

On-line Survey of Religious, Spiritual, and Paranormal Experiences, Beliefs, and Values

The First 500 Respondents:
Some Preliminary Analyses
January 2008

Colette Fleuridas, Ph.D.

Graduate Counseling Program
Saint Mary's College of California

This fall, all of this information and much more will be available at:

www.SpiritResearch.org

colette@spiritresearch.org

Introduction

Spiritual experience, beliefs, and practices have been studied by psychologists and other researchers for over 100 years (James, 1902/1982; Jung, 1942/1973; Maslow, 1971). **Only recently, however, has there been a remarkable interest in the interface between spirituality, mental health, and psychotherapy, beyond the context of the psychology of religion, transpersonal psychology and pastoral counseling** (Koenig, 2005; Richards & Bergin, 1997; Pargament, 2001; Shafranske, 1996; Sperry, 2001).

We continue to find that the relationships among the states or experiences, the stages or processes of development, and the challenges of religious or spiritual and psychological processes are complex (Fowler, 1996; Fowler & Dell, 2005; Grof & Grof, 1989; Meissner, 1996; Vaughan, Wittine, & Walsh, 1996; Wilber, 2006; many others).

For decades, even though national surveys have reported that most people in the USA value their religion and/or spiritual faith, most psychotherapists have not been trained to assess or address the religious or spiritual values, beliefs, or experiences of their clients (The Barna Group, 2007; Gallup, 1995; Lyons, 2005 {Gallup Poll}; Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, 2007; Shafranske, 1996; Wiseman, 2005 {Gallup Poll}).

Since the late 1980's, there has been a growing concern about the need for psychotherapists to be more aware of and competent in addressing these issues in a way that promotes positive psychological and spiritual growth for their clients (Bergin, 1988; Bergin & Jensen, 1990; Kemp, 1996; Pargament, 2001; Shafranske, 1996; Shafranske & Maloney, 1990; Vaughan, Wittine, & Walsh, 1996; and many others).

Curious

- In the mid-1980s, I became curious about people's perceptions of their spiritual and religious experiences, beliefs, values, practices, and the degree to which they shared their beliefs, values and significant experiences with their others, in particular, with their psychotherapists.
- For decades, I had read and heard many personal stories about people who seemed psychologically healthy or "normal," who had spiritual, religious, mystical, paranormal, or transpersonal experiences that they, initially, were afraid to share with anyone, out of fear that others would think that they were "crazy."
- I wondered how many people experienced mystical, transpersonal, and/or anomalous experiences, and at what age, how often, and whether or not they shared these experiences with others.

Construction of the Survey

- This curiosity inspired me to review the professional literature on the subject in the late 1980's/early 1990's and to search for an instrument suitable to investigate the phenomenology of transpersonal and anomalous experience.
- After not finding an instrument that seemed suitable for this study, I began the construction of a qualitative questionnaire which consisted of open-ended questions; the use of this instrument with about 75 volunteers lead to the construction of a more structured survey; professional feedback from numerous psychologists and religious leaders help to shape the survey in its current form.

Construction of the Survey

- This curiosity inspired me to review the professional literature on the subject in the late 1980's/early 1990's and to search for an instrument suitable to investigate the phenomenology of transpersonal and anomalous experience.
- After not finding an instrument that seemed suitable for this study, I began the construction of a qualitative questionnaire which consisted of open-ended questions; the use of this instrument with about 75 volunteers lead to the construction of a more structured survey; professional feedback from numerous psychologists and religious leaders help to shape the survey in its current form.

General Research Questions

In addition to general questions about people's religious and spiritual beliefs, values, priorities, and practices, the survey includes questions investigating the following:

- **What percentage of self-described spiritual and/or religious people report having had spiritual, religious, and/or paranormal experiences?**
- **What kinds of experiences do people consider to be spiritual or religious or anomalous?**
- **At what age and how often do people have these experiences?**
- **Do people tend to share their experience with anyone?**

Given a sample of people who respond to this on-line survey and who report that they consider themselves to be spiritual or religious:

What are the relationships between their reports of:

- **having a spiritual/religious experience or paranormal experience (and the age of these experiences)**
- **identifying with a particular religion or spiritual tradition or ideology**
- **the age when they remember/report becoming spiritual/religious**
- **the number of years that they have been spiritual/religious**
- **the extent to which they currently engage in various spiritual practices**

AND the degree to which these people report that they:

- **value their spirituality overall**
- **prioritize their spiritual/religious faith in their daily lives**
- **have seen a psychotherapist and have told the therapist about their faith and/or about their spiritual experiences**

Given

- **Their age, ethnicity, and gender (and other independent variables)**

Survey Questions Related to Psychotherapy

- **How many of these self-identified spiritual and religious experiences tend to be related to drug use and/or to psychopathology?**
- **Are people concerned about these experiences and, if so, do they seek out the help of a psychotherapist?**
- **Are people apt to share their spiritual and religious faith and values as well as their spiritual, religious, and/or paranormal experiences with their therapist? If not, why not? If so, how does the therapist respond?**
- **How do people's responses vary by age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and other demographic variables?**

Note: 100+ Variables: Quantitative and Qualitative Responses

A few of the many developmental questions

- **At what age, in general, do people begin to identify as spiritual or religious people?**
- **For how long do people consider themselves to be spiritual or religious?**
- **What is the relationship between age and the value of spirituality? . . . the daily priority of spiritual faith? . . . of having a spiritual or religious or paranormal experience?**
- **Are people of different age groups more or less apt to identify with certain religions or spiritual faiths?**
- **Are people of different age groups more or less apt to practice certain religious or spiritual disciplines or activities?**
- **Are people of different ages (and cohorts) more or less apt to talk with a therapist about their religious or spiritual faith, when it is something that they value?**

In This Report

- Brief overview of Survey
- Brief description of 1st 500 respondents
- Preliminary analyses of a few variables
- Brief consideration of implications: For research, theory, and clinical application

The Survey of Religious, Spiritual and Paranormal Experiences, Beliefs, and Values (SRVBE) is posted at www.spiritresearch.org.

Demographics of the Sample: The First 500 Respondents

Age

Ethnicity(ies) and/or racial/multi-racial identity

Primary language

Nationality

Residence: State/country/nation

Marital status

Gender/Sex

Sexual orientation

Highest level of education completed

**Currently a student? Field of study/training/major
or degree(s)**

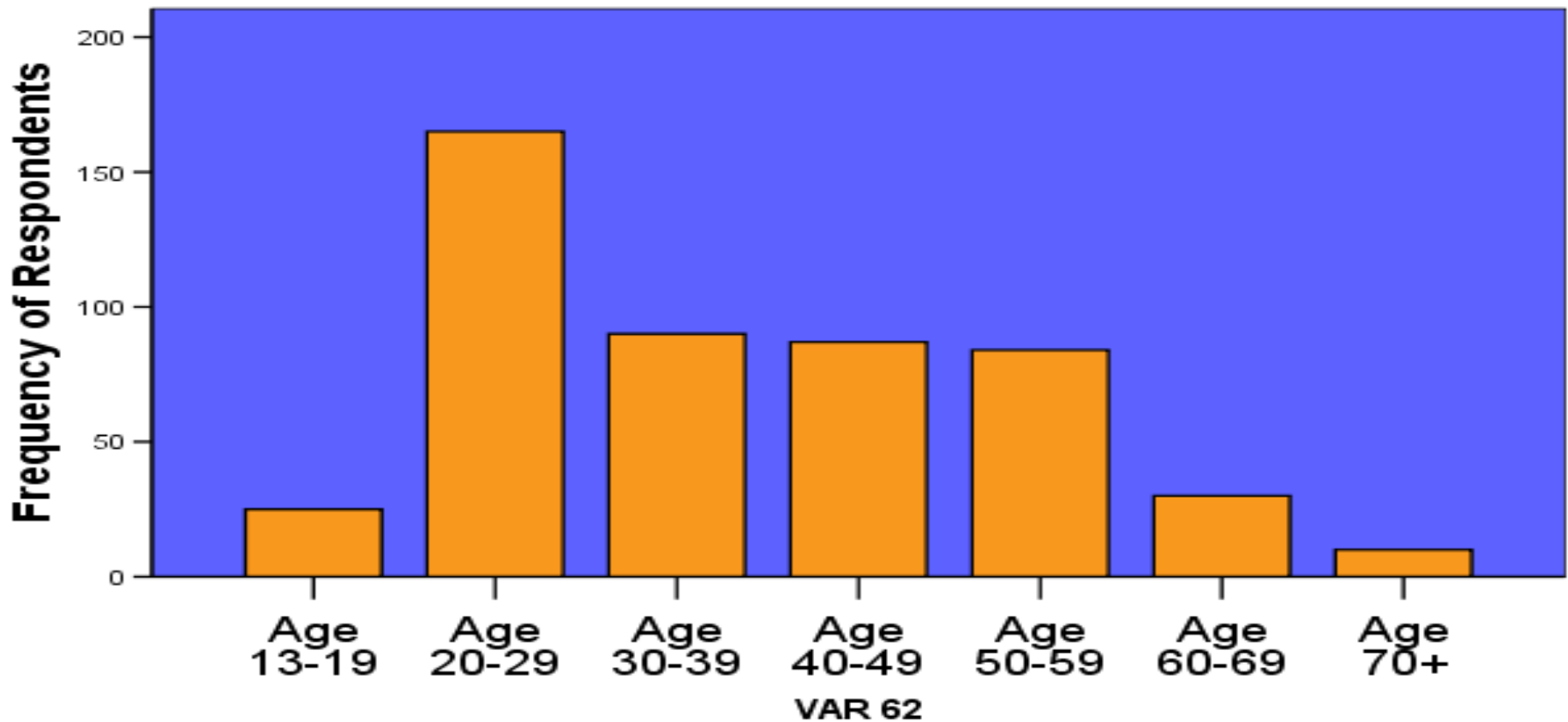
Primary occupation/job/profession

Annual salary or income (gross)

