

An Atheist

Defends Religion

Why Humanity Is Better Off
with Religion than without It

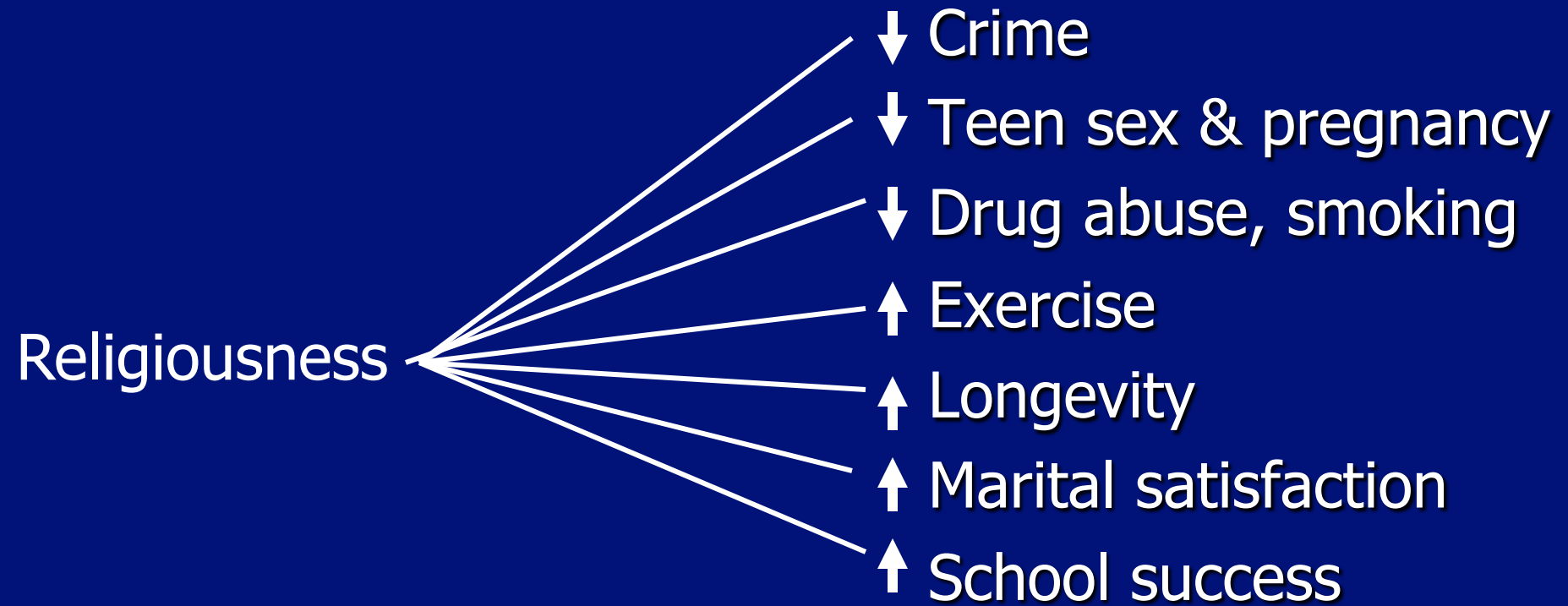
Bruce Sheiman

What Faith Offers

1. Where two or three are gathered (social support)
2. Impulse control (self-control and self-regulation)

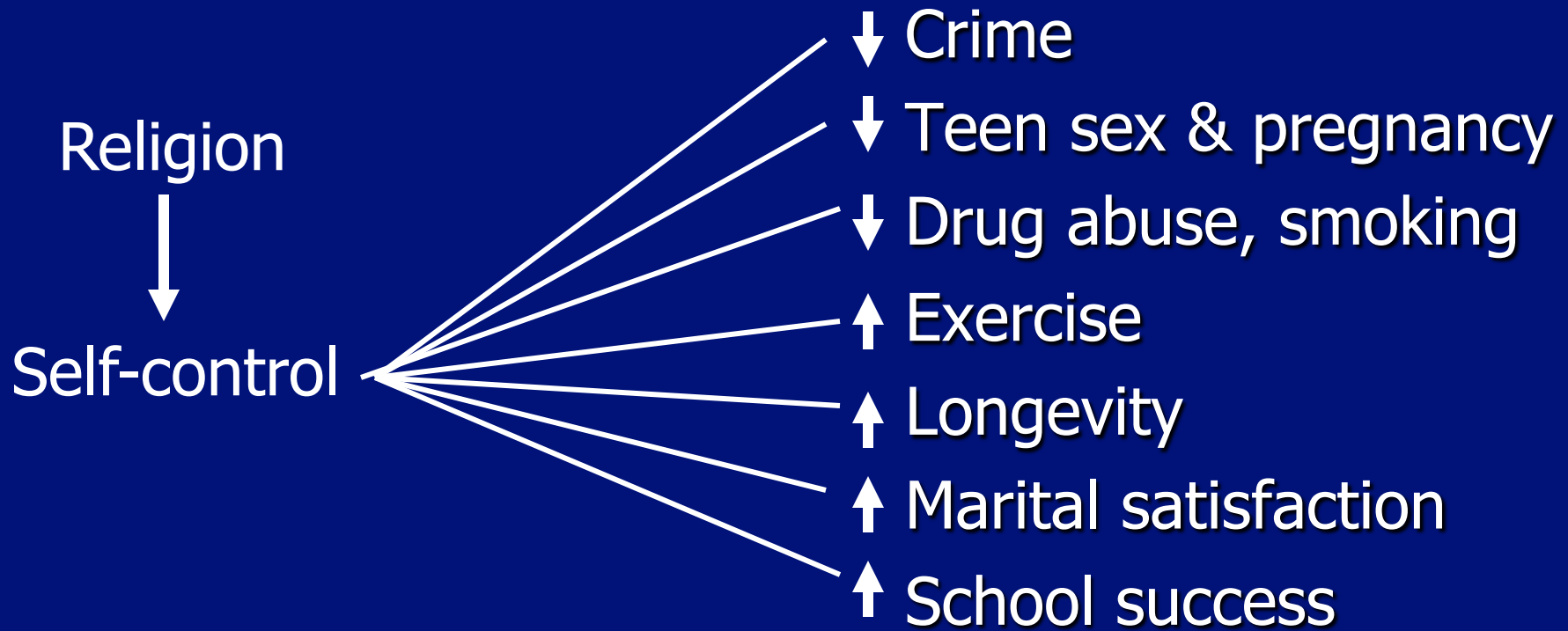
McCullough & Willoughby on religion, self-control, and human flourishing

(Psychological Bulletin 1/09)



McCullough & Willoughby on religion, self-control, and human flourishing

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What Faith Offers

1. Where two or three are gathered (social support)
2. Impulse control (self-control and self-regulation)
3. Something worth living and dying for (meaning and purpose)
4. The good news (ultimate acceptance)
5. Losing/finding one's life (a focus beyond self)
6. An eternal perspective (“terror management”)

Purposeless scientism v. mindless fundamentalism . . . *a 3rd alternative*

- A spirituality of humility that
 - is rooted in a faith tradition that crosses centuries,
 - is “ever reforming”: acknowledging it might be wrong and welcoming scientific insights,
 - and that, at its best,
 - helps makes sense of the universe
 - gives meaning to life
 - opens us to the transcendent
 - connects us in supportive communities
 - mandates morality and selflessness
 - offers hope in the face of adversity and death

Final paragraph:

“Surely, in some ways I’m wrong, you’re wrong, we’re all wrong. We glimpse ultimate reality as in a dim mirror, constrained by our cognitive limits. Perhaps, then, we can draw wisdom from both skepticism and spirituality, by anchoring our lives in a rationality and humility that restrains spirituality with critical analysis, and in a spirituality that nurtures purpose, love, joy, and hope.”

For further information . . .

davidmyers.org

