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Thank God? The Effect of Religious Attitudes and Behaviors on Emotions

Jadon Sokoll-Ward
Skidmore College, jsokollw@skidmore.edu

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Jadon Sokoll-Ward

Skidmore College

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ABSTRACT

What is the effect of one's religious attitudes and behaviors on the frequency of different emotions? I propose that a stronger religious affiliation and a higher frequency of attending religious services will lead to feeling happy and ashamed more often and feeling sad, anxious, and mad less often. Further, I propose that a higher frequency of prayer will lead to feeling sad, anxious, mad, and ashamed more often and feeling happy less often. I analyze the frequency of these emotions in 892 respondents to the 1996 General Social Survey, a nationally representative dataset obtained via face to face interviews. Regression analysis revealed that more frequent prayer leads to feeling sad and ashamed more often, and more frequent religious service attendance leads to feeling anxious less often. Demographic control variables are also found to have an effect on how frequently one feels sad, mad, and anxious. The results offer partial support for the hypotheses. Further research is necessary to reconcile these differences and to explain the mechanisms by which the relationship between religiosity and emotions operates.

Thank God? The Effect of Religious Attitudes and Behaviors on Emotions

The sociology of emotions is a relatively new but important subfield of sociology. Several different theories of emotion have been brought forth: Dramaturgical theory, symbolic interactionist theory, interaction ritual theory, power and status theories, exchange theory, affect control theory, the social theory of shame and more (Scheff 2000; Turner 1999; Turner and Stets 2006). Each one of these theories provides a different lens with to examine emotions. Sociologists are often interested in the way in which large institutions impact individuals and shape their lives. The institution of religion specifically, has a profound impact on people's worldviews, what is important to them, and how they solve their problems. There is a wealth of research concerning the connection between religion and how people feel. The vast majority of this research has covered topics such as quality of life, overall well being, and general happiness, but many other emotions may be linked to religion.

This research has important theoretical implications because so much of the research on the impact that religion has on one's emotional state has to do with happiness or well being (Childs 2010; Edling, Rydgren and Boham 2014; Eichhorn 2011; Ellison et al. 2001; Jung 2014; Mackie and Brinkerhoff 1986; Mochon, Norton, and Ariely 2011; Pargament et al. 2011; Peacock and Poloma 1999; Poloma and Pendleton 1990; Stavrova, Fetchenhauer, and Schlösser 2013). Other studies lean in the opposite direction, focusing instead on the link between religion and depressive tendencies or distress (de Velde, der Bracht, and Buffel 2017; Ellison and Lee 2010; Ellison et al. 2001; Jang and Johnson 2004; Mackie and Brinkerhoff 1986; Mochon et al. 2011; Pargament et al. 2011; Salsman and Carlson 2005; Schuurmans-Stekhoven 2011). The plethora of research on this topic makes it clear that religion has an impact on people's emotions, but further research must be done to see how far the hand of religion reaches. It is entirely

possible that religiosity can be linked to presently unstudied, subtler emotions. By understanding the most prominent emotions of people across religious belief and intensity, a better understanding of the interaction between people's emotions and religious behaviors and experience may be obtained. By gaining a better understanding of emotional states, this research may provide information about what attracts people to religion and what keeps them faithful to religious traditions.

This study will concern the impact of religious attitudes and behaviors on the frequency of different emotions. I put forth three hypotheses: First, the stronger one's religious affiliation is, the more days they will report feeling happy and ashamed, and the fewer days they will report feeling sad, anxious, and mad. Second, the more often one attends religious services, the more days they will report feeling happy and ashamed, and the fewer days they will report feeling sad, anxious, and mad. And third, the more days one prays, the more days they will report feeling sad, anxious, mad, and ashamed, and the fewer days they will report feel happy. This research will contribute to theoretical knowledge in both the fields of the sociology of emotions and religion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research asks the question, "What is the impact of one's level of religiosity on how frequently they feel different emotions?" To effectively answer this question, I look to previous literature on the interaction between aspects of religion and different human emotions. Two major themes emerge from the literature: well being and distress. By far, the most dominant and most studied theme is well being. Different studies have investigated the positive effects of religion in different ways, ranging from happiness, to life satisfaction, to more general well being. The overwhelming conclusion in the literature is that generally, religious belief and practice has a positive relationship to well being (Childs 2010; Ellison et al. 2001; Jung 2014;

Mackie and Brinkerhoff 1986; Mochon, Norton, and Ariely 2011; Pargament et al. 2011;

Peacock and Poloma 1999; Poloma and Pendleton 1990; Stavrova et al. 2013). Each of these

studies investigated the connection between religion and well being with a slightly different

focus, so it is important to contextualize their findings.

Well Being

Some of the research concerning well being specifically focused on the relationship and

individual has with God. In the research completed by Peacock and Poloma (1999), nearly all

religiosity measures showed significant positive relationships to life satisfaction; however, the

leading predictor was the individual's perceived relationship with God. It was discovered that

actions that are more ritualistic or behavioral have differing effects on levels of life satisfaction,

but perceived closeness to God was most salient. In a study done by Poloma and Pendleton

(1990), a similar result was found: closeness with God was the most important factor in the

existential dimension of well being. Further, Childs (2010) found that one's perceived

relationship with God is actually a stronger indicator of happiness than one's perceived

relationship with their fellow congregants. Attendance of religious services is commonly thought

of as one of the stronger predictors of well being (Jung 2014; Peacock and Poloma 1999).

However, Childs (2010) found that the relationship between religious service attendance and

happiness is mediated by one's perceived relationship with God and other congregants, though

relationship with God had the stronger effect. This suggests that the experiential aspect of

religion may have a bigger and more important influence on well being than the behavioral

aspects of religion.

Other research investigating the link between religion and well being looked at the

impact of religious identity. In a study done by Lu and Gao (2017) concerning faith and

happiness in the Chinese context, different outcomes were found depending on the religious

affiliation of the respondent. Daoist and Christian beliefs were found to be negatively associated

with happiness, while Buddhist beliefs and practice were found to be positively associated with

happiness. It is important to note that because this research was done in China, the specific

results concerning which religious denominations produce positive and negative effects are not

necessarily generalizable to the United States. However, this research does indicate that different

religious traditions with their different religious beliefs and practices can have different

emotional effects on their followers. Mackie and Brinkerhoff's (1986) research investigated

exactly this, finding that for the majority of religious groups, the rewards that members reap

depend on denomination. Specifically, it was discovered that conservative Christians and

Mormons invest the most into their religion, but also get the most back in terms of domain

specific rewards (Mackie and Brinkerhoff 1986). This research suggests however that no matter

the denomination, religion is both costly (in terms of investment) and rewarding.

Another swath of research on the interaction between religion and well being situates the

effects of religiosity within the context of the culture of the individuals being studied. This

research puts into question the conventional knowledge in this field that religiosity has a positive

influence on well being. Eichhorn (2011:590) found in her study of 43 different European and

Anglo-Saxon societies that "The positive individual-level effects [of religiosity on life

satisfaction] found disappear when contextualizing them with a country's level of religiosity."