Age of Respondents

n = 500 (9 did not report) range: age 13-89
mean = 37.54 median = 35.00 mode = 21

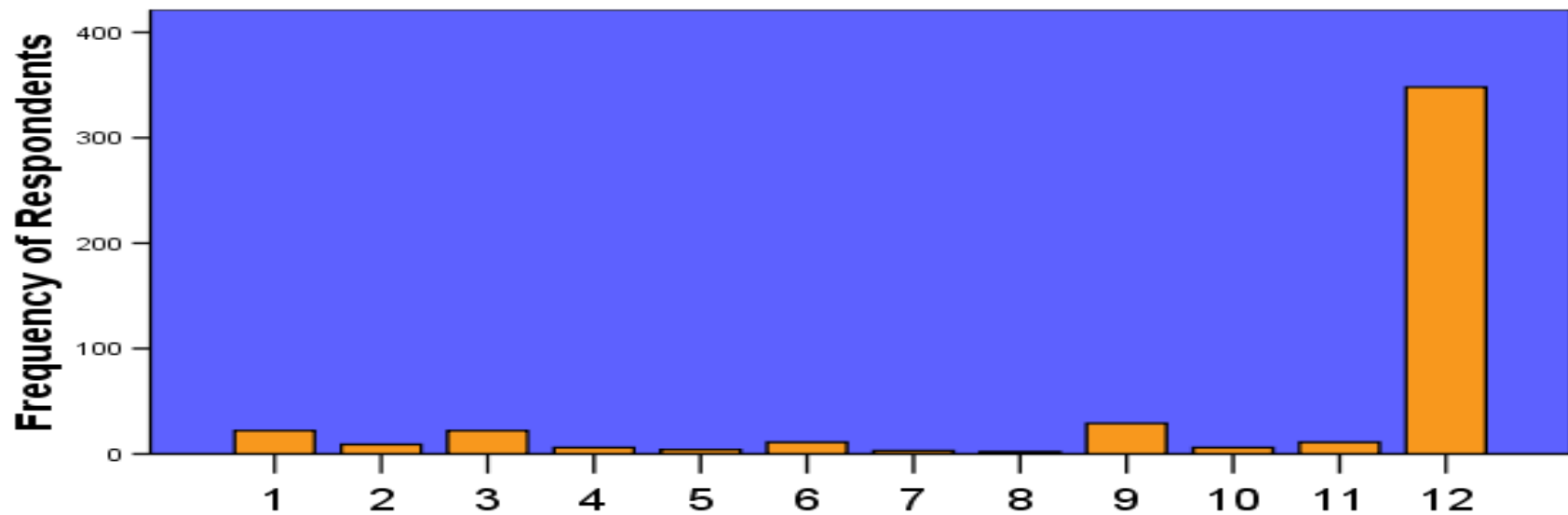
VAR 62 Age by Decade



Self-Identified Ethnicity

1.	Asians	22 (04.7%)
2.	Black/African	9 (01.9%)
3.	Hispanic/Latino/Latina	22 (04.7%)
4.	Indian (South Asian)	6 (01.3%)
5.	Native American/Indian	4 (00.8%)
6.	Jewish	11 (02.3%)
7.	Arab	7 (00.6%)
8.	Middle Eastern/Persian	2 (00.4%)
9.	Bi-racial	29 (06.1%)
10.	Multi-racial	6 (01.3%)
11.	Other/Unsure	11 (02.3%)
12.	White	348 (69.6%)
	Did not respond = 27	n = 500

VAR 49 Self-Identified Ethnicity/Racial Identity



1=Asian 2=Black/African 3=Hispanic/Latino
4= South Asian Indian 5=Native American/Am. Indian
6=Jewish 7=Arab 8=Middle Eastern
9=Bi-racial 10=Multi-racial 11=Other/Unsure 12=White

Nationalities

■ USA	447	89%
■ Canada	9	2%
■ Australia	7	1%
■ England	10	2%
■ Germany	5	1%
■ India	2	<1%
■ South Africa	2	<1%
■ China	1	<1%
■ New Zealand	1	<1%
■ Did not respond	16	3%
■ Total = 500		

Ethnicity, Gender and Sexual Orientation

- White = 70%
- Other ethnicities (many categories) = 20%
- Bi-&Multi-racial = 7%
- Did not respond = 27 n = 500

- Female = 67%
- Male = 31%
- Other = 0.2%

Did not respond = 12 n = 500

- Heterosexual = 84%
- Bi-sexual = 8%
- Gay/Lesbian = 7%
- Other = 1%

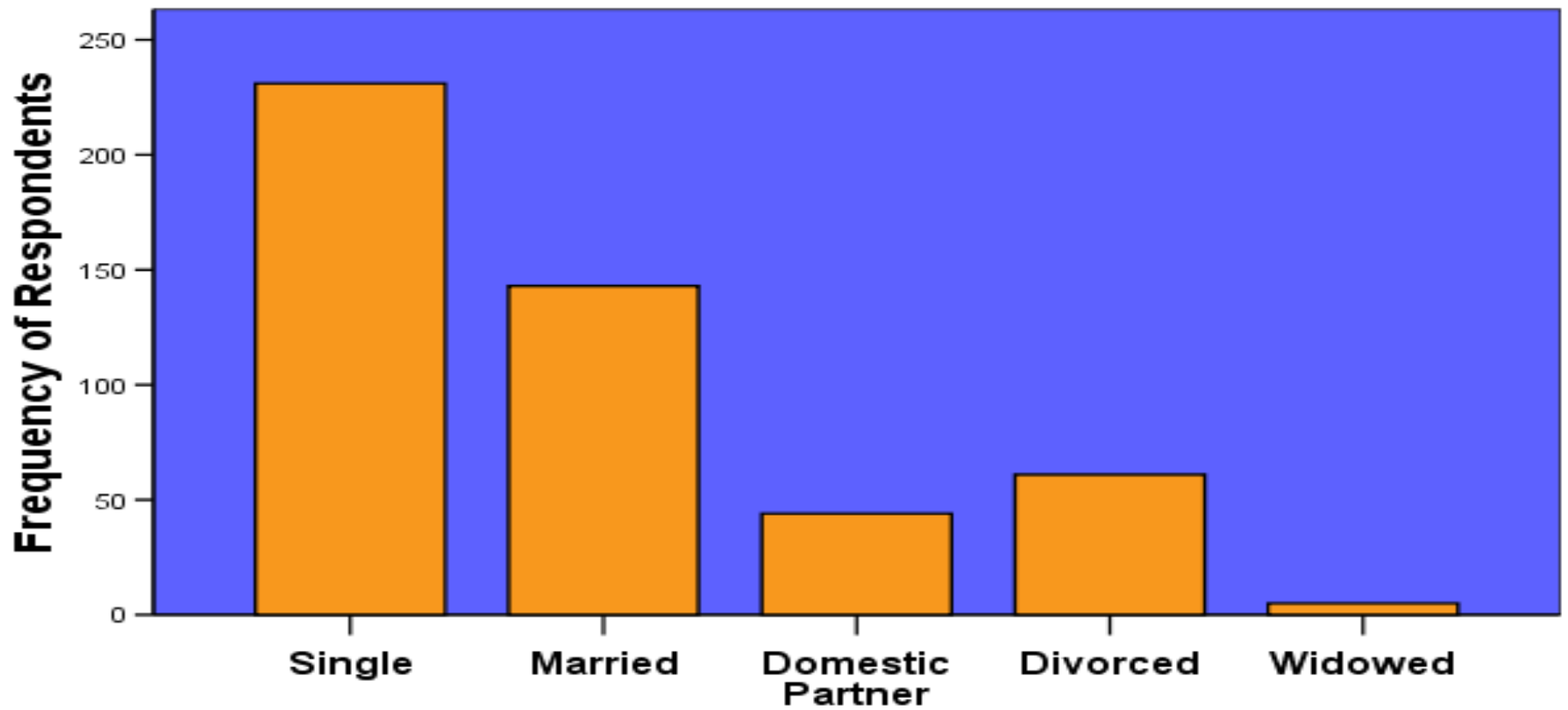
Did not respond = 20 n = 500

Marital Status

■ Single	= 231 (47.7%)
■ Married	= 143 (29.5%)
■ Domestic Partner	= 44 (09.1%)
■ Divorced	= 61 (12.6%)
■ Widowed	= 5 (01.0%)
■ Did not respond	= 16
■ Total (n)	= 500

