Death Anxiety Among Older Adults as a Function of the Christian Faith With Specific Reference to the Experience of Being "Born Again"

Wendy E. Holland
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DEATH ANXIETY AMONG OLDER ADULTS AS A FUNCTION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING "BORN AGAIN"

BY

WENDY EBERT HOLLAND
B.A., Baylor University, 1983

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science degree in Clinical Psychology in the Graduate Studies Program of the College of Arts and Sciences University of Central Florida Orlando, Florida

Summer Term
1987
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is dedicated to my parents who with their words and their lives introduced me to the Way;
and to my husband with whom I delight in walking in it;
and to my Savior and Lord, Christ Jesus, in whom resides all victory forever. Hallelujah!
Sixty male and female subjects between the ages of 60 to 84 years were administered three questionnaires concerning death anxiety, religiosity, and life satisfaction. Data were collected and analyzed by Pearson r correlation as well as by multiple regression analysis.

Findings included those subjects considering themselves to be "born again" Christians scored significantly lower on the death anxiety scale than did those respondents considering themselves Christian, but not "born again." Subjects considering themselves to be non-Christian/Other did not correlate significantly with death anxiety. Life satisfaction was not a significant predictor of death anxiety. Subjects indicating more conservative/fundamentalist denominational affiliations indicated less death anxiety than respondents with more liberal affiliations. This suggests the multidimensional nature of religiosity and the need for precision in instruments assessing this variable.
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INTRODUCTION

Of all events known to man, only one, death, is experienced by all men, everywhere. This common denominator stirs the emotions and thoughts of the living, and has been a topic of scrutiny by philosophers, writers, theologians, and scientists. In the scientific field, most studies of death and the emotions it evokes have centered around personality variables such as age, health status, and the death experience itself, while one of the more important variables in death attitudes, that of religiosity, has been little studied or understood. Religiosity by definition is the strength of one’s religious commitment (Young and Daniels, 1981). Exactly what role religiosity plays in death attitudes, its ability to increase or to alleviate fears and anxieties, is the subject of this research.

The experience of death as the ending of conscious experience and the beginning of faith, the demarkation between the known and the unknown, is dealt with most suitably in the arena of religion. All religions have attempted to rationale of stability in the otherwise chaotic concept of nonexistence.
In the Buddhist religion, for example, death is the gateway to new life through rebirth. To Buddhists, what we call life is more accurately a series of chain of "lives" and "deaths" (Kapleau, 1971). This anticipation of rebirth through metamorphosis is accepted matter-of-factly.

Within the context of the Christian religion, death is typically looked upon as a necessary end to life but the beginning of a better hope. Christianity, particularly through the concept of the resurrection, offers "victory" over death. How one's personal religious belief system affects death attitudes, specifically, death fears, is the focus of the present study. In the following section of this paper, a basic, biblical or fundamentalist (Mitchell, 1987) perspective of death and an afterlife will be sketched out. While there is no interpretation or summary or scripture that would be necessarily agreed upon by all individuals who would describe themselves as "Christians," much less as "fundamentalist" or "born again," for the purpose of this paper, these ideas are offered as an example of the kind of belief system which might influence death anxiety for this population. Thus, the thesis of this paper, that a fundamentalist Christian belief system will moderate death anxiety, falls generally within the historical theoretical concept of cognitive psychology (Ellis, 1962).
A Biblical Conception of Death-Afterlife

The following selected scriptual passages from the Bible reflect the kind of belief statements which might form a cognitive framework which would alleviate death anxiety. Thus, according to the Bible, death entered the world as the penalty for sin. Paul the Apostle wrote in Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death" (p. 1409). And again in Hebrews 9:27, "Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (p. 1495). Man's first experience with death came after disobedience to God. Speaking to Adam in Genesis 2:16 God commanded the man, "But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (p. 3). Living in disobedience to God's will, then, leaves man in a state of spiritual death, (estrangement from God) that ultimately results in physical death, followed by judgment.

The Bible views man as spiritually dead in his own sin, (Ephesians 2:1), in a lost state needing a savior. God himself provides this savior out of love for the sinner. Ephesians 2:4 says, "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in transgressions for it is by grace you have been saved" (p. 1455). This grace, received through faith in Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, is the provision God made for sinful man to enter into communion
with a holy God. This awareness that one can do nothing to purchase a place in heaven, thus acknowledging that one is a sinner in need of a savior, and accepting Jesus Christ as one's personal savior, is the spiritual crossing from death into life—becoming "born again." In Johns 3:3 Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (p. 1332).

To live life apart from God is therefore having to face God on one's own merits at the judgment. Since no man can stand justified before a holy, righteous God, the ultimate end of living life without Christ is eternal punishment in "the lake that burns with fire and brimstone" (Revelation 20:14). But, to live life in the acceptance that Jesus has paid one's debt for sin in full is to face death and the judgment with peace and assurance that God will accept his perfect son's shed blood as remission for one's sins, thus providing hope of a place in heaven.

The Bible teaches that God sent Jesus to die on earth as the sacrifice for sin, providing an escape from the death penalty to all that believe. Jesus reigned victorious over death since there was no sin in him. That is why Isaiah prophesied of him saying, "He will swallow up death in victory" (Isaiah 25:8, p. 875). It was Jesus' conquering of death when he rose again three days after his crucifixion that caused Paul to proclaim, "O death, where is your
victory? O death, where is your sting?" (I Corinthians 15:55, p. 1435). All believers benefit from this event as it says in Romans 6:8, "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe we shall also live with him" (p. 1408). Hebrews 2:14-15 states that Jesus came not only to purchase man back from slavery to sin, but to free him from the fear that surrounds death. This freedom is offered to all who will receive Christ and be born again. I Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (p. 1506).

