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Implications for Church and College

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THE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE FRESHMAN: IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCH AND COLLEGE

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Abstract

As conservative religious liberal arts colleges and universities expand into the traditional secular academic environment, competition and fluctuations in the student market will demand greater commitment to institutional analysis of student needs impacting persistence decisions. This study focused on the actual concerns of Freshman students at two of the largest conservative Christian universities, Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina, and Liberty University, in Lynchburg, Virginia.

The sample consisted of approximately one-third of the Freshman class at Bob Jones University (n=310) and nine-tenths of the Freshman class at Liberty (n=929). Each school has undergraduate enrollment in the four to six thousand range. Each group was administered the Mooney Problem Checklist (Mooney and Gordon, 1950) consistent with retention literature suggesting that the anonymity and broad choice range would be most appropriate with a conservative Christian college population.

The results of the study confirm the need for institutional and home church involvement in a first-year students decisionmaking process regarding persistence in a Christian college or university.

Introduction

Christian college students live and work in an academic and social environment written off by some as extinct. Eddy (1977) asserts "we have dropped with a sigh of relief outmoded regulations on dress and chapel attendance...the days are gone when a university or college could create a moral climate by devising and enforcing a distinctive set of regulations for behavior" (pp. 8-9).

While it may be that such conditions have largely vanished from secular public schools, the atmosphere described by Eddy continues to exist and flourish at the more than 300 religious institutions enrolling a minimum of 100,000 students yearly (U. S. Government Printing Office, 1978). Eddy's premature burial is not surprising. Astin, Lee, and Besse (1972) used the term "invisible" to describe institutions examined in this study. Invisible colleges and universities were described as having a relatively small and unselect student body, private or independent status, and maintaining an *in loco parentis* stance regarding regulations and discipline.

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Of such "invisible" institutions, Bob Jones University and Liberty University are, if not the largest, certainly near the top in enrollment. This research reports the results of a descriptive study of first-year student problems at these two conservative Christian universities. In all, more than 1200 Freshman were surveyed using the Mooney Problem Checklist as primary instrument.

In discussing the reliability of the Mooney Problem Checklist, Mooney and Gordon (1980) report that in a test-retest program allowing from one to ten week intervals, the rank order of the eleven problem areas, arranged according to mean number of problems checked in each category, remained virtually unchanged from one testing to the next. Rank order co-efficients varied from .90 to .98.

The Mooney offers a student 330 unforced problem statements such as "not as strong and healthy as I should be", "giving in to temptations", "too easily discouraged", and "home life unhappy". Students may circle as many or as few as they wish. The anecdotal nature of these results should provide ample resources for counseling and pastoral care.

Results

Results described below should prove useful to administration of Christian colleges and universities, student personnel staff, pastors at home, and parents.

Health And Physical Development

LU	3.8	(mean problems per category)
BJU	3.0	

Most Frequent

BJU (ranking 6)	LU (ranking 6)
1. Not getting enough sleep	1. Not getting enough sleep.
2. Feeling tired much of the time	2. Feeling tired much of the time.
3. Poor complexion or skin trouble	3. Not getting enough exercise
4. Being overweight	4. Being overweight
5. Not getting enough exercise	5. Poor complexion or skin trouble

Finances, Living Conditions, Employment

LU	4.2
BJU	3.7

Most Frequent

BJU (ranking 1)	LU (ranking 5)
1. Needing to watch every penny I spend	1. Going in debt for college expenses

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2. Needing a job during vacations | 2. Needing to watch every penny I spend |
| 3. Going through school on too little money | 3. Going through school on too little money |
| 4. Unsure of my future financial support | 4. Unsure of my future financial support |
| 5. Going in debt for college expenses | 5. Too little money for clothes |
| 6. Lacking privacy in living quarters | |

Personal Psychological Relations

LU 5.2
BJU 4.4

Most Frequent

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| BJU (ranking 4) | LU (ranking 4) |
| 1. Daydreaming | 1. Afraid of making mistakes |
| 2. Moodiness "having the blues" | 2. Worrying about unimportant things |
| 3. Worrying about unimportant things | 3. Moodiness "having the blues" |
| 4. Afraid of making mistakes | 4. Lacking self-confidence |
| 5. Lacking self-confidence | 5. Too easily discouraged |

COURTSHIP, SEX, AND MARRIAGE

LU 3.2
BJU 2.4

Most Frequent

- | | |
|--|--|
| LU (ranking 9) | LU (ranking 11) |
| 1. Wondering if I'll ever find a suitable mate | 1. Wondering if I'll ever find a suitable mate |
| 2. Too few dates | 2. Too few dates |
| 3. Not meeting anyone I'd like to date | 3. Afraid of losing the one I love |
| 4. Deciding whether I'm in love | 4. No suitable place to go on dates |
| 5. Wondering if I'll ever get married | 5. Deciding whether I'm in love |

