



Learning strategies of Bible college freshmen : a case study of Prairie Bible College  
by Lynn Heasty Wallace

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education  
Montana State University

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Abstract:

The impact of selected demographic characteristics and use of 10 learning strategies upon first semester GPA was examined among 122 freshmen at Prairie Bible College (PBC) in Three Hills, Alberta. This descriptive case study found that the freshmen tended to fall on a continuum. At one extreme was the young, single female who was raised in a stable home with Christian parents and who was uncertain as to her future plans. At the other end of the continuum was the older, married male whose parents may or may not be Christians and who was planning to enter full-time Christian service. The freshmen at either end of this continuum were very likely to have higher GPAs than those whose demographic characteristics placed them in the middle. Weinstein's Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) was used to measure learning strategies among the freshmen. When compared to the freshmen at two American universities, the PBC freshmen were found to be somewhat less proficient than freshmen at a high-selectivity university and somewhat more proficient than freshmen at a low-selectivity university. The academically successful PBC freshmen made more frequent use of all 10 learning strategies than the less successful freshmen. Through the use of discriminant analysis, it was possible to classify the freshmen into two groups representing the academically highest and lowest 15.6% of the class with over 97% accuracy.

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This thesis has been read by each member of the graduate committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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April 27, 1994

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## ABSTRACT

The impact of selected demographic characteristics and use of 10 learning strategies upon first semester GPA was examined among 122 freshmen at Prairie Bible College (PBC) in Three Hills, Alberta. This descriptive case study found that the freshmen tended to fall on a continuum. At one extreme was the young, single female who was raised in a stable home with Christian parents and who was uncertain as to her future plans. At the other end of the continuum was the older, married male whose parents may or may not be Christians and who was planning to enter full-time Christian service. The freshmen at either end of this continuum were very likely to have higher GPAs than those whose demographic characteristics placed them in the middle. Weinstein's Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) was used to measure learning strategies among the freshmen. When compared to the freshmen at two American universities, the PBC freshmen were found to be somewhat less proficient than freshmen at a high-selectivity university and somewhat more proficient than freshmen at a low-selectivity university. The academically successful PBC freshmen made more frequent use of all 10 learning strategies than the less successful freshmen. Through the use of discriminant analysis, it was possible to classify the freshmen into two groups representing the academically highest and lowest 15.6% of the class with over 97% accuracy.

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Bible colleges are small, privately-funded, Christian colleges which prepare students for Christian ministry. Their primary goals are to teach students to perform an accurate and in-depth study of the Bible and to apply Biblical principles to real issues in the students' lives. They typically stress a disciplined lifestyle in order to promote personal and academic integrity.

Over 30,000 students attend accredited Bible colleges in North America each year (American Association of Bible Colleges [AABC] Annual Report Data, 1992). Students who attend these schools are often drawn to them for their small size and caring atmosphere in addition to the academic programs available. The average student to faculty ratio is 15:1 (AABC Statistical Report, 1992). Because of a strong belief in both the value of Bible study and the future ministries of their students, it is logical that Bible college faculty and administrators desire their students to learn as effectively as possible.

One area that holds promise for helping students learn more effectively is that of learning strategies. The concept of learning strategies developed as researchers in

the relatively new field of cognitive psychology began to examine traditional study skills. A learning strategy is simply a plan or device used to help accomplish learning. It may be an external, observable skill such as the underlining or annotating of text while reading. A learning strategy may also be an internal, unobservable skill such as the ability to effectively plan a study schedule or to control test anxiety.

Just as the learning and teaching requirements of public colleges and universities have resulted in a need for information on learning strategies, so a need exists in Bible colleges. Indeed, since Bible colleges are smaller schools with more limited funding than public schools, there is strong incentive for maximum efficiency in teaching and learning.