These results suggest that the depending on the average level of religiosity within a society,

individuals may or may not receive positive emotional benefits from their religious attitudes and

behaviors. Indeed, people tend not to be happier because of some intrinsic quality of their

religion; rather, it is the fact that others in their society also place high importance in God

(Eichorn 2011; Stavrova et al. 2013). This conclusion is further supported by the work done by Edling et al. (2014:621) who found that "in a country with a low level of aggregate religiosity such as Sweden, religion is not especially important for happiness." Together, these results cast doubt on other results linking increased religiosity to increased well being, suggesting the need for further research on the subject to reconcile these differences and understand the true causal mechanism behind the relationship.

Distress

Other research concerning the connection between religion and emotions focuses on the possible negative effects. Some research in this category finds that religiosity is linked to less psychological distress (de Velde, der Bracht, and Buffel 2017; Jang and Johson 2004; Salsman and Carlson 2005). Conversely, other research has found that depending on the type of belief and religious experiences, religion can have detrimental effects on general well being (de Velde et al. 2017; Ellison and Lee 2010; Ellison et al. 2001; Mackie and Brinkerhoff 1986; Mochon et al. 2011; Pargament et al. 2011; Schuurmans-Stekhoven 2011). It is clear from these seemingly contradictory findings that this topic is complex, and there are multiple factors influencing the emotional experiences of those studied. I will attempt to provide context for these different conclusions to provide an explanation of the current state of the literature.

The literature focusing on the interaction between religion and negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, and distress offers a different and necessary perspective for understanding the full range of outcomes produced by religion. Jang and Johnson (2004) found in their study about religion in the African American community that religiosity has a significant negative effect on state distress. Their explanation for this effect is that religious African Americans are provided with a better sense of control and social support compared to those who are less

religious or not religious at all. Other researchers have also found that individuals receive better benefits when the strength of their religion is higher (Mackie and Brinkerhoff 1986; Mochon et al. 2011; Salsman and Carlson 2005). In Salsman and Carlson's (2005) research, it was suggested that "young adults who report having a mature faith that is integrated in their everyday lives and emphasizes the centrality of their relationship with God are likely to experience less depression, paranoia, and hostility, as well as less overall psychological distress." These results together indicate that simply having a religious identity is not enough to impede negative emotions; indeed, the strength and centrality of the religion is of vital importance.

Other research focusing on negative emotions looks at a possible dark side to religion, the struggles that only exist within the context of religion. Ellison and Lee (2010) investigated spiritual struggles across three dimensions: divine struggles, interpersonal struggles, and chronic religious doubting. It was found that each of these spiritual struggle variables bears significantly on psychological distress, divine struggle producing the most profound effect of the three. Additionally, "the strength of these associations is far from trivial. Individually, these variables are among the strongest predictors of distress" (Ellison and Lee 2010:512). These findings suggest again that the experiential aspect of religion may have a bigger effect in some instances on one's emotional experience than the behavioral aspects of the religion. Pargament et al. (2011) also found that spiritual struggles can be particularly devastating for some individuals when religion is closely tied to the core aspects on their identity. Some sociologists posit that religion can lead to increased feelings of shame (Ellison and Lee 2010; Ellison et al. 2001, Jung 2014). Ellison et al. (2001:241) acknowledge that "some have suggested religious involvement may actually worsen the impact of some types of stressors–for example, by promoting feelings of guilt or shame." These findings, coupled with the findings from Jang and Johnson (2004) and

Salsman and Carlson (2005) suggest that the having a strong religious identity that is a prominent and central part of one's life has the capability of producing highly positive and highly negative emotional effects on individuals.

Attachment theory has been used by past researchers with the goal of understanding the mechanisms through which religiosity has an effect on individual's emotions (Ellison and Lee 2010). Attachment is defined as a strong emotional tie that bonds one person intimately with another person. Attachment is also a behavior system through which humans regulate emotional distress, such as being threatened. Ellison and Lee (2010) suggest that God could be an ideal attachment figure. They identified past research which found that those with a secure attachment to God enjoy higher levels of well-being than other persons. The main independent variable of attachment theory is the presence of a strong social tie. For the purposes of this study, the social tie in question is an attachment to God. Attachment is a behavior system and so is religion. Religiosity are indicates the strength of a social tie either to a higher power or a religious community. It is reasonable to assume that those who have a stronger religious affiliation, go to religious services more often, and pray more often have a stronger attachment to God.

RESEARCH METHODS

To accomplish this research, I utilize the 1996 General Social Survey (GSS). The population this dataset surveys is English speaking, non-institutionalized adult respondents who reside in the United States. The response rate was 76 percent. The original size of the sample was 3814 cases, but after deleting missing cases and cases where the questions central to my study were not asked, my sample size is 892 cases. The GSS uses a variation of the stratified probability proportional to size method to sample the population. The GSS data itself is obtained

via face to face interviews. For further information on how the data were collected, see

http://gss.norc.org/. The unit of analysis for my study is individuals.

To test my hypotheses, I use 5 dependent variables. The variables are from the GSS

emotions module. The concept these variables are measuring is emotions. Each of these

measures asks how often the respondent feels a certain emotion: happy, sad, mad, anxious, and

ashamed. For each of the five measures, the respondent is asked: "Now I'm going to read a list of

different feelings that people sometimes have. After each one, I would like you to tell me on how

many days you have felt this way during the past 7 days. On how many days in the past 7 days

have you... (SPECIFY NUMBER OF DAYS)." The respondent will then be provided with

whatever emotion is being tested for. The respondent then must answer on how many days in the

past week they felt that emotion (0-7).

I use three independent variables. I use the GSS variables that measure religious

intensity, religious attendance, and frequency of prayer. These three variables measure the

concept of attachment to God. The measure for religious intensity in the GSS asks the question:

"Would you call yourself a strong (PREFERENCE NAMED IN RELIG) or a not very strong

(PREFERENCE NAMED IN RELIG)?" The respondent can then choose to answer: 1: strong, 2:

not very strong, 3: somewhat strong, or 4: no religion. I have recoded this variable, so the new

values are: 1: no religion, 2: not very strong, 3: somewhat strong, and 4: strong. The measure of

religious attendance in the GSS asks the question: "How often do you attend religious services?

(USE CATEGORIES AS PROBES, IF NECESSARY.)" The respondent can then choose to

answer: never, less than once a year, once a year, several times a year, once a month, 2-3x a

month, nearly every week, every week, or more than once a week. I have recoded this variable as

an interval ratio level measurement, so the respondent's answers are measured in terms of how

many times they attend a religious service in a year. I interpreted "several" as three. The new

values are as follows: 0, .5, 1, 3, 12, 30, 40, 52, 104. The measure for frequency of prayer in the

GSS asks: About how often do you pray? USE CATEGORIES AS PROBES." The respondent

can then choose to answer: Several times a day, once a day, several times a week, once a week,

less than once a week, or never. I have recoded this variable as an interval ratio level

measurement as well, with the respondent's answers being measured in terms of how many times

they pray in a week. Again, I interpreted "several" as three. The new values are 21, 7, 3, 1, .5,

and 0 respectively.