Psychological Science Meets the World of Faith

David G. Myers

(davidmyers.org)

Unused slides follow

Why we believe . . .

- Because faith seems reasonable and likely true
- Because faith is (E.J. Dionne, *Souled Out*)
 - a form of loyalty (to one's parents/tribe/ethnic group/community)
 - an aesthetic judgment (that a well-ordered universe is more attractive than purposeless, randomness)
 - a pragmatic choice (b/c faith nurtures morality, regard for others, a focus greater than self)
 - a psychological comfort (easier to live in a world with a loving God and a hope that death is not the last word)

A Friendly
Letter to
Skeptics and
Atheists



MUSINGS ON WHY GOD IS GOOD
AND FAITH ISN'T EVIL

DAVID G. MYERS

The religious roots of science

- Searching the mind of God: Bacon, Galileo, Kepler, Pascal, Newton, Mendel, and Copernicus wondered *how God did it*
- Our calling
 - To “*love God with our minds*”
 - To search the book of God’s *word* and the book of God’s *works* (with no ultimate allegiance to any human authority or interpretation)
 - so, faith *mandates* scientific inquiry

Why the new antireligious fervor?

- Reaction to conservative religion's perceived *antagonism to science*:
 - stem cell research
 - understanding of sexual orientation
 - evidence of global climate change (58% unaffil; 34% white evang)
 - teaching of evolution
- Religion's contribution to *violence*
 - 9/11 terrorist martyrs; Middle East
 - Pres. Bush: "God would tell me 'George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq.'"
- Assumption: New explanations of religion (evolutionary, neuroscientific, cognitive, and socio-cultural) *explain religion away*



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Journal of Economic Psychology

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/joep

Religion and trust: An experimental study [☆]