#### Problem Statement

The vast majority of research on the learning and study strategies of college students has been conducted on students in public colleges and universities, often on freshmen with known or predicted academic difficulties (Confer-Owens, 1992; Ickes & Fraas, 1990; McKeachie, Pintrich, & Lin, 1985; Nist, 1987, 1989; Weinstein, 1980a, 1980b). It is possible that the differences in setting and size (large public colleges and universities versus small private Christian colleges) as well as the differences in

population (students with known or predicted academic difficulties versus regularly admitted students), may make the results of these studies inapplicable to Bible college students. Although research using Bible college students is sparse, that which does exist indicates several important demographic and attitudinal differences between Bible college students and students in public four-year colleges (Brown, 1982; Bosma & O'Rear, 1981; Shaver, 1987). For example, the majority of Bible college freshmen are over 18 years old and tend to share not only similar values but also similar vocational goals. Most were raised in rural areas by Christian parents and plan on entering some type of full-time Christian service. The primary personal objectives of Bible college freshmen are to help others and raise a family. Less than 17% of them rank having business success or being financially well off as being very important personal objectives (Brown, 1982).

No major studies have been published that deal directly with the use of learning or study strategies among Bible college students. If Bible college students differ from public college students in their use of learning strategies and study skills then the results and recommendations from studies done at public colleges must be used with extreme caution. New research must be conducted to determine where the differences exist as well as why they exist. For example, if students are using

different strategies, then which strategies are being used? Are the different strengths and weaknesses systematically affecting academic performance? In what ways might the distinctive characteristics of Bible college freshmen such as declared major, intent on full-time Christian service, or years of home schooling influence the choice or effectiveness of these learning strategies?

On the other hand, if Bible college students do not differ from public college or university undergraduates, then Bible college faculty and administrators will be able to make confident use of an abundance of existing and ongoing research on learning strategies in order to help their students become more efficient learners. With this information as a baseline for incoming freshmen, additional research will be needed to determine the relationships between strategy use and academic success. Are the academically successful Bible college freshmen using different learning strategies than the academically unsuccessful freshmen?

To identify relationships between learning strategies, certain demographic factors, and academic success may provide Bible college faculty and administrators with information which could be used to guide students toward the most appropriate and effective learning strategies. Use of efficient and productive learning strategies should

allow students to receive maximum academic benefit from their college experience.

#### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe the learning strategies of college freshmen at Prairie Bible College and to determine which strategies and demographic characteristics were related to academic success. Learning strategies were measured by using Weinstein's Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI). This 77 item self-response questionnaire yields scale scores on 10 learning strategies. The first five are affective strategies: attitude, motivation, time management, anxiety and concentration. The remaining five are cognitive strategies: information processing, selecting main ideas, study aids, self-testing and test strategies. The demographic characteristics were examined by using a 23 item self-response questionnaire. The characteristics were chosen based on their known or theorized correlation to academic performance and included items such as age, gender, declared major, type of high school attended, or years of homeschooling.

Setting

The study took place at Prairie Bible College, Three Hills, Alberta, during the 1993-1994 school year. Prairie Bible College is one division of Prairie Bible Institute, an organization consisting of an elementary school, a junior high school, a high school, a college offering both two and four-year degrees, and a graduate school. Established in 1922, the Institute has an alumni of just over 12,000. The 130 acre campus is located in a rural farming community of about 3,400 people and is 80 miles northeast of Calgary--a city of over 625,000 people. The Institute is interdenominational (not officially supported by any single denomination) though it aligns itself theologically with Protestant evangelicalism by adhering to doctrines such as the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures and the vicarious death of Christ and His bodily resurrection. Over 40 denominations are represented in the student body including Alliance, Anglican, Baptist, Brethren, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Pentecostal and Presbyterian. Tuition, room and board for a single dorm student, and miscellaneous school fees totaled approximately \$6,000 for the 1993-94 school year (Prairie Bible College Catalogue, 1991-1993). Fall 1993 enrollment in the college was 434 with 150 first term freshmen. Fourteen percent of the 1993-94 student body

came from countries other than Canada or the United States with 26 different countries represented (Doug Lewis, PBC registrar, personal communication, February 8, 1994).

### Research Questions

1. What are the demographic characteristics of the freshmen at Prairie Bible College?
2. Do these freshmen differ from the norms established for other college freshmen in their use of learning strategies?
3. To what degree are different types of learning strategies used by the successful students?
4. To what degree are different types of learning strategies used by the unsuccessful students?
5. To what degree does the use of learning strategies affect academic success as measured by grade-point average (GPA)?
6. To what degree are select demographic factors related to GPA?
7. Is there a correlation between the demographic factors and the choice of learning strategies? That is, are certain types of students more likely to use certain learning strategies?
8. Can demographic factors, learning strategies, or a combination of the two discriminate between the most academically successful and the least successful students?

