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## "It All Just Ends": Death Attitudes Across Age, Gender and Religion

Bekah Bass

*University of Northern Iowa*

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## Research Questions

- This study looks at death attitudes across different demographic groups. I raise the following questions:
  - How do death attitudes vary by age, gender, and religion?
  - Do people with more (a) recent or (b) frequent death experiences have different death attitudes than those with fewer death experiences?

## Background

- Death is a social reality and life is influenced by death: “[H]ow individuals view life affects their attitudes toward death. The converse is also true: How people view death affects how they conduct their lives” (Wong, Reker, and Gesser 1994:128).
- The fear of death, also referred to as death anxiety, is considered conscious negative thoughts and feelings towards death, whereas death avoidance is a negative attitude towards death that is less intense and less explicit (Tomer and Elisason 1996; Wong et al. 1994).
- Neutral Acceptance is present when an individual is neither looking forward to death, nor fears it; Approach Acceptance is seen in individuals who believe in a happy afterlife; Finally, Escape Acceptance is when death is accepted because it will end the negativity or pain of life (Wong et al. 1994).
- Scholars have identified different models of how death anxiety changes as individuals age, but a commonality among these models is that death anxiety declines as individuals move from middle age into old age (Hong et al. 2018; Tomer 2000)

## Data and Methods

### Data

- Original data collected during January and February of 2021
- Online survey distributed through social media and email correspondence, mainly through connections at UNI

### Sample

- n=322 cases

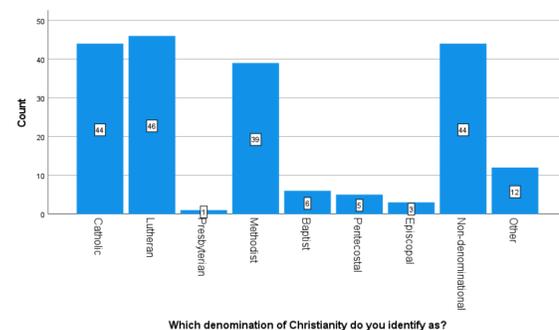
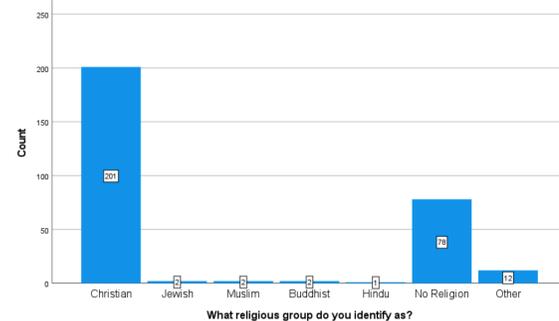
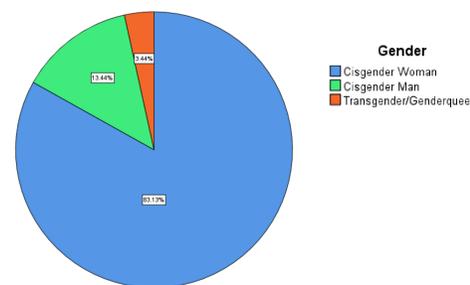
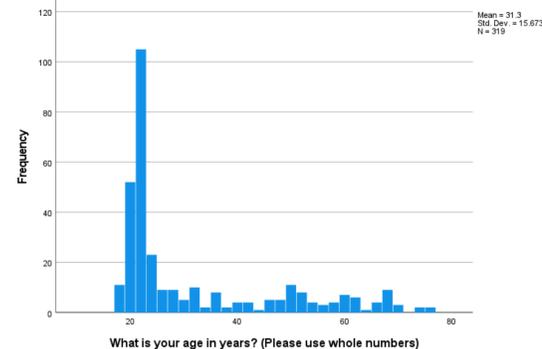
### Measures

