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Living Life Together: A Qualitative Study of Taylor University's Lifestyle Covenant

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Abstract

Taylor University, a small, Christian, liberal arts institution in the Midwest, utilizes a lifestyle covenant which outlines expectations for campus life to promote character development and fulfill the university's mission. In pursuit of exploring community members' perceptions of the Life Together Covenant (LTC), the larger qualitative study, consisting of individual interviews with ten senior students, ten staff members, and ten faculty members, found that participants generally perceived the LTC as a guide or set of expectations to live cohesively at Taylor. This article focuses on the student findings and analyses. Students generally perceive and experience the LTC in a legalistic manner yet appreciate its intent in creating the Taylor community, varying in their understanding of the document. These differences of perception and experience provoked a further analysis of these variations related to one's role on campus, maturity of personal development, and familiarity with the LTC.

Introduction

George Kuh (1993) said, “the ethos on a Christian university campus is one defined by a belief system widely shared by faculty, students, administrators, and others” (pp. 277–278). As a foundational document at Taylor University, the Life Together Covenant (LTC) is an example of a lifestyle covenant that lays out the expectations for campus life. All higher education institutions provide rules and policies that determine acceptable student behavior (Dalton & Crosby, 2010). In the totality of all types of policies, the use of and literature regarding lifestyle covenants to determine and guide community life at institutions is very rare. Nonetheless, lifestyle covenants can promote character, ethical, moral, and spiritual development in students (Lau, 2005; Longjohn, 2005; Longshore, 2015).

Behavior Codes

Christian higher education institutions utilize a variety of approaches to student behavior codes: handbooks, college catalogs, (Lau, 2005) codes of conduct (Longshore, 2015), and honor codes (McCabe et al., 2002). Honor codes have been utilized in attempts to curb academic dishonesty through an emphasis on honesty, respect, and justice. Research regarding the success of academic integrity has mixed results (McCabe et al., 2002; Bernard-Brak et al., 2013). Literature also highlights the use of codes of conduct or behavioral codes. Codes of conduct contain prohibitions against “the most serious forms of student behavior such as academic cheating, sexual harassment, racial intolerance, and alcohol and substance abuse” (Dalton & Crosby, 2010, p. 2), but are usually limited to these matters. However, within Christian higher education, these behavioral codes also seek to promote institutional values and missions designed to create a truly “Christian” environment (Lau, 2005).

A handful of researchers have explored codes of conduct or behavioral codes within Christian higher education. The most prominent study on the topic conducted by Lau (2005) identified ten rationales behind behavior codes. Colleges and universities utilize behavior codes to promote Christian distinctiveness and values reflected in disciplined behavior, reflect the campus ethos and dialogue, project a certain “image” of community, capitalize on issues of safety, assume some in *loco parentis* responsibilities for students in transition, aid in the integration of faith and learning, promote a sense of Christian community, prepare students for life after college, protect students from a “slippery slope”

of “big” sins (e.g., premarital sex), and provide liability safeguards. When comparing student and administrative perspectives of conduct codes at two Christian liberal arts colleges, Longshore (2015) found that student conduct codes foster whole person development, yet students at the institution which encourages the language of “obedience” over “discipline” appeared to develop more freely. Longjohn’s (2013) case study at a Christian university concluded that codes “exist to provide an opportunity for university personnel to reflect the character of God by pursuing restoration and relationship in the lives of the students” (p. iv). Longjohn’s understanding of conduct codes embodies the goal and intent of lifestyle covenants.

Lifestyle Covenants

Honor codes and codes of conduct are typically contractual agreements in nature. Contractual thinking acknowledges responsibilities, but it emphasizes boundaries, limitations, and constraints (Bennett, 2002; Hoover et al., 2018). A covenant can include all of the elements of a contract, but also emphasizes and establishes a relationship between the parties involved. A covenant is an agreement or promise, usually formal, between two or more persons to do or not to do something specified (Wickett, 2000). A covenant downplays potential legalistic nature and encourages accountability (Bennett, 2002). In pursuit of a common goal, a covenant pushes those involved to move beyond themselves, committing themselves to the welfare of the others out of free will (Wickett, 2000).

