

Religion and Music

Does music enhance the spiritual lives of listeners? Are members of particular religious groups especially likely to be disgusted by popular music? What about people who attend church frequently?

This learning module explores these and other relationships between religiosity and music using the Arts and Religion Survey. Completing the module will allow you to learn more about how music shapes our spiritual experiences, as well as how our perception of music is shaped by our religious beliefs.

If you find yourself lost at any point, look to the instructions on the right.

Open your web browser and go to the homepage for the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA).

The 1999 Arts and Religion Survey asked respondents about a variety of issues related to their appreciation for and participation in the arts. In addition, respondents were asked to provide information about their religious beliefs and participation.

Find the Arts and Religion survey on the ARDA website and open it.

You should now see a description of the study. Read through the description and answer the following questions.

1. How many people participated in this survey?

2. How was the sample selected?

Open your web browser.

Go to www.thearda.com

Click on “Data Archive” in the main toolbar.

Click on the “Browse Alphabetically” tab.

Find the “Arts and Religion Survey, 1999.”

Click on the name of this file.

You can look at the questions that were asked in the Arts and Religion survey, as well as the responses given for each question, by viewing the codebook for the dataset

Open the codebook and browse through the questions.

Find the variable MYST_ENC (variable 57).

3. What percentage of respondents reported having a mysterious encounter when they were growing up?

4. Find the series of questions UPLIFT1 through UPLIFT5 (variables 168-172), which ask respondents whether they have felt uplifted in the past year by seeing or hearing something particularly beautiful. Were the respondents more likely to feel uplifted by listening to music or looking at art?

The ARDA can also be used to perform simple analyses of the variables that are included in the datasets. By using the “Analyze Results” tool, you can compare the responses to each question for different types of people.

Perform the “Analyze results” function on variable 105, GRO_MUSI. Use the results of this analysis to answer the following questions.

5. What question is being asked in the variable GRO_MUSI?

Click on the “Codebook” tab.

Scroll through the questions until you find MYST_ENC (variable number 57).

Locate variable number 105, GRO_MUSI, and click on “Analyze Results” below the question.

6. Find the table for frequency of religious attendance. For each of the following rates of attendance, list the **percentage** of respondents who reported that music was **very important** for their spiritual growth.

Every Week: _____

Once or Twice a Month: _____

Never: _____

7. Now, find the table for religious preference. For each of the following religious groups, list the number and percentage of respondents who reported that music was very important for their spiritual growth.

Protestant: _____

Roman Catholic: _____

Jewish: _____

8. Review the other tables for the variable GRO_MUSI. What relationships do you see between other variables and the importance of music for spiritual growth? Choose two variables included in the online analysis of GRO_MUSI and describe their relationships to this variable below.

Now, find the variable that asks respondents whether, in the past six months, they have heard a song that disgusted them. Use the “Analyze” feature to find out more about the characteristics of people who have been disgusted by a song that they heard in the past six months.

Click on the “Search” tab, located next to the “Codebook” tab.

Enter an appropriate search term (such as “disgusted” or “song”) in the text box and press “Search.”

9. Develop a hypothesis about the relationship between religiosity and the likelihood of being disgusted by a song. Do you expect that religious affiliation (the specific religious group to which one belongs) or the frequency of religious attendance is likely to be a more important predictor of being disgusted by music?

10. What religious group's members are least likely to have been disgusted by a song? Most likely?

11. What is the relationship between frequency of religious attendance and the likelihood of being disgusted by a song? Are people who attend religious services frequently more or less likely to be disgusted than people who attend services infrequently?

12. Which variable seems to be more strongly related to the likelihood of being disgusted by a song, religious affiliation or frequency of religious attendance? Was your hypothesis confirmed?

Click on “Analyze Results.”

13. Using the steps you have just learned, perform your own search of the variables in the study to find a variable that deals with playing a musical instrument. Record the variable name, number, and the wording of the question:

14. How are religious affiliation and frequency of attendance related to this variable?

15. What have you learned in the exercises above about the relationship between religion and music? Which seems to have a stronger relationship with music, religious attendance or affiliation?
