

Religion and Deviance at 4 American Universities

by

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Basic Research Question:

What is the relationship between Religion and Deviance

Independent Variables: A Scale of Religious belief and practice
Christian Fundamentalist Beliefs
Religious Context

Dependent Variables: Premarital sexual intercourse
Binge drinking
Marijuana use

Previous Research:

- Stark and Hirschi (1969): No Relationship. “(W)ord spread quickly that kids on their way home from Sunday School were as likely to strip your car as were kids on the way home from the pool hall.”
- Subsequent Research: Individuals who express a strong religious faith and who regularly pray and attend worship, are less likely to:
 - drink alcohol illegally,
 - use illegal drugs
 - exhibit sexual deviance through pre or extra marital activity
- The inverse relationship between religiosity and deviance also seems especially prominent among religiously conservative individuals.

Why?

The Moral Communities Hypothesis

- I suggest that what counts is not only whether a particular person is religious, but whether this religiousness is, or is not, ratified by the social environment. The idea here is that religion is empowered to produce conformity to the norms only as it is sustained through interaction and is accepted by the majority as a valid basis for action. ... Religious individuals will be less likely than those who are not religious to commit delinquent acts, *but only in communities where the majority of the people are actively religious.*

The Analytical Questions

Which component of “Religion” ...

(Religiosity, Fundamentalism, Environment)

... best helps us predict:

Premarital Sex

Binge Drinking

Marijuana use

Religiosity

A Scale of:

- Strength of Religious Faith (Non-Existent to Very Strong)
- Frequency of Prayer (< Once/week to Several Times a Day)
- Closeness to God (Not Close At All to Very Close)
- Church Attendance (Never to Weekly or More Often)

Range = 4 to 20

Chronbach's Alpha Measure of Reliability = .844

Davis, J.A., T.W. Smith, and P.V. Marsden. 2004. *General Social Surveys, 1972-2004: [CUMULATIVE FILE]*[Computer File]. ICPSR 04295-v. 2. Chicago, IL: National Opinion Research Center [producer], 2005. Storrs, CT: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut/Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributors], 2006-04-05.

Fundamentalism

A Scale of Six Questions:

I am sure that the Bible contains no errors or contradictions.

It is very important for true Christians to believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God.

Christians should not let themselves be influenced by worldly ideas.

The Bible is the final and complete guide to morality; it contains God's answers to all important questions about right and wrong.

Christians must try hard to know and defend the true teachings of God's Word.

The best education for a Christian child is in a Christian school with Christian teachers.

Response Choices: "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree"

Range = 6 to 30

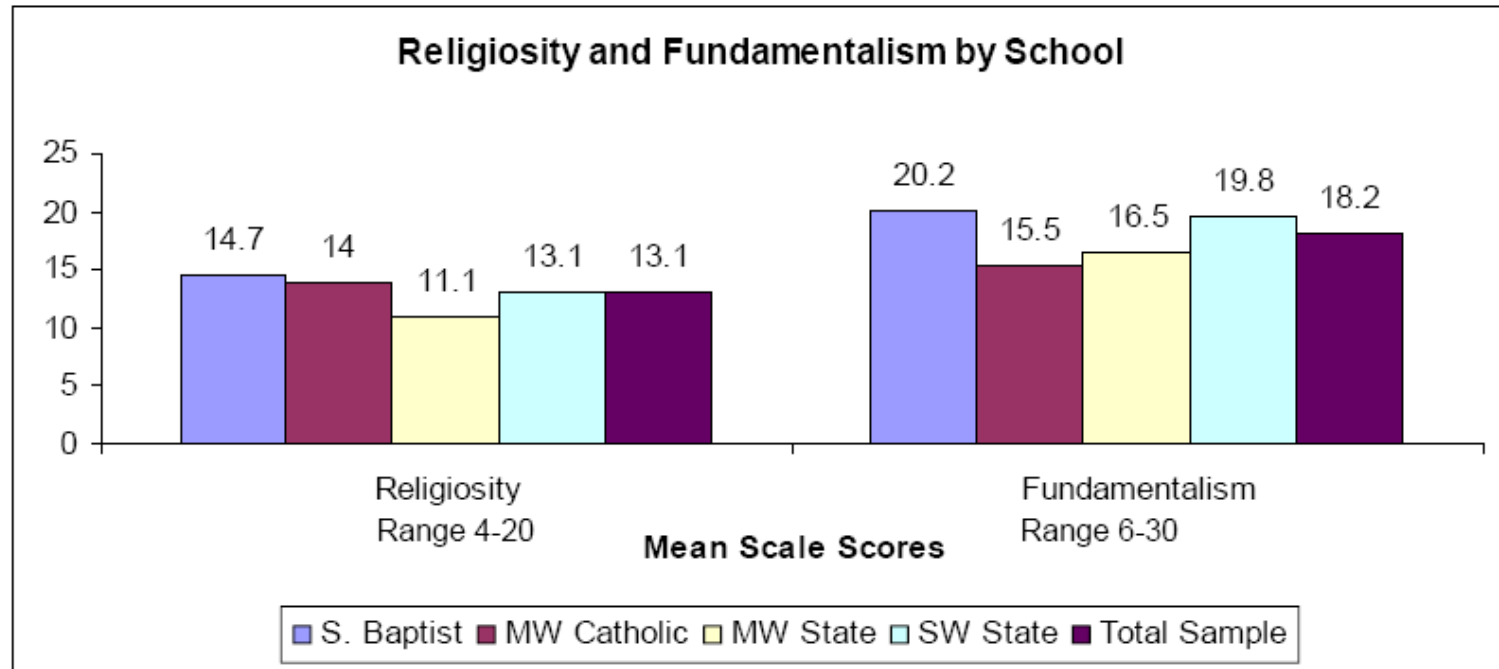
Chronbach's Alpha Measure of Reliability = .861