Marital Status

VAR 53 Marital Status



Education

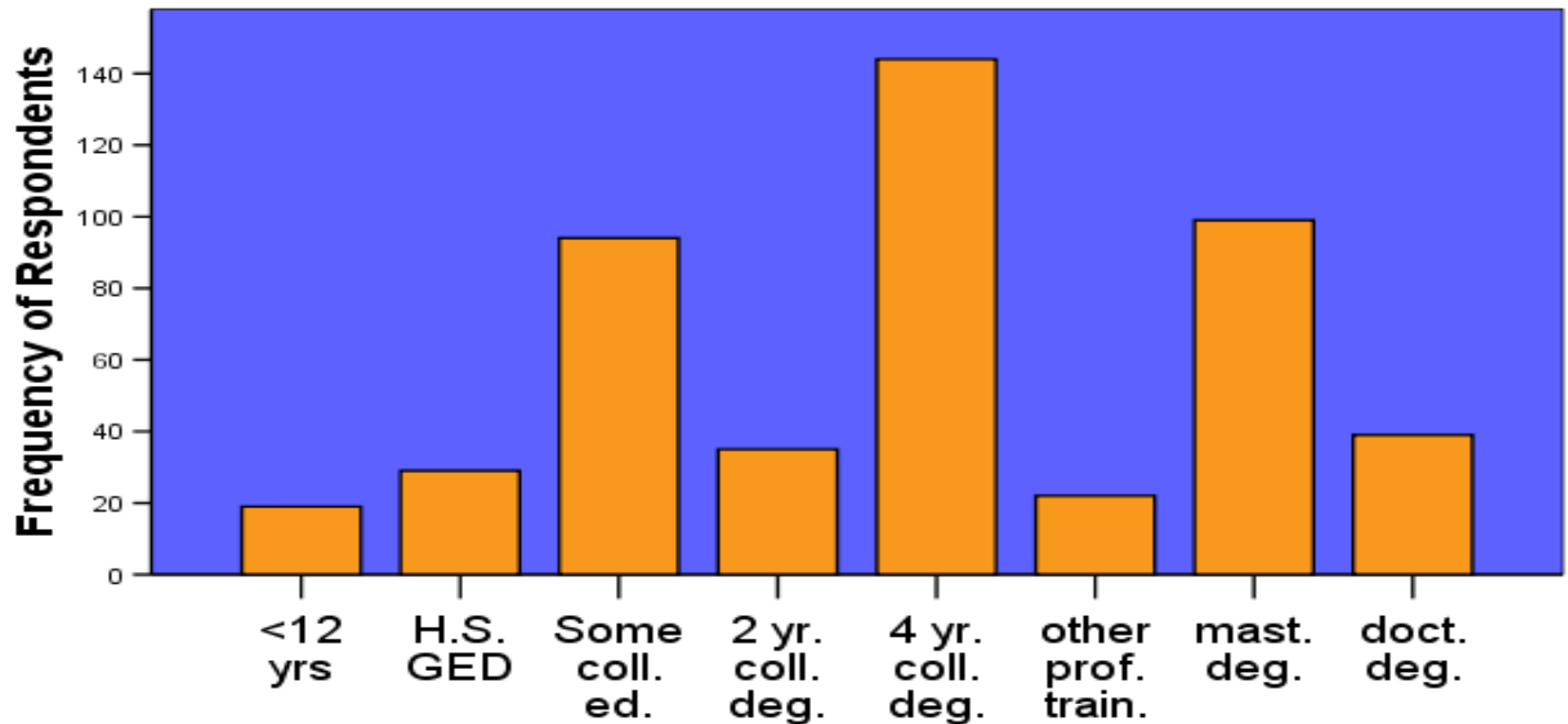
■ Less than 12 years	=	19 (04.0%)
■ High School/GED	=	29 (06.0%)
■ Some college education	=	94 (19.5%)
■ Two year college degree	=	35 (07.3%)
■ Four year college degree	=	144 (29.9%)
■ Other professional training	=	22 (04.6%)
■ Master's degree	=	99 (20.6%)
■ Doctoral degree	=	39 (08.1%)

Did not respond = 19

n = 500

Education

VAR 56 Education



Question 1 (Quantitative Variable 1)

At this time in your life, do you consider yourself to be a spiritually oriented or religious person, or do you value a religious faith or spiritual practice (given how you define these terms)?

yes	= 414 (83.0%)
no	= 50 (10.0%)
unsure	= 35 (07.0%)

Did not respond	= 1
Total (n)	= 500

Comment? [A box is available for qualitative responses.]

Question 2 (Quantitative Variable 2)

If you answered "No" to Question 1
(such that you do not consider yourself to be a spiritual
or religious person now):

**At a previous time in your life, did you
consider yourself to be a spiritual or
religious person or did you value a spiritual
or religious faith?**

yes	= 51 (65.4%)
no	= 24 (30.8%)
unsure	= 3 (03.8%)
Did not respond	= 422
Total (n)	= 500

Qualitative Response for Question 2

If "Yes" or "Unsure": Briefly explain why or how you changed from one who had a spiritual orientation or religious faith to one who does not. (If you are unsure, please summarize your best guess as to why or how you changed):

[A box is available for qualitative responses.]

Question 3 Part 1 (Quantitative Variable 3)

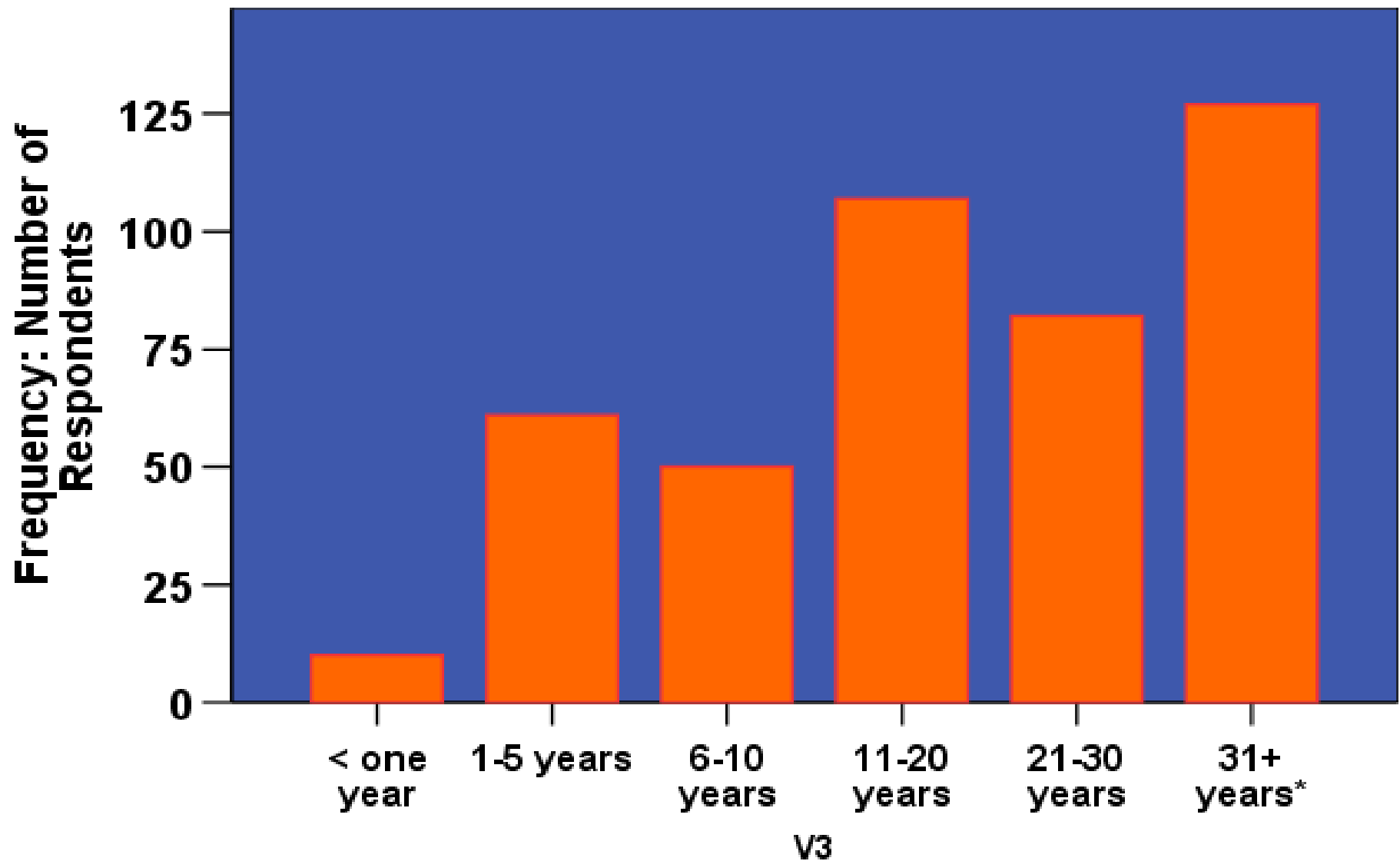
If you answered "Yes" or "Unsure" to Question 1:

For how long have you considered yourself to be a spiritual or religious person?

(Or for how long have you valued your spirituality or religious faith? Or for how long have you been interested in spirituality or religion, as you define it?)

1 For less than one year	= 10 (02.3%)
2 1-5 years	= 61 (14.0%)
3 6-10 years	= 50 (11.4%)
4 11-20 years	= 107 (24.5%)
5 21-30 years	= 82 (18.8%)
6 31-50 years	= 127 (29.1%)
7 More than 50 years	= 0
Did not respond	= 63
Total (n)	= 500

Var 3: For how long have you considered yourself to be a spiritual or religious person?