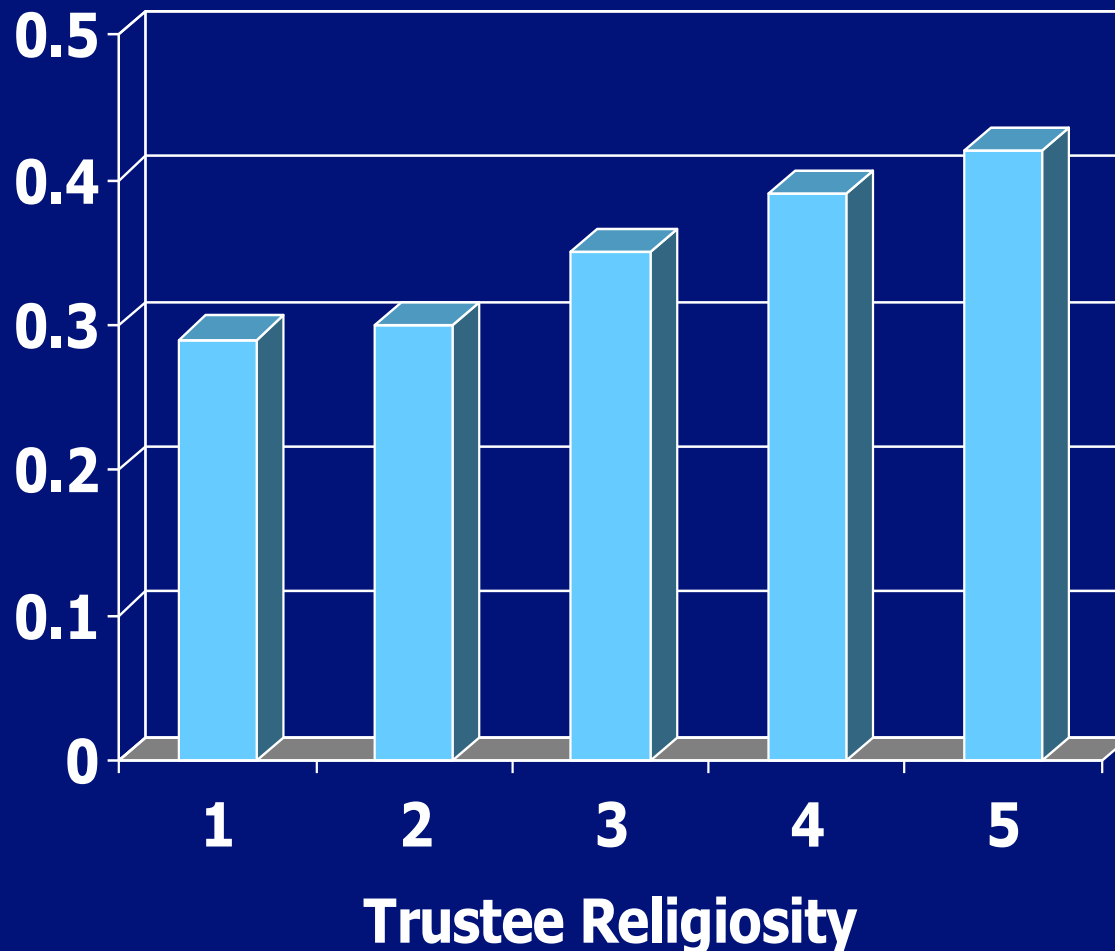
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^a Nottingham University Business School, The University of Nottingham, Nottingham NG8 1BB, UK