ADJUSTMENT TO COLLEGE WORK

LU 7.0
BJU 5.6

Most Frequent

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| BJU (ranking 2) | LU (ranking 1) |
|-----------------|----------------|

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Easily distracted from my work | 1. Easily distracted from my work |
| 2. Not spending enough time in study | 2. Having a poor background in some subjects |
| 3. Not knowing how to study effectively | 3. Not spending enough time in study |
| 4. Weak in spelling and grammar | 4. Worrying about examinations |
| 5. Not planning my work ahead | 5. Not knowing how to study effectively |

THE FUTURE: VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL

LU 3.3
BJU 2.8

Most Frequent

- | | |
|--|--|
| BJU (ranking 8) | LU (ranking 7) |
| 1. Wondering if I'll be successful in life | 1. Wondering if I'll be successful in life |
| 2. Not knowing what I really want | 2. Not knowing what I really want |
| 3. Restless at delay in starting life's work | 3. Needing to decide on an occupation |
| 4. Doubting wisdom of my vocational choice | 4. Doubting wisdom of my vocational choice |
| 5. Needing to decide on an occupation | 5. Purpose in going to college not clear |

SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

LU 4.7
BJU 4.4

Most Frequent

- | | |
|--|---|
| BJU (ranking 3) | LU (ranking 3) |
| 1. Too little time to myself | 1. Too little time to myself |
| 2. Too little chance to read what I like | 2. Wanting to improve my mind |
| 3. Trouble in keeping a conversation going | 3. Not enough time for recreation |
| 4. Wanting to improve my mind | 4. Too little social life |
| 5. Slow in getting acquainted with people | 5. Slow in getting acquainted with people |

SOCIAL - PSYCHOLOGICAL RELATIONS

LU 5.4
BJU 4.1

Most Frequent

BJU (ranking 5)

1. Missing someone back home
2. Speaking or acting without thinking
3. Worrying about how I impress people
4. Wanting a more pleasing personality
5. Being timid or shy
6. Feeling too easily hurt

LU (ranking 2)

1. Missing someone back home
2. Worrying about how I impress people
3. Being timid or shy
4. Wanting a more pleasing personality
5. Speaking or acting without thinking

HOME AND FAMILY

LU 3.0
BJU 2.2

Most Frequent

BJU (ranking 10)

1. Parents sacrificing too much for me
2. Worried about a member of my family
3. Wanting love and affection
4. Getting home too seldom
5. Unable to discuss certain problems at home

LU (ranking 9)

1. Parents sacrificing too much for me
2. Wanting love and affection
3. Worried about a member of my family
4. Clash of opinions between me and parents
5. Not telling parents everything
6. Getting home too seldom

MORALS AND RELIGION

LU 3.2
BJU 3.0

Most Frequent

BJU (ranking 7)

1. Wanting to feel close to God
2. Wanting to understand more about the Bible
3. Sometimes not being as honest as I should be
4. Can't forget some mistakes I've made

LU (ranking 10)

1. Wanting to feel close to God
2. Wanting to understand more about the Bible
3. Giving in to temptation
4. Can't forget some mistakes I've made

5. Giving in to temptations

5. Sometimes not being as honest as I should be

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING PROCEDURE

LU 3.0
BJU1.3

Most Frequent

BJU (ranking 11)

1. Hard to study in living quarters
2. Too much work required in some courses
3. Not enough chance to talk to teachers
4. Unable to take courses I want
5. Forced to take courses I don't like

LU (ranking 8)

1. Difficulty in getting required books
2. Too much work required in some courses
3. Hard to study in living quarters
4. Dull classes
5. Forced to take courses I don't like

TOP FIVE CONCERNS OVERALL

BJU

1. Not getting enough sleep
2. Wanting to feel close to God
3. Too little time to myself
4. Missing someone back home
5. Easily distracted from my work

LU

1. Missing someone back home
2. Not getting enough sleep
3. Difficulty in getting required books
4. Wanting to feel close to God
5. Easily distracted from my work

NOTABLE IN THEIR ABSENCE

1. Science conflicting with my religion
2. Needing information on sex matters
3. Sometimes bothered by thoughts of insanity
4. Failing to see the relation of religion to life
5. Unfair tests
6. Don't know what to believe about God
7. Classes run too much like high school
8. Thoughts of suicide
9. Living at home or too close to home
10. Losing my earlier religious faith

Implications for Christian Colleges and Universities

Considering the persistent growth at Christian Colleges and Universities, the desirability of conducting independent studies of this nature seems clear. It is of particular importance to conduct longitudinal studies in order to achieve the "goodness of fit" between student and school described by Ironside (1979).

Further, the increasing competition for new students between evangelical schools and fundamentalist schools will place increased demands on colleges to meet the needs of their students. As the competition grows more intense, especially among accredited institutions, those able to tailor their academic, social, and spiritual programs to meet their student needs will be most successful in recruiting and retaining first year students.