Similar to codes of conduct, lifestyle covenants can lay out abstinence expectations regarding, but not limited to: alcohol, drugs, tobacco, social dancing, behaviors forbidden by Scripture, lying, homosexuality, and premarital sex (Reisberg, 1999). In 2011, the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) gathered data from the websites of 97 of the then 110 U.S. CCCU institutions, which showed that at least 24.18% of U.S. CCCU institutions required students to sign a lifestyle covenant. The study also found that 98% of the institutions had policies prohibiting premarital sex and academic dishonesty, 96% prohibited alcohol and tobacco use, and approximately 33% prohibited dancing (Rine, 2012).

Throughout its history, Taylor University has utilized various forms of living standard statements for the community. With input from students and employees, the covenant was created in 1990 to present integrity and accountability in a more positive manner (Campbell, 1990). Since its creation in the 1990s, the document has undergone various wording

and policy changes. The LTC intends not to be a document of rules and restrictions, but rather an aspirational document with Christ-minded values where members commit to prioritizing the needs of the group. Today, the LTC is split into seven sections: an introduction of the school's mission and the LTC's purpose; an explanation of why members have a responsibility to love God, others, and self; a list of biblical responsibilities for community (e.g., building up one another); a list of biblical responsibilities for individual attitudes and behavior (e.g., attributes of the heart and prohibited behaviors); a list of university expectations (e.g., expectations of worship, prohibited behaviors); an application section; and a conclusion statement utilizing Colossians 3:12–17.

Student Development in Higher Education

Since its origin in 1636, higher education in the U.S. has sought to promote moral and character development in addition to instilling strong Christian behaviors within its students (Marsden, 1994; Thelin, 2011). As institutions' *in loco parentis* role started to diminish in the 20th century, colleges and universities gradually had less interest and oversight in students' behaviors (Kuh, 2000; Marsden, 1994). However, in recent decades, scholars have returned to this body of research, students have begun to express interest in their own spiritual and holistic growth, and administration has returned to setting moral and behavioral expectations by employing various types of honor codes, codes of conduct, and lifestyle covenants in hope of developing character and strengthening the community culture (Bok, 2013; Boyer, 1990; Dalton & Crosby, 2010).

This development of character includes moral development. Kohlberg (1971) outlined how students create moral judgements into six stages. The first four stages reflect typical behaviors of college students, yet students enter college at different points and progress at different rates. Progressively, students obey rules (a) to avoid punishment, (b) if they are in their best interest, (c) as defined by those close to them, and (d) because they believe the social system contains a consistent set of rules that apply equally to all. During college, students progress through these stages towards post-conventional moral judgment—basing their moral reasoning off universal principles of social justice utilizing individualistic thinking (Kohlberg, 1971).

In addition to moral growth, higher education cultivates a stronger sense of identity within students. Chickering and Reisser (1993) present seven vectors that contribute to the formation of identity: developing confidence to cope with challenges and achieve goals; managing

emotions; increasing emotional independence; developing interpersonal relationships; establishing identity and comfort with one's sexuality, social roles, and culture; developing purpose and clear vocational goals; and developing integrity and creating congruence between values and actions. The use of vectors symbolizes not only a direction of identity development, but also differences in students' magnitude of growth.

Purpose of the Study

Though the LTC prevails as a founding document of the university, no research has been conducted regarding members' perceptions of the LTC. The larger study sought to provide a broad understanding of how different population groups at Taylor understand the LTC by answering the question: What are student, staff, and faculty perceptions of and experiences with the LTC? The following pages will focus on findings and analysis for the student population.