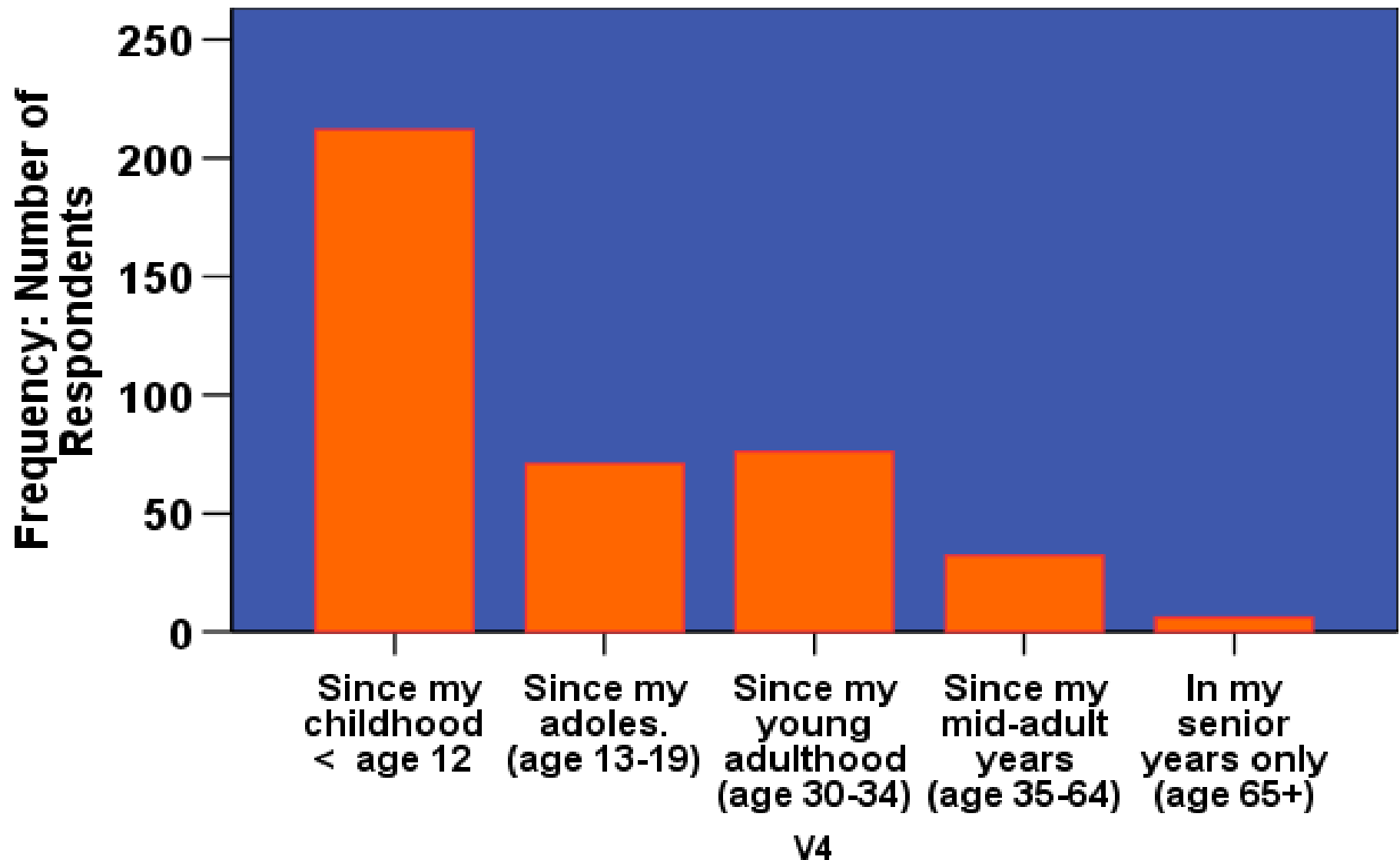
Question 3 Part 2 (Quantitative Variable 4)

At what age did you first experience a personal interest in spirituality or religion?

1 Since my childhood (age 12 or younger)	= 212 (53.4%)
2 Since my adolescence (age 13-19)	= 71 (17.9%)
3 Since my young adulthood (age 30-34)	= 76 (19.1%)
4 Since my middle adult years (age 35-64)	= 32 (08.1%)
5 In my senior years only (age 65+)	= 6 (01.5%)
Did not respond	= 103
Total (n)	= 500

Comment? [A box is available for qualitative responses.]

Var 4 At what age did you first experience a personal interest in spirituality or religion:

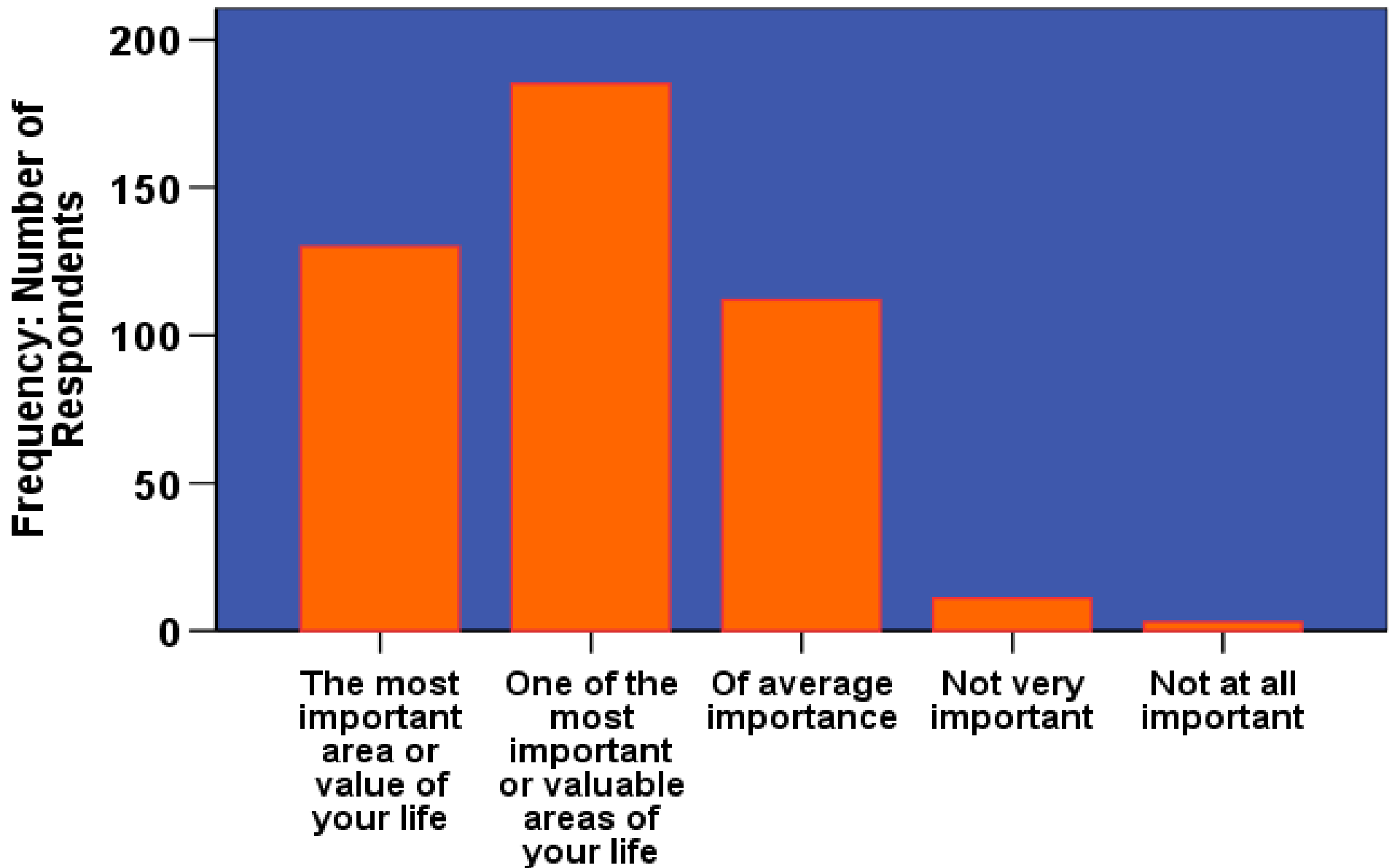


Question 4 (Quantitative Variable 5)

How important, significant or valuable is your spiritual belief or religious faith to you now in your life?

1	The most important area or value of your life	= 130 (29.5%)
2	One of the most important or valuable areas of your life (for example, more important than or equally important to your career/job and/or your primary relationships)	= 185 (42.0%)
3	Of average importance (for example, your relationships or your career/job are more important; it may be a strong interest, like a hobby or sport)	= 112 (25.5%)
4	Not very important	= 11 (02.5%)
5	Not at all important	= 3 (00.7%)
	Did not respond	= 59
	Total (n)	= 500

VAR 5 How important, significant or valuable is your spiritual belief or religious faith to you now in your life?



V5

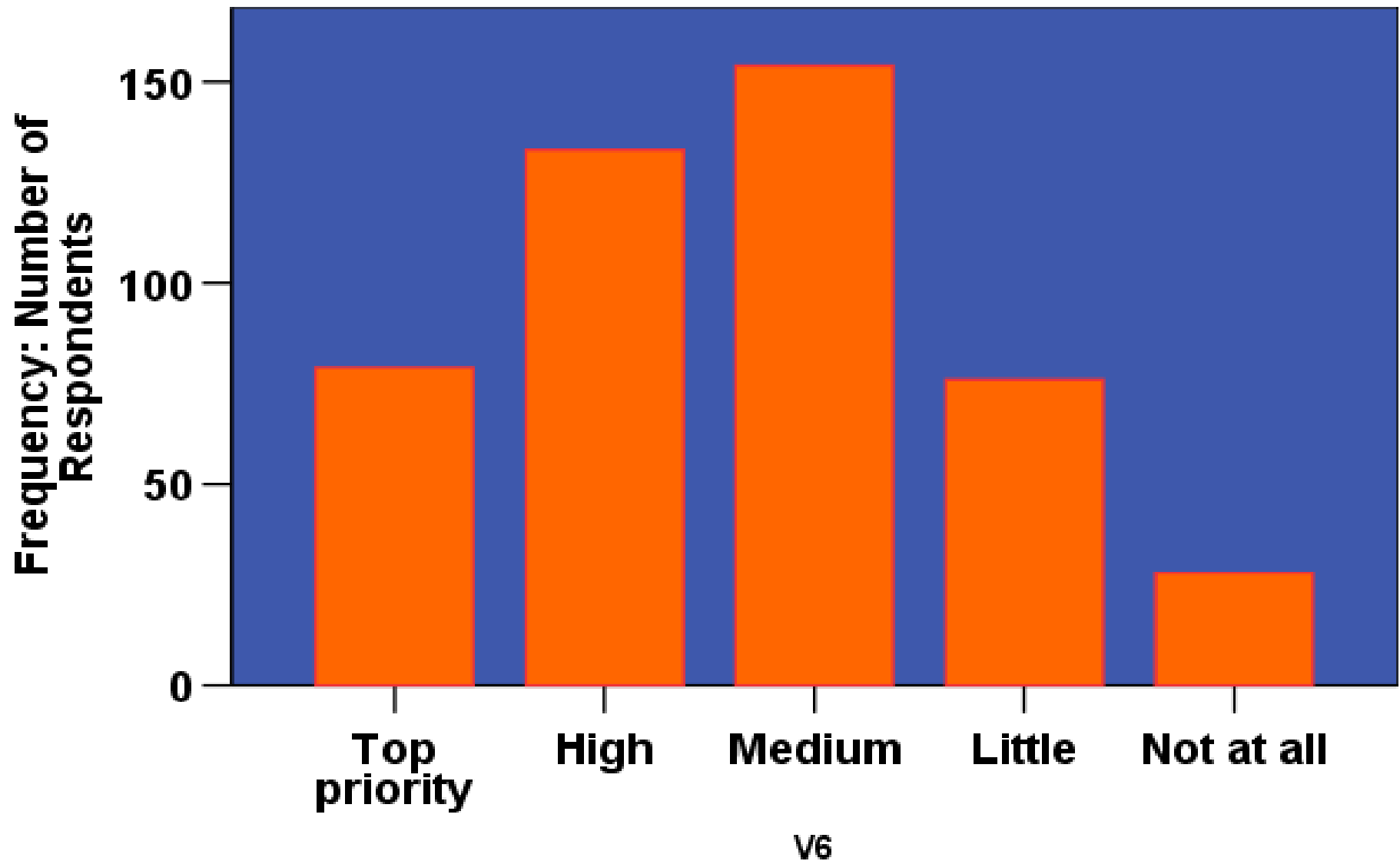
Question 5 (Quantitative Variable 6)

To what degree do you prioritize your spiritual/religious faith and practices in your daily life?