In summary, these passages of scripture suggest that for those individuals who have embraced the beliefs/tenents outlined, the death and resurrection experience of Jesus may ameliorate feelings of fear/anxiety regarding the anticipation of death. In order to determine if these Biblical concepts translate into actual relief from death anxiety, the body of literature which has examined religiosity and death fears will be reviewed.

Research Review

In examining various studies done in the area of religiosity and death concerns, a great variability appears
across subject selection, fear of death measures, and religiosity indexes. When using a Christian population, even the devices used to determine which subjects are and are not Christians vary widely study to study. This unsystematic approach has, not surprisingly, lead to conflicting results. Every possible relationship between the variables of religiosity and death fear has been reported, from no association to both positive and negative relationship (Lester, 1977).

An early work by Leming (1976) investigated the effects of religiosity upon death concerns. He employed Homan's theory which states that anxiety associated with death is socially ascribed. In this context, religion serves a dual role. First of all, it increases the level of anxiety for the followers of the religion. Then, once individuals have fulfilled the religious or magical ceremonies which are required by the religion, they experience a reduction in anxiety. Leming believed, as did Homan, that "religion afflicts the comforted and comforts the afflicted" (p. 358). Leming tested this theory on 403 Utah residents with a mean age of 45 years. His population was largely made up of Mormon respondents who, he states, "do not make the doctrines of hell and divine retribution central in their theology." Using Boyar's Fear of Death scale and a religiosity index, he applied statistical tests of ANOVA and
found a curvilinear relationship between the variables. He states that, "Individuals who are either very religious or non-religious have a tendency to display lower death anxiety than individuals who are moderately religious" (p. 355). In support of Homans's theory, Leming concluded that "the strength of an individual's religious commitment is the most important variable in explaining the relationship between our variables" (p. 357-8).

Leming's later research (1980) once again confirmed Homans's theory using his own Fear of Death scale. Using 372 respondents from a rural Minnesota area, he once again found a curvilinear relationship between religiosity and death fears. His population was randomly sampled and self-reported to consist of 72% Protestant, 15% Roman Catholic, and 11% other or no religious preference. Although he found that those with moderate religious commitment as measured by Faulkner and DeJong's Religiosity Index as well as 10 items developed by Glock and Stark, had the highest death anxiety, he reported individuals with low religiosity have higher death fear than those with a high degree of religious commitment. He interpreted this by stating, "Those with a modicum commitment to religion have added to the general anxiety which has been socially ascribed to death from secular sources. The moderate religionist receives only the negative consequences of religion—he may believe there is a
hell or divine judgement, yet he is unsure of his plight in the after-life. Therefore, he acquires only the anxiety, which religion is capable of producing, and none of the consolation" (p. 355).

Examining the hypothesis that the strength of one's belief system is an important determinant in fear of death, McMordie (1981) tested this on undergraduate respondents, (mean age 22 years), applying his own Death Anxiety Scale and a self-perceived religiosity checklist consisting of a six-point rating from extremely religious to anti-religious. The participant's ratings and scores on death anxiety were: Extremely religious M = 49.78; Very religious M = 58.83; Somewhat religious M = 62.24; Slightly religious M = 60.36; Not at all religious M = 57.53; and Anti-religious M = 53.71. When combined into high, medium, and low scores, high M = 57.20, medium M = 61.27, and low M = 56.66. These scores are significant with F (2,317) = 4.31, p < .05. Three post hoc two-tailed t tests were conducted to compare the three groups. The high group obtained a significantly lower Mean score than the median group, t (257) = 2.03, p = .04. No significant differences between the Mean death anxiety scores for the high and low groups were found t (109) = 0.22, p = .82. The medium group had significantly higher death anxiety scores than the low t (268) = 2.49, p = .02. Therefore, he too, found a curvilinear relationship
between the variables, and attributed increased control and predictability as reducing the effects of an aversive stimulus. He states, "It may be speculated that a strong belief system fosters perceptions of control and predictability for the highly religious and non-religious person which helps to lessen the fear of death" (p. 921).

Using a group of middle-aged men, Downey (1984) administered a 13-item composite of several religiosity scales and Boyar's Fear of Death scale. She then applied tests of multiple regression analysis in which the F ratio for religiosity, $F_{(1,158)} = 1.92, p > .05$, showed a nonsignificant relation with death anxiety. Although linear regression analysis did not support her hypothesis that middle-aged men who were less religious would exhibit higher death anxiety scores than those who were more religious, further tests of analysis of covariance demonstrated that a curvilinear relationship existed between the variables, once again supporting Leming's research. Individuals with moderate religiosity scores ($M = 39.31$) evidenced significantly higher fear of death than either the males who were little religious ($M = 30.49$) or highly religious ($M = 32.87$).

Expecting to find a curvilinear relationship between the variables of religious beliefs, religiosity, and death anxiety, Fraker (1984) administered the Templer-McMordie
Death Anxiety Scale, the Religious Belief Scale, and Faulkner and DeYoung's Religiosity Scale to 294 respondents. The subjects, with a mean age of 45 years, were selected from six congregations: three Protestant, one Roman Catholic, and two Jewish. Using a one-way ANOVA, a significant difference was found between the groups (high, medium, and low religiosity) on death anxiety $F_{(2,291)} = 9.65, p = .01$. A Pearson product moment correlation was done to test the strength and direction of the relationship between death anxiety and religiosity. A correlation of $-.2862$, significant at $p < .01$ was obtained. Instead of a curvilinear relationship, Fraker found an inverse relationship between religiosity and death anxiety. Respondents with high degrees of religiosity and strong religious convictions expressed less death anxiety.

