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A Descriptive Analysis of Religious Involvement Among Older Adults In Japan

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to conduct a descriptive analysis of multiple dimensions of religion with data provided by a nationwide sample of older people in Japan. Six dimensions of religion were evaluated: Religious affiliation, involvement in formal religious organizations, private religious practices, the functions of prayer, belief in punishment by supernatural forces, and beliefs about the afterlife. In addition to describing these facets of religion for the sample as a whole, tests were also performed to see if they vary by age, sex, marital status, education, and whether older Japanese people live in rural or urban areas. The findings suggest that even though older people in Japan are not highly involved in formal religious institutions, they frequently engage in private religious practices. Moreover, the data reveal that while older people in Japan do not often endorse some religious beliefs (e.g., beliefs about the quality of the afterlife), they strongly adhere to others (e.g., beliefs about punishment by supernatural forces). Significant and fairly consistent variations by gender and rural versus urban residence were also observed across the measures of religiousness.

Keywords

Religion; older adults; Japan

Introduction

During the past several decades there has been a dramatic increase in research on religion. Evidence of this may be found in a review of the literature that covered 1,200 studies (Koenig, McCullough and Larson 2001). Unfortunately, the wide majority of the quantitative studies that have been conducted on religion have been done in the United States. Moreover, as Hill

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and Hood (1999:4) observe, this research has been A... largely dominated by convenience sampling of college students (and) an American Protestant orientation is over-represented.@ More quantitative research is needed on religion in cultural settings outside the United States, and more work is needed on religions other than Christianity. There are at least three reasons why it is important to expand the scope of research on religion in this way.

First, researchers in the United States need to know if the insights they have gleaned from their quantitative studies are specific to the American cultural context, or whether the findings they have obtained reflect deeper and more fundamental aspects of religion that are invariant across cultural settings. This type of research is important because differences in particular dimensions of religion across cultures highlight points where unique cultural and historic forces may be at work, whereas cross-cultural similarities in religion that help identify more universal factors, such as the need to find meaning in life, may be the key driving force (for a discussion of the universal functions of religion see Spilka *et al.* 2003).

Second, research that has been conducted in the United States suggests that religion is a complex multidimensional phenomenon (Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging Working Group 1999). However, the content domain of religion has yet to be fully illuminated and carefully described. Examining religion in different cultural settings contributes to this important task by helping investigators more clearly define the boundaries of this unwieldy conceptual domain. Uncovering ways in which religious practices and beliefs vary across cultures helps identify new dimensions of religion that must be taken into consideration, whereas discovering similar aspects of religion across cultures promotes greater confidence in the conceptual domain that has been staked out so far.

Third, quantitative researchers in the United States have devoted a good deal of effort to identify the various functions of religion (Spilka *et al.* 2003). This work is important because deriving a better understanding of the social and psychological functions of religion helps investigators explain why some form of religion is found in virtually every culture in the world (Smith 1991) and why various forms of religion have been practiced for thousands of years (Eliade 1978). Identifying and exploring different dimensions of religion in different cultural contexts provides a way for researchers to more clearly identify the universal functions of religion. This type of research may reveal, for example, that dimensions of religion that are similar across cultures perform more universal functions, whereas those that are unique may speak to needs that emerge only in specific cultural settings.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the literature by conducting a descriptive analysis of multiple dimensions of religion in a diverse cultural context B Japan. A descriptive analysis is performed because we believe that before a phenomenon can be explained, and before it can be associated with key outcomes such as health, it must first be described.

It should be emphasized at the outset that we are by no means the first to study religion in Japan. In fact, a great deal of research on religion has been done in Japan. For example, there is at least one journal that is devoted entirely to the study of Japanese religious practices and beliefs (i.e., the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*). Even so, there are four ways in which research on religion in Japan may be developed further.

First, a good deal of research on religion in Japan has been done by anthropologists and other investigators who rely primarily on ethnographic methods. For example, Reader and Tanabe (1998) wrote an illuminating volume on religion in Japan. However, their research was based primarily on interviews with religious leaders in select shrines and temples, as well as convenience samples of people who happened to be worshiping in them. Consequently, it is difficult to tell whether the observations made by these investigators can be generalized to the

wider Japanese population (see also Nelson 2000; Traphagan 2004). Supplementing the insights that have been derived from ethnographic studies with findings from quantitative studies that rely on national probability samples contributes to the literature in the following way. When the two methodological orientations are brought to bear on the same substantive issue, the weaknesses of one approach are offset by the strengths of the other, and vice-versa. Relying on findings produced by both of these methods is consistent with the time-honored tradition of triangulation (i.e., converging operations; see Garner, Hake and Eriksen 1956).

Second, even when quantitative surveys have been conducted on religion in Japan, the data are often gathered in geographically circumscribed areas and, as a result, issues involving the generalization of study findings remain unresolved. For example, Miller (1992) conducted a survey of religious behavior in the Tokyo area only. But it is not possible to tell if the findings he observed in this dense urban area apply to older Japanese who live in rural settings, as well.

Third, even when more representative quantitative studies have been conducted on religion in Japan, they are not always available in English. This makes it difficult for investigators in the United States who do not speak Japanese to take advantage of the insights provided by their cross-cultural counterparts. For example, Sugiyama (2001) published a comprehensive review of research on religion in Japan in the *Japanese Psychological Review*. Unfortunately, only the abstracts of papers in this journal are published in English, and as a result, the insights provided by Sugiyama are not available to many investigators in the West.

Fourth, a good deal of the quantitative research in Japan has involved adults of all ages (e.g., Stark, Hamberg and Miller 2005), whereas fewer studies have been conducted with older people specifically. There are two closely-related reasons why it is important to focus on older adults in Japan. First, studies that have been conducted in the United States consistently reveal that people who are currently older tend to be more deeply involved in religion than people who are presently younger (see Krause 2006, for a review of this research). There is some evidence that this is also true in Japan. For example, in his recent book, Reader (2007) speculates on the future of Shinto. He observes that this religious tradition now faces A... the problem of attracting the support of the younger generation who, while they may occasionally attend a shrine before their examinations, may be less interested in the ritual aspects of Shinto and religion in general ...@ (Reader 2007:136). Second, research conducted primarily in the United States suggests that as people grow older and get closer to death, they experience a shift in their priorities (Carstensen 1992). Perhaps this explains why religion may become increasingly important as people grow older.

The discussion that follows is divided into three main sections. We begin by providing a brief overview of research on religion in Japan. In the process, we discuss five dimensions of religion that form the focal point of our empirical research. Following this, we introduce the sample and the measures that were used in our study. Next, we review the plan for conducting a descriptive analysis of our data. In the process of presenting this plan, we discuss why it is important to assess variations in key dimensions of religion by age, sex, marital status, and whether study participants reside in urban or rural areas. Then we present empirical findings from a large, national probability sample of older adults in Japan.

Religion Among Older People In Japan

Religion in Japan is vastly different from religion in the United States and, as a result, some Western scholars are puzzled by it. For example, Stark *et al.* (2005:16) recently observed that, AAt first glance, Japanese religion is a muddle.@ Similar views were expressed by Reischauer and Jansen (1995:215), who maintain that A... religion in Japan offers a confused and indistinct picture.@ There are at least three reasons why some Western scholars are baffled by religion in Japan.

First, with the exception of the few Japanese who are Christians or members of New Religions, worship does not typically take place in groups consisting of coreligionists who meet at regular times during the week. Instead, with the exception of a few major holidays, Japanese people only go to temples and shrines when they feel the need to do so. And when they go to a temple or shrine, worship is often a solitary activity.

Second, research in the general population suggests that a significant number of Japanese claim to be affiliated with more than one religion (Miller 1992; Traphagan 2005). Moreover, a significant number of Japanese do not claim to be religious at all (Stark *et al.* 2005).

