LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

PERCEPTIONS OF VOCATION, CALLING, AND WORK AMONG

COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM UNION UNIVERSITY:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Matthew S. Bowman

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2023

PERCEPTIONS OF VOCATION, CALLING, AND WORK AMONG

COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM UNION UNIVERSITY:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by Matthew S. Bowman

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

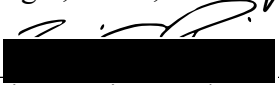Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

Date Defended: September 29, 2023

APPROVED BY:

_____

John B. Cartwright, Ed.D., Dissertation Supervisor

_____

Brian S. Pinzer, Ph.D., Second Reader

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore perceptions of vocation, calling, and work among junior classification students at Union University. Calling was defined as a transcendent drawing toward a particular path in life, particularly as it relates to work. Vocation was defined in light of its historical and theological roots with a focus on the transcendent drawing toward a way of life as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Work was defined as one's job or career. The theory guiding this study was that of constructivism or social constructivism, which "understands human reality as socially constructed reality" (Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 189). Social constructivism recognizes that as individuals seek to make meaning out of their life and experiences, that meaning is often shaped by history and social connections or interactions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). This study collected data utilizing interviews and journaling activities relevant to the topic from a sample of junior students in order to describe participants' experiences and perceptions. In order to invite diverse perspectives, the researcher employed a purposive, maximum variation sampling to include factors such as gender, ethnicity, first generation college student, and major. The data was analyzed by triangulating interview and journal data to identify themes from individual participants in comparison to one another. The findings describe students' experience of vocation, calling, and work and how the university's overall programming culture, as well as its career center influence and interact with student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work. The researcher also provides data-driven, pertinent recommendations for campus programming and further research.

Keywords: Vocation, calling, Christian higher education, work, student success

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my wife, Valerie, and daughters, Julia and Audrey, who have been unwavering in their support of my work with students and my doctoral research. In addition, this work is dedicated to the countless pastors, church volunteers, and Christian college faculty and staff members who tirelessly seek to honor Christ as they serve students. All glory and honor be to Him.

Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge and thank Union University President, Dr. Samuel W. "Dub" Oliver, and the IRB members at Union University for allowing me the opportunity to conduct my research among the students we serve. A special thanks to Dr. Oliver for continually encouraging me to persevere and complete the program.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Scott Huelin for being another constant encourager and who helped give me the initial confidence to pursue doctoral studies. In addition to Dr. Huelin, I would like to acknowledge the encouragement and support of other colleagues at Union University, such as Dr. Ray Van Neste, Dr. Janice Pittman, Dr. Nita Mehr, Dr. Bill Nance, Dr. Bill Thierfelder, Dr. Ann Singleton, Dr. Mark Bolyard, Stephanie Hawley, and Joe Ball.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the students who participated in this research study. Thank you for your thoughtful engagement with the ideas and questions involved with the study. Your willingness to be a part of this study will help Christian higher education better serve and support students.

I would especially like to acknowledge and thank Dr. John Cartwright and Dr. Brian Pinzer for their encouragement, feedback, and support in the development of this dissertation. Their assistance was always timely, helpful, and presented in a way that was easy to grasp and implement. This work literally would not exist without their investment and support.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

Union University (UU)

Research Question(s) (RQ)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

A university's career services office is an interesting place. Based on this writer's experience, it tends to attract two kinds of students. First, it attracts the hyper-motivated student who knows exactly what she wants to do after college and why. It also draws the frustrated student who has no idea what he wants to pursue, much less why. In the middle of these two extremes is the vast majority of the student population. What perspectives do these students have on work? Do they know what career they want to pursue and why, or are they secretly just as frustrated as that student who cannot settle on a major and is only in her current major because that is what her parents want?

In addition to the purely practical, career-oriented aspects of the work of career services, there is the added weightiness of the idea of calling. On a distinctively Christian campus this idea is taken for granted and often embedded in the culture and language, but do students understand what it means? How do students in a Christian university context perceive and experience this almost mystical idea of calling, and how do their perspectives on work and calling influence one another? In addition, what are the other factors that have shaped students' views on work or calling, whether consciously or subconsciously? Finally, are career services offices in such contexts offering services that understand and interact with the way students perceive and experience calling, or are the services just the run-of-the-mill resumé and interview preparation workshops? The problem of not knowing and understanding student views of work and calling undergirds the following study. This chapter outlines the research problem by providing some general background of the problem and describing important items related to the proposed research, such as research questions, assumptions, and a summary of the research design.

Background to the Problem

The concept of vocation has connections both in theology and psychology (Cremen, 2019; Dik & Duffy, 2012; Veith, 2011; Waalkes, 2015). In addition, it is a theme that has implications for college students and college student support and programming, perhaps particularly on a Christian college campus. This section surveys some of the broader ideas around the issues of vocation and calling as it pertains to Christian higher education.

Theological Understandings of Vocation and Calling

One cannot escape work and its connection to the biblical concept of calling or vocation. Keller (2012) highlights how fundamental work is in the biblical narrative when he writes, "The Bible begins talking about work as soon as it begins talking about anything—that is how important and basic it is" (p. 19). Not only is God portrayed as working throughout Genesis 1 and 2, but Genesis 1 also reveals that humanity is made in the image of this God who works (English Standard Bible, 2008/2001, Genesis 1:27-28) and that God "put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (ESV, Genesis 2:15). From a biblical standpoint, when humans work, they are fulfilling something in themselves that reflects the image of God which they bear. Wellum (2018) rejects the common view of work as a necessary evil and instead writes that work is connected to humanity's purpose and that "work and vocation is intrinsic to who we are as image-bearers" (p. 7). Cawley and Snyder (2015) echo this sentiment with the statement, "Work is a gift from God who loves us" (p. 165).

Not only should the biblical creation narrative shape the Christian's understanding of vocation, calling, and work, but so should the overarching gospel message of redemption and restoration. At the heart of Jesus' message was the invitation to "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (ESV, Matthew 4:19). This invitation holds the promise of a redeemed and

restored relationship and the work that flows from that relationship. It is literally a calling, but it is a calling that encapsulates the whole person. Waalkes (2015) argues for a broad understanding of vocation "as the primary calling to discipleship" (p. 137). Waalkes interpretation of vocation understands "our work and all of our relationships first and foremost in response to the call of Jesus to follow him and 'fish for people'" (p. 149). Waalkes refuses to limit the concept of vocation to work writing, "we must listen for the voice of Jesus calling us to follow him-a voice that always pulls us beyond our current career and toward the mission of God, toward finding our identity in Jesus and the advancing Kingdom first" (pp. 137-138). Waalkes asserts that such a discipleship perspective of vocation also protects from a more secular view, which makes it possible "to carry out our work without any explicit attention to the distinctly cross-centered work of Jesus Christ, without any explicit grounding in the distinct person of Jesus, or without any participation in the body of Christ" (p. 141). Thus, vocation becomes broader than occupation or career and shapes every sphere of life within the framework of being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Veith (2011) has a similar perspective that is rooted in the Protestant Reformation writing, "in the Reformation, vocation was nothing less than the doctrine of the Christian life" (p. 119). Elsewhere, Veith (2018) characterizes the doctrine of vocation as "Christian secularism" in which "God is present and active even in the most seemingly mundane and this-worldly facets of everyday life" (p. 30). He argues that this broad, gospel-rooted understanding of vocation has implications beyond the spiritual life of the believer. For Veith vocation "is where Christians interact with non-Christians and with the sinful world, so recovering vocation in the church can be crucial in evangelizing and bringing justice to societies that have forgotten the Christian faith" (p. 32). Therefore, the doctrine of vocation encompasses work, but is also much broader than

one's occupation, as it serves as one of the theological through-lines of the biblical narrative, with foundations in creation and gospel-rooted, eternal implications for the believer's spiritual life and evangelistic influence.

Psychological Understandings of Vocation and Calling

Rotman (2017) advocates for integrating theological understandings of vocation with the more recent focus on calling within the psychological research community. He writes,

> This integration (theology and psychology) will likely not only result in a psychologically rewarding experience of work for Christian professionals enrolled in postgraduate courses, but also in their spiritual growth, resulting from a conscious rethinking of one's presence in this world from the perspective of the kingdom of God. (Rotman, 2017, p. 30).

Cremen (2019) represents a very traditional psychological approach to studying calling, writing that it "may be fruitfully understood and lived as a process of collaboration and co-authorship with the psyche, or soul" (p. 46). Cremen's work is interesting because it frames calling as separate and "distinct from career" (p. 43) rather than conflating the two as synonymous, as is often the case in broader discussions.

Dik's and Duffy's (2012) extensive work on the topic of calling notes that those with a sense of calling have a strong connection between the meaning and purpose in their work and for their overall life (p. 13). Schnell (2013) took a closer look at the connection directly between work and meaning, which is often related to calling or vocation, and concluded that "meaning (in work) seems to arise, primarily when work activities are positively related to something larger than the self" (p. 551). Similarly, Sawhney, Britt, and Wilson (2020) looked at the effect of perceiving a calling on occupational commitment and report that "perceiving a calling may be especially important for maintaining a high level of affective commitment to one's occupation" (p. 196). These are helpful, practical findings that help pull together both the theological realities

and psychological implications of a healthy understanding and perception of vocation, calling, and work.

Vocation and Calling in Christian Higher Education

Conyers (2003) writes that "the classic understanding of liberal studies centers upon the work to be done in the learner, not by the learner" (p. 123). Such a perspective of education is not only in line with the Christian liberal arts tradition, which sets the cultivation of student purpose and meaning at the forefront (Glanzer et al., 2017a, p. 24). It also aligns with the broader understanding of vocation as previously alluded to in Waalkes (2015). Such an understanding highlights the transformative potential of education. After extensive research, Clydesdale (2015) concluded that "intentional, contextually suited, campus-based programming for exploration of purpose and vocation" (p. 26) is needed on college campuses because the neglect of student formation opened the gates to "American privatism, careerism, and consumerism" (pp. 53-54).

Similarly, Wells (2016) characterizes higher education without formation as "the dis-integration degree" (pp. 59-60), in which students are merely gathering credits rather than being formed by a single educational experience. Wells' answer to this threat is to renew focus on vocational discernment as a "centripetal force" (p. 60) to counter the fragmenting tendencies of contemporary culture and higher education. In their discussion of the fragmenting forces at work among Christian academics, Glanzer, Alleman, and Ream (2017b) note, "The Christian academic vocation is first and foremost defined by thinking about and living one's vocation in light of the triune God and God's story of the world" (p. 255). This integrating the secular with the spiritual sounds very similar to Simmons' (2016) comment that "Vocation addresses the practical from the context of the existential. It seeks to connect purposes and practices, ends and means, and not allow them to fall apart into separate realms" (p. 4). Helping students develop the

tools and skills necessary to live integrate lives is one of the greatest services a Christian liberal arts education can provide.

Statement of the Problem

A general review of the literature demonstrates a rich theological history of the doctrine of vocation and its implications for the lives of Christian believers. In addition, the literature consistently highlights the practical benefits of experiencing and perceiving a calling, especially as it relates to work and its integration into one's view of life in general. However, this integration is not always something experienced by undergraduate students. Instead, students experience confusion, stress, and a sense of fragmentation. In response, Christian educators and leaders should seek to discover what student perceptions are surrounding the concepts of vocation, calling, and work. Then they will be positioned to lead students toward a theologically sound, psychological healthy perspective that will serve them long after their undergraduate experience ends. To that end, this study sought to address the problem of student vocational perceptions by gathering in-depth, qualitative data from a sample of juniors regarding those perceptions. The study also included exploring the influences on those perceptions, especially how the university's overall culture and programming may have influenced student perceptions. A phenomenological design that utilizes in-person interviews and participant journaling provided an appropriate avenue for collecting such descriptive data.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the study was to explore perceptions of vocation, calling, and work among junior classification students at Union University. In this study, calling was defined more as a transcendent drawing toward a particular path in life, particularly as it relates to work. Vocation was defined more in light of its historical and theological roots with a focus on the

transcendent drawing toward a way of life as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Work was defined simply

as one's job or career. The theory guiding this study was that of constructivism or social

constructivism, which "understands human reality as socially constructed reality" (Berger &

Luckman, 1966, p. 189). Social constructivism recognizes that as individuals seek to make

meaning out of their life and experiences, that meaning is often shaped by history and social

connections or interactions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. How do the junior students at Union University describe their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work?

RQ2. How do the junior students at Union University describe the relationship between their faith and their work or future career?

RQ3. What are the common factors junior students at Union University describe as having impacted their view of vocation, calling, and work?

RQ4. How do junior students at Union University describe the impact of the university's overall culture and programming, such as academic curriculum, co-curricular offerings, and student services, on their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work?

RQ5. How do junior students at Union University describe the university career center's effectiveness in addressing and interacting with student perceptions of vocation, calling, work, and career over the course of their academic career?

These questions sought to invite students to explore their experiences and perceptions of

vocation, calling, and work in order for them to put words to their experiences. These questions

also sought to illuminate what factors may shape student understandings of vocation, calling, and

work. Finally, the final research question addressed the practical concern for those leading and

working in Christian higher education who seek to equip students with a biblical framework for

life and work.

Assumptions and Delimitations

This section highlights the basic assumptions that undergirded the study. In addition, it describes delimitations that created boundaries and provided definition for the research.

Research Assumptions

The researcher assumed that students participating in the study have a basic cultural understanding of the term calling and were therefore able to identify and discuss their perceptions of it. In contrast, the researcher assumed that students may have varying understandings of the term vocation, especially in light of its definition in this study. Due to cultural usage and in light of research, it was assumed that many students would understand vocation strictly in terms of work and career.

Delimitations of the Research Design

This study identified and explored the perceptions of vocation, calling, and work held by juniors at Union University, what factors have shaped these views, and whether those views impact students' experience of calling to their intended career. In addition, the study sought to identify whether and to what degree university programming has shaped student views. Therefore,

1. Research was delimited to traditional undergraduate junior students in at least the third year of the undergraduate experience rather than those who may be juniors by credit hours. Additionally, this study excluded non-traditional undergraduates or adult studies students. Therefore, this study was generally limited to what might be considered traditional undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 22.

2. The study was also delimited to the junior population at Union University. Union University is an evangelical Christian liberal arts institution with 200 years of historical commitment to biblical and theological orthodoxy and is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Since phenomenological research's task is to "provide rich, detailed, and textured descriptions of phenomena as experienced in actual concrete contexts" (McNarry et al., 2019, p. 140), this study was limited to one particular context in order to describe the experiences within that particular context rather than in multiple contexts on

various campuses. As a result, the research did not include junior students outside of Union University.

3. The research was also bound to identifying and exploring the views of vocation, calling, and work held by the population under examination, as well as exploring the factors that shaped student views. The research was therefore delimited to exploring any potential relationship between student views of vocation, calling, and work and their experience of calling.

4. Finally, the research was focused on describing the particular impact of Union University's culture and programming on student perceptions of vocation, calling and work. While other influential factors were identified and described in the study, there was particular attention given to influence of the student's experience at Union University.

Definition of Terms

1. *Calling*: Unless otherwise noted, the broad definition provided Dik and Duffy (2012) was assumed and was an acceptable definition both in the cultural and theological sense. It reads, "a transcendent summons experienced as originating beyond the self to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation" (Dik & Duffy, 2012, p. 11).

2. *Junior:* For the purposes of this study, juniors were defined as traditional undergraduate students in at least the third year of their undergraduate college career. To qualify for participation, a student had to be in at least their third year and have the necessary credit hours. Students also had to fall into the traditional undergraduate age range of 18 to 22. Additionally, any juniors who transferred to Union were required to have been enrolled at Union no later than August 2021in order to have been enrolled for at least one year prior to the start of this study.

3. *Vocation:* Since this term's history is more theological in nature, Waalkes (2015) framework for understanding this concept was more helpful. His view "focuses on vocation as the primary calling to discipleship" (Waalkes, 2015, p. 137)

4. *Work:* Unless otherwise noted, this term referred specifically to one's job or career.

5. *University/campus programming:* Unless otherwise noted, campus programming referred broadly to the curricular and co-curricular offerings available to students. Examples include academic coursework, residence life activities, career center services, student activity clubs/organizations, or collaborative programming involving multiple academic or student life departments.

Significance of the Study

While there is good research regarding the effects of perceiving a calling or having a sense of vocation, there is a less robust body of literature that is qualitative in nature regarding precisely what college students have to say on the subject. This study aimed to discover what students on a Christian university campus believe about vocation, calling, and work and how they came to have those beliefs. In addition, the study explored how the university culture and programming, particularly academics and career services, may have influenced those beliefs.

This study serves other institutions, especially Christian liberal arts universities similar to Union University. It sheds light on what students believe and the factors that influence those beliefs-both inside and outside the institution. The student perceptions uncovered by the study can assist career services professionals and Christian educators with new information for evaluating their programming and approaches to Christian education. Considering that Feenstra and Brouwer's (2008) research suggests that vocational development parallels identity development (p. 89) and that Conner, Daugherty, and Gilmore (2012) highlighted a "significant and positive relationship" (p. 256) between vocational exploration and student persistence/retention, there is much at stake for Christian institutions. Vocational perceptions have implications not only on student development and formation but also on institutional stability and viability. Christian institutions must intentionally seek out information regarding student perceptions in this area so that they may be intentional in their programming and their messaging regarding issues such as vocation, calling, and work. This study aimed to provide such information that encourages further research.

Summary of the Design

This qualitative phenomenological design utilized an in-depth, semi-structured interview and journal documents to collect and report descriptive data on student views of vocation, calling, and work. The interview and journaling activities sought to uncover what experiences or influences may have shaped student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work. They also explored how those views may or may not have shifted during their college experience and how those views impact student perception and experience of calling toward their intended career. In addition, students were asked to reflect on how Union University's programming, specifically its career services programming has impacted their views of work and understanding and perception of a sense of vocation and/or calling. The data was analyzed to identify the common views of students, the factors that shape those views, and specifically to describe the general student experience of vocation, calling, and work and to ascertain how well the university's career services programming is equipped to interact with student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work.

This study sought to identify and then explore student views of vocation, calling, and work among juniors at Union University. For the purposes of this study, a junior student is defined as being a student in at least the third year of her undergraduate college career who also is classified as a junior by credit hours. Students who are juniors by hours but who are in only their second year as an undergraduate student were not examined. The rationale for this approach is to not only examine how junior students view vocation, calling, and work, but to also look at how different people, programs, or experiences have shaped those views. Juniors who are in at least their third year should be able to provide more perspective of that potential impact, especially regarding how campus culture and programming may have informed their views.

In cooperation with the host institution, the researcher identified a sample group of 17 students to participate in the study. The researcher endeavored to construct a sample that reflected demographic realities such as gender, ethnicity, and general degree program. The goal of a demographically diverse sample group of this size was that the sample group would provide a saturation point in the data collection and analysis when no new insights or information would be helpful to addressing the research questions. The researcher also incentivized student participation in the study by giving gift cards to participants as tokens of appreciation.

The existing body of literature highlights the theological reality, the psychological value, and the genuine confusion students can experience regarding the ideas of calling and vocation. Christian higher education is uniquely poised to reclaim the doctrine of vocation that leads students toward an integrated life in a fragmented age. This study explored student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work and the influences of those perceptions in an attempt to not only understand students on the Christian college campus but to also inform and serve the broader Christian higher education community in its endeavor to form students who serve Christ and the common good.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

There are many dynamics at play in student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work. For example, do students, particularly Christian students, have a biblically rooted, theologically rich understanding of vocation, or has it been shaped more by cultural understandings? In addition to addressing the theological depth of vocation and its relationship to work, this section reviews relevant literature pertaining to psychological understandings of vocation, calling, and work and the value one experiences when experiencing a calling. Several other factors related to student development are also pertinent to this study. Factors such as culture, socioeconomics, and various institutional and campus dynamics have the potential for significant influence in a student's view of vocation, calling, and work and even whether they have had the chance to ponder concepts such as vocation or calling. This chapter explores these theological, theoretical, cultural, and socio-economic issues and discuss their implications for student support in a Christian higher education context.

Theological Framework for the Study

Since the mainstream use of the word vocation is almost exclusively used in reference to one's work, there is a danger of it becoming completely divorced from its theological heritage. Christian higher education leaders have the opportunity to help preserve that history and theological richness. This section discusses vocation's connection to major biblical themes such as creation, redemption, and the Kingdom of God. It also discusses work's place within a more holistic vision of vocation.

Biblical Vocation: Rooted in Creation, Redemption, and God's Kingdom

The doctrine of vocation is clearly connected to the overarching narrative and doctrines of Christianity. Its origins are found in creation, and its renewal is seen in the gospel message of redemption in Jesus Christ. It is also an essential doctrine to the everyday living of Christians who seek to be good citizens of God's kingdom living as sojourners in the broader culture.

Vocation, Creation, and the Image of God

The doctrine of vocation has its roots both in the New Testament's call to becoming a disciple of Jesus, and in the biblical creation account and doctrine of the image of God. Vocation's interconnectedness to work itself is likewise rooted in these foundational doctrines of Christianity. Keller (2012) points out, "The Bible begins talking about work as soon as it begins talking about anything-that is how important and basic it is" (p. 19). Genesis 1 uses words like "created" (*English Standard Version*, 2011/2001, Genesis 1:1), "separated" (*English Standard Version*, 2011/2001, Genesis 1:3), and "made" (*English Standard Version*, 2011/2001, Genesis 1:7) to describe God's creative work. The language becomes even more intimate in Genesis 2 to describe God's creation of humanity. The text says that God "formed the man" (*English Standard Version*, 2011/2001, Genesis 2:7). Similarly, Genesis 1 and 2 reveal that God made humanity in his image (*English Standard Version*, 2011/2001, Genesis 1:27-28) and "put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (*English Standard Version*, 2011/2001, Genesis 2:15). The entire universe is built on work.

Just as God worked in creation, God's vice-regents (Plummer, 2018, p. 13) join with the Lord in the work of caring for creation. God's call to work is hard-wired into humanity. Darling (2018) writes that work is a "God-imaging gift that the Creator gives to his image-bearers" (p. 132). It is clear that work in and of itself then is not a necessary evil as many might think. In fact,

Keller (2012) says, "Work could not have had a more exalted inauguration" (p. 21). The first two chapters of Genesis demonstrate that humanity's status and calling or vocation as image-bearers and their activity and work on earth are intertwined. In fact, Wellum (2018) argues that it is impossible to understand what vocation is apart from God and humanity's status as image-bearers (p. 7).