1 Top priority	= 79 (16.8%)
2 High	= 133 (28.3%)
3 Medium	= 154 (32.8%)
4 Little	= 76 (16.2%)
5 Not at all	= 28 (06.0%)
Did not respond	= 30
Total (n)	= 500

Comment? [A box is available for qualitative responses.]

V6 To what degree do you prioritize your spiritual/religious faith and practices in your daily life?



Question 6 (Quantitative Variable 7)

Which spiritual faith, religion, or category best describes your current beliefs?

(If you have more than one answer, please rank order them, with #1 being the best description or closest match. Please explain your choices in the comments area below if necessary.)

1st Choice: (Variable 7); 2nd Choice (leave blank if not applicable): (Variable 8); 3rd Choice (leave blank if not applicable): (Variable 9); (49 choices are provided in a pop-up menu including “Other, please describe in comment below” is the final option.) Comment?

Which spiritual faith, religion, or category best describes your current beliefs? (1st Choice)

In descending order: Slide 1
Continued on Slide 2

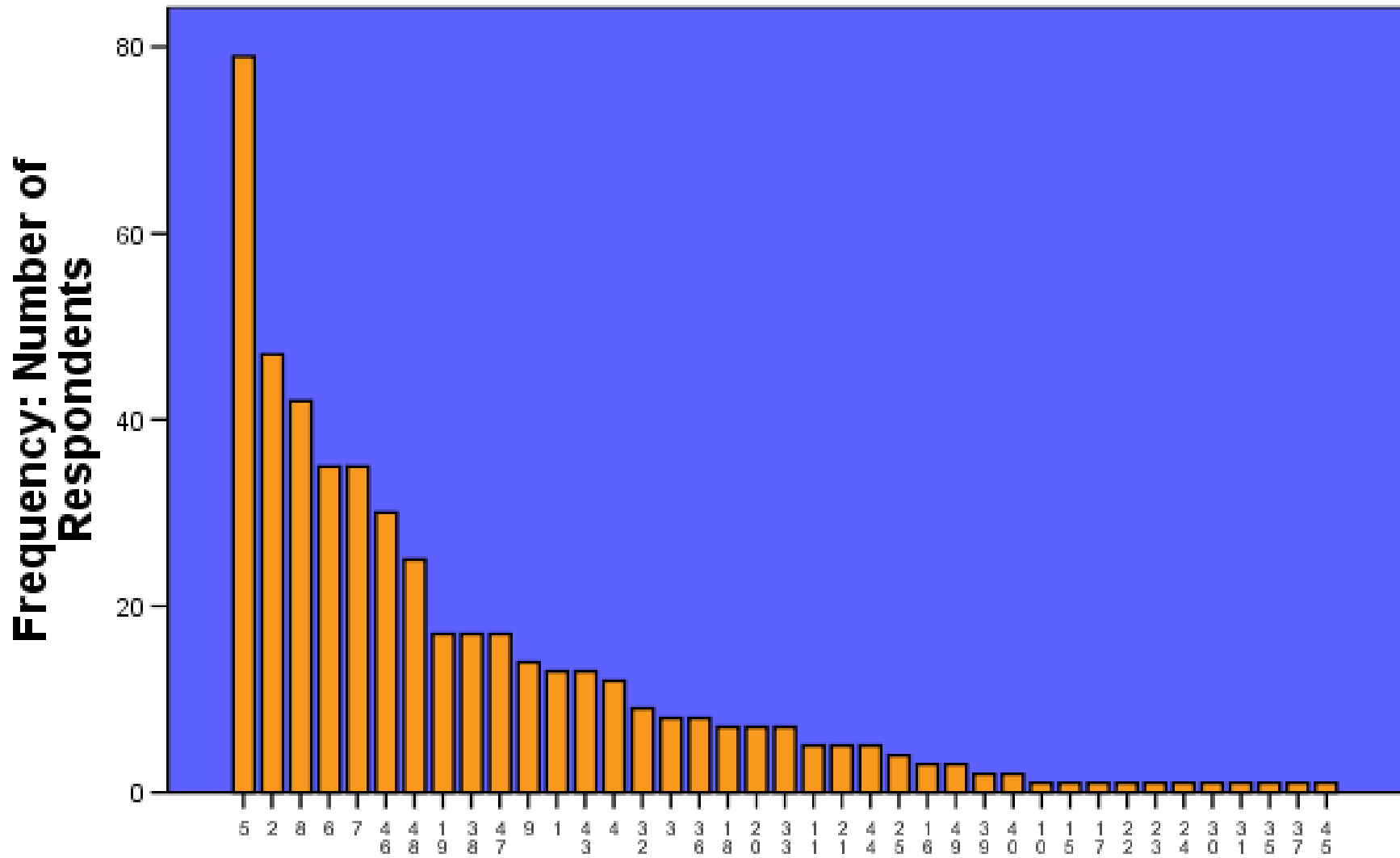
■ Christian		= 187 (37.4%)
– Catholic	= 79 (17.8%)	
– Protestant	= 35 (07.0%)	
– Nondenominational	= 35 (07.0%)	
– Other	= 18 (03.6%)	
– Unitarian/Universalist	= 9 (02.8%)	
– Mormon	= 5 (01.0%)	
■ Unspecified (Religion)		= 67 (13.4%)
– Monotheist	= 47 (09.4%)	
– No Deity	= 12 (02.4%)	
– Pantheist	= 8 (01.6%)	

Which spiritual faith, religion, or category best describes your current beliefs?

(1st Choice) In descending order: Slide 2

■ Trans-religious Spiritual World View	= 30 (06.0%)
■ Other (Not on list)	= 25 (05.0%)
■ Agnostic	= 24 (04.8%)
■ Open to all religions	= 17 (03.4%)
■ Buddhist	= 17 (03.4%)
■ Atheist	= 13 (02.6%)
■ Jewish	= 12 (02.4%)
■ Pagan	= 9 (01.8%)
■ Native American Spirituality	= 8 (01.6%)
■ Hindu	= 7 (01.4%)
■ Wicca	= 7 (01.4%)
■ Yoga	= 5 (01.0%)
■ The Twelve Step Program	= 5 (01.0%)
■ Others selected other options (e.g., Taoist, Islam) (<1.0% each category)	
■ Did not respond	= 18 n = 500

Var 7 Which spiritual faith, religion, or category best describes your current beliefs?



V7

Question 10 Part 1 (Quantitative Variable 10)

Have you been to a psychotherapist or counselor for personal, relationship or family assistance?

Yes = 329 (65.8%)

No = 171 (34.2%)

Total (n) = 500

Question 10 Part 2 (Quantitative Variable 11)

If "Yes", did you value spirituality or a religious faith or have spiritual experiences at the time that you saw a therapist?

Yes	= 216 (64.1%)
No	= 92 (27.3%)
Unsure	= 29 (08.6%)
Did not respond	= 163
Total (n)	= 500

Question 10 Part 3 (Quantitative Variable 12)

Did you tell your therapist about your spiritual faith, religion, or spiritual experiences?

Yes	= 180 (53.9%)
No	= 118 (35.3%)
Unsure	= 36 (10.8%)
Did not respond	= 166
Total (n)	= 500

Question 10 Part 4
(Qualitative Variables not yet analyzed)

If not, why not? (or comment)

If you did talk with your therapist about your religious or spiritual faith or experiences, what did you share (e.g., did you talk about a spiritual experience or belief)?

How did your therapist respond to this information?

[Boxes are available for qualitative responses.]

Question 11 Part 1 (Quantitative Variable 13)

Have you ever had what you consider to be a spiritual or religious experience?

(Also see the next question, about paranormal or psychic experiences.)

Yes	= 329 (66.5%)
No	= 123 (24.8%)
Unsure	= 43 (08.7%)
Did not respond	= 5
Total (n)	= 500

Question 11 Part 2

(Qualitative Variables not yet analyzed)

If "Yes" or "Unsure", how old were you when this experience/these experiences occurred?

(Please separate multiple answers with a comma, for example, 8,15,82,103): _____ years old

How often do you have what you consider to be spiritual or religious experiences?

Please describe briefly one or two of your most significant or meaningful spiritual or religious experiences:

(Please keep your description to less than 2 pages of text, thank you.)

[Boxes are available for qualitative responses.]

Question 12 Part 1 (Quantitative Variable 14)

Have you had a "supernatural," paranormal, transcendent or psychic experience (such as seen visions? heard voices or channeled for other beings? had a visitation from a divine or evil being? had a near death or out-of-body experience? experienced a spiritual or alien abduction? extrasensory perception?)