The third reason that religion in Japan may be confusing to some in the West arises from the fact that Japanese often engage in religious rituals without necessarily endorsing the underlying belief structures that support them (Traphagan 2005). Yet, despite the often dramatic cultural differences in religion in Japan, Stark and his associates conclude that, "The Japanese turn out to be deeply and very *actively* religious ...@ (Stark *et al.* 2005:17, emphasis in the original). These observations are consistent with the conclusions that are reached by Reader and Tanabe (1998:7), who maintain that "... Japanese religion is less a matter of belief than it is of activity, ritual, and custom.@ Simply put, research that has been conducted to date suggests that religion in Japan appears to involve Adoing@ more than Abelieving.@

When viewed at a broader level, the research reviewed here suggests that findings from studies on various dimensions of religiousness in Japan will vary depending upon the particular aspect of religion that is under consideration. As a result, a clearer picture of religion in Japan requires that multiple dimensions of religion be evaluated within the same study. In the analyses that follow, we focus on five specific dimensions of religion in Japan: Religious affiliation, organizational religiousness, private religious practices, prayer, and select religious beliefs, especially beliefs in an afterlife.

Religious Affiliation—Measures of religious affiliation assess whether individuals identify with a particular religious orientation. In the West, measures of religious affiliation serve as basic markers of social integration that help investigators better understand the social forces that shape the specific religious beliefs that people endorse, and the particular religious practices they engage in. Knowing if a person is affiliated with a particular religion is also important because it tells researchers in the West something about their level of commitment to religion. But as we discussed above, religious affiliation in Japan is more complex because some people may either affiliate with more than one religion or they may not identify with any religious tradition at all. Even so, it is important to emphasize that these insights emerge from studies of the general population, and not older people specifically. If older people in Japan are more deeply involved in religion than younger adults, as some investigators claim (e.g., Reader 2007), then perhaps their patterns of religious affiliation may differ from those of younger adults, as well.

Organizational Religiousness—Some time ago, Mindel and Vaughn (1978) made a useful distinction between two basic dimensions of religious involvement: Organizational and non-organizational religiousness. Cast within the context of the current study, organizational religiousness reflects participation in formal religious organizations and is assessed, for example, by asking study participants how often they go to temples or religious shrines to pray.

Private Religious Practices—In contrast, non-organizational religiousness has to do with religious activities that typically take place at home. This facet of religion is typically assessed by asking people how often they pray or read religious literature when they are at home.

In his classic treatise on religion, William James (1902/1997:486) argued that prayer is A... the very soul and essence of religion.@ Describing prayer as A... religion in action,@ James believed that prayer is the arena in which the work of religion is done. Assessing how often people pray and determining where they pray is important, but it does not go far enough. In addition, researchers need to understand what people pray for. Three foci of prayers appear to be especially important in Japan. First, as Kawano (2005) reports, one of the primary functions of prayer in Japan is to express gratitude. This reinforces the notion that the individual is intimately tied with other people as well as the deities. In fact, Kawano goes on to point out that failure to express gratitude in prayer would be a sign of self-centeredness, which is something that is eschewed in Japan culture. Second, research consistently reveals that one of the primary functions of religion is to help people deal with adversity (e.g., Pargament 1997). If prayer is the essence of religion as James (1902/1997) claimed, then one of the primary goals of prayer should be to help people deal with the effects of stress. And as Reader and Tanabe (1998) discuss in detail, people in Japan often pray for help with adversity. In fact, as Musick and his colleagues report, a common Japanese expression (*kurushii toku no kamikanomi*) encourages people to Aturn to the gods in time of distress@ (Musick *et al.* 2000:83). In addition to asking the gods for help with adversity, people in Japan also rely on prayer to attain a number of material goals, as well. According to Reader and Tanabe (1998:69), one of the primary functions of religion in Japan is to help people make Awishes@ become a reality. Among the things that Japanese often wish for is continued good health, success in business, and success in college entrance examinations for their children and grandchildren.

Religious Beliefs—In their classic discussion of the basic dimensions of religion, Stark and Glock (1968) place a special emphasis on religious beliefs. In fact, the belief dimension is the first facet of religion that was discussed by these investigators. However, there are two reasons why it is difficult to study religious beliefs. First, there are so many different religious beliefs that it is difficult to know which beliefs are most important in the daily lives of older people. Second, as discussed above, the Japanese may affiliate with more than one religion, and they often engage in religious rituals without subscribing to the underlying belief structures that support them. Nevertheless, we suspect that it is possible to study religious beliefs in Japan if careful attention is given to aspects of religion that are salient for older people in this cultural setting. Consistent with this goal, we focus on two areas of belief that may be especially relevant for older Japanese.

First, the facets of religion that have been discussed up to this point deal with the potentially beneficial aspects of religion. But a more balanced view requires that some of the potentially negative aspects of religion be brought to the foreground, as well. One such factor involves fear of punishment by supernatural powers, such as the gods or one's own deceased ancestors. Many temples and shrines in Japan are dedicated primarily to the worship of a particular deity. For example, Reader and Tanabe (1998) discuss Kankiten, a deity that is worshiped in a temple on the outskirts of Osaka. They note that even though Kankiten can be a powerful ally, AThe deity contained potentially dark sides as a ferocious and demanding deity associated (with) ... angry spirits and capable of divine wrath@ (Reader and Tanabe 1998:37). The same may be true of deceased ancestors. In his insightful discussion of ancestor worship in Japan, Klass (1996:287) points out that, AIf the survivor does not perform the prescribed rituals, the dead will turn into harmful spirits, causing bad things to happen in the world of the living.@ Support for this view may be found in Reader's (2007) work on the Shinto religion in Japan. He reports that, AThe spirits of the recent dead are thus highly dangerous and, because of their loneliness and sense of abandonment by the living, also potentially malevolent@ (Reader 2007:54). This suggests that for at least some people in Japan, beliefs surrounding punishment by supernatural forces for bad behavior may be a salient issue (see also Kawano, 2005).

The second cluster of religious beliefs that are examined in the current study have to do with beliefs about the afterlife. The Japanese appear to maintain a rather ambivalent stance toward issues associated with death. On the one hand, the fact that ancestor worship is so widespread suggests that issues involving death may often be on the minds of many Japanese. However, the situation may not be as straightforward as it first appears. Shinto is one of the significant religious traditions in Japan. The pronounced tendency to avoid death is evident in the account of Shinto that is provided by Reader (2007). More specifically, he discusses AShinto's abhorrence of, and where possible, avoidance of, the impurities of death ...@ (Reader 2007:60). In fact, he goes on to argue that A... the dissociation between Shinto and death remains one of the religion's most marked features@ (Reader 2007:77). Given the ambiguity in the literature on Japanese views of death, it is important to probe their beliefs that surround it.

Methods

Study Samples

The data for this study come from a seven-wave panel survey of older people in Japan. The baseline survey consisted of a national sample of 2,200 Japanese aged 60 and older in 1987. The response rate was 69%. Preliminary analysis revealed that this sample is representative of the total elderly population of Japan (Jay, Liang, Liu and Sugisawa 1993). Follow-up surveys with the older people who participated in the baseline interviews were conducted in 1990, 1993, 1996, 1999, and 2002 with response rates ranging from 85% to 93%. The sample was supplemented in 1990 and 1996 to ensure that the survey was representative of the Japanese non-institutionalized elderly aged 60 and over. In addition, the sample was further supplemented by including a national sample of Japanese age 70 and over in 1999. Only the data involving the Japanese respondents who were age 65 and over in the 1996 (Wave 4) and 2002 (Wave 6) surveys are analyzed in the current study because the most extensive measures of religion were included in these surveys. Appropriate weights were used with the 2002 data to ensure the representative nature of the sample.

Measures

The measures of religiousness that are evaluated in our study are provided in Table 1. The procedures used to code these indicators are identified in the footnotes of this table.

Religious Affiliation—Study participants were asked if they identify with a specific religion. It is especially important to emphasize that respondents were explicitly told to select more than one religion if they wished to do so. A series of binary variables were created from the responses to these questions. These indicators reflect the particular religions that older Japanese identify with, including Buddhism, Shinto, Christianity, ancestor worship, and other religions, such as the New Religions. These data were subsequently used to create measures that identify study participants who identify with more than one religion.

Organizational Religiousness—As shown in Table 1, organizational religiousness was measured with three items. One asks study participants to report how often they typically go to a temple, shrine, or church to pray. Another asks respondents how often they go to a temple, shrine or church to participate in formal social activities. Included among these social activities are religious festivals as well as the practice of hatsumiyamairi (i.e., the first visit of a newborn infant to a shrine). A final item asked study participants if they are a member of a religious association (i.e., a Ako@). These are official groups within a temple or shrine that are formed to encourage group pilgrimages, such as organized bus tours to sacred sites. Whole families often join a ko together, so membership of the individual takes place through the family

(Traphagan 2004). A high score on any of these items denotes more frequent organizational religious activity.

