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"Identifying as Religious" and "Strength of Religious Commitment" Predict Substance Use Rates, but "Type of Religion" Does Not

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Introduction

Previous studies have shown religiosity to predict health outcomes, and some studies have found religious beliefs, religious service attendance, and religious affiliation, all measured in varying ways, to predict substance use. The current study sought to confirm previous findings. If religiosity is found to be a protective factor against substance use that is robust across behaviors and samples, screening and intervention efforts could be enhanced.

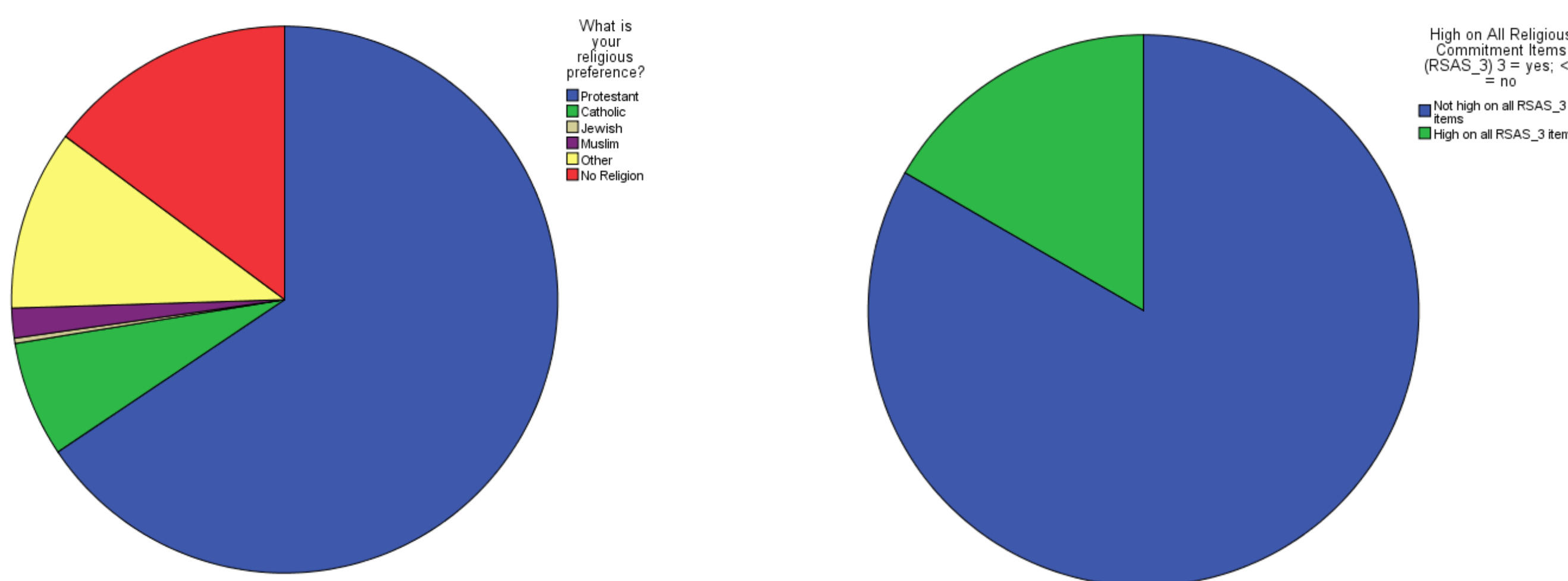


Method

Participants

949 college students

- 68% Male
- 85% White
- 21 countries represented
- 65.6% Protestant
- 17% High in measured religious commitment



Measures and Procedures

All undergraduate students enrolled in the Sona Systems participant pool at a Southern Appalachian University were invited to complete this online survey during spring 2013 and fall 2014. Extra credit was awarded for participation. Cases were omitted if inadequate time was spent (<5 min) or inconsistent answers were given (answering items in opposite directions or entering obviously random responses (e.g., 54 years of school, 54 children).

Logistic regression was used to determine the degree to which Religious Commitment and Religious Affiliation predicted probability of use of various substances. No covariates were used because no demographic variables were significantly related to any of the substance use variables.

Measure	Number of Items	Scoring
Religious Affiliation	1	Percentage
Religious Commitment	3	High/Not high
Illicit drug use	1	Yes/No
Alcohol (past 30 days)	1	Yes/No
Alcohol (moderate)	1	Yes/No
Alcohol (heavy)	1	Yes/No
Smoking	1	Yes/No

Results

- Odds of substance use were significantly higher for the students who did not report being high in religious commitment
- Odds ratios for substance use ranged from 2.67 to 7.64

Substance Use by Religious Commitment (RC)	Religious Commitment (RC)			p
	High N=165	Not High N=777	Odds of Non-High RC Using Compared to High RC OR [95% CI]	
Have you ever used marijuana, cocaine, including crack or freebase, or other street drugs?	20.0%	45.9%	3.4 [2.26 - 5.10]	< .001
Have you had at least one drink of alcohol within the past 30 days?	29.7%	59.2%	3.44 [2.39 - 4.93]	< .001
Have you had more than two drinks of alcohol per day (males) or more than one drink of alcohol per day (females) in the past 30 days?	14.5%	31.0%	2.67 [1.69 - 4.24]	< .001
Have you had five or more drinks of alcohol on one occasion (males) or four drinks of alcohol on one occasion (females) in the past 30 days?	10.9%	31.6%	3.82 [2.29 - 6.37]	< .001
Do you NOW smoke cigarettes?	1.8%	12.1%	7.64 [2.33 - 23.81]	.001

- Odds of substance use was significantly higher for students with no religion as compared to students reporting affiliation as a Protestant
- Students reporting affiliation as Muslim had greater odds of smoking, but lower odds of alcohol use than those reporting Protestant affiliation

Odds of Substance Use by Religious Affiliation	Religious Affiliation				
	Catholic n=61	Jewish n=2	Muslim n=13	Other n=92	No Religion n=136
Have you ever used marijuana, cocaine, including crack or freebase, or other street drugs?	1.19 [0.70-2.05]	Omitted*	0.50 [0.14-1.82]	1.88 [1.21-2.92]**	3.30 [2.33-5.10]***
Have you had at least one drink of alcohol within the past 30 days?	1.25 [0.74-2.13]	0.93 [0.06-14.94]	0.25 [0.07-0.91]*	1.18 [0.76-1.83]	1.78 [1.21-2.62]**
Have you had more than two drinks of alcohol per day (males) or more than one drink of alcohol per day (females) in the past 30 days?	1.21 [0.68-2.14]	2.68 [0.17-43.0]	0.45 [0.10-2.01]	1.17 [0.73-1.89]	1.15 [0.77-1.74]
Have you had five or more drinks of alcohol on one occasion (males) or four drinks of alcohol on one occasion (females) in the past 30 days?	1.29 [0.73-2.29]	2.85 [0.18-45.91]	0.52 [0.11-2.37]	0.95 [0.57-1.58]	1.82 [1.24-2.69]**
Do you NOW smoke cigarettes?	0.59 [0.18-1.96]	11.47 [0.71-186.2]	4.59 [1.39-15.17]**	1.23 [0.58-2.59]	3.11 [1.88-5.14]***

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. *Small sample size caused an erroneously large Odds Ratio

Conclusions

- High Religious Commitment predicts low risk of all types of substance use
- Lacking any Religious Affiliation appears to predict higher risk substance use
- Particular Religious Affiliation was predictive of few areas of substance use

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