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The Association for
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Editorial

For fifteen years, the *Biblical Higher Education Journal* has enriched and elevated the practice of biblical ministry formation and professional leadership education through informed reflection and scholarly research. Biblical higher education fills a distinctive and important niche in the broader field of higher education by providing students the opportunity to integrate Christian faith and biblical teaching into their professional and ministerial preparation. This journal supports the mission of biblical higher education by providing a venue for publication of related research and a forum for thought and dialogue regarding the issues, trends, opportunities, and challenges facing biblical higher education.

This fifteenth volume includes contributions from nine authors who work at diverse institutions connected with the Association of Biblical Higher Education. This volume consists of four articles and five book reviews.

The first article is contributed by J Jerome Prinston, Professor of Bible and Education at Johnson University. He provides an incisive critique of the *homo liturgicus* theory proposed by James K. A. Smith in several of his writings. He examines the implications of the theory for worldview formation at Christian colleges and proposes an alternative approach that recognizes the multidimensional nature of human beings.

The second article is a summary of research provided by Rodney Phillips, Vice President of Enrollment & Student Services at Carolina College of Biblical Studies. He analyzes and summarizes the factors that promote academic persistence among nontraditional African American male undergraduates.

The author of the third article is Justin Harbin, Director of the Center of Teaching & Learning at Lancaster Bible College | Capital Seminary and Graduate School. He summarizes lessons learned from the implementation of a faculty learning community that will inform other institutions of biblical higher education.

The fourth article is contributed by Barry L. Saylor, Associate Professor of Bible & Theology at Trinity Bible College & Graduate School. He draws from a metaphor proposed by Walter Brueggemann—the church as exile community—and applies it to the Christian campus. He shows that this image has important implications for preparing students to engage with contemporary culture.

The five book reviews in this volume touch on a variety of important topics related to biblical higher education. These succinct but insightful reviews will help readers consider whether these resources can contribute to their own work in teaching and administration.

I want to thank the members of the editorial board who provide helpful feedback to authors so that their final products can inform, inspire, and challenge the reader. I also want to thank the Book Review Editor, Aaron Profitt, Vice President for Academic Affairs at God's Bible School and College, for his faithful assistance in preparing the book reviews for publication. And thanks again to Carol Dibble, Director of Communications and Events at ABHE, for producing a clear, attractive final document.

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Editorial Policy

The articles in the *Biblical Higher Education Journal* reflect the opinions of the authors and reviewers and do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or the Publisher.

ARTICLES

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Implications of the Homo Liturgicus Theory on Worldview Formation at Christian Colleges

J Jerome Prinston

Abstract

*This article presents a critique of the homo liturgicus theory as proposed by James K. A. Smith in his books *Desiring the Kingdom* and *You Are What You Love*. Smith's theory promotes a new philosophical anthropology that describes human beings as primarily and fundamentally "lovers" instead of "thinkers" or "believers." The effect of this revised philosophical anthropology on worldview formation at Christian colleges is significant in that it requires a pedagogy that relies almost exclusively on the cultivation of desires. An examination of the homo liturgicus theory on educational, philosophical, and historical grounds points to its inadequacy to support an effective worldview formation program at Christian colleges. As an alternative, this article advocates for an approach to worldview formation that prioritizes the multidimensional nature of human beings.*

T

his article will examine primarily the theoretical basis of the *homo liturgicus* theory of James K. A. Smith. Smith's views are based primarily on philosophical claims that are derived from the phenomenological tradition. He presented these arguments initially in his 2009 publication *Desiring the Kingdom*. Then a few years later, in 2016, he published a simplified version of these same views under the title *You Are What You Love*. As a popular

rendition of the *homo liturgicus* theory, the 2016 publication did not reproduce the more complex philosophical arguments that form the backbone of this theory. This being the case, this critique will target primarily the 2009 publication and will give special attention to a key emphasis in that publication—namely, that Christian colleges should reconsider, if not abandon, the worldview approach.

In *Desiring the Kingdom*, Smith challenges Christian educators to rethink their approach to Christian higher education from what he describes as an information-dissemination, cognitive-based pedagogy to a habit-formation, affective-based pedagogy. In order for that to happen, Smith explains, we need to re-examine our basic assumptions about the nature of human learners and be willing to readjust our philosophical anthropology from seeing the human learner as a thinking machine stemming out of the modernist tradition to seeing the human learner as a liturgical being.¹ Once we do that and follow it up with a reformulation of the proper aim of education, the effect of that change, Smith (2009) explains, will “prompt us to rethink a common mantra in Christian schools and colleges, namely, that a Christian education is concerned with providing a Christian worldview” (p. 27). In Smith’s view, a liturgy-based pedagogy targets the heart instead of the head and provides habit formation practices capable of fashioning the affective dimension of students toward loving things instead of thinking things, because he believes that “what defines us is what we love” (p. 25).²

There is no question that a pedagogy that treats the human learner as a disembodied thinking machine is a pedagogy that is bound to failure. However, while Smith may be right in calling our attention to the dangers of disembodied pedagogies, the *homo liturgicus* theory does not appear to be philosophically sound and

pedagogically adequate enough to support an effective program of worldview formation at Christian colleges.

Philosophical Anthropology and the Inadequacy of the *Homo Liturgicus* Theory to Deliver a Holistic Education

Smith (2009) insists, and rightly so, that “behind every pedagogy is a philosophical anthropology” (p. 27). In keeping with that assertion, he claims that the worldview approach currently practiced at Christian colleges is guided by a faulty philosophical anthropology, one that views the human learner as primarily a rational being. In his view, human learners are neither primarily thinkers nor primarily believers; they are “fundamentally lovers” (p. 75).

If we accept the view that students are primarily lovers instead of thinkers, then the cognitive-based worldview approach as it is practiced in Christian colleges is incompatible with the nature and needs of Christian college students. A more philosophically fit approach, according to Smith (2009), is to pursue “the formation of hearts and desires,” or more precisely, the shaping of our hearts and desires by “material bodily practices that aim or point our love to ultimate visions of human flourishing—to particular configurations of what ‘the kingdom’ should look like” (p. 131).

Smith (2009) does indicate his adherence to the idea that education is “a holistic endeavor that involves the whole person.” (p. 39). Indeed, it is highly doubtful that any reasonable Christian college administrator would raise a philosophical objection regarding the necessity to implement a holistic program targeting students’ spiritual, intellectual, social, and emotional development. However, for Smith, holistic education is an education that is necessarily delivered through a pedagogy of desires. Thus, it is

highly doubtful that the Christian college can, as Smith proposes, educate students in a holistic way if they are simply to focus on the formation of hearts and desires. Such a pedagogy is too fixated on the fundamental one-dimensionality of the human learner to be adequately concerned with a holistic education agenda. How, for example, is the formation of human desires through “material bodily practices” to provide adequately for the formation of the intellect, among other things?

The Unstable Philosophical Foundations of the *Homo Liturgicus* Theory

Smith carefully describes his *homo liturgicus* theory as being anchored in the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger. To explain this, he begins with the intentionality theory of Husserl that emphasizes the nature of human consciousness as always being directed toward an object of desire, thought, or judgment. He then expands into Heidegger who retains aspects of Husserl’s phenomenology but finds it expedient to discard the Cartesian baggage that Husserl’s intentionality carries. In Heidegger’s system, Smith explains, we do not intend the world through our mind as in Husserl’s phenomenology but through the agency of a phenomenon called *care*. As he puts it, “*care* is the most primordial way that we ‘intend’ the world” (Smith, 2009, p. 49). Smith welcomes Heidegger’s rejection of Cartesian rationalism as an important development toward a more fitting philosophical anthropology capable of providing a basis for the *homo liturgicus* theory.

However, there is a problem in adopting Heidegger’s phenomenology as a fitting model of philosophical anthropology for Christian colleges. The problem resides in the fact that Heidegger’s

care has no grounding in traditional metaphysics, which means it cannot be subjected to the sanction of traditional Christian theology. ³ Heidegger's *care* is an existential being (a phenomenological entity) that has no basis in ultimate reality and does not depend on any essential constituency or frame of reference outside of the self that would be capable of guiding how one should move about or be involved in the world. In other words, God and the Bible are out of the picture, at least philosophically speaking. Should Christian colleges adopt a philosophical anthropology that falls outside the bounds of traditional theology?

To mitigate this problem, or to strengthen Heidegger's *care*, Smith attempts to associate *care* with Augustine's theology of love. Indeed, there is a solid argument to be made that Heidegger, in conceiving his phenomenological theory, was influenced by Augustine in some capacity. However, in judging the nature and strength of that influence, one must ask the question: To what extent is this Augustinian influence on Heidegger legitimate considering that Heidegger took Augustine's ideas and applied them outside of the conceptual theological framework that Augustine envisioned? In any case, Smith (2009) recognizes some deficiency in Heidegger's *care* when he said that "rather than settling for the more generic notion of 'care' or 'concern' as the most primordial mode of intentionality, Augustine would argue that the most fundamental way that we intend the world is *love*" (p. 50).

Still, there is a problem of false equivalence in associating Heidegger's *care* with Augustine's *love*. First, *love* and *care* are two very different phenomena that resemble each other on some level but do not behave the same way. *Love*, as conceived by Augustine, is grounded in traditional metaphysics. Augustine made sure of that in

his homilies on 1 John, among other writings, by positing that God is love, love is of God, and love is God: “For if you love your brother whom you see, at the same time you shall see God also; because you shall see Charity itself, and within dwells God.”⁴ Augustine’s *love* has an ultimate reference point outside of the self that determines how it should be involved in the world. This connection with the transcendent makes love, unlike *care*, an entity that cannot be corrupted by the human subject.

Second, Augustine’s love, as it is appropriated by the human person, is subject to Augustine’s doctrine of free will. The implication is this: Even though for Augustine human beings are ruled by love, they still get to choose if they want love to rule them or which object of love should rule them. This characteristic of love is not present in *care*, for *care* is more often than not motivated by self-interest and self-preservation, a position that corroborates the tendency for human desires to be perverse, without convictional resolve. Heidegger (1996) identifies *care* as the being of *Dasein*. *Dasein* (translated “being there” or “being-in-the-world”) is the elusive existential entity that is constitutive of human being in the ontological sense. One of the many ways to explain how *care* functions within the structure of *Dasein* is to consider how Heidegger himself describes it: “As a primordial structural totality, *care* lies ‘before’ every factual ‘attitude’ and ‘position’ of *Dasein*, that is, it is always already in them as an existential *a priori*” (Heidegger, 1996, p. 180).

Smith may have recognized this difference between *care* and *love* when he insists that the heart must be oriented toward the desired object of love by liturgical practices. However, the more significant problem for the *homo liturgicus* theory is that “material

bodily practices” are inadequate to peel and expose all the layers of knowledge that are necessary and available to the human learner. For example, we know that a worldview program must be based on a solid curricular framework if it is to train students in the essentials of how to live as Christians in the world. Thus, a successful worldview program is one that equips students to make the most of their natural abilities as thinking-sensing-feeling-doing beings whose daily quest to be an embodiment of Christ in the world is carefully informed by their faith and their knowledge of the human experience. The important issue here concerns the question of what system of thought or belief is informing how the Christian should live in the world. This question is based on the generally accepted assumption that everything we think, feel, do, believe, know, intend, etc.—including this question of philosophical anthropology—is influenced by our worldview.

Smith is concerned with one’s object of ultimate love toward which we should orient our heart’s desires. The goal is commendable; however, in the *homo liturgicus* theory it is not clear what system of *a priori* thought, beliefs, values are informing what this ultimate object of love should be and how to access these *a priori* categories if the cognitive is suppressed or deemphasized in the learning process. For example, what is informing our vision of human flourishing? Is any vision of human flourishing as good as any other? In a traditional metaphysical context, the object of love cannot be the thing that informs itself. It requires an external reference point. If our heart is always oriented toward some object of love, what worldview system is orienting it? If instead of a worldview system, our hearts are oriented by “material bodily practices,” as represented in Smith’s *homo liturgicus* theory diagram (2009, p. 48), what worldview system is informing these “material bodily practices”?

A possible answer to these questions might be to say that the heart does not need to be informed by a worldview system, because it is in the nature of the heart to be pulled and oriented toward something all by itself. If that is the case, then the orientation of the heart is either at the mercy of the body's instinctual, uncontrollable impulses, or it is controlled by an existential entity such as Heidegger's *care*, Husserl's *intentionality*, or Merleau-Ponty's *perception*, to mention only these. In some phenomenological traditions, such as existentialism, it is the existential self that goes on to create one's essence or fundamental nature through the choices that one makes.⁵

Based on these considerations, the *homo liturgicus* theory appears much more at home in the phenomenology of Heidegger than in the theology of Augustine. Thus, the philosophical foundations of the *homo liturgicus* theory remain unstable.

The *Homo Liturgicus* Theory as an Instance of Pedagogical Déjà Vu

Educational methods and approaches to teaching and learning come and go as part of an ongoing process of philosophical dissension. When emerging philosophies react, if not revolt, against well-established methods and approaches, these philosophies eventually succeed in either replacing them completely or competing with them as the more effective way to educate. One of the first and most significant philosophical dissensions about teaching and learning happened during the Enlightenment of the 18th century. Philosophers and public intellectuals at that time, standing on the shoulders of Descartes, used reason as the all-powerful tool to tackle all the known problems of their time. Their approach was to think systematically through every issue, and propose ideas capable of

bringing about change in areas of public life as diverse as social policies, political theories, educational methods, religious norms and practices, etc.