Private Religious Practices—The third set of items assess private religious practices. These indicators assess how often older Japanese people pray when they are at home, how often they read Buddhist scriptures or other religious literature at home, and how often they watch or listen to religious programs on television or the radio. A high score on these indicators reflects more frequent private religious practices.

Functions of Prayer—Two items were included in our survey to capture the functions of prayer. The first asks study participants how often they pray to overcome stress or worries, whereas the second has to do with how often older people in Japan pray to obtain positive material benefits or wishes. A high score on either item identifies older people who pray more often for relief from stress, and who pray more frequently for material benefits.

Punishment by Supernatural Powers—The fifth dimension of religiousness reflects beliefs about punishment for bad behavior by supernatural powers, such as deities or deceased ancestors. These beliefs further dictate that punishment will be forthcoming even if bad behavior is not detected by other individuals. The item that is used to assess this construct does not refer to any specific deity, yet the way this question was asked in Japanese implies that punishment is coming from a supernatural or non-human source (i.e., *bachi ga ataru*). A high score on this item represents study participants who believe more strongly in this type of spiritual retribution.

Beliefs About the Afterlife—The final dimension of religion deals with beliefs about the afterlife. For example, these items were designed to see if older people in Japan believe that the spirit lives on after death, whether they believe in heaven and hell, and whether they believe in the possibility of eternal happiness. As discussed above, the items dealing with beliefs about the afterlife were the only indicators that were taken from the Wave 4 survey. A high score on any of these four indicators stands for greater belief in a given aspect of the afterlife.

Demographic Correlates of Religiousness—In addition to describing levels of religious involvement, we also conducted a series of more fine-grained descriptive analyses to see if the dimensions of religion vary by age, sex, marital status, education, and whether study participants reside in urban or rural areas. The influence of age is evaluated by comparing and contrasting older people in three ordinal age categories: Young-old (aged 65-74); old-old (aged 75-84), and the oldest-old (aged 85 and over). Sex (men vs. women) and marital status (currently married vs. not currently married) are evaluated with binary measures. Education is assessed with three ordinal categories: 8 years of schooling or less, 9 to 12 years of education, and more than 12 years of education. Finally, population density is assessed with a variable that contrasts older people in Japan who live in rural areas (i.e., 25,000 people or less) with study participants who reside in medium cities and large urban areas.

Data Analysis Strategy

The goal of this study is to provide a descriptive analysis of religiousness in Japan. As Friis and Sellers (2009) point out, research designs can be partitioned into two broad categories. The first involves descriptive studies. This type of research is designed to characterize the amount and distribution of a phenomenon, such as religious involvement, within a population. In contrast, the second type of research design, the analytic study, is developed to uncover the determinants (i.e., the causes) of a phenomenon, such as the reasons why religious involvement is either higher or lower in specific population subgroups. Descriptive studies generally precede analytic studies because the findings that are obtained from descriptive analyses can ultimately

be used to frame hypotheses that are subsequently tested in analytic studies (Friedman 1994). However, it is important to emphasize that hypotheses are not developed or tested in descriptive studies. In fact, as Koepsell and Weiss (2003:95) argue, AThe hallmark of a descriptive study is that it is undertaken without a specific hypothesis.@

Two descriptive statistics are used in the analyses presented below. First, we review the simple frequency distributions of all study measures for the samples taken as a whole. Second, using t-tests, we assess whether the various facets of religious study vary by age, gender, marital status, education, and whether differences in religious practices and beliefs vary across urban and rural residential areas.

Age—The participants in our study were between 65 and 99 years of age. Clearly, 34 years represents a significant portion of the life course. When researchers study age differences in religion in the West, they typically pool all study participants who are 65 years of age or older into a single group. Investigators who use this data analytic strategy are, in essence, assuming that religious development ceases at age 65. This is an untested assumption, especially in Japan. Consequently, we believe that it is important to see if religious practices and beliefs vary over the course of late life. However, because our data are cross-sectional, it is not possible to tell if the variations we observe reflect age differences, cohort differences, or both. Even so, exploring our data in this way is important because the findings will help determine if more fine-grained studies that differentiate between age and cohort effects are necessary.

Gender—Research in the United States consistently shows that older women are more deeply involved in religion than older men (e.g., Levin, Taylor and Chatters 1994). We need to know if the same is true in Japan. There is some evidence that gender differences exist in Japan, as well. For example, Musick *et al.* (2000) report that the care of religious altars that are maintained in the home (i.e., a Buddhist altar [butsudan] or Shinto altar [kamidana]) is typically left to older women. Moreover, as Reader (2007) points out, priests at Shinto temples are typically, but not exclusively, men, whereas women often fulfill the role of miko (i.e., shrine maidens). Miko typically perform important shrine activities, such as selling amulets and talismans, as well as looking after people who come to visit the shrine. Although there appear to be significant gender differences in select organizational aspects of religion in Japan, it is less clear whether there are gender differences in other facets of religion during late life, such as religious beliefs and the frequency of private prayer.

Marital Status—Research with adults of all ages in the United States suggests that married people tend to be more deeply involved in religion than people who are not married (see Wilcox 2005, for a review of this literature). However, findings from studies on marital status and religion among older adults are less consistent (e.g., Levin and Chatters 1998). Perhaps the differences between these studies can be explained by the fact that younger people who are married tend to be more deeply involved in religion because they are raising children, and their heightened religious activities reflect their desire to pass along their religious beliefs and practices to their offspring. Even so, less is known about whether older people in Japan who are married are more involved in religion than older adults in Japan who are not married.

Educational Attainment—Research on the relationship between education and religious activities in Japan suggests that adults of all ages who are more highly educated tend to be more likely than their less educated counterparts to possess religious amulets and believe in the existence of ancestral spirits (Miller 1992). But Miller reports that educational differences in other facets of religion, such as belief in the gods and the frequency of prayer failed to emerge from his data. Viewed more broadly, it appears that the relationship between educational attainment and involvement in religion depends upon the dimension or facet of religion that is under consideration. Unfortunately, the research that has been done so far has been conducted

with people of all ages. We aim to contribute to the literature by evaluating the interface between education and multiple dimensions of religion among older people in Japan.

Urban Versus Rural Residence—The secularization hypothesis is one of the more widely debated theoretical perspectives in the sociology of religion (Gorski 2003). Simply stated, the secularization hypothesis predicts that as societies become more modernized, they tend to become more complex, more rational, more individualistic, and less religious. Although modernization is a complex process, one key facet of it forms the focal point in our analysis B urbanization. Adherents of the secularization hypothesis predict that as residential areas become more urban, the population becomes more heterogeneous and the social and psychological distance between people increases. In the process, the firm integrating grip that religious institutions previously held over local residents begins to loosen. Cast within the context of our study, this suggests that older people in rural areas of Japan should be more deeply involved in religion than older people who live in more urbanized areas in Japan.

Although some researchers have conducted studies on religion in rural areas of Japan (e.g., Traphagan 2004), and others have focused on urban areas (e.g., Miller 1992), we have not been able to find any quantitative studies that compare and contrast levels of religious involvement among older adults in both urban and rural settings.

Results

Religion Among Older People in Japan

Table 2 contains the findings from the frequency distributions that provide an overview of religious involvement among all the older Japanese people in our sample taken together.

The data reveal that, consistent with other studies (e.g., Stark *et al.* 2005), a significant proportion (34%) of older people in Japan do not claim to be affiliated with any religion. This relatively large number may reflect the rather tenuous way in which religious affiliation is regarded among some older people in Japan. However, two other findings regarding religious affiliation do not agree with the results in some studies on religion in Japan. First, our data suggest that relatively few older people in Japan identify with more than one religion. Specifically, only 7.4% are affiliated with two religious traditions and only .5% are associated with three. Second, few older Japanese claim to be affiliated with Shinto (2.1%), whereas the majority are Buddhist (41%). In contrast, Traphagan (2005) reports that nearly half of the adults of all ages in Japan identify with Shinto and he argues that a much more substantial number identify with more than one religion. There are two ways to reconcile the discrepancy between our results and the findings reported by Traphagan (2005). First, the data cited by Traphagan (2005) were provided by the Japanese Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The data for these surveys were supplied by religious organizations and not directly from potential religious adherents, themselves. In contrast, our data come directly from older men and women in Japan and not from a religious organization. Second, we turned to the 2000 Japanese General Social Survey (JGSS) to see if we could find data that would instill greater confidence in our results. The JGSS is a random probability survey of 2,893 people of all ages in Japan (Tanioka *et al.* 2000). The data from this survey reveal that, as in our study, only 2.7% of the Japanese people identify with the Shinto religion. Unfortunately, the JGSS did not provide data on people who identify with more than one religion. Perhaps the most prudent conclusion to draw at this time is that estimates of religious affiliation in Japan vary substantially and, as a result, more research is needed to resolve this issue.

