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FACULTY RESEARCH NOTE

Victoria L. Bacon

Contemporary societies are struggling with a variety of social and personal issues, with addiction as a top contender in the United States today. Professor Bacon, an Assistant Professor in the Graduate Counseling Program from the Department of Secondary Education and Professional Programs, used a summer grant from BSC's Center for the Advancement of Research and Teaching to investigate multiple addictions among our college athletes.

Professor Bacon and graduate student Katrina Lee have constructed an instrument to measure five addictive processes: alcohol, drugs, weight control behavior, exercise, and gambling. Bacon and Lee are interested in identifying which addiction or combination of addictions are significant for college athletes. Socioeconomic status, gender, and type of sport are some of the factors being controlled. This pilot study is of great importance for a number of reasons:

- 1) determining what percentage of college athletes at Bridgewater have one or more addictive behaviors,
- 2) identifying subclinical and clinical addictive processes, and
- 3) providing study results to college Counseling Centers and Athletic Department staff to assist in the development of psychoeducational programming and intervention strategies for students in need of services.

In Professor Bacon's study, she found significant gender differences in addiction with male athletes attracted to drugs and alcohol and females challenged by eating and exercise addiction. Bacon also found surprising evidence of a growing gambling addiction among both male and female athletes. After analyzing the data Professor Bacon places a growing number of the athletes in what she describes as the "problematic category", which means that the respondents showed symptoms of pre-clinical addictive behavior that could easily develop into more serious problems. This past September, Professor Bacon and Ms. Lee presented a paper at the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology Annual Conference in San Diego on their findings. They are currently preparing their results for publication in a journal for higher education administrators.

In addition to this study, Professor Bacon, along with Dr. Barbara Fenby from the Department of Mental Health has completed a three-year qualitative research project investigating female identity development. Professor Bacon examined twenty-nine female athletes in three different categories: recreational athletes, competitive athletes and elite athletes. She also looked at women in these categories at various age levels across the lifespan. One of her most interesting findings is that many of the competitive and elite athletes were motivated by fear — fear of losing, fear of performing poorly, fear of not living up to their potential. These athletes expressed no regrets about being motivated by fear, stating that it allowed them to reach the heights of athletic greatness. Professor Bacon is currently working on transforming this study into a book length manuscript.

These research efforts stem from Professor Bacon's training as a child and family psychologist. She received a fellowship in the assessment and treatment of dual

diagnoses with adolescents at Brookside Hospital in New Hampshire. She also has experience as a clinical psychologist working with athletes. Besides her research efforts, Professor Bacon has offered a wide variety of courses at Bridgewater. Her current teaching focus includes: Group Therapy, Psychopathology, and Theories of Development as well as supervising students in their practicum and internship placements.

Because Professor Bacon recognizes the importance of linking her research with practical solutions to current problems, she is concentrating her efforts on working with college staff members to address addiction on campus. As a result, Professor Bacon is seeking funding for additional psychoeducational programs for BSC students. With her research and commitment to address addiction problems, Professor Bacon has become a valuable resource person on the Bridgewater State College campus. ❧

