	-.41	.26	.11	.12
Anticipated post-divorce financial stability	-.09*	.04	-.02	.07	-.05	.06	-.06	.12	.13*	.06
Divorce-related grief			-.57**	.13	-.40**	.11	-.65**	.20	-.70**	.12
R ²		.19**		.16**		.10*		.11**		.30**

N = 278. Predictors and divorce-related grief were assessed at Time 1 and outcomes at Time 2. Coefficients are unstandardized.

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

TABLE 7 Study 2: Estimates of indirect effects of quality of the dissolving marriage, presence of children, and anticipated post-divorce financial stability, through divorce-related grief, on work outcomes

Predictor → Mediator	Cognitive engagement T2		Physical engagement T2		Job performance T2		Health T2	
	Point estimate	95% BCB CI	Point Estimate	95% BCB CI	Point Estimate	95% BCB CI	Point Estimate	95% BCB CI
Quality of the dissolving marriage quality → Divorce-related grief	-.08	[-.18, -.01]	-.05	[-.13, -.01]	-.09	[-.24, -.01]	-.09	[-.20, -.01]
Presence of children → Divorce-related grief	.10	[.01, .23]	.07	[.01, .17]	.12	[.01, .28]	.13	[.003, .27]
Anticipated post-divorce financial stability → Divorce-related grief	.05	[.02, .11]	.04	[.01, .08]	.06	[.02, .14]	.07	[.02, .13]

N = 278. 95% BCB CI = 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals, obtained from 5000 bootstrap samples.

TABLE 8 Study 2: Change in work outcomes from going through a divorce to after divorce completion

Parameter+	Estimate	SE
Means		
Mean change in cognitive engagement ($\mu_{\Delta\text{Cog}}$)	.45**	.07
Mean change in physical engagement ($\mu_{\Delta\text{Phys}}$)	.33**	.06
Mean change in job performance ($\mu_{\Delta\text{Jobp}}$)	.42**	.14
Mean change in health ($\mu_{\Delta\text{Health}}$)	.44**	.06
Variances		
Mean change in cognitive engagement ($\mu_{\Delta\text{Cog}}$)	1.00**	.10
Mean change in physical engagement ($\mu_{\Delta\text{Phys}}$)	.72**	.08
Mean change in job performance ($\mu_{\Delta\text{Jobp}}$)	3.70**	.41
Mean change in health ($\mu_{\Delta\text{Health}}$)	.43**	.08
Correlations		
Mean change in cognitive engagement ($\mu_{\Delta\text{Cog}}$), Intercept for cognitive engagement	-.22**	.05
Mean change in physical engagement ($\mu_{\Delta\text{Phys}}$), Intercept for physical engagement	-.16**	.04
Mean change in job performance ($\mu_{\Delta\text{Jobp}}$), Intercept for job performance	-1.14**	.22
Mean change in health ($\mu_{\Delta\text{Health}}$), Intercept for health	-.14**	.05

$N = 205$ individuals with completed divorces at Time 3. Latent changes scores were based on work outcomes measured at Time 2 and 12 months later (Time 3). Parameter estimates are unstandardized.

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

5 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

We employ two studies and mixed methods to provide new insights into the extent and nature of the impact of going through a divorce on individuals at work, the predictors of and mechanisms involved in this impact, and recovery over time. Divorcing individuals reported higher negative mood at work, lower self-evaluated job performance, and poorer self-evaluated health as compared to individuals not in the process of divorce. A total of 43.8% (Study 1) and 57.1% (Study 2) of divorcing individuals agreed or strongly agreed that divorcing had a negative impact on their work. A total of 38.8% (Study 1) and 24.0% (Study 2) of divorcing individuals agreed or strongly agreed that divorcing had a positive impact on their work. Qualitative content analysis suggested that one major differentiator between individuals reporting more positive versus more negative outcomes at work was the extent of experienced divorce-related grief.