The data in Table 2 further indicate that the level of organizational religious involvement among older people in Japan is fairly low. Most older adults do not go often to temples, shrines, or churches for social activities. More specifically, only about one quarter (i.e., 25.3%) of the

older people in our study attend social activities once a month or more. And even fewer go to temples, shrines, and churches to pray. In fact, nearly two-thirds (i.e., 62.2%) report that they never go to a religious institution to pray. Finally, only a very small proportion of older people in Japan are members of a religious association (5.8%).

In contrast to formal involvement in religion, the findings in Table 2 suggest that some forms of private religious activity at home are fairly common among older people in Japan. For instance, nearly two-thirds (i.e., 64.9%) say they always pray at home. But in contrast, 29.5% of older Japanese say they either always or sometimes read religious material at home. This finding is consistent with the observations of Kawano (2005), who notes that most people in Japan do not read nor do they try to understand sacred Buddhist texts. The findings further reveal that only 13% either sometimes or always watch or listen to religious programs on TV or the radio.

Consistent with studies that have been conducted in the West (e.g., Pargament 1997), the data from our study suggest that over half of the older people in Japan (i.e., 59%) indicate that they sometimes or always pray to relieve stress. Also, as Reader and Tanabe (1998) report, we found that a significant number of older people in Japan either sometimes (23.2%) or always (13.7%) pray for practical things. Even so, the majority of older people in Japan either never (26.5%) or usually do not (36.6%) pray for practical things. This finding indicates that the practice of praying for practical benefits may not be as widely endorsed in Japan as Reader and Tanabe (1998) suggest.

Some investigators have argued that religious beliefs are less important to people in Japan than are religious behaviors and rituals (e.g., Reader and Tanabe 1998). However, our data suggest that this may depend upon the beliefs in question. More specifically, the findings that are provided in Table 2 suggest that just under half the older people in our sample (i.e., 42.1%) believe that supernatural powers either sometimes or always punish bad behavior.

The results involving beliefs about the afterlife point to other ways in which religious beliefs factor into the lives of older people in Japan. Two major trends may be seen in the responses to the four indicators that assess this facet of religion. First, between 32.4% and 45.5% of the study participants provided a *don't know* response when they were asked these questions. Second, the items that assess belief in the afterlife address two issues: one involves whether people believe the spirit lives on after death, whereas the other issue has to do with the overall quality of the next life. The findings reveal that over a third of the older people in Japan believe that the spirit lives on after death (38.5%). However, fewer older study participants believe that the next life is a better place than the present one (6.8%), that death is just one point on the way to eternal happiness (15.1%), or that there is a heaven and a hell (20%). There is one potential explanation for these results. As we discussed earlier, Reader (2007) argues that one of the most distinguishing features of the Shinto religion involves avoidance of and dissociation from death. Perhaps this is why the older people in our study do not subscribe to a positive view of life after death. However, it may not seem as though this explanation applies to the older people in our study because, as our data show, relatively few older people in Japan identify with Shinto. Even so, it is important to recall that older people in Japan often adopt various aspects of a religious tradition without formally aligning themselves with it (Traphagan, 2004).

Variations by Age

The data in Table 3 contain the results of the tests that were conducted to see whether levels of religious involvement differ among the young-old, old-old, and oldest-old in Japan. Three general trends emerge from these data.

First, the findings reveal that organizational religious involvement appears to decline through late life. More specifically, rates of participation in social activities at temples and shrines, the frequency of praying at temples and shrines, and participation in religious associations (ko) decline steadily across the three age groups. This may reflect the fact that levels of functional disability increase with age, thereby making it difficult for the oldest-old to leave their homes and participate in activities at temples, shrines, and churches.

Second, even though the oldest-old have lower rates of organizational religious involvement, they appear to engage in private religious practices more frequently than their younger counterparts. Moreover, the differences in private religious practices are especially evident when the oldest-old are compared with the young-old. These data reveal that compared to the young-old, the oldest-old are more likely to pray at home and the oldest-old are more likely to read religious literature when they are at home.

Third, there is a somewhat mixed tendency for the young-old to hold less firmly to the religious beliefs that are evaluated in our study. More specifically, the findings reveal that compared to the oldest-old, the young-old are less likely to believe that supernatural powers punish the living for bad or undesirable behavior. Moreover, the results suggest that there is a somewhat similar pattern with respect to the indicators that assess belief in the afterlife. The data indicate that compared to the old-old, the young-old are less likely to believe in the existence of heaven and hell, less likely to believe that the spirit lives on after death, and less likely to believe that death is just one point on the way to eternal happiness.

Variations by Gender

Table 4 contains the findings from the analyses that were designed to see whether there are gender differences in the religious activities and beliefs of older men and women in Japan. Taken as a whole, the data reveal that, consistent with studies in the West, older women in Japan appear to be more deeply immersed in religion than older men. More specifically, the results indicate that compared to older men, older Japanese women attend social activities at religious institutions more often, pray more often when they are at home, and read religious literature at home more frequently. The same pattern emerges with respect to the functions of prayer. The results in Table 3 suggest that compared to older men, older women in Japan tend to pray more often for relief from stress and they tend to pray more often for wishes and practical benefits.

Fairly pronounced gender differences also emerge from the data on religious beliefs. The findings suggest that older women in Japan are more likely than older men to believe that the gods or deceased ancestors punish the living for bad behavior. Moreover, statistically significant gender differences emerge in three of the four afterlife beliefs. In particular, the data indicate that older Japanese women are more likely than older Japanese men to believe in the existence of heaven and hell, they are more likely to believe that the spirit lives on after death, and they are more likely to believe that death is just one point on the way to eternal happiness.

Variations by Marital Status

A number of statistically significant differences in religious involvement emerge between older people in Japan who are married and those who are not married (see Table 5). However, as the data suggest, none of these differences involve organizational religiousness. Moreover, when differences between the married and non-married emerge in other dimensions of religion, the non-married appear to be more deeply involved in religion than older people in Japan who are married. In particular, the findings in Table 5 reveal that compared to older people who are married, older adults in Japan who are not married are more likely to pray at home and they

are more likely to read religious literature when they are at home. In addition, older people in Japan who are not married are more likely than their married counterparts to pray for relief from stress and to pray for wishes and practical benefits.

The differences between married and non-married people in Japan are evident when religious beliefs are examined, as well. The results indicate that people who are not married are more likely than individuals who are married to believe that deities or dead ancestors punish the living. In addition, there is a slight tendency for people who are not married to express beliefs about the afterlife. More specifically, the findings reveal that non-married older people in Japan are more likely than people who are married to believe in the existence of heaven and hell, to believe that the spirit lives on after death, and they are more likely to believe that death is just one point on the way to eternal happiness. However, as the data in Table 5 reveal, the magnitude of the differences in the means of these afterlife beliefs are not substantial.

Variations by Educational Attainment

Table 6 contains the results of the tests that were performed to see whether the various dimensions of religion vary according to an older person's level of educational attainment. The data in Table 6 suggest that education is not associated with substantial differences in organizational religiousness. The findings indicate that older people with moderate levels of education (i.e., 9-12 years of schooling) are slightly more likely to attend social activities in religious institutions than older adults with low levels of education (i.e., 8 or fewer years of schooling). In addition, older individuals in Japan with high levels of education (i.e., more than 12 years of schooling) appear to attend social activities at shrines, temples, and churches less often than older people with low levels of educational attainment. However, the magnitude of the differences between the means is fairly modest in both instances. But in contrast to these minor variations, education does not appear to be significantly associated with praying in religious institutions or membership in religious associations.

