States of Spiritual Awareness by Time, Activity, and Social Interaction

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We explore how people experience the sacred in their everyday lives using a recently developed research technique—smartphone-based experience sampling method (S-ESM). The primary goal of our experience-driven approach is to explore the contours and variations of spiritual awareness within people's day-to-day lives. We seek to better understand when and where spiritual awareness is likely to arise, and the contexts in which it is rare. Our smartphone-based data allow us to track the many contexts in which an awareness of the sacred occurs, as reported in real time during people's normal daily activities. We parse out how immediate contextual factors and how people's more habitual behaviors are related to their spiritual experiences. This illuminates a wide range of factors that influence spiritual experiences that have not received much scholarly attention, and enables us to connect cutting-edge quantitative methods with qualitative scholarship on spirituality. We hope this will open the door to the development of new theories of situated spiritual experience.

Keywords: spirituality, lived religion, experience sampling.

INTRODUCTION

How do people experience the divine in their everyday lives? Decades of quantitative survey research measures various aspects of spiritual experiences, including feelings of transcendence, sacred awareness, meaningfulness, peace, gratitude, interconnectedness, and other spiritual beliefs and feelings (Kapuscinski and Masters 2010; Paloutzian and Ellison 1982; Underwood 2006, 2011). Much of the quantitative research on spirituality uses a psychological approach, which relies upon spirituality scales to identify between-person differences in spirituality (e.g., Jagers and Smith 1996), and how spirituality is related to health and well-being (Hall and Edwards 2002; Idler et al. 2003; Nelms et al. 2007; Underwood 2011; Underwood and Teresi 2002). Based on this body of research on spirituality, it is unclear whether we are studying spiritual traits, which are constant over time, or spiritual states, which vary a great deal over time and across social situations (Underwood 2006). In interpreting common measures of spiritual experience used in quantitative research, most researchers assume that they are accessing spiritual traits.

There are theoretical limitations to relying primarily on measures of spiritual and religious traits. By focusing exclusively on spiritual and religious traits instead of states, we miss the

dynamic and context-dependent nature of sacred experience. We also make undue generalizations and assumptions about religious and spiritual believers. In the sociology of religion, research on religious traits often contains the implicit assumption that people are belief-driven, religious actors who have stable religious selves (Ammerman 2014a; Lichterman 2013). The "Default Model" in the sociology of religion, as Lichterman (2013) calls it, identifies religious and nonreligious actors and assumes that when a person is "religious" (e.g., holds religious beliefs, has a religious identity or religious behavior), he or she will generally always be religious, regardless of changing social contexts. Survey-based research on religiosity also typically compares different groups, rather than variations in spiritual experience in individuals' lives. This leads to a "subtle form of 'groupism,' or a tendency to attribute to members of a religiously identified organization the same shared religious sensibilities and identities" (Lichterman 2013:119).

The critiques noted above all raise awareness of how regression models assume variables have a constant causal influence (Ragin 1987). Yet, when one looks closer, it appears that religiosity changes in different contexts, and that facets of religiosity have varied effects based on the contexts they are embedded in. Chaves (2010:1) argues that we need to become more sensitive to a pervasive "congruence fallacy" in the sociology of religion, which assumes that there is "consistency among an individual's religious beliefs and attitudes, consistency between religious ideas and behavior, and religious ideas, identities, or schemas that are chronically salient and accessible to individuals across contexts and situations." This assumed fallacy persists even though there is a considerable body of research and theory on religion, culture, and social psychology suggesting that beliefs, attitudes, and behavior often are weakly related and context dependent. Instead of assuming congruence, we should assume incongruence and try to identify incidents of congruence in which the causal effects of religion and spirituality hold up. We can do this by investigating in more depth "mental states rather than beliefs" (Chaves 2010: 26), and the situations individuals are located in.

Chaves also suggests that scholarship in the sociology of religion needs to examine religiosity in the short and medium term. In studying spiritual experience, we should build upon the quantitative research on traits noted above and long-term longitudinal research documenting within-person changes in spirituality (e.g., Wink et al. 2007; Wink and Dillon 2002) by implementing more studies on how religion manifests over periods of days, weeks, and months. By doing so, we can better understand where and when religious and spiritual identities are salient and people experience an awareness of the sacred. We will additionally better discern where religious and spiritual orientations and experiences are marginalized or absent.

In this article, we build upon prior research by examining, over a two-week period, both "in-the-moment" spiritual states and traits in which individuals are aware of the divine. By doing so, we can explore the patterns and conditions of both spiritual states and traits. We identify variation in people's spiritual awareness of the divine as they go about their normal activities, showing what people are doing, who they are around, and when a sense of the sacred is likely to emerge.

BACKGROUND

The Many Contexts of Spiritual Experience

Qualitative scholars address critiques of relying too heavily on religion as an "all-or-nothing category" or a "totalitizing identity" (Ammerman 2014a) by examining how lived religion manifests in people's everyday lives across a variety of situations (Ammerman 2007, 2014a, 2014b; Bender 2003, 2010; Cadge 2012; Ecklund 2010; Schmalzbauer 2003; Williams 2010). This body of research identifies how people bring religion and spirituality into their everyday lives in their homes, and their secular workplaces in science, journalism, the arts, business, and healthcare. Religious and spiritual people incorporate elements of the sacred into their daily

lives in complex, nuanced ways, intermingling and juxtaposing sacred and secular culture and experiences depending on where they are and who they are with.

Our quantitative, experience-based approach builds upon qualitative research on the many places spirituality and religion occur by providing a new way of investigating patterns of sacred experience across social contexts and time. With our method, we can use inferential statistics possible with larger sample sizes to quantitatively decompose between-person and within-person effects on spiritual awareness. This allows us to examine how different contextual factors—such as time, activity, and who one is with—are related to experiences of the divine in the moment and over a two-week period.

Timing of Sacred Experience

We begin by investigating how time is related to spiritual experience over the course of a week; this is a facet of spirituality we know little about. Using data collected throughout the day, for example, we can explore if people are more likely to have an awareness of God on holy days, such as Sundays or the Sabbath, as would be expected by some existing studies (Ammerman 2014b; Malhotra 2010). We can also explore whether the sacred arises for people during probable periods of reflective activity, such as when they are beginning their day in the early morning or ending their day in the late evening. Multiple religious and spiritual traditions (e.g., Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism) encourage periods of reflection, meditation, or prayer for the devout in the morning when one wakes up, or in the evening before one goes to sleep. Accordingly, Ammerman's (2014b) research suggests that the devout from many traditions, such as various Christian denominations and Mormons, tend to adopt daily prayer rituals in the morning and/or evening. Practically, it also seems likely there is space for the sacred to arise during these times, rather than during work and other time-consuming daily activities.

Consequently, we generally expect that:

H1: Spiritual awareness varies by time.

More specifically, we hypothesize that:

- **H1a:** People will have higher spiritual awareness on traditional days of worship, which for most Americans is Sunday, than on other days.
- **H1b:** During the early morning, before people go to work or their other daily activities, people will have higher spiritual awareness than at other times of day.
- **H1c:** During the evening, after most of the activities of the day have been completed, people will have higher spiritual awareness than at other times of day.

