

# Religious Beliefs and Attitudes of Taiwanese People

## Abstract

Based on the data on religious beliefs and attitudes from the first Taiwan Social Change Survey in 1985, this paper will discuss the distribution of different religious affiliations of Taiwanese people and how the distribution is affected by social factors. Second, the present discussion will focus on analyzing the effects of religious beliefs, social background, and the sense of alienation on religious attitudes. This study is the first to use the sample of four thousand people from the population to outline the percentage of adults who believed different religions. It will further examine the significant influence of factors, such as education, age, and the degree of urbanization, on different kinds of religious beliefs. In our analysis of religious attitudes, the research found that the effects of folk religious beliefs and education on religious attitudes were opposite. On the other hand, the sense of meaninglessness and powerlessness had a significant influence on religiosity. In terms of the attitudes regarding seeking help from gods, the sense of powerlessness had significant effects. This paper attempts to provide a deep and detailed analysis for the different research findings.

## 1. Introduction

In studying the phenomenon of religion in Taiwan, most scholars in the past studied some communities, because of limited data. These researches rarely studied and analyzed the phenomenon of religion in the whole of Taiwan. Anthropologists made an important contribution to the study of religion in Taiwan. Most of them closely examined the phenomenon in villages or areas through long-term, in-depth field studies. On the other hand, based on data from questionnaires and surveys in certain areas, sociologists seriously analyzed religious attitudes and behavior. In terms of research on the development of religions, scholars discussed

and analyzed the entire trend of development of some religious organizations and further discussed and analyzed them. However, an analysis of the people in the whole of Taiwan, except Grichting's book, *Taiwan System of Value*, which published statistics for a large quantity of surveys, there is only "Religious Beliefs and Family Beliefs" which I wrote based on secondary sources from Grichting's research.

In the first Taiwan Social Change Survey, the questionnaire included information on religious affiliations, religious behavior, and religious attitudes. This nationwide survey in Taiwan provided a more complete set of data. The present paper uses this set of data in order to provide a comprehensive discussion on the phenomenon of religion in Taiwan.

Based on these data from the questionnaire, we will first discuss the distribution of religious affiliations of Taiwanese people. We attempt to use the findings to estimate the percentages and the numbers of members of different religions in the population at large. Because people were not distributed in different religions by chance, another question worth investigating is what factors led people to believe in different religions. From the survey data, we identified background factors, such as residential area, age, sex, educational levels, and occupations, for further analysis. Among these factors, since the difficulties we had assessing occupations had not been resolved and also since the analysis should not include too many variables, our analysis focused on the other four aforementioned variables. Because of the improvement in statistical analysis techniques, our analysis could employ a Log-linear model, including four independent variables and one dependent variable, in order to correctly determine the pure effects of each of the independent variables. These types of independent variables were set factors that accounted for the religious affiliations of the people. These variables not only represent or form the culture of the society but are also related to the trend of secularization. Furthermore, these factors were related to the basis of the development of some religions. In fact, the degree of urbanization could provide a reference point for secularization. The more urbanized an area is, the more secularized it is. In addition, modern education is loaded with secular, humanistic ideas. Because of the influence of secular forces, the religious affiliation of people might change when people received modern education. With respect to the factor

of age, if we set aside the influence of education, it represented the effect of the whole secularization process in the society. On the other hand, the influence of age could also be related to personal development and experience. That is, as one grows older, one experiences many more hardships, obstacles, and turmoil and, consequently, may be more likely to become religious. Finally, in terms of sex, researches in the past have always indicated that women had stronger religiosity, while men tended to be affected by secularization more, tending not to be as pious and devoted as women.

After determining the distribution of Taiwanese people in terms of their religious affiliation, this study will pursue an analysis of religious attitudes. In order to effectively assess all the variables included in the analysis, researchers used factor analysis and constructed five measurements to assess religious affiliations and the sense of alienation. In the analysis, religious attitudes are taken as dependent variables, while background variables, religious affiliations, and the sense of alienation are considered as independent variables. Roughly speaking, the background variables we included, such as urbanization, education, age, and sex, were related to secularization. The theoretical basis and discussion were similar to the discussion about religious affiliations. Our analysis included religious affiliations mainly because we attempted to examine to what degree religious affiliations influenced religious attitudes. Moreover, including the variables could help us to assess the net effects of other variables. Our regression analysis also included the sense of alienation and considered it as another factor affecting religious attitudes. This was because religion functions as providing a system of meanings for people. We hypothesized that when people felt a sense of meaninglessness, they were more likely to seek help from religion, which in turn, strengthened their religious attitudes. In addition, religion often could provide a kind of strength for believers. Therefore, people that felt more powerless tended to have stronger religious attitudes. Finally, the secularization of society could weaken the religious system, which originally was bound up with the social system. This further led to the lost of social norms, leading people to lose their sense of direction. Thus, a lack of direction is considered a factor that affects religious attitudes. In theory, (Baum, 1975), some scholars pointed out that religion leads to the formation of the sense of alienation, while other scholars believed that it is the sense of alienation, which accounts for religious conversion. This paper

will discuss and analyze these questions based on our analysis of the research data.

## **2. Different Religious Affiliations and Their Changes**

According to the Taiwan Social Change Survey, among people who were over 20 years of age, the number of people who claimed to be Buddhists was the greatest, about 47%. Surely, there were people among these who are ‘pure’ Buddhists. However, Chinese people habitually claim to be Buddhists, when, in fact, quite a number of these people may be followers of folk religion or other religions. If we determine peoples’ religious affiliation based on a set standard, we found that a total of 6% of these people ate vegetarian meals, chanted Buddhist sutra, and attended rites and ceremonies in Buddhist temples. If we took people who worshipped Matsu (the goddess of sea), Kuan-di (the god of justice), and Tu-di (the god of earth as ‘mixed’ Buddhists, there were about, at most, 5% who were ‘pure’ Buddhist. In other words, two-thirds of the respondents who claimed to be Buddhist were actually followers of folk religion or other religions.

In this study, about 7% of the respondents claimed to be a Taoist, while 29% of the respondents claimed to be believers of folk religions. If we added the number of people who said they were Buddhists and yet also worshipped non-Buddhist goddess, like Matsu, then about 65% of respondents were believers of folk religions. The distinction between Buddhists and believers of folk religion is generally determined by whether one has gone through procedures of Buddhist conversion. This is because Buddhists have to go through proper rituals for conversion. Each Buddhist needs to be approved by a master. On the other hand, believers of folk religion become believers because they follow their family members to worship gods, ghosts, and ancestors, without having to go through formal rituals of conversion. However, the present survey did not ask about whether people have gone through conversion or not. For these reasons, we could only use the aforementioned religious behaviors as reference to make basic distinction.

Other traditional religions, such as folk religions, Buddhism, and Taoism, the number of Christians was comparably high. 1.7% of the respondents claimed to be Catholics, and 3.5% of the people claimed to be Protestants. In total, Catholics

and Protestants made up there 5.2% of the sample. The estimated percentage of Christians of the present survey were similar to the estimation made previously by Protestants (Swanson, 1981; Chiu, 1982) However, the number of Catholics proclaimed by the Catholic church was 70 to 80 thousand more than the number shown in the present research. This difference could be due to the fact that the sample for this survey was people who were over 20 years old, while the number of Catholics that the church proclaimed included people who were under 20. In addition, after 1970, the number of Catholics substantially decreased. Perhaps, some members no longer considered themselves to be Catholics. For these reasons, the present data indicated that the number of Catholics in Taiwan was between 190 to 260 thousand people.

According to the index of religious behavior, 1.8% of males and 2.2% of females believe in the goddess of Wu-ji. This means that about 230 thousand people believe in the goddess Wu-ji. These people are over 20 years old. Religions which mainly worship the goddess Wu-ji include I Kuan Dao, Ruzong Shanjiao, and Chi-wei Temple. For these reasons, the number of believers of I Kuan Dao as estimated by this research was less than the number reported by other scholars (Tung, 1980; Sung, 1984). The reason for why this research underestimated the number of members of this religion was not only that it did not include people who were under 20, but also that I Kuan Do had not been recognized by the government as a lawful organization. For this reason, many members might have disguised their identity in order to avoid any trouble. Even though the questionnaire had not directly asked whether or not respondents were followers of I Kuan Dao, people who were vigilant and sensitive would likely refuse to acknowledge that they worshipped the goddess Wu-ji.

In Taiwan, 0.1% of the people were Muslims and about 2.7% belonged to other religions.