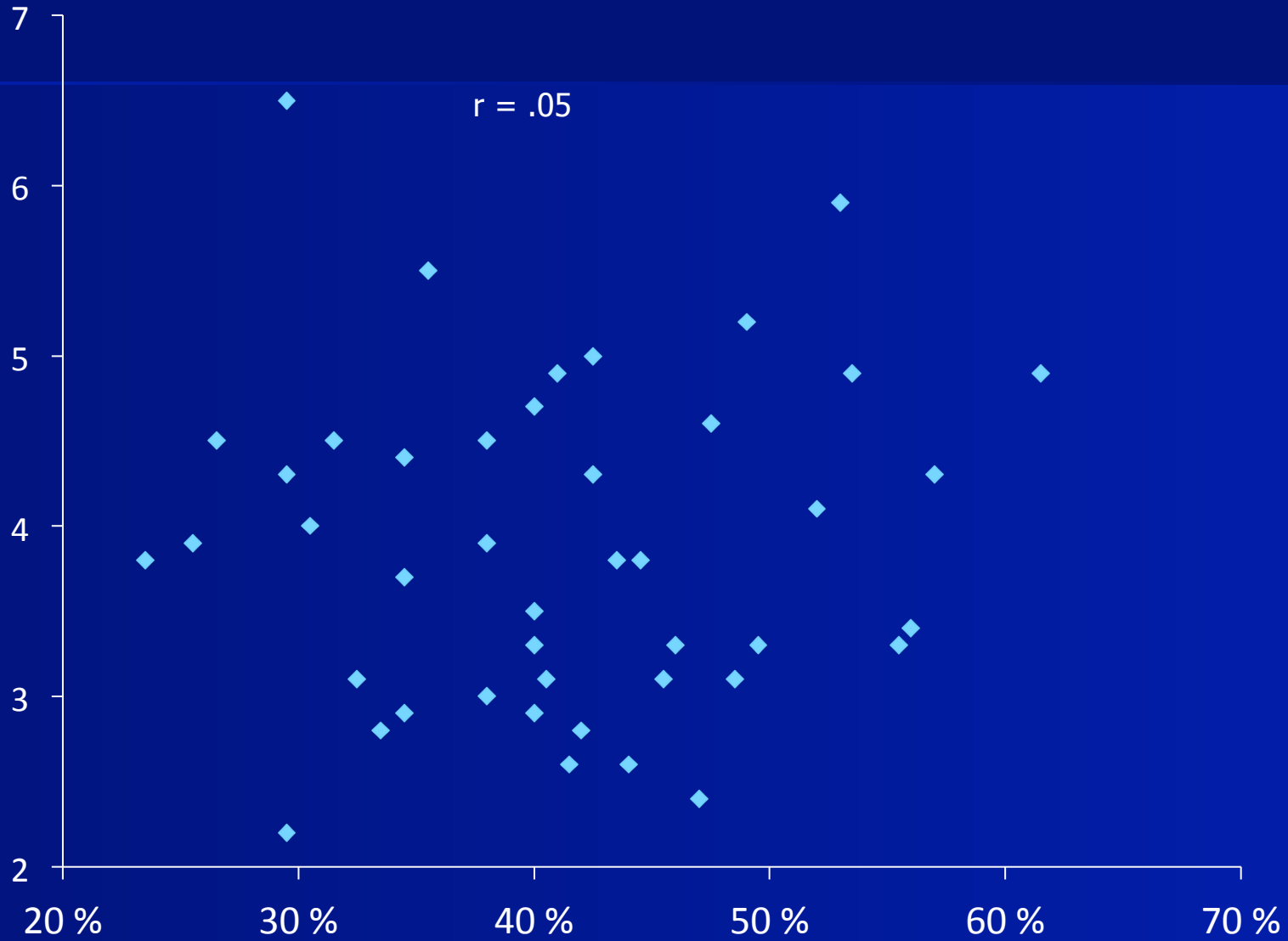
^b Department of Economics, European University Viadrina, 15207 Frankfurt (Oder), Germany

Trust/investment game:

- German participants given points (worth Euros)
- For every point given to "Trustee" the value was tripled, and any portion could be returned the "Truster"
- Trustee attributes disclosed, including religiosity

