


**Presentation to the Florida
Association of Christian
Colleges and Schools**

October 2-3, 2008

Drs. Mervyn Wighting & Deanna Nisbet
Regent University

1



**School Community and
Religious Commitment:
Interactions in Christian High
Schools**

Drs. Mervyn Wighting & Deanna Nisbet
Regent University


2



The Purpose of the Current Study

To investigate the relationship
between sense of community and
religious commitment among high
school students in Christian and
independent schools.

3



Overview of Presentation

- ◆ What is Community?
- ◆ Why the Current Study?
- ◆ Religious Commitment
- ◆ Overview of the Study
(Participants, instrumentation, research
questions, data analysis, results)
- ◆ Discussion of Findings
- ◆ Implications for Teachers
- ◆ Recommendations for Further Research

4




What is Community?

- ◆ Differs from setting to setting...in this study
the setting was the community of high
school students

Two dimensions....

- ◆ **Social Community** -- students' feelings of
spirit, trust, interdependence, belonging
- ◆ **Learning Community** -- feelings of group
norms and values, group membership


5



Why The Current Study?

- ◆ Findings from past research studies
e.g. Wighting & Jing, (in press) revealed
a clear need for additional research
examining the relationship between
sense of community and religious
commitment
- ◆ Biblical significance: One body, many
parts
 - ◆ Romans 12:4-5
 - ◆ I Cor. 12: 12-26

6



Religious Commitment

Worthington, et al. (2003)

- ◆ Religious commitment ...the degree to which a person adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs, and practices and uses them in daily living.
- ◆ Worthington et al. theorize that a highly religious person will evaluate the world through religious schemas and will integrate his or her religion into life experiences.

7



An Overview of the Current Study

- ◆ Participants:
 - ◆ 306 students in grades 11 and 12
- ◆ Setting: 5 high schools in Brazil and USA
 - ◆ 1 independent Christian school, Sao Paulo, Brazil
 - ◆ 1 public school, Sao Paulo, Brazil
 - ◆ 2 independent Christian schools, Virginia, USA
 - ◆ 1 independent Christian school, Vermont, USA


8



An Overview of the Current Study

- ◆ Instrumentation:
 - *The Classroom and School Community Inventory* (Rovai, Wighting, and Lucking, 2004)
 - *The Religious Commitment Inventory – 10* (Worthington et al., 2003).


9



The Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between sense of community and sense of religious commitment among high school students?
2. If a relationship does exist, are there differences between males and females?


10



Data Analysis

- ◆ Pearson product-moment correlations were computed to examine relationships between religious commitment and sense of community.
- ◆ The effects of gender were analyzed using independent t-tests.


11



Key Findings: Research Question 1

- ◆ Pearson product-moment correlations revealed a positive overall relationship between sense of community and sense of religious commitment; a low correlation ($r = .40$) exists between the two constructs.
- ◆ Results of a bivariate correlation revealed a stronger correlation for females, $r(152) = .43, p < .001$, than for males, $r(154) = .33, p < .001$.

12



Key Findings: Research Question 2

- ◆ Results of independent t-tests revealed a statistically significant difference between males and females in sense of community, $t = 3.39$, $p = .001$, as well as sense of religious commitment, $t = .24$, $p = .03$.
- ◆ Females' sense of community and religious commitment were significantly higher than those of males in this study.


13



Discussion of Findings

- ◆ Sample size was small, especially from both schools in Brazil
- ◆ Positive correlations between total instruments and also subscales are consistent with results of earlier research
- ◆ Gender differences are consistent with previous research


14



Implications for Teachers

- ◆ Teachers may find that to collect data on community and religious commitment could be helpful additions to their knowledge of individual students and how they work and learn collaboratively.
- ◆ The correlation is stronger among females than among males, and teachers may wish to structure collaborative learning among students in ways that benefit from this.


15



Recommendations for Further Research

- ◆ Further research into the sense of community in Christian schools could investigate whether any relationships exist with academic success, and in particular the subscale of learning community could be measured against perceived learning (determined by self-report) or actual learning (determined by GPA or standardized test).

16




References

Rovai, A. P., Wighting, M. J., & Lucking, R. (2004). The Classroom and School Community Inventory: Development, refinement, and validation of a self-report measure for educational research. *Internet and Higher Education*, 7(4).

Wighting, M. J. (2006). Effects of computer use on high school students' sense of community. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 99 (6), 371-379.

17



References (cont'd)

Wighting, M. J. & Jing, L. (in press). School Community and Religious Commitment. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*.

Worthington, E.L., Jr., Wade, N.G., Hight, T.L., Ripley, J.S., McCullough, M.E., Berry, J.W., Schmitt, M.M., Berry, J.T., Bursley, K.H., & O'Connor, L. (2003). The Religious Commitment Inventory -10: Development, refinement, and validation of a brief scale for research and counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 50, 84-96.

18



Scripture References

- ◆ Rom. 12: 4-5 “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” (KJV)
- ◆ I Cor. 12:26 “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured , all the members rejoice with it .”