Finally, about 9% of the people claimed to have no religion. However, many people who consider themselves to be religious believers, especially followers of folk religions, in fact, feel apathetic towards religion, or are mostly passive and participate only occasionally in religious activities. Based on the statistics of temple visitors, 51.4% of males and 42.2% of females rarely or never visited temples. Quite a number of these people could be non-religious people. On the

other hand, because members of folk religion have not been through proper rituals of conversions, these believers do not share a strong sense of belonging. Furthermore, the secular tendency caused by social change leads some people, who consider themselves believers of folk religions, to have weaker beliefs. Thus, their positions might be closer to people who have no religion.

According to the analysis of the log-linear model, the distribution of different religions were related to sex, age, education, and residential area. There were interactions among these independent variables, except sex and residential areas. For the details on the distribution of religions and the results for the log-linear model analysis, please see table 1, 2, and 3.

Education has a significant effect on religious affiliations. Briefly speaking, people with more education, receiving 10 to 25 years of formal education, are more likely to affiliate with Buddhism and Christianity but less likely to be affiliated with folk religions. Meanwhile, people with more education are more likely to have no religious affiliation. After controlling variables, such as residential areas, age, and sex, there were 2.29% more of well-educated Buddhists, 6.3% more of well-educated Christians, and 6.0% more of non-religious people than their less-educated counterparts. A study in the past (Yao Li-hsiang, 1984) indicated that traditionally Buddhism is a religion that attracts more intellectuals. Since 'pure' Buddhists often commit to understanding Buddhist theories and doctrines, the potential for people with more education to become Buddhists is higher. Nonetheless, people who have 'latent intelligence' for Buddhist knowledge are not necessarily literate, learned people. In particular, people who focus on chanting Buddhist Amitabha are not necessarily learned. For this reason, there are Buddhists with less education. Even though the number of well-educated Buddhists is higher, the differences between these groups are not huge. On the other hand, Christianity set up schools after coming to Taiwan. Other Christian sects that came to Taiwan after the WWII focused on spreading religions to military personnel and government officials; therefore, Christians in Taiwan have higher levels of education. The spread of Christian teachings also required a considerable degree of literacy in society. In order to encourage literacy, the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan promoted the use of Romanization instead of Chinese characters. Besides, modern education contributed to the propagation of Christianity. The success in

publication achieved by Christianity after the Japanese colonization also related to this point.

Modern education is the key factor that drives the development of secularism. This secular process has a particularly negative impact on diffused religions, like folk religion which lacks a comprehensive system of teaching. For these reasons, the numbers of their believers also decreased substantially. In terms of the effects of education, the present research showed that its impact on folk religion is the greatest. The percentage of the difference between people with more education and people with less education was the greatest. On average, the former was almost 15% less likely than the latter to believe in folk religions. In contrast to folk religions, the secular forces of modern education facilitate an increase in the number of people with no religion. This study found that, on average, 6% more of people with higher levels of education claimed that they had no religion, compared with people with less education. Taken together, we discover that modern education facilitated an increase in the number of Buddhists and Christians. In addition, while the secular tendency led to a decrease in the number of people who believed in folk religions, it led to an increase in the number of people who had no religion.

The effects of age on religious affiliations are significant, but unclear. Compared to other independent variables, its effects are the least. People who are under 40 years old are more likely to be Buddhists. After we controlled other independent variables, this group of respondents were, on average, 0.38% more than people who were over 40 years old. The difference between the two groups was very small. What was surprising was that, overall, the percentage of younger people who believed in folk religion was actually 3.06% more than older people. When we examined these results in greater detail, this difference was seen in a small number of groups. For instance, in the group of 'well-educated, female urban dwellers', there were 23.9% more younger people than older people; in the group of 'well-educated male town-dwellers', there were 21% more younger people. If we exclude these two groups, older people who believed in folk religion tended to be 1.3% less than younger believers. Why were young and well-educated women who lived in the cities more likely than their older counterparts to believe

**Table 1** The log-linear analysis for the effects of social background factors on religious affiliations

Formulas	G <sup>2</sup>	df
(E)(R)(A)(T)(S)	2477	87
(E)(R)(A)(T)(S) (ER)	2130	84
(E)(R)(A)(T)(S)(RA)	2460	84
(E)(R)(A)(T)(S)(EA)	1500	86
(E)(R)(A)(T)(S)(ET)	1936	85
(E)(R)(A)(T)(S)(RT)	2334	81
(E)(R)(A)(T)(S)(AT)	2407	85
(E)(R)(A)(T)(S)(ES)	2360	86
(E)(R)(A)(T)(S)(RS)	2419	84
(E)(R)(A)(T)(S)(AS)	2469	86
(E)(R)(A)(T)(S)(TS)	2473	85
(ER)(RA)(EA)(ET)(RT)(AT)(ES)(RS)(AS)(TS)	288	63
(ER)(RA)(EA)(ET)(RT)(AT)(ES)(RS)(AS)(TS)(ERA)	258	60
(ER)(RA)(EA)(ET)(RT)(AT)(ES)(RS)(AS)(TS)(ERS)	271	60
(ER)(RA)(EA)(ET)(RT)(AT)(ES)(RS)(AS)(TS)(EAS)	227	62
(ER)(RA)(EA)(ET)(RT)(AT)(ES)(RS)(AS)(TS)(RAS)	260	60
(ER)(RA)(EA)(ET)(RT)(AT)(ES)(RS)(AS)(TS)(ERT)	249	57
(ER)(RA)(EA)(ET)(RT)(AT)(ES)(RS)(AS)(TS)(EAT)	271	61
(ER)(RA)(EA)(ET)(RT)(AT)(ES)(RS)(AS)(TS)(RAT)	257	57
(ER)(RA)(EA)(ET)(RT)(AT)(ES)(RS)(AS)(TS)(EST)	286	61
(ER)(RA)(EA)(ET)(RT)(AT)(ES)(RS)(AS)(TS)(RST)	281	57
(ER)(RA)(EA)(ET)(RT)(AT)(ES)(RS)(AS)(TS)(AST)	278	61
(ERA)(ERS)(EAS)(RAS)(ERT)(EAT)(RAT)(EST)(RST)(AST)	68	29
(ERA)(ERS)(EAS)(RAS)(ERT)(EAT)(RAT)(EST)(RST)(AST)(ERAS)	52	26
(ERA)(ERS)(EAS)(RAS)(ERT)(EAT)(RAT)(EST)(RST)(AST)(ERAT)	58	23
(ERA)(ERS)(EAS)(RAS)(ERT)(EAT)(RAT)(EST)(RST)(AST)(ERST)	60	23
(ERA)(ERS)(EAS)(RAS)(ERT)(EAT)(RAT)(EST)(RST)(AST)(EAST)	66	27
(ERA)(ERS)(EAS)(RAS)(ERT)(EAT)(RAT)(EST)(RST)(AST)(RAST)	51	23
(ERAS)(ERAT)(ERST)(EAST)(RAST)	15	6
(ERAS)(ERAT)(ERST)(EAST)(RAST)(ERAST)	0	0

E : Education , R : Religious Affiliations , A : Age , S : Sex , T : Residential Areas



**Table 2** The effects of the social background factors on religious affiliations

	G <sup>2</sup>	df	P
Education	347	3	.000
Age	16	3	.005
Residential Areas	143	6	.000
Sex	58	3	.000
Education x Age	30.3	3	.000
Education x Sex	16.7	3	.001
Education x Residential Areas	39.1	6	.000
Age x Sex	28.1	3	.000
Age x Residential Areas	30.8	6	.000
Sex x Residential Areas	6.8	6	> .250
Sex x Age x Education	15.8	3	> .005
Education x Age x Residential Areas	10.2	6	> .250
Education x Sex x Residential Areas	7.9	6	> .250
Age x Sex x Residential Areas	17.5	6	> .010

in folk religions? Why a similar trend was also observed in males with higher levels of education? Perhaps, it was not because the number of younger people was high, but because the number of older people was low, which meant that modern education greatly affected people who were over 40 years old. The possibility of them leaving behind their folk beliefs could be greater. Perhaps, in the city, women who are over 40 years old have greater chances of receiving education. Women who have these backgrounds will less likely believe in folk religions. The situation for older men in towns is similar. Age did not have a huge effect on people with no religion. On average, 1.23% more younger people had no religion. After we controlled other independent variables, especially education, although the influence of age was statistically significant, its effects were small and its meaning was considerably unclear.

The effects of age were, overall, not very substantial. The difference between the percentages of males and females who were affiliated with Buddhism was small (0.6%). The difference between male and female Christians was not great (2.21%). A similar tendency was observed in believers of folk religions. Male believers were 2.5% less than female believers. Only with respect to people with no religion, the average percentage of male believers was greater (5.26%).