Activity and Sacred Experience

We next examine the activities during which spiritual awareness is most likely to arise. Extant scholarship suggests that this awareness is more likely to occur when people are undertaking religious or spiritual activities together, such as praying or meditating (Ammerman 2014b; Ellingson 2007; Pagis 2010). Generally, people are less likely to experience the divine when working than while doing other activities. This is particularly true for people working in business or in menial labor jobs, as well as in other secular professional fields where religion is stigmatized and marginalized (Ammerman 2014b; Smith 2003). Yet, other scholarship brings attention to how the religious and spiritual can carry their sacred practices, beliefs, and experiences into the workplace in nuanced, and sometimes covert, ways (Ecklund 2010; Kucinskas 2014; Schmalzbauer 1999). We build upon existing knowledge of work and spirituality by examining sacred awareness

"in the moment" while working, as well as the relationship between working long hours and sacred experience.

Experiences of the divine can arise at home as well (Ammerman 2014b; Williams 2010). As mentioned above, many people pray early in the morning and in the evening at home. The devout in certain traditions are also likely to pray at mealtime in various ways. In many traditions, adherents conduct a prayer before eating, expressing gratitude for food and for family (Ammerman 2014b). Other contemplative traditions practice eating meals in silence or "mindful eating."

Ammerman (2014b) additionally found that the sacred was less likely to be experienced during secular, leisure activities such as playing sports, watching television or other media, or taking local outings to a museum or restaurant. Spiritual awareness may also be inversely related to shopping and conspicuous consumption, as suggested by Stillman et al. (2012). Many spiritual leaders argue that materialistic pursuits are inconsistent with spirituality. Experimental studies find that spiritual people are less likely to desire expensive material goods. Subjects asked to recall a spiritual event rather than a generally enjoyable event were also less likely to desire to buy high-status products (Stillman et al. 2012).

Based on this research, we expect that:

H2: Spiritual awareness will vary by activity.

More specifically, we anticipate that:

- **H2a:** People will have higher than average spiritual awareness when praying, worshiping, or meditating.
- **H2b:** People will have lower spiritual awareness when working.
- **H2c:** People will have higher spiritual awareness while eating.
- **H2d:** People will have lower spiritual awareness when engaged in leisure activities.
- **H2e:** People will have lower spiritual awareness when engaged in materialistic pursuits, such as shopping.

Experiencing the Sacred with Others

Lastly, we investigate who participants are with when they feel aware of God or the divine. Based on scholarship in sociology dating back to Durkheim ([1912] 1995), as well as contemporary research (Ammerman 2014b; Bender 2010; Pagis 2010), we expect that experiences of the divine will often occur while with others. Although people can have many unexpected, inexplicable, or fortuitous experiences, it is likely that they are more prone to identify such experiences as "spiritual," "transcendent," or "religious" when in conversation with others who ascribe to such beliefs. Being with other believers in the moment or for extended periods of time may implicitly or explicitly prime people to label their experiences as supernatural or sacred, rather than just unusual, mysterious, or lucky.

However, it remains unclear who people are most likely to discuss sacred experiences with. Bearman and Parigi (2004) suggest that people are most likely to talk about religious and ideological matters with friends. Talking about religious and spiritual matters constituted a very small proportion of the topics people discussed with their spouses. Yet, nearly two-thirds of the courtships Ammerman (2014b) examined were partly shaped by spiritual or religious concerns. Among the most religious third of her respondents, 80 percent shared a place of worship with others in their household. Ammerman also found the religious and spiritual tried to impart sacred practices and experiences to their kids.

Consequently, we hypothesize:

H3: People will have higher spiritual awareness with others than when alone.

- **H3a:** People who are with their friends will have higher spiritual awareness than others.
- **H3b:** People who are with members of their family such as with spouses and children will have higher spiritual awareness than others.

However, as noted previously, because many people in secular spaces, such as certain business professions or academic disciplines, feel that discussing the sacred is stigmatized (Ammerman 2014b; Reuben 1996; Schmalzbauer 2003; Smith 2003), we additionally expect:

- **H3c:** People in situations with work colleagues will experience lower spiritual awareness than others.

DATA AND METHODS

This article analyzes data collected by the SoulPulse study, which is an ongoing smartphone-based, experience sampling method (S-ESM) study. The original ESM was pioneered by Csikszentmihalyi and colleagues in their study of the psychological state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi and Larson 1987; Larson and Csikszentmihalyi 1983). Initial applications of ESM used the technology of that time—beepers and paper diaries. More recent studies, such as Killingsworth and Gilbert (2010), have developed S-ESM with smartphones, texting surveys to participants at random times throughout the day.

Our study uses S-ESM to examine daily spiritual and religious experiences. This distinguishes it from traditional cross-sectional or widely spaced longitudinal surveys. The S-ESM approach gives real-time measurement of the participants' thoughts, feelings, and attitudes at that moment—as opposed to having them recall the past or summarize their general tendencies. Thus, a smartphone-based ESM study of religion and spirituality avoids the problems of recall bias that can happen when people report on their religious behavior retrospectively, as is often the case in traditional surveys or in-depth interviews. Collecting data "in the moment" also lessens the extent to which these experiences are made sense of through discursive thought processes, which organize them into narrative form and occur during in-depth interviews (Vaisey 2009). Additionally, by measuring participants' spiritual states at random times, S-ESM allows for the examination of variability of spiritual experiences over the course of days as well as average levels of them. Finally, this methodological approach allows for the linkage of spiritual experiences to the daily situations in which participants live their lives.

The data reported here were collected between November 2013, when the study was launched, and May 2015. Participants are members of the general population who, having heard about SoulPulse through various means, signed up at SoulPulse.org to take it on their smartphones. SoulPulse has been publicized through various traditional and social media outlets nationwide: *The New Yorker* magazine, the *Associated Press*, and various blogs featured stories on the study; additionally, SoulPulse has its own Facebook page and Twitter account.

Participation in SoulPulse is limited to people at least 18 years old. After providing their smartphone number, participants complete an intake survey that asks about various aspects of their lives, including social-psychological characteristics, health levels, religious experiences, and demographic characteristics. Upon completing the intake survey, the participants are sent a text that links to their first daily survey, which contains between 15 and 25 questions. Participants are instructed to answer the daily survey questions as soon as they receive them; however, if that is not possible (e.g., they are driving), then they are asked to take the survey as soon as it is possible. All questions in the survey referred to the moment that participants first received the survey text. At the end of the study, participants receive a report graphically summarizing their spiritual and personal experiences over the course of the study. This is their reward for participating.

Participants receive two surveys a day for 14 days. The surveys arrive at random times during participants' self-reported waking hours. During the time frame analyzed here, a total of

2,439 people living in the United States signed up to take SoulPulse, completed the intake, and started taking the daily surveys. A total of 68,292 daily surveys were scheduled to be sent out for the 2,439 participants (i.e., 2,439 * 28). Of these, 63,616 (93 percent) were sent because some participants withdrew in the middle of the study. Of the 63,616 daily surveys sent, 47,819 (75 percent) were completed. We ended up with a sample of 2,372 participants, because 67 (2,439 – 2,372) people who signed up did not fill out a single daily survey. The number of participants varies across our analyses. Consequently, sample sizes are reported in figures and tables.

SoulPulse participants self-select into the study, and thus are not a representative sample. An estimated 62 percent of American adults own smartphones (Pew Internet and American Life Project 2013). Smartphone usage varies across personal and social characteristics. Smartphones are used more in urban and suburban areas, as well as among the young, educated, and well-to-do (Pew Internet and American Life Project 2014). Women, introverted people, and the mentally ill are less likely to use smartphones (Lane and Manner 2011; Miller 2012).

