

Dialogue III

Comments about “Marketing in the New Millennium: Motivational Differences Between Traditional and Non-Traditional Christian Business Students”

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Distinguishing between the motivations of traditional and non-traditional students is crucial to the marketing of a college that tries to serve both. For Christian colleges, the task takes on an additional dimension. The Andrews, Roller, and Baker (ARB) study is a significant and useful attempt to distinguish motivations. Its results will need to be replicated and expanded in order to be generalized, but they are in agreement with the anecdotal evidence I have observed over 20-some years of teaching both groups.

In the first paragraph of the introduction, ARB state that “More and more employees are finding themselves out of work” I realize they are drawing from Munk, but unemployment is currently at a record low. The news media continually harp on the layoffs at large, mature firms, but new jobs at growing firms are

more than offsetting those layoffs. If “more and more” were replaced by “many,” I think the point would be better and more accurately expressed.

The remainder of the same sentence suggests that many non-traditional students are returning to school while out of work. My experience may be unique, but of more than a thousand non-traditionals I have taught, only a handful have been involuntarily out of work, and most of those were on disability. The vast majority of students were full-time employees, although some were house spouses preparing to return to the work force.

At the beginning of the “Research Design and Methodology” section, ARB refer to “Christian business students.” Nowhere did I detect any effort to determine the students’ spiritual status. There is an obvious difference between “business

students at a Christian college” and “Christian business students.” Did the authors ask the students how they classified themselves? If it was an anonymous instrument, that could have been done. Is it possible that the traditional students come (or are sent) some distance *because* of the college’s spiritual character, while the non-traditional students come because the college is close, convenient, offers the program desired, etc. *in spite of* the college’s spiritual character? If such a difference exists, a “born again” variable might provide more explanatory power than any collection of other variables.

The remaining comments are of a statistical nature. A given student (or group of students) may consistently answer a set of Likert questions with a high or low bias. If that bias is systematic between the groups tested, it might influence results. The difference between a student’s response on a given question and his or her average response on the set of questions could be used in the statistical tests to eliminate that bias.

A small but significant error in statistical reasoning appears in the last sentence before the “Student Motivations” section.

Age and teaching methodology were the dichotomous, independent variables. ARB state that “As expected, the two variables were closely related ($t = -25.55$; $p = .000$).” Since the students were categorized on the basis of these variables, it is not meaningful to run a statistical test on their correlation.

No mention is made of whether the univariate difference tests are one-tailed or two-tailed. The text refers regularly to “differences,” so I presume that the t-tests are two-tailed. However, since the literature that is referenced suggests a directional pattern, one-tailed tests might be appropriate. The article should indicate which is the case.

Overall, I found the paper to be a useful and thought-provoking addition to the Christian college literature.

JBIB