**Table 3** The distribution of people with different religious affiliations in Taiwan

	Sex	Age	Education / Age	Buddhism	Folk Religions	Christianity	No Religion	Total
Cities	Male	20-39	0-9 Years 10-25 Years	38(6.5) 102(11.2)	497(85.0) 530(58.3)	5(0.9) 65(7.2)	44(7.6) 213(23.4)	584 910
		40-70	0-9 Years 10-25 Years	50(7.8) 40(13.6)	462(71.8) 157(53.4)	26(4.0) 41(14.0)	106(16.4) 56(19.1)	644 292
	Female	20-39	0-9 Years 10-25 Years	65(9.3) 77(10.8)	572(81.7) 455(63.8)	20(2.8) 45(6.3)	43(6.2) 137(19.2)	700 714
		40-70	0-9 Years 10-25 Years	68(10.3) 11(14.6)	536(80.8) 30(39.9)	31(4.7) 21(27.5)	28(4.3) 14(18.0)	663 76
Towns	Male	20-39	0-9 Years 10-25 Years	32(9.7) 26(10.2)	254(78.2) 190(74.8)	11(3.5) 12(4.8)	28(8.6) 26(10.1)	325 254
		40-70	0-9 Years 10-25 Years	11(3.0) 3(8.8)	316(85.6) 21(53.7)	8(2.2) 6(16.2)	34(9.1) 8(21.4)	369 38
	Female	20-39	0-9 Years 10-25 Years	19(4.6) 18(8.9)	364(87.5) 139(70.7)	13(3.0) 14(6.9)	20(4.9) 26(13.5)	416 197
		40-70	0-9 Years 10-25 Years	17(4.8) 1(14.0)	313(90.0) 7(86.0)	10(2.8) 0(0.0)	9(2.5) 0(0.0)	349 8
Villa-ges	Male	20-39	0-9 Years 10-25 Years	25(6.8) 5(3.3)	292(80.4) 121(79.5)	19(5.3) 4(2.9)	27(7.4) 22(14.3)	363 152
		40-70	0-9 Years 10-25 Years	16(3.9) 1(2.7)	336(80.2) 36(80.3)	25(5.9) 3(6.3)	42(10.0) 5(10.7)	419 45
	Female	20-39	0-9 Years 10-25 Years	19(5.3) 6(6.7)	280(78.8) 71(75.5)	35(9.9) 4(4.6)	22(6.1) 12(13.3)	356 93
		40-70	0-9 Years 10-25 Years	22(5.3) 0(0.0)	349(83.2) 3(72.2)	14(3.4) 1(27.8)	34(8.0) 0(0.0)	419 4

\* Number inside the brackets are percentages

There were more Buddhist members in cities than in towns, while there were fewer believers of folk religion in cities. The average difference was 9.6%. In cities, the number people who had no religion were comparably greater (5.2%). The number of Christians was also greater (3.0%). These results were derived after we controlled the independent variables. This showed that cities provided an environment which not only fostered secularism but was also more suitable for the development of institutional religions. There was not a huge difference between the religious affiliations of people in the towns and cities, especially with

respect to folk religion and no religion. The average difference was nearly 0.1%. In Taiwan, the difference between the religious affiliations of cities dwellers and people who live in other areas are greater; while the religious affiliations of town dwellers and villagers are more similar. These indicated a divergence in social, cultural development in Taiwan.

Based on the statistics, the interactions between all of the two variables were significant. This meant that not only the key effects of the independent variables on religious affiliations were significant, but that the effects of each independent variable also changed according to the effects of other independent variables. In terms of the interaction of education and residential area, more well-educated town dwellers affiliated with Buddhism. The situation in the cities was similar. On the other hand, the number of well-educated villagers was less than the number of villagers with less education. These results indicated that the effects of education were strongest in towns and in cities, but that its effects were very different in villages. The actual figures also showed that the number of well-educated city dwellers who believed in folk religion was on average 26% less than their less educated counterparts. However, this figure was substantially lower in towns, only 14%. It further decreased to 4% in villages. Even though people with more education were less likely to believe in folk religion than people with less education, the effects of education were much lower in villages. If we say that education represents the influence of secularization, then residential areas also show different propensities for secularization. Such influence is strongest in cities but weakest in villages. The combined effects of education and residential areas, or their interaction, have notable influence on folk religions. At the same time, we could infer that the effects of education on the number of people who have no religion decrease from cities, towns, to villages. The statistical results suggested this tendency. The average percentage of difference among cities, towns, and villages were 11.3%, 5.0%, and 1.7%. We further considered which residential areas had greater effects on the religious affiliations of people with different levels of education. We discovered that, for people with less education, the difference between living in cities and living in towns is greater. The number of less educated city dwellers who believed in folk religion was smaller than the number of their counterparts who lived in towns. Moreover, there were more Christians and non-religious people in the former group (less-educated city dwellers) than the latter

(less-educated town dwellers). We can derive very important findings from the above discussion. The influence of education on followers of folk religion and non-religious people was greatest in cities, and then in towns, and was least in villages. On the other hand, the influence of residential areas was the strongest among people with less education.

In terms of the interaction between education and age, the differences caused by education were the greatest among adults over 40 years old. In this age group, more people with high levels education believed in Buddhism while fewer people believed in folk religions. There were also more Protestants. With respect to these religions, the influence of education among people over 40 years of age was greater than among people under 40. Only with respect to people who had no religion, were the effects of education smaller among people over 40 than people under 40. However, there was a greater number of well-educated people who claimed to have no religion. These results indicated that not only did education not have a negative correlation with age but also that overall education had a greater effect on adults over 40. In terms of the effects of age on people with the same level of education, we discovered that, with respect to folk religions, the number of well-educated people under 40 was much greater than well-educated people over 40. In contrast, with respect to Christianity, the former group (well-educated people under 40) was smaller than the latter (well-educated people over 40). Statistically, these findings obscured the influence of age, but, in fact, this interaction indicated the special characteristics of the religious environment in Taiwan. We mentioned above that well-educated women over 40 were less likely to believe in folk religion compared to their counterparts who were under 40. The percentage of the former was 39.9%, while the latter was as high as 63.8%. In cities, the number of women over 40 who received higher education was less than the number of women under 40. In our research sample, only 10% of women over 40 were well-educated, while 50% of women who were under 40 were well-educated. Because of various reasons, a small number of women in the older age group had received 10-25 years of formal education. The influence of education on these women was especially great, so the effects of secular elements in modern education on their values and behaviors seemed especially evident. For these reasons, the number of them who believed in folk religion was particularly small. On the other hand, the number of women who had received such high levels of education in towns and villages was extremely

small (only 2% and 0.9% respectively), which did not affect our statistical results. To conclude, the above analysis showed that the effects of education on religious affiliations were greater on people over 40 years of age. The impact of education on women over the age of 40 years who had received high levels of education was the greatest.

Education also produced a significantly different impact on religious affiliations of people from different sex groups. Ordinarily speaking, for people who had religious beliefs, education had a greater influence on women's religious affiliations. More well-educated women believed in Buddhism and Protestantism; fewer well-educated women believed in folk religions. As for people who had no religion, the effects of education on males and females were similar, while the difference between men who had different levels of education was greater. In discussing the main influence of age, we only discovered that in the non-religious group, the percentage of males was higher than females, while other differences were limited. We looked carefully into the effects of education on the different sex groups. While the differences were statistically significant, the differences were not great. For instance, the difference caused by education between the percentages of Protestants in the two sex groups was greatest. In the female group, the difference caused by education was 8%, while the difference caused by education in the male group was 5%. With respect to folk religions, the effects of education on the female and male groups were 16% and 14%. In addition, the percentages of the difference between two sex groups were greatest in the following two groups – less educated followers of folk religion and better educated Protestants. Yet, the difference was not very big. The average was 3.6%. In conclusion, while the statistical results showed that the interaction between education and sex was significant, which meant it would create differences in peoples' religious affiliations, the difference was actually not very substantial.

The interaction between age and sex was also significant. Among people over 40 years of age, the number of males with no religion was greater than the number of women with no religion. The average was about 9%. On this measure, the difference between males and females under 40 was only 1.5%. In other words, with respect to religious affiliations, the difference between the sex groups decreased as the age decreased. In other words, there were fewer differences

between males and females in the younger age group. This showed that the effects of the secularism in modern society were similar. However, in the past, the effects of secularism were greater in men than in women. The effects of residential area and age were significant. The most special situation was in cities. The effects of age on the number of people who believed in folk religion were the greatest. The number of followers of folk religion under 40 was much greater than followers of folk religion over 40, on average 11%. This situation was particularly evident among well-educated females in cities. A higher percentage of people from the older age group did not believe in folk religions. A related reason was examined in the above discussion concerning the interaction between education and age. It is worth mentioning that this situation was also observed in less educated men in cities. The number of younger men who believed in folk religion was 13.2% greater than the number of older people. These findings were also observed in men with more education in cities. However, the difference between the two age groups was smaller, only 4.9%. It seemed difficult to have an adequate explanation for these findings. The actual meanings of the significant interaction between residential area and age were difficult to explain. Besides, the analysis showed that the interaction between residential area and sex was not significant.