Methodology

The research utilized a qualitative, phenomenological approach. No research has been conducted on this topic to date; thus, the study was exploratory in nature. The research question followed a phenomenological methodology as it sought to understand and “describe the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75).

Context and Participants

The study was conducted at Taylor University—a private, faith-based, liberal arts institution located in the Midwest. Taylor's student body consists of approximately 2,000 students. Over the past seven years, the institution has remained 89–92% residential with many of the other students living in nearby off-campus housing (S. Barrett, personal communication, April 1, 2020). Thus, there is a strong sense of both geographical and communal proximity. At the beginning of every school year, students read and sign the LTC with other members on their floors or wings (typically 20–30 other students). Throughout the year, various residence life programs (e.g., informational posters or discussions of the covenant's history) and chapels remind students of the LTC's content and values (Beers, 2008). Every first-year student participates in additional discussions on the LTC during Taylor's introductory “Foundations of Christian Liberal Arts” course. Some students (e.g., student leaders) interact with the LTC more frequently than others, while some discuss the LTC during conduct meetings.

The participants of the study included 10 students, 10 faculty, and 10 staff members. All participants needed to hold their respective statuses for a minimum of three years at Taylor, allowing them time to interact with the covenant. At Taylor, student development professionals hold faculty status.

Positionality of the Researcher

The researcher attended an undergraduate institution which also expected its students to commit to a lifestyle covenant. While at Taylor, the researcher served as a graduate hall director. The researcher not only sought to abide by the covenant terms but also held an additional responsibility to encourage compliance and hold students accountable to the LTC.

Procedure and Validity

Procedures for the study followed Creswell's (2015) data collection recommendations. Prior to setting up interviews, the researcher refined the interview questions and procedures through pilot testing. The researcher emailed eligible participants, requesting self-referral for participation in the study. The Taylor community showed a large interest in this specific study as more students, staff, and faculty volunteered to participate than needed. The researcher employed a stratified sampling method utilizing a random number generator and then emailed the selected ten senior students, ten staff members, and ten faculty members to set up an individual interview.

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews by asking each participant a series of questions concerning how they perceive and have experienced the LTC. Interview questions expanded on Moustakas' two broad phenomenological questions: What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon? (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Participants selected a pseudonym to add to the confidentiality and intimacy of the results. Following the qualitative data collection, the researcher analyzed the open-ended responses from the transcriptions and highlighted significant statements regarding how the participants experienced the phenomenon. The researcher then grouped these codes into themes to interpret the data. Typical of a phenomenological study, an essence of participants' collective perceptions of and experiences with the LTC emerged (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Rich description, pilot testing, and member checking increased the validity of the study. The researcher used rich descriptions of the setting

and participants to set the context for the study. Few institutions utilize a lifestyle covenant and its use largely depends on the environment of the university. Rich descriptions will aid readers in making decisions regarding transferring results to other institutions (Creswell, 2015). The practice of member checking involves asking participants to check the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2015). Following the interviews, the researcher emailed all participants their transcription findings to check for accuracy.

Findings

Within the larger study, the researcher examined themes both within each of the three populations of participants, as well as collectively. Due to scope, only student perceptions and experiences will be displayed and discussed in detail.

All Participant Themes

The participant groups generally agreed upon the purpose of the LTC. Students, along with both faculty and staff, agreed that the LTC is a guideline for life together; defines the values of Taylor, which set it apart from other institutions; and should create a community of inclusion.

Perceive the LTC as a Guideline or Set of Expectations for Life Together

The most prominent subtheme that emerged from the study was a unified recognition that the LTC serves as a guideline or a set of expectations for the community. Faculty member Vito stated, “[the purpose of the LTC is] to provide guidance...if you’re going to live in community here, this is what’s expected. How you treat one another, what your behavior is.” Participants saw this aspirational document as not only setting individual behavioral expectations but helping the members of the Taylor community live together cohesively. Max said, “[the LTC is] a shared sense of expectations of how we’ll live and treat one another; get all that on the table so there’s a starting point for building relationships and living together in community.” However, for many students, the interpersonal benefits were an afterthought to the rules or living expectations.