The role of faculty will need to be expanded to include more informed, non-academic contact with students. While not necessarily suggesting the *in loco parentis* extreme, it is clear that faculty can be very influential in the effort to keep new students in school and to assure their successful progress (Freedman, 1969; Terenzini and Pascarella, 1976). Homesickness is a very common and powerful foe for new students. Informal contacts with faculty can do much to diminish its effect.

Implications for the Home Pastor

This study demonstrates the need for continued pastoral involvement in the lives of young people away from home at a Christian school. The following summarizes the areas where intervention from home church and pastors can do the greatest good. There is no ranking implied.

1. Afraid to make mistakes
2. Unsure of social contacts
3. Unsure of preparation for college
4. Missing family and friends
5. Worried about giving into temptation
6. Need and want to know the Bible better
7. Parents giving too much for me
8. Worried about someone back home
9. Will I be successful in life
10. How do I know when I'm in love

Pastoral Interventions

Pastors first need to realize that a primary reason Christian students leave school is the students' inability to be at peace about what is or is not happening at home. For example, Yamashita (1978) and Whiting (1980) found that

students leave school both in reaction to and in support of family expectations. Family considerations need to be recognized as crucial to student success at school and dealt with accordingly. A pastor who can assure an away-from-home student that he or she is working with the family will inevitably contribute to the student's success and persistence at school.

A suggestion that may be appropriate is that pastors or staff create individually signed form letters to send to their away-from-home college students. Such form letters can easily be made to appear individually written. Each letter could deal with one of the ten common concerns mentioned above. The letters could be mailed out periodically to coincide with particular stresses or events related to the school year.

Wise Pastors recognize that attending a Christian college is not all fun and games and such religious leaders can be influential in assisting their young people with making mature decisions regarding career choice, spiritual and moral issues, relationships, and leaving or remaining in school.

Conclusion

Entering Freshmen face a number of trials and tribulations when they leave home to attend a Christian college. Leaving home and church, facing roommates, adjusting to teacher idiosyncracies, learning the rules, taking tests—the list seems endless. Each new student needs to be surveyed, counseled, and advised by Christian college personnel. New students can be retained if their problems and concerns are identified and dealt with.

Home pastors need not and should not relinquish their influence when their young people go away to college. Homesickness is the major problem for Freshmen students at Christian colleges. Letters from pastors, church bulletins, and some individual attention when returning home for holidays tell students that survival of the Freshman year is possible after all.

When needs are met, they diminish in power. Home pastors and Christian college personnel can become or continue to be make-a-difference people in the lives of their young people away at school.

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To Outgrow or to Control Our Anxieties: That is the Question.

Howard J. Shear

ABSTRACT

This paper contrasts an emancipating with a controlling way of responding to anxiety. Condensations of three dramatic, therapeutic incidents illustrate a liberating orientation to our anxieties. Implications for counseling and therapy of an emancipating way of responding to anxiety are discussed. Congruent with the assumption that many psychopathological phenomena are ways of controlling anxiety, this paper has implications for understanding the meaning of "mental illness" and for appreciating that only God "cures" anxiety.

Although anxiety is one of human nature's pervasive and most powerful events, so much effort is put forth in dealing with it, and paradoxically, so many destructive and constructive phenomena are associated with it, the meaning of anxiety remains ambiguous. Clinicians and researcher have conceived of many and varied theories of anxiety. These have been summarized by May (1950, 1977) and Spielberger (1972) and Zuckerman and Spielberger (1976).

In his 1977 revised edition of *The Meaning of Anxiety*, May described that a score of volumes concerning anxiety have been published since his book was marketed and that some scholars estimated that 6,000 studies and dissertations on the subject were published between 1950 and 1977. May wrote that he knew of no one who would claim that the riddle of anxiety has been solved. A 1920 statement by Freud articulates how crucial an understanding of anxiety is: "... One thing is certain that the problem of anxiety is a nodal point, linking up all kinds of most important questions, a riddle, of which the solution must cast a flood of light upon our whole." (Freud, 1949).

In his practice as a psychological therapist and in his work as a research psychologist since 1952, this writer has been trying to discover the meaning of anxiety. Since 1962, he has recurrently observed a relationship in his therapeutic practice, in his clinical and naturalistic research, and in his living as a human being which led to the refining of a concept of anxiety.¹ He confidently believes that this meaning solves the riddle of anxiety.

During years of trying to get the refined concept published since 1974, a vital issue regarding anxiety has become coherent in further experiences and in feedback from various editors. It became apparent to this writer that most theories of anxiety have assumed that anxiety was a condition which was either overcome or controlled or not. It also became clear that this assumption was closely related to an extensive cultural norm for dealing with life, of course, there are exceptions. This norm consists of valuing aggression, manipulation and control as ways of coping with life. These matters were pinpointed in a paper describing how a Vietnam veteran outgrew his delayed,