Similarly, education does not appear to be consistently associated with the private religious practices of older adults in Japan. The results provided in Table 6 reveal that older people with either low levels of education or moderate levels of education tend to pray less often when they are at home than older adults with high levels of educational attainment. But significant variations by education failed to emerge with respect to reading religious literature at home or watching or listening to religious programs on television or the radio.

In contrast to the findings that have been discussed up to this point, the data in Table 6 further indicate that older people in Japan with low levels of education are more likely to pray for relief from stress than older adults with moderate levels of educational attainment. In addition, the findings suggest that older individuals with fewer years of schooling are more likely than older people with either moderate or high levels of educational attainment to pray for wishes or practical benefits.

Returning to Table 6, the results also indicate that beliefs about punishment by the gods or deceased ancestors may vary by education, as well. More specifically, the findings suggest that compared to older people with moderate or high levels of educational attainment, older adults in Japan with fewer years of schooling are more likely to believe that bad behavior may be punished by supernatural powers. But as the data in Table 6 also suggest, educational differences are only evident in some religious beliefs. In particular, there were no statistically significant variations by education in any of the items that assess belief in the afterlife.

Variations by Rural and Urban Residence

The last set of analyses were designed to see whether involvement in religion differs in rural and urban residential areas in Japan. The findings from these analyses are provided in Table 7. Taken together, the results reveal that older people who reside in rural areas of Japan (i.e., towns and villages) appear to be more deeply involved in religion than older adults who live in more densely populated areas. Evidence of this may be indicated, for example, by turning to the findings involving religious activities in temples, shrines, and churches. The data in Table 7 suggest that older people who live in urban areas are less likely to attend social activities in religious institutions than older adults who live in medium sized cities or towns. Moreover, there is a clear residential gradient in the frequency of praying at temples, shrines, and churches. Older people in urban areas pray less often in religious institutions than older adults in medium sized cities, and older individuals who live in medium sized cities are less likely to pray in temples, shrines, and churches than older adults who live in towns and villages. Similar, though less consistent, differences are evident with respect to prayer at home. These data reveal that older people who live in either large or medium sized cities pray less often when they are at home than older adults who live in towns and villages. A somewhat similar tendency emerges with respect to prayers for wishes and practical benefits. The data suggest that older people in Japan who reside in large urban areas are less likely than older people who live in either medium sized cities or towns to pray for wishes.

The data provided in Table 7 further reveal that there are urban/rural differences in religious beliefs. More specifically, the findings suggest that older people who live in large cities are less likely than older adults who reside in either medium sized cities or towns to believe that supernatural powers will punish bad behavior. Moreover, the results indicate that beliefs in the afterlife vary according to the population density of the place where older people in Japan reside. In particular, significant differences emerge with respect to three of the four afterlife beliefs. And in each instance, older people who live in large cities are less likely than older adults who live in less densely populated areas to believe in the existence of heaven and hell, believe that the spirit lives on after death, and believe that death is just one point on the way to eternal happiness.

Viewed more broadly, the data presented in this section are consistent with the basic tenets of the secularization hypothesis. As population density increases, involvement in religion declines. Although longitudinal data are needed to properly evaluate this theoretical perspective, it appears as though one facet of modernization (i.e., increasing population density) is associated with how tightly older people are integrated into religion in Japan.

Discussion

The data in this study help illuminate the broad landscape of religious involvement among older adults in Japan. The findings suggest that for the sample taken as a whole, religious involvement is more a matter of private practice than affiliation with formal religious institutions. This is consistent with the observations provided in a number of ethnographic studies (e.g., Reader and Tanabe 1998). These results underscore one of the key ways in which religion in Japan differs from religion in the West.

Private prayer appears to be the way in which religious involvement is most likely to be manifest among older people in Japan. Yet, the content or function of these prayers reveals both culturally unique as well as more universal practices. As in the West, the findings from the current study suggest that older people in Japan often pray for relief from stress (see Pargament 1997). However, unlike older people in many other cultural settings, the data further reveal that people in Japan also often pray for wishes.

In reading the literature on religion in Japan, one is left with the impression that religious beliefs are relatively unimportant. However, our results suggest that it depends upon the nature of the specific beliefs in question. For example, relatively few older Japanese believe in eternal happiness following death, yet slightly less than half believe that supernatural powers (i.e., the gods or deceased ancestors) can punish people for bad behavior, even when bad behavior is not detected by other individuals. In the process, these findings show the value of conducting studies in non-Western settings because they bring to the foreground dimensions of prayer that have not typically been evaluated by other quantitative investigators.

But rather than merely describing religious involvement for older Japanese people as a whole, a second goal of our study was to probe more deeply for key social demographic variations in religiousness. Fairly pronounced social demographic differences emerged in our analyses, suggesting that religion may not mean the same thing nor be practiced in the same way by all older adults in Japan. The greatest demographic subgroup variations in our study involved differences between older men and older women in Japan. Taken as a whole, older women in Japan appear to be much more deeply involved in religion than older men. Similar findings have been reported in studies that have been conducted with older people in the United States (e.g., Levin, Taylor and Chatters 1994). Yet, the reasons for these gender differences still remain unclear. Perhaps part of the explanation for the gender differences that were observed in our data may be found in Traphagan's (2004) research. As Traphagan points out, older women are responsible in the family for performing primary ritual duties, such as the rituals associated with ancestor veneration. He goes on to argue that this is one way in which older women may maintain the caregiving activities they frequently assumed earlier in the life course of the family. A closer examination of our findings tend to support Traphagan's (2004) observations. We found that some of the strongest gender difference involved praying during stressful times and praying for wishes. Although we did not gather detailed data on the precise nature of these prayers, perhaps they involved prayers for family members who were experiencing stressful times as well as family members who were in need.

Rural and urban differences were the second most evident demographic trend in our data. Consistent with the literature that was reviewed earlier we observed that patterns of religious involvement among older people in Japan are consistent with the basic tenets of the secularization hypothesis. Levels of religious involvement appear to be high in rural areas than in more densely populated areas. But these results help confirm views that are much older than those that are captured by the secularization hypothesis. More specifically, our findings also harken back to the work of the classic social theorists, especially Ferdinand Toennies. In his seminal work, Toennies made a distinction between two types of social organization: *Gemeinschaft* (i.e., rural, agrarian settings) and *Gesellschaft* (i.e., urban, industrial settings) (Cahnman and Heberle 1971). And, presaging the secularization hypothesis, Toennies argued that social relationships in *Gesellschaft* settings are driven by rational scientific thought, whereas *Gemeinschaft* forms of social organization are shaped by A... supernatural ruling and norm-giving powers@ and A... pious devoutness ...@ to religious principles (Cahnman and Heberle 1971:137 and 332).

With respect to age, the results suggest that compared to the young-old, the oldest-old are less involved in formal activities at religious institutions but more involved in private religious practices at home. This pattern of findings is consistent with the notion that mobility limitations may hamper the ability of the oldest-old to participate in formal religious activities outside the home. However, as we noted earlier, we cannot determine whether these findings represent age or cohort effects. Even so, the fact that there are age-related variations in the data suggests that more research on this issue is justified.

Relatively little variation in religion emerged among older people with different levels of education. Education is a widely-used marker of social class standing. Perhaps the findings in our study involving education reflect the wider nature of social class differences in Japan. As Christopher (1983) points out, wealth in Japan is much more evenly divided than in the United States. Moreover, he reports that more well-to-do Japanese do not segregate themselves from their less prosperous countrymen to the same extent that more privileged people do in America. To the extent this is true, older people in different social classes in Japan should be relatively homogeneous. And if they are, then perhaps they practice religion in similar ways, as well.

The fewest demographic subgroup differences were found with marital status. However, when differences emerged from our data, the non-married always appeared to be more deeply involved in religion than older people who are married. One possible explanation for these results may be found in the literature on living arrangements. Research in Japan consistently reveals that older people who are not married (i.e., widowed) are more likely to live with their children than older adults who are still married (e.g., Takagi, Silverstein and Crimmons 2007). Perhaps living with children and grandchildren reawakens interest in, and provides greater opportunity for, the practice of religion among widowed elders in Japan.