Additionally, I will be controlling for sex, race, and age. I have chosen these three

variables because they are likely to have an impact on the emotions that respondents have. These

three variables are commonly used as controls in the previous literature on this topic, so I have

chosen to utilize them for my study as well (Childs 2010; Ellison and Lee 2010; Ellison et al.

2001; Pargament et al. 2001; Peacock and Poloma 1999). For the sex measure, the respondent is

asked if it is not obvious what their sex is, male or female. I dummied sex, so the values are 1:

male and 0: female. For the age measure, the respondent is asked what their age is. The values

for the measure correspond to the age of the respondent, starting at 18 and going up to 88; all

respondents 89 and older are collapsed into a single category (89). For the race measure, the

respondent's race is recorded without asking only if there is no doubt in the coder's mind;

otherwise, the respondent is asked: "What race do you consider yourself?" I dummied race, so

the values are 1: white and 0:black and other.

FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of the independent, dependent, and

control variables. The means for the dependent variable were roughly five happy days, two sad

days, two anxious days, two mad days, and zero ashamed days. Over the course of a week on

average, respondents feel happy much more often than any other emotion. On average, sad days,

anxious days, and mad days are less than half as common as happy days. Meanwhile, on average,

respondents almost never feel ashamed over the course of a week. Figures 1-5 show the

frequency distributions for the dependent variables. 46 percent of respondents reported feeling

happy every day of the week. For every dependent variable measuring the frequency of negative

emotions, the most frequent response was 0 days of that emotion, though the percentages of each

varied depending on the specific emotion. For sad, anxious and mad days, the percentage of

respondents who felt those emotions 0 times in a week were all somewhat similar: 36 percent, 27

percent, and 34 percent respectively. Contrastingly, 74 percent of respondents felt ashamed 0

times in a week.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

[Insert Figure 4 about here]

[Insert Figure 5 about here]

The median response for the measure of strength of religious affiliation is "not very

strong." The means for the other two independent variables, number of religious services in a

year and number of prayers in a week are 25 and 8 respectively. On average, respondents go to

religious services multiple times a month and pray more than daily. Figures 6-8 show the

frequency distributions for the independent variables. Most respondents either report having a

not very strong religious affiliation (43 percent) or a strong religious affiliation (36 percent). The

distribution of responses for religious service attendance vary widely with a standard deviation

of about 20, though the most common responses were never attending religious services (16

percent) and attending religious services every week (18 percent). The most frequent response

for the prayer measure was once a day at 32 percent, and over half the sample (58 percent) pray

once a day or more.

[Insert Figure 6 about here]

[Insert Figure 7 about here]

[Insert Figure 8 about here]

The means of the control variables reveal that 43 percent of the sample is male and 80

percent of the sample is white; this is also seen in figures 9 and 10. The mean age of the sample

was about 45, but the standard deviation was about 17, indicating that there is a lot of variation in

the ages of respondents in the sample. Figure 11 shows this variation in more detail.

[Insert Figure 9 about here]

[Insert Figure 10 about here]

[Insert Figure 11 about here]

Table 2 shows the correlations between the emotion measures, the measures of

religiosity, and the controls. There is no relationship between the strength of one's religious

affiliation, how often one goes to religious services, or how often one prays and the number of

days one feels happy in a week. There is no relationship between the strength of one's religious

affiliation, how often one goes to religious services, or how often one prays and the number of

days one feels sad in a week. There is a very weak, negative, statistically significant relationship

between the strength of one's religious affiliation and the number of days one feels anxious in a

week. As one's strength of religious affiliation increases, the number of days one feels anxious in

a week decreases. There is a very weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between how often one goes to religious services and the number of days one feels anxious in a week. As one goes to religious services more often, the number of days one feels anxious in a week decreases. There is no relationship between how often one prays and the number of days one feels anxious in a week. There is a very weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between the strength of one's religious affiliation and the number of days one feels mad in a week. As one's strength of religious affiliation increases, the number of days one feels mad in a week decreases. There is a very weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between how often one goes to religious services and the number of days one feels mad in a week. As one goes to religious services more often, the number of days one feels mad in a week decreases. There is a very weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between how often one prays and the number of days one feels mad in a week. As one prays more often, the number of days one feels mad in a week decreases. There is no relationship between the strength of one's religious affiliation, how often one goes to religious services, or how often one prays and the number of days one feels ashamed in a week.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

There is no relationship between being male, being white, or age and the number of days one feels happy in a week. There is a very weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between being male and the number of days one feels sad in a week. Men, on average, feel sad on less days in a week than women. There is a very weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between age and the number of days one feels sad in a week. As one's age increases, the number of days one feels sad in a week decreases. There is no relationship between being male and the number of days one feels anxious in a week. There is a very weak, positive,

statistically significant relationship between being white and the number of days one feels

anxious in a week. White people, on average, feel anxious on more days in a week than non-

whites. There is a weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between age and the

number of days one feels anxious in a week. As one's age increases, the number of days one

feels anxious in a week decreases. There is no relationship between being male or being white

and the number of days one feels mad in a week. There is a weak, negative, statistically

significant relationship between age and the number of days one feels mad in a week. As one's

age increases, the number of days one feels mad in a week decreases. There is no relationship

between being male, being white, or age and the number of days one feels ashamed in a week.

There is a very weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between being male

and the strength of one's religious affiliation. Men, on average, have a lower strength of religious

affiliation than women. There is no relationship between being white and the strength of one's

religious affiliation. There is a weak, positive, statistically significant relationship between age

and the strength of one's religious affiliation. As one's age increases, the strength of one's

religious affiliation increases. There is a very weak, negative, statistically significant relationship

between being male and how often one goes to religious services. Men, on average, go to

religious services less often than women. There is no relationship between being white and how

often one goes to religious services. There is a weak, positive, statistically significant

relationship between age and how often one goes to religious services. As one's age increases,

they go to religious services more often. There is a weak, negative, statistically significant

relationship between being male and how often one prays. Men, on average, pray less than

women. There is a very weak, negative, statistically significant relationship between being white

and how often one prays. White people, on average, pray less than non-whites. There is a weak,

positive, statistically significant relationship between age and how often one prays. As one's age increases, they pray more often.