In discussing humanity's creation in the image of God, Kilner (2015) rightly focuses the discussion of the imago dei on passages like Colossians 1:15 and Romans 8:29 which reveal Jesus as the image of the invisible God and that God's intention has always been to conform people to the image of Christ. Kilner writes that sin "prevents godly human attributes from developing as they should" (p. 149). God created humanity with the intention and capacity to glorify Him by becoming more like Christ. Part of humanity's glorifying God would be expressed through their work. Sin, however, creates a barrier to those intentions, causing people to live in ways that "contradict who they are (i.e., who they are created to be)" (Kilner, 2015, p. 148).

Shatzer (2019) helps further connect humanity's creation in the image of God with the doctrine of vocation by noting how one thinks about the doctrine of the imago dei could cause them to focus too much on self-determination or self-actualization (pp. 44-45). Shatzer corrects such a view by using vocation language. He writes, "Any life project or desire must be rooted not in the power of self-determination but in the faithful response to God's call" (Shatzer, 2019, p. 45). From this it is evident that Shatzer understands vocation to be much broader than the typical vocation as work perspective and instead rooted in both the Christian doctrines of humanity's creation and redemption.

Vocation and the Gospel Call to Redemption and Discipleship

The gospel is the good news of God's demonstrating His sovereignty and power over sin by simultaneously absorbing the cost of sin and crushing the power of sin. Humanity is made in the image of God, but Jesus is the image of God, yet Jesus "came in the likeness of man" (*English Standard Bible,* 2011/2001, Philippians 2:7) , demonstrating his "full identification with sinners" (Sherlock, 1996, p. 69), so that humans might be made whole and no longer live alienated from God, one another, the world, and even from themselves (Shatzer, 2019, p. 123). In answering Jesus' call to follow Him (*English Standard Version,* 2011/2001, John 1:43), people are embarking on a life of vocation, of continuously responding to the call to faithfully follow Jesus by loving God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength and their neighbors as themselves (*English Standard Version,* 2011/2001, Matthew 22:37-39).

In Colossians 3, Paul unpacks the practical implications of the Gospel. He addresses issues like morality, ethnic prejudice, and marriage. Within this discussion, Paul makes the statement, "And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus…" (*English Standard Version,* 2011/2001, Colossians 3:17). According to this passage's broader context, one's vocation transcends social status or in modern terms, a career path. Instead, vocation is really a matter of one's response to Christ, while the particular work at hand is merely the opportunity one leverages in order to love and honor Christ. Allen (2018) appears to echo this passage by saying, "We glorify the Lord through our work by living out the Christian life, and its expected virtues, in the arena of our occupation" (p. 89).

Keller (2012) writes that the Gospel helps believers see things in a new light (p. 184), but that new light is actually an old light. The gospel provides the light to see things the way they were meant to be and how they will be again, and in Christ, believers can begin to reclaim now

some of what was lost in the Garden. In Christ believers can experience not only the revival of their soul but renewed vigor and fruitfulness in their work.

Vocation and the Kingdom of God

Reorienting Christians toward holistic vocational living also helps bear witness to the in-breaking of the kingdom of God here and now as believers live holistic lives of loving God and their neighbors as themselves. Veith (2018) refers to this as "Christian secularism, in which God is present and active even in the most seemingly mundane and this-worldly facets of everyday life" (p. 3). Veith's renewed focus on the doctrine of vocation is an effort to answer both the struggles of contemporary believers and secularists of both the modernist and post-modernist stripe. Such a perspective has broad implications for the believer's life, which is embedded in a secular culture. Nahnfeldt (2018) recognizes this engagement aspect of vocation as well by describing it in terms of "going into the world, not leaving it" (p. 92). After all, it is through one's various works that the Christian interacts most with non-Christians and with the world, which make recovering the concept of vocation vital to evangelism and the pursuit of justice in the world (Veith, 2018, p. 32).

Similarly, Pfeiffer (2014) proposes understanding the doctrine of vocation through the lens of the missio dei. In fact, he goes so far as to say that the missio dei requires the reality of Christian vocation (p. 167). He writes, "By faith, they (believers) now see their callings in life as callings from God…what they are doing in marriage, family, work, and society is God's work, and it is done on God's behalf." (p. 167). This approach is consistent with Luther's teaching on faith and work, but it is also a stark contrast to the mindset of many students who are desperate to try to figure out what their "calling" is. What Pfeiffer advocates for is an understanding that all of life is life in Christ, with Christ, and for Christ. Pfeiffer states, "We live vocationally because

this is God's call…" (p. 169). Everything is impacted by answering the Gospel call and living as citizens of God's kingdom. Family life, work life, community life can all be leveraged for furthering God's work in the world.

More recently, Ballor (2017) notes that the Protestant Reformation itself was rooted in this broad understanding of vocation when he writes, "Everyone is to reform within his or her own area of influence and sphere of responsibility…" (p. 330). Vocation, then, is the idea of partnering with God to steward one's own life, in all aspects, in response to who Christ is, what Christ has done, and who Christ is calling the Christian to be—ambassadors of the kingdom of God (*English Standard Version,* 2011/2001, 2 Corinthians 5:20).

This holistic understanding of vocation not only promotes sanctification in the believer, but it also promotes human flourishing as believers seek to bring a taste of the kingdom of God into this world. Beeley (2016) points out that early patristic theologians understood this as they viewed Christ as the "archetype and first instance of human flourishing, and other human beings flourish by participating in Christ's divine-human life" (p. 127). Vos (2017) asserts that a more robust view of Christian vocation "is related to what we may call the common good" (p. 21). He writes, "At the heart of the Christian concept of vocation is the ability to see numerous obligations and occupations through the lens of our calling to love both God and neighbor" (Vos, 2017, p. 21).

Christian higher education has the unique opportunity to teach students to not only see and think about their lives through such a lens, but also how to live amid the various issues and arenas of life in light of their vocation as followers of Jesus Christ and citizens of God's kingdom while serving in their various roles in contemporary culture, including through their work. The interdisciplinary nature of higher education provides Christian institutions with an

ideal environment to teach and apply these robust and interconnected theological concepts in a way that equips students to see vocation more holistically in light of their overall Christian faith and practice.

Biblical Vocation: Including Work, But More Than a Job

While the doctrine of vocation is a thoroughly theological concept, it has suffered from misuse or oversimplification. While it has clear implications for one's work and career, it has too often been reduced to dealing only with one's work. This section highlights the doctrine's implications on work while also spotlighting some of the dangers associated with a reductionist view of vocation as work.

Work Is Good but Not Ultimate

While work's origins in the biblical narrative are rooted in the perfection of Eden, it has been corrupted by mankind's fall into sin. Therefore, it can become problematic as is often seen in humanity's unwillingness to work or tendency to make work the focus of life. In fact, the word vocation has lost virtually all the richness of its meaning in culture. Rod Dreher (2018) recently noted that it has simply become synonymous with a job (p. 177). Dreher is not the only one who has noticed. Moser and Fankhouser (2018) write, "Vocation cannot be reduced to simply work" (p. 10). As the literature on vocation increases, so does the recognition that while Christian discussions of work and career should always include the doctrine of vocation, vocation should not be reduced to one's work or career.

The dignity of work seen in the biblical creation narrative coupled with the redemptive story of the gospel laid the foundation for the classic Protestant work ethic taught by the likes of Luther and Calvin. For Luther all Christians were called by God; there were no two classes, one spiritual, one worldly. Instead, all Christians live and work in the three estates of family, church,

and government (Ballor, 2017). Ballor (2017) notes that vocation was the "touchstone" (p. 328) for Luther's reforms, resulting from his own responsibility as a theologian and preacher of Scripture. As such, Luther taught that all believers should embrace their Christian responsibilities or vocations in their various roles of life, primarily through their work.

Bonhoeffer built on Luther's ideas. Kleinhans (2016) describes it by writing, "Bonhoeffer's concern was the whole person before God, and the whole person living faithfully in response to God's call within God's world" (p. 109). This holistic perspective of one's vocation stands in stark contrast to and as a "corrective to the instrumental view that equates vocation primarily with one's employment" (Kleinhans, 2016, p. 110). Recognizing that vocation encompasses but is, at the same time, so much larger than one's job or career, Waalkes (2015) exposes a fatal flaw in the work as vocation/calling view, arguing that

> if a job or career is a primary place to find a calling, then we have little to say to a majority of our population, including the unemployed or underemployed, stay-at-home parents, and those who are institutionalized (whether the disabled, prisoners, or the aged) (p. 136).

In addition, Waalkes recognizes the danger of "sanctifying" (p. 136) some careers over others that may seem more mundane. Instead, he advocates for using vocation language to focus on the call to follow Christ, while using language such as "stations" to describe social or economic roles one holds (Waalkes, 2015, p. 149).

Similarly, Rotman (2017) alludes to biblical verses like Ephesians 4:1, which instructs Christians to live "worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (*English Standard Version,* 2011/2001) and is directly in the context of society (p. 27). He recalls that "in the New Testament, calling is closely related to ethics" (Rotman, 2017, p. 27). Rotman even argues that the Lutheran perspective is itself an overly simplified vocation as work framework that "cannot be maintained in the light of New Testament theology" (p. 28) precisely because it focuses too

much on work. However, Rotman would not say that work is not included in one's calling or vocation, rather, that vocation is much larger and life-encompassing than that. As such, a Christian's occupation may consume his or her time, but a Christian's vocation consumes his or her life.

The Danger of Making Work Ultimate

Though work is good and meaningful, one should not put his or her hope in work. The beauty and glory of Genesis 1 and 2 is tempered by the tragedy of Genesis 3 and humanity's fall into sin. When God pronounces judgment on the serpent, the woman, and the man, the ground is part of the judgment (*English Standard Version,* 2011/2001, Genesis 3:17-19). The garden that mankind was meant to cultivate and enjoy will no longer cooperate. Work becomes toil, and fruit is choked out by thistles.

Darling (2018) notes that this strained relationship with work can cause one to think wrongly about work in two ways: to "make work our everything" (p. 134) or "to see work as nothing" (p. 136). The first view leads a person to invest their identity and worth into his career (Darling, 2018). In an article in *The Atlantic*, Thompson (2019) highlights this issue in the broader culture by revealing that for the college-educated elite, work has evolved "from a means of material production to a means of identity production" and has morphed into a religion he calls "workism" (para. 4). The end result of this approach is "collective anxiety, mass disappointment, and inevitable burnout" (Thompson, para. 18). Von Vuuren (2017) affirms this by pointing out that "The thorny, dangerous, and sometimes even destructive side effects of unhealthy zeal can become a curse in the determined pursuit of goals" (pp. 52-53). Christians should work hard but without becoming workaholics who love their work more than their Savior, families, or neighbor.

The second incorrect view tends to diminish the significance of one's own work and therefore, one's dignity (Darling, 2018). The apostle Paul directly addresses the extreme example of this warped view of work in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (*English Standard Version,* 2011/2001). The more common version of this distortion and diminishing of work is often associated with an overemphasis on secular versus sacred work. Darling (2018) highlights that it is not uncommon for believers to perceive that it is only what they do on Sunday that counts as Christian service. A more holistic understanding of Christian vocation is a helpful defense against the drift toward minimizing or idolizing one's work.

Both theological and cultural realities must be dealt with in order to have a healthy understanding of Christian vocation and how one's career or occupation fits within it. Both the biblical and the scholarly literature indicates that the mainstream understanding of vocation as work/job is too narrow to encompass the biblical teaching or the practical needs of men and women. Instead, there needs to be a return to a more holistic doctrine of vocation that encompasses all of life and helps individuals properly order their lives.

Implications for Christian Higher Education

Christian higher education should invite students into the lifelong journey of vocational exploration, which is the process of seeking to live faithfully to Jesus Christ in every arena of life. This section recognizes the tension of competing worldviews and reviews the benefits of an educational approach that is both transformative and integrative, not only in terms of belief but also in practice.

Christian and Postmodern Worldviews Colliding

Henry (1997) points out that "Hebrew education, in short, was intensely theistic" (p.6). From this Hebrew tradition sprang the Christian goal of education, including "penetrating

references to the fallen condition of man, the availability of spiritual redemption, the salvific

significance of the crucified and risen Christ, the renewing power of the Holy Spirit, and the

divine imperative of interpersonal love and social righteousness" (Henry, p. 11). However,

Johnson (1990) asserts that "modern psychology, rather than the Judeo-Christian tradition, is the

primary well from which contemporary Americans, including churchgoers, draw in their search

for spirituality" (p. 126). This is the danger of a superficially Christian educational model.

Beers and Beers (2008) recognize that most university educators, even Christian college

educators, were trained in a secular university where various other worldviews operate as the

"guiding philosophy underlying the study of a particular discipline" (p. 52). Carson (1997)

supports this by asserting that contemporary universities in the West have become increasingly

postmodern in their epistemology (p. 26). This is why Beers and Beers advocate for faith and

learning integration to begin at the "epistemological level" (p. 54). This postmodern cultural

trend has not slowed down in the last two decades. Therefore, the pedagogy of a Christian

institution cannot look like that of the secular institution, only with the added biblical illustration

or prayer before class. Such window dressing will not equip students to think Christianly, even

less so to live vocationally as disciples of Jesus Christ. Instead, a more holistic view of vocation

highlights the shortcomings of education that is limited to the classroom and its inability to equip

students to address the needs of the world around them (Kleinhans, 2016).

Christian Education as Transformative

What if instructional and student services roles on Christian campuses are unintentionally

reinforcing a cultural understanding of vocation because they too have a distorted or partial

understanding of the biblical concepts of vocation and work? For example, Dockery (1997)

states that the purpose of Christian institutions is, in part, "to educate students to be prepared for

whatever vocation God has called them…" (p. 51). That sounds similar to Dreher's (2018) reference to vocation being synonymous with a job or career. In contrast, Conyers (2003) states that "the classic understanding of liberal studies centers upon the work to be done in the learner, not by the learner" (p. 123). Such an education is intentionally formative, or perhaps more accurately, transformative. When a holistic understanding of vocation is lost or diminished, the liberal arts institution must "prove its work in a world of pragmatic standards, one that can only understand instrumental values…" (Conyers, 2003, p. 124).

Pazmino's (2010) discussion on Christian education implies a broader aim as well when he writes about the transformative potential of Christian education (p. 364). He writes,

> In transformations, God's Spirit fashions human spirits so that they might glorify God in all of life. The all of life includes personal, familial, communal, cultural, societal, and global spheres that can reflect and resound with God's creative and redemptive purposes (Pazmino, 2010, p. 364).

Though not speaking directly to it, Pazmino identifies the true nature of vocation. One's occupation should be leveraged for the sake of one's vocation: to love and glorify God while also loving one's neighbor. Pazmino's point about the creative and redemptive purposes of God echo Moser and Fankhouser's (2018) position that the overarching goal of vocation is shalom (p. 11), which might be understood in terms of wholeness or integration.

Vocation as Integration

A more broad and robust understanding of vocation becomes not merely just a framework for a more biblical view of work but an integrating framework for life in general. Similar to Veith's (2018) concept of Christian Secularism, Chandler (2015) discusses vocation in terms of "the process of being conformed into the image of Jesus through the discerning of one's life calling and the discovering and exercising of one's giftings, talents, abilities, and skills to reflect God's glory within life, ministry, and work contexts" (p. 323). This conforming to Christ

should be the goal of Christian education. A Christian college student who is taught to see every facet and arena of their life as an opportunity to answer Christ's call to love the Lord and one's neighbor (*English Standard Version*, 2011/2001, Matthew 22:37-39) can be set free from the idolatry of work or the crushing pressure to pick the right job after graduation so that they don't miss God's will. Waalkes (2015) recognizes this as well, writing, "we must understand our work and all of our relationships first and foremost in response to the call of Jesus to follow him and 'fish for people'" (p. 149). He also believes such a view would "counter the subjective individualism of mainstream American spirituality" and "help students avoid the modern world's idolatrous equation of work and identity" (Waalkes, 2015, p. 152).

Similarly, Simmons (2016) writes, "Vocation addresses the practical from the context of the existential. It seeks to connect purposes and practices, ends and means, and not allow them to fall apart into separate realms" (p. 4). This further underscores the need to broaden the idea of Christian calling and vocation beyond one's occupation or career. Such an understanding of vocation "permits the relating of faith and career in a dialectical fashion as all faith is related to life" (Simmons, 2016, p. 4). Besides the local church, there may be no better place for this integrating work to take place than in a Christian liberal arts institution.

From Lecture to Living

Christian epistemology and worldview must be paired with Christian practices. Smith (2009) believes that over time many Christian institutions have absorbed the informative understanding of education while abandoning a formative model (p. 31). Smith argues that worldview formation is incomplete and that institutions should rather focus on forming what he describes as "peculiar people-a people who desire the kingdom of God and thus undertake their vocations as an expression of that desire" (p. 34). Smith goes on to advocate for instituting

practices or "liturgies" which will foster godly desires and loves within students. A biblically faithful and holistic understanding of vocation will guide Christian educators not only to equip students with the means to think faithfully but to live faithfully as followers of Christ.

Setran (2018) builds on Smith's liturgy motif when he writes,

> Students' everyday activities are not just things they do; these practices are doing something to them…these liturgies may contribute to the formation of inclinations and tendencies that work against the very Kingdom vision of human flourishing communicated in the classroom and affirmed in their assignments (pp. 55-56).

Setran recognizes that "deeply rooted, self-oriented visions of the good life" may actually override "the Kingdom vision of human flourishing taught in the Christian college" (p. 57). As a result, Setran recognizes "the communication of a worldview that highlights human flourishing may not be enough to tip the scales when it comes to generating lifestyles committed to shalom" (p. 59), which is the ancient Hebrew concept of human flourishing and wholeness.

Therefore, Setran (2018) advocates for practices such as remembering and celebrating the blessings of God, lamenting the suffering and injustices within the greater community, and seeking out the guidance of spiritual mentors and the fellowship of spiritual friends. Wells (2016) has a similar framework for infusing vocation into the Christian higher education environment as she recommends the two pillars of a common vocational curriculum and a mentoring environment. Wells describes the common curriculum as "a series of small, intimate, vocation-themed courses which allow students to consider consequential and communal concerns, to ponder life's big questions, and to make connections between coursework and personal experience" (p. 66). She describes the value of a mentoring environment as shaping "the ethos of an institution in intentional ways" (p. 68) around its central values while also "infusing institutional mission into campus culture" (p. 68). As a result, the institution does not seek to

merely inform students in the classroom but instead, seeks to form students in the context of a community.

Summary

Broadening the scope of Christian education beyond simply promoting a Christian worldview and toward vocational living that promotes a kingdom vision of human flourishing requires Christian educators to develop a "compelling theological and educational rationale for the common good" (Wells, 2018, p. 4). As Wells (2018) points out, the idea of the common good is a contested one. Therefore, faithful institutions must develop a picture of human flourishing and the common good that is consistent with the biblical narrative. It also means that Christian educational institutions must "carefully examine the evidence regarding the outcomes" of their strategies (Wells, 2018, p. 4). This will require faculty, staff, and administrators to look for innovative ways to effectively teach content while also encouraging real, transformed, vocational living. The issues related to Christian higher education and its students are explored more extensively later in this review.

Summary of Theological Framework

Such tension between the good and God-ordained nature of work and the very real effects of sin on one's work makes it essential that Christians be equipped with a thoroughly biblical understanding of work's origins, sin's impact on work, and the Gospel's restorative effects that allow one's work to become an act of worship to God and service to one's neighbor. A survey of the literature demonstrates that a renewed vision and understanding of vocation in light of the totality of biblical theology is underway and is necessary not only for Christian faithfulness but to also withstand the cultural pressures and pitfalls associated with one's work. The literature also increasingly indicates that students on Christian college campuses need the environments

and opportunities to reflect on how these realities and a broader understanding of the doctrine of vocation impact and shape their own occupational paths and that Christian institutions possess the means and to seize this opportunity.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

While the theological understanding of vocation offers a rich historical foundation from which Christian higher education leaders may draw, the growing field of vocational psychology offers additional insight into understanding how people understand vocation, calling, work and their contribution to a sense of meaning or purpose. This section highlights basic recurring themes in the literature, some of the practical psychological benefits of having a sense of calling, and how the theoretical framework of Personal Investment Theory applied on a college campus can help explain and shape institutional efforts aimed at student development.

Psychology of Vocation

While a robust theological understanding of vocation and how it interacts with work is foundational for Christian institutions as they seek to guide their students toward a transformed and integrated life, it is also helpful to understand what the fields of positive psychology and vocational psychology have contributed to how people interact with questions of calling, meaning, and work. An overview of the literature demonstrates that though most psychological research does not come from a Christian worldview, the findings can often be consistent with or complementary to a Christian worldview. As Christian higher education applies both theological and psychological understanding to the themes within the study of vocation, calling, work, and student development, institutions will be better prepared to guide their students toward whole, purposeful living.

Value of Psychology of Vocation

Although the idea of vocation or calling has its historical roots in Christian theology, it has found a place in contemporary psychology. Rotman (2017) notes that "because the positive effects outweigh the negative, most psychologists hold that a sense of calling or vocation is something to be encouraged" (p. 25). This pragmatic view of vocation and calling should be noted as it does not necessarily deal with whether there is actually a call or, more importantly, a caller to whom people are accountable. At the same time, Rotman also highlights that "there is a growing reluctance in the field of theology to see vocation as the theological basis for human work. (p. 27). Instead, he notes that the doctrine of vocation applies to and is related to one's work in a "derivate sense" (Rotman, 2017, p. 29). Again, a broader theological understanding of vocation and calling is warranted in order to appropriately apply the psychological aspects of calling. Rotman (2017) writes,

> This integration (theology and psychology) will likely not only result in a psychologically rewarding experience of work for Christian professionals enrolled in postgraduate courses, but also in their spiritual growth, resulting from a conscious rethinking of one's presence in this world from the perspective of the kingdom of God. (p. 30).

Coming from a more clinical psychological perspective, Cremen (2019) theorizes that vocation "may be fruitfully understood and lived as a process of collaboration and co-authorship with the psyche, or soul." Cremen's approach relies heavily upon Jungian concepts of the psyche and individuation. As such, one should understand that in such a framework the call comes from deep within the person himself. Dik and Duffy's (2012) psychological framework is less technical as they describe calling as

> a transcendent summons experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation (p. 11).