Feifel and Tong Nagy (1981) researched men engaged in life-threatening behaviors and divided them into three groups based on their responses to three fear of death indexes. These included conscious level awareness, fantasy level, and below conscious awareness measures. The subjects were then given death attitude measures, life value measures, self-acceptance measures, and religious orientation indexes. A principle components analysis was conducted subsequent with a stepwise discriminant function analysis to determine how the individuals in the seven fear
of death groups differed in response. Among their findings, they discovered that high fear of death correlated inversely to religious conduct and creed. Those with high fear of death ratings displayed low scores on measures of religiosity making these findings consistent with Fraker's.

In her 1981 study of life purpose, death fear, religiosity, and a belief in a life after death, Martha Fried-Cassorla studied undergraduate students and their parents. She noted the importance of differentiating between extrinsic religiosity, which serves to meet one's immediate needs and/or to establish oneself as a moral person in the community, and intrinsic religiosity where religious beliefs are carried over into all other dealings in one's life. She hypothesized that intrinsic religiosity correlates positively with lower fear of death. Applying a measure of intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity to her subjects, she found that intrinsic religiosity was, in fact, significantly related to less conscious death concern while extrinsic religiosity correlated with more conscious death fear. Sixty-eight subjects were administered various psychometric measures of life purpose, death fear, and religiosity. The data were analyzed to two Pearson correlation matrices (one for parents and one for the undergraduate students). Means and standard deviations were derived for all of the variables and t-tests were performed
for each set of means (matched groups of parents and their children). The means were compared for each of the variables. Additionally, two ANOVA were performed after the groups had been subdivided into high purpose-in-life and low purpose-in-life. Among her findings it was discovered that while no significant negative correlation existed between death anxiety and the intrinsic religiosity scale, the data concluded that intrinsically religious respondents had less conscious fear of death than did extrinsically religious respondents (undergraduates, $r = .23$, $p = .100$; parents, $r = -.05$, $p = .388$).

The Fried-Casserola study (1981) highlighted the multidimensional nature of religiosity. It appears that too often, superficial measures of religiosity (such as church attendance and religious preference) have been employed as a measure of the strength of one's belief. Frequency of church attendance, prayer, or Bible reading may simply not be enough to guarantee that one has internalized his or her religion. It is suggested that measures of religiosity include assessment of "internalization" of religious beliefs.

In Cerny's 1975 study of college students, he divided his sample into Christian and non-Christian groups. For the first time the Biblical definition of "Christian" was employed. He defined "Christians" as "persons who know that
they were 'born again,'" whereas "non-Christians" were defined as "persons who did not know that they were 'born again' or knew that they were not." He found that when using this definition, the Christian group showed significantly lower fear of death scores on Boyar's Fear of Death Scale. Using Pearson correlation coefficients and one-way ANOVA, he found that intrinsic religiosity and born-again status correlated significantly with positive acceptance of death ($F = 81.87, p < .001$). Of interest, Cerny reports that 60% of the non-Christian sample considered themselves to be Christians but they did not know they were "born again." This suggests the meaningfulness of considering one's "born again" status in unraveling the confusion in research outcome. In a later replication of this study Cerny (1977) once again found the "born again" status a critical factor in defining religiosity.

Noting the need for a multidimensional approach to religiosity, Young and Daniels (1981) set out to determine the relationship of several aspects of religiosity and death anxiety among high school students. Previous unidimensional research with high school students (Iammarino, 1975) had shown that religious affiliation was not a factor in death anxiety. Using 312 randomly selected students, they utilized the Templer Death Anxiety Scale as a measure of death concern. The Faulkner and DeJong Religiosity in 5-D
scale was used to provide a multidimensional measure of religiosity. Additionally, they included measures of religious affiliation (liberals, moderates, and fundamentalists) and self-reported born again status. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science Program (SPSS) including a multiple regression analysis (forward stepwise inclusion was used). A Mean death anxiety score of 7.90 was found for the 312 respondents. The results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis found that: (a) religiosity—the intellectual scale $r = .13$; (b) religiosity—the ideological scale $r = .12$; and, (c) born again status were significant ($p = .05$) predictors of death anxiety. The findings of the study showed that subjects with more liberal denominational affiliations exhibited greater death anxiety and subjects who identified themselves as born again exhibited less death anxiety. These findings once again support the importance of clearly delineated, multidimensional measures of religiosity.

The present study will utilize both uni-dimensional and multi-dimensional measures of religiosity. Two scales have been standardized to assess the multi-dimensional aspects of religiosity. Allport and Ross (1967) devised the Religious Orientation Scale to differentiate between the persons who "use" their religion and those who "live" their religion.
According to their theory, the individual of "intrinsic" faith has internalized his/her faith into an integral part of their personality pattern, whereas the individual of "extrinsic" faith uses his/her religion in an external, social manner. This 20-item scale is stated so that one can express agreement or disagreement with the statement on a four-point scale. These statements are expressed in a manner in which the respondent would have to disagree with positive statements of religiosity, religious practice, and belief. The measure was first standardized in a study on prejudice and religious types. Five churches in two southern cities were chosen to represent a wide range of church members, leaders, and ministers. The N for the study was 286 and included various age groups from 18 to over 50. The item to scale reliability correlations of the Factor I and Factor II subscales ranged from a low of .48 to a high of .71 with a median of .61. The Factor II subscale correlated highly with the total Intrinsic/Extrinsic scale at +.74.