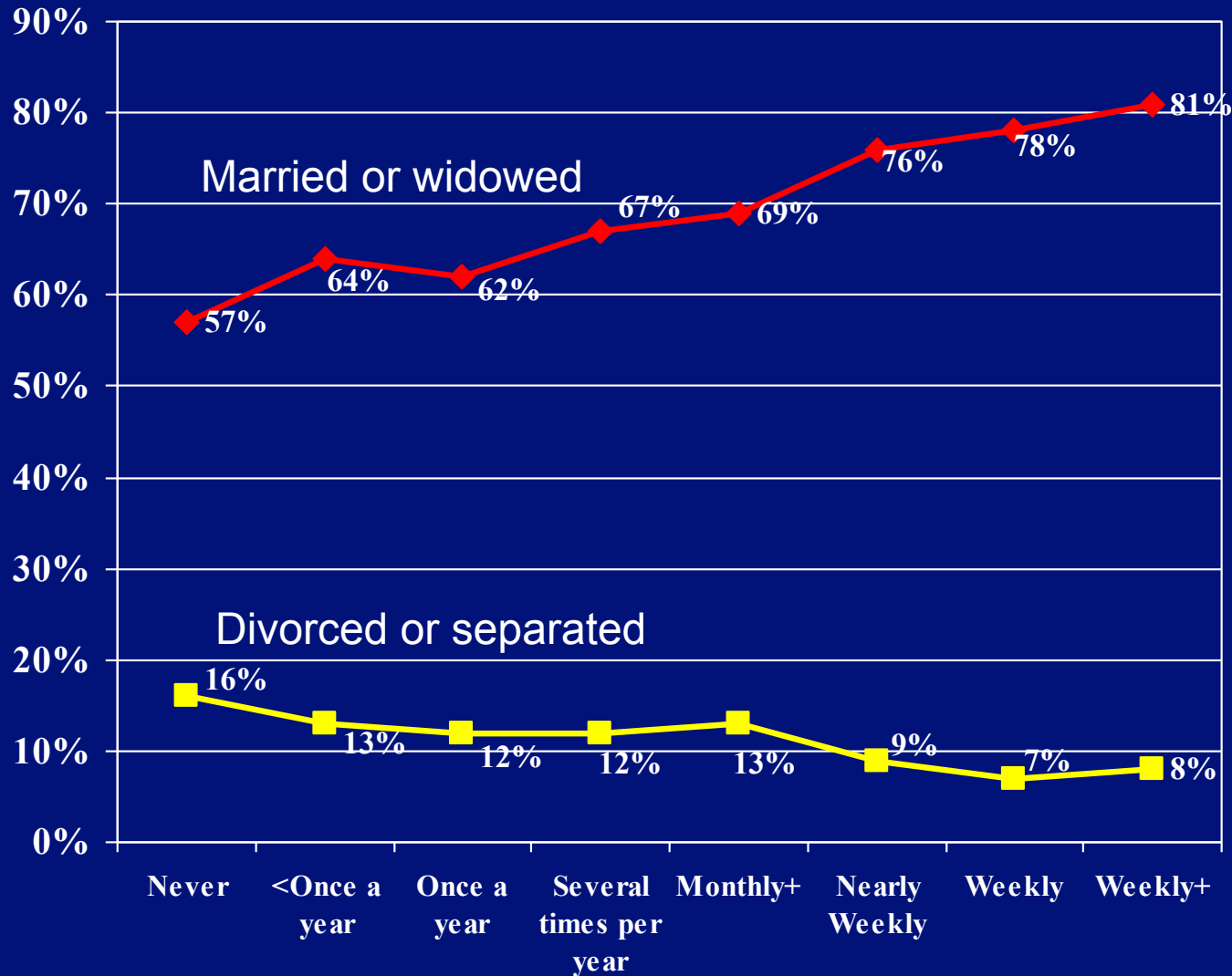


Divorce Rate



Marital Status, by Religious Attendance

(n=52,545, NORC, 1972-2008)



Research Article

Neural Markers of Religious Conviction

Michael Inzlicht,¹ Ian McGregor,² Jacob B. Hirsh,¹ and Kyle Nash²

¹University of Toronto Scarborough and ²York University

“Religious conviction is marked by reduced reactivity in the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), a cortical system that is involved in the experience of anxiety. . . . These results suggest that religious conviction [acts] as a buffer against anxiety. . . .”

James Gregory Public Lectures



**Psychological Science
Meets the World of Faith**

David Myers
Professor of Psychology, Hope College

A Friendly
Letter to
Skeptics and
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MUSINGS ON WHY GOD IS GOOD
AND FAITH ISN'T EVIL

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A
*Quiet
World*

*Living
with
Hearing
Loss*

DAVID G. MYERS

"The tide runs explosive, but this is one of the most compassionate religious books published this year." —*Dust on Fire Press*

WHAT GOD HAS
JOINED TOGETHER
THE CHRISTIAN CASE
FOR GAY MARRIAGE



David G. Myers and
Letha Dawson Scanzoni



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T H E

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS



DISCOVERING
THE PATHWAY
TO FULFILLMENT,
WELL-BEING,
AND ENDURING
PERSONAL JOY

DAVID G. MYERS, PH.D.

"BURSTS WITH THOUGHT-PROVOKING, INNOVATIVE MATERIAL... IF THERE WERE A TEXTBOOK ON THE SUBJECT OF HAPPINESS, THIS WOULD BE IT." *Publishers Weekly*