While most, if not all, of these Enlightenment thinkers relied on reason to formulate solutions, an almost singular voice among them called for something radically different. Jean-Jacques Rousseau essentially blamed many of the societal problems of his time precisely on the instrumentality of reason and the many public intellectuals who wield it like a mighty weapon. As Rousseau (2006) famously wrote in his first *Discourse*, “a thinking man is a depraved animal” (p. 86). In his analysis of what Rousseau means, Ratzinger (1996) explains that “for Rousseau, everything which owes its origin to reason and will is contrary to nature and corrupts and contradicts it” (p. 22). Thus, those who have left the natural state and crossed over into the realm of thinking beings necessarily become corrupted.

Consequently, when it comes to formulating solutions to diverse problems, the better alternative to thinking, according to Rousseau, is the heart and the feelings it generates. In his extremely popular novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, published in 1761, he endeavored to demonstrate the power of emotions and the superiority of the affective dimension of human beings over the intellect.

By shifting the focus from the mind to the heart, Rousseau’s philosophy would help usher in the Romantic period in art, literature, and music beginning just after the French Revolution and lasting roughly until the late 1840s. However, one of his most lasting influences that persists to this day concerns his ideas on education presented for the most part in his 1762 novel *Emile*. These ideas would challenge the educational status quo long characterized by

intellectual dullness and students' passivity and would prepare the way for an alternative pedagogy that prioritizes students' interests, autonomy, and active participation in the learning act. This new pedagogy is motivated by Rousseau's belief that humans are born naturally good. Rousseau's ideas would provide the basis for the development of a host of new education philosophies and theories to be grouped under different labels including the various naturalistic education movements and progressive and humanistic education theories.

As important as Rousseau's influence has been, it is crucial to qualify its significance mostly in terms of providing an often missing perspective to the workings of holistic pedagogies and educational approaches. It was, for example, in that sense that Rousseau was immensely influential to Immanuel Kant. After hearing Rousseau's singular voice clamoring against the rationalism of his time, Kant could not help but to factor Rousseau's romantic perspective into his moral philosophy (Bertram, 2017).

The same is true about Rousseau's influence on various educational approaches. The progressive education movement, spearheaded by philosophers like John Dewey and William Kilpatrick, appeared on the American scene in the early part of the 20th century as a reaction against various forms of traditional education.⁶ Contrary to what was described as the narrow, rigid, bookish, heavy content approach of traditional pedagogies, progressivism advocated a new focus on experiential learning through social studies, student-centered activities, and problem-solving. Additionally, progressivism's emphasis on students' interest, desires, and emotions, among other things, was in sharp contrast to the focus of traditional education philosophies on the human mind.

In many of these cases, the educational status quo was challenged because of observed deficiencies in existing methods in light of new knowledge and new philosophical perspectives on teaching and learning. In the late 1950s, it became evident to some that the progressive education agenda was to blame for certain failures observed in American education after a long period of focus on the cultivation of desires and affective-centric pedagogies. Proponents of more traditional education philosophies such as educational essentialist Arthur Bestor and educational perennialist Robert Hutchins saw an opportunity to revive the opposition to progressive education—which opposition was initially started in the 1930s—and mount an effective revolt that would lead to the steady decline of progressive education within the following decade.

Subsequently, educational essentialists like E. D. Hirsh advocated a return to a common core of traditional subject matters, the teaching of basic skills, and the formation of character and citizenship. Likewise, educational perennialists like Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler succeeded in promoting a return to the humanities with a refocus on the changeless and universal aspects of humankind's cultural, intellectual, and for some, religious heritage. However, as the cycle of philosophical dissension and pedagogical improvement continued to evolve, certain aspects of progressive education, particularly those that were associated with active learning, would later be revived beginning in the 1960s through the work of cognitive psychologists like Jerome Bruner and Jean Piaget.

Thus, it is clear that certain aspects of the *homo liturgicus* theory have already been a part of the progressive and humanistic education paradigms since the 1930s and as such have already been challenged. The notion that we should go back to an affective-centric

pedagogy is in a way a call to refight the educational foundations battles that have already been settled by overwhelming evidence from educational research.

Worldview Formation or Cultivation of Desires?

Should Christian colleges replace their traditional worldview formation approach with Smith's cultivation of desires approach? Based on the arguments presented above, the cultivation of desires as a pedagogical approach is totally inadequate to satisfy all aspects of worldview formation at Christian colleges. However, to Smith's point, a worldview formation that treats the human subject as a thinking machine is equally inadequate. The solution to these pedagogical inadequacies does not require the formulation of a new philosophical anthropology motivated by postmodern claims, as Smith has proposed, but the adoption and implementation of proven instructional methods and educational practices. In that sense, Christian colleges have some work to do in ensuring that their approach to worldview formation remains true to the Bible and conformed to best practices in educational methods.

There is a belief among some educators, including Smith, that worldview formation is exclusively an intellectual affair. Such a belief does not fully capture all that worldview formation entails. Although the concept of worldview is associated with a cognitive function, the teaching of worldview happens in ways that are not strictly cognitive. Students develop a worldview largely through a broad formative process that involves being exposed not only to ideas, values, and beliefs but also reinforcement practices capable of shaping how they think and how they live.

While Smith expresses support for a holistic approach to worldview formation, he insists—in keeping with his *homo liturgicus* philosophy—that the affective must always supersede the cognitive. However, the very arguments that Smith presents point to the inadequacy of any pedagogy that prioritizes only one dimension of the human subject. Consider, for example, Smith’s arguments in the introductory chapter of *You Are What You Love*. He begins by introducing the central theme of the book with a simple question, “What do you want?” This is a question that Jesus asked two of his would-be-disciples who decided to follow him after hearing John’s testimony about Jesus (John 2:35-42). For Smith (2016), this question is axiomatic in that it points to what is most fundamental about human beings, the desires of their heart. He argues that “Jesus doesn’t encounter Matthew and John—or you and me—and ask, ‘What do you know?’ He doesn’t even ask, ‘What do you believe?’ He asks, ‘What do you want?’” Smith then explains that “our wants and longings and desires are at the core of our identity, the wellspring from which our actions and behavior flow” (pp. 1-2).

However, when one examines the full context of the passage, Smith’s reasoning does not hold well. In making the point that this question by Jesus validates the one-dimensional *homo liturgicus* philosophy, Smith ignores two important details. First, the desire to follow Jesus does not exist in a vacuum as a standalone existential predisposition. These disciples were not disinterested followers of Jesus. Rather, they desired to follow Jesus because they understood and accepted who he was. These two dimensions—to understand (cognitive) and to choose (affective)—are inseparable and equally important. A reading of Jesus’ question in context suggests that he asks the question because these two would-be-disciples were at a

decision point. They had just heard John's testimony that Jesus was "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," and they felt compelled to respond to that amazing testimony.

A second related detail is that, contrary to Smith's belief, Jesus was not simply asking "what do you want?" He was also confirming what these would-be-disciples knew. There is every indication that the sequence of actions that preceded Jesus' question justifies his use in that sentence construction of a brachylogy (an expression that is intentionally abbreviated because the context makes repeating the whole thought unnecessary). In other words, the full meaning of what Jesus was saying was more like the following: "Now that you know that I am the Lamb of God (as John said in his testimony), what do you want to do about that?" "Are you willing to follow me, then?"

The point is this: For a worldview formation to be effective, it must promote an idea to enact, a claim to embody, a set of values to desire, a belief to practice, a plan to execute, etc. A concrete way this could be done in a Christian college is to create formative spaces that address both the conceptual and experiential dimensions of worldview teaching. For example, if there is a chapel segment to disseminate ideas, there should be a corresponding chapel segment or service-learning opportunity to practice, enact, embody, these exact same ideas. In establishing a worldview program, Christian colleges must insist on incorporating both the cognitive and the affective, the instructional and the liturgical dimensions. These dimensions are equally important both because of the multidimensional nature of the human subject—which is a biblical prerogative—but also because of the need to adhere to current best practices on teaching, learning, and formation.

A worldview formation program should be an integrative activity that relies on all types of pedagogies such as information processing, social interaction, modeling, mentoring, guiding, coaching, questioning, valuing, etc. It should draw from various experiences related to campus practices, institutional ethos, community covenants, philosophical frameworks, etc. Worldview teaching should be fed not just from the regular curriculum but also, and probably much more, from the hidden curriculum (Meighan, Harber, Barton, Siraj-Blatchford, & Walker, 2007). The hidden curriculum pulls together everything that happens within the campus environment that makes up the school's cultural fabric. For example, the simple fact that admissions policies attract a certain type of students who will live together in campus housing and influence each other in certain meaningful ways is a significant aspect of how students' worldview are formed.

Conclusion

Despite the various problems with the *homo liturgicus* theory, Smith's views may have contributed in a significant way to a resurgence of interest in recent years in the idea of education as formation. That is a positive development. In that sense, whether formation is concerned with the development of students' reflective capacities or their abilities to integrate their intellectual, spiritual and vocational lives or their participation in meaningful reinforcement rituals or liturgies, the overarching purpose of (worldview) formation is to facilitate the embodiment of learned ideas and experiences in a deep, transformational way. Such students become one with their acquired knowledge, disposition, and values. In our efforts to uphold a holistic Christian education pedagogy, we should view Smith's contribution not as a roadmap but as a reminder that the affective

dimension of the human learner is an important aspect of the total person. For that reason, Christian colleges should begin by making sure that the heavily cognitive aspect of their worldview programs is supplemented by a formative process capable of incarnating the dull intellectual accounts of worldview teaching.



Endnotes

¹ Smith associates the learner-as-thinking-being model with the modernist tradition, and rightly so. In that sense, associating the *homo liturgicus* model with postmodernism would seem a logical next step given Smith's well-known penchant for postmodernism. However, he has instead attempted to associate the *homo liturgicus* model with St Augustine, which, strangely, also makes some sense insofar as Augustine is being portrayed more and more as the inspiration behind certain post-modern thinkers like Heidegger.

² Loving and thinking are primarily intended as present particle verbs instead of adjectives.

³ What this author calls traditional metaphysics here refers to the earliest conceptions of being and universals in Western philosophy before Kant. Traditional metaphysics is seen as being very accommodating to Christian theology because of the use of conceptual categories to explain reality. See Loux, (2002).

⁴ See Augustine's collection of homilies on 1 John, particularly his homily on 1 John 4:4-12 and 1 John 3:9-18 (Augustine, 2011). Also, in his very helpful essay on Augustine's hermeneutic of love, Pool (2004) provides some important insights into Augustine's metaphysics as it relates to his theology of love.

⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre (1956), in *Being and Nothingness*, points to Heidegger as the source of this idea. Indeed, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1996) clearly explains that *Dasein*, as the always a priori existential self, is that which determines what our essence (as in our ultimate state of human flourishing) becomes: "The 'essence' of human-being lies in its existence" (p. 40).

⁶ Traditional education relies on teacher-centered, standard-driven methods and practices to transfer required knowledge, skills, and values. For an early history of how proponents of traditional education, particularly educational essentialists, mounted an effective revolt against the rise of progressive education, see Null (2007).

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Academic Persistence for Nontraditional Undergraduate African American Males in Bible Colleges

Rodney Phillips

Abstract

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand factors that contribute to college persistence for nontraditional undergraduate African American male four-year degree completers from select evangelical Bible colleges in the southeastern United States. An ecological and adult resiliency theoretical framework guided the research. Three research questions framed this study: (a) How do nontraditional undergraduate African American male four-year degree completers from select evangelical Bible colleges describe persistence? (b) What type of experiences do participants understand as having contributed to their persistence at Bible colleges? (c) What specific factors do participants identify as having contributed to their persistence at Bible colleges? Data collection included a demographic survey, interviews, journaling, and focus groups. Data analysis combined reflective notes and constant comparative analysis to facilitate a hermeneutic interpretation of the essence of the participants' experiences. The findings indicate that spiritual formation, the Bible college relational experience, Christian service formation, a family support network, and a local church connection all play a vital role in the persistence behaviors of this population.

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Bible colleges lay a biblical foundation for diversity. However, enrolling a diverse field of students does not guarantee all ethnicities' successful matriculation as Bible colleges are often underprepared in offering support services. This is especially true of African American¹ male students (born in America but are of African ancestry). Between 2010-2015 African American higher education enrollment decreased by 14 percent and continued in 2015-2016 to drop from 2.3 million to 2.2 million (McFarland et al., 2018). African American college students have a significantly lower graduation rate than their White counterparts with 19% and 26.8% attainment of bachelor's degrees, respectively (Aud et al., 2011; Hussar & Bailey, 2011; McFarland, 2017). African American students have not only low degree completion rates but also a high attrition factor with 66% not graduating within six years.