A second multi-dimensional measure of religiosity is Faulkner and DeJong's Religiosity in 5-D Scale (1966). Based on Glock's framework (1962) that religiosity should include ideological, ritualistic, experiential, intellectual, and consequential dimensions, five
Guttman-type scales were devised, one for each dimension. The 24 statements represent traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs to which respondents can agree or disagree in degrees of intensity. Separate scores are determined for each dimension based on the deviation from a traditional Judeo-Christian response on each item in a given dimension. Higher scores are indicative of lower levels of religiosity. After an initial pretest, 362 respondents were selected from a university population and administered an instrument which had been revised to include the items most promising on empirical and logical grounds. The ideological dimension yielded a coefficient of reproducibility of .94. The remaining dimensions ranged from .92 to .90, all meeting the minimum standards. The interrelationship correlation coefficients ranged from a high of .58 between the ideological and the intellectual dimensions to a low of .36 between the experiential and the consequential dimensions. The various findings from the correlations among the five dimensions indicate the interdependent nature of these measures of religiosity, yet, the diversity in the degree of relationships at least partially supports the view that religiosity involves several independent dimensions.

Numerous methods have been devised to measure attitudes toward death. The technique most often used, and having the most normative data, is the employment of rating scales
Death attitude scales are available in multiple forms: Likert-type, forced-choice, and others. (For a review of available measures see Kurlychek, 1978). Among these, four are most frequently employed. The first is Collett and Lester's Fear of Death Scale (1969), which consists of 38 statements concerning four fears: fear of death of self, fear of death of other, fear of dying of self, and fear of dying of other. Scoring is based on a six-point Likert scale. Also utilized frequently is Dickstein's Death Concern Scale (1972), which measures how one consciously faces death and anxiety related to death itself. This 30-item measure is rated on a four-point scale of frequency and intensity. A third available measure is the Boyar Fear of Death Scale (1964) which is formulated of 18 death-fear statements. Templer's Death Anxiety Scale (1970) has, of these, the most normative data available of all death attitude measures (Kurlychek, 1978). This 15-item scale consists of statements to which the respondent answers "True" or "False." This scale was designed to reflect a wide range of personal experiences with death concern, fear of the dying process, and fear of corpses.

The present research examined the relationship between death anxiety, as measured by the Templer/McMordie scale, to religiosity, as measured by the Faulkner scale, and life satisfaction as measured by the Neugarten scale. Additional
demographic information and responses to questions regarding religious affiliation and born again status were also obtained. This study represents an attempt to partially replicate Young and Daniel's (1981) study with an improved measure of death anxiety while adding a measure of life satisfaction. Additionally, the present research utilized an elderly population as opposed to populations previously mentioned. According to Erikson's stages of life development (1963) the consideration of death, and therefore, the possibility of death anxiety, is greatest in life's later years. Specifically, it was hypothesized that: (a) subjects who self report more liberal denominational affiliations will exhibit higher death anxiety scores; (b) subjects who identify themselves as born again Christians will exhibit lower scores of death anxiety; (c) subjects attaining low scores on each of the five religiosity subscales will exhibit lower death anxiety scores than respondents with high scores; and (d) that subjects attaining higher life satisfaction scores will display lower death anxiety as measured by the Templer/McMordie scale.
METHOD

Subjects

The subjects for this investigation were 60 men and women selected from two retirement communities in Lake County, Florida. Participants were limited to persons 60 years and older and an attempt was made to have an equal number of male and female respondents. The ages ranged from 60 to 84 years, with a mean age of 67 years. The examiner screened for person's displaying an inability to read and physical impairment which would impede completion of the questionnaires.

Measurement Instruments

The Faulkner score was selected for the present research to assess for the multi-dimensional aspects of religiosity (see Appendix B). The use of questions as opposed to statements creates a neutral environment for the respondent and the scale offers a wide range of response categories. In addition, subjects were asked to self-report their affiliation with liberal, moderate, or fundamentalist denominations and identified themselves either as a "born again" Christian, or Christian, but not "born again," or non-Christian/other (see Appendix C).
McMordie (1979), in an attempt to improve the psychometric characteristics of the Templer scale, converted it to a Likert format (see Appendix D). This new Templer/McMordie version was developed into a seven-point scale with Very Strongly Disagree—Very Strongly Agree response categories. The results suggest that the Templer/McMordie scale offers advantages over the original Templer scale. The internal consistency was significantly improved and the Likert version was more sensitive in discriminating between high and low scorers.

Life satisfaction was measured by the Life Satisfaction Index A (Neugarten, Havighurst, and Tobin, 1961). This index consists of 20 items to which respondents agree, disagree, or state uncertainty (see Appendix E). The total score may range from 20 to 60 with the respondent's life satisfaction increasing as their scores increase.

**Procedures**

A pilot study was undertaken to better anticipate subject reactions to the questionnaires. After careful debriefing of these pilot participants, they were asked for reactions to the various components of the project. Overall, the response was favorable with no participant indicating adverse reactions.

