

Religion and Deviance at 6 American Universities

by

Jerome R. Koch

Presented to

Sociology 5384
Seminar in Sociology of Religion
Spring, 2020

This research was supported by a generous
grant from the

E.A. Franklin Charitable Trust

(and from viewers like you).

Thank you!

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 – Ever
2+ Sex partners – previous year
Alcohol Use
Binge drinking

Previous Research:

- Differential Association and Reference Group Theory – Edwin Sutherland (1947) Robert Merton (1969)
- 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 and Ongoing Sex

Alcohol Use & Binge Drinking

Hypotheses

- Respondents from Christian Schools will be less sexually active than those at Public Schools
- Respondents from Christian Schools will drink alcohol to a lesser degree than those at Public Schools

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

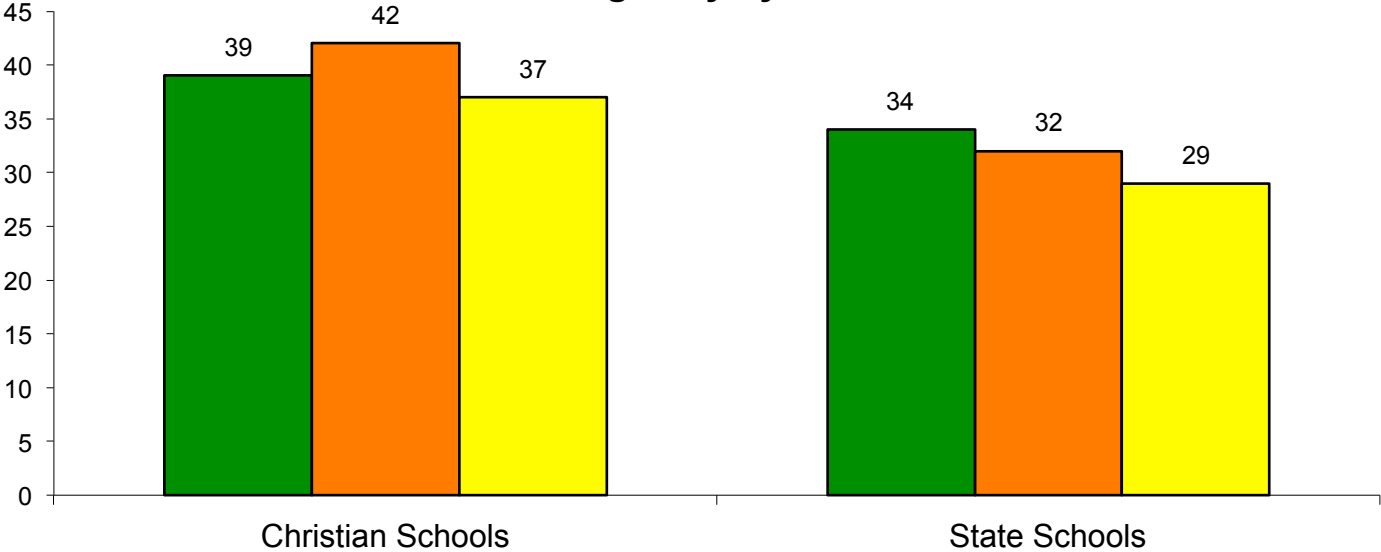
McFarland, S.G. 1989. "Religious Orientations and the Targets of Discrimination." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28: 324-336.

The Sample

- Mid-South Christian University n= 531
 - Mid-West Christian University n= 127
 - South-West Christian University n= 112 (Christian n= 770)
 - Mid-South Public University n= 556
 - Mid-West Public University n= 469
 - South-West Public University n = 190 (Public n= 1215)
-
- 85 % Ages 18-20 Total N = 1985
 - 69 % White Response Rate = 76 %
 - 63 % Female