Nearly all of my dependent variables are correlated with each other as well, though the strength of these correlations vary. There is a negative relationship between the number of days one feels happy in a week and the number of days one feels sad, anxious, and mad in a week. There is a positive relationship between the number of days one feels sad in a week and the number of days one feels anxious, mad, and ashamed in a week. There is a positive relationship between the number of days one feels anxious in a week and the number of days one feels mad, and ashamed in a week. There is a positive relationship between the number of days one feels mad in a week and the number of days one feels ashamed in a week. All of my independent variables are correlated with each other. All of these correlations are at least moderately strong. There is a positive relationship between the strength of one's religious affiliation and how often one goes to religious services and how often one prays. There is a positive relationship between how often one goes to religious services and how often one prays. The only control variables that are correlated are age and being white; this is a very weak, positive relationship though.

Table 3 shows the regression of happy days, sad days, mad days, anxious days, and ashamed days on all other variables. The regression model for the happy measure is not statistically significant, nor are any of the individual predictors.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

The regression model for the sad measure is statistically significant. 3.5 percent of the variation in the number of days one feels sad in a week is explained by the independent and control variables. Controlling for all other variables, how often one prays, gender, and age all have a statistically significant impact on the number of days one feels sad in a week. All else

being equal, the more often one prays, the more often they will feel sad in a week; men tend to

feel sad fewer days in a week compared to women; the older one is, the less often they will feel

sad in a week. The predictor with the strongest effect on the number of sad days one feels in a

week is age, followed by gender, and then how often one prays.

The regression model for the anxious measure is statistically significant. 5.6 percent of

the variation in the number of days one feels anxious in a week is explained by the independent

and control variables. Controlling for all other variables, the strength of one's religious

affiliation, age, and race all have a statistically significant impact on the number of days one

feels anxious in a week. All else being equal, the stronger one's religious affiliation, the less

often they will feel anxious in a week; the older one is, the less often they will feel anxious in a

week; white people tend to feel anxious more days in a week than non-whites. The predictor with

the strongest effect on the number of anxious days one feels in a week is age, followed by

strength of religious affiliation, and then race.

The regression model for the mad measure is statistically significant. 5.0 percent of the

variation in the number of days one feels mad in a week is explained by the independent and

control variables. Controlling for all other variables, age has a statistically significant impact on

the number of days one feels mad in a week. All else being equal, the older one is, the less often

they will feel mad in a week.

The regression model for the ashamed measure is not statistically significant, but it is

worth noting that the significance value for this model is .026, so it approaches significance at

the .01 level. Controlling for all other variables, how often one prays has a statistically

significant impact on the number of days one feels ashamed in a week. All else being equal, the

more often one prays, the more often they will feel ashamed in a week.

DISCUSSION

The regression analysis lends partial support to the initial hypotheses. The theoretical basis for the hypotheses was attachment theory. Attachment is a behavior system through which humans regulate their emotions; similarly, religion is a behavior system. I posited that religious attitudes and behaviors constitute an attachment to God, and people would regulate their emotions through this attachment. However, the results of the regression analysis indicate that one's attachment to God may lead to the regulation of some emotions, but not others. Indeed, in the regression models for the happy measure, none of the measures of attachment to God had significant effects. The results of the happy model stand in contrast to some of the previous literature on this topic which found a positive connection between religiosity and well being (Childs 2010; Ellison et al. 2001; Jung 2014; Mackie and Brinkerhoff 1986; Mochon, Norton, and Ariely 2011; Pargament et al. 2011; Peacock and Poloma 1999; Poloma and Pendleton 1990; Stavrova et al. 2013). Because of the amount of research that has found this link, my insignificant results most likely have more to do to the specific measure of happiness I used and less to do with people not regulating their happiness though religion. Previous studies used variables that were overall measures of well being, life satisfaction, or happiness. In my study however, the happiness measure reflects how many days respondents reported feeling happy in the past week. Taken together, the results of the current study and the previous literature suggest that while religiosity may have a positive effect on one's overall sense of happiness, this may not translate to more feelings of happiness on a day-to-day basis.

Similarly, the results of the mad model proved to be insignificant, with none of the measures of attachment to God having a significant effect on the number of days one felt mad in the past week. The insignificant results of the mad model could have a similar explanation to the

insignificant results of the happy model. The non-significance could be due to the variable measuring feeling mad on a day-to-day basis instead of one's overall feeling of anger, but previous literature has not studied the link between religiosity and feeling mad, so it is difficult to know. It is more probable that people simply do not regulate feelings of anger through their attachment with God. Attachment theory as it relates to religion may be a more useful frame for some emotions than others.

The regression results for the sad and ashamed models indicate that for some, God is not a desirable attachment figure, leading people to feel sad and ashamed more often in some instances. This attachment to God could be an unhealthy one for some depending on the way in which that attachment manifests itself and/or is expressed in concrete behavior. All things being equal, increased frequency of prayer is associated with more days of feeling sad and ashamed. These results may lend support for past research which has found a possible dark side to religion (Ellison and Lee 2010; Ellison et al. 2001; Jung 2014). Ellison et al. (2001:241) explains that "religious involvement may actually worsen the impact of some types of stressors - for example, by promoting feelings of guilt or shame." Similarly, Ellison and Lee (2010) acknowledge that certain Judeo-Christian religious doctrines, specifically ones about human sinfulness, could have possible effects on well being. For both the sad and ashamed models, neither strength of religious affiliation nor frequency of religious service attendance proved to be significant factors. The results of these regression models might then be saying more about the activity of prayer specifically than religious attachment in general. It is possible that prayer works in a different manner than other manifestations of religiosity. It is important to note however, we cannot know the causal order between prayer and feelings of sadness and shame. It is entirely possible that the causal order is reversed and it is actually the fact that people feel sad and ashamed more

frequently that leads them to pray more often. Given that many people use prayer to cope in times of struggle, this possibility cannot be ruled out.

The regression results for the anxious model more closely fall in line with previous literature. Controlling for other variables, as religious service attendance increases, days one reported feeling anxious decreases. A stronger attachment to god, as measured though religious service attendance is associated with decreased emotional distress. Attachment theory appears to be a proper frame for this relationship then, with attachment regulating the emotions of respondents. This result offers support for previous research which has found a negative relationship between religiosity and negative emotions such as anxiety (Jang and Johnson 2004; Mackie and Brinkerhoff 1986; Mochon et al. 2011; Salsman and Carlson 2005). However, the other two measures of religiosity, strength of religious affiliation and frequency of prayer, were not significant predictors of the number of days one reported feeling anxious. Strength of affiliation and prayer do not serve to regulate one's anxiety in the same way that religious service attendance. The non significant findings across all regression models indicate that perhaps attachment theory has a limit in explaining the relationship between religion and emotions. Other sociologists may benefit from using another theoretical framework to interpret the interactions occurring between religion and emotions.

CONCLUSION

This study was concerned with investigating how three different measures of attachment to God (strength of religious affiliation, frequency of religious service attendance, and frequency of prayer) impacted how many days one reported feeling five different emotions (happy, sad, anxious, mad, and ashamed). To accomplish this task, I analyzed 892 cases from the 1996 General Social Survey. The findings of the study were mixed. In both the happy and mad

regression models, no measure of attachment to God was a significant predictor. In contrast, more frequent prayer was associated with feeling sad and ashamed more often, and more frequent religious service attendance was associated with feeling anxious less often. These results offer partial support for the hypotheses.