When viewed at the broadest level, the findings from our analysis of social demographic variations in religiousness suggest that religion does not mean the same thing to all older people in Japan nor is it always practiced in the same way. Now, the task is to determine why these variations exist. In the process of examining these issues, it is important to move beyond the assessment of religious differences to the potentially important impact that greater involvement in religion may have in the lives of older people in Japan. As we noted earlier, a vast number of studies that have been conducted in the West reveal that greater involvement in religion is associated with better physical and mental health (Koenig, McCullough and Larson 2001). Researchers need to know if the same is true in Japan. Unfortunately, there appear to be few quantitative studies that have examined this issue, especially in nationally representative samples of older adults.

In the process of examining this, as well as other issues, researchers would be well advised to pay close attention to the limitations in our work. Two are mentioned briefly below.

First, even though we examined a number of key dimensions of religion in Japan, many other facets of religion were not evaluated in our work. For example, research in the West suggests that an important function of religion is to help older people find a deeper sense of meaning in life (Krause 2008). Yet, we are unaware of anyone who has quantitatively assessed religious meaning among older people in Japan.

The second limitation in the research we have presented arises from the fact that our data are cross-sectional. As a result, it was not possible to provide a sense of whether the various facets of religion that we examined change over time, and if they do, how they change. The study of change in religion over the life course is becoming an increasingly important issue in the West (see George *et al.* 2004), yet we have not been able to find any quantitative studies that look at change in various dimensions of religion among older people in Japan. Because we do not assess change in the current study, our descriptive analysis of religion in Japan remains incomplete.

Even though there are limitations in the work we have done, we hope that the broader message from this study is not overlooked. A large part of the empirical research on religion is based on studies that have been conducted in the United States. However, the United States is a relatively unique setting because this country was founded by religious dissidents. These unique historical forces have shaped the way that religion is practiced in America, and they have influenced the interface between religion and other key facets of society, such as

educational institutions and political practices. As a result, the view of religion that is afforded by empirical studies in America may be biased or slanted in any number of ways. The only way to be sure this is not so is to study religion in diverse cultural settings. We hope that the descriptive analyses that are provided here take a potentially important step in the right direction and emphasize the need to delve more deeply into these exciting issues.

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Table 1**Core Study Measures****1. Religious Affiliation^a**

Do you believe in a specific religion? You can answer more than one.

2. Organizational Religiousness

A. How often do you go to a temple, shrine, or church to pray? Going to a temple also includes visiting a grave.^b

B. Except for worship, how often do you engage in activities at a temple, shrine, or church? For example, activities include a gathering to support a member of a Buddhist temple, volunteer activities or events to civilize youth supported by a temple, shrine, or church.^b

C. Do you belong to a religious group or association (U ji ko) B a supporting group for a Buddhist temple or church group?^c

3. Private Religious Practices^d

A. At your home, do you pray or offer prayers to your ancestors? Include offerings of water, incense, and rice.

B. How often do you read Buddhist scriptures or the Bible in your home?

C. How often do you watch or listen to religious programs on the TV or radio?

4. Functions of Prayer^d

A. Praying to God or Buddha helps me overcome my stress and worries.

B. Wishes can come true by praying to God or Buddha.

5. Punishment by Supernatural Powers^d

A punishment or curse will be offered toward bad behavior and action.

6. Belief about the Afterlife^e

A. Compared to life on earth, life after death will be a much better place.

B. I believe in the existence of heaven and hell.

C. Even though the body dies, the spirit lives on.

D. Death is just one point on the way to eternal happiness.

^aThis item is scored in the following manner (coding in parentheses): Buddhist (1); Shinto (2); Christian (3); ancestor worship (4); other (5); no specific religion (6).

^bThese items are scored in the following manner: never (1); less than once a year (2); 1-2 times a year (3); several times a year (4); about once a month (5); about 2-3 times a month (6); more than once a week (7).

^cThis item is scored in the following manner: no (0); yes (1).

^dThese items are scored in the following manner: never (1); seldom (2); sometimes (3); always (4).

^eThese items are scored in the following manner: definitely don't think so (1); don't really think so (2); somewhat think so (3); I think so (4).

Table 2**Religious Involvement Among Older People in Japan**

Full Sample (N = 1670)	
1. Religious Affiliation	
A. No religious preference	N = 568; 34.0%
B. One religious affiliation	N = 971; 58.2%
1. Buddhist	N = 684; 41.0%
2. Shinto	N = 35; 2.1%
3. Christian	N = 19; 1.1%
4. Ancestor Worship	N = 190; 11.4%
5. Other	N = 43; 2.6%
C. Two religious affiliations	N = 123; 7.4%
1. Buddhist and Shinto	N = 52; 3.1%
2. Buddhist and Ancestor Worship	N = 55; 3.3%
3. Buddhist and Christian	N = 2; .1%
4. Buddhist and Other	N = 3; .2%
5. Shinto and Ancestor Worship	N = 8; .5%
6. Shinto and Christian	N = 1; .05%
7. Shinto and other	N = 1; .05%
8. Ancestor Worship and other	N = 1; .05%
D. Three religious affiliations	N = 8; .5%
Buddhist, Shinto, and Ancestor Worship	N = 8; .5%
2. Organizational Religiousness	
A. Social activities at Temple, Shrine, or Church (0 = 3.897; SD = 1.383)	
1. Never	N = 129; 7.7%
2. Less than once a year	N = 83; 4.9%
3. 1-2 times a year	N = 319; 19.0%
4. Several times a year	N = 722; 43.1%
5. About once a month	N = 237; 14.1%
6. About 2-3 times a month	N = 103; 6.1%
7. More than once a month	N = 85; 5.1%
B. Praying at Temple, Shrine, or Church (0 = 2.059; SD = 1.584)	
1. Never	N = 1038; 62.2%
2. Less than once a year	N = 114; 6.8%
3. 1-2 times a year	N = 148; 8.9%
4. Several times a year	N = 221; 13.2%
5. About once a month	N = 76; 4.6%
6. About 2-3 times a month	N = 29; 2.3%
7. More than once a month	N = 33; 2.0%
C. Member of a religious group or association (0 = .058; SD = .235)	
1. Yes	N = 98; 5.8%
2. No	N = 1538; 94.2%

**Full Sample
(N = 1670)**

3. Private Religious Practices

A. Pray at home (0 = 3.311; SD = 1.077)

1. Never	N = 225; 13.4%
2. Seldom	N = 117; 7.0%
3. Sometimes	N = 246; 14.7%
4. Always	N = 1088; 64.9%

B. Read religious literature at home (0 = 1.889; SD = 1.182)

1. Never	N = 972; 58.3%
2. Seldom	N = 204; 12.3%
3. Sometimes	N = 196; 11.8%
4. Always	N = 295; 17.7%

C. Watch or listen to religious programs on TV or radio (0 = 1.411; SD = .803)

1. Never	N = 1249; 75.4%
2. Seldom	N = 191; 11.5%
3. Sometimes	N = 157; 9.5%
4. Always	N = 59; 3.5%

4. Functions of Prayer

A. Prayer to overcome stress and worry (0 = 2.710; SD = 1.063)

1. Never	N = 272; 17.1%
2. Don't usually	N = 379; 23.9%
3. Sometimes	N = 476; 29.9%
4. Always	N = 462; 29.1%

B. Prayers for wishes (0 = 2.241; SD = .994)

1. Never	N = 411; 26.5%
2. Don't usually	N = 567; 36.6%
3. Sometimes	N = 359; 23.2%
4. Always	N = 213; 13.7%

5. Punishment by Supernatural Powers

Punishment for bad behavior by supernatural powers (0 = 2.300; SD = 1.051)

1. Never	N = 440; 28.5%
2. Don't usually	N = 455; 29.4%
3. Sometimes	N = 398; 25.8%
4. Always	N = 252; 16.3%

6. Belief about the Afterlife

A. Life after death will be a much better place (0 = 1.592; SD = .849)

1. Don't know	N = 669; 39.0%
2. Definitely don't think so	N = 611; 35.6%
3. Don't really think so	N = 317; 18.5%
4. Somewhat think so	N = 52; 3.0%
5. I think so	N = 66; 3.8%

