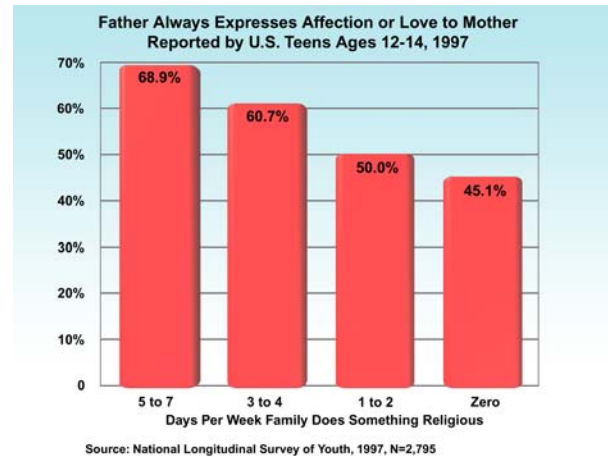
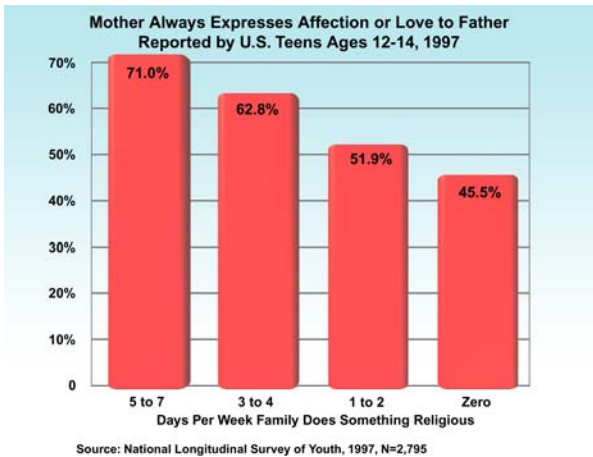


Parents in Religious Families with Teens More Likely to Express Affection or Love to Each Other

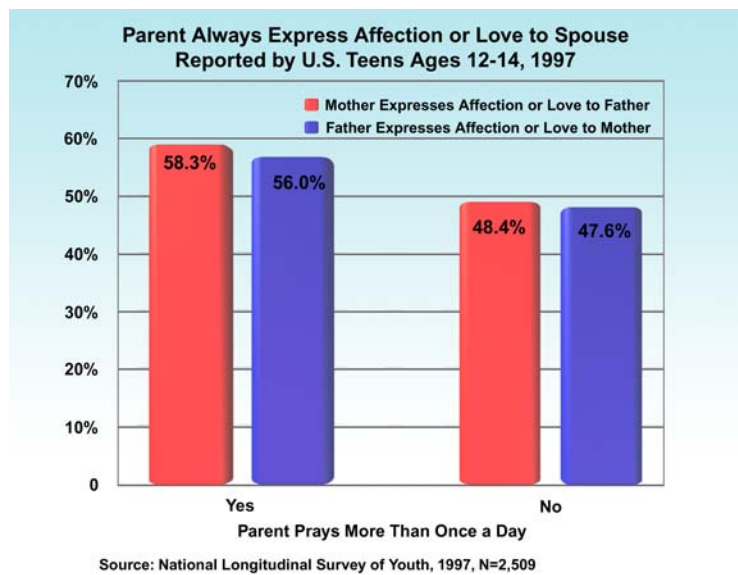
Early adolescents from families that do something religious, such as attend religious services, pray or read scripture together — even occasionally — are more likely to report that their parents always express affection or love to each other, according to sociologists with the National Study of Youth and Religion at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Parents of early adolescents who pray more than once a day are also more likely to express affection or love to their spouses.

Seventy-one percent of early adolescents in families that do something religious five to seven days a week say their mothers always express affection or love to their spouses, compared to 46 percent of young people in families that never do anything religious. Early adolescents from more religious families report slightly lower numbers for their fathers: 69 percent of fathers express affection or love, compared to 45 percent for families that never do anything religious. These findings are based on analyses of 1997 data from The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth.



In addition, early adolescents with parents who pray more than once a day are significantly more likely to report that their mothers always express affection or love to their fathers than those with parents who do not pray more than once a day (58 percent compared to 48 percent). The numbers

are similar for fathers: 56 percent compared to 48 percent always express affection or love to their wives.



At the same time, it is worth noting that 8 percent of mothers and 9 percent of fathers in families that do something religious together five to seven days a week express affection or love to their spouses only sometimes, rarely or never. Likewise, 15 percent of mothers and 18 percent of fathers who pray daily express affection or love to their spouses only sometimes, rarely or never. Thus, while greater religiosity is associated with an increase in spousal expressions of love and affection, it by no means guarantees it. A minority of highly religious parents of early adolescents appears to express little or no love or affection to their spouses.

The National Study of Youth and Religion, funded by Lilly Endowment Inc., is based at the Odum Institute for Research in Social Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This four-year research project began in August 2001 and will continue until August 2005. The purpose of the project is to research the shape and influence of religion and spirituality in the lives of U.S. adolescents; to identify effective practices in the religious, moral and social formation of the lives of youth; to describe the extent to which youth participate in and benefit from the programs and opportunities that religious communities are offering to their youth; and to foster an informed national discussion about the influence of religion in youth's lives to encourage sustained reflection about and rethinking of our cultural and institutional practices with regard to youth and religion.

Analysis of the data was completed by Christian Smith and Phillip Kim. Christian Smith is professor and associate chair of sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Phillip Kim is a Ph.D. graduate student in sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997) (NLSY97) is a nationally representative survey documenting the transition from school to work of youth living in the United States who were between 12 and 16 years old as of Dec. 31, 1996. These analyses focused on early adolescents, ages 12 to 14 years old. Reports of religious behavior are based on the parent surveys, where the questions were asked: “In a typical week, how many days from 0 to 7 do you do something religious as a family such as go to church, pray or read the scriptures together?” and “I pray more than once a day” (True/False). Reports about parental relationships are based on the youth surveys, which included the following question about mothers and fathers: “Does she (he) express affection or love for him (her)? (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Usually, Always).”

The general term “father” represents both biological male parents and non-biological male parent figures who may instead be present in the household. All of the differences reported here are statistically significant in regression models controlling for age, sex, race, relationship of youth to household parent figure, income, rural/urban residence, region and education of the residential mother.