Yes	= 239 (49.6%)
No	= 216 (44.8%)
Unsure	= 27 (05.6%)
Did not respond	= 18
Total (n)	= 500

Question 12 Part 2

(Qualitative Variables not yet analyzed)

If "Yes" or "Unsure", how old were you when this experience/these experiences occurred? (Please separate multiple answers with a comma, for example, 8,15,82,103): _____ years old

How often have you had paranormal or psychic experiences?

Please describe briefly one or two of your most significant experiences (unless already described under the previous Question).

(Please keep your description to less than 2 pages of text, thank you).

[Boxes are available for qualitative responses.]

Question 13 Part 1 (Quantitative Variable 15)

If you answered "Yes" or "Unsure"
(to Questions 11 or 12):

Were you using any psychoactive or
psychedelic substance, entheogen, drug,
or medication when this (or these)
experience (s) occurred?

Yes = 18 (05.2%)

No = 328 (94.8%)

Did not respond = 154

Total (n) = 500

Question 13 Part 2
(Qualitative Variables not yet analyzed)

For one or some of the experiences?

If "Yes" or "For some", please indicate which experience (s) and what drug or medication you used?

[Boxes are available for qualitative responses.]

Question 14 Part 1 (Quantitative Variable 16)

If you answered "Yes" or "Unsure"
(to Questions 11 or 12):

Have you shared the experience (s)
with any one?

Yes	= 294 (93.0%)
No	= 22 (04.4%)
Did not respond	= 184
Total (n)	= 500

Question 14 Part 2
(Qualitative Variables not yet analyzed)

If "Yes", if you have shared a significant spiritual, religious or paranormal experience with someone, with whom did you share it? (for example, friend, romantic partner, spouse, minister, spiritual teacher, psychotherapist, etc.)

If "No", or if you did not share one or more of your significant spiritual, religious or paranormal experiences with anyone, why not?

[Boxes are available for qualitative responses.]

Question 15 Part 1 (Quantitative Variable 17)

If you answered "Yes" or "Unsure"
(to Questions 11 or 12):

Have you ever seen a psychologist,
psychiatrist, medical doctor, counselor
or psychotherapist because you were
concerned about having such an
experience?

Yes	=	21 (06.3%)
No	=	313 (93.7%)
Did not respond	=	165
Total (n)	=	500

Question 15 Part 2 (Quantitative Variable 18)

If not, did you consider seeing a psychotherapist or doctor because you were concerned about having such an experience?

Yes	= 12 (04.3%)
No	= 264 (95.7%)
Did not respond	= 224
Total (n)	= 500

Comment? [A box is available for qualitative responses.]

Question 16 (Quantitative Variable 19)

If you answered "Yes" or "Unsure"
(to Questions 11 or 12):

Have you ever been diagnosed as having a mental disorder that may have contributed to these experiences?

Yes	=	7 (02.3%)
No	=	288 (94.4%)
Unsure	=	10 (03.3%)
Did not respond	=	195
Total (n)	=	500

If "Yes": Specify the diagnosis, if you know it:

Comments? [A box is available for qualitative responses.]

Question 17 Religious/Spiritual Activities or Practices (Quantitative Variables 20-43)

If you have a spiritual or religious orientation, please indicate how often you usually engage in the following activities and practices.

(Limit your responses to those that are most meaningful; if you do not engage in a listed activity, please leave it blank.):

This item is followed by 22 activities, in addition to this first option:

No spiritual or religious activities, rituals, or practice = 34 = (06.8%) n = 500

Question 17 Religious/Spiritual Activities or Practices

(Quantitative Variables 21-43):

Prayer

Meditation

Contemplation (spiritual contemplation)

Worship

Devotional chanting, singing, toning, playing instruments and/or using music or sound

Devotional dance or ritualistic movement (such as mindfulness meditative walking)

Body-mind (and/or spiritual) practice (such as hatha yoga, tai chi, or gi gong; describe below in comments)

Physical exercise as a spiritual practice (describe below in comments)

Creative arts as spiritual practice (describe below in comments)

**Question 17 Religious/Spiritual Activities or Practices
(Quantitative Variables 21-43):**

Spending time alone in nature (with a spiritual or religious intent) Spending time with others in nature (with a spiritual or religious intent)

Service to others (donating time and/or money with a spiritual/religious intent to those in need)

Reading spiritual or religious texts spiritual or religious texts

Listening to audio tapes and/or viewing video tapes of a spiritual or religious content

Family rituals or spiritual activities (for example, Shabot or family prayer)

Community rituals (with the community of faith) Personal rituals (done alone)

**Question 17 Religious/Spiritual Activities or Practices
(Quantitative Variables 21-43):**

The spiritual or religious use of psychoactive substances (such as peyote or psilocybin mushrooms)

Celebrating religious holidays

Psychotherapy (e.g., transpersonal or depth psychology; only check if these are considered part of your spiritual/religious practice; describe and indicate how often below in comments)

Body work such as massage/Somatic therapy (only check if these are considered part of your spiritual/religious practice; describe and indicate how often in comments)

Attending Church

Other (describe and indicate how often in comments)

Question 17 Religious/Spiritual Activities or Practices (Quantitative Variables 20-43):

**For each activity (e.g., prayer or meditation),
respondents selected one of the following or left it
blank:**

- More than once a day**
- Daily or almost daily**
- Several times a week**
- Weekly**
- Monthly**
- A few times a year**
- Once a year or less**

Question 17 Religious/Spiritual Activities or Practices (Quantitative Variables 20-43):

The top three activities selected by respondents that they reported engaging in more than once a day were:

Prayer	= 92 (18.4% of 500)
Spiritual Contemplation	= 52 (10.4%)
Meditation	= 37 (07.4%)

n = 500, however, people may select as many responses as they wish.

For extensive descriptive analyses of these 22 items, go to: www.spiritresearch.org

Question 17 Religious/Spiritual Activities or Practices (Quantitative Variables 20-43):

The top five activities selected by respondents that they reported engaging in more than once a day, daily or almost daily were:

Prayer	= 208 (41.6% of 500)
Spiritual Contemplation	= 141 (28.2%)
Meditation	= 108 (21.6%)
Reading spiritual or religious texts	= 80 (16.0%)
Personal Rituals	= 66 (13.2%)

n = 500

however, people may select as many responses as they wish.

For extensive descriptive analyses of these 22 items,
go to: www.spiritresearch.org

Developmental Considerations

Relationships between the Age of Respondents and Other Variables:

Crosstabulation using the Pearson Chi-Square statistic reveals a significant relationship between the age (by decade) of the respondents and whether or not they consider themselves to be spiritually oriented or religious, valuing a religious faith or spiritual practice ($p < 0.0001$):

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	40.447 ^a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	49.413	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	28.815	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	490		

- a. 6 cells (28.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .67.

Developmental Findings: Valuing One's Spiritual or Religious Faith Varies by Age**

- 80% of the teenagers (ages 13-19)
- 72% of those in their 20s
- 83% of those in their 30s
- 92% of those in their 40s
- 95% of those in their 50s
- 93% of those in their 60's
- 100% of those in their 70s and 80s consider themselves to be spiritual/religious people.
- ** Pearson Chi-Square Value: 40.447 (df 12)
Asymp.Sig. Two Tailed .000 $p < 0.001$

Age and Spiritual or Religious Orientation

(continued)

- In this sample, 80% of the teenagers (ages 13-19) reported that they value their spiritual/religious faith; 72.1% of those in their 20s and 83.3% of those in their 30s claim to be religious or spiritual.
- Over 90% of those in their 40s (92.0%), 50s (95.2%), and in their 60's (93.3%) reported valuing their spirituality.
- 100% of those in their 70s and 80s consider themselves to be spiritual/religious people.
- Therefore, those in their 20s are least likely to identify as religious or spiritual.

Age and Spiritual or Religious Experience

Crosstabulation using the Pearson Chi-Square statistic reveals a significant relationship between the age (by decade) of the respondents and whether or not they have had what they consider to be a spiritual or religious experience ($p < 0.0001$):

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	66.111 ^a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	69.892	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	37.791	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	486		

a. 4 cells (19.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .88.

Age and Spiritual or Religious Experience

(continued)

- An examination of these data show that, in this sample, less than half of the teens (40.0%) and young adults in their 20s (47.5%) report having had a spiritual experience, however,
- 73.0% of those in their 30s,
- 84.9% of those in their 40s,
- 79.8% of those in their 50s,
- 80.0% of those in their 60s, and
- 80.0% of those in their 70s and 80s report having had such an experience.

Developmental Findings: Having a Spiritual or Religious Experience Varies by Age**

- 40% of the teens
 - 47% young adults in their 20s
 - 73% of those in their 30s
 - 85% of those in their 40s
 - 80% of those in their 50s, 60s, 70s & 80s
-
- ** Pearson Chi-Square Value: 66.111 (df 12)
Asymp.Sig. Two Tailed .000 $p < 0.001$

Age and Paranormal Experience

Crosstabulation using the Pearson Chi-Square statistic reveals a significant relationship between the age (by decade) of the respondents and whether or not they have had what they consider to be a “supernatural, paranormal, transcendent or psychic experience (such as seen visions? Heard voices or channeled . . . ? had a visitation from a divine or evil being? Had a near death or out-of-body experience? Experienced a spiritual or alien abduction? Extrasensory perception?) ($p < 0.0001$):

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	42.445 ^a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	43.987	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	17.971	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	474		

- a. 7 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .51.

Age and Paranormal Experience

(continued)

- In response to this question, only 31.8% of the teens and 32.5% of the young adults reported that they have had such an experience, whereas
- Over half of those in the other age groups did have what they consider to be a anomalous experience:
 - 52.8% of those in their 30s,
 - 65.5% of those in their 40s,
 - 63.1% of those in their 50s,
 - 58.6% of those in their 60s, and
 - 55.6% of those in their 70s and 80s.