Surprisingly, a lack of studies correlating spirituality to academic performance have been produced, especially within diverse institutions. After completing a seven-year study on college students' spiritual status, Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) stated that higher education "has increasingly come to neglect its students' 'inner' development" (p. 2). Among the more than 5,000 studies in the past four decades, "very little systematic study has been done on students' spiritual development" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 1). Clarifying faith's role will enable African American students to succeed (Cooley, 2012; Milacci, 2006; Milacci, Lawson, Firmin, & Anderson, 2005; Paredes-Collins, 2014; Rockenbach & Mayhew, 2014).

Therefore, the purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand factors that contribute to college persistence for nontraditional undergraduate African American male four-year

degree completers from select evangelical Bible colleges in the southeastern United States. Given the problem of low academic attainment, the purpose of this study was to explore experiences related to academic persistence for African American Bible college males. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological Systems and the Adult Resiliency theoretical framework guided the research. According to Bronfenbrenner, the microsystem is the smallest network of relationships, family, peers, and community. These networks point toward an interaction that takes place at the basic microsystem level and is influenced by motivational experiences of inter-personal relationships, which provide a network of persistence support. Additionally, the Adult Resilience Theory explains that the best way for students to advance is through reciprocal relationships of affinity, strengthening internal protective factors (Morales, 2000, 2010, 2014; Richardson, 2002; Van Breda, 2001). This research indicated the sooner the participants became aware of individual risk factors, the sooner they responded with appropriate protective factors, which fed their persistence.

Research Questions

1. How do nontraditional undergraduate African American male four-year degree completers from select evangelical Bible colleges describe persistence (Arbelo Marrero, 2013; Arbelo Marrero & Milacci, 2015)?
2. What type of experiences do participants understand as having contributed to their persistence at Bible college?
3. What specific factors do participants identify as having contributed to their persistence at Bible college?

Literature Review

A review of related literature provides a synthesis of the existing knowledge of undergraduate nontraditional Africa American male graduates. This review specifies what pertinent studies have produced and what is yet unknown. There is a significant gap in the literature as it relates to African American male higher education success in Bible colleges.

African American Male Research

African American male studies have explored retention factors, such as family (Harper, 2012), community learning centers (Flowers, Scott, Riley, & Palmer, 2015), faculty mentors (Harper, 2012), and tutorial services (Ticknor, Shaw, & Howard, 2014). Other studies have focused on successful African American male achievers at predominantly White institutions (Johnson, 2013), historically Black colleges and universities (Bracey, 2014), and community colleges (Horton, 2015), pointing to peer networks, family members, mentors and spirituality as persistence factors.

Studies were also conducted within the confines of faith-based higher education institutions. Couch (2011), for example, studied student athletes, while De Souza (2012) and Andrade (2008) researched international student persistence in faith-based institutions. While these studies were conducted on nontraditional students in higher education secular and private settings, there remains little or no research that specifically focuses on African American nontraditional students within Bible colleges (Burks & Barrett, 2009; Patten & Rice, 2009).

Campus Connectedness

Research revealed relationships with faculty as the most important factor in persistence to graduation for African American males (Habley, Bloom, & Robbins, 2012; Rine, 2014; Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, & Klingsmith 2014; Schmidt, 2015). Connecting genuine and authentic faculty and their students positively produced various academic outcomes, including persistence (Arbelo Marrero, 2013; Flowers et al., 2015), cognitive development (Palmer & Maramba, 2012), elevated GPAs, higher levels of campus and social integration (Flowers et al., 2015), degree attainment (Roscoe, 2015), and reducing stress (Forbus, Newbold, & Mehta, 2011).

African American students, more than all other ethnicities, connect, interact, and form relationships with faculty outside of the classroom. The more meaningful contacts African American students have with faculty, inside and outside the classroom, the more likely they are to persist. The critical part is for faculty to understand the importance of reaching out to African American men because they typically are reluctant to ask for help (Kim & Hargrove, 2013).

Family Connectedness

A national study of the characteristics of 219 African American male undergraduates who earned a cumulative GPA above 3.0 indicated that 61% grew up with both parents in the same home (Harper, 2012; Patton, 2012). These GPA accomplishments occurred even though 50% of the fathers of the undergraduates had no college experience. This indicates that families play a critical role in college success. As a distinctive contrast with Tinto (2012), diverse students rely on high levels of family support so that it is imperative that

these students not break away from their families' interconnections (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014).

Research Method

To explore and understand what factors influenced the participants' persistence, a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach guided this research. Hermeneutic phenomenology is a descriptive methodology that allows participants to speak for and reveals the meaning of their lived experiences. Personal, lived experiences are essential since only 13% of African American males will enroll in private nonprofit higher education institutions. Of those 13%, only 25% will graduate in four years, 35% in five years, and only 39% complete a bachelor's degree in six years (Aud et al., 2011; Hussar & Bailey, 2011; Kena et al., 2014; McFarland, 2017). These voices are critical in providing solutions from those who did beat the odds by graduating.

Sampling and Research Sites

All ten participants had moderate to high nontraditional characteristics, which included being older than age 25 (indicating delayed entry), financially independent, married with dependent children, and who had at least part-time employment. Both colleges qualified as minority-serving institutions (Li, 2007). Additionally, both colleges met the criteria of having accreditation by an organization aligned with faith-based institutions (e.g., The Association for Biblical Higher Education) recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data collection included a demographic survey, individual and focus group interviews, and e-journaling. A demographic survey was designed to ensure participants met the study's prerequisites. The interview questions were essential to pinpoint areas regarding participant experience with academic persistence. Journaling (Hayman, Jackson, & Wikes, 2012) was helpful for participants to recall experiences long forgotten. Focus group meetings provided additional insights, clarifying and confirming the stated themes. Hermeneutic data analysis sought to capture the main significance of persistence wherein statements that seemed particularly essential to the persistence phenomenon were highlighted (van Manen, 1990). A line-by-line approach accompanied by constant comparative analysis was conducted to categorize and code experiences to gain a composite description serving as a basis for the formalization of themes and their interpretation (van Manen, 2014).

Findings

In the analysis of the data, five themes inductively emerged through the coding and the constant comparison process as discussed below.

The Magnet of Persistence: The Bible College Relational Experience

By far the strongest connection to persistence was the Bible college experience. Participants expressed various factors highlighted by professors who built personal relationships, led by example, invested strategies outside the classroom, shared pastoral

experiences, and offered challenges to pursue excellence. The Bible college experience also provided family togetherness and a sense of belonging (Newman, Wood, & Harris, 2015), as directed by a proactive administrative staff. Matthew (participants' names are pseudonyms) was quite adamant, stating, "The most effective thing was the relationships with [professors] who really care They were always encouraging me . . . because they cared."

A sense of belonging overcame initial fears and apprehensions. Zion's initial impression was that "my experience here at the college was amazing, because you enter in with being such a skeptic So, when I got here, what made this college so amazing [is] . . . they make you feel so welcome." Initial fears were put to rest through the welcoming atmosphere!

The Channel to Persistence: Spiritual Formation

The elevated importance of spirituality by the participants indicated spiritual formation served as a conduit for successful matriculation. For example, humility and meekness provided a teachable spirit, even when the teaching differed from the student's own personal beliefs. Additional personal characteristics of discipline, patience, and maintaining priorities led to spiritual formation. As Zion persisted in the Bible college program, he observed it "really started transforming the way I think spiritually."

The Fruit of Persistence: Christian Service Formation

Ministry preparation is one of the main goals for Bible college enrollment. Thus, as the college experience fed the participants' ministries, it produced a strong persistent factor. As Caleb noted,

“Everything that I learned in the classroom I utilize in ministry.” Isaiah excitedly recalled, “It was because I’ve been in class and the Lord has given me sermons for the week, right there doing the study.”

The Bond of Persistence: Family Support Network

A strong passion to please family and correspondingly to avoid disappointing them is a fourth theme. This drive provided confident reassurance toward success. Nathan shared, “My wife was always my first line of encouragement.” Isaiah agreed, “My family all worked together, and was patient, and everybody was very supportive.” Gabriel appreciatively reflected, “My mom and dad were so proud of me . . . I was so motivated.”

The Accountability in Persistence: The Local Church Connection

A strong direct connection with a local church formed a fifth link to academic persistence. The relationship was commonly made by means of a pastor-mentor who often directed the participant toward the respective Bible college and kept the dialogue going with regular follow-up. Another aspect is the participants’ own Christian service ministry. This local church connection provided accountability toward persistence as the members observed growth in the student-pastor and provided positive feedback. Isaiah summed up:

The church family . . . encouraged me because they said, “Hey, the teaching that you are getting down at [the Bible college], it shows because now you are beginning to preach more practical so we can understand it . . .” This was very positive for me and it began to make me a better student.

Discussion

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems and the Adult Resiliency theoretical framework guided the research and indicated there was an interaction of the themes at the basic microsystem level influenced by the motivational experiences of interpersonal relationships. The persistence factors identified in this study were all experienced at the most basic level of relationships, engagement, and environment.

For example, spiritual formation provided a microcosm layer of support for persistence because once spiritual growth was apparent, the student made an immediate connection with the school as the source of the growth. This connection with the school elevated the participant's fellowship with God by means of the Holy Spirit when one is tackling something new.

Additionally, the Bible college experience formed the intersection of all persistence factors for these participants as they encountered a healthy representation of other African American students, enabling a boost in persistence. This microcosm was an opportunity to connect with others establishing interconnections, relationships, and identifying with those who are also nontraditional students involved in preparing for vocational ministry. Furthermore, the Bible college experience demonstrated the positive factors of offering opportunities to have access to the administration and faculty on a microcosm level. Such access provided the participants with role models and mentors.

The fruit of Bible college persistence is Christian service formation. Once participants understood course content fed directly into their individual ministries, and once they experienced a maturing

of their ministry competencies, the motivation to succeed in school was strengthened. This microcosm meant greater attentiveness in class and a proactive role with peers and faculty. Christian service was not a deterrent to persistence even though a great deal of time and energy is invested. Instead, Christian service became a strong persistence factor as the biblical content and training directly fed the participants' ministries (Barnett, 2010).

The family network and local church accountability microcosm served as a source of motivation for the participants. A network with a pastor-mentor provided accountability and instituted another microcosm layer of support for persistence. Church members reinforced the ministry development, which motivated the participants in persistence (Bland, 2013).

The Adult Resilience Theory explains the best way for students to advance is through reciprocal relationships of affinity, strengthening internal protective factors (Morales, 2000, 2010, 2014; Richardson, 2002; Van Breda, 2001). The participants indicated they became aware of risk factors soon after beginning in Bible college. This is the first and initial step of The Adult Resiliency Theory. Risk factors included little or no college experience, inefficient abilities in English grammar and writing skills, and lack of computer and electronic skills. The sooner students were aware of these deficiencies, protective factors could be implemented to offset them, the second step within The Adult Resilience Theory.

Protective factors included a sense of belonging to meet fears of returning or starting in higher education. Another protective factor included accessing group and individual helps for inefficient

abilities. Implementing these protective layers to offset risk factors is the second step in this theory. In steps three and four of the Adult Resilience Theory, participants continued to value, refine, and invest time with peers, faculty, family, and church-related mentors. As confidence is incrementally increased, protective factors are never abandoned but are strictly practiced, which is the fifth step of this theory.

Recommendations for Biblical Higher Education

It is crucial for institutions of biblical higher education serving African American males to understand the specific persistence factors linked to student success. All academic factors interlink with support systems from within and from outside the educational institution to ultimately impact African American male persistence. Serving the nontraditional student requires an understanding beyond the traditional college student.

Interconnect the Student and Institutional Context

This study demonstrated that the family and local church connections are critical to persistence. Because students experienced the family and local church connections as stabilizing, guiding factors, Bible colleges should create an atmosphere of acceptance while triangulating with a student's family and the student's local church.

Create an atmosphere of acceptance. Initial reentry fears were eliminated when the students witnessed a loving, caring, and welcoming spirit from administrators, faculty, and staff. Being well received opened the door for spiritual formation resulting in a wholesome satisfaction. Blount's (2018) grounded theory research

of student's spiritual integration within a Bible college setting likewise determined that alignment with the spiritual environment is a determining factor for persistence.

Triangulate with family. The importance of family with nontraditional undergraduate African American male students has been well established. The key, then, is for administrators to link the family to the institution, giving them a perspective of the rigors of the higher education setting that invites them to cooperate in more supportive ways. Within academic advising, or in a new student orientation, students should be guided concerning the importance of their family support network as it serves to foster academic success. Hosting family events reinforces the importance of family ties to the institution.

Triangulate with the local church. This study demonstrated the critical impact a student's home church has in persistence. The pastor serves as a mentor-accountability figure who maintains contact throughout matriculation. This relationship provides a source of encouragement, direction, local church resources, and accountability as there is always a desire on the part of the mentee to please the spiritual mentor. The church family extends an extra boost of encouragement for strengthening an internal sense of fortitude in challenging conditions. Bible colleges must bridge the gap between the college, the student, and the student's home church.

Develop Faculty Mentorships

Participants in this study indicated having a connection with a faculty member was viewed with honor as the student was the recipient of the care being extended by a trusted confidant, one

who would personally become vested in the student's success. Collaborating with faculty on an intimate but professional scale feeds persistence. Bible colleges should engender a system of support for students among their faculty and staff, building it into the context of daily roles.