The results of the present study provide a mixed bag of findings. The institution of religion has the ability to produce profound effects on people's overall emotional states. This research set out to investigate just how much of an effect religion has by investigating its effect on emotions on a day-to-day basis rather than on a holistic basis. Further, this research focused on specific feelings like feeling mad or ashamed, whereas most past research has focused on overall measures of well being or overall measures of distress. In the regression models, most relationships between measures of religiosity and measures of emotions turned out to be insignificant, which may indicate that generally, one's attachment to God does not have a major effect on their day-to-day emotions. Attachment theory may not be an appropriate frame for this field of research. However, the few relationships which were significant point to interesting interactions with potentially important implications. Perhaps the practice of prayer is not as beneficial to people's well being as many religions would assert.

This study was limited in a variety of aspects. First of all, the measures used to capture one's attachment to God were not exhaustive. Religion manifests itself in many different behaviors and attitudes that were not measured in this study. For instance, a measure that asks about how close one feels with God could be fruitful. Further, the specific measures of emotion used did not capture people's overall emotional state; ideally both day-to-day emotions and overall emotional experience would be measured. Additionally, past research has included control variables that were not utilized in this study. Indeed, factors such as income, marital

status, and employment status could all be influencing people's emotional states. As for the relationships which were found to be significant in the regression analysis, the causal order cannot be determined. For instance, it is unclear whether praying more leads to feeling ashamed more often, or feeling ashamed more often leads one to pray more.

Future research should address the limitations in the present study. By analyzing data collected more recently and including additional religious measures, emotional measures, and controls, a more robust picture of the interaction between religion and emotions can be developed. Future research could also address some of the more counterintuitive findings established in this study. This data suggests that prayer operates in a very different manner from other measures of religiosity, actually increasing the frequency people felt the negative emotions of sadness and shame. To address the limitation of establishing a causal order, perhaps future research could investigate this issue in a longitudinal study. This data could track how people's emotions change over time in connection to their religious behaviors, which could provide sociologists with a clearer understanding of how prayer operates.

This research contributes to both the sociology of religion and the sociology of emotions. While this study has limitations, it points to interesting relationships that should be studied more thoroughly in future research. It is clear the the institution of religion has an impact on many different aspects of people's lives, and it is worth learning how beneficial or how harmful this impact is.

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Table 1. Means, Medians, and Standard Deviation for Variables ($N = 892$)

Variable	Mean	Median	SD
Happy days	5.34	6.00	1.990
Sad days	1.64	1.00	1.909
Anxious days	2.29	2.00	2.234
Mad days	1.58	1.00	1.834
Ashamed days	.49	.00	1.148
Strength of religious affiliation	2.69	2.00	1.084
Religious services in a year	24.83	12.00	20.664
Prayer in a week	8.21	7.00	7.941
Men	.43	0.00	.496
White	.80	1.00	.400
Age	44.61	42.00	16.585

Table 2. Correlations (*r*) between emotions and measures of religiosity (listwise deletion, two-tailed test, *N* = 892)

Variable	Sad days	Anxious days	Mad days	Ashamed days	Strength of affiliation	Religious services	Prayer	Men	White	Age
Happy days	-.402*	-.227*	-.142*	-.081	.075	.084	.056	.031	-.026	-.005
Sad day		.388*	.353*	.315*	-.003	-.032	.051	-.109*	.052	-.090*
Anxious days			.412*	.228*	-.087*	-.136*	-.039	-.017	.099*	-.158*
Mad days				.263*	-.132*	-.106*	-.091*	.065	.020	-.192*
Ashamed days					-.022	-.012	.071	.052	-.006	-.041
Strength of affiliation						.570*	.416*	-.100*	-.030	.205*
Religious services							.475*	-.108*	-.051	.175*
Prayer								-.169*	-.117*	.261*
Men									.062	-.054
White										.115*

*p < .01

Table 3. Regression of Happy days, Sad days, Mad days, Anxious days, and Ashamed days on All Variables

Variable	Happy β	Sad β	Anxious β	Mad β	Ashamed β
Strength of religion	.041	.012	-.006	-.078	-.039
Religious service attendance	.059	-.075	-.140*	-.030	-.034
Prayer	.023	.105*	.083	.014	.130*
Men	.045	-.109*	-.036	.045	.063
Age	-.024	-.122*	-.170*	-.176*	-.058
White	-.019	.081	.123*	.036	.009
R^2	.011	.035	.056	.050	.016
F (6,885)	1.678	5.301*	8.769*	7.720*	2.402