Nonetheless, our sample is socially and geographically diverse. The participants analyzed in this study were in the United States at the time of the study, and they represent all 50 states. While the SoulPulse participants roughly follow the contours of the American population, there are some significant differences. Comparatively, the SoulPulse participants are disproportionately female (60 percent). The participants also include a lower proportion of blacks (3 percent) and Hispanics (7 percent) than the American population. Participants are well-educated (39 percent have a graduate education) and predominantly Protestant (68 percent). They define themselves most often as politically independent (48 percent). Their geographic distribution throughout the country comes close to the general population, with slight underrepresentation in the South. SoulPulse participants are slightly older than adults in the general population (median = 45 years old) and wealthier (median annual household income = $87,500).

This article examines four variables measured in the daily surveys. The first variable, "God Awareness," assesses participants' awareness of God, or whatever is holy to them, at the time of the survey. The question asks participants to rate on a sliding scale how much they agree with the statement: "I am aware of God at this moment." The scale is anchored with "not at all" on the left and "very much" on the right. Participants swipe a bar to indicate their level of "God Awareness." We use this item as our dependent variable to measure spiritual awareness. Before asking this question, the survey included the following statement: "In this survey, we use traditional religious language in referring to 'God.' However, if this does not fit with your belief system, please substitute another word that calls to mind the divine or holy for you." This preface is a rewording of an introductory statement used with the Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (Underwood 2011), which has been used in the General Social Survey.

The other three variables measure aspects of the participants' situation at the time they received each daily survey. The first situational measure, "Current Activities," asks what the participant is doing at the time of the survey. It lists two dozen possible activities such as working, taking care of children, watching TV, playing video games, praying/worshipping/meditating, and exercise. Participants are instructed to check off all applicable activities. The second situational measure, "How Many With," asks if participants are alone or with others. The response categories include being alone, with one person, with two people, or with three or more. The third situational measure, "Who With," asks participants who they are with at that moment, if anyone. Eleven response categories are given, including with a spouse or partner, friends, co-workers, or strangers.

Every daily survey sent to participants included randomly selected questions from a larger pool of 120 daily questions. A few questions were selected every time. Some were asked frequently, and some infrequently. This weighted sampling of survey questions increased the number of questions that were asked of participants while keeping any single daily survey at a manageable length. It also made for a more engaging experience for participants, compared to answering the same questions every time. Among the variables examined in this article, "God Awareness" was measured on every daily survey, "Current Activities" was included on 75 percent of the surveys,

"Who With" was on 25 percent of the surveys, and "How Many With" was on 50 percent. Because of this sampling of survey questions, the analyses in this article each used a different, randomly selected subsample of the data. When we analyze "God Awareness" by itself, we use the full sample. However, when we link it to situational characteristics, we are limited to those daily surveys that included both "God Awareness" and the specific situational variable. As a result, both the sampled units and sample size vary across analyses.

A Multilevel Analytical Approach

We investigate the effect of situational characteristics on spiritual awareness using mixed-effects multilevel regression models. This approach decomposes the situational effects into within-person effects (L1) and between-person effects (L2). For each person, we calculated an overall mean for a variable using a participant's observations across all daily surveys. Then, for each specific observation, we create a deviation score that represents the difference between that observation and the person's mean. We include both the person-means and the observation-deviations in the equations to calculate the between- and within-person effects (McCrae et al. 2008). We estimate random intercept equations without controls that include both within-person and between-person effects.[1] The equations take the following form:

$$y_{ij} = b_0 + \underbrace{b_1(x_{ij} - \bar{x}_j)}_{within\_effects} + \underbrace{b_2(\bar{x}_j)}_{between\_effects} + \underbrace{u_j + e_{ij}}_{random\_effects} \ .$$

Multilevel modeling allows us to parse out the influence of people's *average habits (compared to others) versus their immediate contextual influences* on spiritual experience. Within-person effects on spiritual awareness access the importance of immediate "in-the-moment" variables, whereas between-person effects indicate the importance of the ongoing, more stable characteristics of the person.

RESULTS

Across all daily surveys, "God Awareness" was measured 47,964 times. The average score was 63.6 (out of 100 points), and the median was 68 points.[2] Because the study does not use representative sampling, this number is not a suitable point estimate for the American population. It does, however, provide a useful reference point for examining variation in "God Awareness" across types of people and situations.

Figure 1 plots the observed distribution of the variable "God Awareness." Panel A plots participants' person-means. To calculate this, we averaged all observations of "God Awareness" for a participant, and that person-mean is one point of data on Panel A. There are 2,372 participants, so Panel A summarizes 2,372 points of data. As shown, the distribution is skewed; a majority of participants averaged "God Awareness" scores that were on the right side of the scale, with many more participants averaging scores between 60 and 80 than between 20 and 40. Both ends of the scales had peaks, representing participants who always reported "not at all" or "very much" when it comes to being aware of God.

Panel B of Figure 1 plots within-person deviations from person-means. To calculate this, we took each observation and subtracted from it the participant's average score across all observations

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[1]Additional models, which control for religious denomination, political affiliation, region, race and ethnicity, gender, education, age, income, and whether respondents had children in their home, are robust with our reported findings. These models are available upon request.

[2]We include descriptive statistics of variables in the Appendix.

Figure 1

Within-person and between-person averages of awareness of God [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

A: Person Means of Awareness of God

Person Means, n = 2,372 respondents

B: Within-Person Deviations on Awareness of God

Within-Person Deviations, n = 47,964 observations
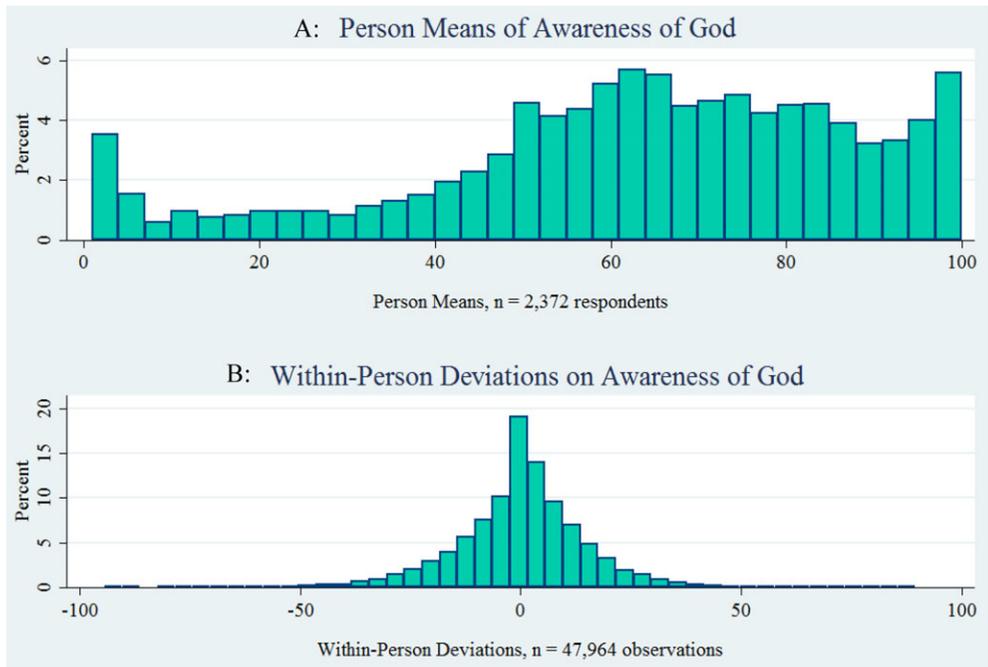
(i.e., the score plotted in Panel A). As shown, within-person deviations follow a symmetrical, near-normal distribution. The modal within-person deviation value, as we might expect, is zero. This indicates that many observations are near a person's average score. Still, there is meaningful variation, with observations frequently being up to 30 points away from the person's mean (and outliers even further out). This distribution of within-person deviations is significant because it demonstrates variation to be explained; without such variation, awareness of God could be analyzed as a trait only.

