Measuring Religiosity and Risk in a Prenatal Population: Attendance, Prayer, Influence or Surrender to Predict Developmental Risk?

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The goal of this study was to determine whether measured surrender to God, religious attendance, prayer frequency, and/or the degree to which religiosity influences daily activities predict health risk and health-protective characteristics.

## BACKGROUND

- Some health benefits of religiosity have attributed to lifestyle variables such as lower rates of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use, and higher rates of marriage among more religious individuals.
- Health risk behaviors are particularly important during prenatal development, as alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use are known to be related to developmental problems in children.

## OBJECTIVE

The goal of this study was to determine whether measured surrender to God, religious attendance, prayer frequency, and/or the degree to which religiosity influences daily activities predict health risk and health-protective characteristics.

## METHODS

**Participants:**
- 249 pregnant women were recruited prenatally and detailed data on religiosity and risk factors were prospectively collected.

**Measures**
- The Surrender Scale (Wong-McDonald & Gorsuch, 2000)
- The Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiosity/Spirituality (BMMRS, Fetzer Institute, 1999)
- Prenatal chart review

## RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Drug Use During Pregnancy</th>
<th>Alcohol Use During Pregnancy*</th>
<th>Smoking During Pregnancy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>χ²</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Direction of Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTENDANCE</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRAYER</td>
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<td>8.43</td>
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<td>Positive</td>
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<tr>
<td>INFLUENCE</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>10.44</td>
<td>.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>SURRENDER</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>8.65</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Only 5 women reported drinking alcohol during pregnancy

## PREDICTORS

- ATTENDANCE – attendance at religious services (BMMRS item)
- PRAYER – frequency of prayer (BMMRS item)
- INFLUENCE – to what extent does religion influence all areas of life (BMMRS item)
- SURRENDER – the degree to which an individual surrenders his or her will to God and indicates that her or she will follow God even if his or her own plans

## CONCLUSIONS

- All dimensions of religiosity are not equal in their ability to predict health risk or protection. In this prenatal population
- Women reporting any type of influence of religion were more likely to be married
- SURRENDER and INFLUENCE were far more predictive of lower levels of risk (e.g., Drug Use, Smoking) than frequency of attendance or frequency of prayer