- Death Attitude Profile – Revised (DAP-R) (Wong, Reker, and Gesser 1994)
  - Measures five facets of death attitudes using a 7-point Likert scale
    - Fear of Death
      - Ex. “Death is no doubt a grim experience”
    - Death Avoidance
      - Ex. “Whenever the thought of death enters my mind, I try to push it away”
    - Neutral Acceptance
      - Ex. “Death is a natural aspect of life”
    - Approach Acceptance
      - Ex. “I believe that I will be in heaven after I die”
    - Escape Acceptance
      - Ex. “Death will bring an end to all my troubles”

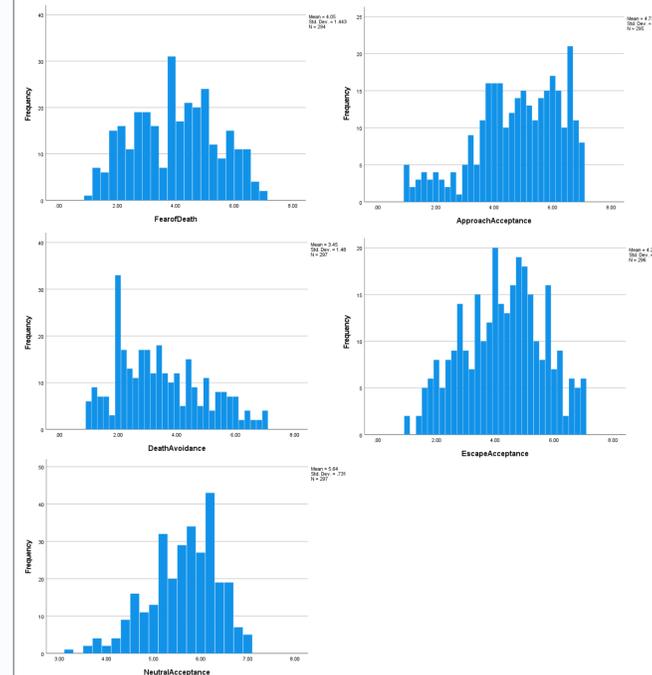
## Data and Methods cont.

- Scores for questions in each attitude category are averaged and become the statistic for said category
- Analysis**
  - ANOVA and difference-in-mean tests were done with categorical variables (income, gender, work status, experience with death) and the scores for each death attitude.
  - Correlations between age and death attitudes, and among different death attitudes were calculated.

## Sample Characteristics



## Death Attitude Distributions



## Results

### Age x Attitudes Correlations

	Age	Fear of Death	Death Avoidance	Neutral Accept.	Approach Accept.
Fear of Death	-.322**				
Death Avoidance	-.324**	.689**			
Neutral Accept.	.253**	-.489**	-.406**		
Approach Accept.	.211**	-.065	-.032	-.045	
Escape Accept.	.147*	-.129*	-.162**	.100	.397**

\*\* p < 0.01  
\*p < 0.05

### ANOVA: Income and Death Attitudes

Attitude	F
Fear of Death	1.229
Death Avoidance	2.457*
Neutral Acceptance	.472
Approach Acceptance	.679
Escape Acceptance	.260

\*\* p < 0.01  
\*p < 0.05

## Results cont.

### Difference in Means: Religious and Not Religious

Attitude	t
Fear of Death	-.153
Death Avoidance	-.022
Neutral Acceptance	-1.968*
Approach Acceptance	15.122**
Escape Acceptance	2.844**

\*\* p < 0.01  
\*p < 0.05

### Difference in Means: Women and Men

Attitude	t
Fear of Death	2.047*
Death Avoidance	1.680
Neutral Acceptance	-2.030*
Approach Acceptance	1.235
Escape Acceptance	1.800

\*\* p < 0.01  
\*p < 0.05

## Conclusions

- Similar to previous research on death anxiety and gender, analyses found that women showed significantly higher levels of fear of death than men. Additionally, men showed higher levels of neutral acceptance.
- There was a significant difference in death avoidance between the \$50,000 - \$75,000 annual income category and the less than \$30,000 category. The wealthier individuals showed significantly lower levels of death avoidance than their less wealthy counterparts.
- As people age, their negative death attitude scores decline, while all types of acceptance increase.
- Those who are religious (primarily Christian in this sample) had higher Approach and Escape Acceptance, and lower Neutral Acceptance scores than non-religious individuals.

## References

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