### Definition of Terms

American Association of Bible Colleges (AABC): The federally recognized accrediting agency for Bible colleges in the United States and Canada.

Bible colleges: Undergraduate theological institutions.

In this study, the data reported are representative of Bible colleges accredited by the American Association of Bible Colleges or members of the Association of Canadian Bible Colleges.

Christian: A follower of the teachings of Christ. For this study, Christian refers to those students who declared themselves as such on the demographic survey (See Appendix A, Question 82).

Full-time Christian service (FTCS): A primary, professional vocation in a church or church-related organization. Typically represented by pastors and missionaries, FTCS can also include pilots, teachers, doctors, secretaries, and administrators in Christian hospitals, schools, churches, missions, and relief organizations.

Grade point average (GPA): A single numerical average representing the academic achievement of a student for all classes taken in a semester. In this study a 4-point scale was used with 4.0 representing the highest possible level of academic achievement.

Homeschool: A program of formal education that occurs in a home rather than a traditional school environment. In this study, students were classified as homeschooled if they declared themselves as such on the demographic survey (See Appendix A, Question 96).

LASSI: The self-report instrument used to measure learning strategies in this study. It is the abbreviation for the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory developed by Weinstein.

Learning strategies: The "active, deliberate, and teachable methods of processing information" (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986, p. 257).

#### Limitations and Delimitations

The scope of this study was limited in the following ways:

1. The sample was limited to the type of student attracted to Prairie Bible College during the 1993-1994 school year.
2. Academic success was measured by using the first semester cumulative grade point average of the freshmen.
3. Learning strategies were limited to the five affective and five cognitive strategies measured by Weinstein's "Learning and Study Strategies Instrument" (LASSI).

The following delimitations exist:

1. This research was a case study of the learning strategies of first term freshmen taking at least six credits at Prairie Bible College; therefore, the population consists of the freshman class at one Bible college in western Canada. Although Prairie Bible College is representative of inter-denominational North American Bible colleges, the design of this study does not support generalizability to other colleges.

2. The data were collected using self-response surveys of demographic characteristics and learning strategies so the accuracy of the results depends upon the honesty of the responses. The students were clearly instructed to respond to the learning strategy questionnaire by rating themselves according to how well the statements actually described them and not in terms of how the students thought they should be or would like to be. In addition, the students were assured of anonymity. These two factors should have increased the accuracy of the responses, but results of this study should be interpreted with this delimitation in mind.

## CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH

Learning StrategiesHistory

F. Galton once stated that "until the phenomena of any branch of knowledge have been submitted to measurement and number it cannot assume the dignity of a science" (cited in Misiak, 1966, p. 57). Psychology attempted to attain "the dignity of a science" by the use of measurement and quantification, and its success in this regard did produce progress; it also influenced that progress (Misiak, 1966).

When John B. Watson published Behavior--An Introduction to Comparative Psychology (1914) and Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist (1919), he became the acknowledged leader of behaviorism. Watson was resolute in his belief that psychology should be a science of behavior and not a study of mental activity. Understanding humans could come only through careful, measured observation of their behavior and not by exploring inner (and unobservable) workings of the mind and the emotions. Other behaviorists expanded upon the work of Watson as they attempted to explain, control, and predict

complex human behaviors. Although these behaviorists differed in their areas of research, they all attempted to explain behavior in terms of the connection between stimuli and observable responses.

This mechanistic and often fragmented approach to human behavior was challenged by the introduction of Gestalt psychology in the 1930s. Gestalt theorists looked at the whole rather than parts because they believed that the whole was something different from merely the sum of the parts. They also felt that complex behavior could not be explained in the reductionist terms of stimulus-response bonds. They began with experimental studies of perception using a stroboscope. Finding evidence to support their theories, they subsequently studied memory, thinking, and motivation. These Gestalt psychologists broadened the investigation of learning to include understanding, insight, and problem-solving (Elias & Merriam, 1980). In the early 1970s, behaviorists began to adopt cognitive positions. Environmental engineering was not effecting the desired changes in their clients. In addition, laboratory studies were evidencing the role of cognitions such as awareness and expectancy (Matheny & Kern, 1984).