Figure 2 plots within-person variation in "God Awareness" by day of the week. The variation displayed was modest, but statistically significant at a .05 level. As predicted by H1a, scores were higher on Sundays than the other days of the week, with Monday and Friday having the lowest scores.

Figure 3 plots "God Awareness" scores by hour of the day, from 6 am to midnight. An interesting pattern emerged: participants had higher "God Awareness" scores in the early morning, with this pattern extending throughout the morning. The highest scores were from 7 am to noon. Thus, H1b (predicting that people will have higher spiritual awareness early in the morning) is partially supported. In the afternoon, however, scores dropped. Participants' scores dropped to below average levels from 2 pm to 10 pm, with the nadir at 5 pm—the traditional end of the workday. Although there is an uptick at 11 pm in spiritual awareness, there are low scores for most of the evening. Thus, H1c is largely unsupported.

Figure 4 plots "God Awareness" by activity. Consistent with H2, there is substantial variation across types of activities. The x-axis in Figure 5 presents the average person-mean scores of people while doing each activity, with higher scores of "God Awareness" on the right. The y-axis presents within-person deviation scores associated with each activity, with higher scores toward the top of the graph. To illustrate how to interpret the graph, consider the case of walking, which is in the top-left quadrant at 59, 3.5. Because walking is to the left of the graph, this means that the type of

Figure 2
Within-person deviation of awareness of God by day of the week [Color figure can be viewed at
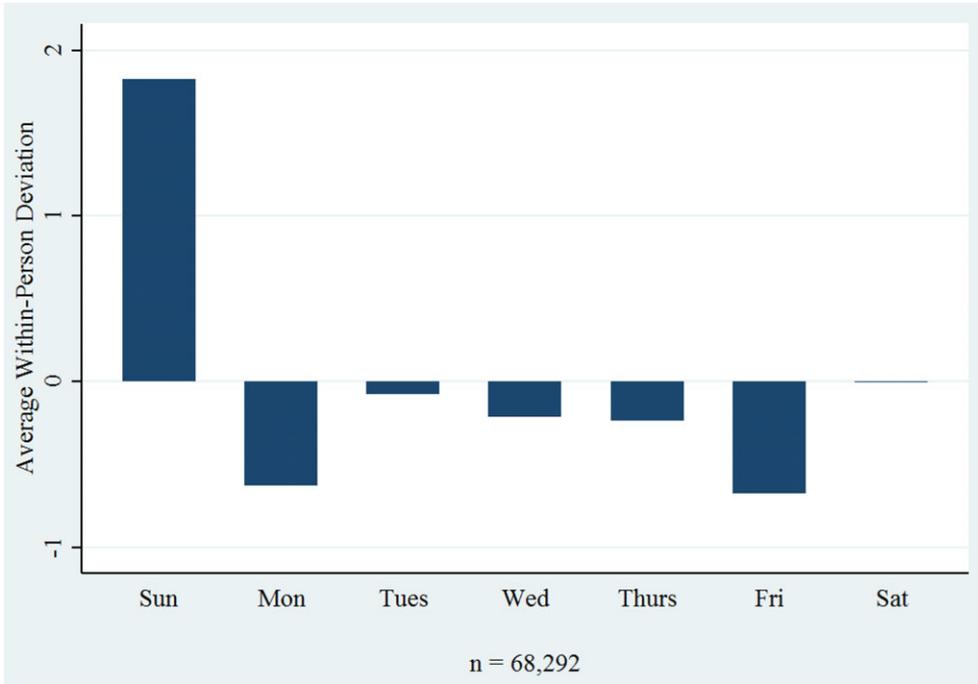wileyonlinelibrary.com]

n = 68,292

Figure 3
Within-person deviation of awareness of God, by hour of the day [Color figure can be viewed at
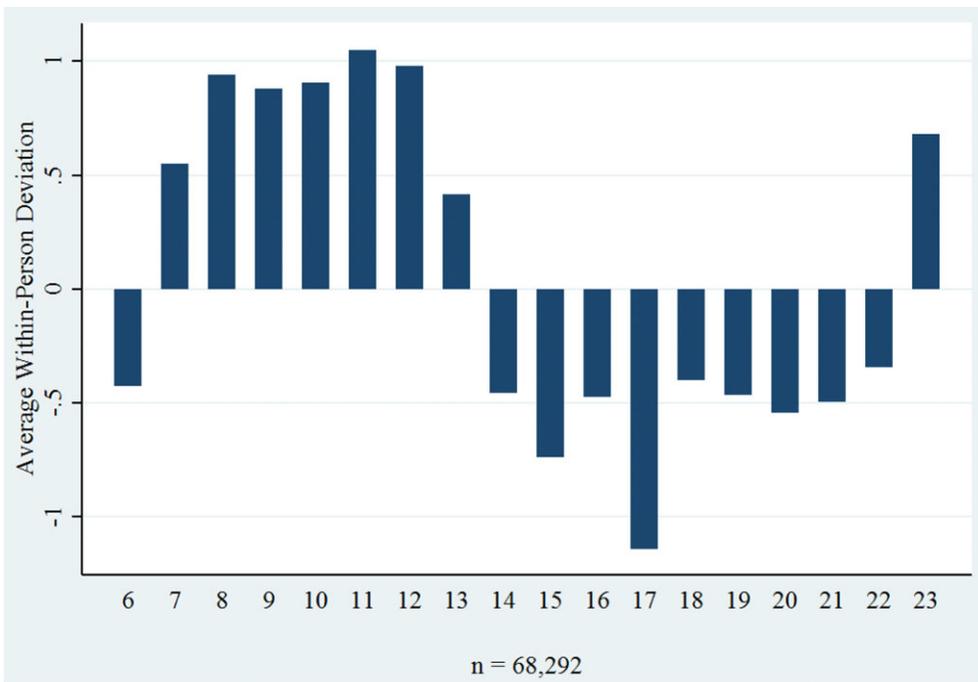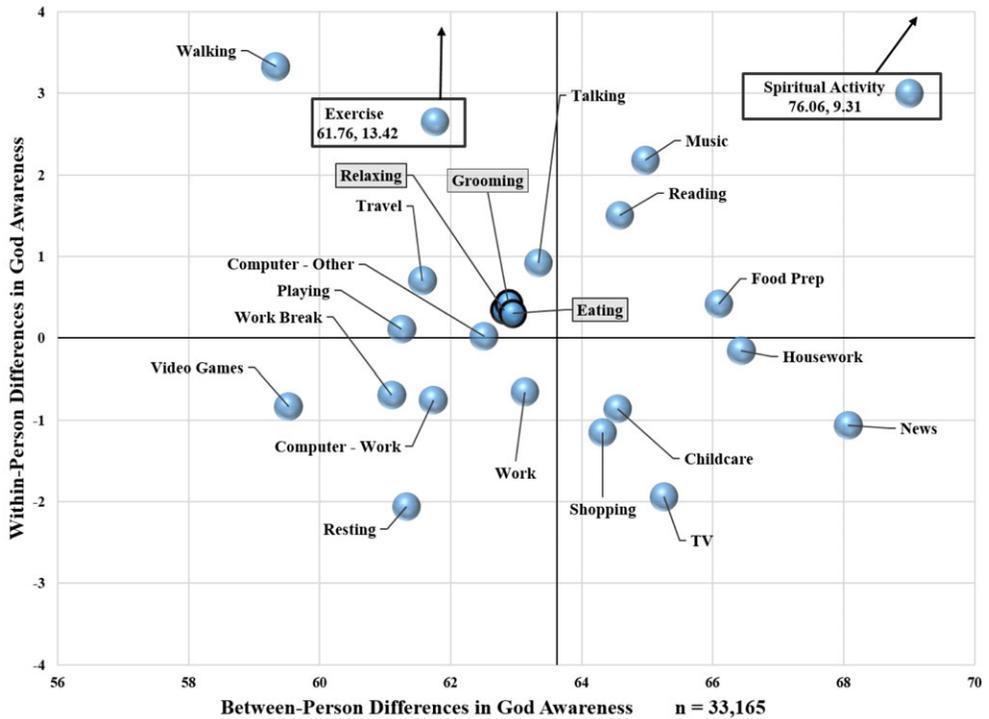wileyonlinelibrary.com]