Building on these results, Study 2 quantitatively illustrated that the extent of experienced divorce-related grief differentiates between individuals having better or worse work outcomes while divorcing. Our findings respond to calls to unpack context-specific resources that may be lost or threatened during major life transitions and stressful events (Hobfoll et al., 1995). Specifically, results introduce evidence that the quality of the dissolving marriage, the presence of children, and anticipated post-divorce financial stability are relevant to divorce-related grief and work outcomes. Higher quality dissolving marriages and lower anticipated post-divorce financial stability were negatively associated with work outcomes via divorce-related grief. The presence of children was unexpectedly negatively related to grief and indirectly positively related to work outcomes. Study 2's results furthermore showed that cognitive engagement, physical engagement, self-evaluated job performance, and self-evaluated health improved from the time of being in the divorce process to 12 months later.

5.1 | Theoretical and practical implications

To date, very little research has examined the ways in which divorcing may affect an individual at work. Extending theory, we provide insights into the work outcomes experienced by divorcing individuals and propose and test a conceptual model of factors that can be used to differentiate between better and worse outcomes at work. Our conceptual model highlights the role of divorce-related grief in differentiating between divorcing individuals who experience negative versus positive outcomes at work. This is the first study, to our knowledge, to apply COR theory to the study of divorcing outcomes and to examine a portfolio of context-specific resources that are affected in the divorce process. In addition, this work is an extension of research on family-to-work spillover. Existing research on family-to-work spillover has tended to focus on spillover in typical times, rather than in the context of a specific disruptive event, and has not looked at potential recovery from a specific disruptive event.

Our work reveals that there are divorcing individuals who experience positive, rather than negative, outcomes at work. Illustrations of resource gains during stressful life events have been scarce in the literature (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015; Hobfoll, 2011). Our study indicates that some employees used work to cope with resource loss, using work as an escape, or to provide a new focus. Within the work-family literature, this is an example of reallocating one's time and effort from a less satisfying domain to another that may provide more positive experiences (J. R. Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). For other individuals in our sample, the removal of the stressor of marriage seemed to restore a cycle of resource gain (e.g., having more time, focus, or energy). Individuals have finite resources and, for some, divorcing removed a source of resource drain previously hampering work (J. R. Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Overall, our research lends support to COR theory propositions that individuals actively shape their environment to reduce further resource loss and acquire other resources (Hobfoll et al., 2000). We also introduce additional evidence that, across individuals, a specific crisis event can produce negative family-to-work spillover as well as positive family-to-work spillover (Vaziri et al., 2020).

The present research also has practical implications. In the U.S. alone, 1.5 million individuals become divorced annually and 35% of primary working age individuals undergo divorce (CDC, 2022; Mayol-García et al., 2021). It is valuable for employees, managers, and human resources professionals to understand the impact of divorcing on work as one that involves a wide range of work outcomes. The current results suggest that divorce's negative effects on work outcomes are time-bound, although this may be studied more as we indicate below. Educating managers regarding the impact of divorcing can prepare them to support and advocate for those undergoing divorce in a way that buffers both employees and organizations from productivity loss. We believe that the ways in which human resource professionals and managers handle the experience of divorce-related grief and subsequent outcomes is important not only for divorcing employees but also for coworkers who are observing how individuals undergoing stressful life events are treated. For some in our study, the negative impact of being in the divorce process was substantial. For example, qualitative results indicated that some individuals experienced a hard time regulating their emotions, resulting in their crying or being rude and short-tempered at work. Such displays of sadness or anger at work by someone experiencing grief from a life crisis are often misunderstood by others at work (Hazen, 2008). Offering accommodations such as flexible scheduling or remote work may help employees manage divorce-related appointments and also provide space to work in a way without placing an undue and unnecessary strain on emotional regulatory capacities. Normalizing various reactions to divorce is another form of compassionate responding managers may wish to consider. Normalizing divorce-related grief and various reactions may offer reassurance to divorcing employees, potentially protecting their durable resources and promoting recovering lost resources (Lattanzi-Licht, 2002; Wilson et al., 2020). Our results suggest that the ways in which undergoing divorce influences work is complex; some individuals experience less divorce-related grief than others and may view divorcing as a time for renewal at work. We recommend managers openly communicate with employees to better understand what the divorcing employee needs and to better tailor support and recommendations for resources.

