

Moral Community:

Gender, Drinking, Religion, and Sex at Six American Universities

Jerome R. Koch
Alden E. Roberts
Myrna L. Armstrong
Texas Tech University

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jerome.koch@ttu.edu

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Thank you!

Question 1

(How) Does Religion Suppress Underage Drinking and Premarital Sex?

Belief – Levels of Christian Fundamentalism?

Belief and Practice – Incidence of prayer, church attendance – strength of faith – closeness to God?
(Religiosity)

Context – Three Christian Schools and three public schools?

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

- 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

Variables, Scales, and Results from Surveying Students

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"

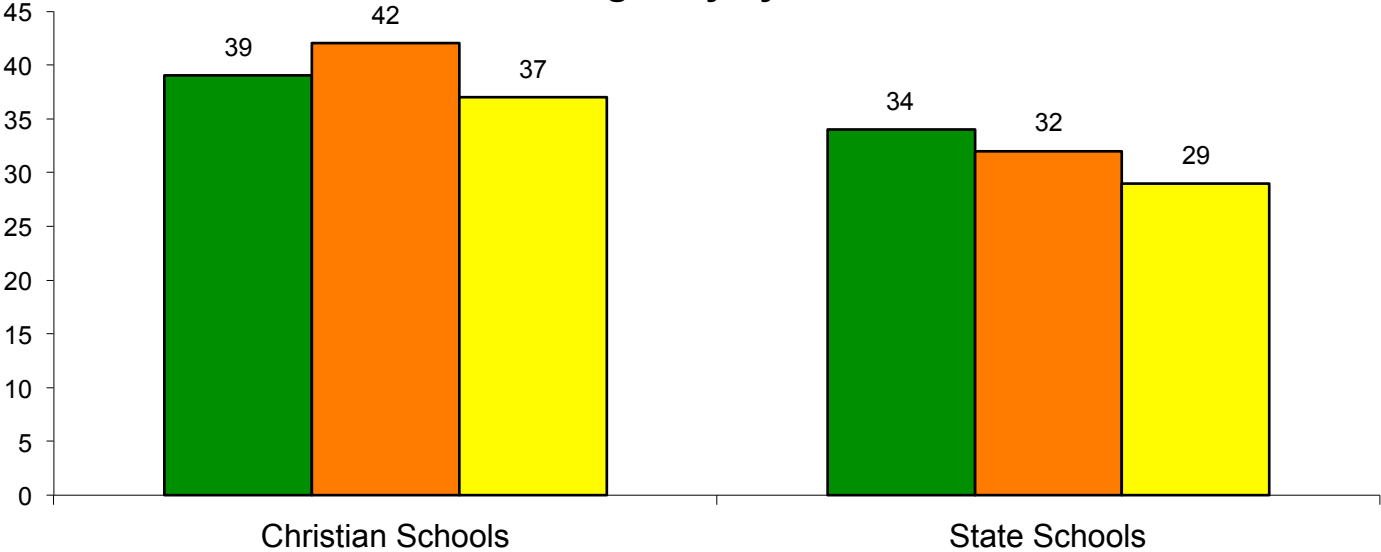
Range = 3 to 15

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.