### **3. Changes in Religious Attitudes**

#### **1) Measures of Religious Attitudes**

The questionnaire had a group of measures for religious attitudes. There were a total of seven questions concerning respondents' views about the existence of soul, the relationship between human beings and gods, and the social function of religious beliefs. The original questions were as followed:

- a. The existence of the soul after death.
- b. When doubts arise, one should go to seek help from gods.
- c. Dreams about unusual incidences represent a sign from the gods.
- d. It is important to have offspring to attend one's funeral after one's death.
- e. The more people believe in gods, the safer and more peaceful the society will be.
- f. Your sons and daughters should believe in the same religion as you do.

- g. When one works hard, one does not need to rely on gods.

The multiple choice answers included “strongly agree”, “agree”, “somewhat agree”, “slightly disagree”, “disagree”, “strongly disagree”, and “no opinion”. During the analysis, I discovered that among the questions concerning behavior towards medicine, there were two questions relating to religious attitudes. Therefore, we included those questions among the original questions about religious attitudes. This way we could use our data fully as well as improve the reliability and validity of our research. These two questions concerned the relationship between illnesses and beliefs about gods and ghosts –

- a. Insanity is caused by violations against gods, ghosts, or souls of dead people.
- b. One should seek help from a doctor when one is sick, but not from gods or Buddha.

The multiple choice answers for question 8 were same as for the questions discussed above. However, question 9 included one more answer “unwilling to respond.” During the analysis, I put this extra choice together with “no opinion”.

Based on the responses to different questions, we could roughly define the following tendencies. More than 91.8% of males believed that “when one works hard, one does not need to rely on gods”. Counting only “strongly agree” and “agree”, the results was still as high as 72%. The results for their female counterparts were 86.6% and 64.2%. Most people believed that one’s own efforts are more important than relying on gods. This generally indicated that peoples’ basic attitudes are secular, tending to be more rational. Nonetheless, it is important not to neglect the fact that 9% to 10% of female and male respondents still sought help from gods. Besides, 90.9% of males and 93.6% of females believed that “it is important to have offspring to attend one’s funeral after one’s death.” This showed that ancestor worship still remains a central value in our society.

66.8% of males and 70.6% of females believed in “the existence of the soul after death.” These percentages are fairly high. As for the social function of religion, most people have a positive evaluation. 63.6% of males and 66% of females believed that, “the more people believe in gods, the safer and more peaceful the society will be.” However, if we exclude “somewhat agree”, counting

only “strongly agree” and “agree”, only one-fifth of the people believed in the existence of the soul after death. Since more than half of male and female respondents “somewhat agree” with the existence of the soul after death, many people have doubts about the existence of the soul. In terms of their views about social functions, if we exclude respondents who chose “somewhat agree” about one-third of the respondents believed that the society would be safer and more peaceful if more people believed in gods. The results of these questions indicated that the religious beliefs of Taiwanese people are not very strong. Most people partly believe and partly doubt. When respondents were asked whether they would seek help from gods when they felt uncertain, 29.6% of males and 42.7% of females agreed. In addition, 18.4% of males and 23.3% of females believed that “dreams about unusual incidences represent a sign from the gods” If we excluded people who selected “somewhat agree” in these two questions, the results were less than 10%. These findings further indicated that Taiwanese had passive attitudes towards gods, namely that “rather believe it to be true than not”, as an old Chinese saying goes.

34.5% of males and 35.1% of females agreed that, “your sons and daughters should believe in the religion you believe in.” If we excluded “somewhat agree”, about one-fifth of male and female respondents shared this view. Among them, Christians tended to strongly support this idea, followed by Buddhists, and then folk religion and other religions. People who had no religion were most likely to disagree with this view.

Finally, 3.7% of males and 5.9% of females agreed that, “insanity is caused by violations against gods, ghosts, or souls of dead people.” As for their views concerning illnesses, 37.7% of males emphasized the importance of seeking help from doctors, not gods and Buddha, and 29.3% of females strongly agreed with this view. This generally indicated the tendency towards secularism and rationalism.

In order to further discuss religious attitudes of people in Taiwan, we employed factor analyses to examine different constructs of religious attitudes. We further used the analysis results to construct important variables. Because of the research design, researchers believed that respondents might not have opinions about certain questions and would not want to express the degree to which they



held these beliefs. For these reasons, during our analysis this study eliminated the choice of 'no opinion'. However, on the other hand, sociologists, who analyze these kinds of ideas, often took "no opinion" as neutral attitudes. Thus, we also tried to group "no opinion" as a position somewhere between "somewhat agree" and 'somewhat disagree'. We quantified it with a 3.5 point score. When we used the aforementioned two methods of analysis, we discovered that the difference was very small. This indicated that, during our analysis, we could also take 'no opinion' as a neutral position.

In terms of the loadings of the factors, the difference between the results of the two analysis methods was extremely small. It was between  $-0.014$  to  $0.052$ . The average was only  $.018$ . In terms of the variance explained, the difference between the first sample, which eliminated the choice of 'no opinion,' and the second sample, which took 'no opinion' as a neutral position, was also extremely small. For example, for the first factor, the variance explained in the first sample was  $2.328$  and in the second sample it was  $2.149$ . For the second factor, the difference of the variance explained in the two samples was even smaller. They were  $1.787$  and  $1.814$ . We used oblique rotation technique to isolate two factors, which were correlated. The correlated coefficients in the two samples were also very close. They were  $-.240$  and  $-.234$  (See table 4). For these reasons, the author decided to take the choice of 'no opinion' as a neutral position in the following analysis, so that we would not have to waste our data and also so we could increase the scope of our analysis.

Based on the actual results of the factor analysis, the nine questions concerning religious attitudes could be combined into two factors. Table 2.4 showed that questions 1 to 6 combined to be the first factor, while questions 7 to 9 combined to be the second factor. The loadings of the second factors were also considerably high in questions 2 and 3. A closer examination of the questions that covered the first factor could be called "general religiosity", while the second could be called "seeking help from gods". Those who received a high score in the first factor tended to believe that a person's soul would continue to exist after death, that it is important to have offspring to attend one's funeral, that one should seek help from gods when one has doubt, that dreams represent a sign from the gods, that the more people believe in gods, the safer and more peaceful the society

will be, and that the younger generation should have the same religious beliefs as the older generation. All these attitudes are generally related to gods and religious beliefs. Therefore, we named them ‘general religiosity’. The meaning of the second factor is different from the first factor, tending to focus on more concrete power of gods, including gods and ghosts causing some psychological phenomenon. For example, mental illnesses being caused by violations against gods and ghosts, and dreams about unusual incidents being a sign from the gods. Moreover, the second factor also related to attitudes about seeking help from gods, i.e., when one is sick, one should seek help from doctor, rather than from gods or Buddha, one’s efforts are more important than gods’ help, and seeking help from gods when one has doubts. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to name the factor “seeking help from gods”.

The correlation between the two factors was  $-.234$ . The sample consisted of over 4,000 people. This correlation is significant. Two factors are negatively correlated since, during our analysis, researchers adjusted the direction of the questions, i.e., we considered the directions of questions 7 and 9 to be opposite from the direction of the other seven questions. The way to calculate the scores was also inverted accordingly. If all the directions for all the questions were the same, then we could not explain the negative correlation. However, the factor analysis indicated that, with respect to the second factors, the loadings of the questions were all negative except for question 4. In other words, the variable behind these questions was basically different from the first factor. That is, the loading of the relevant factor led each value to be different from that of the first factor. Concretely speaking, the more one believed that mental illness was caused by violations against gods and ghosts, the higher the score one would get with respect to the second factor. The more one believed that dreams about unusual incidents were signs from the gods, the higher the score one would get with respect to the second factor, but one would get a lower score with respect to the first factor. Therefore, the negative correlation in fact indicated that people who had stronger general religiosity also tended to have firmer attitudes towards seeking help from gods. In subsequent analysis, in order to avoid confusion, the measurements of the second factor multiple by “-1”. Thus, we used standardized scores of the factors as the measurement of the first factor, while the scores for the second factor were inverted.