Dik and Duffy's basic definition and framework for discussing vocation is a helpful psychological companion to the theological study of vocation, calling, and work.

The paradoxical psychological value of the midlife crisis and questions of purpose was one noteworthy theme that emerged in Cremen's (2019) research. One of her research subjects' crises came in wake of losing both his first and second wife to cancer. Cremen states that these events "brought a humbling awareness of what matters most to the forefront, initiating a deeply rooted sense of vocation" (p. 52). Perhaps seasons of suffering or loss have a psychological and/or spiritual effect that can motivate an individual to consider or reconsider the way he or she has been living. If vocation has the ability to be an integrating framework for life, perhaps suffering or loss helps clarify how fragmented one's life has been.

Common Themes Within Understandings of Calling

Rooted in their aforementioned definition of calling, Dik and Duffy (2012) identify three overarching elements of calling that appear in various iteration throughout the literature: a transcendent summons, purpose and meaning in work, and other-oriented motives (pp. 11-13) While the transcendent summons has historically been understood as God, other forces, whether internal or external, have also become associated with calling, such as societal needs, a sense of destiny, or family legacy (Dik & Duffy, 2012, p. 12). In connection with meaning and purpose in work, Dik and Duffy (2012) note that this could involve either deriving or demonstrating a sense of purpose (p. 12). Finally, Dik and Duffy assert that those with a calling "understand how their work contributes; they can put into words the difference they make, whatever its magnitude" (p. 13). This other-oriented aspect of the psychology echoes the concepts of the common good and human flourishing (Beeley, 2016; Langer et al., 2010).

In another study, Hunter et al. (2010) asked students to define calling and the primary themes that emerged were "guiding force, personal fit/eudemonic well-being, and altruism" (p. 181), which are generally consistent with Dik and Duffy's (2012) definition. Respondents were also asked, "What specifically does it mean for you to approach your career as a calling?" (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 182). The four similar themes that emerged were "follow guiding forces, pursue interests/talents/meaning, display altruism, and effortful dedication" (Hunter et al., p. 182). It should be noted here that the notion of a driving force or guiding call was represented not only among those with religious background, but also among those with secular worldviews (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 183). The fact that more than two-thirds of the students surveyed by Hunter et al. (2010) found calling to be a relevant consideration, including those without a religious or Christian background, underscores that the desire for one's work to matter and contribute meaning to both life and the world is not something that is unique to Christians. At the same time, this basic human desire provides Christian institutions with an opportunity to engage both Christian and non-Christian students with questions of how their work may connect to the larger issues of life.

Another interesting theme that seems to be consistent in the research in the field of calling is exemplified in Domene's (2015) hypothesis regarding students' perceptions around the presence of and search for calling was that the presence of calling would be significantly higher for students expecting to work in human services professions than for those in other careers (p. 319). The findings of Domene's study supported that hypothesis with "a significant effect" for students in the human services group (p. 320). Similarly, the search for calling was significantly higher among the human services group as well (Domene, 2015, p. 321). Does this mean that students pursuing degrees in areas like accounting or engineering do not have a holistic vocation

or calling? Likely it means that the concepts of vocation and calling have been defined or conceptualized in such a way that they cannot see how their occupational work can be leveraged to answer a vocational call to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength and their neighbor as themselves.

Psychological Benefits of Vocation and Calling

There is a strong body of literature surrounding the benefits that come with having a sense of calling, particularly as it applies to one's work. Dik and Duffy (2012) note that those with a sense of calling have a strong connection between the meaning and purpose in their work and the meaning and purpose in for their overall life (p. 13). Duffy et al. (2011/2012) note that those experiencing higher levels of calling also experience higher levels of psychological health (p. 471). However, student religiousness did not moderate this calling-life satisfaction correlation (Duffy et al., 2011/2012, p. 477). In fact, Dik and Duffy (2012) note that seeking a "transcendent summons" regarding career can actually have an adverse effect on one's decision making (Dik & Duffy, 2012, p. 54). Instead, they point out that every major theory of career choice and development assumes an active role on the part of the individual (Dik & Duffy, 2012, p. 54).

In a slight contrast, Shimizu et al. (2019) note that their cluster analysis revealed that among two groups, one that placed a greater importance on "the work value of self-enhancement" (p. 15) and the other who placed a higher level of value on "religion and on self-transcendence value" (p. 16), the group with a higher value on religion "demonstrated a stronger sense of calling" (p. 16). While Shimizu et al. stop short of stating a causal relationship between religious commitment and a sense of calling, they do acknowledge that "those who engage in more self-exploration report higher rates of presence of calling" (p. 16). There were also some commonalities between the two clusters. Members from each cluster who identified as having a

calling did not differ in regard to career decidedness or career self-efficacy, which suggests to Shimizu et al. that "vocational identity achievement is a common characteristic for those who have a calling" (p. 16). These related points regarding religiousness highlight both the importance of individual agency involved in calling for the religious student, while also underscoring the fact that vocational discernment and exploration could prove to be a helpful way for Christian institutions to engage non-Christian students in the larger questions of life meaning and purpose.

The concepts of calling and meaning are clearly connected across the vocational psychology literature. Schnell (2013) concludes that "meaning (in work) seems to arise, primarily when work activities are positively related to something larger than the self" (p. 551). As a result, Schnell advocates for allowing people to try various work roles "to maximize correspondence between person concerns and actual work tasks" (p. 552). In addition, Sawhney et al. (2020) studied the impact that having a calling and experiencing meaningful work have on occupational commitment. In their research they found that "affective occupational commitment was actually stronger when participants reported low meaningful work" (Sawhney et al., 2020, p. 196). This led their team to conclude that "perceiving a calling may be especially important for maintaining a high level of affective commitment to one's occupation" (Sawhney et. al., 2020, p. 196). Results such as this could be helpful in the practical, everyday counseling of students in a career center. Students often romanticize their future careers, and research such as this helps bring a more balanced perspective into view.

Summary

Considering there is research to suggest that students may place too much or not enough meaning in their work, and in light of the fact that most students, regardless of their faith

background, seek to find meaning in their work, Christian institutions must seek to understand how students conceptualize vocation and calling and how that may differ across disciplines. Doing so will allow them to engage these students in a way that will allow these students to reap the benefits of recognizing their particular calling within a holistic understanding of vocation.

Integrating Psychology, Theology, and Higher Education

Wise faculty, staff, and administrators on Christian campuses will seek to bring together the valuable truths and implications of vocational psychology as well as the theological roots of vocation. Rotman (2017) argues that "doing so will help Christian students to live their calling and to integrate their future profession to their faith in a meaningful way" (p. 30). If Christian institutions seek to teach their students to live whole, integrated lives in service to Christ and others, they should apply the theological and psychological principles to their approach to student development and engagement.

Student Development

Cunningham (2016) notes that the undergraduate experience often forces young adults to consider their futures (p. 3). It is during these traditional college years, which are increasingly being referred to as the stage of emerging adulthood, that Cunningham sees the opportunity for a holistic approach to student development that engages students in the question of vocation and calling. He writes, "Filling these years of the late teens and early twenties with these kinds of activities could have tremendous value; it would also equip young people with a range of practical resources for the lives they will lead" (Cunningham, 2016, p. 5). In addition, he notes that the college campus offers two important resources for discerning that calling: time and place (Cunningham, 2016, p. 5). Equally important, it should be noted that in this time and place, there are people who are in place to help student navigate these questions and develop as young men

and women. The faculty, staff, administrators, and the programming and culture that they foster create the space in which students grow.

Faculty and Staff. On a Christian college campus, the faculty and staff leverage the curricular and cocurricular programming to help students discuss questions of meaning and purpose through a Christian worldview. For example, the Christian who recognizes Christ's lordship over all his life will think about his work differently. He will ask questions about his work that perhaps others would not ask. Christian faculty members have a particularly impactful platform for guiding students to ask think differently about their disciplines and their future work. For example, Hagenbuch (2008) recognizes that one's occupation is a part of one's larger vocation (p. 85). As a result, Hagenbuch seeks to think about the career of marketing through the lens of his vocational call to Christ and to answer the question, "How does marketing support reconciliation?" (p. 87) and that reconciliation should bleed into the Christian marketer's work.

Similarly, Newberry (2005) wrestles with how the concept of vocation influences another field not often considered in discussions on calling: engineering. He points out a "highly parochial brand of professionalism and extensive technicality" in the engineering field that is actually antithetical to a biblical understanding of vocation (Newberry, 2005, p. 56). He cautions engineering educators to beware of "scientism" and "technism" because they marginalize things that are at the heart of what it means to be human, like virtues, values, and hopes (Newberry, 2005, p. 57). Newberry (2005) warns against excluding such subjective ideas because rather than creating a morally neutral framework, one has in fact made a very clear moral decision about what will be considered in one's work (p. 58).

Faculty and university staff are uniquely positioned to help students wrestle with such vocational questions as students explore their potential career paths. As such, faculty and staff

should look for opportunities to share their own testimonies of wrestling with the intersection of their faith and work. As mentioned earlier, Smith (2009) writes that the primary goal of Christian education is to form "peculiar people" (p. 34). That is facilitated as students see how their leaders have been and continue to be formed into that peculiar people known as the Church. How has faithfulness to Christ affected how a professor handled a difficult situation with a colleague? How has seeking to love God and their neighbor cost them professionally but shaped them into a more faithful Christ follower? What are the issues within a field that the mainstream may not question but that believers should? Students need to hear stories of faithfulness in every field. The people, programming, and overall culture of a Christian college or university have the potential to shape students to become those peculiar people to which Smith alludes.

Institutional Influence. Braskamp et al. (2006) define student development in terms of a "spectrum of holistic student learning and development goals" (p. 3), which includes various aspects of growth such as academic knowledge, critical thinking, faith and practice, identity, and vocational knowledge and skills. Braskamp et al. contend that a campus' culture "has a direct, significant, and continuous impact on an institution's commitment to and nurturing of holistic student development" (p. 43). Institutions who effectively develop whole students have cultures shaped by factors such as the institution's mission and its implementation, the institution's historic or religious legacy, its leadership, its physical location, its expectations for and evaluation of faculty, the institution's ability to balance support and challenge of students, and even its facilities (Braskamp et al., 2006). Under this broad concept of institutional culture are other factors, but they are factors that are directly influenced by an institution's culture and mission. In addition to culture, these factors that impact student development are curriculum, cocurriculum, and community (Braskamp et al., 2006).

Christian liberal arts institutions who are effectively developing whole students are responding to the needs of student by expanding their curricular offerings in professional fields that are traditionally outside of the liberal arts heritage, recognizing that "preparation for a career is a part of preparation for life, not separate from it" (Braskamp et al., 2006, p. 93). Braskamp et al. (2006) also recommend incorporating field-based options into the curriculum such as service learning, community-based research, or study abroad programs. In terms of the cocurriculum, Braskamp et al. (2006) suggest that it is beneficial for there to be connection to the curriculum and that faculty be actively engaged in the cocurriculum offerings (p. 129). The advocate for a cocurriculum that helps students "connect and make meaning out of classroom experiences" and that "encompasses activities that augment the cognitive and theoretical aspects of the classroom" (p. 129). It should be noted that it is in these environments that character formation is also more likely to be taking place (Braskamp et al. 2006, p. 145). Finally, it is within the overall campus community that students see and experience collaboration between faculty and staff, experience the institution's place within the broader community, and "integrate their learning and development and development and an ethic of care" (Braskamp et al., 2006, p. 185).

Student Development, Vocation, and Personal Investment Theory

The research of Braskamp et al. (2006) is rooted in Personal Investment Theory, which is "built on the centrality of meaning and stresses the importance of the relationship among a student's sense of self, patterns of behavior, and the nature of the sociocultural context that is the college environment" (p. 26). Maehr and Braskamp's (1986) research on Personal Investment Theory informs Braskamp et al.'s (2006) research. Maehr and Braskamp make an important distinction when it comes to the concept of personal investment, noting that it "is most readily defined as a course of action rather than as a psychological state" (p. 9). Maehr and Braskamp

also note that personal investment is not an isolated decision or action. Rather it is a but a piece of a broader process or a chain of events leading to the investment itself. Similarly, Braskamp et al. assert that "vocation is not an activity or event, but rather a lifelong journey of becoming who one is and expressing oneself in life" (p. 29). Finally, Maehr and Braskamp note that there are two broad categories of factors that influence personal investment: external factors such as the nature of a task, rewards, punishments, etc. and the internal factors within the person herself such as her thoughts, perceptions, and feelings (p. 9). Maehr and Braskamp are also clear that external factors "seldom, if ever, operate directly to determine person investment" (p. 9) but are "modified by internal psychological factors" (p. 9).

In summary, Personal Investment Theory states that external factors of a particular situation may influence meaning within the individual, but other internal factors, such as one's history or worldview, are also brought to the situation. These external and internal factors work together within the person to determine the meaning in a given situation. Then, based on the meaning assigned by the individual, a measurable behavior of personal investment takes place.

This framework serves the present research well. The researcher sought to discover and understand what factors shaped student perceptions, particularly how the institutional culture and programming has impacted the students' perceptions and decisions regarding issues of vocation, calling, work. This framework not only accounts for investigating perceptions, but it also looks for measurable behaviors or personal investments that have helped further shape those perceptions as the student grows and develops over their time at the university. In addition, Braskamp et al. (2006) conducted a portion of their research on the campus of Union University, whose students were the subject of this research project. As such, the present research served as a

follow-up study that focused particularly on the university's influence on student understanding of vocation and calling and its relationship to one's work and career.

Summary

This section highlighted the value of both theological and psychological understanding of vocation and calling in a Christian higher education context. All institutions have a culture which forms students in some way. Intentional consideration must be given to how the institutional culture shapes issues related to curriculum, cocurriculum, and community. The theoretical framework of Personal Investment Theory is a helpful grid through which to understand how Christian institutions might understand the impact of campus culture on student development, learning, and vocational discernment.

Summary of Theoretical Framework

Vocational education and exploration in the historical, biblical, and theological sense of the word has the potential to make Christian institutions distinctive from the sea of other institutions who are simply training future professionals without a broader view and meaning for their lives. Feenstra and Brouwer's (2008) research underscores the value of such exploration, as it suggests that "identity development and development of vocation follow parallel paths" (p. 89). Christian liberal arts institutions have the opportunity to not merely train teachers, engineers, nurses, etc. but to equip their students to live faithfully and vocationally across the various arenas that make up their lives.

Related Literature

Cultural and generational dynamics could carry more direct influence than theology in the way college students perceive the concepts of vocation, calling, and work. As such, Christian higher education leaders must be in the continual process of understanding how students'

backgrounds color their conception of vocation, calling, and work. Similarly, Christian educators must recognize the value of implementing vocational exploration programming on their campuses. This section will highlight these factors that impact student perceptions and the research related to vocational exploration and discernment programming within higher education, particularly Christian higher education.

Culture, Economics, and Generations: Factors Influencing Views of Calling and Work

This portion focuses on issues related to cultural and socio-economic influences on student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work. For example, participants in Coil's (2016) research revealed multiple privilege-related factors such as ethnicity, financial limitations, lack of resources, and gender (p. 241). Coil also notes that most career choice theories emphasize self-efficacy beliefs and discernment of interests while deemphasizing circumstantial dynamics (p. 239). This section also shares literature regarding the differences between various generations and how each thinks about and approaches vocation, calling, and work. Understanding these dynamics is pertinent to this study as it sheds light on those influences that might be more subtle, as well as ascertaining how effective campus programming takes such factors into consideration.

Cultural Influences

Lingenfelter (2008) writes that "Culture becomes a prison to us when we insist on employing its structure, order, meanings, and values to all of our life experiences" (p. 59). This is an especially dangerous trap for those coming from a Western, evangelical perspective because it has been such dominant force for so long. However, students coming to Christian campuses today may not share those perspectives or at least have not taken time to consider them and how they affect one's decisions and behavior. Therefore, for Christian educators to blindly operate on those cultural assumptions can lead to misunderstandings, frustration, and conflict. Instead,

higher education leaders should seek to understand the mixture of modern and post-modern influences that has shaped the contemporary student as well how those influences have potentially warped the student's understanding of vocation, calling, and work.

Modernism. Hiebert (2008) notes that one of the subtleties of the modern worldview is that work is no longer a calling but merely a "utilitarian activity" for survival or social/professional success (p. 200). Schuurman (2004) specifically notes that the emergence of secularism and capitalism worked to disconnect the idea of vocation, with its religious significance, from everyday life (p. 8). Ironically this disconnecting of work from the larger meaning of life also occurred at a time when self and self-realization were becoming the dominant idea in modern thought. Self-realization was the new transcendence (Hiebert, 2008, p. 170).

Post-Modernism. The issue of self-realization has only been amplified as post-modernism emerged. While post-modern thought rightly pointed out shortcomings of modernity, it moved further away from biblical revelation by rejecting all unifying metanarratives (Hiebert, 2008, p. 220) and by making autonomy and self-determination the supreme value (Hiebert, 2008, p. 221). Hiebert (2008) notes that such a view has led to "existential anxiety" (p. 230) in which people must live with increasing contingency (p. 229). It's no wonder that students often arrive on campus unsure about everything. Rejecting a metanarrative means rejecting any teleological reality outside of self, which is more than anyone was meant to bear. Even Christian students who have been raised in church have been impacted by these cultural constructs. Educational leaders would be foolish to overlook this and should instead expose the faults of both modernity and post-modernity with the timeless truths of Scripture.

Nationality. Meanwhile other research shows that other cultural backgrounds have managed to retain the idea of calling, in spite of little to no Christian worldview. Douglass et al. (2016) conducted research to measure worker in the United States and India to determine their levels of perceiving and living out a calling and to determine whether nationality actually played a part in any differences. Their study showed that individuals from India were "significantly more likely to perceive and live out a calling, be more satisfied with life, and have higher levels of life meaning" than participants from the United States (Douglass et al., 2016, p. 259). This begs the question, "Why?" After all, one might think that the high levels of poverty in India might preclude one from living out a calling in comparison to the relative luxury experienced in the United States (Douglass et al., 2016, p. 256). However, it should be noted that India's more collectivistic cultural values may actually contribute to an understanding of calling in contrast to the very individualistic cultural values of the United States (Douglass et al., 2016, p. 259).

Could it be that Christian educational leaders in America should rethink the adoption of individualism that has been born out of both modernity and post-modernity and instead return to a more collectivist value system as portrayed in the New Testament and which is still practiced in much of the world? Could it be that professors, administrators, and staff should seek opportunities to highlight such culturally significant differences in such a way as to actively defend against their own cultural defaults and instead recognize the value other cultural values might offer. Similarly, should Christian higher education professionals not seek to acknowledge the dangerous aspects of their own native cultures and speak a redemptive, biblical corrective?

Socio-Economic Influences

In addition to the cultural values that slowly and subtly shape the worldview of students, many may come from a socio-economic background that has had a much more dramatic and

perhaps even traumatic effect on their views of vocation, calling, and work that is rooted not in Western prosperity but in Western poverty. This section highlights a series of reports produced by Penn State University in 2004 which illustrate the struggles facing families in low-income economic environments. It is helpful to understand as well that the students who have recently graduated from college as well as those who are entering campuses this fall not only faced circumstances such as those in the following research but were also shaped by later economic downturns such as the recession that began in late 2007 and the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the way they view vocation, calling, and work cannot help but be affected by how those events impacted their families. Without recognizing the influence of such factors, Christian educators cannot effectively address them.

Low Wage Labor. Bernstein's (2004) report on low-wage labor contends that the low-wage labor market has become an essential part of the broader American economy (p. 4). In addition, Bernstein notes that such employment provides families with little protection against the "vicissitudes of the market" (p. 3). The result of this dependency upon such workers and the low level of compensation and stability for the work is an "inequality-generating structure" (Bernstein, 2004, p. 4). This inequality is illustrated by the fact that such employment is disproportionately female, minority, and less educated (Bernstein, 2004, p. 9). Bernstein illustrates the lack of stability and protection for low-wage workers by pointing out that compared to the overall workforce, only a small share of low-wage earners are union members or under a collective bargaining agreement (p. 9).

24/7 Economics and the Family. Presser's (2004) report on the challenges of a 24/7 economy on the family notes that temporal diversity in employment seems to be trending upward (p. 83). She notes that in the late 1990s only 29.1% of all Americans worked the standard

daytime, 35-40 hour, Monday through Friday, work week (Presser, 2004, p. 83). Presser points out that the impact of shifting toward a service-based economy has been a significant contributor to the 24/7 economy (p. 84). Based on the developments since this 2004 report, there is little reason to think the trends have changed significantly. In addition, Presser reports that nonstandard work hours are disproportionately found among those from low-income demographics. Therefore, it is important to consider the implications for families both economically and relationally.

Presser's (2004) research shows that marital instability increased among married couples with children when one of the spouses worked the night shift (p. 94). In addition, working nonstandard hours creates a more complicated setting for parent and child interaction (p. 95). Another dynamic created by nonstandard hours and exacerbated by low income is the issue of childcare. Huston's (2004) report notes that families in such a situation face major issues related to availability, cost, and quality (p. 145). There is limited supply for those in low-income areas and public policies do little to address the issue of supply (Huston, 2004, pp. 145-146). As far as the issue of quality, Huston's research confirms that low-income families often receive lower quality care and are often in unregulated home-based settings (p. 158)

The Danger of Instability. If Bernstein's (2004) assertions are true, many students are coming from low-income backgrounds that could be setting them up for a similar path. In addition, Presser (2004) and Huston's (2004) research suggests that many of those students not only come from economically unstable environment, but their families may be unstable as a result. Such instability undermines the social support that Lent's (2019) research found to be so helpful for students. For many of those students, pursuing a college education is their opportunity to break away from the "inequality-generation structure" (Bernstein, 2004, p. 4) However, in

their pursuit of socio-economic freedom, they may drift toward an unhealthy obsession with work and material success. Christian educators should help serve as a guardrail by declaring the dignity of all work in a way that does not dishonor the hard, but less compensated, positions in which a student's parents work, while simultaneously opening the student's eyes to opportunities that they may have never considered due to their inequitable background.

Generational Influences

In recent years much has been made of the fact that Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials are all in the workforce together, bringing their own unique generational perspectives with them. Now, Generation Z is matriculating through their college years in preparation of joining that already generationally diverse job market. There are now four generations represented in workplaces all over the world. What, if any, impact do generational differences have in the way that people view vocation, calling, and work, and how can higher education professionals understand them in order to help their students grapple with their calling?