Figure 1

Religiosity by School

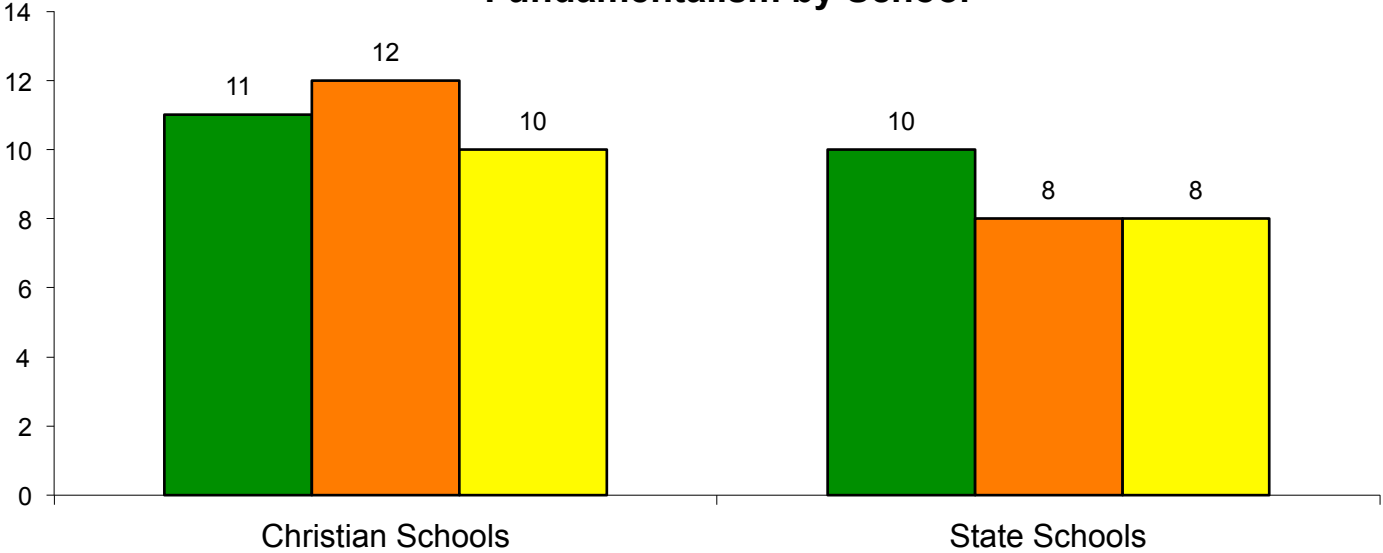


Mean Scale Scores
Range = 5-52
p = < .01



Figure 2

Fundamentalism by School



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

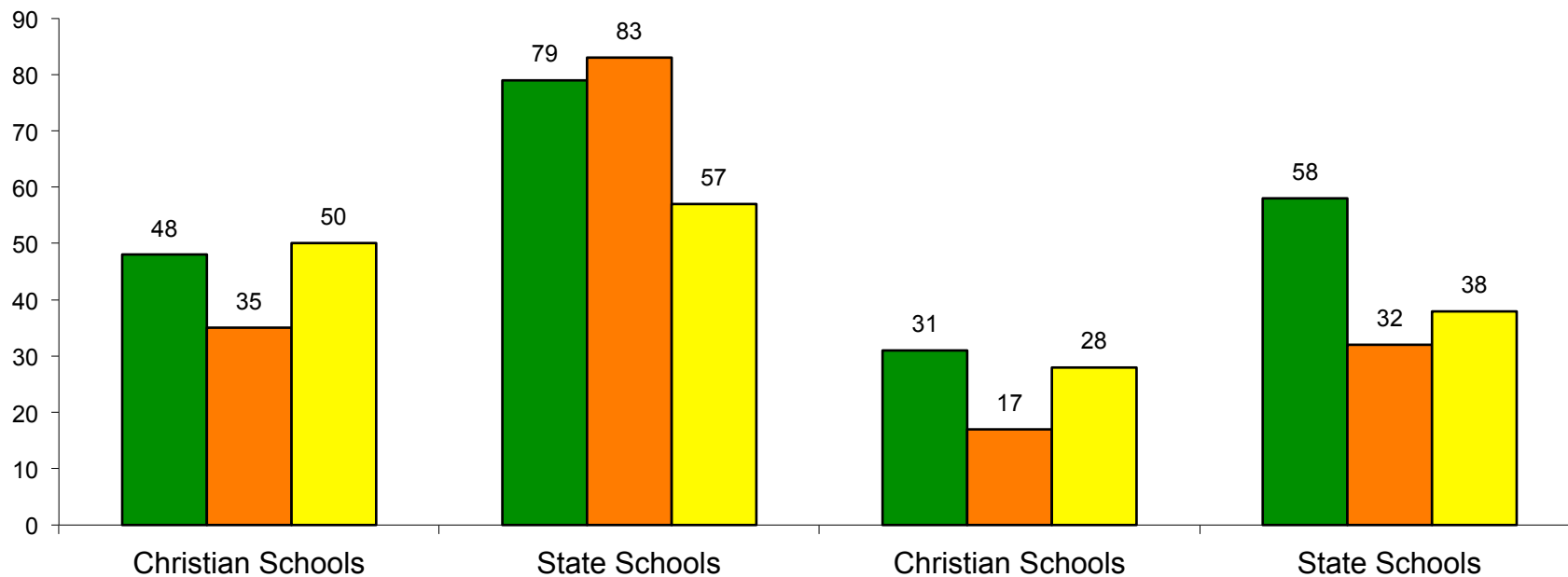
■ Mid South ■ Midwest ■ Southwest

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

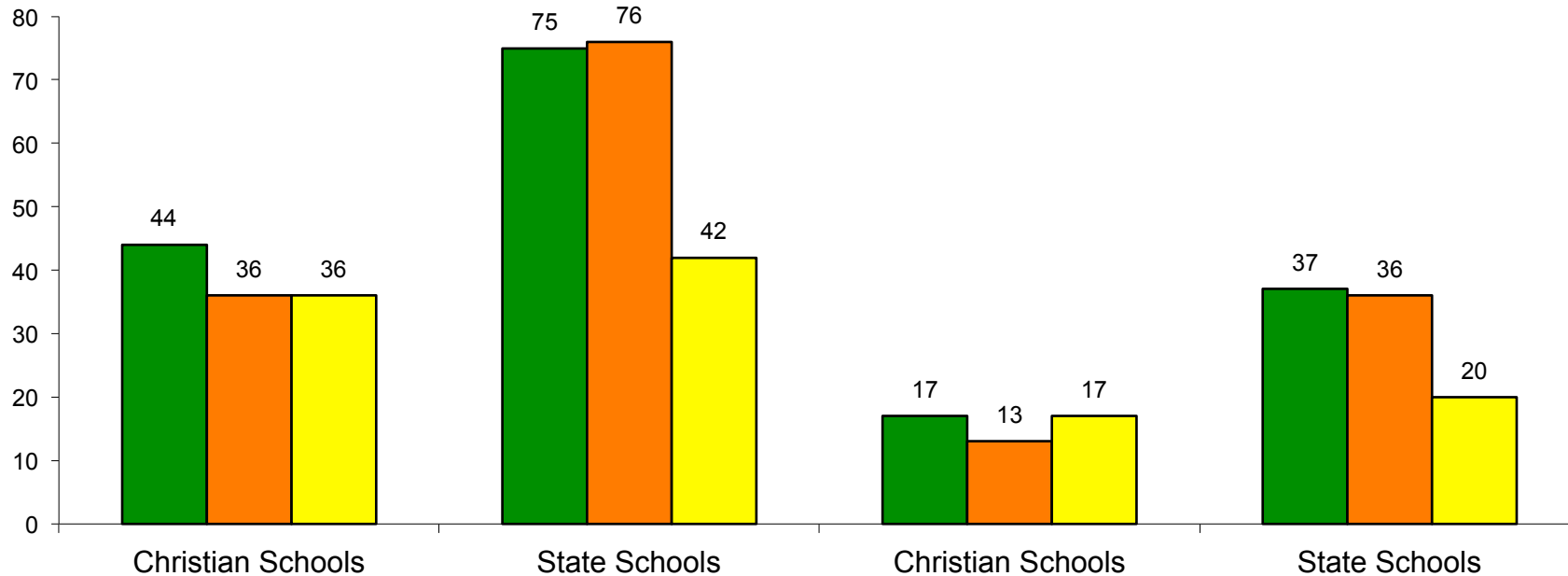
■ Mid South

■ 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 – Moral Community

- 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