Developmental Findings: Having a Paranormal Experience Varies by Age**

- 32% of the teens
- 33% of those in their 20s
- 53% of those in their 30s
- 66% of those in their 40s
- 63% of those in their 50s
- 59% of those in their 60s and
- 56% of those in their 70s and 80s
- ** Pearson Chi-Square Value: 42.445 (df 6)
Asymp.Sig. Two Tailed .000 $p < 0.001$

Related Questions: Qualitative Responses

- Respondents were asked a few other questions, such as at what age they had these experiences (many responded with many ages), how often (many responded with numerous times, some too many to count), and to describe their spiritual and paranormal experiences, to write about what happened. These qualitative data help to better understand the types of experiences that respondents consider to be spiritual and/or transcendent or anomalous.
- These data have not yet been systematically analyzed, however, one common spiritual experience is feeling the presence of the divine; a common paranormal experience is an accurate but unexplainable premonition or a “visitation” from someone who had died.

**Related Questions:
Drug use
or known psychiatric diagnosis related to the
spiritual or paranormal experience**

- **Respondents were also asked if they had used drugs or entheogens to facilitate their spiritual or paranormal experience (05.3% indicated that they did; no detectable significant difference between the age groups).**
- **Seven people (02.3%) of the sample responded affirmatively to the question as to whether or not they had been “diagnosed as having a mental disorder that may have contributed to these experiences”; 10 (03.3%) reported that they were unsure; and 286 (94.4%) indicated that they had not; no significant age differences between these respondents were found.**

Sharing Spiritual or Paranormal Experience with Others

Respondents were asked if they had ever shared their spiritual or paranormal experience with anyone (and with whom did they share it). It is interesting to note the significant difference between the teens and the other age groups in their responses to this question (Pearson Chi-Square, $p < 0.0001$):

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.040 ^a	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	24.357	6	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	16.467	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	314		

- a. 6 cells (42.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .42.

Sharing Spiritual or Paranormal Experience with Others (continued)

- **66.7% of the teens responded that they had shared their spiritual or anomalous experience with someone else;**
- **87% of those in their 20s,**
- **95.0% of those in their 30s,**
- **96.9% of those in their 40s,**
- **100% of those in their 50s,**
- **95.0% of those in their 60s, and**
- **100% of those in their 70s and 80s reported that they shared their experience with another.**

Seen a psychotherapist because they were concerned about having such an experience

Crosstabulation using the Pearson Chi-Square statistic did not find a significant relationship between the age (by decade) of the respondents and whether or not they had seen a psychologist, psychiatrist, medical doctor, counselor or psychotherapist because they were concerned about having such an experience ($p < 0.05$); this may be due to the fact that only 21 (06.3% of the entire sample) reported that they had sought help from a therapist because of this concern:

None (0) of the teens,
04.8% of the young adults,
19.0% of those in their 30s,
33.3% of those in their 40s and 50s,
09.5% of those in their 60s, and
none of those in their 70s and 80s.

Relationships between the Age of Respondents and Other Variables: Continued

- **Significant relationships between age (by decade) and a number of other variables in the Survey were found;**
- **Some of these significant relationships are expected (e.g., between age and education, marital status, the number of years that people have valued their spiritual faith, and the age at which they first experienced a personal interest in spirituality or religion, and whether or not they had been to a psychotherapist or counselor).**
- **A lack of significant difference among age groups also provides important information; such is the case in terms of the religion or spiritual faith selected.**
- **A few others significant relationships that are interesting include:**

Relationships between the Age of Respondents and Other Variables: Continued

- How important, significant, or valuable their spiritual belief or religious faith is to them now in their lives (negative relationship, the younger the age, the less important, in general):

Pearson Correlation	=	-.269**
Sig. (2-tailed)	=	.000
n	=	435

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Relationships between the Age of Respondents and Other Variables: Continued

- How much they prioritize their spiritual/religious faith and practices in their daily lives (negative relationship, the younger the age, the lower the priority, in general):

Pearson Correlation	=	-.348**
Sig. (2-tailed)	=	.000
n	=	461

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Relationships between the Age of Respondents and Other Variables: Continued

- For those who have a spiritual or religious orientation, how often they usually engaged in spiritual or religious activities, rituals, or practices: **None (that is, no spiritual or religious activities, rituals, or practices) is positively related to age (the younger the respondent, the more apt they are to report no activity):**

Pearson Correlation	= .113*
Sig. (2-tailed)	= .012
n	= 491

***Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level**

Relationships between the Age of Respondents and Other Variables: Continued

Teenagers and young adults report that they are less apt to engage in these activities than people in their mid- to later years: (n=491; negative correlations significant at the 0.01 level, 2-tailed Pearson Correlations):

Prayer

Meditation

Contemplation (spiritual contemplation)

Worship

Devotional chanting, singing, toning, playing instruments and/or using music or sound

Devotional dance or ritualistic movement (such as mindfulness meditative walking)

Teenagers and young adults report that they are less apt to engage in these activities than people in their mid- to later years: (n=491, negative correlations significant at the 0.01 level, 2-tailed Pearson Correlations):

Body-mind (and/or spiritual) practice (such as hatha yoga, tai chi, or qi gong)

Physical exercise as a spiritual practice (describe below in comments)

Creative arts as spiritual practice

Physical exercise as a spiritual practice (describe below in comments)

Creative arts as spiritual practice (describe below in comments)

Spending time alone in nature (with a spiritual or religious intent) Spending time with others in nature (with a spiritual or religious intent)

Service to others (donating time and/or money with a spiritual/religious intent to those in need)

Teenagers and young adults report that they are less apt to engage in these activities than people in their mid- to later years: (n=491, negative correlations significant at the 0.01 level, 2-tailed Pearson Correlations):

Reading spiritual or religious texts spiritual or religious texts

Listening to audio tapes and/or viewing video tapes of a spiritual or religious content

Family rituals or spiritual activities (for example, Shabbat or family prayer)

**Community rituals (with the community of faith)
Personal rituals (done alone)**

Celebrating religious holidays

Body work such as massage/Somatic therapy (only check if these are considered part of your spiritual/religious practice; describe and indicate how often in comments)

**These were the only activities
where no significant differences were found
between age groups:**

**The spiritual or religious use of psychoactive
substances (such as peyote or psilocybin
mushrooms)**

**Psychotherapy (e.g., transpersonal or depth
psychology; only check if these are
considered part of your spiritual/religious
practice; describe and indicate how often
below in comments)**

Attending Church

Other

Relationship between age when respondents first experienced in a personal interest in spirituality or religion and the value of faith:

The age of first interest in spirituality or religion is significantly related to respondents' report of "how important, significant, or valuable" their "spiritual belief or religious faith" is to them "now in their lives." (The positive correlation indicates that, in general, the younger the age of first experience, the more important is their faith):

Pearson Correlation	=	.148*
Sig. (2-tailed)	=	.004
n	=	385

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Relationship between age when respondents first experienced in a personal interest in spirituality or religion and current engagement in religious/spiritual activities:

The age of first interest in spirituality or religion is significantly related to respondents' report of the frequency of their engagement in a number of spiritual/religious activities (the positive correlation indicates that, in general, the younger the age of their first interest in spirituality, the more apt they are to engage in these particular activities): (n=397; positive correlations significant at the 0.05 level, 2-tailed Pearson Correlations):

Prayer

Family rituals or spiritual activities (for example, Shabbat or family prayer)

Celebrating religious holidays

Attending Church

Additional Findings

A selection of respondents' descriptions of significant spiritual, religious, and/or paranormal experiences will be shared, as well as the data on the willingness of individuals to discuss the value of their faith and/or other spiritual issues and important anomalous experiences with their therapists or spiritual teachers, priests, ministers, rabbis, and so forth will be posted on-line this fall, 2007. An updated resource list, including an annotated bibliography, will be made available at www.spiritresearch.org.

Clinical Implications

- Given that data were gathered through the use of an on-line survey, the results of this study are not generalizable to other populations; however, they confirm the results of numerous well known surveys, done in the USA, that have found that most people in the United States value their spiritual or religious faith and claim to be engaged in regular spiritual practices or religious activities (*The Barna Group, 2007; Gallup, 1995; Lyons, 2005 {Gallup Poll}; Shafranske, 1996; Wiseman, 2005 {Gallup Poll}; also see Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, 2007*).
- Among other findings, these data draw our attention to the potential prevalence of spiritual, religious, and paranormal experiences among all age groups; the younger the person, the less apt they may be to share their experience with another.

Psychotherapists need to be professionally prepared to discuss religious and spiritual concerns and experiences with their clients.

- Over half (66%) of these respondents have been to a psychotherapist, and over half of those respondents (65%) valued their spirituality or had spiritual experiences at the time that they saw their therapists; 54% told their therapists about their faith and experiences.
- Note that 33% of those in their 40's and 50's claimed to have been concerned enough about their spiritual, religious, or paranormal experience to seek the aid of a psychotherapist (only 6% of the entire sample and another 4% considered seeing a therapist due to this concern).
- Only 2% of the respondents reported that they had been diagnosed as having a mental disorder that may have contributed to their religio-spiritual or paranormal experience.

Multi-Religious and Spiritual Clinical Competence

- Given the prevalence of spiritual and religious values and experiences of those in the United States and in other countries where spirituality and religion is valued, clinicians are better prepared to serve their clients, of all ages, if they have developed competence in this area.
- Clinical training programs are encouraged to address the religious/spiritual competence of their students in the same way that they require the development of student multicultural competence.
- Religious/spiritual competence includes knowledge, skill, and experience, as well as spiritual self-awareness and understanding.

- A general knowledge of other faiths, traditions, practices, and experiences common within each major tradition is essential.
- The ability to discriminate between a spiritual experience or crisis of faith and mental illness, psychosis or other psycho-social disorder, given the culture and faith of the client, is very helpful.
- Discerning when clients' religion, faith, or specific religious community may be harmful to their psychological and/or physical health and how to address these concerns ethically and clinically are also important clinical skills.