Work, Drive, and Commitment. Twenge (2010) reported on the empirical evidence regarding actual differences among generations in the area of work attitudes. There are always anecdotes and stereotypes built around generational traits, but this report seeks to bring clarity to the way people actually report feeling and thinking regarding their work. Among the findings, Twenge reports that when it comes to how generations view work, multiple time-lag studies show that recent generations (Generation X and Millennials) place less value on work for its own sake (p. 202). The centrality of work in these generations' understanding of identity has declined (Twenge, 2010, p. 203). Both Gen X and Millennial respondents were more likely than Boomers to view work as simply a way to make a living (Twenge, 2010, p. 203). The interesting aspect of this is that these answers were given when individuals were the same age (Twenge, 2010, p.

203). Therefore, there is evidence to suggest that Boomers in their twenties were more focused on work and had a higher work ethic than Gen X or Millennial adults in their twenties. Interestingly however, there were cross-sectional studies that found a greater drive for achievement among Generation X and Millennials, which may reflect differences based on age or stage of career (Twenge, 2010, p. 204).

Another stereotype of younger generations is their lack of commitment. However, Twenge (2010) reports that the best data on job satisfaction and commitment shows that Millennials are "actually more satisfied with their jobs and want more job security than older generations" (p. 206). So why the apparent lack of commitment to a job or organization? Twenge sees Gen X and Millennials as more eager to embrace new opportunities when they come along (p. 206). She writes, "they like their jobs and would like to stay in them, but this attitude may bread down when better opportunities arise" (Twenge, 2010, p. 206). Perhaps Gen X and Millennial young adults who have witnessed major economic crises in the lives find less security in an organization and rely more on seizing upon the promising opportunities that come their way, even if it means relocating or changing career paths.

Work-Family Balance. In contrast to the Boomers' higher work-centric value, Gen X and Millennial young adults were more family-centric (Twenge, 2010, p. 203). This finding is consistent with a broader generational trend toward leisure values (Twenge, 2010, p. 204). In contrast to Twenge's report, Kalleberg and Marsden's (2019) longitudinal study notes that "Millennials do not appear to differ from members of other generations in their work values, even in the importance of flexible schedules" (p. 53). Kalleberg and Marsden also state, "differences among cohorts or generations are very small, unpatterned, and usually not statistically significant" (p. 53). These findings undermined their hypothesis that Millennial work

values would lead to a greater priority on flexible work schedules (Kalleberg & Marsden, p. 46). These varying findings show that there is something more fluid and dynamic at work in younger generations that is not served by oversimplifying and stereotyping them. In addition, Christian educators ought to support a renewed emphasis on work-family balance, upholding both as good gifts from God that should be stewarded well.

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Values. Twenge (2010) defines intrinsic work values as including "finding meaning and interest in work" and extrinsic values as including "status, respect, and a high salary" (p. 204). In her review of the research, she found that intrinsic values were relatively consistent across Boomer, Gen X, and Millennial generations (Twenge, 2010, p. 205). She notes that this undermines theories that portray younger generations as looking for meaning in their work (Twenge, 2010, p. 205). This could be a helpful starting point among coworkers and between faculty/staff and students. This common ground could provide solid footing from which to discuss true differences. These differences may be nothing more than poor perception of one another. Kelly and Schaffert (2019) report that all generations view one another rather negatively in comparison to themselves (pp. 1051-1052). Recognizing that each group is looking for meaning can lead to conversations about how each group defines meaning. Kelly and Schaffert's work are a helpful tool as they note some of the basics of how each group defines meaning.

- "Baby Boomers and Traditionalists find meaning in the more achievement-oriented factors" (p. 1052).

- "Generation X thinks that a meaningful job will bring growth, reward, and work-life balance" (p. 1052).

- "Millennials agree that challenge is important in a career, but they also want personal happiness, nice coworkers, and to be able to help others" (p. 1052).

Understanding where everyone is coming from is a valuable insight in building comradery among coworkers so that teams function well and do good work together. As Generation Z

emerges, higher education leaders can help them through this process of self-discovery of their own values and understanding the values of those who have gone before them.

Different or Developing? Often in conversations of generational differences, each group is viewed as having static values and practices that completely set them apart from other generations. However, the research says otherwise. Krahn and Galambos (2014) conducted research on cohorts from the graduating classes of 1985 and 1996, and their research found that each group's values changed over time. In their research, both the 1985 and 1996 cohort reported,

> significantly higher intrinsic work values at age 25 than at age 18. Extrinsic work values also rose significantly during early adulthood for the 1996 cohort. In contrast, job entitlement beliefs declined significantly between ages 18 and 25 in both cohorts (Krahn & Galambos, 2014, p. 106).

Krahn and Galambos' findings align with those of Kalleberg and Marsden (2019) who found that people in their prime working years place greater emphasis on income and security, while younger people place more value on interesting work (p. 56). This supports their hypothesis that such people would place a high value on income and other extrinsic factors due to this being the season of life that when economic pressures to support a family are highest (Kalleberg & Marsden, 2019, p. 47). The evidence points to the reality that values and views on work are fluid, depending on a wide array of factors such as changing needs and national and global economics.

Summary

While there are differences in the way generations see and assign value to their life and work, perhaps the gap is not nearly as large as once thought. Twenge concludes, "the usual view of generations as categorical, separate entities may need to be reconsidered. Instead, generations can be viewed as a part of social change, which occurs gradually over a number of years" (Twenge, 2010, p. 208) Kalleberg and Marsden appear to agree. They write,

we found few if any meaningful differences in work values among people in different cohorts or generations. This finding suggests that much speculation about the distinctiveness of values for particular generations lacks a strong empirical grounding, at least for the United States (Kalleberg & Marsden, 2019, p. 56).

The real gap appears to be one more based in relationships and communication. Rather than perpetuating stereotypes and making assumptions about their students, faculty, staff, and administrators should seek to truly know students and be known by students. In doing so, educators will be better equipped to lead students, which in turn will better equip students to understand their view of work and the views of those around them.

Formation and Fragmentation: Issues Facing Higher Education

As with much of the general culture, higher education and the young men and women transitioning into young adulthood are facing rapid shifts in their realities. Issues such as student debt and shifts in the job market loom large for many students as they matriculate through the college years. Similarly, higher education leaders must navigate changing views on the purpose of higher education and the cost students incur in order to pursue that education. One of the key responses to the shifting realities surrounding emerging adults and Christian higher education is a return to a proper understanding of vocation and infusing that understanding through the total life of the institution.

From Formation to Careerism

Cunningham (2016) notes that much of the discussion around higher education is now focusing on issues such as its purpose and on "whether culture could do without these institution of higher learning" (pp.1-2). Cunningham also points out that undergraduate education draws particular critique with its "lofty ideals and less narrowly defined goals" (p. 3). This shift follows a prolonged period of the democratization of higher education, and while this greater access was important and necessary, Clydesdale (2015) notes that it has resulted in pendulum swing "away

from elitist formation" and toward "disavowal of formation" (p. 53). This neglect of student formation in areas of character and morality have contributed to a sense of careerism (Clydesdale, 2015, pp. 53-54).

This idea of careerism and its effects on culture's view of higher education are hard to deny. Barna (2017) points out 70% of American adults believe that the primary purpose of a college degree is to prepare for a specific job or career. That statistic holds true among self-identified Christians with 69% citing job and career preparation as the primary purpose of a higher education (Barna, 2017, p. 71). Where does student formation rank for Christians? Barna's statistic is concerning. Only 7% of Christians cite spiritual growth as a purpose for college, and only 14% cite the development of moral character as a purpose (Barna, 2017, p. 71). In connection to this trend toward college as career preparation, institutions and their administrators are increasingly tempted to focus on outcomes rather than formation. This is especially true of Christian institutions in Europe which are mostly funded by the state (De Munyk et al., 2017).

Forces of Fragmentation

The shift toward careerism is just one symptom of the greater fragmentation in a culture that is deeply shaped by both modern and post-modern worldviews. Glanzer et al. (2017) caution that Christian higher education leaders are not immune from this fragmentation. They also rightly recognize that the threat of this fragmentation is not only something individual faculty, staff, and administrators must guard against, but that fragmentation can occur when institutional structures are "only concerned with academic goals and productivity" (Glanzer et al., 2017, p. 247). Clydesdale's (2015) research seems to reinforce this assertion as one faculty member who participated in a purpose exploration program came to the realization that faculty typically must

earn the right to reflect on their whole personhood through professional academic markers such as publishing, grants, and tenure (p. 33). The trend of careerism in the broader culture threatens to tempt Christians to fragment their identities so that their career becomes their fundamental way of seeing themselves and their worth. When coupled with the previously mentioned trend away from student formation, Christian higher education loses some of its distinctive qualities.

Wells (2016) notes other sources of fragmentation which she refers to as "centrifugal forces" (p. 54) that permeate higher education. She cites the digital revolution and the proliferation of technological advances in education a "disruptor to higher education's greater purposes" (Wells, 2016, p. 54). Wells' critique includes some of the oft-repeated concerns regarding relationships between students and faculty and the questioning of the quality of the educational experience when the academic content is separated from the traditional academic context of a face-to-face classroom. In addition, she also highlights the very real fiscal tension students face, as well as the near-sighted focus of much of the conversation around the value of higher education which focuses primarily on economic outcomes (Wells, 2016). In keeping with Barna's research, Wells asserts, "The vast majority of students place a higher premium on the employment-related outcomes of a college education than on the process of education itself" (p. 56).

Perhaps connected to these financial realities, another force threatening the greater formative purpose of education is what Wells (2016) calls "the dis-integration degree" (pp. 59-60) to describe the current educational landscape in which students are gathering credits from a variety of sources rather than being formed by a single educational experience of institution. Finally, in a reflection of both the financial concerns and the growth of careerism already discussed, Wells points to the emphasis on specialization as "a particular challenge for the

advancement of integrated, holistic learning" (p. 57). Wells then offers a renewed vision of vocation and the work of "vocational exploration and discernment" (p. 60) as the "centripetal force" (p. 60) to neutralize the centrifugal forces at work in contemporary higher education.

Choice and Anxiety Among Students

While institutions may be facing serious issues that are shaping the landscape of higher education, young men and women transitioning into adulthood are facing their own. With the proliferation of capitalism and technology, the average contemporary young adult has known nothing but a world full of choices. In addition, Clydesdale (2015) points out that postmodernism "assigns individuals the task of navigating life's purpose amid ever-changing seas of meaning" (p. 21).

One might expect that this technical level and cultural sanctioning of choice would be liberating for students embarking on adulthood, yet Cavanaugh (2016) argues that the perception of practically unlimited choice creates a "tyranny of choice" (pp. 34-39) which actually increases anxiety and undermines happiness in emerging adults. Cavanaugh writes, "They are often told not only that they can and must choose their life, but that they must maximize that choice and choose their best life" (p. 26). Asking an eighteen or nineteen-year-old young man or woman to declare the path toward that best life upon arrival on campus is not only weighty, but also unrealistic. It should come as no surprise that such an expectation, whether explicit or implicit, is paralyzing to many young adults (Cavanaugh, 2016).

With this anxiety-inducing level of choice combined with the overall fragmentation of society and life, it should not be surprising that Cavanaugh (2016) would recognize that those who complete their college degree in the current settings are often thrust into the job market with "the expectation that they must invent their own lives without the traditional markers of identity

and custom" (p. 33). This finding is consistent with the issues facing higher education in general, but it allows one to view the way a young adult experiences those realities. Recognizing this reality in young adults should lead Christian higher education leaders to the difficult task of self-examination. Clydesdale's words should reverberate in the minds of administrators, faculty and staff as they examine their own institutions. He writes, "For the vast majority of today's students, higher education does not engage the heart, and improved pedagogy or new curricular designs, while important, are not the answer; they supply improvements of degree only" (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 25). What is needed is not minor adjustments to the system but a fundamental reexamination of the system and whether it is encouraging the integrative power of personal, spiritual formation and vocational discernment or if it is simply contributing to the anxiety and fragmentation that students are already experiencing.

Vocation and Christian Higher Education

Considering vocation's theological heritage, Christian higher education stands uniquely able to address the issues that students bring with them that influence the way they view life, work, and career. However, the question of what that might look like is more debatable. This section highlights important concepts and findings from the literature that are helpful as institutions attempt to lead their students to integrate their lives, work, and other community activities under the integrating framework of vocation.

Principles, Questions, and Community

It is encouraging to see the recent renewed interest in vocational exploration in higher education, especially among Christian institutions. The way those institutions have implemented that exploration is varied, but there are some helpful principles and insights to be considered. Vos (2017) offers three helpful principles regarding vocational discernment in higher education:

- Vocational discernment "should be cultivated in Christian higher education as a communal practice" (p. 20).

- "Discerning vocation in Christian higher education should critically be related to God's primary call to be a citizen of his kingdom" (p. 20).

- "From a Christian viewpoint, vocation is related to what we may call the common good" (p. 21).

Vos' recommendations stand as a commonsense Christian corrective to some of the issues in contemporary culture. Cavanaugh (2016) points out that popular culture is filled with stories that prioritize self-fulfillment over the common good. Vos' recommendations also stand in contrast to Cavanaugh's recognition that in post-modern culture "customs, community, rules, habituation-all are ignored in favor of spontaneous gratification of one's wants" (p. 25). It should then come as no surprise that Cavanaugh too recommends that community play a key role in helping students discern their vocation.

One of the more significant vocational discernment initiatives was the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE), supported and sponsored by the Lilly Endowment and the Council of Independent Colleges (Roels, 2017). Roels' (2017) reflections on her work with the NetVUE program has led her to present three central questions that institutions should ask when undertaking the design of a vocational discernment program:

- "How is the institution's educational mission and identity understood in relationship to God" (p. 96)?

- "What is the institution's articulation of the ideal graduate" (p. 96)?

- "Which institution-specific vocabulary will be used to articulate vocational discernment with students" (p. 96)?

It is important to note that Roels' questions have almost nothing to do with programming or content but instead focuses on more philosophical questions that leaders must answer in order to

construct a program and curriculum that fits the context of a particular institution. There may be principles that apply across institutions, but there is no one size fits all program.

In addition to these generic questions, Roels (2017) does share some specific ideas that grew out of particular institutions' responses to the three questions. One important trend was that almost all the programs in the NetVUE project included at least one aspect that affected curricular content and pedagogy (Roels, 2017, p. 99). Vocational discernment cannot be divorced from the academic work of the classroom. Another interesting insight is that many leaders involved in the NetVUE project discovered that addressing the questions of purpose and meaning cannot be addressed merely in the freshman year (Roels, 2017, p. 100). Instead, leaders created "multiple curricular intersections" for students to wrestle with the issues surrounding vocation (Roels, 2017, p. 100). Roels (2017) also notes the value of communal aspects of vocational discernment programs such as service projects, Scriptural literacy, and communal worship. Roels' highlighting of the importance of community in the discernment process echoes the previously mentioned insights of Vos (2017) and Cavanaugh (2016).

Vocational Exploration That Works

In Clydesdale's (2015) book, he notes the strong engagement in vocational exploration programs and seems to anticipate the reader's surprised response to the large number of students, faculty, and staff who participated with such programs that were theological in nature. He offers a few reasons why this is the case. First, as has already been noted, post-modernism thrusts students out into the world and asks them to somehow discover meaning and purpose "amid ever-churning seas of meaning" (Clydesdale, 205, p. 21). While post-modernism may seek to throw out the concepts of meta-narratives, the majority of students want to live a meaningful life and are willing to listen to a genuinely communicated narrative of purpose (Clydesdale, 2015).

Secondly, Clydesdale argues that there is far too much projection of secularism onto the campus population when the fact is that many students and faculty are seeking to integrate spirituality into their lives. Next, Clydesdale notes that exploration programs are initiatives, not indoctrination, and therefore invite participants into honest conversation. The final explanation for the strong engagement in such programs is that even with the growing diversity of the United States, "two out of three Americans identify as Christian" (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 23). Even in a post-truth, post-modern society, it appears that many American students and faculty have enough of religious or Christian context that such programs appeal to them and, when done well, strengthen and encourage them.

In Clydesdale's case study approach, he is able to highlight various institutions and share what made them successful. There are a few trends that stand out and are worthy of discussion. First, it is clear that contextualization led to programming. "Ignatius University" recognized that they needed to steer clear of loaded terms like "vocation" or "calling", and instead used terminology like "self-knowledge" and "self-transcendence" (Clydesdale, 2015, pp. 34-35). Meanwhile, "Pullman College embraces its Christian faith and Calvinist heritage" (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 66) and felt no need to avoid such terminology.

Another important factor in an exploration program's success is the support of leadership. In discussing inherent organizational limitations and program design, Clydesdale (2015) notes that "broad impact thus requires program directors with collaborative skills and senior administrators who endorse the program's mission" (p. 80). One of the key reasons cited for "Ignatius University's" successful program was the "clear and consistent support of IU's president" (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 40).

One final aspect of note is the familiar theme of community. Programs built a sense of community both inwardly and outwardly. One example of the inward community aspect is that "Ignatius College" included not only students, but also faculty and staff in its exploration seminar and sought to treat everyone as equals (Clydesdale, 2015). Similarly, "Ignatius" offered the Rebound Retreat as an "intense yet malleable experience of engage meaning" (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 37). Such experiences undoubtedly developed a sense of connection and community within the particular cohorts. In a separate study, Bechtold (2017) points out the community building nature of simply having student live on campus together as they are participating in the institution's exploration course. He writes, "Spontaneous discussions pertaining to the course contents arise as student live together, eat together, play, study, and worship together and share their lives with each other" (Bechtold, 2017, p. 84). The shared experience of exploring one's vocation cannot be overlooked.

Outward community building can be seen in the example from "Pullman College" whose program sought to "broaden student perspectives" of the "world's pressing needs" (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 67). Clydesdale (2015) characterizes "Pullman's" program as distinctive because of this "palpable other-directedness" (p. 67) that sought to serve the greater community and society. Such an outward focus of the greater community can serve as a uniquely Christian aspect vocational exploration. Christians are to leverage their lives and work not merely for self-fulfillment but for the good of their neighbor and society at large.

Student Effects. Clydesdale (2015) breaks down the effects of vocational exploration programming on students into four broad categories: "retention, trajectory calibration, social norms, and maturity" (p. 90). These are helpful categories to use when parsing out the impact such programs have on students.

Retention. Clydesdale (2015) notes that the link between vocational exploration and student retention was an unexpected link. He also points out that such a link was not expected among "the majority of those who designed these programs for their campuses" (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 90). However, when Clydesdale compared the graduation rates of the Lilly-funded institutions with a random set of 88 unfunded schools, he found that sixty-one funded campuses saw their graduation rate increase compared to only fifty-three of the unfunded institutions and that "about 1 out of 5 funded campuses posted better six-year graduation rates than comparable campuses selected at random" (p. 96).

In contrast to Clydesdale's broad study of vocational/purpose exploration, Conner et al. (2012) focused their research on the impacts of a life calling course on student retention and persistence on one particular campus. Their hypothesis was that the implementation of such a course among "freshmen students with an undeclared major, will have a significant positive relationship with its participants' persistence to graduation" (Conner et. al., p. 256). In addition to student participation in the life calling course, Conner et al. also took into consideration other variable that could have an impact on a student's retention and persistence to graduation, such as standardized test scores and family income. After analyzing their findings, "a positive and significant relationship was observed between graduation status and course participation…" (Conner et. al., 2012, p. 260). Conner et al. observed that "65.4% of 638 LDR150 course participants persisted to graduation at the university, whereas only 61.5% of 2700 non-participants persisted to graduation" (p. 261). However, their research also "failed to demonstrate a unique contribution beyond other predictors" (Conner et. al., 2012, p. 261). In other words, a life calling course has a strong positive significant correlation to student retention and persistence to graduation, but there are other factors that must be considered that make student

retention much more complex than any one program can effectively address. So, while purpose exploration and vocational discernment programs are helpful tools, leaders must recognize that they are not cure-alls.

It's interesting to remember that in Clydesdale's (2015) discussion neither the researcher nor the program designers expected this link between programming and retention. In fact, there seems to be nothing "inherently retention-related" (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 98) about the typical vocational or purpose exploration program. In fact, he points out that of the three campuses who launched their programs "to expressly improve undergraduate retention…none succeeded" (Clydesdale, p. 97). Instead, Clydesdale surmises, "Its retention effects lie in its community-building effects…" (p. 98).

Trajectory Calibration. Evaluation of vocational exploration programming is probably most commonly thought of in terms of students' post-graduation realities. Clydesdale (2015) points to the outcomes in this area in several ways. He notes that "those who participated in exploration programs demonstrated-one year after graduating from college-greater intentionality, more resilience, and broader life satisfaction that those who did not participate in such programs" (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 211). Clydesdale also notes that alumni report that the effects of vocational exploration "grow with time as life decisions accumulate" (p. 211).

A robust understanding of vocation, calling, and work gained through a well-rounded program in the undergraduate journey may contribute to this greater life satisfaction, in part, due to what Kleinhans (2016) describes as the doctrine's effect of freeing people from the burdensome feeling of having to find the "one divine calling that is intended just for them, whether defined as the perfect job or the perfect mate" (p.110). One student's quote seems to align with Kleinhans' statement.

> Since matriculating at [this university], I began to think of my life as a life of calling and purpose-and without that seed planted early on, I may not have even thought about it. To most of the world, a job is just a job-but vocation is who you are (Clydesdale, 2015, pp. 104-105).

In addition to these post-graduation effects, 64 % students reported that campus vocational programming "helped me identify skills and talents", while 82% reported that programming "encouraged me to see and serve the needs of others" (Clydesdale, 2015, Table 4.1). 74% of students reported having "a faculty or staff adviser with whom I have helpful conversations about my vocation, calling, or purpose" (Clydesdale, 2015, Table 4.1). Clydesdale (2015) also reports that of the students surveyed only 2% of student participants were dissatisfied with their campuses vocational/purpose exploration programming (p.108). Clydesdale partially attributes this high satisfaction rate with the fact that the ideas of vocation and purpose "impart a meta-narrative that infuses the arc of one's life with meaning and provides a base for constructive engagement with the world" (p. 108).