**Table 4** Constructs of the factors of religious attitudes

	Sample 1 *		Sample 2 *	
	I	II	I	II
1.Belief in the existence of the soul after the body dies	.555	-.048	.529	-.042
2.One should seek help from gods when one has doubts	.595	-.418	.568	-.430
3.Dreams represent indications from gods	.526	-.466	.509	-.462
4.The importance of having male offspring to attend one's funeral	.702	.343	.692	.303
5.Belief in gods is related to safety and peace in society	.658	-.030	.645	-.031
6.Your offspring should believe in the same religion as you do	.609	-.047	.557	-.033
7.One's own efforts are more important than gods' efforts	-.106	-.738	-.130	-.745
8.Mental illness involved violations against gods or ghosts	.285	-.502	.254	-.523
9.Doctors are more important than gods or Buddha	-.017	-.700	-.037	-.701
Variance explained	2.328	1.787	2.149	1.814
%	25.87	19.86	23.88	20.15
Correlations among factors	-.240		-.234	

\* The first sample excluded the answer of "I don't know". The number of the sample is 3213-4203.

\* The second sample took the answer of "I don't know" as a neutral response, which is 3.5. The number of the sample is 4278-4305.

## 2). Measures for the Sense of Alienation

The questionnaire has a set of measurements for 'general feelings about life', which is, in fact, the measurement for the sense of alienation. We use a neutral term in order to avoid negative responses from the respondents. The measure consisted of 12 questions. It mainly measured powerlessness, normlessness, and meaninglessness. Based on the results of the factor analysis (see Table 5), we could isolate three factors. In this group of questions there were three extra choices in addition to the aforementioned six choices concerning the degree of agreement or disagreement. They were "no opinion", "do not understand the question", and "not willing to answer". Our analysis employed a similar strategy that was used in our analysis of religious attitudes and the results were similar. The results for excluding these answers were similar to the results for considering these answers as neutral positions. There was no significant difference.

**Table 5** Constructs of the factors of the sense of alienation

	Sample 1 *			Sample 2		
	I	II	III	I	II	III
1. Does not know how to understand the change in views	-.058	-.065	.835	-.067	.052	.819
2. Do not know how to make many decisions	.005	-.050	.816	.021	.047	.803
3. Lack of trust in human relationships	.447	.050	.457	.480	-.042	.419
4. Success in career and becoming wealthy require luck	.475	.126	.307	.491	-.119	.284
5. One must be able to find a person one can trust	.169	.510	-.036	.174	-.517	-.047
6. Citizens can influence government policy	.005	.662	-.043	-.030	-.663	-.019
7. Lack of meaning in life	.693	.012	.047	.707	-.014	.014
8. One should not meddle with public matters	.720	-.007	.049	.707	-.002	.035
9. Infrequent contact with neighbors	.788	-.026	-.200	.772	.040	-.208
10. Ordinary people can affect social development	-.005	.732	-.038	-.024	-.727	-.016
11. One can decide whether one is right or not	-.166	.607	.104	-.133	-.614	.074
12. People can work hard to improve society and politics	.062	.678	-.092	.099	-.669	-.095
Variance Explained	2.108	2.088	1.735	2.131	2.083	1.634
%	17.57	17.40	14.46	17.75	17.36	13.61
Correlations between factors	.203	-.029		-.228	.037	
	.214			.188		

\* The reference for the first and second samples are shown in Table 4.

Based on our grouping of questions that consisted of different factors, we could name these factors “normlessness”, “powerlessness”, and “meaninglessness”. In defining normlessness, Seeman (1959) pointed out that this state represents a kind of suspicion towards the operation of the norms as well as the belief that some actions that are not approved by society can lead to success (p.788). In Taiwan at present, many people feel confusion about the norms and that they are insufficiently defined. Quite a number of people did not know how to interact with neighbors, friends, and thought that the trusting relationship between people is not reliable. Finally, to be successfully in career and get wealthy also depended on luck. The first factor included “since public matters are difficult to manage, it is better not to get involved”, “in order to avoid trouble, it is better to reduce contact with neighbors, “life is meaningless”, “human relationships are not trusting and reliable anymore”, and “unless one is lucky, it is difficult to achieve career success

and become wealthy”. According to the definition of powerlessness, people tend to believe that their actions cannot determine the results they hope for (Seeman, 1959: 784). For 40 years under the present political system many people adopted democratic thoughts gradually as political views. On the other hand, because of political control the society became more politicized, people were further regulated and as citizen they participated passively in politics. The factor of powerlessness was composed of questions that included “as long as we often make our opinions known, people like us can also influence of the development of the society”, “as long as everyone puts in their efforts, the improvement of society and politics is not difficult to achieve”, “ordinary citizens can affect political decisions”, “after the completion of each action you are able to determine whether you have done rightly or wrongly”, and “in one’s living environment, a person is always able to find some people that one can trust.” Seeman (1959:786) pointed out that powerlessness refers to people who do not know what to believe, find it difficult to predict the future, and do not know how to make decision. In the present study, the third factor of meaninglessness is latent in the following two questions – “people’s thoughts change at any time, it is really difficult to know if there is anything stable enough for us to manage”, and “there are numerous decisions in life, sometimes it is difficult to know what to decide to do”. The name “meaningless” is clearly appropriate here.

According to the above discussion, we can determine that the overall sense of alienation that this research measured consisted of normlessness, powerlessness, and meaninglessness. The explained variances of these three variables are 18%, 17%, and 14%. In total, the explained variance is 49%. This indicated that the results of the factor analysis were satisfactory. Except for the weak correlation between the sense of normlessness and meaninglessness that was low (0.037), other correlations between the factors were significant, although the correlation coefficients were not high. They were about .2 on average. The components of the sense of alienation are correlated. This point was discussed in Seeman’s paper. Thus, it is appropriate to use oblique rotation method to identify related factors. The question as to why the correlations between the factors were as such will be set aside as it is not the main point of this paper.

**Table 7** Results for regression analysis of religious attitudes

	X <sup>1</sup>	X <sup>2</sup>	X <sup>3</sup>	X <sup>4</sup>	X <sup>5</sup>	X <sup>6</sup>	X <sup>7</sup>	X <sup>8</sup>	X <sup>9</sup>	X <sup>10</sup>	X <sup>11</sup>	X <sup>12</sup>	X <sup>13</sup>	X <sup>14</sup>
<b>Sex (X<sup>1</sup>)</b>														
<b>Age (X<sup>2</sup>)</b>	.048													
<b>Education (X<sup>3</sup>)</b>	-.199	-.509												
<b>City (X<sup>4</sup>)</b>	-.025	-.015	.237											
<b>Town (X<sup>5</sup>)</b>	-.009	-.031	-0.70	-.607										
<b>Buddhism (X<sup>6</sup>)</b>	-.010	-.004	.081	.088	-.062									
<b>Folk Religions (X<sup>7</sup>)</b>	-.032	0.16	-.224	-.123	.095	-.495								
<b>Christianity (X<sup>8</sup>)</b>	-.039	-.003	.091	.003	-.030	-.067	-.423							
<b>Normlessness (X<sup>9</sup>)</b>	-.082	.055	-.191	-.047	.007	-.006	.047	-.033						
<b>Powerlessness (X<sup>10</sup>)</b>	-.126	.144	-.271	-.040	.014	-.017	.052	-.022	.228					
<b>Meaninglessness (X<sup>11</sup>)</b>	-.055	-.008	-.078	-.015	.003	.016	.009	.019	-.037	.187				
<b>General religiosity (X<sup>12</sup>)</b>	.120	.163	-.314	-.169	.076	-.043	.176	.045	-.013	.177	.143			
<b>Seeking Help from Gods (X<sup>13</sup>)</b>	-.142	.110	-.302	-.185	.064	-.055	.122	.023	.243	.269	.042	.233		
<b>Worshipping at Temples (X<sup>14</sup>)</b>	-.092	.090	-.205	-.077	.056	-.036	.331	.030	-.244	.077	.031	.236	.163	
<b>Average</b>	.525	38.3	7.7	.552	.552	.073	.756	.054	.000	-.001	.000	-.001	-.004	2.75
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	.497	13.3	4.7	.497	.497	.260	.429	.227	1.000	.999	1.001	.999	.998	1.29
<b>Sample</b>	4308	4308	4308	4308	4308	4281	4280	4287	4284	4284	4284	4263	4263	4228

In the following analysis, I used the scores for the questions as the measurements of the three factors. We took the three factors representing the sense of alienation as independent variables, which influenced religious attitudes and behavior, not as dependent variables of religious attitudes and behavior.