n = 68,292

Figure 4
Within-person and between-person averages of God Awareness, by activity
[Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

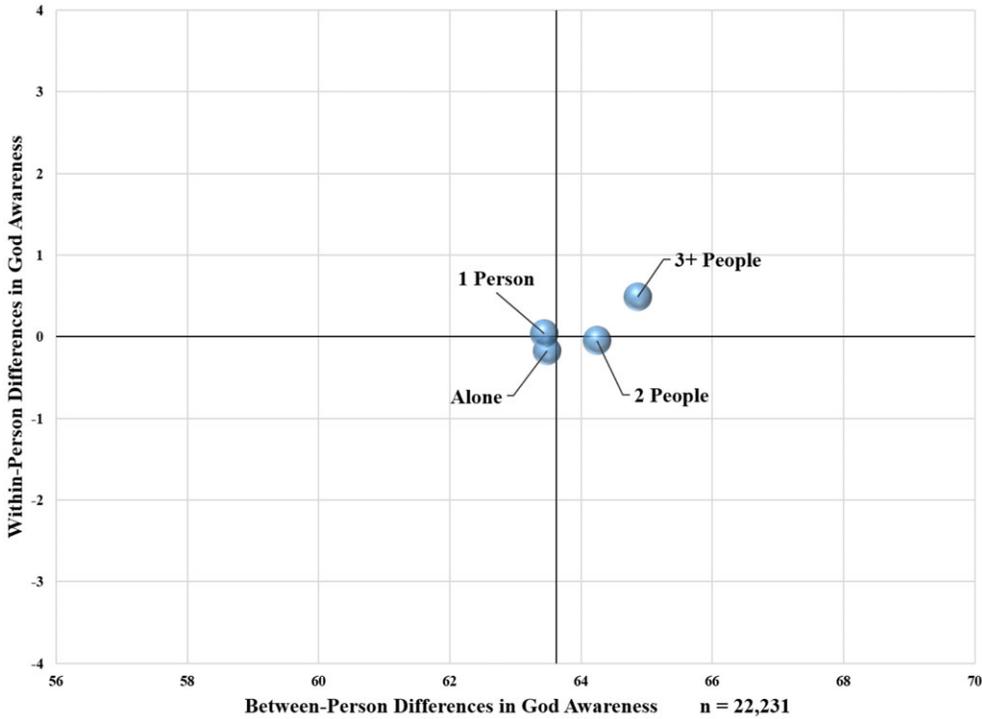*Note*: Axis line represents sample average for awareness of God (63.6).
*Spiritual activity includes praying, worshiping, and meditating.

people who ever reported walking when they received a daily survey were overall less aware of God than the participants who did not report walking. Thus, the habit of walking was negatively associated with "God Awareness." However, walking is also in the top half of the graph. This means that when people were walking, they had relatively high scores of "God Awareness." The *state* of walking positively associated with "God Awareness." Thus, the state and habitual effects of walking had different valences. In contrast, watching television is in the lower-right quadrant. This means that the people who watch television have higher overall "God Awareness," but the act of watching television itself is associated with less awareness.

This figure plots all 24 activities measured in SoulPulse. In strong support of H2a, spiritual activities such as praying, worshiping, and meditation are associated with the highest "God Awareness" scores. Being in the top-right quadrant, both the state and habit of doing spiritual practices are associated with significantly higher scores of "God Awareness." In partial support of H2b, work was associated with slightly lower than average scores—whether participants reported being at work, working on a computer, or being on a work break. Contrary to H2c, participants reported about average levels of "God Awareness" scores when eating, as opposed to the expected high levels. H2d, predicting high spiritual awareness during leisure activities, was not consistently supported. Doing leisure activities in the moment, such as reading, walking, and exercise, was associated with relatively high "God Awareness" scores. Other activities, such as relaxing and playing, received average scores. Still other activities, such as resting and playing video games, received low scores. These different findings could reflect the difficulty of identifying leisure behavior using our measures. For example, walking, such as when taking an after-dinner stroll

Figure 5
Within-person and between-person averages of God Awareness, alone or with others
[Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Note: Axis line represents sample average for awareness of God (63.6).

around the neighborhood, can be a leisure activity. Or it can be a work activity, such as when walking to get to a meeting. Lastly, H2e, which expected that there would be a negative relationship between shopping and spiritual awareness, was not supported overall. While the types of people who shop have slightly higher awareness of God, the act of shopping is slightly below the mean.

Table 1 presents a series of equations that test the between- and within-person effects displayed in Figure 1. Column 1 presents a multivariate, random-intercept, multilevel equation. The measure for each activity is simply a dummy variable as to whether the participant was doing that activity at the time of the survey. The model roughly averages the within- and between-person effects of each variable, collapsing them into one coefficient. Likewise, column 2 estimates only one effect for each variable, but it gives the zero-order effect of each activity, not controlling for other activities. Columns 3 and 4 present two coefficients estimated in the same equation that disentangle the within- and between-person effects of each activity. Column 3 presents the effect of the activity variable when it is measured as a deviation from the participant's overall mean for that activity, i.e., within-person effect. Column 4 presents the activity variable measured as the participant's mean across all surveys, i.e., between-person effect.