Perceive the LTC as a Distinction of Taylor University

Participants believed the LTC helps the institution define its values, remain close to them, and set Taylor apart from other institutions. Students typically highlighted this distinction when comparing the culture of Taylor to other, specifically state, universities.

Perceive A Community of Inclusion

Another subtheme found regarding participants' perceptions of the purpose of the LTC is its role in inclusion or lack thereof. Some believed the LTC sets expectations to create common ground, include all types of people, and create a safe community. Amber perceived the LTC as a list of things that we're agreeing to so if anybody is not comfortable with those things, [then] not participating in those things as a collective body leaves room for community to foster and it doesn't exclude someone from activities they aren't comfortable in.

In contrast, three students including Brenda think "some of the items that are on [the LTC] clash with some people's cultures and might...be very frustrating for some people to follow." Participants whose thoughts aligned with Brenda's specifically questioned the drinking, dancing, homosexuality, and study abroad expectations' abilities to stay alive amongst cultural shifts. Participants' reflections regarding the idea of inclusion varied depending on their perception of the LTC's purpose for inclusion and their experiences with peers who feel excluded.

Perceive and Experience the LTC Differently

Although most participants viewed the purpose of the LTC to be the expectations for community life, the researcher was unable to find any more all-encompassing themes true for a majority of the participants. The LTC is a widely interpreted document, and this variation largely depends on one's familiarity with the document and their role on campus. A few participants incorrectly discussed aspects of the document contributing to discrepancies. Others indicated they were unclear regarding the application of staff and faculty adherence to the LTC in light of the employee implementation clause which outlines when employees are to abide by LTC expectations. In addition, one's role on campus influences their experience with the LTC. Student leaders noted their training on the LTC and used language similar to that of their trainee. Further, student leaders, like Joel, must think about the LTC more frequently, "[questioning] what example I am setting with the way I'm talking and the way I'm interacting with people."

Themes Unique to Students

Perceive and Experience a Legalistic Document

As participants widely interpreted the LTC, the student population tended to view the LTC as more of a legalistic document. When asked what the first LTC ideas or expectations that come to their mind are, a

majority of student participants mentioned rules (e.g., no drinking or restrictions on dancing). By way of student leader training, two students knew that the LTC is not intended to promote legalistic thinking; however, these two students still viewed the ideas of the LTC as rules needed to be enforced. Others who did not personally view the LTC in a legalistic way noted that their peers see the document as a list of rules.

Brenda and Beth noted the implications of a legalistic document in producing shame as a small, yet important subtheme. When seeing friends struggle after not living up to the LTC's expectations, Beth questioned the LTC's role in creating a perfect front for shame:

Do these rules, or guidelines as they would call them, whatever, I still feel like it's a rule, do they play into that of setting up this perfect front of like, "We don't drink. We don't like engage in like sexual activities or sin." Sometimes I feel that plays into [the role of shame] because people feel like they have to meet these goals.

Whether or not students perceived the LTC to provoke feelings of shame, almost every student participant either personally viewed the LTC in a legalistic light or believed their peers did.

Understand the Purpose of the LTC Amidst Disagreement

All student participants disagreed with at least one aspect of the LTC (most notably the drinking prohibition or dancing limitations). Some students noted frustration with the LTC's wording. Paxton said the LTC was "written for its time," while Beth believed the LTC has not kept up with cultural ideas from 2021. Others believed the wording itself leads to varying interpretations (e.g., specifically the wording regarding homosexual behavior). However, regardless of students' dissatisfaction with the content or wording, students generally appreciate the LTC's influence in creating the Taylor community. All students spoke in line with Brenda when she said, "I wanted to live [by the LTC] a little more... because it was a document that [was intended] to support me and the community I was in, even though I don't agree entirely with everything in it." Students who expressed frustrations regarding the drinking expectations typically understood its purpose for inclusion in the LTC. However, students who disagreed with the dancing limitation policy did not reciprocate this understanding. Christina said, "a lot of people don't like the LTC and it tends to be a joke around campus because of all the rules and some of the more extreme ones of no dancing other than folk dancing." Students believed the policy to be unnecessary, unbiblical, or contributing to the LTC being viewed as a joke.