### **3. Variations in Religious Attitudes and their Causes**

In this study, we take social backgrounds, residential areas, religious affiliations and the sense of alienation as independent variables to examine how religious attitudes are influenced by social, religious, and psychological factors. The measurements for the sense of alienation and religious attitudes are discussed in detail in the above. In this study, the sense of alienation was measured in terms of the sense of normlessness, of powerlessness, and of meaninglessness. Religious attitudes were measured in terms of two factors – ‘general religiosity’ and seeking help from gods. In terms of the dummy variables for sex, female was 0, and male was 1. The age measure was quantified based on the actual age; education was represented by the number of years of formal education that the respondents have received. Living in cities and towns were represented by two dummy variables. When the former value was 1, respondents lived in cities; when the value was 0, it indicated respondents did not live in cities. On the other hand, when the latter was 1, the respondents lived in towns. When the two variables were 0, respondents were villagers. In terms of measuring religious affiliation, we used another group of dummy variables. The three sets of dummy variables were (1,0) for Buddhism, (1,0) folk religions, and (1,0) Christians. The value of 0 for all the three dummy variables included people with no religion and a small number of believers of other religions. The average, standard deviation, number of the sample, and correlation coefficient between the two variables are listed in the tables.

Among all the independent variables, folk religion have the sole influence on ‘general religiosity’. In other words, believers of folk religion tend to have a stronger religiosity. They not only tend to believe in gods, ghost, and spirits, but also tend to affirm the social function of religion. The number of years of education was the second most important factor on ‘general religiosity’, although its influence is slightly less than folk religions. The influence was opposite to folk

religions. The  $\beta$  coefficient was negative. The influences of the two variables were similar and their directions were opposite. This can be considered as the most important religious situation in Taiwan. Because the influence of the tradition of folk religions, more than half of Taiwanese people believe in folk religions. Their views about gods and ghosts are also affected by folk religions. From a young age, ordinary people are affected by the influence of folk religion becoming part of society. They do not only participate in various worshipping activities, but they are also exposed to different kinds of legends and history about various gods. By living in this religious atmosphere for a long time, the religious attitudes of these people tend to be stronger and more durable. While believers of other religions also have strong religious attitudes, theirs are not as strong as believers of folk religions. The question of whether one has religious beliefs or not has a significant influence on 'general religiosity'. However, modern education is loaded with secular humanistic elements. For this reason, religion and education are somewhat incompatible in modern society. Because folk religion are kind of a diffused religion, their teachings lack the backing of a comprehensive system (Yang, 1961; Li Yih-yuan, 1984). Modern education should have a substantial negative impact on these kinds of religions. Nevertheless, based on the regression coefficient of our analysis, the influence of folk religious beliefs was a bit greater than the influence of education. From this, we can infer that, in Taiwan, widespread folk religious beliefs still have an important influence because of the customs and traditions associated with them. For this reason, when folk religion face the negative impact from modern religion, their believers still have a stronger religious sense.

Compared to people with no religion, the 'general religiosity' of Buddhists and Christians is stronger. The  $\beta$  coefficient of Christians was .172, which was stronger than Buddhists ( $\beta = .113$ ). While both religions have influence, the difference between the two has to do with the characteristics of the religions. Surely, it is also closely related to how we define the ordinary sense of religion. Since different religions affirm supernatural instances, believers of various religions tend to have a stronger religious sense. This also means that our recent measure for religious attitudes can generally be used on different religious attitudes. Buddhism and Christianity have very different kinds of teachings and views about gods. In terms of a religious sense, Buddhism has a weak emphasis on gods and ghosts, although practical Buddhism is not a religion without god.



However, basically, real Buddhists emphasize that the sense of Buddha is different from the sense of god. Conversely, Christians place strong emphasis on the existence of god. It can be said that it is the religion that is based on one only true god. Moreover, more pious Christians follow the rule of Christianizing their own families. They tend to emphasize that the son's generation should have the same religion as the father's.

Therefore, generally speaking, Christians have a stronger religiosity than Buddhists. However, at least, in terms of religious attitudes, both Buddhism and Christianity are negatively impacted by modern, secular education.

Based on the research results, the religious sense of men and women are significantly different. The general religiosity of women is stronger than that of men. The regression coefficient of the variable of sex was  $-.065$ . The difference that is caused by different sexes has been validated by many studies in Taiwan as well as other places (Chiu, 1975, 1976; Dittes, 1968). Regarding the question as to why there is such a difference, while scholars have some explanations, many of them are based on speculations. These assumptions have not been tested meticulously. In examining different types of religious affiliations, we discovered that the religious beliefs of women also tend to be higher than men. However, the difference between males and females is not substantial. In some residential areas, some age groups, there were more male believers than females. In terms of religious attitudes, even though the difference was significant, the degree of difference was small.

The older one's age is, the stronger one's religiosity is ( $\beta = .047$ ). On the one hand, the influence of age involves the fact that people from the different age groups experienced different kinds of social and cultural changes. On the other hand, because of more life experience, an older person has encountered uncertainty and failure more often than a young person. Therefore, one's religious sense also increases. When we further examined the degree of influence of age on religiosity, we discovered that the effects of age were small. It is the smallest of all variables. This is because age and education are strongly correlated ( $.163$ ); its effects operated through education. In other words, people from a younger age group have more education. After we controlled the variable of education, the direct effects of age decreased significantly. Nonetheless, after we controlled education and other

variables, age still had a significant effect. Perhaps, this indicates that an increase in age can directly increase people's religiosity and is independent from the influences of other factors. However, in modern society, these kinds of effects are relatively small.

Different residential areas also have a significant influence on the general religiosity that people have. People who live in cities tend to have a weaker religious sense ( $\beta = -.106$ ). However, while people living in towns tend to have a weaker religious sense than people living in villages, this difference is not statistically significant. Cities generally have a greater tendency towards secularism. Not only is modern education more developed in cities, but also many other social institutions tend to promote secular humanistic ideas. For instance, newspaper, magazines, movies, community groups, and government organizations all share characteristics of secularism. However, in cities, religious organizations, especially those that are more institutionalized, tend to be more active. These religions have an opposite influence from the influence of secularism. For these reason, even though the dummy variable representing the sole effects of different religious organizations was significant, it was not substantial. Most towns are centers of religious organizations rather than cities; therefore, religious attitudes of people are relatively less influenced by secularism.

The variables discussed above all have net effects on general religiosity, except for the dummy variable of towns. The variance explained of the whole function was 15%. According to the analysis in the introduction, we included the sense of alienation in the regression function. We discovered that the variance explained of the whole function significantly increased, to 17%. To put it differently, after adding the 3 variables of the sense of alienation, the function becomes more meaningful. Various independent variables generally maintain their sole effects. Most of the other coefficients of standard regression were close to the original values before including the sense of alienation. On the other hand, the three new variables had actual effects on general religiosity. More importantly, the meanings of these results were comparably complicated. Based on the statistical results, when we take the sense of alienation as the factor behind general religiosity, we discover that people who have a weaker sense of normlessness also have a stronger religiosity. On the other hand, the stronger

one's sense of powerlessness or the sense of meaninglessness, the stronger one's religious sense. The reason why different constructs of the sense of alienation have different influences on religious sense is worth paying attention to. Moreover, the sense of normlessness also has different effects on religious sense and the variable of seeking help from gods. While it has a negative impact on religious sense ( $\beta = -.089$ ), it has a positive influence on the variable of seeking help from gods ( $\beta = .157$ ). The sense of normlessness mainly refers to an individual's doubts on the operation of social norms. In Taiwan, because of social change, although the existing social norms continue to operate all the while, in many situations, the norms were uncertain and even inconsistent. Furthermore, based on the questions about the sense of normlessness examined in this study, we can see that people have different feelings towards normlessness. People who have a stronger sense of normlessness tend to refer to uncertainty concerning interpersonal relationships and attribute success in career and becoming wealthy to luck. These people have less religious sense. We may consider the formation of normlessness as a phenomena relating to the secularization and weakening of religion. Since religions, especially those that focus on folk beliefs, like gods and ghosts as well as other forces concerning rewards and punishment, gradually become insufficient in providing norms for members of society. Therefore, people who have a stronger sense of normlessness also have weaker beliefs in gods and ghosts. In other words, their general religiosity is weaker. Conversely, from the negative value of the standard regression coefficient, the weaker the sense of normlessness, the stronger one's religious attitudes. When people feel that society has some norms and rules to follow, their views about gods and ghosts as well as their religious attitudes are stronger. However, if we reverse the cause and effect, religion can also weaken people's sense of normlessness, which suggests that religion tends to provide some norms for society. Because we have not confirmed the cause and effect relationship between normlessness and general religiosity, the above two views cannot be confirmed, though both views seem reasonable.