After receiving permission from the management, the experimenter then attended a meeting of the residents of
each retirement community. She introduced herself and gave her affiliation with the University of Central Florida's Department of Psychology. After delineating the nature of her studies and the requirements for the M.S. degree, she introduced her project (see Appendix F for a verbatim summary of instructions to each participant) and then distributed an informed consent sheet. This sheet delineated the nature of the research and required the participant's signature (see Appendix A). The subjects were then asked to complete the Faulkner, Neugarten, and Templer/McMordie scales and were asked to self-report their religious affiliation (Liberal: Congregationalists, Northern Methodists, Episcopalians, Friends, Unitarians, and members of the United Church of Christ; Moderate: Disciples of Christ, Presbyterians, Southern Methodists, Christians, and members of Community Churches; Conservative: Lutherans, American Baptists, Christian Scientists, and Mormons; and Fundamentalist: Southern Baptists and Pentecostals) (Peterson and Mauss, 1976) as well as their self-reported born again status. The subjects completed their questionnaires individually and returned the completed forms to a lidded box which further insured their anonymity. After completion, no participant approached the examiner to indicate adverse reactions to the questionnaires. Respondents were informed that a summary abstract would be
made available at the completion of the project to all who expressly requested this.

Data Analysis

A multiple regression/correlation (MRC) analysis was done to assess the relationships among the various variables employed. Each questionnaire was hand scored in the following manner:

The Religiosity in 5-D Scale was scored as five component scores as well as a composite score of religiosity. Higher scores indicate less reported religiosity. the scores obtained from the overall scale range from a possible 23 (highly religious) to 80 (non-religious).

Denominational affiliation was scored according to degree of liberal--fundamentalism or no denominational affiliation.

Born again status was scored in three categories: Born Again Christian; Christian; and Non-Christian/Other.

The Death Anxiety Scale scores ranged from a possible 15 (low death anxiety) to 105 (high death anxiety).

The Life Satisfaction Scale total score ranged from 20 (low life satisfaction) to 60 (high life satisfaction).

The degree to which the predictor variables, religiosity, denominational affiliation, born again status, and life satisfaction jointly or uniquely correlated with
the measure of death anxiety was computed by regression analysis.
RESULTS

Table 1 presents means and standard deviations for the Religiosity, Death Anxiety, and Life Satisfaction variables. Table 2 presents the bivariate correlation matrix for all variables based on the 42 subjects indicating some denominational affiliation. A Pearson $r$ correlation was used to assess the magnitude of the relationship between all of the variables employed. As would be expected, this analysis demonstrates strong, significant correlations between the Total Religiosity score and each of the five component subscales ($r$'s = .83 to .93, $p$'s < .001). Additionally, the more conservative/fundamentalist one reports to be, the more religious one is ($r$'s = -.45 to -.58, $p$'s < .001). Less religious respondents indicated more death anxiety ($r$ = .50, $p$ < .001). Additionally, the more conservative/fundamental subjects indicated less death anxiety ($r$ = -.62, $p$ < .001).

Subjects reporting to be born again Christians not only indicate greater religiosity ($r$ = -.65, $p$ < .001), but also less death anxiety ($r$ = -.50, $p$ < .001). This is contrasted to subjects who report to be Christian, but not born again who indicated less religiosity ($r$ = .65, $p$ < .001) and greater death anxiety ($r$ = .50, $p$ < .001).
# Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Religiosity, Death Anxiety, and Life Satisfaction Variables

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TABLE 2

BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS FOR SUBJECTS INDICATING SOME DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION

| N of Cases: 42 | 1-tailed Signif: * - .01 ** - .001 |

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| N of Cases: 42 | 1-tailed Signif: * - .01 ** - .001 |

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| V2 | Total Religiosity Score | V8 | Denominational Affl. |
| V3 | Ideological Subscale | V10 | Death Anxiety |
| V4 | Intellectual Subscale | V11 | Life Satisfaction |
| V5 | Ritualistic Subscale | BAC | Born Again Christian |
| V6 | Experiential Subscale | C | Christian |
| V7 | Consequential Subscale |

26
Table 3 presents the bivariate correlations for all 53 subjects who completed the questionnaires, both those with and without religious affiliation. Once again, a Pearson $r$ correlation was used to assess the magnitude of the relationship among all variables employed. Life Satisfaction was not a significant predictor of death anxiety, religiosity, or any other variable. As before, subjects indicating more religiosity display less death anxiety ($r = .41, p < .01$). Specifically, a significant negative correlation was demonstrated between death anxiety and born again Christian status ($r = -.49, p < .001$), indicating born again status was related to lower death anxiety scores. On the other hand, however, while there was no established relationship between death anxiety and those indicating Non-Christian/Other status, $r = .10, p > .05$, respondents checking Christian, but not born again Christian status, had significantly higher death anxiety scores ($r = .44, p < .001$).

The fundamental question addressed in this investigation concerned the variables which may predict death anxiety. In addition, the interrelationships between the variables and their effect on death anxiety was also examined. A multiple regression strategy was employed to further test the hypotheses. Specifically, a backward (POUT) regression analysis was utilized in which all
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N of Cases: 53  1-tailed Signif: * - .01  ** - .001

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N of Cases: 53  1-tailed Signif: * - .01  ** - .001

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28
independent variables were entered simultaneously, with the variable making the least contribution being dropped first. Then, the remaining variables were regressed on Y, and again the one making the smallest contribution was dropped. The process continued until only the variables making independent contributions using the standard $P < .10$ significance criterion remained.