5.2 | Strengths, limitations, and future research directions

The use of multiple methods across two studies provides enhanced internal validity (i.e., confidence that results are due to divorcing rather than some other unobserved variable) and external validity (i.e., generalizability) of our findings. For example, with respect to internal validity, our data reduce arguments that there may be something inherent in divorcing individuals that produces poorer work outcomes, rather than divorcing itself. First, divorcing individuals had more negative moods at work, lower job performance, and lower health in comparison to individuals who had been divorced over 5 years. Second, the qualitative results indicate positive and negative work outcomes, and the quantitative results support the notion that divorce-related grief is an important transmission mechanism between divorcing individuals' family and work domains. Third, divorcing individuals show recovery on work outcomes from being in the process of divorce through divorce completion as demonstrated by increases in cognitive and physical engagement, self-evaluated job performance, and self-evaluated health.

Despite these methodological strengths, some limitations exist. It would be ideal to have both pre- and post-divorce data on work related outcomes. Such data would improve the ability to make causal connections between divorcing and work outcomes. It is difficult to secure such data—stressful life event studies with data pre- and post-event are very rare (Luhmann et al., 2012). We examined the potential of using a nationally representative sample with measures of work outcomes for divorcing and non-divorcing individuals over time. We did not find a suitable combination of relevant work variables, detailed tracking of marriage status changes, and/or sufficiently large sample of divorcing or recently divorced individuals.

It is also possible to argue for reverse causality for some relationships; a compromised work experience may exacerbate divorce-related grief. In addition, it is ideal to evaluate work outcomes from sources other than focal participants to mitigate common method bias and strengthen statistical conclusion validity (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, given the personal nature of divorce, we considered it invasive to request supervisor or coworker ratings. The need for data in this nascent research domain made self-report data suitable for initial insights.

A limitation of Study 2 is that we did not assess divorce-related grief at Time 3. This omission meant that we could not assess whether changes in experienced grief produced changes in work outcomes. Future work examining the variables associated with work related recovery following divorce and other life events would be valuable. In these studies, it would be ideal to follow individuals from the beginning of the divorce process and for a longer period of time, with repeated measures. A repeated measures study could uncover the nature of changes in resources over days, weeks, or months as well as how these changes relate to work outcomes.

In the present research, the presence of children was unexpectedly negatively related to grief and indirectly positively related to work outcomes. It may be that having children is more of a resource than a stressor during the divorce process. Divorcing parents may be able to turn their focus to their children to make up for the loss of their partner. In this way, the presence of children may influence positive family-to-work spillover rather than negative family-to-work spillover as hypothesized. In addition, it is possible that divorcing parents spend less time with their children than they had previously given that time with children is often divided between the parents. This would represent a reduction of time-based conflict, allowing individuals to spend more time in the work domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). More research investigating the processes through which children provide positive family-to-work spillover within the context of divorcing (as well as potential moderators, such as age and number of children) would be valuable.

Given the limited research on this topic, research is needed to examine other variables that distinguish between individuals who experience better versus worse impacts of divorcing on work. Our results indicate that individuals who experience higher levels of grief are more likely to have compromised work outcomes while divorcing. This is consistent with the premise that strain produced at home will make it more difficult for individuals at work (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Another strain-based mechanism might be the amount of divorce-related conflict that occurs while divorcing. Future research can assess two other mechanisms suggested by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) as sources of conflict between family and work roles. Namely, divorcing may affect the amount of time that one can devote to the

work role as well as patterns of in-role behavior (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Drawing from other Study 1 qualitative findings, quantitative investigations exploring renewed work motivation, career proactivity, and self-concept clarity as possible mechanisms of positive family-to-work spillover would also advance research (Jennings et al., 2022; Maitlis, 2020; Vough & Caza, 2017).