- The religious beliefs and practices of respondents at Mid-South State are similar to the Christian Schools, but their levels of alcohol use and frequency of sexual behavior is vastly different. (Region influence on belief; contextual influence on behavior – not really “Community”).
- The levels of alcohol use and sexual behavior of respondents at South-West State are similar to those in the Christian Schools, but their levels religious beliefs and practices are quite different. (Ethnicity – disproportionately Asian).
- There are significant and substantive differences in (especially) alcohol use and sexual behavior within the group of Christian schools. ... *“in communities where the majority of the people are actively religious.”* – **Size matters.**

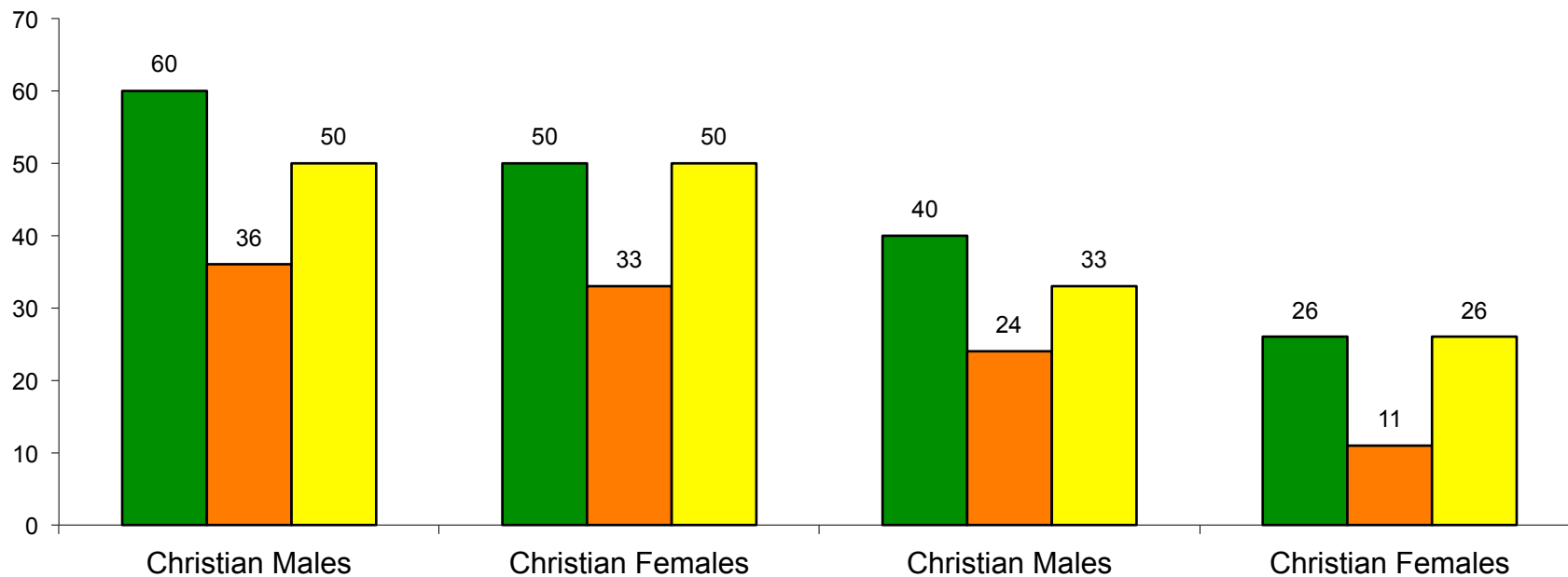
Question 2

Gender, Sex, Drinking, and Moral Community

To what extent does the “gendered” nature of (especially) Conservative Christianity further add to (or not) the suppressive nature of the Moral Community on college women vs. college men.