Similarly, Erwich and Van Der Stoep (2017) acknowledge that once graduates move out into the professional world, "the dilemmas that are likely to be face are often not clear cut…" (p. 110). Things will not go as planned. They will experience setbacks. They will encounter injustice, pain, and disappointment. For them the doctrine of Christian vocation meets these uncertainties with hope allowing Christians to "practice justice and peace in their professional lives" (Erwich & Van Der Stoep, 2017, p. 111). Wadell's (2016) discussion on hope's connection with vocation is helpful as well. He writes,

> …hope sustains us on that journey by keeping us focused on those elements of our vocations that are best and most promising. It does so by remind us of the value of our callings, especially when we are tempted to doubt it. (Wadell, 2016, pp. 211-212)

This hope that Christians carry with them helps to shape and support the meta-narrative that Clydesdale (2015) refers to so that they can engage the world both professionally and personally in a way that transformative in the lives and communities they touch.

    Social Norms. Clydesdale (2015) notes that he unexpectedly found "proexploration student groups" (p. 115) where the desire to explore dimensions of calling is the norm. The three groups he mentions are profession-based groups, student immersed in campus ministries, and students drawn to service or volunteer opportunities (Clydesdale, 2015, pp. 114-115). Clydesdale is careful to note that these groups existed "before their campus's exploration programs began, had a natural affinity for purpose exploration, were quick to engage exploration programs, and flourished with the infusion of grant resources" (p. 115). This means that there is already a demand for such programming; leaders merely need to feed it appropriately within their institutional context. Clydesdale does point out one cautionary aspect to meeting the demand that is already present among some student groups. According to his findings, backlash against exploration programming seems to be connected, at least to a degree, with mandatory participation (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 116). This presents a tension for leaders to manage in terms of how to connect students to the programs.

    Maturity. Another surprising element to Clydesdale's (2015) findings was "how little disappointment I heard from recent college graduates who as students spent time exploring questions of purpose and vocation" (p. 117). He notes that these graduates possessed a more long-term view of life and demonstrated a higher degree of persistence which reflects the development of a "grounded idealism that anticipated longer pats as well as setbacks, in turn generating broader satisfaction with these graduates' life-at-present" (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 117).

Riswold (2016) also recognizes the maturing effects vocational exploration can have on a student. She notes, "the process of development and discernment often includes stark encounters with socially and theologically constructed boundaries for human identities" (Riswold, 2016, p. 73). She also recognizes that these encounters have the power to dehumanize, but that vocational exploration can play a part in equipping student to overcome these challenges (Riswold, 2016).

Similarly, Sullivan (2014) notes that "The developmental effects of participation in the programs, already noted, showed that exploring life purposes directly enhanced the perseverance or 'grit' typical of resilient people and communities, a much sought-after quality today" (p. 10). This touches on the previously mentioned themes of formative education and of hope's role in Christian vocation. Riswold (2016) makes the statement, "Education is always formative-in one way or another" (p. 75). Intentionally formative education represented in vocational exploration helps students not only be technically prepared for their future but to also be prepared to maturely meet any challenges they encounter along the way. At the same time, the Christian's hope serves to undergird the grit and persistence necessary to meeting those challenges.

Institutional Effects. If students are shaped and impacted by their participation in vocational exploration programming, what, if any, benefit is there to the institutions that offer such programming? Is there any tangible benefit? Is there any immediate benefit or is it purely a long-term prospect? Can such programming have impact beyond merely encouraging and equipping students in their growth, or can the impact expand to the faculty, staff, and administration of the institution?

Effects on Faculty and Staff. Clydesdale (2015) characterizes the primary effect of vocational exploration programming on faculty and staff as "affirming and resourcing good citizens" (p. 212). While this may sound vague, it does speak to a stereotypical tension on many

campuses: the divide between faculty and staff. In his report, Clydesdale cites a few examples of

what this good citizenship looks like"

- "Staff reported respect from faculty for their role as educators" (p. 212).

- "Professors spoke about support for pedagogical and scholarly innovation (p. 212).

- "Both mentioned deeper conversations they had had with each other and with students" (p. 212).

This idea of good citizenship supports an idea mentioned by Glanzer et al. (2017), "we

cannot talk about what it means to be a good professor without talking about what it means to be

a good human being made in God's image" (p. 247). That same sentiment would certainly apply

to staff and administrators. In addition to this increased collegiality between faculty and staff,

there was also appreciation for how programming helped students to see faculty and staff as

whole persons, which paved the way for broader conversations with students (Clydesdale, 2015).

From this one can again see the communal nature of vocational exploration in which people

pursue God's call together, which pushes back against the forces of fragmentation at work in

institutional life and in the broader culture.

Another stereotype that may cause some to pause at the idea implementing such

programming is the idea of faculty being unwilling or slow to engage in such new initiatives. In

his research Clydesdale (2015) found that the "widest effects on faculty and staff occurred on

culturally distinctive campuses and the narrowest on historically affiliated campuses" (p. 212).

This is not that surprising considering that historically affiliated campuses are not as likely to be

comfortable with exploring the distinctively Christian aspects of purpose and calling.

Clydesdale, however, provides some encouragement by reporting that even in places where

faculty engagement was slow, once there was engagement, the impact was significant—

"permeating instruction, program structure, advising conversations, and even scholarship" (p. 212). In addition, both faculty and staff reported highly valuing their institution's mission and saw their work as contributing to it (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 212). So, while some faculty and staff may be slow to engage with exploration programming, those that do appear to benefit from it directly and as a result, become an even more valuable part of the institution's community.

Effects on the Overall Institution. As already mentioned in regard to student impact, there is some connection between vocational exploration and student retention and persistence. Such an impact cannot be overlooked. After all, enrollment is the financial lifeblood of an institution. In Conner et al.'s (2012) study, the 3.9% gap in graduation rate between life calling course participants and non-participants would mean an additional 105 graduates. The economic impact of not only these 105 students but subsequent students who would persist to graduation due to their participation in vocational exploration cannot be minimized. Clydesdale (2015) also points out that students who are energetic about their academic work and how it relates to their overall calling contributes to retention. In short, student retention and persistence lead to greater revenue for university, which in turn funds other initiatives across the campus.

In addition to the more pragmatic impact of student retention, Clydesdale (2015) recognizes that the effect of a robust vocational exploration program on students, faculty, and staff "spill over to campuses in general" (p. 212). Whether it is improved morale, expanding curricular opportunities, new programming, greater community connections, or reinvigorated chapel and campus ministry programming, campuses who have engaged in an intentional program of vocational exploration and discernment benefit greatly. He notes, "Quite a few participating institutions reclaimed the intentional exploration of purpose and meaning as core to their educational missions" (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 3).

If there is any doubt about the benefit of vocational exploration programming, one should consider how the Lilly funded institutions handled the issue once the grant funding expired. According to Clydesdale (2015), "88 percent of campuses…continued their exploration programs, with their attendant costs, two or more years after their Lilly Endowment award ended" (p. 128). Properly contextualized and implemented vocational and purpose exploration programming has the potential to reinvigorate institutional mission, student experience, and employee morale and work.

Union University

Union University's long-standing history as an evangelical Christian institution of higher education sets it apart from many institutions who began as Christian institutions but who over time deemphasized that aspect of their history or approach to higher education. This section provides general information about the institution and its history but focuses primarily on the development of the institution since 1975 when it relocated the campus in hopes of growth and expansion.

General Information and History

Union University's history is intertwined with multiple institutions, the oldest dating back to February 1823, who over the course of time merged into one, hence the name Union. (Baggett, 2000; Ward, 1975). Baggett (200) notes that the connection between the institution and its surrounding community has at time "approximated a partnership" (p. 3). Therefore, it enjoys a strong relationship with its local community and is seen as an asset to the community, as was evidenced in the city's rallying to support the university in the wake of devastating tornados that damaged much of the campus in 2008 (Ellsworth et al., 2008). The university is affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board and is the oldest institution affiliated with the Southern

Baptist Convention (Union University, n.d.-a). Currently, the university has over 100 programs of study and offers degrees ranging from the associate's degrees to the doctoral level (Union University, n.d.-a). Finally, the university is guided by its mission to provide "Christ-centered education that promotes excellence and character development in service to Church and society" (Union University, n.d.-a).

Relocation, Growth, and Institutional Identity

A key moment in Union's history occurred in 1975 when Union moved from the location it had known since 1844 (Baggett, 2000, p. 5) to a new location that offered more opportunity for growth and expansion. That growth began in earnest in the late 1990s with the selection of a new president. This era ushered in several changes. Baggett (2000) notes that it was the most significant shift in terms of administrative personnel since the 1960s. In addition, budgeting practices were adjusted in order correct the recent trend of budget shortfalls (Baggett, 2000). Perhaps most importantly, the new administration shifted the declining enrollment trend upward by identifying Union's niche and adjusting recruiting strategies to identify the strongest prospects, including "Christian secondary school students, home schoolers, and other indicating a private college experience" (Baggett, 2000, p. 251). By 1998 the institution saw its largest freshman class ever with 468 students, and total enrollment over the president's first two years had increased by 339 students, thanks to these improved strategies and expanding graduate programs (Baggett, 2000). This growth would serve to fuel "a new campus master plan in response to the ordinariness of the buildings and the challenge of the changing environment surrounding the university's property" (Baggett, 2000, p. 253).

This era of leadership also saw the establishment of the institution's core values: "excellence-driven, Christ-centered, people-focused, and future-directed" (Baggett, 2000, p. 253). The university describes excellence driven by writing,

> We strive for excellence in our academics and service out of a desire to do all things for God's glory. Because he cares about our work and is involved in everything we do, we will not be satisfied with mediocrity. (Union University, n.d.-b)

This value is clearly reflected in Union's academic rigor and commitment to excellent faculty. The institution highlights that 100% of its classes are taught by professors rather than by graduate students (Union University, n.d.-b).

The institution describes its Christ-centered value as integrating "top-tier academics with Christian faith in every program of study. No matter which program you choose, you'll understand your role in that field within the context of biblical faith". (Union University, n.d.-c). This commitment to a Christ-centered life includes the integration of faith and learning but also extends beyond the classroom to multiple chapel services each week and multiple mission trip and discipleship opportunities offered through the Office of University Ministries.

As a people-focused institution, the university describes itself by writing, "...we value one another. We show it through our words and actions. We understand that every student's needs are different, and we are committed to each person's success and spiritual, intellectual and physical well-being" (Union University, n.d.-d). This value is demonstrated through 10:1 student to faculty ratio and the wide array of student support services, including health and counseling services, career services, and academic support services.

Finally, the institution describes their future-directed orientation in this way, "We equip our students for continuing success, and as a result, Union graduates excel in top graduate schools and careers around the world" (Union University, n.d.-e). The school boasts a 98%

placement rate for graduating seniors in either graduate programs or full-time jobs, which is 12%

above the national average (Union University, n.d.-e). In addition, the university has committed

120 million dollars toward campus improvements in the last decade to better equip students for

future outcomes (Union University, n.d.-e). The university is also about to begin construction of

a 50,000 square foot academic building to house the business school, the engineering

department, and the computer science department. The building is described as

> ...a center for free enterprise, innovation and entrepreneurship—an innovation hub that will promote the creation and development of ideas, concepts and products that make a difference in society and that make people's lives better, both at home and around the world. (Union University, n.d.-f)

The institutional revival that began in the late 1990s has continued on under the

leadership of the new President who was elected in 2014 (Union University, n.d.-g). Under the

President's leadership the institution adopted a strategic plan call United in Spirit, Grounded in

Truth which "will enable Union to pursue on-going distinctiveness in its academic programs,

constantly seeking after the ultimate embodiment of truth: Jesus Christ" (Union University, n.d.-

h). The plan includes objectives related to items such as the institution's gospel witness,

operational effectiveness, support for faculty research, and strength of student life and

programming (Union University, n.d.-h).

The core values undergird all aspects of university life and the strategic plan help

administrators and faculty prioritize particular aspects of their work in order to strengthen the

work of the institution as it seeks to educate students and prepare them for both life and their

intended. career paths.

Union University's Vocatio Center for Life Calling and Career

Union University's career center is named the Vocatio Center for Life Calling and

Career. The name itself communicates that there is more to their work with students than simply

helping them secure a job after graduation. Even the choice of the Latin word *vocatio*, which means calling, connects to the theological convictions of the institution. The stated mission of the Vocatio Center is to help students "discover, respond to, and live out your calling in service to God and others" (Union University, n.d.-i). A survey of the center's website landing page greets students with a menu of services available to them such as résumé and cover letter assistance, career counseling, interview preparation, and job and internship search assistance (Union University, n.d.-i). As one digs a little deeper, they find that the Vocatio Center advocates for an understanding of calling "which is found in the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20)" (Union University, n.d.-j). It is evident that the office understands that there is more to their work with students than simply helping them polish their resume, secure an on-campus job, or get that internship that could ultimately lead to a full-time job. Their work is instead described in biblical and theological terms.

The question then becomes how is that biblical and theological understanding demonstrated in their daily work and in the services they provide to students. Are these good intentions recognized and understood by students? Does the Vocatio Center staff have a clear understanding of the student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work on the campus so that they can enter into a dialog with those perceptions to further instruct them and prepare them for both life and work? Furthermore, how do students perceive the Vocatio Center's programming and services? Do students see it simply as a place to prepare for an interview, or do they see it as a place where they can receive sound, biblically and theologically sound counsel as they wrestle with questions of vocation, calling, and work? After all, when investigating the Vocatio Center website further, one finds much more information about résumés, mock interviews, personality assessments like the Myers Briggs, and career fairs than about workshops or discussion forums

that explore the intersection of the Christian faith and one's life at work. Gaining greater insight into student perceptions of the Vocatio Center and its programming will be valuable and beneficial information for the Vocatio Center staff and ultimately the students of Union University.

Summary of Related Literature

In addition to the theological and theoretical concepts at play in student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work, there are very practical factors at work that could actually override any theological or psychological significance for a student. The literature demonstrates that differences related to culture, economics, and generation can influence student views. In addition, factors on the campus itself, such as the overall campus culture, has influential sway with students. Therefore, it is important that Christian institutions develop contextually appropriate strategies for guiding students through the process of vocational exploration as it is beneficial to both students and the institutions themselves.

Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature

The purpose of this literature review has been to provide the reader with insights related student perceptions of vocation, calling and work. The review has highlighted both theological and theoretical issues related to the research topic. In addition, the review has noted the other factors at play for students, whether it be factors related to culture, economics, or the culture and programming of their particular institutions, specifically as it pertains to the issue of vocational exploration and discernment.

Rationale for the Study

The questions of purpose and meaning are constant among emerging adults who populate college campuses. The magnitude of these questions is compounded when a student's spiritual or

religious faith is included in the conversation. Therefore, higher education institutions, particularly Christian higher education institutions, must continually understand the perceptions of their students in order to effectively serve, support, and guide them through the process of integrating their lives and work.

Braskamp et. al. (2006) defined holistic student learning and development to include themes such as practicing one's faith, religious commitment and worldview, vocational knowledge and skill, physical well-being, social responsibility, self-awareness, and identity. In general, this definition is consistent with the present study's theological conceptualization of vocation which "focuses on vocation as the primary calling to discipleship (Waalkes, 2015, p. 137). Therefore, the various dimensions of student development identified by Braskamp et al. are under the umbrella of this integrating doctrine of vocation. The question then becomes whether students, particularly those immersed in the culture of a convictional Christian institution understand their lives, academics, relationships, and, for this study, their work and career in relationship to the call to discipleship or are other factors overshadowing that understanding.

In addition, the nature of data this study sought to uncover and understand demands a qualitative approach in order to ascertain student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work directly from students and in their own words. Quantitative aspects were employed in order to describe the state of student perceptions, but qualitative approaches were primarily employed to gain more detail in regard to those perceptions and how various factors may have shaped student perceptions.

Finally, considering that Braskamp et al. (2006) included Union University in their research, the current study seeks to be a helpful follow-up that focuses particularly on the issues of vocation, calling, and work and how Union's culture, curriculum, cocurriculum, and

community have shaped student perceptions during their time as students. Union University stands as a leader in Christian higher education and as such has a responsibility to lead the way in creating culture and programming that faithfully supports students toward an integrated life.

Gap in the Literature

Much quantitative research has been published in the realm of vocation and calling, both pertaining to professionals and students. However, qualitative research is less represented (Hunter, et al. 2010, p. 179), especially qualitative research that focuses exclusively on student perceptions. Even important studies like Braskamp et al. (2006) focused more on information from faculty and administrators than students. In addition, many of the existing qualitative studies often focus on whether students perceive a calling or how they perceive a calling. There is a less robust body of literature that goes beneath the question of perception to ask what factors have shaped those perceptions and how those perception have been influenced by an institution of Christian higher education. Similarly, no study could be found that focuses specifically on juniors in their third year of college who have had a significant amount of time to not only be shaped by their campus experience but also have had time to reflect on that experience. Coil (2016) conducted a similar study on sophomores, but the current research seeks to build on that by focusing on the group of students who have experienced the institutional culture and curricular and co-curricular programs for a greater period of time but who are also still working their way through understanding how their life and work may be integrated in a healthy, holistic way.

Finally, and perhaps most useful, the fact that this research explicitly seeks to uncover student perceptions regarding institutional understanding of student perceptions and the effectiveness of current institutional programming in response to those perceptions sets this study

apart from others in the field as an embedded, practical study that should provide actionable findings that not only serves Union University but other similar institutions well as they seek to support their students.

Profile of the Current Study

A review of the literature highlights a theological richness to the term vocation that has been virtually lost across the broader culture, but also among many Christians. While work and vocation are related, they are not synonymous. Even literature from the field of psychology highlights the value of calling that relates and integrates work into broader questions of meaning and purpose. Similarly, the literature demonstrates that the early adult years normally associated with college attendance are a fertile time for pondering these questions, and Christian liberal arts institutions are uniquely positioned to help guide students through those deep questions of meaning and purpose and to help direct them toward an integrated life. This qualitative, phenomenological research study sought to contribute to that body of research by gathering both rich textual data that not only revealed what students think and believe but also dug deeper into those perceptions to discover the factors that have shaped them, particularly as it relates to the institution's influence on student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The college years are an intense season of self-discovery and determining one's next steps for life, family, and career. It can be a time of frustration and fragmentation as students are seeking to determine those steps (Cavanaugh, 2016; Kleinhans, 2016; Wells, 2016). For students on a Christian college campus, these normal rites of passage into early adulthood are often accompanied by faith convictions that interact with these life questions. While it may seem that a student's spiritual or religious convictions would be an asset to navigating these larger life questions, that is not always the case. In fact, those beliefs may actually create confusion and anxiety (Davidson et al., 2017; Kleinhans, 2016).

In order for Christian higher education administrators, faculty, and staff to best serve students and guide them through this season of vocational exploration (Clydesdale, 2015), they should seek to understand student perceptions around issues such as vocation, calling, and work. In addition, they should look for opportunities to identify and understand what influences are factoring into those student perceptions, including the campus culture and programming. This qualitative, phenomenological study explored beneath the surface of student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work produced data leading to a better understanding of how they experience it and perhaps even why they experience it the way they do. In addition, the study provided new data that encourages others toward further study of student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work. This chapter summarizes the research study and reviews pertinent information regarding the qualitative, phenomenological design, such as the setting, participants, and ethical considerations and how the design was implemented in this study.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

A review of the literature confirms a rich theological history of the doctrine of vocation and its importance in the lives of Christian believers (Ballor, 2017; De Muynck et al., 2017; Keller, 2012; Plummer, 2018). The literature also illustrates the practical benefits of experiencing and perceiving a calling, especially as it relates to integrating one's work into one's view of life as a whole (Conner et al., 2012; Duffy et al., 2011; Sawhney et al., 2020; Shimizu et al.; 2019). Unfortunately, many students do not experience these benefits and instead wrestle with anxiety, confusion, and a sense of fragmentation (Cavanaugh, 2016; Davidson et al., 2017; Glanzer et al., 2017). This tension provides Christian educators and higher education leaders with the opportunity to explore student perceptions of calling, vocation, and work so that they might serve their students more effectively and faithfully in order to lead them to a more integrated life. This phenomenological study gathered qualitative data regarding both student perceptions as well as the influences on those perceptions, particularly the institution's influence.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the study is to explore perceptions of vocation, calling, and work among junior classification students at Union University. For this study, calling was defined more as a transcendent drawing toward a particular path in life, particularly as it relates to work. Vocation was defined more in light of its historical and theological roots with a focus on the transcendent drawing toward a way of life as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Work was defined as one's job or career. The theory guiding this study is that of constructivism or social constructivism, which "understands human reality as socially constructed reality" (Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 189). Social constructivism recognizes that as individuals seek to make meaning out of their life and

experiences, that meaning is often shaped by history and social connections or interactions

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. How do the junior students at Union University describe their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work?

RQ2. How do the junior students at Union University describe the relationship between their faith and their work or future career?

RQ3. What are the common factors junior students at Union University describe as having impacted their view of vocation, calling, and work?

RQ4. How do junior students at Union University describe the impact of the university's overall culture and programming, such as academic curriculum, co-curricular offerings, and student services, on their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work?

RQ5. How do junior students at Union University describe the university career center's effectiveness in addressing and interacting with student perceptions of vocation, calling, work, and career over the course of their academic career?

Research Design and Methodology

This qualitative phenomenological design explored and sought to understand student

perceptions of vocation, calling, work. The researcher conducted an in-depth, semi-structured

interview with individual students to build a collection of rich descriptive data that explored both

student perceptions of work, calling, and vocation and the underlying influences on student

perceptions. The interview also explored how those views may or may not have shifted during

their college experience and how those views impact student perception and experience of

calling toward their intended career. In addition to the interview, each student completed both

pre- and post-interview journal activities that provided further data to provide more context for

the interview and allow the student to provide further reflections after the interview, thus

providing opportunity for triangulating the different types of data.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) state that phenomenological research "rests on the assumption that there is a structure and essence to shared experiences that can be narrated" (p. 104). Therefore, this phenomenological study collected data from individuals, and the researcher organized the data to identify common themes or experiences in order to describe what the experiences of vocation, calling, work for a junior student on a Christian campus are like "from an insider's perspective" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 233). It is the focus on identifying and describing common themes taken from various individuals which sets phenomenological research apart from other qualitative designs such as narrative study, which focuses more on the individual experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75), or ethnography, which looks for commonalities but within a group that shares a common culture (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 231). In addition, a qualitative, phenomenological design was an appropriate way to explore student perceptions of calling because qualitative research recognizes that the topic under consideration "has many dimensions and layers" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 228). On the other hand, quantitative research seeks to simplify or quantify phenomenon by looking for potential cause and effect relationships, such as in an experimental design or by seeking to describe trends, attitudes or opinions, such as in a survey design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Even a cursory review of both mainstream and Christian literature demonstrates that calling is a complex experience for individuals. Therefore, while a phenomenological design looks for commonalities among participants, it also respects the unique experience of the participants.