Cognitive theorists attempted to understand how people acquire knowledge, how they form concepts, how they "think." Many of their findings have a direct application to the field of learning strategies (Darkenwald, 1982).

### Development of Learning Strategies

Cognitivists were especially interested in the mental processes of knowledge acquisition and concept formation. Learning was viewed as "an active process that occurs within the learner and which can be influenced by the learner" (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986, p. 316). Since some people seemed to process information more efficiently than others, cognitivists attempted to measure what happens inside the learner's mind while learning is occurring. Traditional "study skills" such as taking good notes, underlining main ideas while reading, and creating logical outlines provided a starting point for these researchers to measure and evaluate how people were learning. As research continued, however, deeper questions appeared: How does an "efficient learner" decide when (or when not) to use certain study skills? What role does previous content knowledge play in the use of study skills? Is recall of information affected by the method of learning? From questions such as these, the concept of "learning strategies" emerged. On the surface, some strategies are quite similar to study skills, but they allow researchers to gather a different type of information and to test deeper hypotheses regarding why some people appear to learn more efficiently than others.

Learning strategies differ from learning styles in that "styles are believed to be more stable (trait-like)

preferences or predispositions to process information in specific ways, whereas strategies are active, deliberate, and teachable methods of processing information" (Weinstein & MacDonald, 1986, p. 257). Researchers in the field of cognitive psychology have not yet agreed upon a precise definition of learning strategies. Some use the terms study skills and learning strategies almost interchangeably (Entwistle, 1982; Palmer & Goetz, 1988). Tobias (1982) divides learning strategies into macroprocesses such as comprehension monitoring, active reading, or note-taking and the microprocesses of intelligence and general thinking skills. Dansereau (1983) basically reverses these two categories with his division of learning strategies into primary and support strategies. The primary strategies such as memory or comprehension strategies are those that are used to process information. Support strategies such as attention or concentration are used to maintain the proper state of mind for learning. McKeachie, Pintrich, and Lin (1985) consider learning strategies to be primarily the global, complex strategies such as elaboration, comprehension monitoring, and active reading though they also include motivational strategies, affective strategies, as well as basic memory strategies such as rehearsal and imagery. Conti and Fellenz (1991) describe learning strategies as "the techniques or skills that an individual

elects to use in order to accomplish a specific learning task" (p. vii).

The learning strategies instrument used in this study to gather information on Bible college freshmen was developed by Weinstein (1987). She categorizes learning strategies into the following four dimensions:

1. Comprehension Monitoring. Weinstein (1990) describes this as "knowing when you know, knowing when you don't know, and knowing what to do about it." (p. 18) For example, if you are reading this paper and your mind wanders, your eyes may still keep moving until something inside of you says "I don't know what I'm reading." So you stop, go back to something you recognize and then re-read. This is comprehension monitoring. Comprehension monitoring also includes being able to "establish learning goals for an instructional unit or activity, to assess the degree to which these goals are being met, and, if necessary, to modify the strategies being used to meet the goals" (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986, p. 323).

2. Knowledge Acquisition. This refers to the building of relationships between what you already know and what you are trying to learn. It includes "those methods needed to organize and elaborate incoming information to make it more meaningful" (Weinstein & MacDonald, 1986, p. 258). An example of this is Berne's personality labels.

He used the analogy of adult, parent, and child because people already understood those concepts clearly.

3. Active Study Strategies. This is putting active information constructs into study skills. For example, as a study skill, note taking was basically taught as a device which would help students remember important information. As a learning strategy, note taking is used to help students learn the process of deciding what the main ideas are, thinking about the relationships between the main ideas, and considering what is important and why.

4. Support Strategies. Support strategies "help to generate and maintain climates for learning . . . [they] deal with what are often called affective variables . . . such as motivation, attention, concentration" (Weinstein, 1990, p. 19). Support strategies can be external such as a quiet place to study with proper lighting or internal such as being able to focus attention or deal with anxiety.