Hire faculty with pastoral experience. This study indicated how important and appreciative the students were to observe examples for pastoral ministry as it came directly from the faculty's own personal history of ministry. This has been referred to as "professors as pastors" (Blount, 2018, p. 231) where faculty are not only teachers but also use their pastoral abilities in the college experience. A significant aspect of biblical training can be a teacher covering the subjects with the ability to apply biblical points while relating solutions to personal challenges that these students will be facing in ministry.

Connect faculty with student discipleship groups. The New Testament model for ministry training is a discipleship model (2 Timothy 2:2). Discipleship should occur both formally and informally. Personable faculty members welcome informal opportunities to disciple apart from formal teaching in the classroom. However, discipleship should be elevated to a formal level so that no student is overlooked. Discipleship groups can occur in student-body-sponsored monthly lunches with professors and fellow students and in other school-wide activities that include both large and small group activities.

Improve the Support Services Network

Noel-Levitz's (2015) research indicated the most effective

strategy by four-year private higher education institutions is academic support services, demonstrating their value for persistence and resilience. With Bible colleges experiencing a lack of resources due to tight budgets, there are some economically effective aspects of support services that should be carefully implemented (Stewart, 2015).

Establish and use a retention director and a retention committee. Establish a retention committee led by a staff person coordinating all the efforts to maintain support services critical to student persistence. Provision can be made for a written retention and college completion plan that is reviewed and updated annually. This plan should include effective retention strategies that provide an early alert indicator followed by intervention and ongoing counseling, academic advising, assessment of student needs, and academic support services to meet the nontraditional needs (Zhang, Fei, Quddus, & Davis, 2014).

Expand the role of advisors. Participants frequently spoke of advisors as doing little more than helping select the proper classes for the subsequent semester. This is important, but advisors can do much more to promote academic persistence. An important improvement is implementing an early and ongoing alert system to assist advisors in helping students persist and progress. An early alert system can help identify at-risk students, focus on de-motivational factors students have or develop, and monitor progress or the lack thereof in order to institute interventions immediately. Campuses must organize their efforts to improve outcomes by appointing a strategic success leader (e.g., Retention Director and staff) to collaboratively lead the process.

Use intergenerational tutorial advantages. An effective and economical strategy for assisting the underprepared nontraditional students is to use the younger students in tutoring them. Reverse tutoring (Kuehne & Melville, 2014) can eliminate anxieties nontraditional students experience as they use various software and computer applications. In the process of teaching computer skills, the digital divide is not only overcome, but great satisfaction is gained through building relationships as a broader level of support, as well as elevating levels of academic satisfaction (Harkness, 2012; Roberto, 2012; Robison, 2012).

Sustain a Proactive Administration

A proactive administration is one that listens to the voices of the students and especially the at-risk aspects of student life. Every contact by participants with members of an administration in gaining a listening ear was greatly appreciated.

Invest in student ministries. Student ministries were a positive persistence factor because they provided a motivating factor to return to class each semester to receive spiritual training and biblical content necessary for their respective ministries. Administrators can proactively coach faculty to include course content that directly feeds student ministries. The residual effect was a maturing of the participants and their ministries.

Spiritual formation is foundational for all directives. Since participants highlighted the supreme importance of spiritual formation, it must find a prominent place in mission and vision statements and connect all aspects of college life to its fulfillment. Administrators must capitalize on every opportunity to develop

spiritual formation within Bible college relational experience, Christian service formation, family support network, and local church connections with the goal of improving retention rates.

Conclusion

The five themes of academic persistence from this study are the Bible college relational experience, spiritual formation, Christian service formation, family support network, and a local church connection. The Bible college experience represents the comprehensive theme for academic persistence from which all themes intersect. The Bible college relational experience connected participants with peers, faculty role models and mentors, and holistic resources that went far beyond anything participants could have accessed on their own. Spiritual formation includes the desires and aspirations that nontraditional undergraduate African American males are seeking in a Bible college experience and is a channel for feeding various avenues for sustaining persistence.



Endnotes

¹ Except for direct quotes, this research consistently uses the term African American, even though the terms Black and African American are synonymous (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

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Learning Together: Employing a Faculty Learning Community at Lancaster Bible College

Justin Harbin

Abstract

As higher education embraces innovative educational models, support for the faculty members who must carry them out remains a vital ingredient for success. Despite this need, many institutions adopt innovations such as blended learning for all of the benefits afforded, with minimal consideration to meaningfully equip professors teaching these courses. “Faculty Learning Communities” (FLCs) provide a powerful model of supporting and equipping faculty in their teaching practice. Nevertheless, ongoing and collaborative faculty development was historically unavailable to professors teaching undergraduate blended courses at Lancaster Bible College. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative action research study was to examine the ways that faculty perceived an FLC during the design and facilitation of a blended course. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework guided the design and facilitation of the FLC in fall 2018, as well as providing insight into measuring how learning communities formed during the FLC and while participants taught their courses. Findings revealed that participants perceived the FLC as supportive for their blended teaching practices. Participants made direct mentions of support and indicated belief that broader institutional change be implemented toward this end to enhance faculty development opportunities. Importantly, the FLC format was found to be a contextually appropriate support for the

faith-based institution. Limitations and implications of the study, as well as desired future research, were explored.

Teaching at an institution of biblical higher education often brings an array of benefits to the faculty member from a community-learning focus to service-oriented programming and smaller class sizes. However, challenges also exist, including limited resourcing and the potential for higher administrative load being placed on the average faculty member in the form of advisement or assisting the academic department. Add to this demand on the time of hard-working faculty members the complexities of teaching in higher education at the current moment in history. Such a multifaceted demand requires ongoing attention and support for the academic life of each faculty member.

This study explored a method of supporting a previously under-resourced subset of faculty at Lancaster Bible College—those choosing to take an option to “blend” their undergraduate course, moving one of the three hours each week to the online environment. This article summarizes one research question of the study and focuses on key findings that may be of use to similar faith-based and service-oriented institutions as Lancaster Bible College.

National Context for Blended Learning

The blended delivery of courses continues to increase in popularity among institutions of higher education (Wong, Tatnall, & Burgess, 2014). While early definitions of the practice were satisfied with the addition of some online component to a face-to-face course, this article defines blended learning as a combination of online and face-to-face components that leverages the strengths of both modalities and centers around student learning rather than

content delivery (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Rovai & Jordan, 2004; Vaughan, 2007). As the landscape of higher education shifts across the country, institutions identify blended learning as a viable and flexible model to meet an ever-changing series of challenges. Considering the complexity involved in aligning administrative goals with faculty practice, the importance of how an institution adopts blended learning carries significant weight.

Local Context

Lancaster Bible College is a private institution in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, with a student body of approximately 2,100 students. Programs include traditional and accelerated undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees, and doctoral degrees (Lancaster Bible College, 2016). Blended and online programs receive full support of the Office of Digital Learning, where professors collaborate with instructional designers and technologists to create courses. However, individual courses may also be blended as an option. Professors teaching undergraduate courses on campus may choose to teach all three hours of a three-credit course on campus or two hours on campus and one hour online. This blended approach has not been supported by the Office of Digital Learning due to a lack of staffing and the need to prioritize the fully online and blended graduate programs.

After the initial cycles of research around this problem, it was clear that faculty practicing blended learning felt isolated and desired collaboration. This qualitative action research study sought to provide that support and collaboration to faculty through a faculty learning community (FLC) for blended learning. The purpose of this research was to investigate whether the creation of an FLC modeling blended learning would be perceived as a support for creating high-

quality blended undergraduate courses at Lancaster Bible College and how the faculty would incorporate what they learned in the faculty learning community within their blended courses.

Four research questions guided the study. Two questions focused on faculty member perceptions of support from the FLC experience (one of which focused on specific faculty developer behaviors), and the other two focused on evidences of the theoretical framework, Garrison et al.'s (2000) Community of Inquiry. This article focuses on the first research question and related findings:

Q1: How did faculty perceive the value of a faculty learning community (FLC) as a support for designing blended courses?

Theoretical Perspective and Guiding Literature

The framework of Communities of Inquiry (Garrison et al., 2000) provides guidance for this research, serving two key roles. First, the framework contains a powerful explanation of an engaged online, blended, or face-to-face classroom, which may be used as an exemplar and model for faculty seeking to design and facilitate high quality blended courses. Second, the Community of Inquiry serves as an effective method of faculty development. In light of both roles, this research seeks to utilize Community of Inquiry as a framework for developing quality blended courses while modeling its use with faculty in the development process. The Community of Inquiry focuses on the intentional design and practice of three areas of “presence” (cognitive, social, and teaching), as well as the relationship between them (Shea & Bidjerano, 2010, p. 1722). This

construct applies to online, blended, or traditional (face-to-face) formats (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

While historic trends of introducing technological innovations follow a once-and-done “workshop” or similar approach, such a model lacks the continuity and depth of critical reflection offered by an ongoing culture of faculty development (Bohle Carbonell, Dailey-Hebert, & Gijsselaers, 2012; Wicks, Craft, Mason, Gritter, & Bolding, 2015). Parsons, Lovato, Hutchinson, and Wilson (2016) explained that interdisciplinary faculty learning communities often reveal paths of inquiry and insight that administration alone may not have identified. A growing consensus across the literature reveals the potential for FLCs to effectively implement educational innovations and provide community support for faculty innovators (Bohle Carbonell et al., 2012; Furco & Moely, 2012; Owston, Wideman, Murphy, & Lupshenyuk, 2008; Parsons et al., 2016; Vaughan & Garrison, 2005; Wicks et al., 2015). Thus, the guidance, collaboration, and mutual inquiry of an FLC approach represents an appropriate measure to support blended learning practice.

The FLC framework also allows for bottom-up faculty development in an organization. Rather than following dictates from a seemingly distant administrator, faculty collaborate around common problems, share ideas, and inspire each other to continually improve (Wicks et al., 2015). From this perspective, FLCs present themselves as a meaningful opportunity for faculty members to share the burden of learning and committing to an innovation. Relevant to this study, a small handful of institutions have employed the FLC to support practitioners of blended learning (Owston et al., 2008; Vaughan & Garrison, 2005).

Method

This study employed an action research approach as a measure of seeking contextually driven answers to the problem of practice (support for undergraduate blended learning) (Mertler, 2017). This research positioned the researcher as participant (where the researcher is both faculty member and the institution's faculty developer), allowing teacher-leaders to study and effect meaningful change in their local teaching environments (Mertler, 2017). This research enacted a qualitative framework to maximize insight into what perceptions participants might hold regarding the intervention of a FLC through multiple qualitative data sources.

Participants

Faculty participants were purposively selected by two key criteria: that they were planning to teach a blended course for the first time in the Spring 2019 semester and that they desired the support of a FLC during the Fall 2018 semester while they designed the course. From this population, five faculty members were willing and able to join the FLC (a number congruent with prior FLC efforts at the institution). Three of these participants were faculty in the Social Work program with one in Criminal Justice and another in Counseling. All but one of the participants held a career outside the classroom prior to joining higher education, a relatively common situation for the practitioner-oriented LBC.

Procedure

During the summer of 2018, the FLC course site and accompanying resources were built in the institution's learning management system at the time, Schoology. The FLC course site

contained instruction through videos, articles, and other resources, as well as opportunities for reflection and collaboration in discussion forums and assignments.

During the fall 2018 semester, the FLC was spread across the three online sessions and four face-to-face sessions with the final session on campus acting as a focus group. Each session was designed in a way to cohere with the next in order to communicate blended learning as one interwoven modality. Sessions held on campus lasted one hour, while all online activities were asynchronous to provide flexibility and mirror the blended model employed by the participants in their own courses.

FLC sessions on campus were video recorded, while the asynchronous online portions acted as digital artifacts housed in the learning management system. Field notes were composed throughout the FLC experience to provide initial insights into the video recordings. Analysis of these data through thematic analysis began concurrently with the FLC and continued through the Spring 2019 semester. After each on-campus session during the fall, analysis involved open-coding for research question four, followed by eclectic and in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016). Additionally, as aligned with research question two, provisional coding following Vaughan and Garrison's (2006) coding template was subsequently supported by open, in-vivo, and eclectic coding (Saldaña, 2016). These codes were refined after each session. After the focus group, which occurred during the final FLC meeting, all codes were refined once more and then analyzed for emergent themes.

During the spring 2019 semester, each participant's course was observed for three hours total (one hour of online observations

and two separate one-hour classes on campus) with data collection occurring via field notes, video recording, and the learning management system. Once again, analysis occurred through initial open codes, which were refined after each observation. Data analysis for evidence of Community of Inquiry presences through Vaughan and Garrison's (2006) coding template took place concurrently with data collection during the spring semester. Data analysis was finished during the late spring and early summer of 2019. This process included finalization of codes and triangulation of all data sets toward each research question. MAXQDA research software was used to organize the analysis process.