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intuition

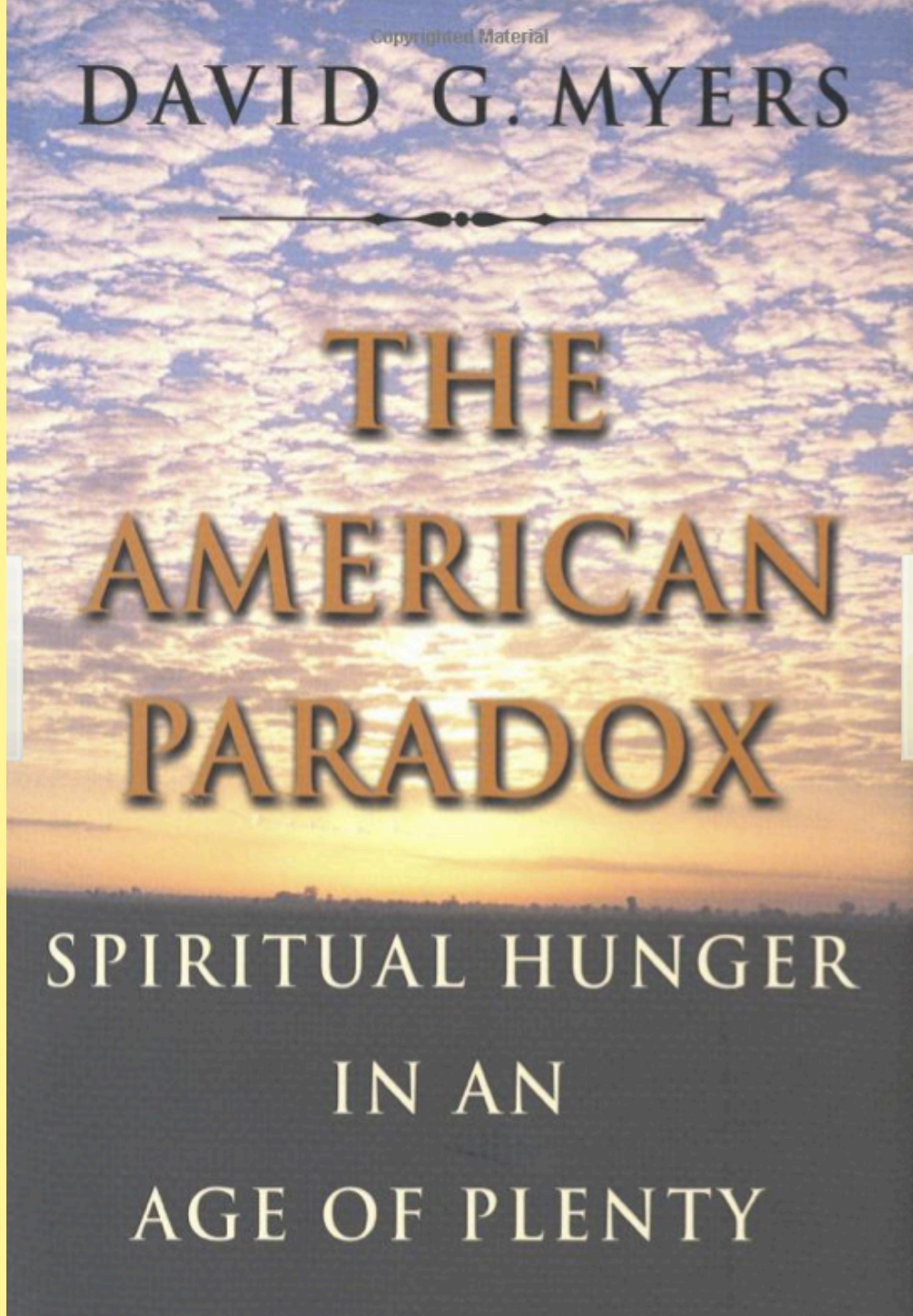


Its
powers
and perils

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THE AMERICAN PARADOX



SPIRITUAL HUNGER
IN AN
AGE OF PLENTY

James Gregory Public Lectures



**Psychological Science
Meets the World of Faith**

David Myers
Professor of Psychology, Hope College