Due in part to the wide variety of definitions, research on learning strategies has been quite diverse and the results have been occasionally contradictory. Following are several of the results that seem to be fairly consistent throughout the literature.

Choice of Learning Strategies. The choice of learning strategies varies with age, ability, and expertise. Older and younger children use different strategies. For

example, when given the task of recalling a list of numbers, kindergartners used repeated rehearsal as a strategy only 24% of the time. This compared to first graders using repeated rehearsal 63% of the time and to third graders increasing to 78% of the time (McGilly & Siegler, 1989, 1990).

Among 6 year olds, the choice between using retrieval or other back-up strategies for math and reading was influenced by both academic ability and a level of confidence in retrieval accuracy. For example, both the "good" students and the "not-so-good" students used retrieval more often than the "perfectionists." Even though the perfectionists were more accurate in using retrieval than the other two groups, these children appeared to set a higher criteria of accuracy before they would use retrieval as a strategy (Siegler, 1988).

Comparisons of good and poor readers have consistently shown that poor readers engage in less comprehension monitoring (Kaufman & Randlett, 1983; Paris & Myers, 1981). People with high spatial abilities use different problem-solving strategies than people with low spatial abilities (Cooper & Regan, 1982; Sternberg & Weil, 1980).

Experts and novices of similar ages use profoundly different problem-solving strategies (Chi, Feltovich, & Glaser, 1981). The effectiveness of teacher-generated

knowledge maps is influenced by the students' levels of expertise. Students with low prior knowledge learned most when lectures were accompanied by knowledge maps and learned least in lectures accompanied by lists of key terms. For students with high prior knowledge, the opposite was true. These students learned most when lectures were accompanied by lists of key terms and learned least when knowledge maps were used (Lambiotte & Dansereau, 1992).

Active Learning Strategies. Students taught to use active learning strategies showed improved performance in recognition and recall of material. College students who were asked to underline sentences in a passage were able to recall substantially more information than students who simply read the passage without underlining (Rickards & August, 1975). However, students focus on and remember whatever is marked whether it is important or not. Therefore, students who are not able to select concepts of high relevance perform better if they are given text with the high-level material already marked (Nist & Hogrebe, 1987).

Students taught to classify passages into five structured categories showed substantial pre- to post-test gains in the recall of high-level material in unfamiliar biology and physics textbooks (Cook, 1982). Students

taught to make their own knowledge maps (a spatial learning strategy) showed significant improvement on both recognition and recall tests (McCagg & Dansereau, 1991). On essay content, essay organization, outline content, and short-answer questions, students taught to generate their own text headings scored significantly higher than those who used author-generated text headings and those without text headings (Dansereau, 1982). Rehearsal strategies that are effective for basic learning tasks may not be as useful for complex tasks (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). Significant improvement in comprehension can be achieved when students are instructed in comprehension monitoring, and the results seem to be stable over time (Bommarito & Meichenbaum, 1978).

Learning Strategy Courses. College courses in learning strategies do produce significant improvement in reading comprehension, academic performance, and stress reduction for regularly admitted students (Dansereau, 1983; Weinstein, 1982). Unfortunately, these results are not consistent among the at-risk freshmen who are often required to take this type of course. At the Nashville State Technical Institute, 92 underprepared freshmen were divided into two groups in order to compare two types of study skills courses. The LASSI was used as a pre- and post-test measure. Neither approach made a significant

improvement among any of the 10 learning strategies measured by the LASSI (Confer-Owens, 1992). At a small liberal arts university, 59 academically at-risk freshmen took a required study skills course where the LASSI was again used as a pre- and post-test measure. These students did show significant improvement on half of the LASSI scales (Anxiety Management, Concentration, Information Processing, Self-Testing, Use of Study Aids); however, these gains had little impact on the students' academic performance as measured by first and second semester GPA (Ickes & Fraas, 1990). As far back as 1960, Entwistle observed that "volunteers seem to do better" than those who are mandated to take the course, and this would still appear to be true today.