McFarland, S.G. 1989. "Religious Orientations and the Targets of Discrimination."
Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 28: 324-336.

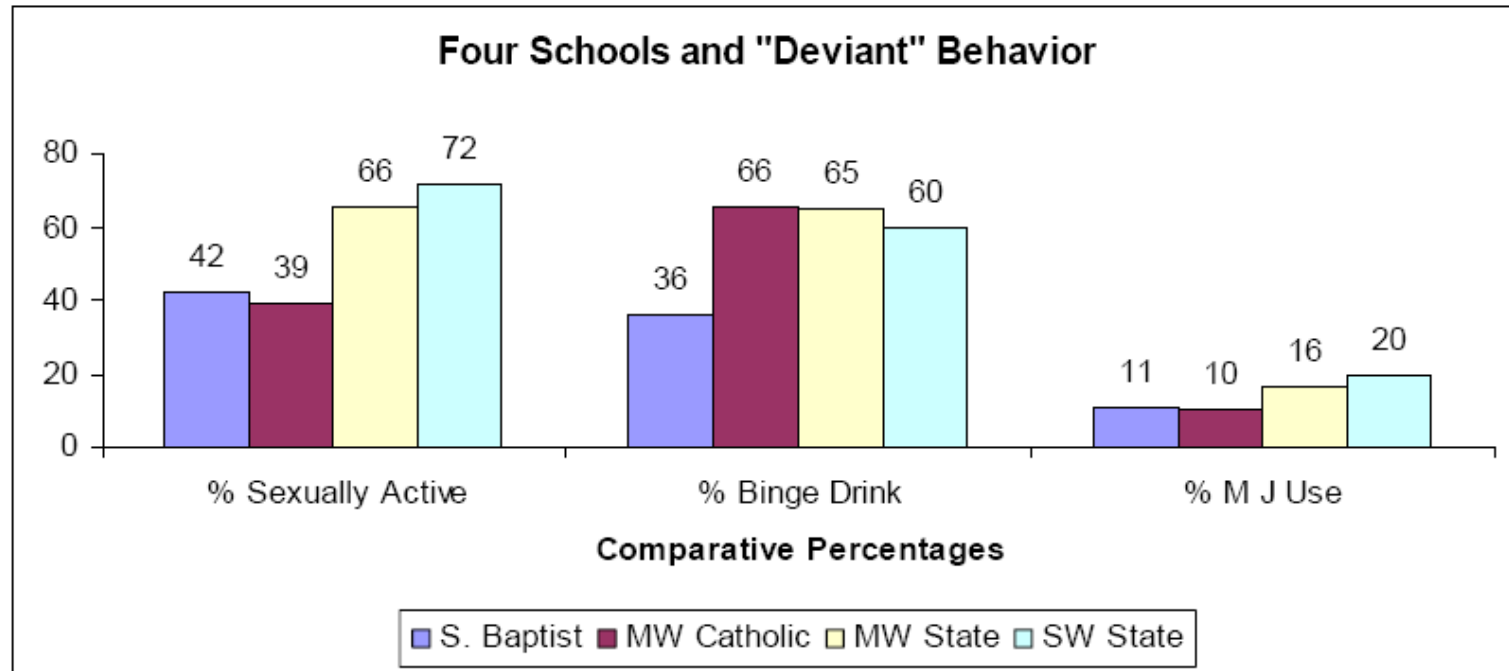
The Sample:
Southern Baptist, Midwest Catholic
Midwest State, Southwest State

- N = 1753
 - Southern Baptist n = 422
 - Midwest Catholic n = 311
 - Midwest State = 497
 - Southwest State n = 523
- 78% ages 18-20
- 60% Female
- 79% White

“How Religious?” How “Fundamental?”



$p < .001$



S. Baptist n = 422
MW Catholic n = 311
MW State n = 497
SW State n = 523

Sexually Active = Experienced Sexual Intercourse.
Binge Drink = 5 or more drinks on one occasion,
at least once in the previous month.
M J use = Monthly casual use.

$p < .001$

Context Dominates

Southern Baptist and Midwest Catholic Respondents:

Are much less sexually active

Use marijuana a bit less

Southern Baptist Respondents

Drink much less than any other group.

Future Research:

Examine these behaviors in:

Different “Moral Communities”

And among

Different age categories of respondents