The relationship between religion and cardiovascular outcomes and all-cause mortality in the women's health initiative observational study

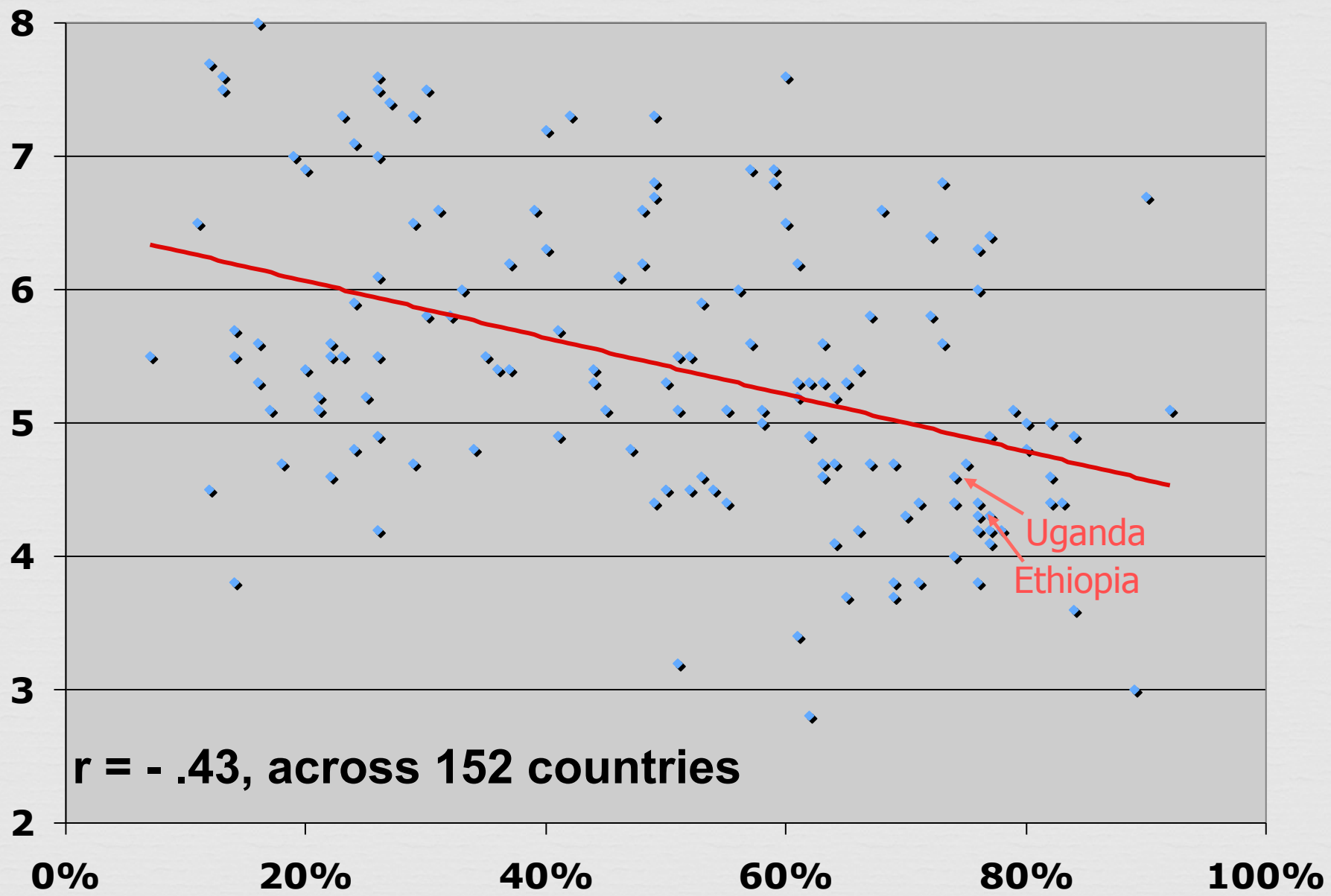
Eliezer Schnall^{a*}, Sylvia Wassertheil-Smoller^b, Charles Swencionis^c, Vance Zemon^c, Lesley Tinker^d, Mary Jo O'Sullivan^e, Linda Van Horn^f and Mimi Goodwin^b

