

*Religion, Race, Gender, and Well-Being Among
American University Students.*

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Thank you!

drjkoch.org – Seeking the Moral Community

Background - 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.*

Stark, Rodney. 1996. “Religion as Context: Hellfire and Delinquency One More Time.” *Sociology of Religion* 57(2): 163-173.

The Sample

- Six American Public Universities n= 2394
 - Three American Christian Universities n= 759
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- 82 % Ages 18-20
 - 67 % White
 - 61 % Female
- Total N = 3153
Response Rate = 75 %

The Research Question:

To what extent is Well-Being a function of Gender, Race, and (three measures of) Religion.

Variables, Scales, and Results from Surveying Students

- Binary independent variables:

Gender (Sex): Male and Female (F = 1)

Race: Anglo and Non-Anglo (Non-Anglo = 1)

School: Public vs. Christian (Christian = 1)

- Scale independent variables

Religiosity

A Scale of Eleven Questions:

- Strength of Religious Faith
- Frequency of Prayer
- Saying Grace Before Meals
- Praying for Personal Needs
- Praying for Specific Others
- Praying for Others in General
- Closeness to God
- Beliefs about God
- Personal Beliefs About Jesus
- Belief in Religious Salvation
- Church Attendance

Range = 5 to 52

Cronbach's Alpha Measure of Reliability = .92

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 Three 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.

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

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

Range = 3 to 15

Cronbach's Alpha Measure of Reliability = .91

Binary dependent variable

How often have you attempted suicide?

- Never
 - Once
 - Twice
 - A few times
 - Several times
-
- Scored for analysis as 0, or 1+

Radloff, L.S. (1977) 'The CES-D scale: A self report depression scale for research in the general population'.
Applied Psychological Measurement 1: 385-401.

Scaled dependent variables

Self Esteem

A Scale of Ten Questions:

- On the whole, I am satisfied with myself
- At times I think I am no good at all
- I feel that I have a number of good qualities
- I am able to do things as well as most other people
- I feel I do not have much to be proud of
- I certainly feel useless at times
- I feel that I'm a person of worth
- I wish I could have more respect for myself
- All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure
- I take a positive attitude toward myself

Response Choices: “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”

Range = 10 to 50

Cronbach's Alpha Measure of Reliability = .86

Depression

A Scale of 6 Questions:

To what extent do you currently feel you cannot eat; your appetite is poor?

To what extent do you currently feel you cannot shake off the blues even with the help of family or friends?

To what extent do you currently feel everything is an effort?

To what extent is your sleep currently restless?

To what extent do you currently feel sad?

To what extent do you currently feel you cannot “get going?”

Response choices:

- Rarely or none of the time (< 1 day a week)
- Some or a little of the time (1-2 days a week)
- Occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3-4 days a week)
- Most all the time (5-7 days a week)

Range = 0 to 18

Chronbach' s Alpha Measure of Reliability = .88

Radloff, L.S. (1977) 'The CES-D scale: A self report depression scale for research in the general population'. Applied Psychological Measurement 1: 385-401.

Suicide Ideation

A Scale of 2 Questions:

To what extent do you currently think about hurting yourself?

To what extent do you currently think about taking your own life?

Response choices:

- Rarely or none of the time (< 1 day a week)
- Some or a little of the time (1-2 days a week)
- Occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3-4 days a week)
- Most all the time (5-7 days a week)

Range = 0 to 6

Chronbach' s Alpha Measure of Reliability = .80

Radloff, L.S. (1977) 'The CES-D scale: A self report depression scale for research in the general population'.
Applied Psychological Measurement 1: 385-401.

Table 1. Regressions of Well Being Variables on Independent Variables

	Self Esteem	Suicide Ideation	Depression	Suicide Attempts
Independent Variables				
Gender (F=1)	0.968***	0.079**	n.s.	-0.048**
Standardized Coeff.	0.072***	0.059**		-0.054**
Race (Non Anglo = 1)	n.s	0.087***	0.267*	n.s.
Standardized Coeff.		0.062***	0.037*	
Religiosity Scale	0.034*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Standardized Coeff	0.057*			
Fundamentalism Scale	n.s.	-0.009*	n.s	n.s.
Standardized Coeff.		-0.052*		
School (Christian = 1)	-1.031***	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Standardized Coeff.	-0.073***			
R Squared	0.154	0.174	0.328	0.154

*** p<.001

**p<.01

*p<.05

Summary – Ascribed Characteristics

Gender (Female) is positively associated with self-esteem and suicide ideation; negatively associated with suicide attempts.

Race (Non-Anglo) is positively associated with depression and suicide ideation.

Summary – Measures of Religion

Religiosity is positively associated with self-esteem. A positive for religious belief and practice.

Fundamentalism is negatively associated with suicide ideation. A positive for Christian conservatism

Christian School affiliation is negatively associated with self-esteem. We know from other studies that students at Christian schools drink less, use fewer illegal drugs, and engage in far less sexual activity.

Apparently they aren't too happy about it.