B. I believe in the existence of heaven and hell (0 = 1.949; SD = 1.075)

1. Don't know	N = 589; 34.2%
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**Full Sample
(N = 1670)**

2. Definitely don=t think so	N = 541; 31.5%
3. Don=t really think so	N = 242; 14.1%
4. Somewhat think so	N = 203; 11.8%
5. I think so	N = 140; 8.2%
C. Even though the body dies, the spirit lives on (0 = 2.599; SD = 1.155)	
1. Don=t know	N = 556; 32.4%
2. Definitely don=t think so	N = 300; 17.5%
3. Don=t really think so	N = 198; 11.5%
4. Somewhat think so	N = 328; 19.1%
5. I think so	N = 333; 19.4%
D. Death is just one point on the way to eternal happiness (0 = 1.955; SD = 1.071)	
1. Don=t know	N = 781; 45.5%
2. Definitely don=t think so	N = 429; 25.0%
3. Don=t really think so	N = 246; 14.3%
4. Somewhat think so	N = 131; 7.6%
5. I think so	N = 128; 7.5%

Table 3**Variations in Measures of Religiousness by Age^a**

1. Organizational Religiousness
A. Social activities at Temple, Shrine, or Church B (Means in Parentheses)
1. Young-Old (0 = 3.973) vs. Old-Old (0 = 3.909) B <i>ns</i>
2. Young-Old (0 = 3.973) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 3.392) B $p < .001$
3. Old-Old (0 = 3.909) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 3.392) B $p < .001$
B. Praying at Temple, Shrine, or Church
1. Young-Old (0 = 2.139) vs. Old-Old (0 = 2.022) B <i>ns</i>
2. Young-Old (0 = 2.139) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 1.709) B $p < .001$
3. Old-Old (0 = 2.022) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 1.709) B $p < .05$
C. Member of a religious group or association
1. Young-Old (0 = .071) vs. Old-Old (0 = .050) B <i>ns</i>
2. Young-Old (0 = .071) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = .015) B $p < .001$
3. Old-Old (0 = .050) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = .015) B $p < .01$
2. Private Religious Practices
A. Prayer at home
1. Young-Old (0 = 3.242) vs. Old-Old (0 = 3.406) B $p < .005$
2. Young-Old (0 = 3.242) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 3.395) B <i>ns</i>
3. Old-Old (0 = 3.406) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 3.395) B <i>ns</i>
B. Read religious literature at home
1. Young-Old (0 = 1.813) vs. Old-Old (0 = 1.990) B $p < .01$
2. Old-Old (0 = 1.990) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 1.990) B <i>ns</i>
C. Watch or listen to religious programs on TV or radio
1. Young-Old (0 = 1.405) vs. Old-Old (0 = 1.417) B <i>ns</i>
2. Young-Old (0 = 1.405) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 1.430) B <i>ns</i>
3. Old-Old (0 = 1.417) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 1.430) B <i>ns</i>
3. Functions of Prayer
A. Prayer to overcome stress and worry
1. Young-Old (0 = 2.680) vs. Old-Old (0 = 2.746) B <i>ns</i>
2. Young-Old (0 = 2.680) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 2.773) B <i>ns</i>
3. Old-Old (0 = 2.746) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 2.773) B <i>ns</i>
B. Prayers for wishes
1. Young-Old (0 = 2.185) vs. Old-Old (0 = 2.286) B <i>ns</i>
2. Young-Old (0 = 2.185) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 2.433) B $p < .01$
3. Old-Old (0 = 2.286) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 2.433) B <i>ns</i>
4. Punishment by Supernatural Forces
1. Young-Old (0 = 2.240) vs. Old-Old (0 = 2.352) B <i>ns</i>
2. Young-Old (0 = 2.240) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 2.485) B $p < .01$
3. Old-Old (0 = 2.352) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 2.485) B <i>ns</i>
5. Beliefs about the Afterlife
A. Compared with life on earth, life after death will be a much better place
1. Young-Old (0 = 1.572) vs. Old-Old (0 = 1.608) B <i>ns</i>

2. Young-Old (0 = 1.572) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 1.761) B *ns*

3. Old-Old (0 = 1.608) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 1.761) B *ns*

B. I believe in the existence of heaven and hell

1. Young-Old (0 = 1.873) vs. Old-Old (0 = 2.090) B $p < .01$

2. Young-Old (0 = 1.873) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 1.980) B *ns*

3. Old-Old (0 = 2.090) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 1.980) B *ns*

C. Even though the body dies, the spirit lives on

1 Young-Old (0 = 2.518) vs. Old-Old (0 = 2.735) B $p < .01$

2 Young-Old (0 = 2.518) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 2.755) B *ns*

3. Old-Old (0 = 2.735) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 2.755) B *ns*

D. Death is just one point on the way to eternal happiness

1. Young-Old (0 = 1.879) vs. Old-Old (0 = 2.093) B $p < .01$

2. Young-Old (0 = 1.879) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 2.051) B *ns*

3. Old-Old (0 = 2.093) vs. Oldest-Old (0 = 2.051) B *ns*

^a young-old (age 65-74); old-old (age 75-84); oldest-old (age 85 and older)

Table 4**Variations by Gender**

1. Organizational Religiousness
A. Social activities at Temples, Shrines, or Churches
Men (0 = 3.764) vs. Women (0 = 4.000) B $p < .001$
B. Praying at Temples, Shrines, or Churches
Men (0 = 2.063) vs. Women (0 = 2.057) B <i>ns</i>
C. Member of a religious group or association
Men (0 = .056) vs. Women (0 = .061) B <i>ns</i>
2. Private Religious Practices
A. Pray at home
Men (0 = 2.997) vs. Women (0 = 3.550) B $p < .001$
B. Read religious literature at home
Men (0 = 1.691) vs. Women (0 = 2.040) B $p < .001$
C. Watch or listen to religious programs on TV or radio
Men (0 = 1.400) vs. Women (0 = 1.423) B <i>ns</i>
3. Functions of Prayer
A. Prayer to overcome stress and worry
Men (0 = 2.490) vs. Women (0 = 2.880) B $p < .001$
B. Prayers for wishes
Men (0 = 1.989) vs. Women (0 = 2.435) B $p < .001$
4. Punishment by Supernatural Forces
Men (0 = 2.155) vs. Women (0 = 2.413) B $p < .001$
5. Beliefs about the Afterlife
A. Compared with life on earth, life after death will be a much better place
Men (0 = 1.559) vs. Women (0 = 1.618) B <i>ns</i>
B. I believe in the existence of heaven and hell
Men (0 = 1.827) vs. Women (0 = 2.049) B $p < .001$
C. Even though the body dies, the spirit lives on
Men (0 = 2.396) vs. Women (0 = 2.755) B $p < .001$
D. Death is just one point on the way to eternal happiness
Men (0 = 1.857) vs. Women (0 = 2.045) B $p < .01$

Table 5**Variations by Marital Status**

1. Organizational Religiousness
A. Social activities at Temples, Shrines, and Churches
Married (0 = 3.854) vs. Not Married (0 = 3.972) B <i>ns</i>
B. Praying at Temples, Shrines, and Churches
Married (0 = 2.085) vs. Not Married (0 = 2.015) B <i>ns</i>
C. Member of a religious group or association
Married (0 = .062) vs. Not Married (0 = .052) B <i>ns</i>
2. Private Religious Practices
A. Pray at home
Married (0 = 3.152) vs. Not Married (0 = 3.591) B $p < .001$
B. Read religious literature at home
Married (0 = 1.739) vs. Not Married (0 = 2.156) B $p < .001$
C. Watch or listen to religious programs on TV or radio
Married (0 = 1.389) vs. Not Married (0 = 1.452) B <i>ns</i>
3. Functions of Prayer
A. Prayer to overcome stress or worry
Married (0 = 2.639) vs. Not Married (0 = 2.839) B $p < .001$
B. Prayers for wishes
Married (0 = 2.158) vs. Not Married (0 = 2.400) B $p < .001$
4. Punishment by Supernatural Forces
Married (0 = 2.231) vs. Not Married (0 = 2.427) B $p < .001$
5. Beliefs about the Afterlife
A. Compared with life on earth, life after death will be a much better place
Married (0 = 1.580) vs. Not Married (0 = 1.613) B <i>ns</i>
B. I believe in the existence of heaven and hell
Married (0 = 1.894) vs. Not Married (0 = 2.039) B $p < .05$
C. Even though the body dies, the spirit lives on
Married (0 = 2.532) vs. Not Married (0 = 2.711) B $p < .01$
D. Death is just one point on the way to eternal happiness
Married (0 = 1.896) vs. Not Married (0 = 2.067) B $p < .05$