Students who mocked the LTC were also frustrated with the frequency with which the Taylor community talks about the LTC. Amber noted,

The flippancy we put behind [the LTC] takes away the safe space that it was trying to create...I also think it's talked about so much that it's like people don't care about it anymore. I wish that when it's being talked about, we talked about the specifics of it.

Many students indicated a wish for less, but better-quality discussions of the LTC.

Perceptions Changed When Turning Twenty-One

Students' perceptions of the LTC changed throughout their time at Taylor. Every student mentioned the drinking policy in some capacity. Six students noted that prior to turning 21, their own personal convictions about the drinking age, rather than the LTC, restrained them from drinking. Therefore the LTC held more significance once they turned 21. Christina said, "my first two and a half years at Taylor, [the LTC] didn't really affect my life because I couldn't drink." Since turning 21, students have experienced the weight of the LTC through their personal daily choices not to drink, experiencing social situations with friends drinking, or reflecting on how the LTC creates an unhealthy relationship with alcohol resulting in shame.

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Discussion

When considering student, staff, and faculty themes together, both similarities and differences across perceptions and realities emerged. In essence, all participants perceived the LTC to be a guide or set of expectations to live together cohesively. The student population generally perceives and experiences the LTC in a legalistic manner, yet appreciates its intent in creating the Taylor community. Students view the LTC differently as they vary in their roles on campus, knowledge of the document, interactions with the LTC, and maturity of personal development.

Framework for Society

The LTC provides its members with the opportunity to identify attributes and learn how to make responsible decisions in a moral context—crucial to preparing students for the maturity required of them for society at large (Boyer, 1990). Participants' recognition of the LTC as a document that serves as a guideline for community life, contributes to a distinct Taylor culture, and aspires to foster an inclusive community highlights its success in aiding students in their ability to identify, build, and participate in healthy communities. Participants'

appreciation for the LTC amidst discrepancies aligns with participants' posture from other research findings (Longshore, 2015) and exhibits mature characteristics of interpersonal relationships and Kohlberg's (1981) conventional moral reasoning as participants generally prioritized concern for the community, with moral thinking legitimized through Scripture stated in the LTC.

Variation of Perceptions and Experiences

As noted in the findings, students' deviation of perception and experience can be attributed to varying roles on campus and familiarity of the document. However, one's stage of development also influences the way they view and interact with the covenant. Whether an institution utilizes a lifestyle covenant or not, its members, particularly students, experience crisis, support, and progression through moral and intellectual development.

The LTC and Student Development

Levels of Challenge and Support. How a participant perceives the LTC could depend on the frequency and degree to which the document presents challenges in their lives. As an appropriate degree of disequilibrium can advance moral development (Morrill, 1980), the LTC facilitates the development of an environment that corresponds to Sanford's (1962) ideas regarding the importance of balancing challenge and support to stimulate personal development. Not explicitly noted in the findings, staff and faculty participants who once attended Taylor demonstrated the positive impact of a proper balance of challenge and support as some reflected on times in which either they (as a former student at Taylor) or a close acquaintance failed to abide by the LTC, yet received grace and support from the Taylor administration of the time. This theme aligns with Lau's (2005) notion that discipline often creates points of crises in students' lives and these crises often serve as transition points for student development. Therefore, it would be "irresponsible [for Christian] institutions to abdicate their responsibilities in this area because the dialogue is difficult, inconvenient, or uncomfortable" (p. 563).