- A National Institutes of Health study followed 92,395 women, over eight years.
- After controlling for many factors, those attending religious services weekly or more experienced a 20 percent reduced risk of death during the study period.

Life Today

(0 = worst possible to 10 = best possible)

Gallup World Survey, 2006-2008



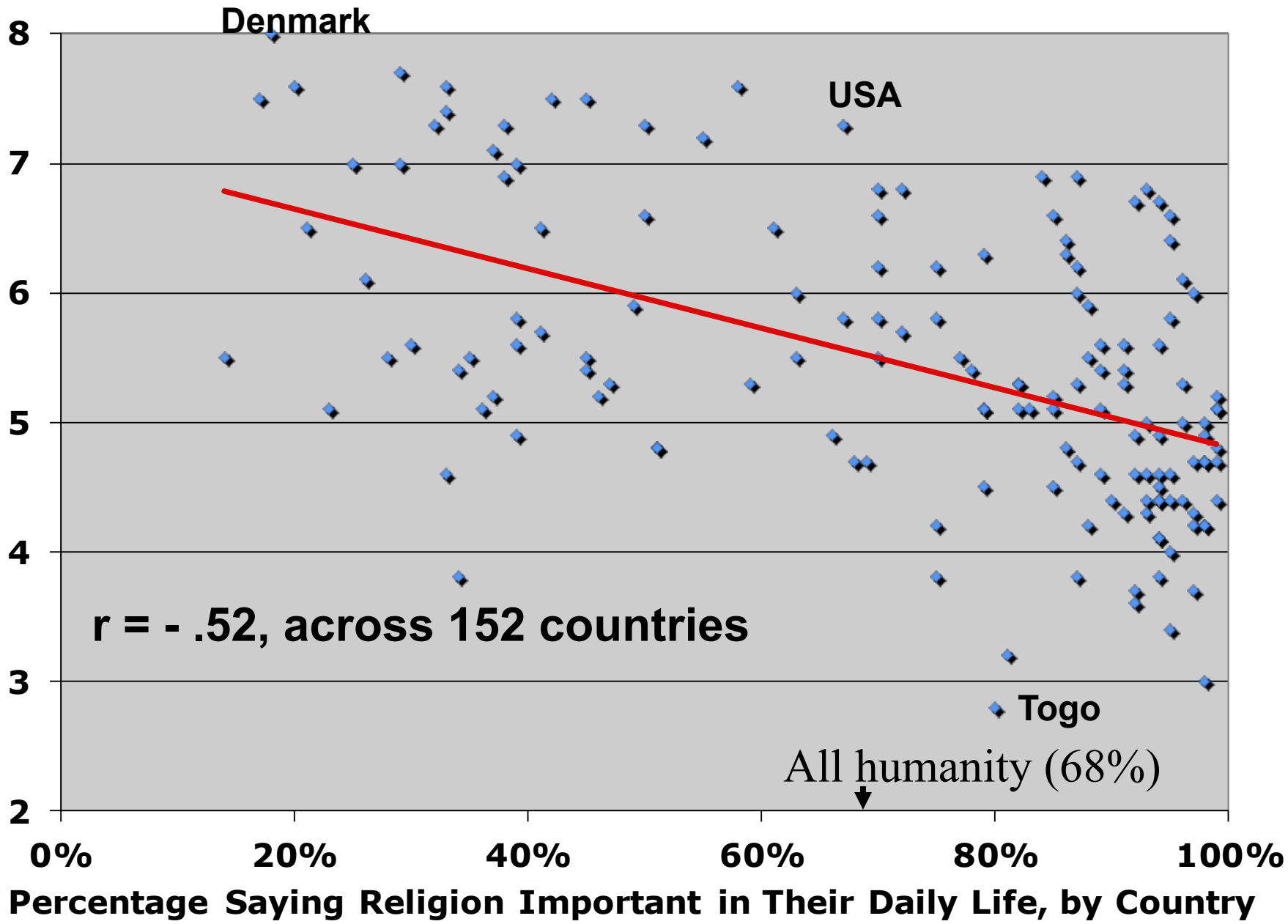
r = - .43, across 152 countries

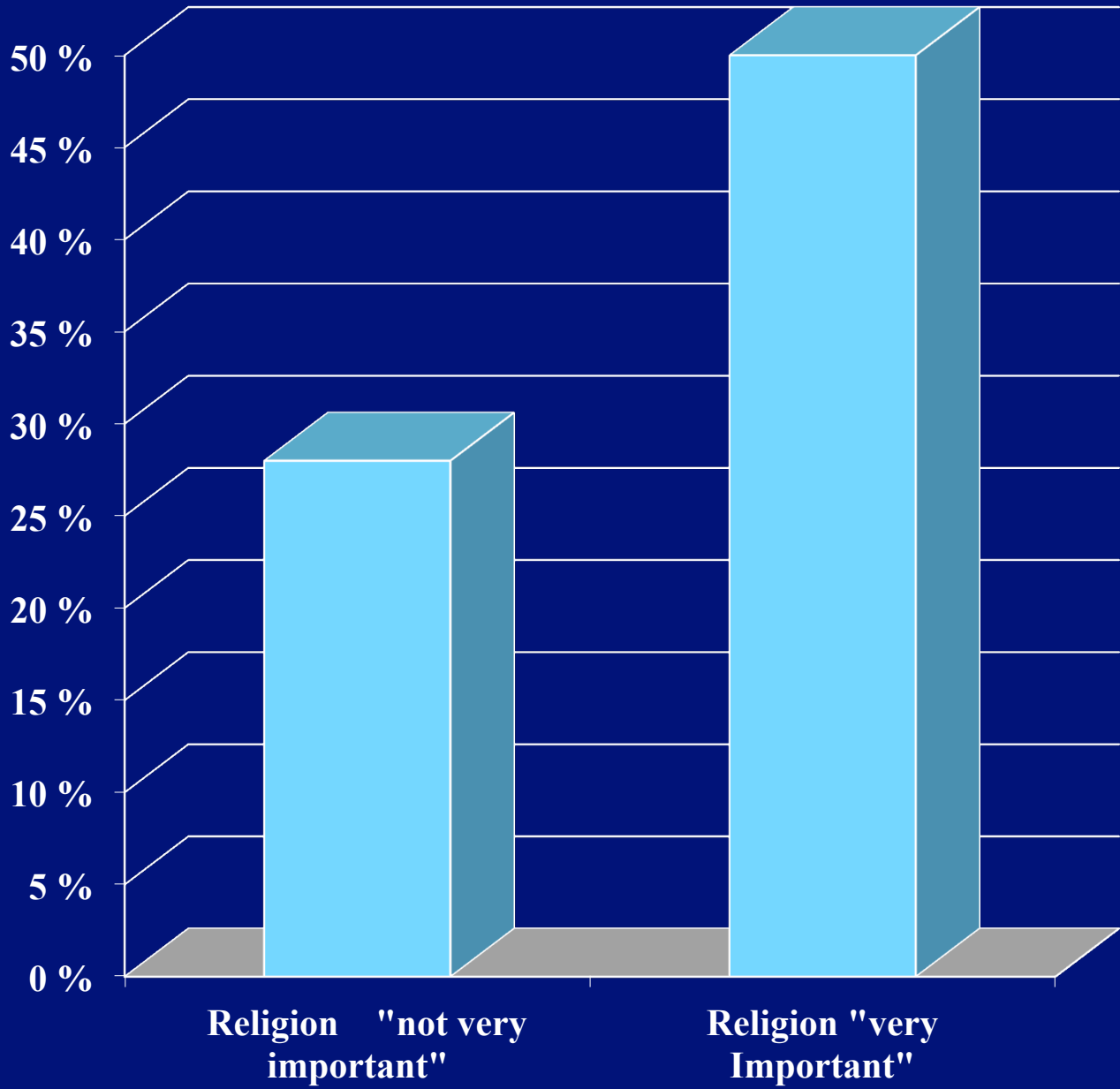
Percent Attending Religious Service Past 7 Days

Life Today

(0 = worst possible to 10 = best possible)

Gallup World Survey, 2006-2008





■ Charitable & social service volunteering (Gallup, 1989)

RELIGIOSITY INDEX AND NATIONAL INCOME