Thus, Table 1 presents three different ways of analyzing each activity. It reveals that the activities had varying types of effects on spiritual awareness. Work, for example, has a significant negative overall effect, even when controlling for other activities (shown in column 1), a significant negative overall effect when not controlling for other activities (column 2), a significant negative within-person effect (column 3), and a significant negative between-person effect (column 4). To interpret the equation in columns 3 and 4, the act of working itself is associated with lower "God Awareness" scores, and those participants who reported working most often also had lower than

Table 1: Multilevel models regressing awareness of God on daily activities

	(1) Multivariate model (One equation)	(2) Zero-order models (24 equations)	Zero-order models-Disentangled (24 equations)	
			(3) Within-effect	(4) Between-effect
What are you doing right now?				
>Work				
Work	−1.03***	−1.11***	−1.08***	−4.85*
	(−4.1)	(5.2)	(−5.1)	(−2.0)
Work break	−.87*	−.91*	−.82	−13.47**
	(−2.0)	(−2.0)	(−1.8)	(−2.5)
Work computer	−.64	−1.15***	−1.08***	−9.99**
	(−1.9)	(−3.6)	(−3.4)	(−2.8)
>Domestic Activity				
Housework	−.15	−.13	−.22	14.91***
	(−.5)	(−.4)	(−.7)	(3.5)
Shopping	−1.57***	−1.30**	−1.32**	4.21
	(−3.4)	(−2.8)	(−2.8)	(.5)
Food preparation	.66	.58	.54	9.22
	(1.7)	(1.5)	(1.4)	(1.5)
Childcare	−1.50***	−1.25***	−1.30***	2.92
	(−3.9)	(−3.3)	(−3.4)	(.9)
Grooming	−.19	.31	.34	−8.95
	(−.4)	(.7)	(.7)	(−1.1)
Eating	.04	.19	.21	−6.36
	(.1)	(.6)	(.7)	(−1.2)
>Leisure Activity				
Travel	.31	.75*	.82*	−18.42***
	(.9)	(2.2)	(2.4)	(−3.3)
Playing	.50	.18	.25	−17.68*
	(.8)	(.4)	(.5)	(−2.3)
Television	−2.42***	−2.66***	−2.72***	7.67*
	(−9.1)	(−1.3)	(−1.5)	(2.3)
Video games	−1.13	−.95	−.84	−2.88*
	(−1.1)	(−1.2)	(−1.0)	(−1.9)
Music	2.05***	2.74***	2.71***	6.78
	(5.3)	(7.1)	(7.0)	(1.4)
News	−.99	−1.24*	−1.40*	23.29**
	(−1.6)	(−2.0)	(−2.3)	(3.1)
Relaxing	.42	.27	.30	−4.20
	(1.6)	(1.1)	(1.2)	(−1.3)
Exercising	2.05***	3.15***	3.20***	−1.09
	(3.2)	(4.9)	(4.9)	(−1.0)
Walking	2.54***	3.23***	3.36***	−3.94***
	(3.5)	(4.5)	(4.6)	(−2.6)

(Continued)

Table 1: (Continued)

	(1) Multivariate model (One equation)	(2) Zero-order models (24 equations)	Zero-order models-Disentangled (24 equations)	
			(3) Within-effect	(4) Between-effect
Resting	−2.51***	−2.36***	−2.32***	−13.62**
	(−6.9)	(−6.6)	(−6.4)	(−2.4)
Praying	1.96***	11.67***	11.33***	7.88***
	(26.2)	(28.0)	(27.1)	(13.2)
Talking	1.40***	1.33***	1.36***	−5.53*
	(5.7)	(5.4)	(5.6)	(−1.7)
Reading	.91**	1.80***	1.79***	3.08
	(2.6)	(5.2)	(5.1)	(.7)
Other computer	.07	−.10	.05	−6.84*
	(.3)	(−.0)	(−.2)	(−2.2)
N	33,165	32,784	32,784	32,784

Note: Significance levels are as follows: *$p = .05$, **$p = .01$, ***$p = .001$.

average "God Awareness" scores. Conversely, spiritual activities, such as prayer, worshipping, and meditating, had a significant, positive effect across all three equations.

Several activities displayed significant within-person effects but no between-person effects. Listening to music, exercising, and reading were each related to more "God Awareness," though how often participants did these activities did not associate with awareness. Taking care of children and shopping were negatively associated with awareness, with no between-person effect.

Several other activities displayed significant between-person effects but no significant within-person effects. Spending more overall time doing housework was associated with higher awareness scores. On the other hand, spending more time on work breaks, playing, playing video games, and on computers (for nonwork-related activities) were associated with lower "God Awareness" scores.

Unexpectedly, several of the activities displayed within- and between-person effects operating in different directions. The act of traveling was associated with higher "God Awareness" scores, while those who traveled most often had lower scores. Walking and talking displayed similar effects. Listening to the news and watching television showed the opposite patterns. Watching television was associated with lower "God Awareness" scores but those who did it most often had higher overall scores.

Figure 5 plots God Awareness levels by whether the participant was alone or with others. In modest support of H3, there is a slight and steady increase of God Awareness scores when participants are with others. The average scores when participants were with three or more people was two points greater than when they were alone.

Table 2 presents multilevel regression equations regressing "God Awareness" on being with others. In the multivariate equations (columns 1 and 2), the effect of being with three or more people was significantly more than being alone. Also, the zero-order effect of being alone was significantly less than not being alone (i.e., being with others). The within-person effect for being alone was negative and significant, indicating that being alone had an impact above and beyond how often people were alone.

Figure 6 plots "God Awareness" levels by who one is with. At this descriptive level, participants experienced the highest level of "God Awareness" when they were with their children, and the lowest when they were with a stranger.

Table 2: Multilevel models regressing awareness of God on being with others

How many people are you with?	(1) Multivariate model (One equation)	(2) Zero-order models (Four equations)	(3) Zero-order models-Disentangled (Four equations)	
			Within-effect	Between-effect
Alone	(ref cat)	−.47[*]	−.45[*]	−1.98
		(−2.1)	(−2.0)	(−1.0)
One other person	.41	.21	.23	−1.63
	(1.5)	(.9)	(.9)	(−.7)
Two other people	.21	−.20	−.22	2.05
	(.5)	(−.5)	(−.6)	(.6)
Three other people	.75[*]	.55[*]	.51	4.15
	(2.5)	(2.0)	(1.8)	(1.6)
N	22,231	21,981	21,981	21,981

Note: Significance levels are as follows: [*]$p = .05$, [**]$p = .01$, [***]$p = .001$.

Figure 6
Within-person and between-person averages of God Awareness, by whom participant was with
[Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
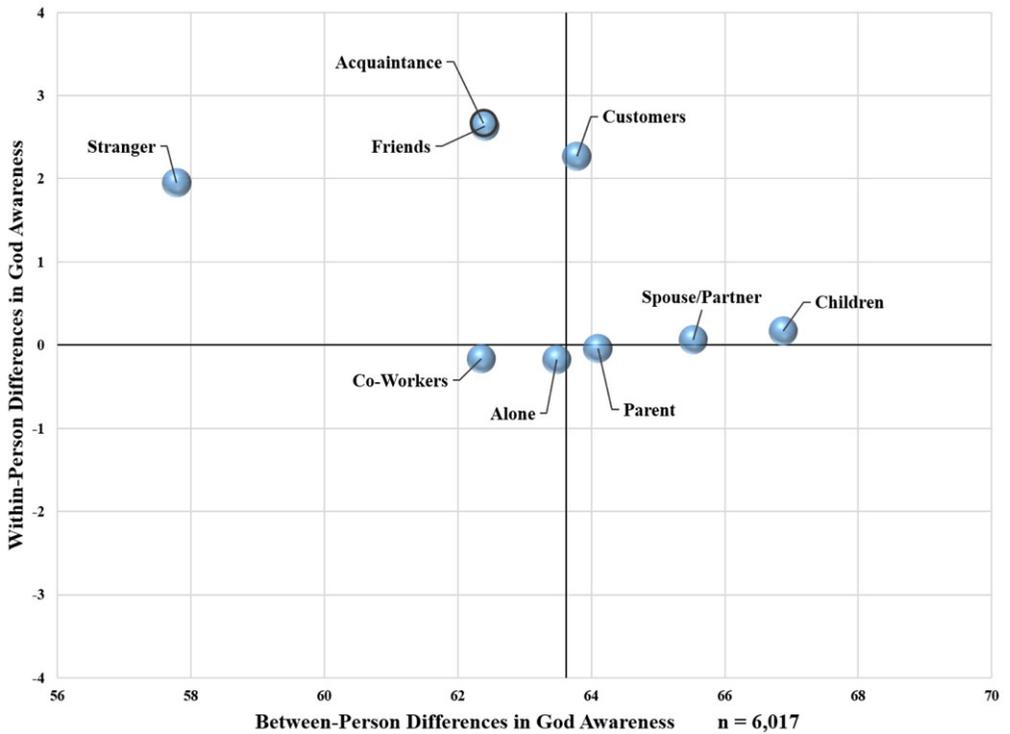
Note: Axis line represents sample average for awareness of God (63.6).