The results of the study also relate to Marcia's (1966) theory of identity development which states that one's sense of identity is determined by the degree of personal and social crises (decision-making period or exploration) and commitments (degree of personal investment one exhibits). Student participants demonstrated actions within stages of moratorium (high degree of crisis with little commitment to one's values, beliefs, or goals) and foreclosure (low degree of exploration and questioning

with a high degree of commitment), consistent with the typical college student. Incoming students who may initially unquestionably follow established policies (Biswas, 2013) or moral rules “expose themselves to an impersonal religiosity, unquestioned ideas of morality, and an inauthentic faith” (Sanders & Joeckel, 2012, p. 141). Students in this study demonstrated foreclosure through a posture of comfort with the LTC with no clear evidence of previous exploration with its content or authority. Administration can highlight the rationale and educational values of behavioral expectations to assist students’ prioritization of these rules within their moral development (Jones & Cunion, 2012). Student participants most notably reflected a state of moratorium when turning 21 or wrestling with cultural or sexuality implications which appear to conflict with the LTC. Within these states of moratorium, students need opportunities to discuss and debate the rationale behind the policies. Participants in Longjohn’s (2013) study found that freedom to discuss policies openly built trust within the community.

Managing Emotions. The LTC has helped some participants to wrestle with and develop both appropriate and inappropriate reactions to emotions—a process key to identity development (Chickering & Reiser, 1993). Optimistically speaking, the LTC’s role in helping navigate emotions may perhaps benefit students if they can learn how to manage feelings of shame in a supportive context. However, if an institution decides to utilize a lifestyle covenant, it must be prepared to find ways to support students through this process.

Interpersonal Relationships. As interactions with others’ perspectives stimulates moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1981), participants’ perceptions and experiences of the LTC varied with interpersonal maturity (Chickering & Reiser, 1993). Residential institutions such as Taylor have the potential to help students develop the ability to recognize, respect, and work with those fundamentally different from themselves (Cornwell & Guarasci, 1993). Students exhibited these qualities as they reflected on respecting one another; however, students failed to provide evidence that the LTC had influenced their openness to reconciliation of differences.

A handful of participants demonstrated a working maturity within their interpersonal development when reflecting on LTC’s cultural implications (most notably, empathizing for students coming from cultural backgrounds which celebrate drinking or dancing). Students displayed growth along Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) fourth vector as a few

demonstrated an appreciation for intercultural differences. Evident in students' interviews, the LTC aims students towards Kohlberg's (1981) fourth stage of obeying authority and conforming to societal order (i.e., although students don't agree with some of the drinking, dancing, or sexuality implications, many abide by them to maintain the intentional, relational community of Taylor). However, students' navigation of cultural implications supports growth towards Kohlberg's (1981) post-conventional moral reasoning as participants have decided that the broadness of the LTC cannot determine what is right for all.

Integrity. The LTC was created in hopes of presenting personal integrity along with personal and group accountability in a positive manner (Campbell, 1990). While students exhibit some qualities of integrity as seen through their willingness to adhere to the LTC amidst disagreement with content, as compared to the employee populations, students lacked proof of active congruence and authenticity within their values and actions (Chickering & Riesser, 1993). In addition, students withheld any indications of the importance of holding one another accountable, no matter the difficulty—a requirement of a successful covenant (Bennett, 2002; Mullen et al., 2011) and marker of integrity (Chickering & Riesser, 1993).