*$p < .01$
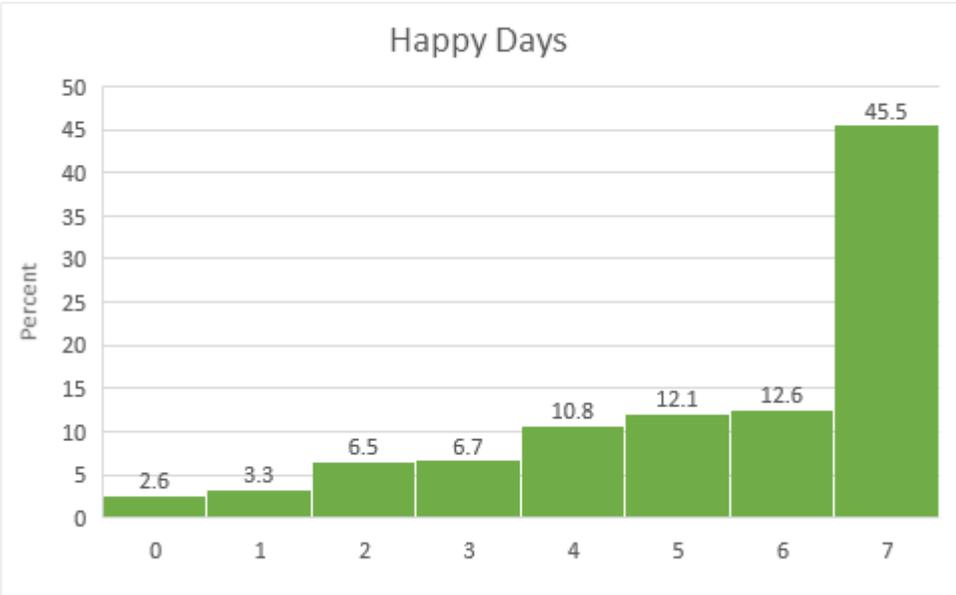
Figure 1. Histogram of How Many Days Respondents Reported Feeling Happy
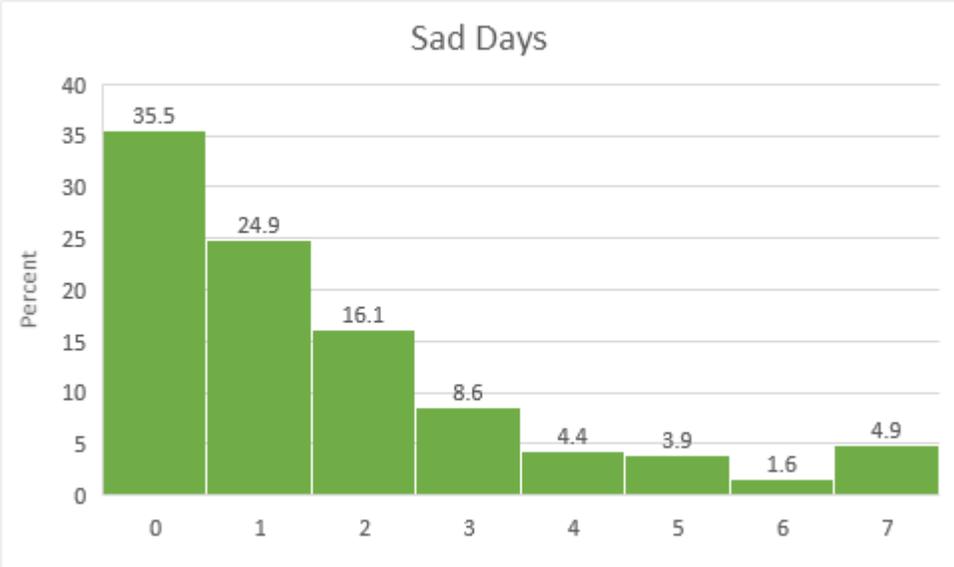
Figure 2. Histogram of How Many Days Respondents Reported Feeling Sad
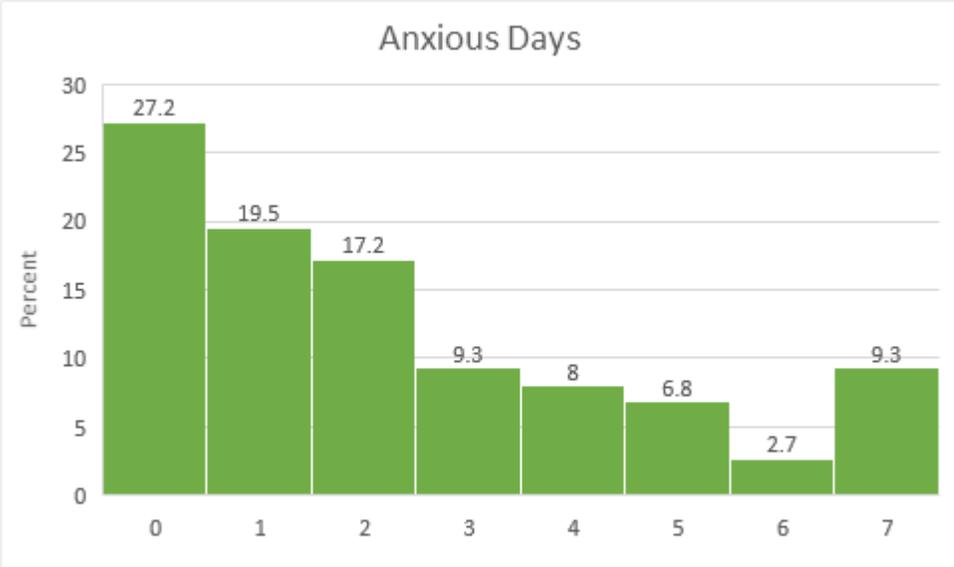
Figure 3. Histogram of How Many Days Respondents Reported Feeling Anxious