The first analysis was completed for subjects indicating some religious affiliation. There were eight predictor variables with the dependent variable, death anxiety. A highly significant multiple $R$ of $.75$, $F(8,33) = 5.30$, $p = .0003$ was obtained for the dependent variable when eight predictor independent variables (each of the five religious subscales, denominational affiliation, Life Satisfaction, and Christian status) were included in the regression equation. The final regression equation resulted in a multiple $R$ of $.72$, $F(4, 37) = 9.98$, $p = .0000$ after four of the original independent variables were dropped from the equation using the standard $.10$ "POUT" (probability criterion). The four remaining variables were found to make statistically significant contributions in predicting death anxiety (denominational affiliation $r = -.41$, $T = -3.58$, $p = .001$; intellectual subscale $r = -.25$, $T = -2.20$, $p = .03$; ritualistic subscale $r = -.20$, $T = 1.74$, $p = .09$; and experiential subscale $r = -.24$, $T = 2.10$, $p = .04$). This
analysis indicates, in particular, that respondents reporting more conservativeness or fundamentalism (i.e., higher scores on the denominational affiliation variable) display less death anxiety.

A separate regression analysis was conducted for all subjects, i.e., those with and without any indicated denominational affiliation. Again, a backward analysis was utilized and nine variables were regressed on the dependent variable (all five religiosity subscales, non-Christian, born again Christian, Life Satisfaction, and no denominational affiliation). An eight-step analysis resulted in two variables remaining as significant independent predictors of death anxiety. These predictors were the experiential religiosity subscale, which independently contributed 20% ($T = 1.70, p = .01$) to the equation, and born again Christian status, which independently contributed 28% to the prediction of death anxiety ($T = -2.32, p = .02$). The regression analysis resulted in a final multiple $R$ of .53, $F(2,50) = 9.70, p = .0003$. 
CONCLUSION-DISCUSSION

The findings from this investigation strongly support the first hypothesis that subjects self-reporting more liberal denominational affiliations do indeed display more death anxiety than similar subjects with more conservative/fundamentalist affiliations. Examination of the data revealed that a significant negative correlation existed between the variables of denominational affiliation and death anxiety ($r = -0.62$, $p = 0.001$). Additionally, multiple regression analysis found that denominational affiliation contributed significantly to the relationship when the effects of the other independent variables were held constant.

Additionally, the findings strongly support the second hypothesis that subjects identifying themselves as born again Christians will exhibit less death anxiety as measured by the Templer-McMordie scale. "Born again" status predicted significantly low death anxiety scores while Non-christian/Other status was unrelated to death anxiety scores. Surprisingly, Christian status was significantly related to higher death anxiety scores. A speculation on this finding might include Homan's theory (Leming, 1976) that Christians have been exposed to increased levels of
anxiety due to the religious teachings on immortality of the soul and a coming judgment. Homan continues that individuals must fulfill the requirements of the religion to experience relief from this anxiety whereas born again Christians have fulfilled this requirement. According to the Bible in John 3:3 (p. 1332) and I Peter 1:3 (p. 1506), individuals stating themselves as Christians, but not born again have not fulfilled the religious requirement for freedom from death anxiety (Hebrews 2:14-15, p. 1488-9). Multiple regression analysis revealed that when the other independent variables were held constant, the "born again" status contributed significantly to predictions of death anxiety (the semi-partial correlation $r_{sr} = -0.28$, $p = .02$). Therefore, the predicted interaction between death anxiety and born again status was obtained supporting this hypothesis. These findings support Young and Daniels work (1981) with high school students and Cerny's (1975) study, both of which found that "born again" status was a significant factor in lowering death anxiety scores.

The third hypothesis, that subjects attaining lower scores on each of the five religiosity subscales would exhibit lower death anxiety scores, was partially supported by the findings. Pearson r correlations revealed that an overall lower score (indicating more religiosity) was positively correlated with less death anxiety ($r = .50$, $p =$
Correlations completed on each of the subtests for those subjects indicating some denominational affiliation indicated significant positive relationships ($r$'s = .38 to .54, $p$'s = .01 to .001). When all subjects were considered, four of the five subscales correlated significantly to death anxiety ($r$'s = .34 to .45, $p$'s = .01 to .001). Also significantly related to scores on death anxiety was the ideological subscale ($r = .29, p < .05$). Multiple regression analysis revealed that three subscales independently contributed to the dependent variable, when the other independent variables were held constant (the semi-partial correlation for the ritualistic subscale ($sr$) = .20, $p = .01$, the semi-partial correlation for the experiential subscale ($sr$) = .24, $p = .04$). Higher scores on the intellectual subscale (indicating less religiosity in this area) negatively predict death anxiety (semi-partial correlation ($sr$) = .25, $p < .03$). This is an indicator that each component subscale contributes uniquely to both the overall Religiosity Scale and the relationship to death anxiety.

The fourth hypothesis that subjects attaining high scores on the Life Satisfaction Index would display less death anxiety was not supported in the present investigation. Life satisfaction did not significantly correlate with any of the independent variables including religiosity,
denominational affiliation, or born again status. There was no relationship indicated with the dependent variable death anxiety ($r = -.15$, $p > .05$). Likewise, the multiple regression analysis indicated no predictive relationship between life satisfaction and death anxiety. Therefore, the predicted interaction between life satisfaction and death anxiety was not obtained and consequently the fourth hypothesis was not substantiated. This indicates that in this older population, satisfaction with the quality of one's life does not necessarily indicate one's level of preparation for death. The mean and standard deviation for life satisfaction were 51.44 and 5.44, respectively. Clearly, the life satisfaction $M$ is very positive, nearly two standard deviations above the neutral point. Therefore, the inability of life satisfaction to function as a predictor of death anxiety may be due to this population having an overall high life satisfaction with little variability.