Setting

The setting for this qualitative, phenomenological study was on the campus of Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. Union University is a 200-year-old private institution that is affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board and is the oldest institution affiliated with

the Southern Baptist Convention (Union University, n.d.). The institution is led by its President who has been in office for nine years. The President's Executive Council is made up of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Student Life, Vice President of Enrollment Management, Vice President for University Ministries, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, and the Vice President for Business Affairs. The university's Board of Trustees is appointed by the Tennessee Baptist Convention during its annual meeting. The university offers over 100 programs of study with degrees ranging from the associate's degrees to the doctoral level. Additionally, Union enjoys a vibrant campus community, and that sense of community is often cited by students as one of the reasons they chose Union and enjoyed their student experience.

The institution's mission statement is to provide "Christ-centered education that promotes excellence and character development in service to Church and society" (Union University, n.d.). Union's stated mission is highly relevant to the issues of calling and vocation as defined for this study. In fact, Union's career center was rebranded several years ago to a focus on both calling and career rather than simply on career. Therefore, exploring the perceptions of Union students regarding vocation, calling, and work and how their experiences at Union may have shaped those perceptions is of high value to the university as it continually seeks to serve and support students as effectively as possible.

Participants

Union University's student population represents 46 of the 50 United States and 8 countries and thus represents a variety of socio-cultural perspectives (Union University, n.d.). The participants of this qualitative, phenomenological study were juniors at Union University who were in their third year as a college student, who met the credit hour requirement for junior

status, and who fell within the 18- to 22-year-old age range for traditional undergraduate students. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that qualitative researchers "purposefully select participants or sites" (p. 185) that allow the researcher to investigate and understand their research problem or the phenomenon under consideration. Creswell and Poth (2018) note that it is necessary for all participants to have experience with the phenomenon being studied (p. 157). However, for this study it was also important that allowances were made to encourage varying perspectives from students. Therefore, maximum variation sampling was the form of purposeful sampling employed in order to identify potential participants who also represent various perspectives within the broader junior class population. Maximum variation sampling "consists of determining in advance some criteria that differentiate the sites or participants and then selecting sites or participants that are quite different on the criteria" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 158). For this study, these criteria included various demographics such as gender, religious affiliation, ethnicity, first generation college students, major, and commuter versus residential students. These markers helped create a sample that provided more diverse perspectives, which allowed the researcher to observe areas of commonality or divergence in their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work.

The process of selecting a sample for the study was conducted in cooperation with the host university. The university confidentially shared a list of junior students and their contact information with the researcher for further communication explaining the phenomenological research in more detail and to invite students to participate. This communication was planned to be initiated in partnership with the university's career center as well in an attempt to boost student responses. Only those students who met the stated criteria, accepted the invitation to participate (Appendix A), gave their informed consent (Appendix B), and completed the

demographic survey (Appendix H) were considered for participation in the study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that a sample group of three to ten individuals is sufficient for a phenomenological study (p. 186). However, the researcher sought to build a sample of 15 to 20 participants for this study in order to have a diverse sample from which to gather data and achieve the ultimate goal of saturation in data collection.

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research is inherently interpretive (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 183) since the primary instrument of data collection in this particular design is the researcher. Creswell and Creswell (2018) urge researchers to comment on two areas in order to identify any potential biases: past experiences and how past experiences shape one's interpretations (p. 184).

The researcher's background and experience with issues of calling and vocation are extensive. His religious tradition's use of the word calling carried significance both theologically and occupationally. Prior to a transition to Christian higher education, the researcher spent nearly 20 years in local evangelical church leadership. As a teenager, he "surrendered to a call to vocational ministry." That statement itself illustrates the complexity of the research problem. The idea of calling can be so narrowly defined theologically that it becomes a special role or office, such as pastor or priest. Similarly, the phrase "vocational ministry" is commonly understood to mean "professional ministry." It communicates that the individual seeks to work, either full-time or part-time, as a paid pastoral staff member of a church or ministry. However, the researcher also recognizes the validity of conceptual understandings of calling as being primarily an issue of discipleship to Jesus Christ (Waalkes, 2015). After transitioning to working with college students at Union University, the researcher began to think more deeply on the issue after speaking with so many students who narrowly define calling as their future career. Their fear of "missing God's

call" and therefore being "out of God's will" prompted the researcher to consider how not only the local church but also Christian higher education may have contributed to a vocation/calling as occupation mindset and how Christian higher education leaders might be able to equip their students with a more robust understanding of vocation by first understanding student's perceptions on issues of vocation, calling, and work.

These background experiences of personally asking questions regarding vocation, calling, and work and serving on the staff of Union University could have potentially influenced the interpretation of data during this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 184). However, McNarry et al. (2019) also found that the "insider experience and perspectives provided significant advantages with regard to shared inhabitance of the lifeworld of those he was researching" (p. 148). The issue then became trying to maximize the advantages while minimizing the disadvantages associate with insider research by employing reflexive or bracketing techniques.

In this case, the researcher firmly supports a broader understanding of vocation and calling that is rooted more in one's faith in Jesus Christ and life of discipleship (Waalkes, 2015; Pfeiffer, 2014). Therefore, it was important to craft interview questions in such a way as not to lead participants to provide responses that align with the researcher's perspective. Similarly, the researcher limited his "discussions about personal experience so that they do not override the importance of the content or methods in a study" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 184). In addition, the researcher differentiated between data provided by the participant and the researcher's own reflections or interpretations of the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 240). Leedy and Ormrod (2019) offer a simple example of how using two columns with one side dedicated for participant response and another column dedicated to the researcher's own thoughts or interpretations of the data. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend a similar practice of

"writing reflexive comments about what is being experienced as the study progresses" (p. 229). They argue that such practices allow the researcher to then review those comments and consider "how biases, values, and experiences impact emerging understandings" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 228). Finally, McNarry et al. (2019) document the use of a standard debriefing form used by McNarry in one research project in which he was considered an insider. This form allowed him to record his thinking about

> 1) the relationship he was developing with the participant; 2) his response to his/her account; 3) how the participant reacted to the questions posed; 4) how G (McNarry) responded to her/his answers and 5) anything that needed to be changed, clarified, or further developed for subsequent interviews (McNarry et al., 2019, p. 146).

These practices were utilized throughout the research study. A form similar to what McNally et al. (2019) described was developed for researcher reflection after each data collection activity (Appendix H). Finally, throughout the research process, the researcher sought to build a level of rapport with participants that invites transparency while also preventing his personal experiences or perspectives from inadvertently influencing their perceptions and responses.

Ethical Considerations

Leedy and Ormrod (2019) highlight an important ethical consideration related to the issue of purposive subsampling for the qualitative research (p. 273). They note that researchers "must describe your intentions in your IRB proposal and informed consent materials" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 273). Similarly, the researcher must take great care to protect the identity of participants and their responses from broader disclosure. In addition to confidentiality concerns, Caruth (2013) notes that qualitative studies "require researchers to communicate the purpose(s) of the study accurately, avoid deceptive practices, respect the study population, respond to potential power concerns" (p. 115).

Since this phenomenological study employed purposeful sampling, care was taken to protect the identifying information of participants. Similarly, since the researcher is employed by the institution that served as the setting for the study, attention was given to issues related to potential prior relationships with students who were candidates for the study as those relationships could have had a skewing effect on participant response. These issues underscored the absolutely vital importance of protecting both participants' identifying information and allowing them to review the results of their interviews to confirm that what the researcher understood is what the participant meant. In addition, the student-university staff dynamic could have contributed to uneasiness among some students who may have viewed a staff member as an authoritative figure. This potential power dynamic highlighted the importance of building and maintaining rapport with participants at every point in the research process (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 248). Trust and transparency were key to navigating such power dynamics.

Prior to scheduling any research interviews with prospective participants, the researcher informed each individual of the potential risks and benefits of their participation in the study in order to gain their fully informed consent. Included in this disclosure was communication regarding the handling of any potential identifying information of the participants. All reasonable attempts were made to protect participants' identifying information. All documents were housed on a password-protected drive that only the researcher can access. Participants' identities were also protected in the reporting of research by use of pseudonyms. While interviews were recorded, those recordings, along with all other documentation containing identifying information, will be destroyed at the completion of the dissertation process.

Finally, throughout the research study the researcher adhered to all requirements of the Liberty University Institutional Review Board in keeping with the protocols of the Doctor of

Education in Christian Leadership program. Similarly, the researcher submitted to the requirements of the host university's Institutional Review Board as the institution that permitted access to its students for research and provided the setting for this phenomenological study.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

This qualitative, phenomenological study explored student perceptions and experiences related to work, calling, and vocation by utilizing both an in-depth, semi-structured interview and pre- and post-journaling activities with each participant. This section highlights the data collection process, its rationale, and the data collection instruments as they currently stand. It also includes information regarding issues of procedure and protection of participant confidentiality.

Collection Methods

In order to gather this rich data, in-depth, semi-structured interviews served as a primary method of data collection. Marshall and Rossman (2006) and Rubin and Rubin (2005) note that qualitative, in-depth interview are more conversational than formal in their structure. This approach is built on the assumption that "the participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p, 101). The researcher combined Seidman's (1998) conceptual framework of his three-phase interview process with an approach used in Lee's (2017) dissertation research, which utilized both pre- and post-interview journaling. Providing multiple streams of data provides more opportunities for participants to reflect on their experiences and triangulate the data for a greater level of credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Seidman (1998) argues that if a researcher's goal is to "understand the meaning people involved in education make of their experience" (p. 5), then interviewing provides a clear

opportunity for data collection and inquiry into the research problem. Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2018) argue for the use of "in-depth and multiple interviews" (p. 79) in the data collection process of phenomenological research. Phenomenological interviewing is designed to "describe the meaning of a concept or phenomenon that several individuals share" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 104). This supported the researcher's plan to learn more about student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work by interviewing students and allowing them to describe their own perceptions, including the factors that shaped those perceptions, including the university's culture and programming.

Seidman's three-phase interview process has become well established and is mentioned in various other texts (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In the first interview, Seidman (1998) states that the interviewer should focus on setting "the participant's experience in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time" (p. 11). The second interview focuses more on the "concrete details of the participants' present experience in the topic area of study" (Seidman, 1998, p. 12). Finally, the third interview invites participants to reflect on and discuss the "meaning of their experience" (Seidman, 1998, p. 12). Seidman (1998) says that this phase "requires that the participants look at how the factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation" (p. 12). While on the surface it may seem that the issue of meaning is limited to the third interview, Seidman reminds researchers that meaning making is taking place in all three phases as participants are reconstructing details of their past and present experiences and framing them in such a way as to make sense to themselves. Using Seidman's proven structure to invite students to reflect on their past experiences, their present experiences and

perceptions, and allowing them to describe those experiences and perceptions in rich detail was a promising framework for this research.

In addition to the interview, the researcher adapted Seidman's (1998) three-phase framework to include pre- and post-interview journaling activities. In Lee's (2017) study, participants completed and submitted a pre-interview journal that had been completed over a three-day period prior to the interview. In Lee's pre-interview journal, participants responded to their choice of five of the ten questions provided in the pre-interview journal. Lee then used the remaining questions as the foundation for the personal interviews, which were conducted by phone. The post-interview journal activity was designed to allow "the individual to share additional private thoughts that may have arisen or changed following the interview" (Lee, 2017, p. 105). Lee (2017) cites this data collection process from multiple sources as a means of strengthening his study's validity. In addition, he allowed transcripts of all the data to be reviewed by participants in order to ensure that their views were accurately represented in his data collection.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) affirm such an approach to data collection by noting that it can "supplement participant observation, interviewing, and observation with gathering and analyzing documents produce in the course of everyday events or constructed specifically for the research at hand" (p. 107). They further describe this as "unobtrusive…rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 107). Because of this, a similar approach to Lee (2017) was combined with Seidman's (1998) three-phase framework to incorporate different data collection sources, including the participants' engaging in reflective writing in private which could elicit responses that the interviewee might be

uncomfortable sharing in an interview or that the interviewee might overlook in a more conversational setting.

Instruments and Protocols

This section focuses on the instruments and protocols used for data collection via in-depth, semi-structured interviews and document analysis, reflecting that a pre- and post-journaling instrument is used in tandem with a personal interview. Attention is given to the interview protocol. Similarly, attention is given to the documents that were used in the pre- and post-journaling phase of the data collection process. Finally, there is a discussion around the development of interview and journal questions and the means of refining and validating those questions in order to ensure that the questions led to answers that would provide data relevant to the research problem and questions.

Interviews

Creswell and Poth (2018) describe the interview protocol as the form used by the researcher to direct the interview activities and record information from the "five to seven research sub-questions phrased in a way that interviewees can answer" (p. 325). Creswell and Creswell (2018) note that these questions should be used across all the interviews. In discussing his three-stage interview, Seidman concurs noting that deviating from the predetermined structure could "erode the focus of each interview" (p. 13). Rubin and Rubin (2005) add further depth to this idea of a predetermined set of questions by discussing how to elicit richer responses through the use of main questions, probing questions, and follow-up questions. Main questions are designed "to get the conversation going on a specific matter and ensure that the overall subject matter is covered" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.13). These main questions could be the predetermined questions that are related to the research question(s) as previously described by

Creswell and Poth (2015). Probing questions, however, are "standardized ways to ask for more depth and detail and encourage the conversational partner to continue" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 13). Finally, follow-up questions are designed to "encourage the interviewee to expand on what he or she has said that the researcher feels is important to the research" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 13). In order to know how to employ these probing and follow-up questions and to achieve the depth of data and understanding necessary to answer the research questions requires that interviewers "listen for and explore key words, ideas, and themes" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 13) that are relevant to the research and that may come up in the participants'' responses.

  With this in mind, the researcher established a series of main questions that were rooted in the study's research questions. Probing questions and follow-up questions were more spontaneous and responsive to the responses of the study's participants during the interviews in order to continue on, elaborate on, draw further attention to or to elaborate on a topic or elaborate on a specific concept within the topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Table 3.1 represents how the interview and journaling activities (See Appendices D, E, and F) interact in the data collection process, as well as their interactions with the research questions.

Table 3.1
Journal and Interview Guide

Pre-Interview Journaling Activity: Past Experiences	Questions
RQ1; RQ2	1. How would you define the following terms: Vocation? Calling? Work?
RQ1; RQ2; RQ3	2. To the best of your ability, please describe your past perceptions of work as a child or teenager. How did your early experiences with work (yours or others; paid or unpaid) affect your attitudes toward and perceptions of work?
RQ1; RQ2	3. Have you ever felt a sense of calling? If so, when did you first sense a calling in your life? Please describe in detail that season of your life. How would you describe that sense of calling at that time?
RQ3	4. Please tell me a little about the past influences in your life. How would you describe them and your relationships with them? What, if any, impact did they

	have on your understandings of or your experiences with vocation, calling, and/or work?
Personal Interview: Present Experiences and Initial Reflections	
RQ1; RQ2; RQ3	4. Follow-up questions built on pre-journaling activity responses
RQ1; RQ2	5. Given what you shared in the journaling activity and what we've discussed today, how would you now describe your current sense of calling?
RQ3; RQ4; RQ5	6. Please describe how your experiences during college have confirmed, refined, or changed your perceptions of vocation, calling, and/or work. Did campus life or curricular offerings factor into your current understandings of vocation, calling, and/or work? If so, how?
RQ5	7. Please describe your engagement with the university's career center. What is your view of the campus career center? How would you describe your experiences?
RQ4; RQ5	8. As you reflect, describe how, if at all, this university understood and interacted with your understanding of vocation, calling, and work or your sense of calling in life or toward a particular field?
Post-Interview Journaling Activity: Further Reflection	
RQ1; RQ2; RQ3; RQ4; RQ5	9. After having some time to reflect on your previous journaling and our conversation, are there any items you'd like to further explain or maybe correct in regard to your perceptions of vocation, calling, and work? Is there anything you would like to elaborate on regarding your experience of calling, understanding of work, or the factors that influenced those perceptions, including your student experience?

Creswell and Poth (2018) encourage pilot testing in order to refine interview questions prior to conducting the research interviews. Seidman (1998) urges researchers to employ a pilot test as well in order to decide whether their research structure fits their study, to gain experience in the practical aspects of conducting research, to discover which of their interview techniques may or may not support their collection of data, and to then discuss with their doctoral committee about any necessary refining of the research approach. Marshall and Rossman (2006) note that a pilot test allows the researcher to demonstrate that he or she "is capable of conducting the proposed research" (p. 57). Therefore, the researcher planned to test the journal activity questions and interview questions using a panel of experts (Appendix I), which consisted of

faculty members at Union University, in order to validate or strengthen the appropriateness of the interview questions and therefore, the research study. The researcher was also mindful of time within each interview. Leedy and Ormrod (2019) identify one to two hours as an appropriate length to gain the level of response necessary. Seidman (1998) offers a 90-minute timeframe for qualitative interviewing. Therefore, the interviewer planned to structure and manage each interview so that it was completed in 90 minutes to two hours.

Document Analysis

In addition to the data gathered in the interview, the researcher used pre- and post-interview journaling activities to gather additional reflections from students. The use of multiple data sources provides the opportunity for corroborating evidence gathered in varying ways, which can increase methodological validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Leedy and Ormrod (2019) note that content analysis of this type can be "an integral part of the data analysis in a phenomenological study" (p. 236). For this particular study, these documents would also factor into the data collection process as the journals served as somewhat of an extension of the interview process. The pre-interview journal activity provided the opportunity for the participant to not only provide data but to also engage in reflection on their past in relation to the topics of vocation, calling, and work. Their responses also helped shape some of the initial questions for the interview phase of the study as their responses may trigger follow-up questions for the researcher to explore and upon which to build the interview. Finally, the post-interview journaling activity provided the participants with opportunities to reflect further and elaborate upon, clarify, or correct anything from their previous responses, especially from the interview. These reflective written exercises supplemented the more conversational environment of an interview.

Since these documents did not predate the study, the only necessary criteria for including the data from these documents is that the participant respond to the journal prompts. The researcher considered the best method for the participants to submit their journals. Personally submitting hard copies of their journals posed a smaller risk of confidentiality breaches as those hard copies could then be filed and locked away so that only the researcher had access to the documents. Digital options such as email or online file storage platforms such as Microsoft Teams offered greater ease of submission but a slightly greater risk of loss of anonymity to participants.

Procedures

This section addresses important items such as document and instrument development, sampling procedures, and data collection methods. Attention is also given to the protection of participant identifying information and data.

Necessary Documents

The researcher developed informed consent forms (see Appendix B) and an email template that served as an invitation to participate (see Appendix A). The initial invitation to participate was sent to prospective participants using their university email address. The email shared broad information about the researcher and the research study. It then invited students to participate by thoroughly reading and completing the informed consent form. The invitation also informed students that once they complete the informed consent form and demographic survey, they would be contacted by the researcher to schedule their interview and journaling activities. The invitation to participate email linked to the official informed consent form. The informed consent form provided information for potential participants regarding the purpose of the study, the nature of the data collected, the method(s) of data collection, potential benefit(s) or risk(s)

associated with participating in the study, and confirmation that participation is voluntary and could be ended at any time (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The researcher completed and included the appropriate documentation requested by the IRB in order to demonstrate that the study complies with all ethical and procedural standards and to receive approval for the study (see Appendix D).

The invitation to participate email linked to the official informed consent form and demographic survey housed within SurveyMonkey. The informed consent form provided information for potential participants regarding the purpose of the study, the nature of the data collected, the method(s) of data collection, potential benefit(s) or risk(s) associated with participating in the study, and confirmation that participation is voluntary and could be ended at any time (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

Data Collection Methods

This study used an in-depth, semi-structured personal interview with pre- and post-interview journaling similar to Lee (2017) combined with the general framework of Seidman's (1998) three-phase interview process. In this approach, the pre-interview journaling activity (see Appendix E) was planned to be sent to the participant via email one week prior to the personal interview (see Appendix F) and completed and returned to the researcher via email at least 48 hours prior to the interview. The post-interview journaling activity (see Appendix G) would then be sent to the participant via email no later than 24 hours after the personal interview and should be returned to the researcher via email no later than 72 hours after it was sent. Both data collection methods allowed the researcher to collect rich data that recorded student experiences and perceptions related to vocation, calling, and work and the factors in their lives which have influenced those perceptions.

Instrument Development

The instruments used for the interview with journaling approach were developed with the study's research questions firmly in view. The research questions were the foundation for the pre-determined questions of any interview or journal activity. There were also follow-up questions that are more responsive to the specific participant's answers. Those questions are reflected in the transcript data. The instruments were submitted for review to a panel of experts (Appendix I) to potentially refine questions for clarity so that they elicited the kind of data being sought. However, the panel's recommendations were limited to refining the wording or structure of the question. They did not alter the substance of the questions themselves.

Selecting Participants

The researcher planned for the host institution to confidentially provide the names and contact information for the entire junior class of students for communication explaining this phenomenological research study in detail and to invite eligible students to participate. The researcher also planned to partner with the university's career center in communication in an effort to boost student responses. Only those students who accepted the invitation (Appendix A) and who completed the informed consent form (Appendix B) and the demographic survey (Appendix C) were considered to participate in the study.

Purposive sampling techniques were also employed in an effort to select eligible participants who would also provide a level of diversity in relation to factors such as gender, ethnicity, or academic programming. The researcher sought to develop a sample group of 15 to 20 participants with the ultimate goal of achieving saturation in the data collection. In an effort to further guard against bias in the participant selection process, the researcher enlisted the aid of an assistant to anonymize the data from the demographic survey results. Respondents' identifying

information was coded with a number so that the researcher did not learn their names until after they had been selected for the study.