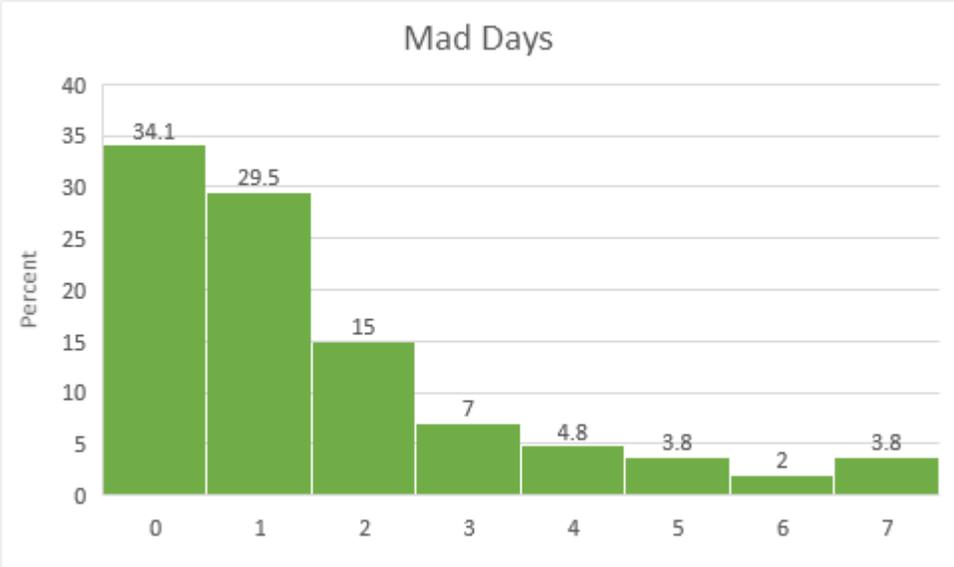
Figure 4. Histogram of How Many Days Respondents Reported Feeling Mad
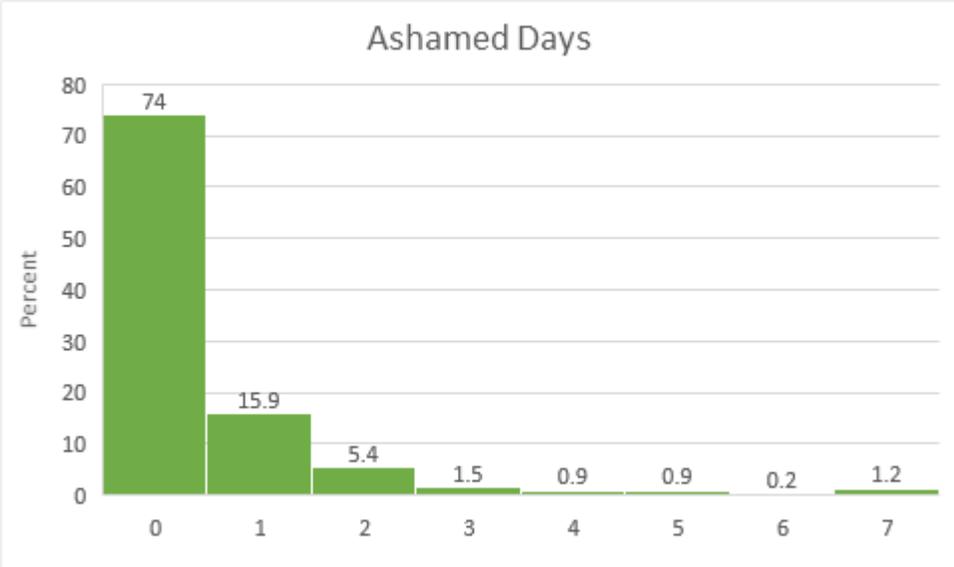
Figure 5. Histogram of How Many Days Respondents Reported Feeling Ashamed
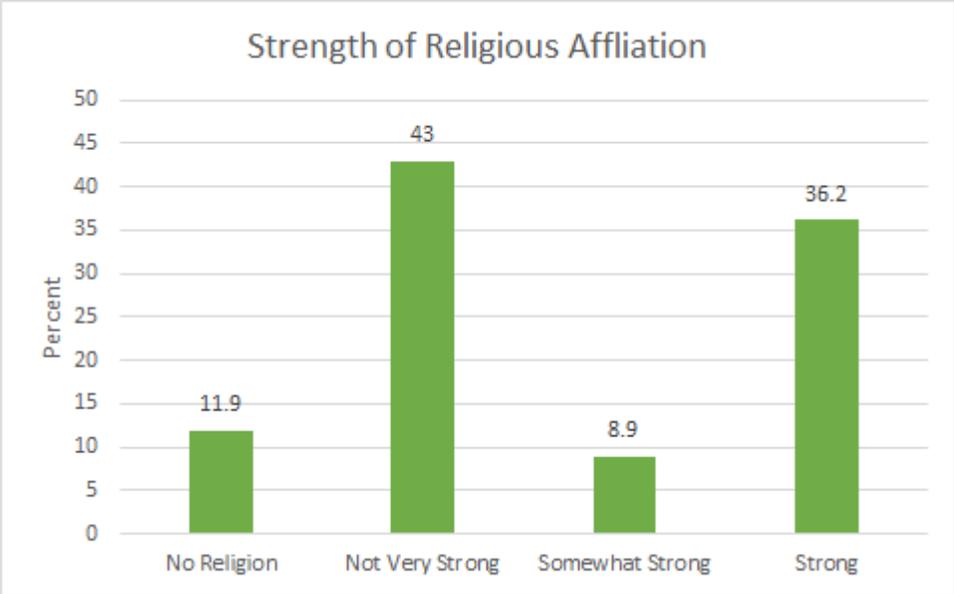
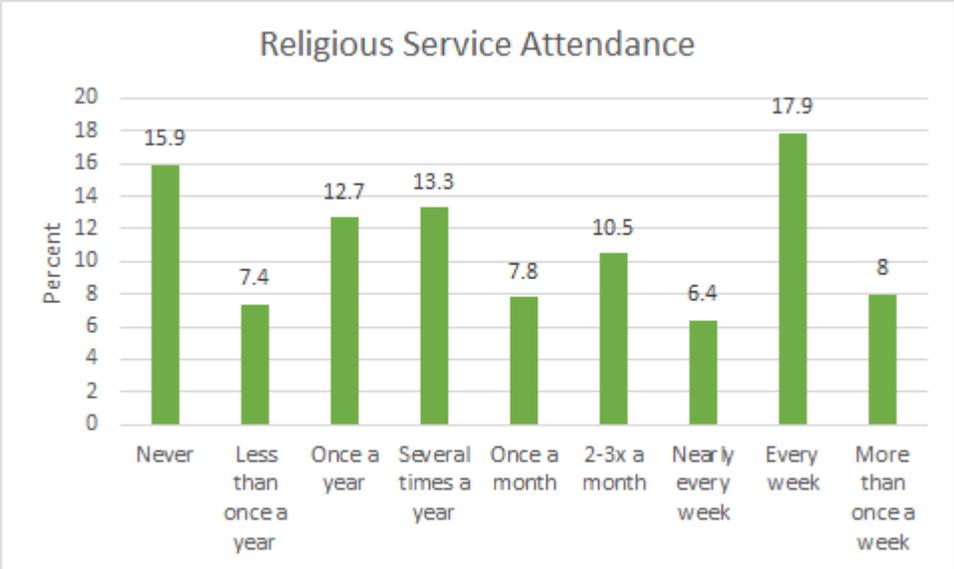Figure 6. Bar Graph of Strength of Religious Affiliation