On the other hand, the effects of the sense of powerlessness are overall simpler. People who have a stronger sense of powerlessness also have a stronger religious sense. When individual feel powerless, they are more likely to seek religious help. In terms of organizations, participating in religious organizations can decrease or eliminate one's sense of powerlessness (Zurcher and Snow,

1981). A person's sense of belonging and usefulness can be increased through involvement in religious organizations as well as taking part in activities. For these reasons, people who feel powerlessness tended to have stronger religious attitudes. Religious beliefs can help people rebuild their confidence through their feelings regarding the power of gods as well as ghosts and spirits. When people feel powerless, especially when they think that they do not have any way to effectively alleviate these feelings, they tend to turn to gods and ghosts and seek help from religion. On the other hand, one may say that an individual will feel small and powerless after undergoing religious conversion and having the resulting stronger belief in gods. This explanation seems plausible for believers of institutional religions who hope to attain salvation and liberation. However, this explanation is less acceptable when we consider the questions concerning the factor of powerlessness, i.e., "people like us can also affect the development of society if we voice our opinions." Even though this kind of religious belief in question can lead believers to feel small and powerless, the sense of powerlessness is towards a god or Buddha, but not powerlessness towards social affairs. The sense of powerlessness can be a cause facilitating general religiosity, but not the effect of it. When we consider how religious affiliations affect different kinds of religious attitudes, how followers of folk religion have a stronger religious sense, we say that people do not believe in different religions because of different kinds of religious attitudes. In contrast, the differences in their beliefs should result after people convert to a different religion. By the same token, the powerlessness can be a cause, not an effect. However, this kind of cause and effect relationship is not very straightforward. Perhaps, the relationship is merely a correlation.

The sense of meaninglessness has a significant influence on general religiosity. People who have a strong sense of meaninglessness also tend to have a stronger religious sense. Religion originally functioned as providing meaning for people. When people feel doubtful about the meaning of life, they will enthusiastically seek an explanation for their lives. Simply said, when people feel empty and confused, they tend to seek answers from religion. Conversely, if we hypothesize that religious attitudes bring about the sense of meaninglessness, we can say that religious beliefs or beliefs in gods and ghosts lead people feel that various aspects of their life are incomprehensible. This view seems to suggest that religion tends to weaken people's ability to adapt to society.

Even though the results of the regress analysis cannot prove a cause and effect relationship, based on the results, we can only affirm that the sense of normlessness is negatively correlated with religious attitudes, while the sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness are positively correlated. However, in considering that religion provides some support for people to adapt to their environment, it is clearly difficult to say that a stronger religious sense leads to a stronger sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness. To put this differently, it is highly possible that the sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness can lead people seek assistance from religion in order to adapt to living in society. As for how the sense of normlessness can have a negative influence on general religiosity, the reason could be that normlessness and the lack of norms and rules can be a kind of secular tendency. Whether this is true or not, the cause and effect relationship between the sense of alienation and religiosity need to be further clarified in further research. Based on the present data, we can at least point out that the sense of alienation is indeed significantly related to general religiosity.

In terms of the tendency to “seek help from gods”, Christians and believers of folk religion have a significantly stronger tendency than Buddhists and people of no religion. Conversely, education tends to have negative impact on these kinds of attitudes. As we have not included the sense of alienation, education has the strongest influence on one’s seeking help from gods. After we included the three factors of alienation, education and the sense of powerlessness have similar and direct effects. In other words, as the number of years of education increases, one’s attitudes towards seeking help from the gods’ are weaker. This phenomenon seems to be similar to how education influences general religiosity and since modern education is loaded with ideas of secular humanism, people who have received formal education for a longer period of time have stronger tendencies towards these ideas. Nonetheless, since seeking help from gods seems more concrete, people who do so tend to have stronger beliefs in gods, which was closely related to a person’s psychological state. Psychologically, these kinds of people should have stronger inclination to accept help from gods and ask for directions from gods. Buddhists emphasize self-practice. ‘Pure’ Buddhists do not rely on gods’ help. Recently, the esoteric doctrine from Tibet is becoming increasingly popular in Taiwan. This religion seems to focus on not only the manipulation of supernatural power but also using charms. However, Buddhists in Taiwan mainly

belong to Chinese Mahayana Buddhists, although sometimes this religion also involves manipulation of supernatural power, they mostly emphasize a person's own practice. For these reasons, in seeking help from gods, Buddhists' attitudes are not as strong as people with no religion. What is worth noting is that Buddhists are not completely opposed to the idea of seeking help from gods, since the correlation coefficient is close to zero, not negative. We can basically observe how the characteristics of Buddhism differ from those of other religions by looking at how this religion influences their believers' religiosity as well as attitudes towards seeking help from gods. Among all religious believers, Buddhists have the weakest religiosity sense. Buddhists not only have the weakest tendency to seek help from gods but also on this measure they are almost the same as people who have no religion.

On the other hand, the attitudes towards seeking gods' help of the believers of folk religion and Christians are strong to a certain degree, and yet they are very similar. Believers of these two kinds of religions tend to have strong attitudes towards seeking help from gods. Surely, Christians' views about seeking help from gods are very different from believers of folk religions. Christians insist that God is omnipotent while human beings are small and sinful. They pray to God because of their reverence; however, Christians also sought to be divine. They do not use other concrete methods to repay gods. Believers of folk religion also believe in the tremendous power of gods; however, they do not feel small because they admire gods. Basically, their views are more utilitarian (Yang, 1961; Chiu, 1986). For these reasons, our measurements of religious attitudes cannot be limited to a particular religion. While different religious believers get similar scores in our measures, the deeper meanings of their attitudes are vastly different. In terms of the differences caused by the variable of residential area, the attitudes towards seeking help from gods are the strongest in villages, then in towns, while these attitudes are weakest in cities. The differences concerning the attitudes towards seeking help from gods were much greater than the differences concerning general religiosity. In particular, while the effects of the dummy variable of living in town areas on the attitudes towards seeking help from gods were significant, this variable has no significant effects on general religiosity. In other words, there are no significant differences between villagers and town dwellers in terms of their general religiosity. However, town dwellers' attitudes towards seeking help from

gods are weaker than villagers'. This, perhaps, indicates that the secular ideas in towns can influence concrete religious attitudes, whereas they have less influence on abstract ideas about religion. These two religious attitudes are weaker among city dwellers compared to people living in other areas. Based on the value of the regression coefficient, residential area is one of the variables that represents the tendency of secularism. Therefore, the variables of education along with residential area strongly reduce peoples' attitudes towards seeking help from gods.

The influence of sex on peoples' tendency to seek help from gods is significant. Females have a greater tendency on this measure. These results are also similar to the results of general religiosity and, that is, most women have a greater tendency towards religious attitudes and behavior. The factor of age does not have a significant influence on religious attitudes. While people from the older age group are less likely to seek help from gods, such influence is very small.

Compared to background factors other than education, the three variables of the sense of alienation have greater influence on seeking gods' help. Among the three factors concerning the sense of alienation, the most influential factor is the sense of powerlessness, followed by the sense of normlessness. However, the sense of meaninglessness has no significant influence. Ordinary speaking, religion provides people with a system of meaning. This system helps believers to eliminate or reduce the sense of meaninglessness of life. For these reasons, people who have a stronger sense of meaninglessness tend to seek religion. However, with respect to seeking gods' help concretely, believers' requests may not be related to the meanings that religion provides, but rather the power of gods. For these reasons, the sense of powerlessness has the greatest impact on these kinds of religious attitudes. When believers feel that they lack power to solve practical problems, one possible solution is to seek help from the gods they believe in. In this process, what they ask for concerns a direct function of the gods' power, but they do not seek to solve their problems through the meanings that the religious system of gods offers. Likewise, the sense of normlessness can lead to a loss of basis for judgement and decision. Therefore, they are more likely to ask gods to show them where they have gone astray from the right path. When people think that they lack any guidance for actions, they seek assistance from gods in order to make decisions. For believers of gods, this seems a normal and natural thing to do.



In the above, we pointed out that the sense of normlessness can be caused by the process of secularization. For these reasons, the sense of normlessness and general religiosity can negatively impact each other. On the other hand, why can the sense of normlessness strengthen one's attitudes towards seeking help from gods? After contemplation, we might explain the results this way – the secularizing process leads to a succession of changes in the social norms, which in turn result in people feeling strongly that the social norms are fleeting. Thus, they develop a stronger sense of normlessness. This feeling is a consequence of and correlated with general religiosity. However, when people feel normless, they tend to seek out gods which can offer some grounding for the social norms; thus, the sense of normless can increase the possibility that people will seek help from gods.