Figure 1

Religiosity by School

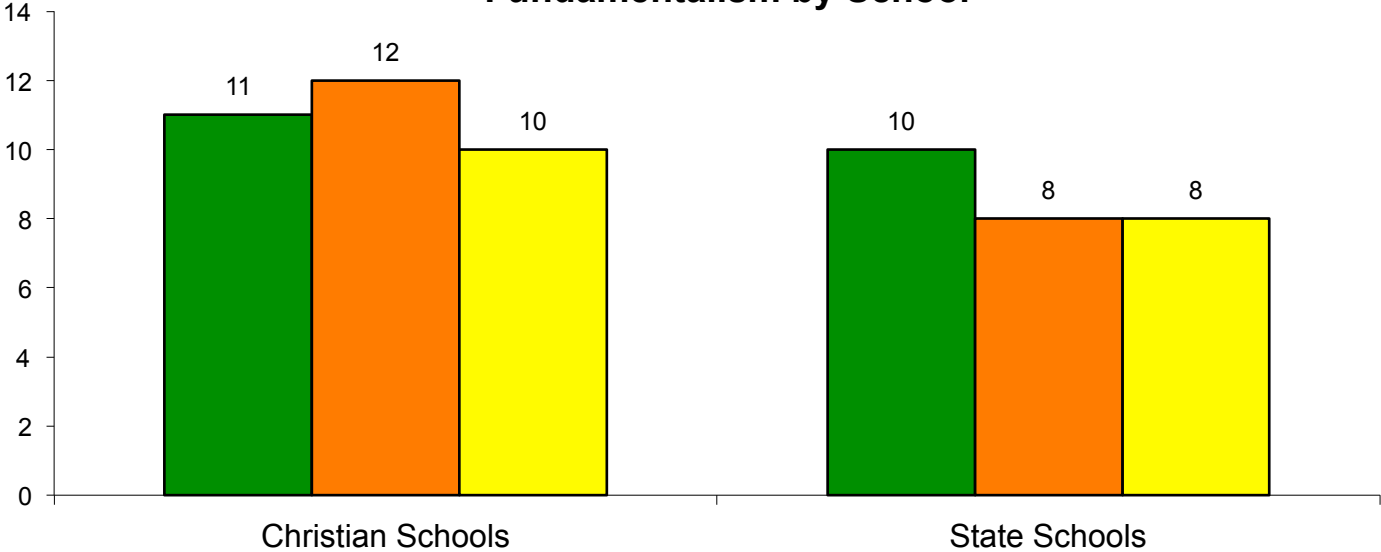


Mean Scale Scores
Range = 5-52
p = < .01



Figure 2

Fundamentalism by School



Mean Scale Scores
Range = 3-15
p < .01

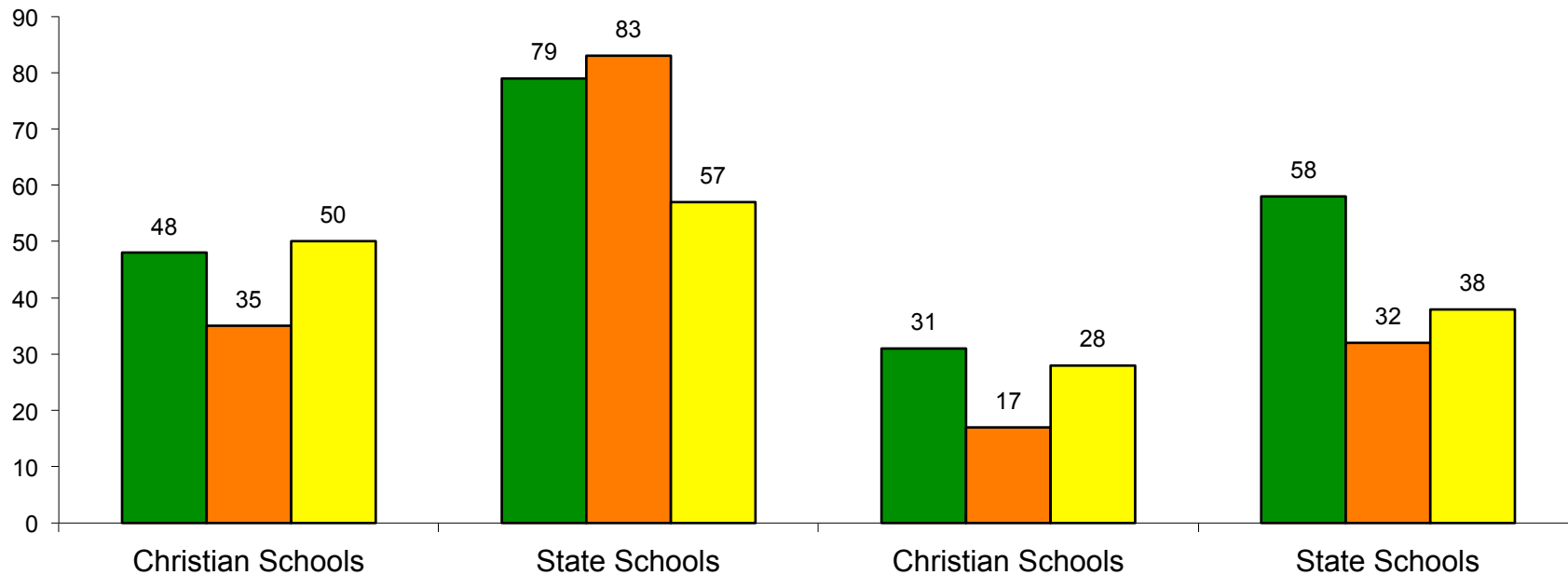


Behavioral Variables

- Current alcohol use: One or more drinks in previous month. Drink = 12 oz. beer; 5 oz. wine; 1.5 oz. distilled spirits.
- Binge drink: 5 or more drinks on one occasion in the previous month.
- Had sexual intercourse – yes or no.
- 2 or more sex partners in the previous year – yes or no.

Figure 3

Alcohol Use by School



Current Use

Binge Drink