Most interesting among the findings is the relationship between death anxiety and born again status. Similar findings were evidenced in the earlier cited works by Leming (1976, 1980), McMordie (1981), and Downey (1984). It appears that the differentiation between those who report to be Christian and those who report a born again experience should indeed be taken into consideration when determining
positive acceptance of death, as suggested by Cerny (1975, 1977).

In conclusion, it appears that a multidimensional approach to religiosity is indicated in connection to death anxiety. This study once again confirmed the necessity for a discrimination definition of religiosity and the use of multidimensional instruments for additional sensitivity. The Young and Daniels study (1981) has been successfully replicated, in part, and extended to incorporate an elderly population. Findings indicate that denominational conservatism/fundamentalism as well as the experience of being a "born again" Christian are significantly related to lower anxiety concerning death in this population.
APPENDIX A

INFORMATION AND RELEASE FORM

You are being asked to participate in a research project by Wendy Holland, a clinical psychology graduate student at the University of Central Florida. This project is designed to look at measures of life satisfaction, death concern, and religiosity.

All participants are being asked to complete the attached questionnaires. The first questionnaire consists of 25 items exploring your feelings about religion. The second questionnaire contains 15 items exploring concern about death. The final questionnaire explores your life satisfaction. You may terminate your participation in this project at any time without negative consequence.

You will be given the opportunity to individually discuss your feelings and reactions to the items with Wendy Holland following the completion of the questionnaires.

All information gathered will be kept confidential. No names will be obtained. Results will be reported in aggregate form and no one individual will be identified. At the end of this project following collection of all the data, Wendy Holland will provide you, at your request, with a summary of the entire project. This will require a written copy of your mailing address. Please feel free to ask any questions now regarding your participation in this project.

I understand the nature of this research and do hereby agree to participate in this study. I also understand that I may terminate my participation in this project at any time without any negative consequences.

Witness

Signature

Date

Date of Birth
APPENDIX B

RELIGIOSITY SCALES

Ideological Scale

1. Do you believe that the world will come to an end according to the will of God?
   1. Yes, I believe this.
   2. I am uncertain about this.
   3. No, I do not believe this.

2. Which of the following statements most clearly describes your idea about the Deity?
   1. I believe in Divine God, Creator of the Universe, Who knows my innermost thoughts and feelings, and to Whom one day I shall be accountable.
   2. I believe in a power greater than myself, which some people call God and some people call Nature.
   3. I believe in the worth of humanity but not in a God or a Supreme Being.
   4. The so-called universal mysteries are ultimately knowable according to the scientific method based on natural laws.
   5. I am not quite sure what I believe.
   6. I am an atheist.

3. Do you believe that it is necessary for a person to repent before God will forgive his sins?
   1. Yes, God's forgiveness comes only after repentance.
   2. No, God does not demand repentance.
   3. I am not in the need of repentance.

4. Which one of the following best expresses your opinion of God acting in history?
   1. God has and continues to act in the history of mankind.
   2. God acted in previous periods but is not active at the present time.
   3. God does not act in human history.
5. Which of the following best expresses your view of the Bible?

1. The Bible is God's word and all it says is true.
2. The Bible was written by man inspired by God, and its basic moral and religious teachings are true, but because writers were men, it contains some human errors.
3. The Bible is a valuable book because it was written by wise and good men, but God had nothing to do with it.
4. The Bible was written by men so long ago that it is of little value today.

Intellectual Scale

1. How do you personally view the story of creation as recorded in Genesis?

1. Literally true history.
2. A symbolic account which is no better or worse than any other account of the beginning.
3. Not a valid account of creation.

2. Which of the following best expresses your opinion concerning miracles?

1. I believe the report of the miracles in the Bible; that is, they occurred through a setting aside of natural laws by a higher power.
2. I do not believe in the so-called miracles of the Bible. Either such events did not occur at all, or, if they did, the report is inaccurate, and they could be explained upon scientific grounds if we had the actual facts.
3. I neither believe nor disbelieve the so-called miracles of the Bible. No evidence which I have considered seems to prove conclusively that they did or did not happen as recorded.

3. What is your view of the following statement: Religious truth is higher than any other form of truth.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
4. Would you write the names of the four Gospels?

1.
2.
3.
4.

Ritualistic Scale

1. Do you feel it is possible for an individual to develop a well-rounded religious life apart from the institutional church?

   1. No
   2. Uncertain
   3. Yes

2. How much time during a week would you say you spend reading the Bible and other religious literature?

   1. One hour or more
   2. One-half hour
   3. None

3. How many of the past four Sabbath worship services have you attended?

   1. Three or more
   2. Two
   3. One
   4. None

4. Which of the following best describes your participation in the act of prayer?

   1. Prayer is a regular part of my behavior.
   2. I pray primarily in times of stress and/or need, but not much otherwise.
   3. Prayer is restricted pretty much to formal worship services.
   4. Prayer is only incidental to my life.
   5. I never pray.