Table 3: Multilevel models regressing awareness of God on whom one is with

Who are you with?	(1) Multivariate model (One equation)	(2) Zero-order models (Nine equations)	(3) Zero-order models-Disentangled (Nine equations)	
			Within-effect	Between-effect
Partner	.06	.44	−.49	4.27**
	(.1)	(.3)	(−.9)	(2.9)
Children	.16	.17	−.48	3.91**
	(.3)	(.3)	(−.7)	(2.4)
Parent	−.97	−1.12	−.70	−3.90
	(−.9)	(−1.0)	(−.6)	(−1.3)
Friends	2.63***	2.99***	3.61***	−1.64
	(3.5)	(4.2)	(4.7)	(−.8)
Acquaintances	1.12	2.04	2.31	−.90
	(.9)	(1.8)	(1.9)	(−.2)
Co-workers	−1.39	−1.56*	−1.30	−3.82
	(−1.8)	(−2.4)	(−1.9)	(−1.8)
Customers	2.08	1.98	2.43	−2.04
	(1.6)	(1.5)	(1.8)	(−.5)
Boss	−.60	−1.11	−.14	−11.01
	(−.3)	(−.6)	(−.1)	(−1.7)
Stranger	−.74	−.38	.27	−6.72*
	(−.6)	(−.3)	(.2)	(−1.6)
N	6,017	5,967	5,967	5,967

Note: Significance levels are as follows: $^*p = .05$, $^{**}p = .01$, $^{***}p = .001$.

In Table 3, consistent with H3a, people have higher levels of "God Awareness" when they are with friends than when they are not. In partial support of H3b, frequently being with children is associated with higher levels of "God Awareness" (though the within-person effect is negative and not significant). The evidence for H3c is marginal. As expected, being with co-workers associates with lower levels of "God Awareness," but these levels are not quite statistically significant. In addition to the main effects of who participants were with, we also tested if these "who with" variables interacted with measures of the different activities, as analyzed in Table 1. The resulting interaction terms were, by and large, not significant.

The analyses above look at the distribution of "God Awareness" across time, activity, and social situation. This is not to assume, however, that the associations observed above would be the same for all people. Indeed, future research would do well to explore how the correlates of "God Awareness" vary across personal characteristics. While it is beyond the scope of this article to go into this issue in depth, we offer one analysis to illustrate the potential of this line of research. Figure 7 reproduces the analyses of Figure 2—"God Awareness" by day of the week—but it does so separately for people who attend religious services at least weekly versus those who rarely attend them at all. Presumably, the meaning of Sunday varies across these two groups. We find that, among frequent service attendees, Sunday is by far the day they most experience God, being 2.3 points above their weekly average. Attendees have much less awareness of God on Monday and Friday. Participants who did not attend religious services also were most aware of God (or the divine) on Sundays. However, the magnitude of the increase in God awareness was greater for Sunday religious attendees (2.3) than for infrequent attenders (.8). The latter group was more aware of

Figure 7
Within-person deviation of awareness of God, by day and frequency of religious attendance
[Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
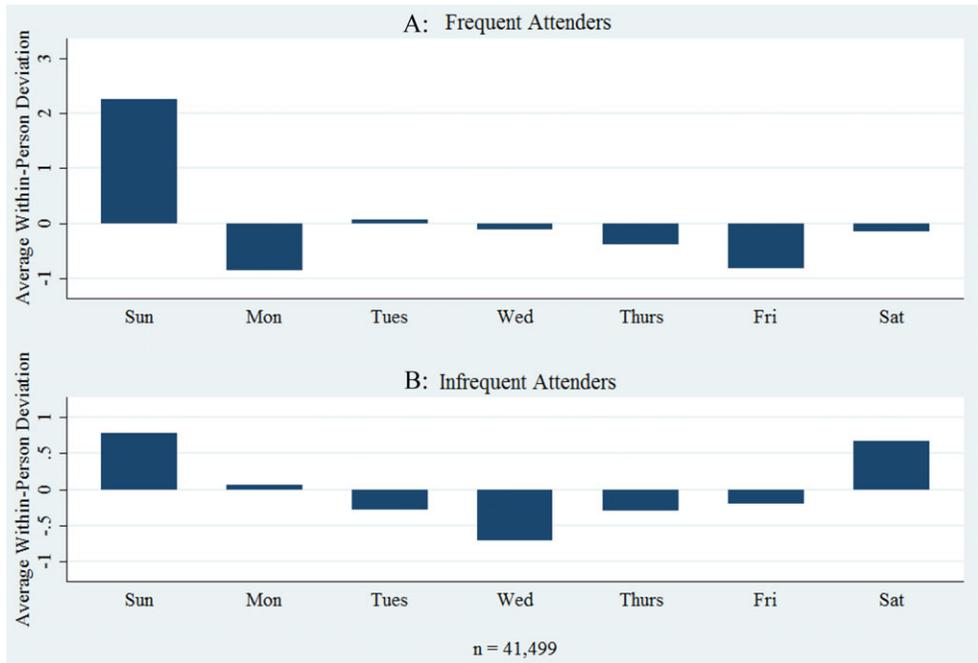
God across the entire weekend, not just on Sunday; on Saturdays, they experienced an average deviation of .7, raising questions of who these people are and what they are doing on Saturdays when they experience higher levels of spiritual awareness. Are they spiritual people doing activities like spending time in nature, doing yoga, or discussing meaningful personal experiences with others?

DISCUSSION

Using data collected in a nationwide experience sampling method study, we found a patterned variation in people's spiritual awareness within their daily lives. The majority of participants experienced God or the divine intermittently, rather than in a constant manner, throughout the course of their daily activities. Spiritual awareness varied somewhat across time, with participants being most likely to experience the sacred on Sundays and in the morning. The pattern of spiritual awareness across day of the week varied by religious service attendance, with those who frequently attended services experiencing less awareness on Saturdays but more on Sundays, than frequent attendees.

The variation of spiritual awareness across daily activities followed several different patterns. We summarize our findings in several propositions below about the conditions that foster spiritual awareness.

Proposition 1: Both the act of doing spiritual activities and the sustained doing of these activities contributes to increased spiritual awareness.

First, we note that the engagement in spiritual activities, such as prayer and meditation, has a strong association with spiritual awareness. This is true for both the effect of spiritual activities in the moment, i.e., as a state, as well as overall frequency of spiritual activities, i.e., as a habit. We note the latter finding lends itself to multiple interpretations. It could be that the type of

people who select themselves into spiritual activities are also the type who score high on spiritual awareness. Or, it could be that, if done for a long enough time, the frequent performance of spiritual activities raises base levels of spiritual awareness. The former reflects a selection effect and the latter a causal effect (albeit as the result of long-term exposure to spiritual activities).