Results

Question one inquired how faculty perceived the value of a FLC as a support for designing blended courses. Understanding the ways an FLC supports faculty members as they seek to innovate in teaching practice remains a key aim of this research. Such community-based faculty development receives substantial support in the literature for providing a meaningful learning environment (Furco & Moely, 2012; Owston et al., 2016; Vaughan & Garrison, 2006; Wicks et al., 2015). This analysis (video recording and field notes) yielded two emergent code categories: "Value Collaboration for Support" (n=212) and "Identifying Needed Improvements" (n=507). As the code categories and the code subsets under each were examined, two themes emerged in response to the research question. The first theme held that participants valued the collaborative nature of the FLC for supporting teaching practice. Learning from FLC colleagues provided one example of this theme. During each focus group, participants indicated that they felt that they had learned

from fellow FLC participants. Participants also drew upon shared experience as a support. LBC remains a practice-oriented institution with many faculty members previously holding careers outside of academia (this was true for all participants in this study). This shared experience provided a common reference as participants referenced the difficulty of adapting to the classroom. Not only did participants learn from each other and share experiences, but they also exhibited trust in their fellow members as an indicator of the support offered by the FLC. This often appeared as participants shared classroom struggles around teaching practice with their colleagues, a vulnerable step among professional peers.

The second theme is that participants also found the FLC relevant to their teaching practice. This theme appeared as each participant indicated FLC topics as relevant with their own teaching practice. Several participants pointed to the fact that they held prior careers outside of the classroom and lacked training on how to be an educator, one stating “I wish I had that when I was a young teacher” (observation, December 7, 2018).

Participants also demonstrated conceptualization of FLC topics in their own teaching practice. From specific educational technology use to backwards design processes and active learning strategies, these faculty members regularly spoke of how they planned to implement specific concepts or tools in their courses during the next semester.

Participants also demonstrated a belief in the FLC format as meaningful by identifying other areas of the institution in which such an approach might be useful. Participants went so far as to

identify specific subsets of faculty such as first-year teachers who might benefit from the collaborative approach (observation, April 12, 2019).

Finally, participants directly mentioned the support afforded by the FLC. Data coded for “direct mention of support” plays a substantial role in this research question’s inquiry into whether the FLC was supportive to faculty member teaching practice. One participant explained that the collaboration had been a “normalizing” experience where common problems could be shared rather than his previous experiences of isolation in teaching blended courses (observation, December 7, 2018). Participants indicated relevancy to practice of the FLC as a support by perceiving concepts as compatible, conceptualizing concepts in their own practice, identifying desired institutional support, and directly mentioning support.

FLC as a Support for Faculty

Congruent with the literature on faculty learning communities, participants perceived the FLC as a meaningful support (Bohle Carbonell et al., 2012; Furco & Moely, 2012; Wicks et al., 2015). Although the success of the FLC approach for ongoing faculty development is well documented, it remains a relatively untested approach in this institutional context. Such methods remain vital to engender “sustained critical reflection and discourse about one’s teaching practice” (Vaughan & Garrison, 2006, p. 140). The ongoing collaborative nature of the FLC was cited by participants as a meaningful element of support (observation, December 7, 2018). Vaughan and Garrison (2005) state: “A faculty development program must provide the time, support, and encouragement for participants to

re-examine and reflect on their course curriculum, teaching practice, and use of educational technology” (p. 3). Participants referenced consistent access and collaboration to the faculty developer and fellow FLC members as essential to their success in designing a blended course (observation, December 7, 2018). The faculty developer’s faculty ranking and experience in the classroom (both past and present) appeared to be particularly relevant to participants, who sought not only resources and instruction but also examples from the faculty developer’s own teaching experience. Previously, participants practiced blended learning without the knowledge of which other faculty members taught blended courses or whether the faculty developer would have the time to guide them in the process under the currently limited resourcing for faculty developer time.

Although participants spanned only three academic disciplines, it seems that this diversity provided value as different learning outcomes (such as skill-oriented versus knowledge-oriented) required different approaches across conceptualization and facilitation of the courses. Participants indicated that this understanding caused them to develop their own courses more clearly, especially regarding the design choice of placing specific activities online or on campus (observation, December 7, 2018). The intended learning outcomes of a blended course substantially shape the necessary structuring of activities (Mortera-Gutierrez, 2005; Wang, Han, & Yang, 2015; Wong, Tatnall, & Burgess, 2014).

FLC members identified ways the different outcomes required different blended learning designs between each other’s courses, but conversation mostly focused on the fact that these differences existed rather than to explore further which methods may be best suited to given outcomes (observation, October 5, 2018). Thus, it seems the

FLC approach for this specific blended learning application may also benefit from targeting specific types of courses and maintaining interdisciplinary composition to allow participants to focus conversation around more deeply contextualized needs. Mortera-Gutierrez (2005) explains that different learning outcomes require different structuring of the blended course, divvying up the design of courses into three components of “content,” “communication,” and “construction.” In this way, participants may benefit from hearing others facing similar instructional design concerns as in their course rather than those engaging with the full gamut of course design.

Four of the five participants held careers in other professions (social work and law) prior to becoming faculty at the collegiate level. Given the practice-oriented context of the college, this is not an uncommon occurrence. However, it may also serve to illustrate why this kind of community learning professional development might be useful as few professors in higher education at large receive formal pedagogical training (Alsop, 2018).

Participants directly identified the FLC as supportive for their own teaching practice. Although this may be unsurprising due to the support for collaborative, ongoing professional development in the literature (Furco & Moely, 2012; Parsons et al., 2016; Vaughan & Garrison, 2005; Vaughan & Garrison, 2006), certain contextual factors may also have contributed to its success. As a small faith-based, practice-oriented institution, Lancaster Bible College prizes community as a distinguishing feature of the institution. Embedding professional development within a context where this is so valued maximizes the potential of faculty member support for the FLC approach. The close working relationship of three participants within the same department likely assisted in the formation of community

for this study, but due to the limited number of full-time faculty at the institution, such a result seems likely for similar approaches in the future since faculty members often engage across disciplines in their daily work on campus (nearly all full-time faculty hold offices in the same academic building).

Limitations

Limitations for this study include (a) sample size and (b) diversity of the sample. While action research does not seek to generalize to other contexts, five participants remains a limited sample. Diversity of the small sample should also be noted. While commonalities may carry to other skill-focused programs, this study lacked exposure to participants from humanities and knowledge-oriented academic disciplines.

Implications

Studies employing the Community of Inquiry for the design of an FLC are limited (with none being conducted at a faith-based, private institution at the time of writing this article), but this study both contributes to the literature and further affirms the value of such an approach (Myers, Mixer, Wyatt, Paulus, & Lee, 2011; Vaughan & Garrison, 2005; Vaughan & Garrison, 2006; Wicks et al., 2015). Another implication is that of divergence in the actual ways participants structured their blended courses. Participants structured the online and on-campus components in a far more diverse manner than was initially understood by the faculty developer. Such diversity in course design may point to a broader usefulness of the FLC approach, allowing for greater flexibility for course design than originally anticipated. This may also explain participants' comments

that the FLC approach would have meaningfully supported them in a completely different need, faculty orientation.

Additionally, the FLC format as a means of learning in the community setting remains a contextually appropriate method of professional development. While social learning receives appreciation across a multitude of contexts, the unique attributes of a faith-based environment where faculty tend to gravitate towards a common set of values with community at the forefront played to the strengths of the FLC. Such a format could resonate within other private, faith-based institutions seeking to grow community and collaboration among faculty members.

Finally, both focus groups documented participants' belief in the FLC format as potentially useful for faculty onboarding as well as ongoing professional development. LBC's contextual disposition for hiring faculty with practitioner experience increases the need for onboarding new or inexperienced faculty well. Similar institutions within ABHE may consider such an approach as a means of addressing a significant faculty need with limited resourcing. The faculty developer in this study carried out the FLC with only 25% release from other full-time duties at the institution, a pivot that could be arranged at many similar institutions by hiring an adjunct professor to teach a class for that semester.

Future Research

Reflecting a limitation of this study, further research regarding FLCs as a support for blended learning should employ purposeful sampling across a greater variety of academic disciplines. A broader faculty representation in such research would also serve to clarify

and deepen the findings of this study. Future action research cycles should seek to gain participants from different academic departments from those participating in this study.

Additionally, action research into the manner in which an FLC may support the onboarding of new faculty, particularly those with prior work experience outside of the classroom, would prove useful in this unique context, especially since current offerings for faculty onboarding also represent a minimally resourced element of institutional need.

Conclusion

Improving and innovating classroom practices remains a challenging task for the teaching professor. Where rapid institutional growth has created gaps in faculty resourcing for blended courses at LBC, the FLC format provided ongoing, collaborative, and targeted support for participants. While such a format of faculty development has been well documented in higher education, the approach was found to show great promise within the unique institutional context of LBC. Faculty who are newer to life in the classroom (including the blended classroom) face many challenges to successful teaching practice, which may be an entirely new discipline of study. Structured time for reflection on their own strengths and weaknesses, timely provision of resources related to their practice, and collaboration with peers working through the same struggles all remain crucial elements of support which the FLC format provides. Through identifying institutional gaps and areas of potential innovation, as well as guiding practitioners through their implementation of the innovation, the faculty developer facilitated meaningful support for teaching professors at LBC. Further resourcing in such faculty-

development initiatives represents one of the most powerful investments a college can make—an investment into the lives and practice of those tasked with carrying out the mission and vision of the institution.



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The Christian Campus as Exilic Community: The Role of Christian Higher Education in Reclaiming Christian Language and Identity in the Contemporary Age

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Abstract

This paper presents a metaphorical look at the role of Christian higher education in reclaiming Christian language and proclamation in a society that is increasingly unfriendly toward religious proclamation. It presents the metaphorical idea often associated with Walter Brueggemann—that of the church as exile community—as a model for which to see the role of the Christian campus. In this vein, the campus intentionally disengages from secular society in order to help students solidify their Christian identity and to best equip them to reengage with contemporary culture. This paper identifies certain challenges in this task and presents theories throughout to be considered for this exilic hermeneutic. The conclusion of this paper is that the exilic hermeneutic is helpful in shaping the posture of the Christian campus and in recognizing the ability for an intentionally Christian community to exist successfully even as “strangers in a strange land.” It is the goal of this paper to provide useful frameworks in which to think of the role of Christian higher education in the twenty-first century and to present hope and purpose for those seeking an intentionally distinct model for higher education from a Christian perspective.

In their recent publication *Faith for Exiles*, Kinnaman and Matlock (2019) contend that many in the American church are attempting to prepare young people for a culture more closely resembling the world from which adults have come than the one in which young people currently live. They assert: “We believe many parents, educators, pastors, and other leaders are trying to prepare young Christians for Jerusalem, to keep them safe and well protected for a world they no longer live in” (Kinnaman & Matlock, 2019, p. 28). The more appropriate posture, they argue, is that of the resilient exile living in what they call “digital Babylon.”

In my doctoral dissertation, I considered a similar idea regarding Bible college students being trained for vocational ministry (Saylor, 2019). Specifically, this study examined the loss of Christian language in the lives of students entering their college years and the role of the Christian college in reclaiming the ability to proclaim one’s faith (Smith, 2009).

To clarify the role of biblical higher education in this way, a particular theological hermeneutic is helpful. As the average Christian emerging adult stands on the outskirts of contemporary American culture, one might recognize this generation as functioning in an exilic reality. The predominant secular view of this culture places one who sees Christian faith as anything more than subjective on the margins of society. As such, the following paper will attempt to lay out an exilic hermeneutic for understanding the role of biblical higher education in a secular culture.

Through a closer look at this biblical—and indeed historical—Judeo-Christian identity, one can identify a model for survival and for carrying on the proclamation of the

message of God. Although this metaphor has been engaged at different points in time, Walter Brueggemann's metaphor remains the foundation on which most "contemporary church as exile" discussions are based (Scott, 2017; Clarke, 1998).

Contemporary Bible College Students as an Exilic People

Brueggemann identifies two facets of Israel's exilic period before he identifies strategies that Israel employed for survival: little influence over public policy and temptations toward cultural syncretism (Brueggemann, 1997, pp. 104-105). These facets will guide the discussion of the metaphorical correlation between emerging adults in twenty-first-century America and the exilic Israel of the Old Testament.

First of all, Brueggemann makes the point that exiles have little influence over public policy. Ancient Israel found itself beholden to the laws and the culture of those who held power over them, whether it be the Babylonians, the Persians, or, as more recent scholarship suggests, Romans (Wright, 2013, p. 177). In all of these cases, Israel had become "politically innocuous and irrelevant"; thus, history records a tellingly one-sided tale of power and influence (Brueggemann, 1997, p. 104).

It is no stretch to recognize the state of contemporary Western Christianity in this exilic metaphor. Some might say that American emerging adults have never known anything different: Their Christian faith has always been marginal at best when it comes to influencing their culture. Many factors have led to the current cultural condition; however, what is important for this paper is to recognize that Christian emerging adults exist today as exiles, which is evident both through their lack of influence over public policy and how this has impacted

their engagement. These factors have thus affected their grasp of the Christian language and their ability to clearly verbalize their faith.

A people's identity is often based heavily on the role and function of public institutions that support the distinction of a given people group. In the state of exile, the displaced people group lacks this kind of public support and is often tempted toward syncretism (Brueggemann, 1997, p. 104). Their way of life becomes increasingly foreign to them. The more acceptable lifestyle becomes that of the foreign culture. Specific to language, the faith proclamation of exiles takes on a depth that is incomprehensible and frequently offensive and off-putting to the surrounding culture.