Figure 5

Christian School Alcohol Use by Gender



Current Use
p = n.s.

Binge Drink
p < .01

Comparative Percentages

■ Mid South

■ Midwest

■ Southwest

Figure 6

Christian School Sexual Behavior by Gender

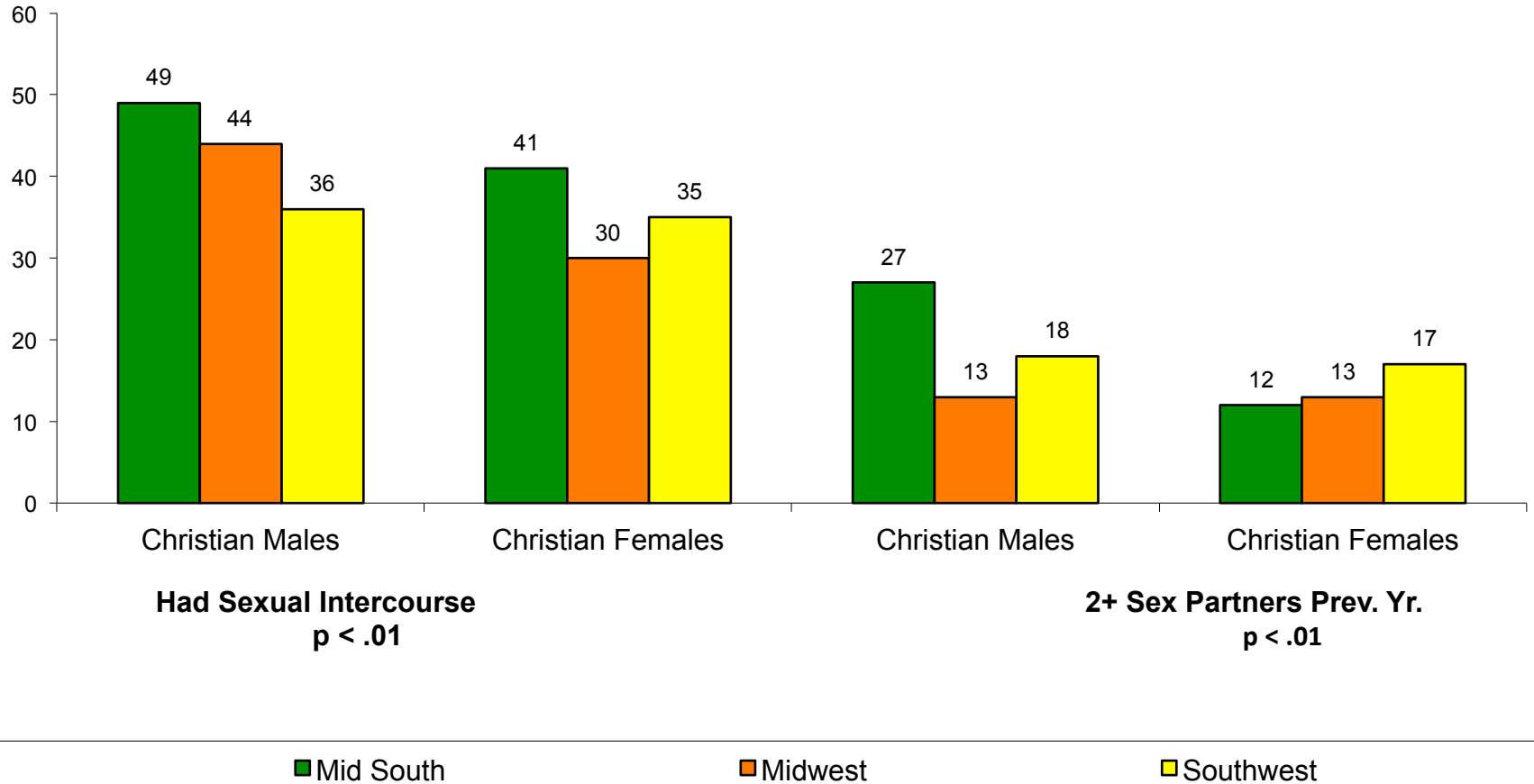
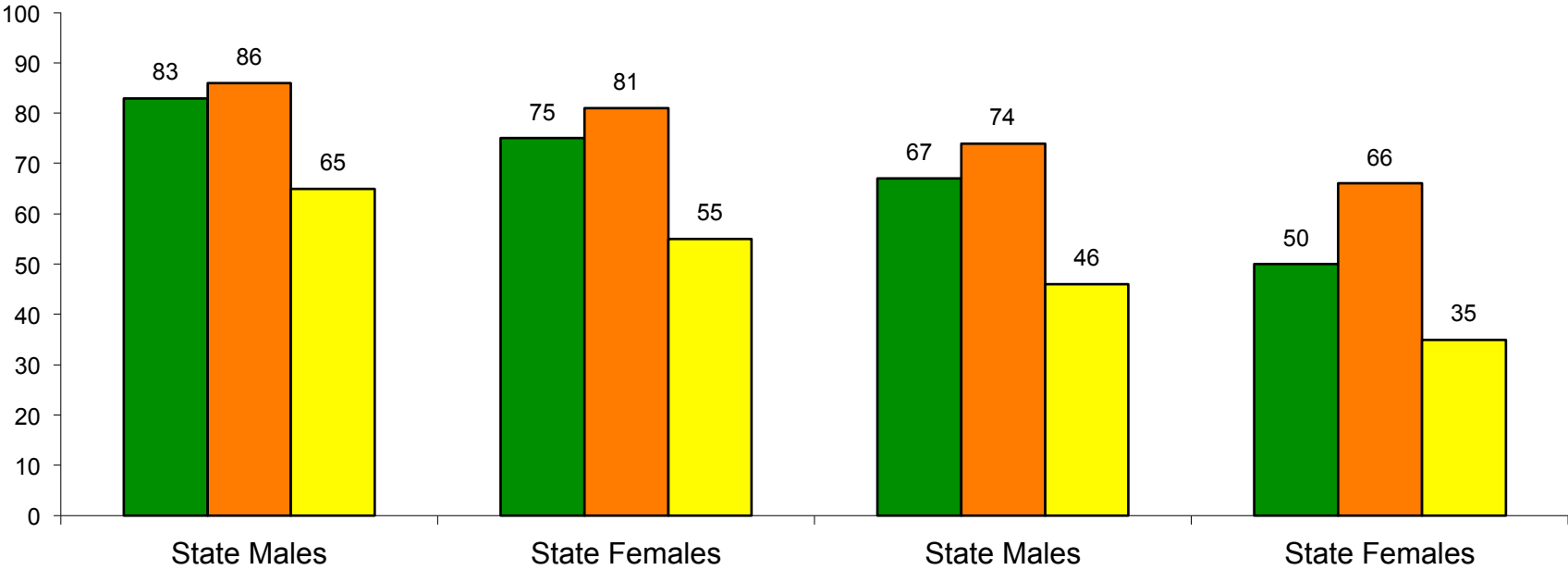