The good news is found in the positive results among the regularly admitted students. Weinstein reported that students who took the "Learning to Learn" class at the University of Texas in Austin not only acquired the study skills and learning strategies that significantly improved their academic performance but also that they appeared to gain self-confidence and to feel better about themselves as learners (Weinstein, 1988/89).

#### Bible Colleges

Bible schools may be named Bible colleges, Bible schools, Bible institutes, or training institutes, but

there is no fundamental difference in their purpose. The American Association of Bible Colleges (AABC) includes schools with all of these names and defines them as post-secondary educational institutions "whose distinctive function is to prepare students for Christian ministries or church vocation through a program of Biblical, general, and professional studies" (American Association of Bible Colleges Manual, 1993, p. 9.). They are Bible-centered and conservative in theology. They stress Christian service, the devotional life of the students, and the world mission of the church. One feature which may distinguish Bible colleges from Bible institutes, Bible schools, and training institutes is the length of program resulting in the ability to grant bachelor degrees. Bible colleges typically offer four-year programs which include 32-64 semester hours of liberal arts courses. Bible institutes/Bible schools/training institutes may have similar programs, but normally they only require 16-32 semester hours of liberal arts courses and grant 1-, 2-, or 3-year diplomas (Witmer, 1962). Since the purpose of Bible schools is to prepare students for Christian vocations, the types of bachelor degrees offered are limited. The primary difference between Bible colleges and Christian liberal arts colleges is that the latter offer degrees in a much broader range of subjects. Bible schools are similar to theological seminaries in that both are "professional,

single-purpose institutions with a heavy concentration in biblical and theological studies. Bible colleges offer a wider range of vocational training programs than do most seminaries, which tend to emphasize training for the "pastorate" (Witmer, 1962, cited in Kallgren, 1988, pp. 32, 33). While seminaries are typically graduate level institutions and Bible colleges are generally undergraduate institutions, many Bible colleges are beginning to offer a limited number of specialized graduate programs such as Ethnomusicology or Urban Missions. Bible schools are often associated with a denomination though approximately one-third of the schools accredited by the AABC are independent and interdenominational (American Association of Bible Colleges Manual, 1993).

### History

While every Bible school has its own special origin, the typical scenario seems to be as follows. A group of people request evening Bible courses. The classes are taught by a local pastor and meet in Sunday School rooms until the classes grow in size and number beyond the capabilities of the church staff and building. A building is acquired (usually quite modest), a full-time teacher is hired, and additional day classes are offered. At this time, the program becomes known as a Bible School, Bible Institute, or Training Institute. Some schools remain at

this stage, deciding not to "dilute" their programs with additional general education courses. They offer certificates and diplomas in Bible-intense programs and expect their graduates to go on to other schools if additional education is necessary. Some schools decide that general education courses would enhance their existing programs, and they add only those liberal arts courses which are necessary for their programs. These schools are renamed Bible colleges and offer bachelor degrees in five principle areas: Pastoral/Theology, Missions, Christian Education, Church Music, and General Bible.

The Bible school movement as a whole began in the 1880's in response to the realization that seminaries would not be able to provide sufficient numbers of clergy to deal with the challenge of world evangelization. The movement "was less a reaction against the seminaries than a mobilization of laypeople to reach the lost" (Kallgren, 1991, p. 27). In 1882, A. B. Simpson started the Missionary Training Institute--known today as Nyack College. This school was modeled after the East London Institute for Home and Foreign Missions and came about because of Simpson's deep concern for world missions. September of 1889 marked the opening of the Bible Institute of the Chicago Evangelization Society--known today as Moody Bible Institute. In 1890, Moody told a newspaper reporter:

There is a class of people whom no man can reach successfully except one of their own number . . . There is far more demand for trained lay workers than is commonly apprehended . . . I am not seeking to make any shortcut to the ministry. I do not consider this work to be in conflict with the work of the theological seminaries. (cited in Pollock, 1963, p. 269)

Today Moody Bible Institute is the largest Protestant missionary training school in the world and in 1962, twenty-seven hundred of its alumni were active missionaries. These two pioneer schools, Nyack College and Moody Bible Institute, not only initiated the movement in America, they also served as prototypes and inspiration for many schools to follow (see Table 1) (Witmer, 1962, p. 34). By 1992 there were 89 Bible schools accredited by the American Association of Bible Colleges (AABC) with 17 others at either candidate or applicant status (American Association of Bible Colleges Manual, 1993).