American emerging adults who speak of their faith openly across all issues of their life risk marginalization at best and dismissal at worst unless they concede to the cultural pressure to leave their religion behind. More dangerous than any level of conscious marginalization, however, is the unconscious reality within most emerging adults that religion simply has no place in the public sphere of conversation. An American Christianity without confidence in its voice in society is a disempowered presence that is not indicative of the One whom it serves.

Fostering a Response from the Context of Biblical Higher Education

Recognizing the above facets of exile, their effects, and finally their impact on the current state of Christian faith in American culture, it is important to begin to find a way through this situation. Brueggemann (1997) notes that exilic communities were forced to develop strategies and mechanisms for survival in order to sustain

their identity as a people. In Israel, one can see these strategies developing early on in their history. Brueggemann (1982) notes in a separate work on Israel's model for biblical education: "Every community that wants to last beyond a single generation must concern itself with education" (p. 1). One can recognize in this statement Brueggemann's insight that Israel, perhaps more than any other nation in history, had to be concerned with its own fortitude. It is just this kind of response that is needed today when it comes to maintaining a Christian worldview in the midst of an ever-increasing secular society.

In offering such a response from that of a Christian college context, it is useful to address Brueggemann's incorporation of Douglas John Hall's (1996) proposal that one must disengage in order to be prepared to reengage with culture. Such a strategy is not an end in itself but "a strategic matter for the sake of refocusing and redeciding about [one]'s identity and mission" (Brueggemann, 1997, p. 80). Ironically, this was the common approach of the seminarian and Bible college student of the past, but it seems that as society has infringed more on faith matters, pastoral preparation in this manner has become less purposefully "disengaged" from the offending culture.

This might appear to be an argument for traditional campus education; however, the goal here is not to argue for a single mode of education but to increase intentional thought around ministerial development. How might any context of theological education continue to instill the depth of preparation needed for vocational ministry? An intentionally disengaged community understands the practice of pedagogical rhythms in that "even temporary submission to the wisdom of the tradition invites one to take seriously the possibilities of engaging further in the Christian life and its practices" (DeYoung, 2011, p. 34). With such a community in mind, it is

important to begin with this idea of disengagement before moving on to identify how one can best be prepared to reengage with the culture.

Intentional Disengagement: A Model for Biblical Higher Education

At this point, the danger would be to simply unpack a predictably obtuse argument in support of such a response; however, the theological bent of this paper calls for a deeper realization of the meaning behind such a move. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is helpful in this area, specifically through a brief review of his approach to community and how it relates to such a purposeful disengagement.

Bonhoeffer is often recognized for his emphasis on Christian community in works such as *Life Together* (Bonhoeffer, 2001) and *Discipleship* (Bonhoeffer, 1996). For him, Christian community was a mandate into which all the church was called to enter (Green, 1999). It is also important to remember that one of the most influential theological minds of the twentieth century—and the one to whom we now look in examining this necessarily “disengaged” community—was a minister who most likely would have found himself most at home in the contemporary world of emerging adulthood, not to mention the college campus.

In summary, Bonhoeffer drew on the sociological work of Ferdinand Tönnies who contrasted the concepts of “community” and “society.” Bonhoeffer thought that the Western world lost its emphasis on community because of the escalation of the functional society and “the fetishizing of productivity” (Root, 2014, p. 50). Bonhoeffer follows Tönnies in seeing community as something wholly distinct from society. He seeks a church that reflects community over the functional society, “for the [community] . . .

upholds and even creates personhood; the [community] wears at least some of the stripes of the family” (Root, 2014, p. 50). For Bonhoeffer, the church must hold to its identity as community and never give in to the outside pressure of becoming a utilitarian society.

Central to Bonhoeffer’s approach was a sort of dialogical community that takes language seriously, intentionally engaging young people in thoughtful discussion. For instance, Schlingensiepen (2010) noted that Bonhoeffer wrote a catechism designed to “help create relational sharing through discussion” (Root, 2014, p. 92). Bonhoeffer, as well as many others, were beginning to criticize Luther’s Shorter Catechism and its use of memorized questions and answers intended to drive home central biblical truths. Schlingensiepen explains Bonhoeffer’s divergent approach: “They used the traditional format of questions and answers, but these were not to be learned by heart, becoming instead a stimulus for discussion with the young people” (Schlingensiepen, 2010, p. 79-80). Bonhoeffer stressed a focus on concrete reality in ministering to young people, declining either an abstract application or a rote form of memory that bears no connection to reality. Instead, he promoted genuine discussion around the application of one’s faith.

In much the same way that Bonhoeffer sought to apply the ideal of community to the young people to whom he ministered; the Christian campus seeks to build a community that makes genuine connection with the real world of its students. To be purposeful in the time that students dedicate to vocational ministry formation, the Christian college must recognize the significance of such an approach. This mindset is well proven in the age groups widely represented on college campuses today. A relational mindset is central to the discussion of those who have been successful in

building partnerships with Millennials, while Gen Z displays a much higher regard for relationship than for ideology (Espinoza, Ukleja, & Rusch, 2010; Barna & Impact 360 Institute, 2018).

This kind of community is only made more important when one recognizes the emotional disconnect between young people and adults in American culture today. Clark (2011) recognizes a standard sense of adult abandonment among many adolescents as American culture has moved from a culture that nurtures adolescents into adulthood to one that devalues such an intentional transition. Esteemed psychologist Robert Epstein contends that systems and structures erected to serve America's young have actually held them back and even done them great damage, a result that he terms *infantilization* (Clark, 2011). David Elkind argues that adults have failed in "enveloping" young people into set standards, values, and beliefs in which "the adolescent can confront and challenge in order to construct and test out her own standards, values and beliefs" (Clark, 2011, p. 26). The Christian campus as an intentionally disengaged community, then, fulfills this idea of enveloping students into a culture that ushers students along in their development. This type of community is vital in the process of re-forming the soul out of a culture that sometimes seems to be deforming it from childhood (Palmer, 2003).

Dean (2010) took part in the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) as an interviewer and followed up with a look at those whom the study identified as the "devoted." The "devoted" were the 8 percent of young people interviewed who "attended religious services, weekly or more often, participated in religious youth groups, prayed and read the Bible regularly, and said they felt very close to God and that faith is extremely important in their lives" (Dean, 2010, p. 46). By focusing directly

on these young people, Dean was able to map a way forward for those wishing to reclaim emerging generations for Christianity.

One of the definitive factors that Dean recognized in these devoted young people is a cultural toolkit that enabled them to navigate their world. Swidler defines this cultural toolkit as “the symbols, stories, rituals, relationships, and worldviews that we pick up from our experience of the world around us—our default operating system—and we use them to construct meaning and guide our actions in the world” (Dean, 2010, p. 48). Highly devoted young people in the NSYR demonstrated at least four of these characteristics: (1) confession to their tradition’s creed; (2) belonging to a community that enacts the God-story; (3) a calling by this story to a larger purpose; and (4) hope for the future promised by this story.

In the Churches Engaging Young People (CEYP) project from 2012-2015, the Fuller Youth Institute (FYI) sought to discover how churches were best engaging and retaining the commitment of these young people into their emerging adult years (Powell, Mulder, & Griffin, 2016). One trait in churches effectively engaging young people was unique: “an accepting, authentic, and caring culture that fostered a sense of belonging The FYI research team termed this frequently mentioned cluster of qualities ‘warmth’” (Powell, Mulder, & Griffin, 2016, p. 166). This cluster of qualities included descriptors such as welcoming, accepting, belonging, authentic, hospitable, and caring. The CEYP study demonstrated a higher faith maturity and vibrancy in emerging adults connected to these kinds of communities, as well as a deeper sense of community than simply meeting together or cooperating. These communities demonstrated a deeper involvement, a sense of actually *becoming part of one another* (Powell, Mulder, &

Griffin, 2016). The warmth of the community determined the ability to engage within as well as beyond the church walls.

Intentional Reengagement: A Model for Engagement with the Secular Culture for Biblical Higher Education

It is imperative that a disengaged community, as described above, remember that its ultimate goal is the reengagement of its members into the world at large. Matthew 28:18-20 is commonly referred to as the Great Commission and is sometimes seen as Jesus' creation of the mission of the church (Wright, 1997). It is notable then that Jesus' language specifically tells his first followers to "go" and to preach the gospel to "all nations." Throughout Jesus' ministry, one sees him inviting others to himself, but the instruction he leaves for the church is to "go."

This instruction means that the question for the Christian college is how one best prepares a 21st-century emerging adult for such a task. It is evident that these young people face a culture much different from the one that even the previous generation or two would recognize. The next task of this paper is to map the course for this kind of calculated reengagement.

Guinness presents an image that is helpful in this examination. To begin, he notes the unique nature of this age and the practice of proclamation within: "We are in the grand secular age of apologetics. The whole world has taken up apologetics without ever using or knowing the idea as Christians understand it" (Guinness, 2015, p. 16). Guinness sees in this secular age great potential for Christian evangelism; however, he warns that this will look differently than in previous generations.

It is not necessary to fully unpack Guinness' slant here, but it is useful to examine a few aspects. Guinness claims that Christian proclamation is "a lover's defense," and as such it should be deeper than what some have adopted as a cold, logical approach to apologetics. Guinness's (2015) approach then to Christian persuasion takes on a profoundly unapologetic stance:

Apologetics may at times be brilliant, complex and scholarly, and climb to a rarified altitude at which only a few thinkers can breathe easily. It may therefore at times appear a long way from the simplicity of the gospel, but it must never be made into an end in itself, and it should never stand by itself. As the early church boasted rightly, *the message of Jesus is both simple enough for a child to paddle in and deep enough for an elephant to swim in.* (p. 111)

Alongside classes emphasizing personal evangelism, apologetics has traditionally been a strong focus in training students for the proclamation of the gospel. Cultural reengagement as presented here serves as a reminder that an emphasis on these practices remains important but that the approach to each of these practices ought to be reconsidered. The swing in cultural values moving into the twenty-first century—especially the move into post-Christendom and its close relation to postmodern thought—requires that today's evangelist take a different tack than in previous generations in American history. Just as the NSYR demonstrated that young people raised in families who put a daily priority on faith conversations were much more likely to retain their childhood faith, 21st-century evangelism requires just such an emphasis. By emphasizing conversational Christianity, one's story informs one's understanding and develops a faith beyond certainty.

Smith (2006) sees this sort of open approach as a necessity—specifically that the Christian reject the need to “know” and instead remember that they are called to “believe.” Smith’s conclusion concedes a great deal to postmodern thought even as it demonstrates a concerted empathy with emerging adults living in the contemporary post-Christian world. It is important to note, however, that this thought process cannot be taken so far as to remove thought from belief. Gregg (2019) reminds the contemporary Christian of the contrasting approach of Christianity and Judaism in that they were built around a rational deity. Most readers of Christian Scripture would recognize the connection here to the Greek *logos* (λογός), but Gregg draws further on the Hebrew *dabhar* (דָּבָר). He says: “This [personal and rational concept of deity] distinguished Yahweh from the gods of other Middle Eastern peoples, whose deities were personified forces of nature” (Gregg, 2019, p. 37).

Israel recognized that belief at its core was an act of faith. Interestingly, one of Israel’s great tasks in the education of its young was to build a yearning in which children longed to be part of what Brueggemann describes as a mysterious faith (Brueggemann, 1982). This longing was built through daily discussion as Israel lived out Deuteronomy 6:6-7. One might recognize this as a conversational faith that not only solidified Jewish young people in their belief but prepared them to pass it along to the next generation. This approach can inform Christian educators in preparing students for effective reengagement with the secular culture of 21st-century America.

Perhaps the college campus is an ideal environment for such preparation. Dean (2010) notes that such a language requires an integration identified in Situated Learning Theory as “legitimate peripheral participation,” which “refers to the way newcomers become

integrated into communities—namely, by participating in them” (p. 145). The NSYR demonstrates clearly the value of this model in the religious devotion in adolescents; however, this conversational approach also places a high emphasis on immersion into the process. The Christian campus fits this model, being a locus for the student to be immersed into the Christian community and to be engaged in the practice of applying one’s argument to the cultural milieu.

The Exilic Role of the Christian College

One sees the exilic community and its deliberate stance against the dominant culture firstly in the disengagement from the predominant worldview and secondly through the intentional reengagement. The question, though, is how a college intentionally prepares students throughout this process for successful proclamation upon full reengagement with a secular society. As he concludes his metaphorical look at exile, Brueggemann (1997) unpacks what he deems “Disciplines of Readiness.” These disciplines “permit a rethinking of what exiles must do that usually is not done by pre-exilic people” (p. 118). In these practices of new hope, one can see the intentionality of movement from purposeful disengagement toward reengagement.

Brueggemann (1997) begins by emphasizing the importance of the exilic community being “driven back to its most *dangerous memories*” (p. 118). A community that is in such apparent danger of losing its identity to the dominant culture must maintain its distinction in this way. Israel was often tempted to succumb to a memory that was more culturally respectable and less radical; likewise, Christian emerging adults in secular culture must be careful to hold to their distinction even as culture pushes them farther to the margins.