Figure 7

State Schools Alcohol Use By Gender



Current Use
p < .01

Binge Drink
p < .01

Comparative Percentages

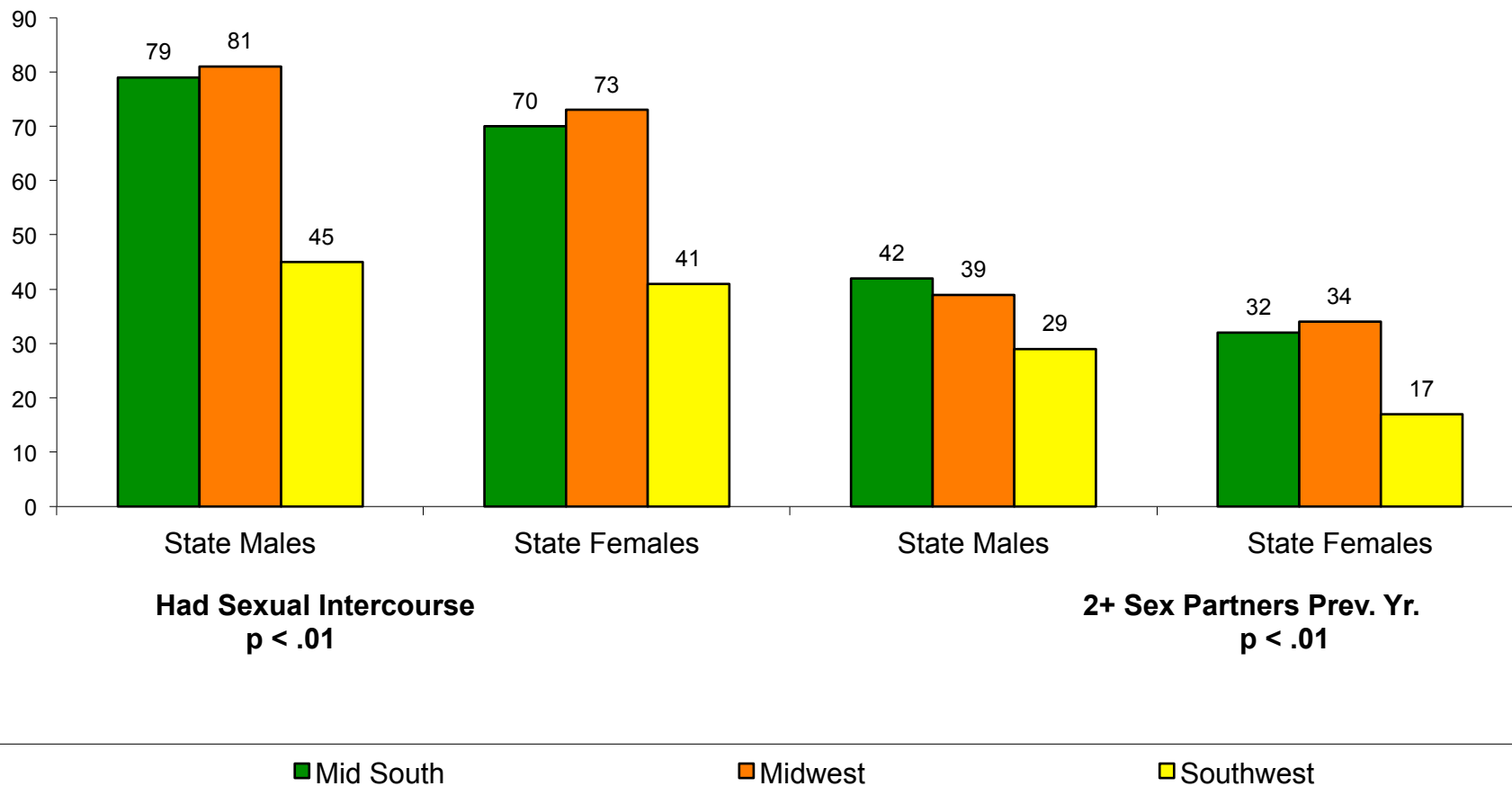
■ Mid South

■ Midwest

■ Southwest

Figure 8

State School Sexual Behavior by Gender



Summary – Drinking, Sex, Gender, Community

- Gender matters everywhere.
- College men drink more and have more sex than college women.
- Moral Community mildly transcends gender with regard to the most mild form of “deviance” – current alcohol use at Christian schools.
- Gender differences in drinking and sex are otherwise similarly different at Christian and State schools.