5. Do you believe that for your marriage the ceremony should be performed by:

   1. A religious official.
   2. Either a religious official or a civil authority.
   3. A civil authority.
Experiential Scale

1. Would you say that one's religious commitment gives life a certain purpose which it could not otherwise have?
   1. Strongly agree
   2. Agree
   3. Disagree

2. All religious stress that belief normally includes some experience of "union" with the divine. Are there particular moments when you feel "close" to the divine?
   1. Frequently
   2. Occasionally
   3. Rarely
   4. Never

3. Would you say that religion offers a sense of security in the face of death which is not otherwise possible?
   1. Agree
   2. Uncertain
   3. Disagree

4. How would you respond to the statement: "Religion provides the individual with an interpretation of his existence which could not be discovered by reason alone."
   1. Strongly agree
   2. Agree
   3. Disagree

5. Faith, meaning putting full confidence in the things we hope for and being certain of the things we cannot see, is essential to one's religious life.
   1. Agree
   2. Uncertain
   3. Disagree
Consequential Scale

1. What is your feeling about the operation of non-essential businesses on the Sabbath?
   1. They should not be open.
   2. I am uncertain about this.
   3. They have a legitimate right to be open.

2. A boy and a girl, both of whom attend church frequently, regularly date one another and have entered into sexual relations with each other. Do you feel that people who give at least partial support to the church by attending its worship services should behave in this manner? Which of the following expresses your opinion concerning this matter?
   1. People who identify themselves with the church to the extent that they participate in its worship services should uphold its moral teachings as well.
   2. Sexual intercourse prior to marriage is a matter of individual responsibility.

3. Two candidates are seeking the same political office. One is a member and a strong participant in the church. The other candidate is indifferent, but not hostile, to religious organizations. Other factors being equal, do you think the candidate identified with the church would be a better public servant than the one who has no interest in religion?
   1. He definitely would.
   2. He probably would.
   3. Uncertain.
   4. He probably would not.
   5. He definitely would not.
4. Suppose you are living next door to a person who confides in you that each year he puts down on his income tax a $50.00 contribution to the church in "loose change," even though he knows that while he does contribute some money to the church in "loose change" each year, the total sum is far below that amount. Do you feel that a person's religious orientation should be reflected in all phases of his life so that such behavior is morally wrong—-that it is a form of lying?

1. Yes
2. Uncertain
3. No
APPENDIX C

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Religiously speaking, do you consider yourself a
   1. Liberal: Congregationalist, Northern Methodist, Episcopal, Friends, Unitarian, United Church of Christ.
   4. Fundamentalist: Southern Baptist, Pentecostal.
   5. Other/None

2. Do you consider yourself a
   1. Born-again Christian
   2. Christian, but not born-again
   3. Non-Christian/Other
APPENDIX D

DEATH ANXIETY SCALE

Please read the following statements and respond in the following manner: VSD=Very Strongly Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree, VSA=Very Strongly Agree.

1. I am very much afraid to die.
   VSD  SD  D  N  A  SA  VSA

2. The thought of death seldom enters my mind.
   VSD  SD  D  N  A  SA  VSA

3. It doesn't make me nervous when people talk about death.
   VSD  SD  D  N  A  SA  VSA

4. I dread to think about having to have an operation.
   VSD  SD  D  N  A  SA  VSA

5. I am not at all afraid to die.
   VSD  SD  D  N  A  SA  VSA

6. I am not particularly afraid of getting cancer.
   VSD  SD  D  N  A  SA  VSA

7. The thought of death never bothers me.
   VSD  SD  D  N  A  SA  VSA

8. I am often distressed by the way time flies so very rapidly.
   VSD  SD  D  N  A  SA  VSA

9. I fear dying a painful death.
   VSD  SD  D  N  A  SA  VSA
10. The subject of life after death troubles me greatly.

11. I am really scared of having a heart attack.

12. I often think about how short life really is.

13. I shudder when I hear people talking about a World War III.

14. The sight of a dead body is horrifying to me.

15. I feel that the future holds nothing for me to fear.
APPENDIX E
LIFE SATISFACTION SCALE

Here are some statements about life in general that people feel differently about. Would you read each statement on the list, and if you agree with it, put a check mark in the space under "AGREE." If you are not sure one way or the other, put a check mark in the space under "?". PLEASE BE SURE TO ANSWER EVERY QUESTION ON THE LIST.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>As I grow older things seem better than I though they would be.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have gotten more of the breaks in life than most of the people I know.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>This is the dreariest time of my life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am just as happy as when I was younger.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>My life could be happier than it is now.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>These are the best years of my life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Most of the things I do are boring or monotonous.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I expect some interesting things to happen to me in the future.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The things I do are as interesting to me as they ever were.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I feel old and somewhat tired.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I feel my age, but it does not bother me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>As I look back on my life, I am fairly well satisfied.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
13. I would not change my past life even if I could.

14. Compared to other people my age, I've made a lot of foolish decisions in my life.

15. Compared to other people my age, I make a good appearance.

16. I have made plans for things I'll be doing a month or a year from now.

17. When I think back over my life, I didn't get most of the important things I wanted.

18. Compared to other people, I get down in the dumps too often.

19. I've gotten pretty much what I expected out of life.

20. In spite of what people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse.
APPENDIX F

VERBATIM INSTRUCTIONS TO EACH PARTICIPANT

"I am doing a research project on religiosity, life satisfaction, and concern about death. Your manager has allowed me to come speak to you and find out if any of you might be interested in participating. It involves filling out three questionnaires, one with 15 questions which concerns things relating to death, one with 24 questions which cover religious beliefs and practices, plus some general information about yourself, and one with 20 questions about life satisfaction. Your responses remain completely anonymous, even from me. No names will be obtained. If while you are filling the questionnaires out, you wish to stop, you may certainly do so without any consequences."
REFERENCES