Data Recording and Protection and Participant Confidentiality

All participant names were replaced with numbers and pseudonyms to protect their identity. Other identifying information shared in the study included information such as gender, ethnicity, major, and whether the student is a first-generation college student. Any documents that included identifying information such as contact lists were saved on a secure drive that was only accessible to the researcher. Similarly, data that was collected digitally, such as video or audio recordings of interviews, were stored on the same secure drive. Hard copy data such as the journal documents were scanned and saved onto the same secure drive, and the hard copies were locked away and only accessible by the researcher for a period of three years. At that time, all data files associated with the research study will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

A unique feature of data analysis in qualitative research is that it often goes "hand-in-hand with other parts of developing the qualitative study, namely, the data collection and the write-up of findings" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 192). Data collected in each phase was initially processed by the researcher and analyzed in such a way that it will have some influence on the subsequent stage(s). Leedy and Ormrod (2019) note this back-and-forth nature as well, pointing out that qualitative researchers often make memos about their initial interpretations of the data being collected. However, once the data is collected it must then be transcribed, organized, read, coded, interpreted by the identification of themes or patterns, and summarized for readers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2006)

This section provides an overview of those steps in the process, as well as discussing opportunities to increase trust in the research design and its subsequent findings.

Analysis Methods

At the completion of the data collection phase of this qualitative study, there was a "dense and rich" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 192) amount of data. Creswell and Poth (2018) describe a series of connected steps that "form a spiral of activities all related to the analysis and representation of the data" (p. 181). Rubin and Rubin (2005) state that the goals of analyzing qualitative interview data "are to reflect the complexity of human interaction by portraying it in the words of the interviewees and through actual events and to make that complexity understandable to others" (p. 202). The first step in the analyzing of this qualitative data was to create transcripts for each interview or digitally scan materials (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), such as journaling activities. During this initial step of transcribing and organizing data, the researcher also took advantage of computer software to help with data management and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The researcher utilized the NVivo platform for transcription, management, and coding assistance in the data analysis process.

This initial step of transcribing and organizing data was essential because a key aspect of the overall analyzation process is immersion in the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). This immersion allowed the researcher to "winnow the data" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 192) and to further organize the data and work through the "data analysis spiral" (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Marshall and Rossman (2006) stress the importance of immersion as well noting that it "forces the researcher to become intimately familiar with those data" (p. 158). It's this intimate familiarity that allowed the researcher to develop and apply codes to categorize various data. As the researcher read through the data, he looked "for the

individual concepts, themes, events, and topical markers" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 208) that

related to the research questions and labeled them with appropriate codes that would allow him

to retrieve them and compare them with findings from other study participants' interviews or

journals. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend the use of memos through the immersion process

in order to facilitate code development (Table 8.3, p. 187).

The coding process was guided by the research questions. Since the themes of vocation,

calling, and work were central to the study, those themes served as initial categories for data

analysis. Likewise, initial codes related to the university career center or university programming

served as helpful starting points for categorizing and analyzing data. With the assistance of the

NVivo software, the researcher used those codes and additional codes that emerged to generate

descriptions or themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 194). Descriptions focused on detailed

information about people, places, or events involved in the research setting, whereas themes

focused on the major categories of findings that appear across the participant group and can be

supported by "diverse quotations and specific evidence" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 194).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) encourage researchers to keep in mind the themes and concepts from

their research topic's body of literature as they look for themes that are emerging from their own

study. This practice was a helpful integrating practice to keep in mind so that the entire study tied

together. The researcher identified themes in the data by looking at the themes related to

interview questions, looking for indirectly revealed themes in interviews, and comparing

interviews from other participants (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, pp. 210-211).

The researcher validated the data analysis by triangulating data through gathering data in

multiple ways (i.e., interviews and journals) and by demonstrating that themes are based on

converging perspectives of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200). In addition, the

researcher used member checking to invite the participants to validate that not only the data collected but also the analysis of that data was consistent with what they communicated. The researcher was also mindful to highlight any contradictory or outlier evidence (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 240) in order to present a more complete explanation of the phenomenon of calling and vocation in the life of the participating students. Finally, the researcher attempted to always clarify his bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200) by not only disclosing his previous experiences with the topic but also through practices such as clearly distinguishing data from researcher reflections or memos (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 240). A more detailed discussion on validity practices follows this section.

When summarizing and representing phenomenological data, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend describing the researcher's personal experience with the phenomenon in question. This discloses the researcher's connection with the topic and reminds both researcher and reader of the personal nature of the study. Creswell and Poth then encourage the development of a list of significant statements from individuals participating in the study that are designed to be "nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping" (p. 201) expressions of participant experience. The researcher then groups these statements into broader categories or themes that serve as the foundation for the interpretation that is reported. Creswell and Poth then recommend writing a "textural description" (p. 201) of what participants' experienced, a "structural description" (p. 201) of how their experiences happened, and a "composite description" (p. 201) brings the two previous descriptions together to capture the essence of the experience, which is "the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study" (p. 201). Creswell and Poth offer a helpful and clear process for summarizing and reporting the data in a way that draws participants' experiences together for a

broad yet descriptive analysis. These steps provided a solid framework for data reporting at the end of the data analysis process.

Trustworthiness

Since qualitative research does not measure data in a more traditional, mathematical sense, qualitative findings are unique in their pursuit of validity and reliability. Findings cannot be statistically verified as they can with a quantitative study, but researchers do have the responsibility to present their study as credible, dependable, confirmable, and transferable as possible. This section addresses these areas of trustworthiness specifically.

Credibility

The credibility of a qualitative study demonstrates "that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was appropriately identified and described" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 201). Leedy and Ormrod (2019) describe credibility as "whether the results from a study are plausible and believable from participants' perspective" (p. 239). The researcher planned to record and transcribe all interviews conducted in this study. In addition, the researcher shared those transcripts with the corresponding participants to assure them that they were being credibly represented. The researcher compared data from the various phases of data collection to triangulate the data from the journal activities and personal interview to identify emerging themes. At the same time, the researcher was mindful of any disconfirming or contradictory data that emerged when looking across the multiple data streams. The researcher went beyond this basic step of member checking to also provide participants with the initial renderings of the analyzed data to confirm that it aligned with their experiences (Birt et al., 2016, p. 1808).

Dependability

Leedy and Ormrod (2019) note that dependability "accounts for the ever-changing contexts within which qualitative research studies take place" (p. 239). Qualitative research assumes an ever-changing social structure as the social world is constantly under construction (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 203). However, a clear description of the setting, participants, and the data collection and analysis process, particularly the interview protocol, the coding categories, and corresponding significant statements should provide the both the framework for replicating the study in a different environment, while also identifying the particular context in which this study was conducted that may or may not apply in another setting. The researcher sought to establish dependability of the data and analysis by employing a system of member checking recommended by Birt et al. (2016). "Synthesized member checking" (Birt et al., 2016, p. 1803) is a unique member checking method as it shares both the data and the interpretation or analysis of the data to participants. Birt et al. (2016) note that it "also enables participants to add comments which are then searched for confirmation or disconfirming resonance with the analyzed study data" (p. 1807). As they began to develop themes from the data, Birt et al. developed a report where "each page summarized a theme from our results, and interpretations were contextualized using anonymized illustrative quotes to allow participants to comment on interview data as well as interpreted statements" (pp. 1807-1808). The researcher used a similar approach that invited participants to not only confirm the content of their interviews and journal activities but also to comment on the analysis and synthesis of the data. The intention of this approach was to enhance the dependability of both the research method and the study's findings.

Confirmability

Leedy and Ormrod (2019) frame confirmability in terms of basing conclusions on the actual data wherever possible (p. 239). Since qualitative research always involves some degree of interpretation, Marshall and Rossman (2006) state that pursuing confirmability means the researcher must ask whether his inferences and interpretations would make sense to someone else (p. 203). The researcher detailed data collection and analysis activities throughout the study in order to establish a clear audit trail (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 241). In addition, transcripts with participant code numbers or pseudonyms and the researcher's memos were stored and made available upon request from the participant. Finally, as previously mentioned, the researcher enlisted participants to participate in member checking for both accuracy of the collected data and to validate the findings (Birt et al., 2016; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which findings can be applied to another setting (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 239). Interestingly, Marshall and Rossman (2006) argue that the "burden of demonstrating that a set of findings applies to another context rests more with the researcher who would make that transfer than with the original researcher" (pp. 201-202). A clear description of the research problem, the research questions, the setting, and the participants should help other researchers determine which findings might apply to their particular setting or sample group of participants. The more closely aligned other studies are in regard to the setting and participants, the more likely there is to be a higher level of transferability. For example, a public university may interview a group of junior students to learn more about their experience of calling, but their responses may not be as likely to be connected to the biblical teaching and spiritual community found in a private Christian

institution. So, while there may be some overlap in experiences, each study would have its own unique contributions to the study of student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work.

Another context which may benefit from this research and find a level of transferability are local church ministries and parachurch ministries that serve traditional undergraduate college students. The data and findings of this study could help provide support and programming for students as they navigate questions related to vocation, calling, and work. These ministries have unique opportunities apart from the college campus programming to invest in students' personal and spiritual development and shape students' perceptions of the intersection of faith, life, and work.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative, phenomenological study sought to explore and describe student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work. It adapted Lee's (2017) structure of using an interview along with pre- and post-interview journaling to collect data from a sample group of 17 junior students at Union University. As data was collected and analyzed, the researcher included the participants in member checking practices to ensure accuracy of recording their words and meaning. The researcher also provided participants with the opportunity to validate the initial findings of the study as in Birt et al. (2016). This study produced findings that shed light on not only student perceptions regarding vocation, calling, and work, but also the people, experiences, and events that may have shaped those perceptions, including their university experience. The findings not only assist in understanding student perceptions, but also help the university evaluate their services to students and make any necessary adjustments in order to better serve its students.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore perceptions of vocation, calling, and work among junior classification students at Union University. This chapter outlines the compilation protocol and measures used to collect, organize, and process data. It also includes information on the participant recruitment and sampling process as well as demographic data related to the recruiting and sampling process. Finally, attention is given to the research findings, including overall themes that emerged from the data analysis, interesting outlier or contradictory data, and descriptions from the participants themselves of their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work and the people and experiences that have shaped those perceptions. The chapter then concludes with an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the research design.

Compilation Protocol and Measures

This study followed a qualitative phenomenological design that incorporated both interview and journaling data. An in-depth personal interview was at the heart of the data collection process. The interview was supplemented with further data collected through a pre-interview journaling activity and a post-interview journaling activity. The pre-determined questions in data collection instruments were guided by the study's research questions. This approach allowed the researcher to gather rich textual data from the study's participants related to their perceptions and experiences of vocation, calling and work. The instruments were reviewed by a panel of experts (Appendix I) consisting of faculty members from Union University to ensure that the questions would elicit the kind of responses and data sought by the researcher. While all panelists did not respond with an opinion. The feedback of those who did

respond confirmed that the instruments would be effective in data collection and helped the researcher think about potential follow-up questions to use in the interview.

The process of selecting a sample for the study was conducted in cooperation with the host university. Although the university's calling and career center was not permitted to directly participate in the recruiting of participants, the university's IT department did provide a spreadsheet of all actively enrolled traditional undergraduate students in the junior class. These students were then invited to participate in the via an email (Appendix A) from the researcher. The invitation to participate email contained a link to the official informed consent form and demographic survey housed within SurveyMonkey.

The invitation email introduced the study, what would be required of the students, and the token of appreciation each would receive once they had completed the data collection phase of the research. The email instructed those who were interested in participating to follow the link to the online consent form (Appendix B) and demographic survey (Appendix C). Only those students who accepted the invitation by giving their informed consent were eligible to proceed in the study. In addition to informed consent, potential participants completed a demographic survey that gathered data related to areas such as gender, ethnicity, and academic major. This was done in an attempt to construct a purposive sample with maximum variation. Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend that phenomenological studies have a sample group of three to ten individuals (p. 186). However, the researcher was able to build a sample of 17 participants for this study which created a more diverse sample from which to gather data.

The initial invitations to participate were sent out February 6, 2023. Invitations were sent via email and provided a general description of the study and what would be required of participants. Email addresses were provided by the host university. Those students who were

interested in participating in the study were encouraged to follow the embedded link to the online informed consent form and demographic survey, which was housed on SurveyMonkey. In addition to gathering consent information, the demographic survey assisted in building a purposive sample that sought to provide a maximum variation sample among students who were willing to participate. One additional invitation went out by email to the junior class on March 14, 2023, to enlist further participants in the study. In addition to the email invitations, the researcher was allowed to directly recruit students in the classroom by faculty colleagues familiar with the research.

In order to better accommodate participant schedules, the pre-interview journaling activity (see Appendix E) was sent to the participant as soon as the participant confirmed the date and time for their interview (see Appendix F) and was completed and returned to the researcher at least 48 hours prior to the interview. The post-interview journaling activity (see Appendix G) was also sent to the participant with the pre-interview journaling activity and was returned to the researcher no later than 72 hours after the interview. In all, data were recorded through audio/video recording of personal interviews as well as through scanned/saved documents for the pre-interview and post-interview journaling activities. Audio/video files were then transcribed using the NVivo transcription service. Interview transcriptions and journaling activity data were stored on a secure, password-protected drive and then uploaded into NVivo and organized by participant for analyzation, coding, and theme development.

Demographic and Sample Data

The research population of this study consisted of the junior class at Union University during the 2022-2023 academic year. Invitations were sent by email to all 300 students classified by the university as traditional undergraduate juniors. The consent form and the demographic

survey were housed in SurveyMonkey, and the researcher received daily notifications of any new responses. The demographic survey not only confirmed eligibility standards, but it also collected data such as the prospective participants' gender, ethnicity, academic major, and religious affiliation. As responses came in from students, the researcher's wife served as an assistant and downloaded a report that included all response data. She then anonymized all of the data from the report so that the researcher could create a purposive sample that utilized a maximum variation technique while maintaining participant anonymity at this point in the selection process. Only those students who accepted the invitation, completed the informed consent form and the demographic survey were eligible for selection to participate in the study.

The researcher then looked at demographic factors to create a diverse group of participants. The identities of those selected to participate were then revealed to the researcher so that he could notify them of their selection and begin scheduling them for data collection. He sent an Excel spreadsheet with available dates and times for the personal interviews that also included the corresponding due dates for the pre-interview journaling activity and post-journaling activity. When students responded with their time for the interview, the researcher provided them with the journaling activities, reminded them of the due dates, and thanked them for their willingness to participate in the study.

The first invitation was sent on February 6, 2023, and resulted in 19 submissions of the online consent form and demographic survey. A second email invitation was sent on March 14, 2023. That same week faculty colleagues allowed the researcher to directly invite students to participate by sharing about the study at the beginning of their class periods or by sharing information about the study including the invitation and consent form link with their students. These combined efforts resulted in an additional 23 submitted consent forms and demographic

surveys. Out of the total of 42 submitted consent forms, five respondents were ruled ineligible for the study due to either not giving consent or due to failing to meet eligibility requirements related to their status as juniors as defined by the parameters of this study. An additional 2 students signed the consent form but did not complete the demographic survey. This left a group of 35 students from which to select a sample group for data collection. Figure 4.1 illustrates the breakdown of responses by academic department.

Figure 4.1 Response By Academic Department

Number of Responses by Department
Biology: 5
Business: 6
Chemistry: 1
Computer Science: 3
Communications: 3
Education: 1
Languages: 2
Music: 1
Nursing: 3
Phys. Ed. and Wellness: 2
Psychology: 1
Social Work: 1
Sociology: 2
Theology and Missions: 3
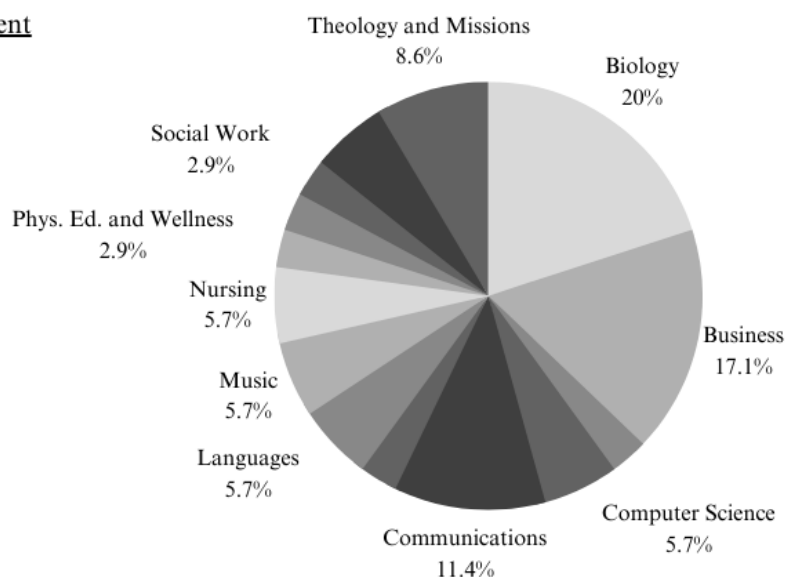
As responses were received the researcher's wife assisted by anonymizing the responses so that bias toward or against any particular students whom the researcher may have known was eliminated and that selection to the sample group was determined more by seeking a balance of factors such as gender, ethnic background, and academic major. Students were then notified of their selection and provided a spreadsheet of available dates and times for scheduling interview, along with the corresponding due dates for their pre-interview journaling activity and post-interview journaling activity. Once students selected their preferred interview time, they were provided with the pre-interview journaling questions and the post-interview journaling prompt

and reminded of the due dates for those exercises. At that time, they were officially considered

members of the sample group. Table 4.1 illustrates the gender and ethnic breakdown of the

sample group, and Table 4.2 illustrates the gender and academic major profile of the sample

group.

Table 4.1
Gender and Ethnic Profile of Sample Group

Sample Group	African American	White or Caucasian	Hispanic	Asian Descent	Other Ethnicity
Male	0	5	0	1	0
Female	0	9	0	1	1

Table 4.2
Gender and Academic Major Profile of Sample Group

Academic Major	Male Participants	Female Participants
Biology	0	2
Business	1	2
Computer Science	2	0
Communications	0	3
Languages	0	2
Nursing	1	0
Physical Education and Wellness	1	0
Psychology	0	1
Social Work	0	1
Theology and Missions	0	1

Other students were selected to participate in study in order to strive for even greater

representation, but they elected not to schedule an interview and follow through with

participating in the study. One of the limitations of the research design and sampling method is

that the researcher is somewhat bound by those participants who actually respond to being

selected to participate in the study. This is discussed further when evaluating the research design. However, under the circumstances the researcher was able to get a sample that is generally reflective of the junior class population.

<div align="center">**Data Analysis and Findings**</div>

This section reviews the data analysis process and the findings that resulted from this qualitative phenomenological study. In qualitative studies, analysis begins while data is also being collected because the researcher is both the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data. Throughout this study, the researcher worked to keep all phases of the study rooted in the five research questions. The findings that are highlighted in this section are organized by research question.

Data Analysis

Even before data collection concluded, the researcher recognized opportunities to better analyze and interpret the initial data collected through follow-up questions that would allow participants to contribute more data to the study, which would also assist the researcher in interpreting what participants meant in their journaling activities and in the interviews. This back- and-forth approach is not uncommon in qualitative research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Reviewing notes and videos of previous data collection assisted the researcher in preparing for the next interview in a way that helped him gather richer, more easily interpreted data from participants.

Once data collection officially concluded, all audio/video files of interviews were transcribed using the NVivo system. Transcripts were shared with participants in order to both maintain the trust of participants and to ensure that the transcripts themselves were accurate reflections of the interviews. The researcher then poured over participants' journal responses and

interview transcripts. The researcher identified items such as participants' definitions of vocation, calling, and work, the people or factors that had shaped those definitions, and students' descriptions of the university's career center. This seemed the logical place to begin the analysis and coding process since these were explicitly connected to the study's research questions. As the researcher continued to read through data, more refined codes began to emerge that dealt with particular factors or people that repeatedly emerged in the data, such as family influence or the university's faculty and staff. Utilizing NVivo's coding system, the researcher organized codes in relation to particular research questions so that it would be easier to revisit those codes to identify what themes were emerging in connection to the research questions. Table 4.3 shows how codes were aligned with specific research questions.

Table 4.3

Data Codes Arranged by Research Question

RQ1	Emerging or Developing Understanding of Calling	Calling Applies Across Aspects of Life	Calling as a Means to Serve Others	Calling= Intersection of talent and purpose	Calling= Sense of Purpose or Fulfillment	Calling= Spiritual or Super-natural pull
	No Definite Sense of Calling Yet	Seasonal Aspects of Calling	Vocation as Attraction but Not Necessarily Gifted	Vocation as Primarily Discipleship	Vocation → Calling →Work	Vocation, Calling, and Work Inter-changeable
	Vocation= Job or Career	Vocation= Ministry Work	Work as Means of Stability	Work as Negative	Work as Source of Identity	Work Is Broader Than Paid Employ-ment
	Work → Vocaton → Calling	Work=Actual Effort or Action				
RQ2	Lack of Rest	Vocation or Career Flows from Calling	Work and Faith			
RQ3	Church Influence	Examples in Life	Family Economic Influence	Family Influence	Pressure or Anxiety	Spiritual Leader Influence
	Taught Work Ethic					
RQ4	Student Culture of Apathy	University Experience:	University Faculty and	University Chapel	University Culture of	University Influences

		Recom-mendations	Staff Influence		Experimentation	(Friends, Clubs, Etc.)
	University Changed Negative View of Work	University's Honor's Community				
RQ5	Vocatio Center Perceptions	Vocatio Center as an Afterthought	Vocatio Center's Awareness Among Students	Positive Buzz Among Students About Vocatio Center		

Soon the long list of codes was distilled to a list of themes specific to each research question. At this point, the researcher again contacted participants as a part of the member checking process to share the findings that were emerging. He emailed each participant with a summary of codes that had been drawn from their particular data, as well as the emerging themes related to the entire study. He invited participants to look over the summary and reflect on their own responses in order to ensure that his interpretations and the findings that flowed from those interpretations were credible and reliable in the minds of those who actually participated in the study. Student were given four days to look over the summary document and raise any questions or seek clarification. Otherwise, it would be assumed that the findings were reliable, and the process could proceed. Not all students responded, but those who did all agreed that they were accurately represented in the coding and subsequent themes. A sample of this summary document is attached (Appendix J). Upon receiving confirmation from participants of the findings' reliability, the researcher moved forward to refining the descriptions of each theme and move forward to reporting his findings.