> *Proposition 2*: Engaging in casual embodied actions that do not require heightened analytic attention is positively related to spiritual awareness.

Certain embodied, in-the-moment activities were associated with spiritual awareness. These actions, such as listening to music, walking, and exercising, had significant within-person, or "in-the-moment," effects. These embodied actions, which do not seem to require a high level of analytic cognitive focus, seem to be doors to an experience of the sacred.

This proposition aligns with various contemplative practices, such as meditation, listening to sacred music, chanting, and contemplative walking (e.g., mindful walking, labyrinths) in Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other spiritual traditions. It also might help explain the transcendent experiences nonbelievers or spiritual people have when listening to music that resonates deeply with them. These findings bring attention to the dearth of scholarship on these activities in sociology, as well as more specifically in the sociology of religion. These findings suggest that greater attention to these embodied experiences, and their relationship to spirituality and religiosity, is warranted.[3]

> *Proposition 3*: Both the act of working and the sustained doing of work contribute to decreased spiritual awareness.

Doing work and working prolonged hours were negatively related to spiritual awareness. Although we find that work is broadly associated with less awareness of God, Ammerman (2014b) argues that in certain jobs, such as menial labor and work in the business sector, people are particularly less likely to bring sacred experiences into their work. Future research should examine whether work is broadly related to decreased spiritual awareness, or, as Ammerman argues, certain professions, like business and menial labor tend to decrease it, while creative and service-oriented vocations support it.

> *Proposition 4*: Habitual embodied engagement with technology is associated with lower levels of spiritual awareness.

Sustained interactions with technology, such as working on one's computer or playing video games, was negatively related to spiritual awareness. Oddly, watching hours of television was positively related to spiritual awareness. It may be that people watching a large amount of television were watching programs that inspired them or had religious content. Television also requires less focused cognitive attention and embodied engagement than working on the computer or playing video games.

Our results overall suggest that people's experiences of the sacred are related to both their dynamic, moment-to-moment activities *and* their more habitual behaviors in a variety of ways, which depend on the activity at hand. The observed variation in spiritual experiences confirms the need to study in greater depth where, when, and how spiritual states occur. Doing so is consistent with scholarship on lived religion (e.g., Ammerman 2014a, 2014b; Williams 2010), and it builds upon Mark Chaves's (2010) call to investigate religious "incongruence" and variation across varied situations.

Future scholarship can build upon our method and findings by delving deeper into examining religious incongruence in several ways. Scholars need to develop theoretical approaches

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[3]For notable research on embodied contemplative practice, see Jain (2014) and Pagis (2009, 2010).

that specify and explain the variety of causal mechanisms operating in daily spirituality. These approaches should seek to explain how engagement in a specific activity or location in a certain context "in the moment," as well as the overall frequency with which a person engages in that activity or is at a specific type of location, might be related to spiritual and religious experiences. We outline trajectories for future scholarship below.

To build upon our finding that spiritual practices such as praying and meditating are strongly related to spiritual awareness, new research can test which "in-the-moment" and habitual behaviors advised in certain traditions, such as going to church, doing yoga, or meditating, are most positively related to spiritual experiences. Studies can additionally examine whether other activities tied to religious or spiritual values or tenets, such as doing charitable work for others, are positively related to spiritual or religious experiences. The effects of prohibited activities, such as drug use, can be examined by tradition as well.

Building upon our results and Ammerman's (2014b) scholarship on lived religion, future scholars should compare the effects of different social settings on spiritual and religious experience. Specifically, examining the effects of different workplaces and vocations should yield interesting results. Although we found that work is inversely related to subjective spiritual experience, Ammerman (2014b) suggests that type of job and workplace culture matter. Experience sampling can be used to examine whether working in a business setting diminishes one's odds of having a spiritual experience, or if the act of working in a vocation one deems a calling, such as working as an artist, teacher, or social worker, is associated with greater spiritual awareness—as Ammerman suggests.

Scholars of religion can also explore how different religious institutions stack up and compare. Does attendance at certain kinds of religious activities, or at some denominations, yield higher "in-the-moment" or average levels of spiritual awareness? Are certain religious activities more closely tied to spiritual experience than others? Participation in religious communities can also be compared to participation in group activities in other locations, like communal hikes in nature. Does spending time in nature make one more likely to have a transcendent experience than in a church?

Some of the seemingly contradictory findings noted above—such as how the act of walking is positively related to spiritual awareness, while habitual walking is negatively associated with spiritual awareness—motivate more nuanced explanations we cannot fully explain in this article. Future qualitative and quantitative scholarship should explore the complex relationships between what we do, what we think, and what we experience. One would suspect that one's orientation to activity and place matter. Taking a leisurely stroll in the park is likely related to spiritual awareness in a different way than walking as part of one's job. Likewise, talking with a friend about one's religious beliefs or commitments presumably has a different effect on spiritual awareness than talking about gas prices.

Methodologically, the results of this article demonstrate the utility of multilevel modeling in studying daily spiritual experiences. Multilevel models allow for the separation of contextual versus personal effects. Multilevel analysis of micro-longitudinal data models complements experimental studies, which provide strong tests for within-person effects of situations, as well as long-term longitudinal studies, which document between-person changes. Future research can move scholarship on spirituality forward in several ways. There is a likelihood of reciprocal causation, with situations affecting levels of divine awareness but also levels of awareness influencing selection into situations that can be examined with other methodological approaches. Also, other measures of sacred experiences can be used. Here, we use a single measure, but there are broader scales available, such as the Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (Underwood 2006), which includes measures of awe, gratitude, mercy, connection with the transcendent, compassionate love, and desire for closeness to God. Finally, studies can explore the potentially negative aspects of spirituality, which include disappointment, grandiosity, and instability (Hall and Edwards 2002).

While innovative, the data used in this study have their weaknesses. Importantly, although the sample of participants studied here is geographically and demographically diverse, as a convenience sample, it has the corresponding limitations in generalizing to the population. Furthermore, participants needed smartphones to be involved in the study. Although a majority of American adults have smartphones (Pew Internet and American Life Project 2013), those who do are different than those who do not. Also, study participants are, presumably, more interested in spiritual matters than most. That could be why they signed up for it. This selection of spiritually interested participants would produce higher overall scores of spirituality than is present in the general population.

Despite these limitations, our study demonstrates the value of using this approach to data collection and multilevel analysis for studying religious and spiritual experiences. This method allows for examining experiences in real time, constrained by the personal and social contexts in which they occur. This approach avoids the potential biases and oversimplifications that can be made in cross-sectional and long-term longitudinal quantitative analyses. Multilevel analysis makes it possible to disentangle momentary and habitual causal factors. This approach fits with a larger shift in the field from a focus on central tendencies in religious groups to examining variation over time and across social contexts.

Jointly examining spiritual states and traits enables us to start asking new and exciting theoretical and empirical questions, such as those mentioned above. These questions are just a few examples of the many kinds of questions that can be investigated in exploring when, where, and how spiritual states and traits manifest. Future theories can build upon our findings by helping to make sense of the various congruencies and incongruencies we identified in the relationship between spiritual awareness and people's activities and social contexts.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

Table A1: Descriptive Statistics