Next, Brueggemann (1997) recognizes that exiles “must practice critical distance from their context, indeed, must practice *dangerous criticism* to keep visible the destructive seduction of the empire that is too often covered over by euphemism” (p. 121). Interestingly, FYI’s *Sticky Faith* study demonstrated the importance of parents in defining this critical distance from context in the adolescent years, specifically by their avoidance of easy answers (Powell & Clark, 2011). As researchers have followed up on this initial study group, they have identified this “distance” as a continuing important trend, even into one’s college years (Crawford & Gilooley, 2018). This distance—even critical distance—is imperative in not only maintaining one’s faith but in being able to proclaim its distinctives.

The conclusions drawn from these studies speak clearly to the third point Brueggemann makes—that in order to resist syncretism, “exiles are invited to practice *dangerous promises*” (p. 124). Although it is important to maintain distance as noted above, that distance should be a purposeful distance. Specifically, Brueggemann’s call brings to mind Scriptures that present a dangerous worldview, passages that pastors often find too difficult to preach. Willimon (1998), however, sees just these passages and the “thickness” of them as essential to the exilic existence. Willimon notes such texts as “seemingly disordered, often exasperating, sometimes threatening,” which “have portrayed the true God truthfully” (p. 113). The language of faith must be one that is taught through the lens of these dangerous promises.

Fourth, Brueggemann (1997) notes that “*dangerous new songs must be sung*” (p. 126). The emphasis throughout this section on poetic expression is significant. Poetic language is “outrageous and unreasonable” and “invites exiles to sing against reality, to dance toward a future not even discernible” and “to praise the faithful God

who will not be held captive by imperial reality” (p. 126). Dean (2010) sees just this kind of language in the art of testimony: “Consequently, testimony tells the story of God in Jesus Christ using speech that is passionate, subjective, and invested. Testimony neither dissects an argument, nor makes one; *it is more inclined to sing*” (p. 148). This kind of poetic expression is the difference between the learning of apologetics and the development of an intimate proclamation. Such testimony has no occasion for which it is appropriate or inappropriate but spills out of the very essence of the passion of the one who believes.

Conclusion

A people who wish to maintain their identity in a hostile culture must go beyond memory, and they must initiate an intense practice of hope. The exilic community must in essence learn to argue against the self-evident reality of their circumstances and cling to a hope that often seems unreal. This hope is found in what Brueggemann (1997) describes as doxologies of defiance: “In the exile, the doxologies are not primarily acts of remembering God’s past ‘wonders’ but anticipatory assertions concerning what God is about to do” (p. 20). The exilic community must sing a new song—not one of memory but one of faith for what is yet to come. Emerging adults today are more than ever a spiritual blank slate with double the amount of Generation Z identifying as atheists as compared to previous generations. And only 4 percent claim a biblical worldview (Barna & Impact 360 Institute, 2018).

The Christian college plays a central role in raising up generations that will not only maintain their faith in an unfriendly culture but will communicate it in a way that entices their peers to believe. The power of language in the exilic community cannot

be overstated. For Christian college students to engage the secular culture effectively, it is imperative that their time on campus be intentionally rooted in purposeful disengagement with an eye toward calculated reengagement and that they learn disciplines for readiness that will sustain their faith and position them to best proclaim the message in a way that engages the culture around them.



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BOOK REVIEWS

- ***Campus Life: In Search of Community***
Drew Moser and Todd C. Ream, eds.
Reviewed by Michael D. Moore
- ***Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon***
David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock with Aly Hawkins
Reviewed by David Hartkopf
- ***From Single to Serious: Relationships, Gender, and Sexuality on American Evangelical Campuses***
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- ***The Resilience of Religion in American Higher Education***
John Schmalzbauer and Kathleen A. Mahoney
Reviewed by John Jaeger

Campus Life: In Search of Community

Drew Moser and Todd C. Ream, eds.

InterVarsity Press

Downers Grove, IL, 2019

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Moser and Ream's expanded edition reflects on the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's (1990) work by the same title, directed by Ernest Boyer. That project surveyed more than "five hundred presidents all over the country along with hundreds of other administrators, faculty, and students" (p. 7). The report summarized six principles that provide foundational pillars of higher education. A college should seek to be a community that is purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, and celebrative. This volume provides analysis and commentary through the lens of Christian higher education professionals.

Moser and Ream's goal is to provide Christian higher education professionals a context to "think critically about the prospects for the future of campus life at evangelical institutions of higher learning" (p. 11). It will be specifically beneficial to campus leaders who work in the area of student life and development and to faculty members interested in understanding the classroom-to-life connections. The editors did not seek to create a formula to follow but rather a series of frameworks so that each unique institution can formulate its own way. Regardless of the institution's unique expression of its Christian

model, these six principles walk readers through the inner life, outer life, and upward life of the contemporary Christian higher education.

First, the principle of purpose: A purposeful community is one with a clear institutional mission statement that is widely known, shared, and received by the academic professionals and students. It should be innovative with the right language to “preserve and evoke the best of the past” (p. 15). The value of the mission statement guides the way faculty and staff are oriented into the institution’s culture. For example, Westmont College hosts a multi-week seminar on its heritage, mission, and values and a two-year seminar for new faculty that includes “defining how current strategic objectives reveal nuances in the five planks of the college’s mission” (p. 15).

Secondly, the principle of openness: An open community is a place where freedom of expression and civility are “uncompromisingly protected” (p. 21). Chapter two explores the tension of being Christian and academic in a context of protected expression because theological convictions, many times, influence how educational programs are designed, sustained, and delivered. The chapter explains Robert Benne’s typology of three types of (Christian) colleges: pluralistic, critical mass, and orthodox. Pluralistic schools do not place belief expectations on the faculty and staff. Critical mass schools “have at least some (critical mass) educators who affirm specific Christian convictions” (p. 22). Orthodox schools, which likely includes most ABHE institutions, expect staff and faculty to affirm the institution’s beliefs.

Thirdly, the principle of justice: In Boyer’s original report the just community is framed as a place “where the sacredness of each person is honored and where diversity is aggressively pursued” (p.

32). However, it rightly pointed out that diversity is much more than forced broader representation. Rather, it is about “deeply imbedded cultural humility, engagement, and responsiveness that goes beyond mere awareness for deeply felt and compelling responsibility for change” (p. 32). Realizing this as a Christian institution begins with committing to continually affirm the dignity and worth of all people.

Fourthly, the principle of discipline: A disciplined community is one governed by policy and procedures that are clearly defined and communicated. However, as the original report stated, “students live in two separate worlds,” one in academics and one outside academics (p. 116). The prior tends to be more clearly communicated and regulated than the former, and there is a “pressure from the broader culture requiring universities to rein in and address bad behavior” (p. 47). John Brown University provides an illustration of how an institution might address members’ personal and social responsibility. They call it the Community Covenant, a document that articulates these expectations for staff and students. It reflects JBU’s four major commitments.

Fifthly, the principle of care: Care is the functional characteristic that facilitates all the other principles. The 1990 report described care as “the people relate to each other, so that they feel they belong” (p. 52). Christian higher education is unique in that individuals’ identity is found first in the identity of Christ and his ways. Therefore, our sense of belonging is directly related and experienced through the teaching of Christ, which is our faith. The authors rightly identify the importance of faculty who “support students by helping them integrate faith and learning in the classroom . . . by creating meaningful connections between the material and their own lives, contributing to transformative learning and identity development” (pp. 53-54).

Lastly is the principle of celebration: A celebrative community is one where “the heritage, traditions, achievements, and beliefs of the institution are remembered, and where shared rituals affirm both tradition and change” (p. 62). This might be more difficult today because the perceptions of students and alumni have changed regarding the higher education’s value. This chapter seeks to understand the tension between tradition and change. Vanguard University utilizes its chapel time to address this, creating a diverse chapel council to plan speakers and events, which allows them to be “more effective and representative” (p. 65). They also connect their first-generation students to faculty and staff engagements where they hear success stories (p. 65). Celebration is difficult where “intentional cultivation of curricular and cocurricular practices that identify ways to bring the campus together” is not the norm (p. 65).

This new edition provides ample examples of how some Christian universities (Westmont College, Messiah College, George Fox University, John Brown University, Wheaton College, Vanguard University) have navigated the cultural shifts of modern higher education to interact with the findings of the original 1990 report. While it is thorough, it would have been helpful to have some commentary concerning the six principles’ relevance to specific departments like Student Life or Admissions. The book provides a thoughtful examination of each principle without providing a prescriptive template. It respects the diversity, autonomy, and integrity of other institutions.



Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon

David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock with Aly Hawkins
Baker Books
Grand Rapids, MI, 2019

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There is no shortage of discouragement in the church regarding retention of younger attendees. As the 2011 book *You Lost Me* pointed out, dropout rates in the church among 18- to 29-year-olds have risen over the last decade. Many church leaders and parachurch organizations have seen membership and participation decrease and have been working diligently to identify problems and find solutions.

Biblical higher education specifically has not been immune to these difficulties. Closing, or threat of it, and financial turmoil, often caused by dwindling student populations, have been concerns of many serving in ABHE contexts. Institutionally, we often wrestle with the tension of being faithful to our historical roots while realizing we must serve the present generation of students enrolled and not the ones we had 50, 25, or even 15 years ago.

Against this challenging backdrop, David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock have written *Faith For Exiles*. The thesis of the book states: “Young non-Christians are avoiding Christianity, and young

Christians are abandoning church; however, by cultivating five practices, we can form and be formed into disciples of Jesus who thrive as exiles in digital Babylon” (p. 15). These five practices are the following: (1) To form a resilient identity, experience intimacy with Jesus; (2) In a complex and anxious age, develop the muscles of cultural discernment; (3) When isolation and mistrust are the norms, forge meaningful, intergenerational relationships; (4) To ground and motivate an ambitious generation, train for vocational discipleship; and (5) Curb entitlement and self-centered tendencies by engaging in counter-cultural mission.

The work is accessible and represents over a decade of research as the authors aim to pass on what they have learned about discipling resilient Christ-followers in our current culture (p. 16). Their writing is honest about present realities but also hopeful and solution oriented. Although not written specifically for faith-based institutions of higher education, the issues dealt with in the book have direct implications for us.

Faith For Exiles is a valuable discipleship resource for administration and faculty serving at ABHE schools. While many specific examples could be cited, the following selected important ideas have framed my thinking about discipling current students over the past few months since reading the book.

The average college freshmen arriving on campus has been discipled (yes, “screens disciple”!) in the fast-paced world of “digital Babylon” their entire lives. They are digital natives, never remembering a time without the Internet and computers/electronics at their fingertips. They live in a world where authentic relationship with Jesus and others is being “choked to death by binge television,

immersive gaming, and social media scrolling” (p. 17). They experience pressure from digital Babylon to present perfect, polished identities and define who they are via social media (p. 48). The authors observe: “The cultural crosscurrents of branding and individualism exert tremendous pull on today’s young Christians” (p. 50).

Unfortunately, *Faith For Exiles* points out we have capitulated to the culture and have offered young people a Jesus “brand experience” (p. 50) while all the while expecting too little of them. We are so enthralled to have them in our classes/pews that we can be wary of engaging and challenging them. The encouraging research from the book shows that young, resilient Christians want to be challenged (p. 51)! And instead of selling them a Jesus product, we should be honest and tell them that Jesus asks us to give everything to him. Failure to present Jesus accurately, as Kinnaman and Matlock wisely pointed out, can inoculate young Christians to the true power of the gospel (p. 55). Authentic relationship with Christ is the first and most important anchor in building resilient disciples in this present world. In college settings, this means more than being dispensers of accurate Christian dogma. It must mean we do more than teach students about God but also create and facilitate an environment where students learn to know God himself in the context of an authentic Christian community.

Practice 3 in *Faith for Exiles* points out the importance of intergenerational relationships in the body of Christ. Many young Christians have a skeptical, disconnected, distant relationship with the local church. Social pressure is leading toward isolation, which is compounded by a corporate experience at churches where the pastor is an entrepreneur or showman rather than a shepherd (p. 112). It

is within this societal context that intergenerational relationships built over time on a foundation of trust become vitally important for discipleship and mentoring.

It is also crucial for us who teach and lead in Christian higher education to remember that these intergenerational relationships are valuable because of what Kinnaman and Matlock call “reciprocal mentoring” (p. 140). These students we serve who have grown up in digital Babylon have a lot to teach us! I watched a professor struggling with a basic function on his laptop in class recently. A student popped up and fixed it in about 5 seconds. We all laughed as the professor humbly thanked him. The professor is a brilliant published scholar in Old Testament studies, but he could not download a document. We need each other. And when we corporately adopt a posture of humility, as the professor did, and when wisdom is shared in both directions, we create a bond that is an important part of the discipling process. For us to thrive as ABHE institutions, this intergenerational mentoring culture needs to be present and is vital both for leaders and students alike.

Kinnaman and Matlock’s research and detailed analysis of our current culture as it relates to building resilient disciples of Christ are thorough and well presented in *Faith for Exiles*. While sometimes challenging and kindly critical, the overall tone of the writing is not one of despair but of hope. The solutions offered are grace-filled and practical. While the authors present excellent data throughout the book, the graphs and research are user-friendly, and the writing strikes a good balance between informational and inspirational. This is a much-needed, quality resource for institutions looking to build resilient disciples in this present age.