Table 6**Variations by Education^a**

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1. Organizational Religiousness
 - A. Social activities at Temples, Shrines, and Churches
 1. Low (0 = 3.838) vs. Medium (0 = 3.988) B $p < .05$
 2. Low (0 = 3.838) vs. High (0 = 3.740) B *ns*
 3. Medium (0 = 3.988) vs. High (0 = 3.740) B $p < .05$
 - B. Praying at Temples, Shrines, or Churches
 1. Low (0 = 2.044) vs. Medium (0 = 2.082) B *ns*
 2. Low (0 = 2.044) vs. High (0 = 1.965) B *ns*
 3. Medium (0 = 2.082) vs. High (0 = 1.965) B *ns*
 - C. Member of a religious group or association
 1. Low (0 = .045) vs. High (0 = .070) B *ns*
 3. Medium (0 = .066) vs. High (0 = .070) B *ns*
 2. Private Religious Practices
 - A. Pray at home
 - 1 Low (0 = 3.383) vs. Medium (0 = 3.330) B *ns*
 2. Low (0 = 3.383) vs. High (0 = 3.036) B $p < .001$
 3. Medium (0 = 3.330) vs. High (0 = 3.036) B $p < .005$
 - B. Read religious literature at home
 1. Low (0 = 1.912) vs. Medium (0 = 1.893) B *ns*
 2. Low (0 = 1.912) vs. High (0 = 1.789) B *ns*
 3. Medium (0 = 1.893) vs. High (0 = 1.798) B *ns*
 - C. Watch or listen to religious programs on TV or radio
 1. Low (0 = 1.399) vs. Medium (0 = 1.404) B *ns*
 2. Low (0 = 1.399) vs. High (0 = 1.546) B *ns*
 3. Medium (0 = 1.404) vs. High (0 = 1.546) B *ns*
 3. Functions of Prayer
 - A. Prayer to overcome stress or worry
 1. Low (0 = 2.818) vs. Medium (0 = 2.640) B $p < .005$
 2. Low (0 = 2.818) vs. High (0 = 2.650) B *ns*
 - 3 Medium (0 = 2.640) vs. High (0 = 2.650) B *ns*
 - B. Prayer for wishes
 1. Low (0 = 2.405) vs. Medium (0 = 2.161) B $p < .001$
 2. Low (0 = 2.405) vs. High (0 = 2.045) B $p < .001$
 3. Medium (0 = 2.161) vs. High (0 = 2.045) B *ns*
 4. Punishment by Supernatural Forces
 1. Low (0 = 2.407) vs. Medium (0 = 2.242) B $p < .005$
 2. Low (0 = 2.407) vs. High (0 = 2.210) B $p < .05$
 3. Medium (0 = 2.242) vs. High (0 = 2.210) B *ns*
 5. Beliefs about the Afterlife
 - A. 1. Low (0 = 1.605) vs. Medium (0 = 1.569) B *ns*
 2. Low (0 = 1.605) vs. High (0 = 1.609) B *ns*

3. Medium (0 = 1.569) vs. High (0 = 1.609) B *ns*

B. I believe in the existence of heaven and hell

1. Low (0 = 1.969) vs. Medium (0 = 1.921) B *ns*

2. Medium (0 = 1.921) vs. High (0 = 1.975) B *ns*

C. Even though the body dies, the spirit lives on

1. Low (0 = 2.643) vs. High (0 = 2.455) B *ns*

3. Medium (0 = 2.587) vs. High (0 = 2.455) B *ns*

D. Death is just one point on the way to eternal happiness

1. Low (0 = 2.000) vs. Medium (0 = 1.925) B *ns*

2. Low (0 = 2.000) vs. High (0 = 1.910) B *ns*

3. Medium (0 = 1.925) vs. High (0 = 1.910) B *ns*

^a low education (less than or equal to 8 years); medium (9-12 years); high (more than 12 years)

Table 7**Variations by Rural Versus Urban Residence**

1. Organizational Religiousness
A. Social activities at Temples, Shrines, and Churches
1. Large Cities (0 = 3.522) vs. Medium Cities (0 = 3.919) B $p < .001$
2. Large Cities (0 = 3.522) vs. Towns (0 = 4.043) B $p < .001$
3. Medium Cities (0 = 3.919) vs. Towns (0 = 4.043) B <i>ns</i>
B. Praying at Temples, Shrines, and Churches
1. Large Cities (0 = 1.769) vs. Medium Cities (0 = 2.007) B $p < .05$
2. Large Cities (0 = 1.769) vs. Towns (0 = 2.297) B $p < .001$
3. Medium Cities (0 = 2.007) vs. Towns (0 = 2.297) B $p < .001$
C. Member of religious group or association
1. Large Cities (0 = .078) vs. Medium Cities (0 = .056) B <i>ns</i>
2. Large Cities (0 = .078) vs. Towns (0 = .054) B <i>ns</i>
3. Medium Cities (0 = .056) vs. Towns (0 = .054) B <i>ns</i>
2. Private Religious Practices
A. Pray at home
1. Large Cities (0 = 3.186) vs. Medium Cities (0 = 3.279) B <i>ns</i>
2. Large Cities (0 = 3.186) vs. Towns (0 = 3.429) B $p < .005$
3. Medium Cities (0 = 3.279) vs. Towns (0 = 3.429) B $p < .01$
B. Read religious literature at home
1. Large Cities (0 = 1.876) vs. Medium Cities (0 = 1.857) B <i>ns</i>
2. Large Cities (0 = 1.876) vs. Towns (0 = 1.953) B <i>ns</i>
3. Medium Cities (0 = 1.857) vs. Towns (0 = 1.953) B <i>ns</i>
C. Watch or listen to religious programs on TV or radio
1. Large Cities (0 = 1.357) vs. Medium Cities (0 = 1.398) B <i>ns</i>
2. Large Cities (0 = 1.357) vs. Towns (0 = 1.462) B <i>ns</i>
3. Medium Cities (0 = 1.397) vs. Towns (0 = 1.462) B <i>ns</i>
3. Functions of Prayer
A. Prayer to overcome stress or worry
1. Large Cities (0 = 2.580) vs. Medium Cities (0 = 2.728) B <i>ns</i>
2. Medium Cities (0 = 2.728) vs. Towns (0 = 2.744) B <i>ns</i>
B. Prayer for wishes
1. Medium Cities (0 = 2.251) vs. Towns (0 = 2.326) B <i>ns</i>
4. Punishment by Supernatural Forces
1. Large Cities (0 = 2.103) vs. Medium Cities (0 = 2.324) B $p < .005$
2. Large Cities (0 = 2.103) vs. Towns (0 = 2.357) B $p < .005$
3. Medium Cities (0 = 2.324) vs. Towns (0 = 2.357) B <i>ns</i>
5. Beliefs about the Afterlife
A. Compared with life on earth, life after death will be a much better place
1. Large Cities (0 = 1.564) vs. Medium Cities (0 = 1.623) B <i>ns</i>
2. Large Cities (0 = 1.564) vs. Towns (0 = 1.546) B <i>ns</i>
3. Medium Cities (0 = 1.623) vs. Towns (0 = 1.546) B <i>ns</i>

B. I believe in the existence of heaven and hell

1. Large Cities (0 = 1.765) vs. Medium Cities (0 = 2.013) B $p < .01$

2. Large Cities (0 = 1.765) vs. Towns (0 = 1.931) B *ns*

3. Medium Cities (0 = 2.013) vs. Towns (0 = 1.931) B *ns*

C. Even though the body dies, the spirit lives on

1. Large Cities (0 = 2.317) vs. Medium Cities (0 = 2.682) B $p < .001$

2. Large Cities (0 = 2.317) vs. Towns (0 = 2.614) B $p < .01$

3. Medium Cities (0 = 2.672) vs. Towns (0 = 2.614) B *ns*

D. Death is just one point on the way to eternal happiness

1. Large Cities (0 = 1.743) vs. Medium Cities (0 = 2.023) B $p < .01$

2. Large Cities (0 = 1.743) vs. Towns (0 = 1.962) B $p < .05$

3. Medium Cities (0 = 2.023) vs. Towns (0 = 1.962) B *ns*