After we included the three variables of alienation, the variance explained of the whole model increased by half, from 12% to 18%. More importantly, the direct influence of the number of years of education decreased from .248 to .173, which was reduced by .075. Furthermore, the reason that the direct effects decreased was because of the effects of the factors of alienation. On the one hand, the sense of alienation directly influences religious attitudes, while, on the other hand, through the influence of the sense of alienation, education indirectly, negatively affected the attitudes towards seeking help from god. Based on the statistics, the influence of education on the attitudes in question was -.173 (path coefficient). The indirect effects of education through the sense of powerlessness and the sense of normlessness were -.043 and -.032 respectively. The total was -.075, which was not a small number. If we further consider the relationship between the sense of alienation and attitudes towards seeking help from gods based on the results of this statistical analysis, we can discover that the lower one's educational level, the stronger one's sense of alienation, and, the greater one's tendency to seek the gods' help. There is almost no other variable that can have a significant influence on the sense of alienation, except for education which was an important variable that had indirectly, significantly affected the sense of alienation. For these reasons, based on the above analysis, we can generally observe that education, the secularizing forces of education produced effects on religious attitudes which should not be ignored. On the other hand, the sense of alienation facilitates people to maintain some religious attitudes.



## 4. Conclusion

Based on the data of the “Survey on Social Change in Taiwan”, this study provides a complete analysis of the distribution of religious affiliations of Taiwanese people and their religious attitudes. With respect to religious affiliation, we estimated that, among people between the ages of 20 and 70, 65% are believers of folk religions, 11% are Buddhists, 9% are non-religious people, 7% are Taoists, 5% are Christians and 3% are members of other religions. Based on the log-linear model of analysis, the factors that affect the distribution here included residential area, education, sex, and age. Not only are the core effects of these variables are significant, but the interactions between each of these two variables are also significant, except for the interaction between residential area and sex. Statistical analysis results indicate that the findings are generally related to the tendency of secularization. In terms of folk religions, since education is loaded with secular humanistic elements, there is a larger percentage of well-educated people who do not believe in folk religions. Likewise, secular humanistic elements are also latent in the process of urbanization, which significantly affects the number of believers in folk religions. Fewer people believe in folk religion in areas that are more urbanized. On the other hand, although age has a significant influence on affiliations with folk religions, its effects on the influence of folk religion are not clear. While the variable of sex also has an influence, the degree of its influence is very small.

In terms of the distribution of people with no religion, we generally discover a pattern that is opposite to that of believers of folk religions. Briefly speaking, as the educational levels increased, the number of non-religious people also increased. Urbanization has similar effects. Based on the aforementioned effects of education and urbanization, we can generally show that the tendency of secularization leads to not only a decrease in the number of folk religious believers, but also an increase in the number of non-religious people. Also a greater percentage of well-educated people believe in Buddhism and Christianity compared with people with less education. The degree of urbanization is also related to the increase in the number of Buddhists and Christians. This situation is clearly related to the social strata of Buddhism and Christianity and has a complicated and profound relationship with the process of secularism. Traditionally, Chinese Buddhism has

had a stronger appeal for intellectuals. The secular elements in modern education negatively affect modern intellectuals attempting to seek liberation from religion. Perhaps, some basic characteristics of Buddhism, like self-reliance, do not go against modern education. On the other hand, after Christianity was spread to Taiwan, it has had a close relationship with people from the middle class. The central efforts to spread the religion tend to be located in urban areas. With the exception of the special situation in aboriginal societies, which is not included in the present research sample, the center of the development of Christian religion focuses on cities and towns. Because of the influence of secularization, city and town dwellers tend to have weaker sense of traditional religions and culture. For these reasons, there is also more resistance in terms of how people receive Christianity.

The interactions between each of the two variables are significant, except for residential areas and sex. The actual meanings behind these findings indicated that education has different effects on the religious affiliations of people who live in different areas. Based on the analysis, the influence of education is the greatest in cities. Conversely, the influence of urbanization is strongest among people who have less education. Education has greater influence on people who are over 40 than people who are under 40. Furthermore, it has greater influence on females than males. The interactions among age, education, and sex produced different effects on people with no religion. These significant interactions indicate that the operation of various forces that represent the process of secularization is not linear. For example, education has a greater influence on religious affiliations of people from the older age group. On the other hand, the effects of the degree of urbanization have a greater impact on people with less education. This not only reveals the complexity of the operation of different forces of secularization, but also reflects the historical point that the development of education and urbanization in Taiwanese society and culture has different stages.

Based on the results of the factor analysis, from the measures of religious attitudes, we can extract two factors – general religiosity and the tendency to seek help from gods. From the measures of the sense of alienation, we can extract the factors of “normlessness”, “powerlessness”, and “meaninglessness”. Researchers carried out regression analyses by taking the two factors of religious attitudes as

dependent variables and treating background variables, religious affiliations, and the three factors of the sense of alienations as independent variables. The results indicated that the dummy variable of folk religion has the greatest net influence on general religiosity. Briefly speaking, this means that believers of folk religion tend to have a significantly stronger religious sense than other people. The net effects of education come next to those of folk religions, while the directions of the former's effects are exactly opposite. This is the most important characteristic of the change in religion in Taiwan. Because the believers of traditional folk religion are distributed in a vast area, the passing of these cultures in the Taiwanese society has a long tradition, which still remains the main phenomenon of religion in Taiwan. However, folk religion receive a strong, negative impact from modern education, which is loaded with humanistic elements and rational tendencies. In other words, the higher the level of education people have, the less apt they are to believe in folk religions. Moreover, people's views towards gods and ghosts also become weaker. Buddhists and Christians have stronger religiosity, which is still weaker than believers of folk religions. However, the effects of religions are opposite to the influence of education. This shows that the forces of secular, modern education as well as ordinary secular tendencies are opposite to the forces expressed by various religions. In recent years, the difficulties in the development of Christianity can also be closely related to the case in point.

The degree of urbanization produces negative effects on general religiosity. According to the above discussion, urbanization can be seen as a kind of force of secularization. It is expected that urbanization will have negative impact on the general religiosity of people. Age and sex represent the weakest measure in terms of the process of secularization; thus, their effects on general religiosity are also the weakest.

When we take the three factors of the sense of alienation as the causes of general religiosity, we discover that people, who have a stronger sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness, also have stronger religiosity. On the other hand, the sense of normlessness has negative influence on religiosity. People, who have a strong sense of normlessness, have weaker religiosity. When people feel weak and powerless, they seek help from religion. When people feel confused and perplexed, they are more likely to seek out a supernatural system of meanings

from religion. These phenomena facilitate the correlation between the sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness and general religiosity. However, the negative correlation between normlessness and general religiosity can indicate that the cause and effect relationship of the sense of alienation and religious attitudes is opposite. That is to say, since religion can provide people's needs within the norm, people who have a stronger religious sense also have a weaker sense of normlessness. When we examine this further, we discover that, in traditional society, religion has greater control on people's concepts of norms. However, because of the secularization of society, the religious control of norms is gradually weakened, which leads people to feel normless. For these reasons, people who feel normless also have a weaker religious sense.

With respect to seeking help from gods, the effects of the independent variables are similar to their effects discussed above, except for the sense of alienation and whether people are affiliated with Buddhism or not. Forces behind secularization, such as education and urbanization, negatively impact people's tendencies to seek help from gods. The effects of age are not significant. While sex has some effects, its actual meaning is very small. From these findings, we see that secularization has similar effects on the tendencies to seek help on gods as it has on general religiosity. However, Buddhists' attitudes towards seeking help from gods are weak, which reflects a basic characteristic of Buddhism as well as the validity of the variable of seeking help from gods. The effect of the sense of alienation on the tendency towards seeking help from gods is very meaningful. Although people with a stronger sense of normlessness have a weaker religious sense, their tendency to seek help from gods is higher. The meaning lies in that although people do not believe in gods and ghosts, as the norms set by religion disappear, the stronger sense of normlessness leads people to feel uncertain and doubtful, not knowing what norms to adopt. In order to resolve this difficulty, people seek help from gods. Although deep down they do not fully believe in gods, they want to try and see what may happen, especially when most people only partly believe and partly doubt. In other words, even though people may not really believe in the existence and function of gods and ghosts, when they are confused and uncertain, they will ask for advice from gods. The sense of normlessness has the greatest influence on this measure, which is the same as education, while the

direction of their effect is opposite. The sense of meaninglessness has no effect for obvious reason that people seeking help from gods hope to use the power of gods in order to compensate for their own lack of power, or to turn around a critical situation. People who have strong sense of powerlessness tend to have greater tendency to seek help from gods. Under these circumstances, what people ask for is gods' power, which is not related to the meaning established by religious systems. Perhaps, we can say that most people who seek help from gods ask for the direct demonstration of gods' power, but are not seeking power through gaining meaning from a system.

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