From Single to Serious: Relationships, Gender, and Sexuality on American Evangelical Campuses

Dana M. Malone
Rutgers University Press
New Brunswick, NJ, 2018

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Ring by spring. MRS degree. *Bridal college* (as opposed to Bible college). These colloquial terms are familiar vernacular at evangelical Christian universities, and perhaps even more so in biblical higher education. Faculty and staff of Bible colleges and universities may remember the marriage culture of their alma maters and see this same strong undercurrent of pressure on relationship formation on our current campuses.

Dana M. Malone has firsthand experience with the marriage culture in evangelical Christian schools, both as a student and then as a student affairs staff member. Now an independent scholar in the Philadelphia area, Malone conducted her doctoral dissertation on how students navigate their romantic relationships and construct and present their gender, religious, and sexual identities. It is clear from the tone and content of *From Single to Serious* that this was Malone's academic research focus, as well as a genuine passion and interest for her.

Drawing from and extending Donna Freitas's study of the sexual practices of college students at secular and Christian institutions titled *Sex and the Soul* (Oxford University Press, 2008), Malone affirms that students' relational practices on evangelical campuses differ from those of students at non-evangelical schools because of their purpose in forming these relationships, namely, finding a marriage partner.

Chapter 1 introduces the topic of relationship development on Christian college campuses, as well as Malone's method and study participants.

In Chapter 2, Malone introduces her two research sites, Small and Large Evangelical Universities, and examines the geographical landscape, campus policies and history, and denominational influence on each college.

In Chapter 3, she describes the process and rituals students employ as they move "from single to serious," such as the significance of the peer group and the role of social media and digital communication. Through discourse from her participant focus groups and individual interviews, Malone illustrates Christian college students' purpose and process of dating: "dating . . . is only a few short steps away from the altar" (p. 18).

Chapter 4 explains the intersection of religion and gender expectations. Malone explores the double standards that women face to be leaders on campus while emphasizing submission in relationship formation. She also highlights the expectations men encounter, such as the importance of spiritual maturity to their desirability as a romantic partner.

Chapter 5 analyzes the many tensions between sexuality and religion. Of particular interest is the tension between students' idealized purity standards and their individual personal experiences. Malone found that many students justify their sexual behavior within a relationship by increasing the commitment level of the relationship—from casual sex to dating relationship, for example, or from dating to engaged.

Chapter 6 concludes the major themes of the book and discusses implications for evangelical Christian universities. Mainly, Malone contends that students traverse a “mind field of contradictions,” particularly gendered and sexual ones. She also describes some of the problems with a campus culture that pushes students toward romantic relationships while at the same time promoting sexual purity. One Christian college alumna in the book blatantly states: “[Our college] did not prepare me for what to do if I was not married by twenty-two years old” (p. 3).

The key strength of the book lies in the rich and vulnerable narratives of Malone's participants, who bravely and thoughtfully describe the tensions they experience between Christian doctrines of sexuality, university policies, campus culture, and their own personal beliefs and practices. Malone astutely connects the dating process on evangelical college campuses to the broader sociocultural context and campus policies and practices to evangelical purity and courtship culture.

As with any qualitative study with a small sample size, Malone warns that her “findings are not intended to represent all evangelical college students” (p. 16). She completed an in-depth study of just two universities, both in the Southeast, and her participants at each

university consisted of 26 mostly White junior and senior students. The curious reader will wonder how Malone's findings may differ across denominational affiliation, type of university (Bible college versus Christian liberal arts college), and region of the United States.

While not the focus of her research, I am particularly interested in the long-term effects of the marriage culture on Christian college campuses to students' later marital stability and satisfaction. Given that the divorce rate among evangelical Christians is similar to the general population and that young age at marriage is a predictor of divorce, I worry about the long-term implications of a campus culture that encourages and promotes an intense hyper-focus on marriage. Indeed, Malone also worries that "there are no doubt couples heading down the aisle before they are emotionally or financially ready All too often marriage becomes the solution to difficulties born out of a culture that encourages coupling" (p. 176). I share Malone's hope that evangelical communities can "honor their theological principles associated with purity while also minimizing . . . the harsh consequences perpetuated within purity cultures" (p. 182), a topic I have written about elsewhere (<https://www.cbeinternational.org/blogs/5-purity-culture-myths-and-why-they-are-false-promises>).

Faculty, administrators, and student affairs staff will benefit from reading this book. In particular, faculty who teach classes related to sexuality or interpersonal relationships and campus life personnel, such as residence life staff and campus pastors, should consider the findings as they plan coursework, chapel topics, and dorm programming for students. Any faculty or staff members who take on mentoring roles with students might also consider the

implications of this book. However, given the academic nature and tone of the book, it is less likely that those outside of the above-mentioned disciplines or roles will find this book accessible and applicable.

Malone's study suggests that students at evangelical Christian universities perceive a dearth of arenas for open, frank dialogue about sexual matters. The programming in chapel or in residence halls about sexuality lacks the depth students need, according to Malone's participants. If the goal of biblical higher education is not just to educate students for their future careers but also to nurture their spiritual, emotional, and social development, then we ought to heed students' call for more holistic and comprehensive discussions of sexuality and relationships on our campuses.



Realizing the Distinctive University: Vision and Values, Strategy and Culture

Mark William Roche
University of Notre Dame Press
Notre Dame, IN, 2017

Reviewed by Matthew Steven Bracey
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When I first stepped into the reins of college administration, institutional mentors emphasized an important principle: Guard the integrity and distinction of our college, while also meeting accreditation norms and following best practices. Learning to accomplish these myriad aims of academic leadership with competence—much less with excellence—requires patient reading and listening. *Realizing the Distinctive University* by Mark William Roche is a helpful contribution to learning these goals of academic administration.

Roche is well qualified to defend and promote distinction in higher education. He has worked in the university context for three-plus decades, including as dean at the University of Notre Dame (1997–2008). He has also written other works on higher education, including *Why Choose the Liberal Arts?* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2010). Roche offers this thesis in *Distinctive University*: “For a university to flourish, it needs to embrace a distinctive vision and instantiate or embody that vision in specific practices” (p. 4).

Roche builds his case for distinction in three parts. First (chs. 1–2), he argues that institutional distinction requires a committed vision that can lead to appropriate change. Vision is the “driving force in the collective of any particular university or college” (p. 25). He gives a fascinating history of the German and American university ideals and comments on what has distinguished and challenged them. Contemporary higher education carries forward the legacies of these histories within which current institutions must work to fashion distinctive identity and vision. Thus, academic administrators should not “downplay” or “hide” their institutions’ “uniqueness” but rather see it “as a strength” (pp. 73, 75). Distinction, not imitation, will set institutions apart.

Part two (chs. 3–4) moves from vision in the abstract to the embodiment and funding of vision. First, distinctive vision requires employees who are committed to representing, leading, and teaching that vision. Thus, academic administrators must note the importance of good communication and the roles that courage, positive reinforcement, sensitivity to social and emotional realities and support structures play in institutional life. Not only does vision require personnel, but it also requires resources, as well as development, priorities, donors, and volunteers to help generate those resources. Effective fundraising will result from the leadership’s ability to tell an effective story of their institution’s vision.

Finally, Roche turns to structures, strategies, and struggles in part three (chs. 5–9), focusing in particular on flexibility, competition, incentives, accountability, and community. He describes competition as “friendly rivalry” that “encourages a university to reach its greatest potential” (p. 159). Competition is internal and external, as

well as local, national, and international. Also, competition should fuel distinction, not assimilation.

Ideally, an institution's personnel pursue some aims because they have inherent value. Still, appropriately designed financial or positional incentives may provide "the second-best way to motivate faculty members" (p. 173). Behind incentives is accountability, which is unpleasant yet also necessary for everyone: leadership, administration, staff, faculty, and students. "Criticism can be a gift" (p. 184). Quoting Karl Jaspers, Roche explains: "Whoever evades criticism really doesn't want to know" (p. 210). He concludes part three by discussing community, which, he says, "is an end in itself, but it can also be a means toward fostering other ends" (p. 233).

At 250 pages in length, *Distinctive University* is substantial but not burdensome. It is most appropriate for those in academic administration but could also serve college leadership generally. This book represents the reflections of a man at the end of his administrative journey who is looking back on the paths he has trod over his career. Consequently, it is memoir-like with numerous stories, at once sobering and also funny.

Roche demonstrates the wisdom that results from decades of practice. For example, he speaks to the importance of cultivating courage within an institution's faculty body so that they learn to "elevate rather than hide a distinct identity" (p. 97). He also comments on the importance of hiring for mission, echoing a similar point that Jim Collins makes in his monograph accompanying *Good to Great* (HarperBusiness, 2001). As another example, Roche reminds readers not to neglect the emotional and social dynamics of the workplace: "Good cheer and laughter are essential" (p. 117).

Readers who know little of the history of the German and American university will appreciate the overview he gives in chapter 1. Also helpful is his distinction between a “culture of responsibility” and a “culture of accountability”: “In the former, one believes others will follow through on requests and simply expects that to happen. In the latter, one ensures, through various strategies, that initiatives have been completed” (p. 186). Roche recommends the latter.

Proponents of online education may find some of Roche’s remarks on the topic disagreeable. For example, he suggests that MOOCs may detract from distinction. He also argues that the graduates most likely to identify with their alma maters are those who experienced “a strong residential, undergraduate culture” (p. 239). Finally, Roche writes on the importance of community: “The holistic college experience will not be replaced by online education or broken down into learning modules. Meaningful and sustained interactions with faculty members are crucial to student flourishing” (p. 233).

Realizing the Distinctive University benefits ABHE readership in three ways. First concerns the opportunity of student impact. Roche cites a recent Gallup poll that “indicated that only 14 percent of college graduates had one or more professors who cared about them as a person, made them excited about learning, and encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams” (p. 53). Because many ABHE institutions benefit from impressive student-teacher ratios, as well as spiritual, social, and academic mentorship programs, their faculty and administration have greater opportunity for measurable student impact.

Second concerns community. Smaller institutions foster a stronger student orientation and community more easily than larger ones (p. 237). ABHE institutions can strategically capitalize on that reality by genuine community. Lastly, Roche's volume should encourage ABHE constituency to make more, not less, of their distinctive identities and to demonstrate pride in, not embarrassment from, their distinctive visions.



The Resilience of Religion in American Higher Education

John Schmalzbauer and Kathleen A. Mahoney
Baylor University Press
Waco, TX, 2018

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It might seem apparent or even obvious that the significance of religion as an academic discipline and its impact on students has been in steady decline over the past few decades. With the rise of secularism, religion seems to have become less relevant. Even many colleges and universities affiliated with Christian denominations have become less closely aligned or have dropped their religious ties altogether.

While there is much truth in the statements above, John Schmalzbauer (Blanche Gorman Strong Chair in Protestant Studies in Missouri State University's Religious Studies Department) and Kathleen Mahoney (senior staff member at the GHR Foundation) present a different perspective. Based on research in sociology, history, and higher education, they find that religion not only is not in decline, but it in many ways is flourishing in academic settings. The idea of religion being seen as subjective and increasingly insignificant has changed substantially. Also, even in previous decades, religion has had certain periods of increased relevance in higher education, particularly through effective student organizations.

The book comprises six chapters, entitled “The Comeback,” “Religion and Knowledge in the Post-secular Academy,” “Crisis and Renewal in Church-related Higher Education,” “The Revitalization of Student Religious Life,” “The Wider Significance of Religion on Campus,” and “The Future of Religion in Higher Education.” The chapters discuss different aspects of the relationship between religion and higher education in both the past and present. The final chapter also addresses how this relationship might develop and change in future years. The structure of the book is logical, integrative, and cumulative. This makes the arguments and supporting data increasingly powerful, with each chapter building on the previous one or ones.

Also, the authors examine the past and present elements in their chapters through a sociological lens. By doing so, they provide insights as to why particular trends and movements took place. Through sociological analysis, the authors show the context in which shifts in conceptual thought and academic practices emerged. Sometimes such contexts are complex, and awareness of them adds depth to the historical analysis.

This book is impressive in that it provides a thorough examination, supported by statistical and empirical data, of the recent history of religion in American institutions of higher education. The book’s endnotes are nearly a hundred pages in length. It would be difficult for most readers to refute or reject the key arguments presented. If one were to attempt a critical response, he or she likely would focus on the way the historical content is presented with material selected and discussed in light of their final conclusions. However, the authors are careful to write in a balanced manner and have a thorough awareness of the many aspects involved.

Perhaps a more significant criticism regards the final chapter that considers the future of higher education and the place of religion in it. In some ways, this chapter is particularly important, since it gathers all the information from previous chapters and uses it to point the way forward. Yet little prognostication is provided, since the authors are well aware of unexpected and unforeseen shifts that may arise, making it difficult to see the future clearly. They take a cautious approach, not wanting to provide an inaccurate projection. While they note that religion is alive and well in academia at the present, they cannot know if this will continue into the future. While their caution is understandable, the reader likely is left with some disappointment. The last part of the book seems weaker than all that went before it. If the authors had provided detailed information on a few likely scenarios, without fully committing to any of them, the chapter would have been significantly stronger.