p < .01

Comparative Percentages

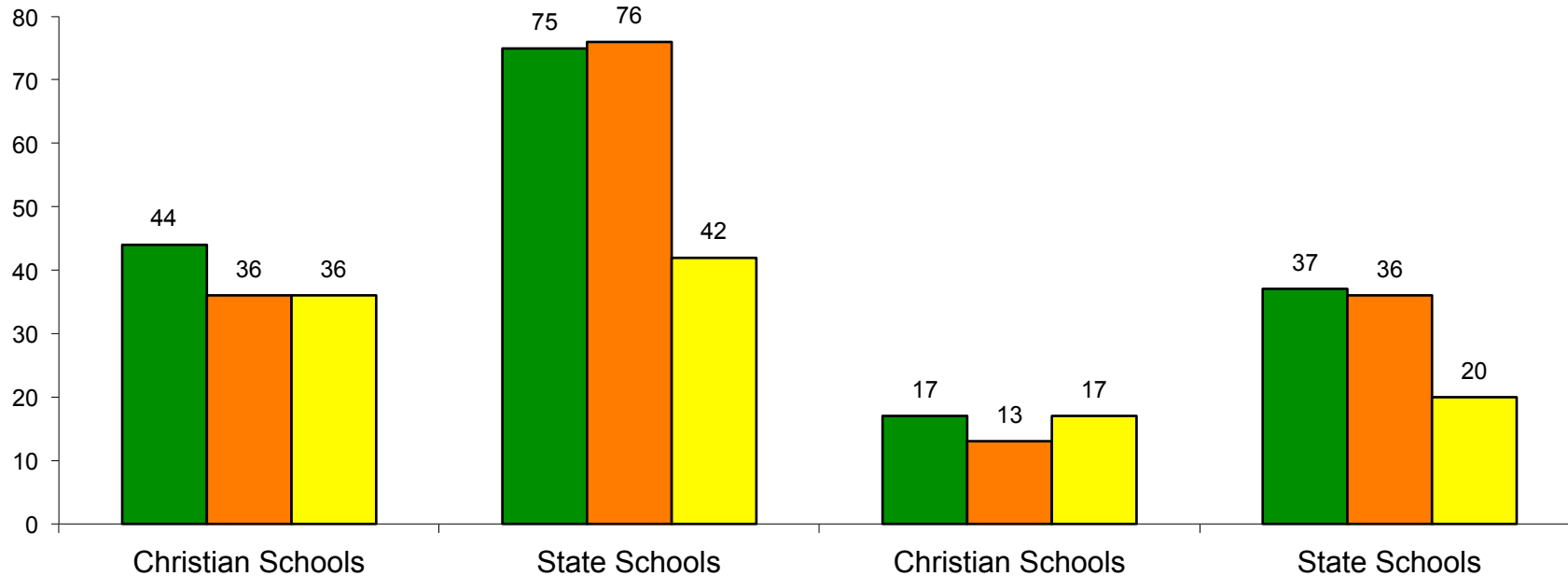
■ Mid South

■ Midwest

■ Southwest

Figure 4

Sexual Behavior by School



Had Sexual Intercourse

2+ Sex Partners Prev. Yr.

p < .01

Comparative Percentages

■ Mid South

■ Midwest

■ Southwest

Summary

- There are significant and substantive differences between the alcohol use and sexual behavior of respondents at the Christian schools vs. those in the State Schools.
- Supports the Moral Communities Hypothesis

Future Research:

Examine these behaviors in:

Different “Moral Communities”

And among

Different age categories of respondents