Table 1. Founding of Bible Institutes and Colleges by Decades.

Decade	USA	Canada	Total
1881-1890	3	0	3
1891-1900	7	1	8
1901-1910	9	0	9
1911-1920	13	2	15
1921-1930	17	9	26
1931-1940	26	19	45
1941-1950	66	16	82
1951-1960	40	4	44
1961-1970	16	2	18

Note. From The Bible college in American higher education (p. 60) by L.J. Eagen, 1981, Fayetteville, AR: American Association of Bible Colleges. Copyright 1970 by the American Association of Bible Colleges.

## Bible College Students

### Bible College Freshmen

Bible colleges attract a remarkably homogeneous body of students, probably the most homogeneous group of freshmen in all of higher education.

It is likely that the homogeneity among Bible colleges--while certainly owing in part to their similarity in size and religious emphasis--can be explained by the fact that they attempt to serve students who are attracted by the same vocation. Consequently, the students have more in common than similar religious beliefs and personal convictions; they also share a common interest in some kind of church work. (Kallgren, 1988, p. 42)

Academic Characteristics. Most Bible colleges do not have academic entrance requirements such as SAT/ACT scores or a minimum high school grade point average. The 1989 AABC freshman survey found that 72% of the freshmen ranked in the top half of their high school graduating class with 49% from the top quarter and 22% in the top 10%. In 1981, Brown compared both high school rank and high school grades and found that Bible colleges attract a fairly representative cross section of students from all academic levels (Table 2). Bible college freshmen ranked higher than the low selectivity institutions and lower than the medium selectivity institutions. Low selectivity institutions are distinguished from medium selectivity institutions based on the minimum SAT/ACT scores required for entrance. Astin classifies medium selectivity colleges

as those which require an SAT score of at least 1025 or an ACT score of at least 23 (1992, p. 94).

Table 2. Academic Comparison of Bible Colleges with Other Types of Four-Year Colleges (by percentage of the freshman class).

Item Response	Public	Non-Sect.	<u>Protestant</u>		All	Bible Coll.
	Low Select.	Low Select.	Low Select.	Medium Select.	4-Year Coll.	
Academic Rank in HS						
Top 20%	31.5	33.5	40.2	47.7	42.8	41.0
Second 20%	25.7	23.4	21.7	22.6	24.1	21.9
HS Grades of B+ or Higher						
	30.0	32.0	39.3	46.8	43.0	42.4

Spiritual Characteristics. Whereas most Bible colleges have very few academic entrance requirements, they tend to have fairly rigid spiritual entrance requirements. According to Dr. L. John Eagen (1981), President of St. Paul Bible College:

Every catalog of every Bible college contains statements of expected student behavior and the college's desire to foster a Biblically consistent life-style. Before being considered for admission, students must give evidence of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and commitment of service to Him, usually accomplished by a letter or recommendation from a minister. (p. 50)

Some Bible colleges further limit admission to students intending to enter Christian ministry (Witmer, 1962).

Demographic Characteristics. The Bible college freshman class resembles the freshman class at other

four-year colleges in gender ratio but differs significantly on the demographic variables of ethnicity, age, and economic status. Both groups have slightly more freshman females than males. The ratio at Bible colleges is 51.0 to 49.0 (Bell, 1989); at other four-year colleges it is 53.8 to 46.2 (Astin, 1989). Whereas both groups are predominantly caucasian, the percentage of caucasian Bible college freshmen is 90.0, much higher than the 81.6% at other four-year colleges. Bible college freshmen tend to be older than freshmen at other four-year colleges (Figure 1). While almost the entire freshman class at other four-year colleges is comprised of students aged 17-20 (98.7%), this same age span accounts for only 77.7% of a Bible college freshman class. In addition, more than one half of the Bible college freshmen are over the traditional age of 18 (Astin, 1989; Bell, 1989).

Figure 1. Age of Freshmen.

























































































































































































