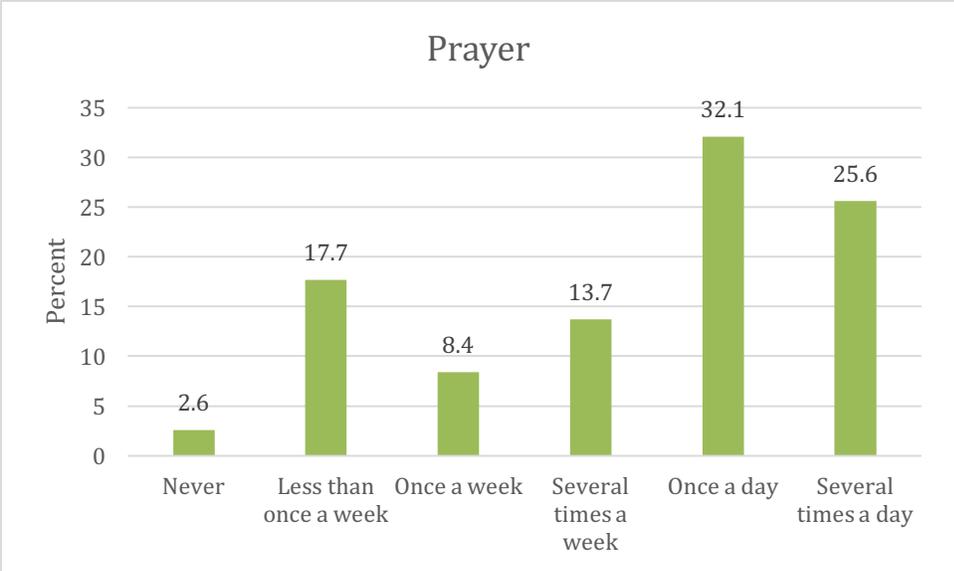
Figure 7. Bar Graph of How Often Respondents Attended Religious Services
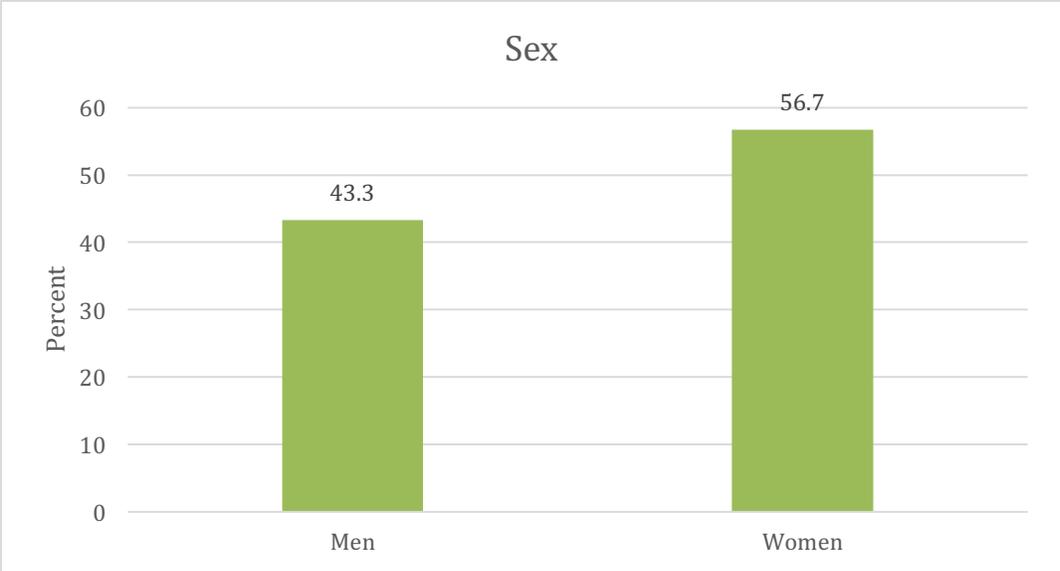
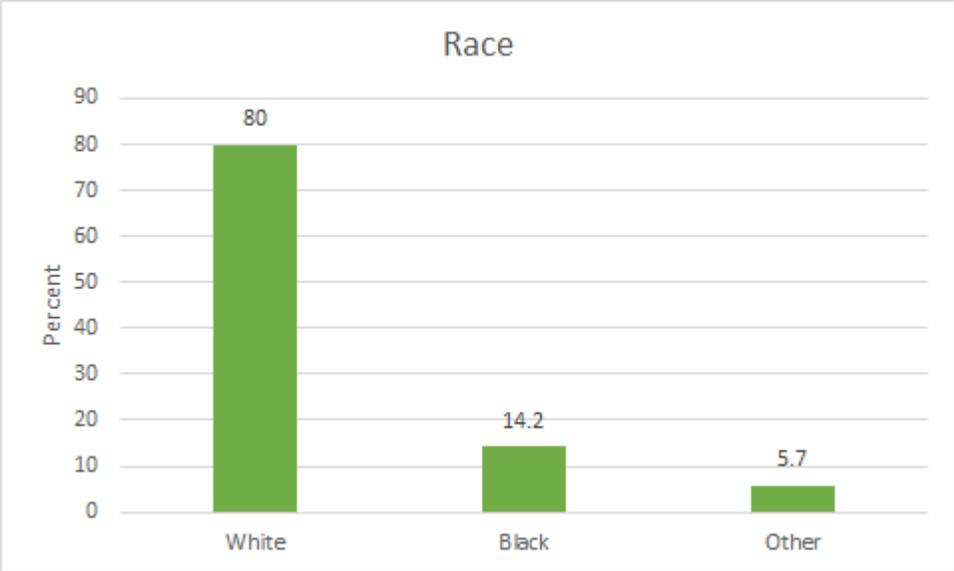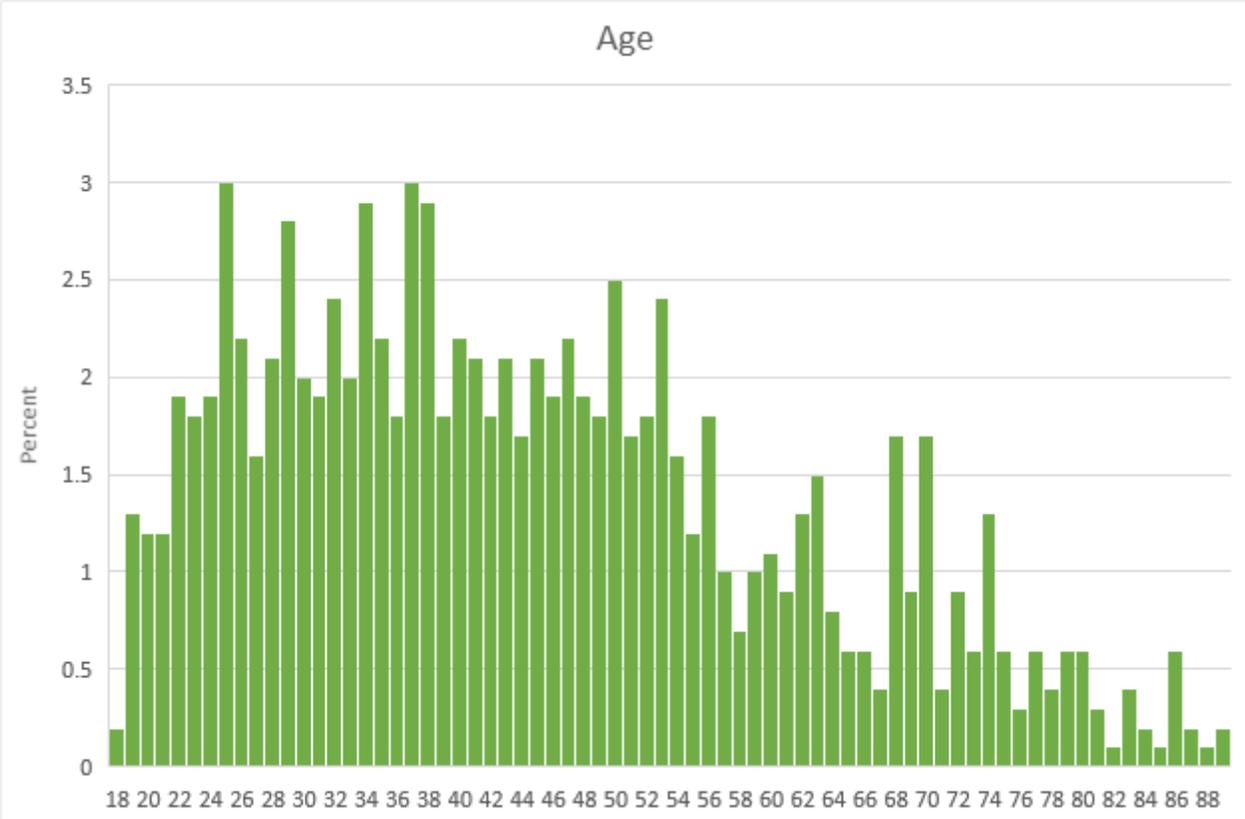Figure 8. Bar Graph of How Often Respondents Prayed

Figure 9. Bar Graph of Sex

Figure 10. Bar Graph of Race

Figure 11. Histogram of Age