Implications for Future Practice

As Taylor members enter into an established covenant, some members misunderstand the reasoning behind specific expectations or believe the content has not culturally stayed alive. The re-evaluation of a covenant at proper times is vital to a covenant's success (Mullen et al., 2011; Wickett, 2000). Administration should thoroughly revisit the LTC within every decade, paying attention to the specificity of wording and highlights of legalism. Most of the LTC expectations feature detailed language and Scripture references. Nevertheless, without explicit expectations for all items (e.g., homosexual behavior, immodesty of dress), the LTC leaves room for various interpretations. However, the inclusion of additional direct language could lead to a more legalistic document and thwart opportunities for challenging conversations to help community members wrestle with their beliefs. Depending on the institution's intention, administration should reflect on which path to adopt regarding the specificity of the wording. To promote inclusivity, buy-in, and less mockery—a purpose of the LTC identified from participants in the study—students and employees of various genders, cultures, ages, and institutional roles should be involved in this review process (Longjohn, 2013).

Students and employees contributed to the creation of and changes to the LTC; however, this input should be further emphasized.

Students do not desire more frequent discussion, therefore, further programming regarding the LTC should be conducted with care and transparency (Longjohn, 2013). What sets the LTC apart from other behavioral codes is its covenantal nature. Students could benefit from hearing the intended purpose of the LTC and covenants in general; student leaders demonstrated higher levels of understanding and appreciation, in part due to their pre-disposed characters, but also due to their participation in further training. Student leaders could benefit from more engaging and personalized trainings to mirror this presentation for their floors. Longjohn (2013) notes that monologues regarding the rationale of codes of conduct, no matter how polished, will be ineffective. Rather, students can benefit from discussing the codes' expectations with an employee in a way that recognizes their personality and unique contribution. As students largely experience the LTC within residential life, the LTC should be incorporated within the academic lives of students. In addition to discussing the LTC freshman year, the discussion should circle back in an upperclassman course to help students explicitly reflect on how to engage the LTC as they approach major life milestones (e.g., turning 21 or exiting college).

The LTC can be particularly helpful as it serves as a mode of shaping the practices of the community, promoting moral and character development in line with Christian principles. However, an institution utilizing a lifestyle covenant should reflect on areas of potential concern:

- What opportunities is it giving students to engage in *meaningful* conversations? How is it engaging its members in higher level moral thinking to avoid legalism or commit to lifestyle choices to which they may not have previously wrestled with?
- What types of support does it provide amidst crisis in relation to the lifestyle covenant?
- What ideas or expectations in their covenant create ambiguity and inconsistency amongst the community? Is it in the community's best interest to change the wording or generate better discussions regarding this content?
- How is it ensuring that the whole campus community has the same, high level of familiarity with the lifestyle covenant given differing roles?

Limitations and Opportunities for Further Research

The researcher was not able to capture all voices. Due to the methodological decision to interview those who had been members of the Taylor community for a minimum of three years, the study did not consider underclassmen or new employee voices. Incoming students may initially unquestionably follow established policies (Biswas, 2013) and make significant gains in their principled reasoning to judge moral issues (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Research that concentrates on new members or pre-admitted students would further assist administrators to understand how new students and employees perceive the LTC. In addition, the current study leaves room for future research to explore the extent of the LTC's direct impact on participants' autonomy, sense of belonging, or other areas of development. Finally, as the success of a covenant relationship depends on members' commitment, sacrifice of one's own desires, and levels of intrinsic motivation (Mullen et al., 2011; Reisberg, 1990), future research should be conducted to investigate successful implementation of lifestyle covenants.

Conclusion

As a foundational document of Taylor, the LTC is an example of a community covenant that lays out the expectations for campus life in pursuit of fulfilling the university's mission. Generally speaking, all participants perceived the LTC to be a guide or set of expectations to live life cohesively at Taylor. However, students generally perceive and experience the LTC in a legalistic manner, yet appreciate its intent in creating the Taylor community, viewing the LTC differently as they vary in their roles on campus, knowledge of the document, and maturity of personal development. As seen through the alignment of various personal development theories, the LTC can provide a holistic approach for moral, ethical, identity, and character development. The challenge then is for institutions to balance the promotion of autonomous thinking with the promotion of Christ-like behaviors and the prioritization of community needs.

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