- Research demonstrates that, for most people, spiritual and religious faith, practices, and resources support people's health and well being; clinicians can assist clients to draw from these resources, when needed and advantageous.
- Skilled clinicians are able to support people of all faiths through anomalous experiences, spiritual crises, and faith challenges in ways that facilitate their personal and spiritual development (Alter, 2000; Bragdon, 1993; Cardeña, Lynn, & Krippner, 2000; Clarke, 2001; Cornett, 1998; Cortwright, 1997; Faiver, Ingersoll, O'Brien, & McNally, 2001; Grof & Grof, 1989; Koenig, 2005; Pargament, 1977, 2007; Richards & Bergin, 1997; Shafranske, 1996; Sperry, 2001; Wilber, 2006).

References for Clinicians: Developing Spiritual/Religious Competence

- Alter, R. M. with J. Alter (2000). *The transformative power of crisis: Our journey to psychological healing and spiritual awakening*. New York: Regan Books.
- Bragdon, E. (1993). *A sourcebook for helping people with spiritual problems*. Aptos, CA: Lightning Up Press.
- Cardeña, E., Lynn, S. J., & Krippner, S. (Eds.). (2000). *Varieties of anomalous experience: Examining the scientific evidence*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Clarke, I. (Ed.) (2001). *Psychosis and spirituality: Exploring the new frontier*. London: Whurr Pub.
- Cornett, C. (1998). *The soul of psychotherapy: Recapturing the spiritual dimension in therapeutic encounter*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Cortwright, B. (1997). *Psychotherapy and spirit: Theory and practice in transpersonal psychotherapy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

- Faiver, C., Ingersoll, R. E., O'Brien, E. & McNally, C. (2001). *Explorations in counseling and spirituality: Philosophical, practical, and personal reflections*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole/Wadsworth/Thomson.
- Grof, S., & Grof, C. (Eds.) (1989). *Spiritual emergency: When personal transformation becomes a crisis*. New York: J. P. Tarcher/Putnam.
- Kelly, E. W. (1995). *Spirituality and religion in counseling and psychotherapy: Diversity in theory and practice*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Center.
- Koenig, H. G. (2005). *Faith and mental health: Religious resources for healing*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton.
- Koenig, H. G., McCullough, M. E., & Larson, D. B. (2001). *Handbook of religion and health*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Miller, M. E., & West, A. N. (Eds.). (2000). *Spirituality, ethics, and relationship in adulthood: Clinical and theoretical explorations*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Pargament, K. I. (1997). *The psychology of religion and coping: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Guilford.

- Paragament, K. I. (2007). *Spiritually integrated psychotherapy: Understanding and addressing the sacred*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Paloutzian, R. F. & Park, C. L. (2005) *Handbook of the psychology of religion and spirituality*. New York: Guilford.
- Richards, P. S., & Bergin, A. E. (1997). *A spiritual strategy for counseling and psychotherapy*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Richards, P. S. & Bergin, A. E. (Eds.). (2000). *Handbook of psychotherapy and religious diversity*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Roehlkepartian, E. C., King, P. E., Wagener, L., & Benson, P. L. (Eds.) (2005). *The handbook of spiritual development in childhood and adolescence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Scotton. B. W., Chinen, A. B., & Battista, J. R. (Eds.). (1996). *Textbook of transpersonal psychiatry and psychology*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

- Shafranske, E. P. (Ed.). (1996). *Religion and the clinical practice of psychology*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Sperry, L. (2001). *Spirituality in clinical practice: Incorporating the spiritual dimension in psychotherapy and counseling*. Philadelphia, PA: Brunner-Routledge.
- Wilber, K. (1995). *Sex, ecology, spirituality: The spirit of evolution*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Wilber, K. (2006). *Integral spirituality: A startling new role for religion in the modern and postmodern world*. Boston: Shambhala.

Implications for Theory and Research

- Thus far, the preliminary findings of this study, in general, support some of the premises of the spiritual development theories of several scholars. [For a review of three decades of faith development theory, see Fowler, 1996; Fowler & Dell, 2005; for other reviews, see Boyatzis (2005), Levenson, Aldwin, & Mello (2005), and McFadden (2005).]
- A more comprehensive analysis of the data is needed to establish the extent to which the results contribute to our understanding of the developmental process of adolescent and adult spirituality across cultures, societies, and religions. [See the edited texts by Paloutzian & Park (2005) and by Roehlkepartian, King, Wagener, & Benson (2005).]
- International data is needed; the use of the Internet provides access to such, however, the number of respondents remain small and are not representative of the general population.

A few key references for on-line social science survey research

- Best, S. J. & Krueger, B. S. (2004). *Internet data collection* (Series No. 07/141). M. S. Lewis-Beck (Series Ed.), *Series: Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Best, S. J., Kreuger, B., Hubbard, C., & Smith, A. (2001). An assessment of the generalizability of Internet surveys. *Social Science Computer Review*, 19(2), 131-145.
- Brenner, V. (2002). Generalizability issues in Internet-based survey research: Implications for the Internet addiction controversy. In B. Batinic, U. D. Reips, & M. Bosnjak (Eds.), *On-line social sciences* (pp. 93-113). Ashland, OH: Hogrefe & Huber.

- Chang, L. (2002). *A comparison of samples and response quality obtained from RDD telephone survey methodology and Internet survey methodology*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Ohio State University, Columbus.
- Daley, E. M., McDermott, R. J., Brown-McCormack, K. R., & Kitleson, M. J. (2003). Conducting web-based survey research: A lesson in Internet designs. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 27(2), 116-124.
- Fowler, F. J. (2002). *Survey research methods* (3rd ed.). C. D. Laughton (Acq. Ed.), *Applied Social Research Methods Series* (Vol. 1). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Harding, R. & Peel, E. (2007). Surveying sexuality: Internet research with nonheterosexuals. *Feminism and Psychology*, 17(2), 277-285.

- Jones, S. G. (1999). *Doing Internet research: Critical issues and methods for examining the Net*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nosek, B. A., Banaji, M. R., & Greenwald, A. G. (2002). E-research: Ethics, security, design, and control in psychological research on the Internet. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 58, 161-176.
- Rhodes, S. D., Bowie, D. A., & Hergenrather, K. C. (2003). Collecting behavioral data using the world wide web: Considerations for researchers. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 57, 68-73.
- Ross, M. W., Mansson, S. A., Daneback, K., Cooper, A., & Tikkanen, R. (2005). Biases in Internet sexual health samples: Comparisons of an Internet sexuality survey and a national sexual health survey in Sweden. *Social Science and Medicine*, 61, 245-252.

- Saphore, R. B. (1999). *A psychometric comparison of an electronic and classical survey instrument*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa.
- Schonlau, M., Fricker, R. D., & Elliott, M. N. (2002). *Conducting research surveys via e-mail and the web*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand.
- Strickland, O., Moloney, M. F., Dietrich, A. S., Myerburg, S., Cotsonis, G. A., & Johnson, R. V. (2003). Measurement issues related to data collection on the world wide web. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 26(4), 246-256.
- Truel, A. D., Bartlett, J. E. II, & Alexander, M. W. (2002). Response rate, speed and completeness: A comparison of internet-based and mail surveys. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, and Computers*, 34, 46-49.

A few key references for on-line social science survey research

- Best, S. J. & Krueger, B. S. (2004). *Internet data collection* (Series No. 07/141). M. S. Lewis-Beck (Series Ed.), *Series: Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Best, S. J., Kreuger, B., Hubbard, C., & Smith, A. (2001). An assessment of the generalizability of Internet surveys. *Social Science Computer Review*, 19(2), 131-145.
- Brenner, V. (2002). Generalizability issues in Internet-based survey research: Implications for the Internet addiction controversy. In B. Batinic, U. D. Reips, & M. Bosnjak (Eds.), *On-line social sciences* (pp. 93-113). Ashland, OH: Hogrefe & Huber.

- Chang, L. (2002). *A comparison of samples and response quality obtained from RDD telephone survey methodology and Internet survey methodology*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Ohio State University, Columbus.
- Daley, E. M., McDermott, R. J., Brown-McCormack, K. R., & Kitleson, M. J. (2003). Conducting web-based survey research: A lesson in Internet designs. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 27(2), 116-124.
- Fowler, F. J. (2002). *Survey research methods* (3rd ed.). C. D. Laughton (Acq. Ed.), *Applied Social Research Methods Series* (Vol. 1). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Harding, R. & Peel, E. (2007). Surveying sexuality: Internet research with nonheterosexuals. *Feminism and Psychology*, 17(2), 277-285.
- Jones, S. G. (1999). *Doing Internet research: Critical issues and methods for examining the Net*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Nosek, B. A., Banaji, M. R., & Greenwald, A. G. (2002). E-research: Ethics, security, design, and control in psychological research on the Internet. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 58, 161-176.
- Rhodes, S. D., Bowie, D. A., & Hergenrather, K. C. (2003). Collecting behavioral data using the world wide web: Considerations for researchers. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 57, 68-73.
- Ross, M. W., Mansson, S. A., Daneback, K., Cooper, A., & Tikkanen, R. (2005). Biases in Internet sexual health samples: Comparisons of an Internet sexuality survey and a national sexual health survey in Sweden. *Social Science and Medicine*, 61, 245-252.
- Saphore, R. B. (1999). *A psychometric comparison of an electronic and classical survey instrument*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa.

- Schonlau, M., Fricker, R. D., & Elliott, M. N. (2002). *Conducting research surveys via e-mail and the web*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand.
- Strickland, O., Moloney, M. F., Dietrich, A. S., Myerburg, S., Cotsonis, G. A., & Johnson, R. V. (2003). Measurement issues related to data collection on the world wide web. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 26(4), 246-256.
- Truel, A. D., Bartlett, J. E. II, & Alexander, M. W. (2002). Response rate, speed and completeness: A comparison of internet-based and mail surveys. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, and Computers*, 34, 46-49.