Researchers may wish to conduct more nuanced examinations of whether the effects of divorcing on work outcomes vary based on individual or contextual differences. For example, prior work indicates that women bear a disproportionate amount of economic strain following divorce and that this financial strain is enduring (Leopold, 2018). In part, this strain is believed to be related to women's generally higher child-care responsibilities following divorce, making active engagement in the labor market challenging (relative to men) (see Mortelmans, 2020). Future researchers can explore whether the disproportionate childcare responsibilities divorcing women face evoke lower levels of engagement at work and whether this effect is short-term versus enduring. Divorcing women may be more vulnerable to loss spirals as high levels of home responsibilities detract from work engagement. Future work may consider whether the effects of context-specific resources (e.g., quality of the dissolving marriage, presence of children) influence divorce-related grief and subsequent work outcomes differently depending on gender. Building on empirical evidence indicating that men experience sharper short-term decreases in subjective well-being during the divorce process (relative to women) (Leopold, 2018), it may be that men fare worse with respect to work outcomes in the short-term and then demonstrate a quicker recovery process which may also offer an interesting avenue to pursue. Future studies can explore other individual differences such as self-regulation (Halbesleben et al., 2014) or core-self evaluations (Judge et al., 1997) that may distinguish between employees who are more and less able to reduce resource loss and facilitate resource recovery.

Future research can examine whether contextual factors such as flexible work practices and support received at work facilitate more positive work outcomes while divorcing. Meta-analytic evidence from the work-family literature suggests that flexible work practices (FWPs) and work support decrease negative, and increase positive, family-to-work spillover (Byron, 2005; Lapiere et al., 2018). When FWPs give employees autonomy over when and how to meet work obligations, they are in a "better position to retain or protect their limited resources" in general (Liao et al., 2019, p. 52) and during stressful life events (Bhagat, 1983). Similarly, support at work (which may involve advice, understanding, respect, and checking in frequently) is a key resource that can promote work and home outcomes (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). The recent increase of remote work may mean that some individuals receive less support from colleagues at work while divorcing than they would have pre-pandemic. At the same time, remote work may provide more privacy and flexibility for divorcing individuals.

Finally, research on family-to-work spillover related to divorcing in contexts beyond American homes and workplaces would advance the global management literature. Whereas we posit that divorcing fuels negative family-to-work spillover across countries, regional patterns may arise. Divorce rates and the influence of becoming divorced vary across OECD countries (de Vaus et al., 2017; OECD, 2021; Thielemans & Mortelmans, 2022). Countries having more generous childcare support, sick and vacation leave, disability policies, and a smaller gender wage gap may somewhat shelter divorcing individuals from negative family-to-work spillover.

6 | CONCLUSION

In a multi-method, two-study investigation, we examined the extent and nature of the impact of divorcing on work and the recovery of work outcomes over time. The investigation contributes new and previously unavailable insights into the work-related implications of divorcing, the factors that differentiate better and worse outcomes, and recovery over time.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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APPENDIX

Study 2 Measure of Divorce-Related Grief (adapted from Prigerson et al., 1995)

Please select the answer that best describes how you have felt in the past month in relation to your divorce.

1 = Never.

2 = Rarely.

3 = Sometimes.

4 = Often.

5 = Always.

1. I think about my situation so much that it's hard for me to do the things I normally do.
2. I cannot accept that my former partner and I are no longer together.
3. I have feelings that the breakup is unfair.
4. I feel myself longing for my former partner.
5. I feel myself longing for part of the life I had before the breakup.
6. I can't help feeling angry about the breakup.
7. I feel disbelief over the breakup.
8. I feel stunned or dazed over the breakup.
9. I feel that life is empty without my former partner.
10. I feel pain because I miss part of the life I had before.
11. I feel bitter over the breakup.