Findings

The following section highlights various themes that emerged from the data analysis as they related to specific research questions. While some themes also have relevant connections or

applications to multiple research questions, an effort has been made to classify these themes to the research question to which it is most relevant.

Research Question 1

The first research question was "How do the junior students at Union University describe their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work?" Based on the data, the researcher recognized that students described an emerging or developing understanding of their calling and regularly discussed the role of experimentation in that emerging understanding. They also presented a theologically thin view of vocation as it relates to Waalkes (2015) definition of vocation as related first and foremost to one's discipleship as a Christian. However, students did describe a robust, holistic understanding of their calling and of work. Finally, students consistently described their understanding of calling as an intersection of talent and passion and as a source of purpose or fulfillment.

Theme 1: Students Described an Emerging Understanding of One's Calling and the Role of Experimentation. Throughout the data collection process, students described their own journeys toward their current understanding of their individual calling as it relates to their future career paths. As they did, it became apparent that it was common for students to drift from one area to another. From these descriptions it became apparent that students' understandings of their own calling, especially as it related to their future career was very much a process rather than an epiphany. In addition to this emerging or developing understanding of their calling, students often noted the role of experimentation during their childhood, adolescence, and even in college as a significant part of the process of understanding their calling.

One female student, "Mary", described her early experiences of calling toward a career in dance. She grew up in the dance world and had performed professionally. However, she stated

that over time she came to understand that while she loved to dance, perform, and create, "dance long-term was not going to be a healthy decision for me." About that same time, this same student had discovered an interest in STEM and had chosen the medical track of STEM courses in her high school curriculum. This led to her graduating from high school with a medical assistant's certificate, which allowed her to get a job working at a large hospital working with doctors in various specialties. These doctors delegated tasks to her beyond her normal tasks, which gave her a glimpse of what doctors do, how they solve problems, and how they interact with patients. This experience led her to choose a pre-med track within her major rather than pursuing a nursing major. In her interview, "Mary" noted that the encouragement of her parents to try new things and from the doctors in her first medical job really helped her explore paths that she may not have explored otherwise.

The emerging or developing understanding of one's calling can also be seen in those students who expressed that they did not yet have a clear sense of calling as it relates to their future career. In her pre-interview journaling activity, "Julie" vividly described her sense of calling as teenager and then as a freshman toward nursing and healthcare. It was a decision that she described as filled with prayer. Therefore, it was surprising to then learn that she is currently a Business Administration major. In her interview, she described this transition in terms of some academic complications related to transfer credits but primarily to realizing, after having been in some nursing courses, that she did not really want to be a nurse. In her interview, she stated that she thinks that initial decision to be a nursing major may have been more influenced by her sister's career as a nurse and her perception that that was the path her parents' desire for her.

Meanwhile, she had taken a job on campus as a barista in the campus coffee shops. In her interview she noted that she had always been really interested in coffee and the idea of owning of

a coffee shop. However, that was not the driving force in her applying for the job. It was just a way to have some spending money. However, that experience reignited her love for coffee, the sourcing and roasting of coffee, and the idea of maybe someday managing or owning a shop herself. So, with that in mind she changed her major to Business Administration because "the practicality of business was appealing." However, "Julie" still characterized her current sense of calling as more prone to doubt and confusion. She stated,

> I don't have the same amount of certainty that I had the fall of sophomore year—living the dream. Right after I declared (nursing) I was so sure that I was doing everything, and I think I was doing my thing. But now? No, I—I'm just not sure—I don't have as much certainty as I did.

Another student, "Phillip", recounted a similar story of uncertainty about calling as it relates to his future career. "Phillip" came to Union with what he described a calling of "working in ministry". Now, rather than pursuing a degree in Biblical Studies or Christian Ministry, he is a Business Management major. He described his sense of calling to ministry by writing,

> At the time, and even now, I do not know what that looks like. It could be full-time or just serving as a faithful member through my time and money. Whatever it is I know that I need to let the Lord guide my path and walk in step with what He has for me.

"Phillip" went on to describe the process of understanding his calling as "like trial and error." Through his experiences as a student as an intern at his local church he has learned that he is more comfortable behind the scenes versus working directly with people, which has him looking away from full-time ministry in the traditional sense. "Phillip's" story supports other students' descriptions of trying different paths to see what they are good at or what really interests them. That freedom to experiment is a key part of their developing a sense of calling toward a particular path, even if they have not fully figured it out yet.

The idea of this emerging understanding of one's calling as it relates to their future career was consistent throughout the data. This theme illustrates the constructivist nature of student

perceptions of calling. Students are working to make sense of their own experiences, emotions, and the influence of others in such a way as to find a sense of direction or calling for their lives and particularly as it relates to their career. Therefore, an environment that encourages students to experiment and explore different potential pathways facilitates student confidence as they discern which path might be the best for them and helps students develop their own understanding of calling, especially in relationship to their career.

Theme 2: Students Described Calling as an Intersection of Talent and Passion and as a Source of Purpose or Fulfillment. Somewhat related to this emerging or developing understanding of calling is the way that students actually discuss and describe calling. All 17 students who participated in the study discussed calling in relationship to an intersection between talent and passion. Similarly, 13 out of the 17 students described calling as something that brings with it a sense of purpose or fulfillment.

Talent and Passion. One student, "Robert", who is an international student majoring in Computer Science described calling as "something where someone has a natural tendency or natural giftedness to do that he actually enjoys as well." Another student, "Elizabeth", who is a Marketing major expressed a similar perspective, but from a negative point of view. She said, "I also know that I will go crazy if I like going to be sitting at an office all day and like typing away or putting things together. So, I know that that's just not an option for me." "Krista", a Public Relations major, said, "calling to me has a very positive connotation because it brings in the factor of someone's personal experiences and emotions toward a specific job or toward work or toward a specific area."

One student did offer some caution about this approach, however. "Emma" is a Communication Studies major, and she was less adamant than her counterparts that talent and

passion necessarily meant sensing a call toward a particular field. In her interview, she said, "I don't want to trick myself into thinking that the Lord is calling me to do something when really internally, I'm just like, I just really want to do this." Instead of equating talent and passion with calling, "Emma" chose her words more carefully and elected to classify talents and passions as things that could guide one toward their potential calling. She clarified saying, "I think that the Lord has given everybody specific talents and things that they excel at...And I think that I feel have been more guided, not necessarily called." "Emma's" perspective was interesting because while the way she discussed calling did at times overlap with other participants, she was much more nuanced and careful in her description of calling. It was clear she did not want to presume anything.

Purpose and Fulfillment. In addition to the idea of calling being at the intersection of one's talents and passions, participants also noted that pursuing one's calling provided a sense of fulfillment, purpose or meaning. "Hannah" who is a Communication Studies major with a minor in Criminal Justice noted,

> Our ultimate goal is not to have a job that sounds cool or have a job that makes a lot of money. But trusting that God's going to lead us to the places that that we are meant to be, I think is one aspect that I definitely learned.

"Clark" who is a junior Nursing major also noted the supernatural sense of purpose he finds in his work with residents at an assisted living facility. He said, "It's not really something that I can explain, except that it's the work of the Holy Spirit in me." "Robert" who is not a Christian also noted the sense of purpose of fulfillment saying, "calling would be what a person feels like will lead them to reach satisfaction and fulfillment." A Social Work major, "Kat", also stated, "It is the thing that when you follow, you are walking in what you know is fulfilling and life-giving for you specifically."

Somewhat related to this theme of calling as a source of purpose or fulfillment was students' recognizing that their calling was also a means to serve others. Eight students specifically related the sense of purpose behind calling to their ability to serve others. One student pursuing a medical profession spoke of also using his medical skills through mission trips. "Elizabeth", the Marketing major who confessed to not really having a clear sense of calling related to her career said, "I am sure that I need to do something with my life that involves people and helping them, and I need to do something creative." So, even in her uncertainty about a career path, she recognizes something bigger than her career. She wants to use her creative skills to do something that will help people in some way. For many students a version of calling that was separated from serving others or their community ceased to actually be calling.

These findings related to talent, passion, and purpose are consistent with previous research. The Hunter et al. (2010) study found respondents related to their calling in terms of the ability to "pursue interests/talent/meaning" (p. 182). Dik and Duffy's (2012) research found one's experience of calling includes purpose and meaning in one's work (pp. 11-13). This connection between one's career and a greater sense of purpose and meaning is reflected in one student's comment, "The biggest thing about calling is sometimes you have to walk away from everything you know to work in your calling." This student is wrestling with what Dik and Duffy (2012) would label as the "transcendent summons" (p. 11) aspect of calling. There is definite meaning and purpose to be pursued, but the one experiencing this calling may not always fully understand or see it as they are experiencing it.

Theme 3: Students Demonstrated a Theologically Thin View of Vocation. The very first question of the pre-interview journaling activity asked students to define, in their own

words, the terms vocation, calling, and work. While the researcher expected there to be a minority of participants who would define vocation in terms of their Christian discipleship, it was surprising that only one student out of the 17 participants explicitly defined vocation this way. A female Spanish major, "Ally", wrote, "My vocation is to love and obey the Lord no matter what work I'm doing." Later she wrote, "I only know that God is good, has a perfect plan, and that my vocation in life is to love and serve Him."

This stands in stark contrast to the 13 students who defined vocation almost exclusively in terms of work or career. Definitions for vocation included, "consistent work done over a period of time to earn a living", "the job or career that a person pursues", "a career", and "a job you are called to do by God." There were three students who defined vocation and calling interchangeably, but even then, two of those students related it directly to one's job or career. The other student classified vocation "as a type of divine calling from God." Later in her interview, this student did flesh that out in a bit more clarity by connecting vocation to the Great Commission found in Matthew 28 and noted that she had only really heard the term vocation in Christian circles, which was a bit surprising considering the mainstream cultural use of the word and how that was reflected in the majority definitions of vocation.

As a result of this definition of vocation, most participants identified calling as the broad, overarching direction for their lives. Vocation then is simply a category within one's life calling that is limited to one's job or career. "Krista" elaborated on her understanding of vocation in her interview, which she defined as a career in her pre-interview journal activity. She stated, "it (vocation) to me kind of insinuates the idea of something long term, someone like being very like an expert in that area or having a lot of knowledge in that area." So, for her, it seems that vocation does go beyond simply one's job. However, it is merely long-term employment in a

field in which one grows in knowledge and expertise. There is nothing in her discussions of vocation that relate back to her Christian faith. Likewise, "Todd" who is a Computer Science major and Worship Studies minor and plans to serve as worship leader in local church ministry discussed the probability of being bi-vocational or serving in a part-time worship pastor role and working full-time in the realm of computer science or information technology. He stated that in this scenario, his vocation would be "where I make the money", alluding to his full-time job in computer science. So, even some students who are planning to pursue some kind of employment in ministry understand vocation primarily in terms of their paid employment, even as specific as their full-time or primary means of employment.

Of the 17 students that participated in the research study, only one did not identify as a Christian. However, only one of these students had an explicitly theological understanding of vocation, and it should be noted that this one student comes from a background where one parent has significant theological training and experience in Christian higher education. This more than likely explains why her response was so clearly theological compared to her fellow participants. The findings within this theme underscore the disconnect between the historical and theological roots of the word and its current use in mainstream culture. Waalkes (2015) understanding of vocation that centers on "the primary calling to discipleship" (p. 137) is foreign to the overwhelming majority of student who participated in this study, and it would not be unreasonable to conclude that the same is true among the broader student population at Union University.

Theme 4: Students Demonstrated a Holistic View of Calling. Whereas the students participating in this study had a narrow understanding of vocation that related directly to one's paid employment, the vast majority of students expressed a much more holistic perception of calling.

Of the 17 participants, 14 (82%) explicitly mentioned that calling applies across various aspects of life, not just to one's work or career. In her pre-interview journaling, "Hannah" described this holistic perspective on calling as "more of an extensive overview or avenue that God is calling you to take part in." Similarly, "Shelby" who is a Psychology major who has yet to feel a sense of calling toward a particular career path wrote that calling, "includes not just what we do for a job, but also the kind of person we are. God can call us into many things, such as relationships, roles we fill in the church, the things we enjoy or are skilled at, etc." "Jon" who is Christian Ministry and Missions major agreed noting that calling can related to one's career or job but that it is not limited to this one area of life.

This idea that calling had as much or more to do with how one lived than simply what job one had was pervasive. In fact, when combined with students' understanding of calling as something that included their talents and passions, it was clear that students' understanding of calling was the driving motivation for how they did their work, why they had chosen particular roles as students, or why they had chosen certain academic or career paths. "Jon" noted that his major and minor were both chosen based on how he perceived his calling. He has a desire and interest in serving in local church ministry and has musical talents. So, he chose Christian Ministry and Missions as his major and Music as his minor. Similarly, "Robert" notes that his change in major from Business to Computer Science was because Computer Science was a better fit for him, his skills, and interests. Likewise, "Grant" settled on an Athletic Training major over

an Accounting major because as he came to a greater understanding of what he perceived as his calling, he recognized that he had chosen Accounting due to its earning power rather than in what would best fit his interests and desire to be in a hands-on service-oriented career. When students combined the character aspects with the talent and passion aspects of their understanding of calling, it became an animating force in their decision-making process.

Summary

When students were asked to define and discuss their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work, it became clear that students are still in the process of working out some of their understandings of these terms and the implications they have in life, particularly as it relates to students' potential career paths. Six of the 17 students explicitly stated they did not necessarily have a strong sense of calling yet as it relates to their career, and almost all of the students discussed how their ideas of what their future career would be had changed over time. What they were confident in was that calling is usually at the intersection of talent and passion and can bring a strong sense of purpose to someone's work, especially when there is an attitude of service to others in that work. Students also demonstrated a real lack of awareness of the historical and theological roots of the term vocation. Instead, the mainstream use of the word as a synonym for one's job or career has trained their thinking about the word. Instead, calling appears to be the holistic, overarching term that encompasses all of one's life, including one's career path.

Research Question 2

The second research question was "How do the junior students at Union University describe the relationship between their faith and their work or future career?" Based on the data, the researcher noted that students described an understanding of work that was both broad and

biblical. The language they used to define and describe calling could be described as spiritual or supernatural. As a result, students articulated that their understanding of calling shapes their perceptions of vocation and career and the decisions they make related to those areas.

Theme 1: Students Demonstrated a Broad and Biblical Understanding of Work. Similar to the earlier note on a holistic understanding of calling, 15 out of 17 participants (88%) expressed a view of work that was broader than simply one's paid employment. In its simplest form, work is effort, time, or thought that is invested in a task, whether that is one's job, one's homework, raising children, or helping out around the house. In her pre-interview journaling article, "Lily", a female Zoology major, defined work as "the effort put into a project or job in order to get a certain result or product." Likewise, "Kat" mentioned that "work does not just have to be the occupation you hold**."**

In addition to this recognition of how work fills various aspects of our lives, students generally had a biblically sound view of work as well. In her interview, "Shelby" stated, "we're created to work, but it's not like our entire identity like. We're to be good stewards of what God gives us." Another student alluded to the goodness of work, noting that Adam and Eve being given work to do in the garden prior to their fall into sin. It was only then that work was cursed. Overall, students had a generally solid understanding of the inherent goodness and value of work as described in the Bible.

Some students also alluded to the biblical counterpart of work: rest. "Ally" recognized that work is a good thing, but that people need rest from it as well. "Phillip" alluded to his tendency toward a lack of rest from work and recognizing "that just comes with like wanting to, you know, make people's lives easier or help people out whatever it is." "Kat" echoed "Phillip's" concern in her interview. She mentioned that she had been taught a strong work ethic, and that

for her, hard work and fruits of her work are "almost addicting." As was mentioned earlier, eight of the 17 students explicitly discussed how they connected the concept of calling with the value of serving others. Therefore, it is not surprising that some students would also struggle with putting boundaries on their commitments and finding time to rest from their work.

Hearing juniors in college discuss the idea of work, whether paid or unpaid, in biblical terms was somewhat of a surprise. The researcher expected some biblical understanding of work, but the students regularly engaged with biblical principles of work, particularly the issue of balancing work with rest. This solid biblical grounding may prove helpful for students as they embark on their future careers and protect them from some of the pitfalls of making work ultimate (Thompson, 2019).

Theme 2: Students Described Calling as a Supernatural or Spiritual Drawing. Students overwhelmingly described calling in a supernatural or spiritual sense. In fact, 100% of the participants used such language. Although they may have discerned or discovered their calling as they discovered the intersection of their skills and passions, they all understood that their calling had an external quality to it. This is not terribly surprising considering 16 of the 17 students identify as Christians and one of the students identifies as a Muslim. With such strong religious backgrounds, this was somewhat expected, but the findings clearly confirmed that expectation.

"Phillip" described calling as "what the Lord has instilled upon your life to be your vocation." Similarly, "Shelby" wrote that calling is "God's intentions for what we do with our lives." During his interview, "Robert" was discussing some differences between himself, as a Muslim student, and the predominantly Christian demographic of students. He was then directly asked whether he viewed calling as a spiritual concept. His response was, "Yes, definitely." He

went on, "Because I think spirituality is, at least in my life, has become very important and has given me a lot of peace personally. So, I think that a calling has to fit in somewhere within your boundaries of religion." Over and over again, students, regardless of feeling called to some sort of ministry career, to a career in healthcare or business, or whether they did not yet have a specific sense of calling toward a particular career path, discussed calling a something supernatural and spiritual and that they felt a sense of responsibility to discover. This sense of supernatural or spiritual drawing is consistent with Dik and Duffy's (2012) definition of calling as a "transcendent summons experienced as originating beyond the self" (p. 11).

Theme 3: Students Described Calling as Guiding Their Perceptions of Vocation and Career. Another interesting implication to the way that students discussed calling as a spiritual drawing and especially as a call from God toward a particular way of life or career path in life is that the word "calling" seems to have replaced the historical word "vocation". A follow-up question that was asked of each participant in regard to their pre-interview journaling activity was, "Based on how you define the terms vocation, calling, and work, how would you describe these concepts relating to one another?" Students regularly responded in ways that characterized "calling" as the overarching concept that applied over their entire lives and that vocation was an aspect of that calling that pertained specifically to one's occupation, profession, or career. Eight of the 17 students used explicit language to clarify that they viewed calling as the umbrella concept, underneath which vocation and work fell.

One example of this is "Sabrina", a junior Spanish major. She stated in her interview, "Calling is much broader than location. Vocation would be one product of a call." She continued, "Calling could literally just be applied to any part of your life." In another interview, "Grant", an Athletic Training major stated, "I think calling can lead to a vocation." In these statements, it is

evident that students are viewing calling as the primary direction for life and vocation or career as implications of her calling. In some ways, this turns Waalkes (2015) conception of vocation on its head. Rather than vocation being the discipleship-oriented concept that drives the other aspects of life, it seems that students like "Sabrina" have applied that meaning to the word "calling." Meanwhile, vocation has lost its historic, theological meaning and is really little more than a synonym for one's career. This leads to the third theme connect with Research Question 2.

With students having discussed and described calling in detail as the overarching purpose of one's life and work and in relationship to one's talents and passions, it isn't surprising that students generally understood calling to be the guiding force in how they think about vocation, career, and work. As mentioned above, they view vocation as being under the umbrellas of one's calling. Therefore, one's vocation should serve one's calling. "Julie" described it this way, "Vocation would be a vessel to further your calling or like to accomplish your calling, and then work would be like accomplishing your vocation, which accomplishes your calling."

Summary

When the data was analyzed, it was encouraging to see that juniors at Union University have a broad and biblical understanding of work. They noted the inherent value and goodness in work, while also highlighting biblical teaching on The Fall's consequences on work. They also recognized the need for rest from work. As expected with this demographic, they also described calling in a very spiritual way. They often discussed God as the one who calls. It was also interesting to see that rather than the historic word "vocation", the word "calling" itself is often used by students in terms of an overarching sense of purpose or direction for one's life. However, it's also regularly used simply to discuss one's calling toward a particular career,

which could lead to confusion or conflation in the minds of students. Nevertheless, students at Union University demonstrated a strong sense of integrating the concepts of faith and work.

Research Question 3

The third research question in this study asked, "What are the common factors junior students at Union University describe as having affected their view of vocation, calling, and work?" Based on the data, a few themes emerged. First and foremost, the influence of one's family background was far and away the most influential factor in student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work. Somewhat related to this, students noted the value of having models or examples to learn from, whether the lessons learned were positive or negative. Next, it did not take long for the pressure and anxiety related to discerning one's calling as it relates to career to emerge. Finally, upon reviewing the data, the researcher was surprised by how little the local church was referenced in relation to students' perceptions of vocation, calling and work, particularly since it has already been noted that they demonstrated a sound biblical understanding of work.

Theme 1: The Primacy of Family Influence. Far and away the most common factor cited by students was their family. Likewise, the most descriptive information from students about influential factors related to their families. All 17 participants cited the influence of their families is one way or another. Most often the influence was positive, including encouraging their child to explore their interests or teaching them a good work ethic. Other times the influences were negative, as participants had early views of work or career shaped by their parents' negative attitudes toward or experiences related to their careers. Another important family-related influence that came up multiple times was the reality of the family's economic

situation. Together these various facets of family influence had a profound influence on students' perceptions of vocation, calling, and work.

      Faith, Work, and Calling. Students described the various ways in which their families influenced their faith, their view of work, and how they think about and pursue calling. Examples include family support and encouragement to try different activities or jobs to discover talents and interests, the instilling of a good work ethic, and the importance of using one's talents to serve others. As mentioned before, all 17 participants grew up in religious families. Sixteen of the participants grew up in Christian homes, while one student grew up in a Muslim family. In correlation with the earlier point about students generally having a strong biblical understanding of work, students regularly commented on how their parents had helped them think about the intersection of work and faith. "Kat" identified her father as the primary influence in her understanding of vocation, calling, and work. She described how her father, who is a Christian minister, helped her understand the intersection of faith and work and the necessity of following what one feels God is calling them to do in life and work. "Robert" discussed how his Muslim father who works in engineering and construction taught him important truths about life and work, such as being fair and just with others in keeping with their Muslim religion. "Clark" also mentioned how his mother had been a strong influence on him and taught him the importance of having empathy for others and using his gifts and talents to serve others. He also mentioned that they regularly volunteered to serve others through their local church. Overall, students characterized that their homes encouraged them to think about their talents, their work, and their future career in ways that were consistent with their faith traditions.

      Seven of the 17 participants specifically referenced how their families modeled and taught them a strong work ethic. "Lily" specifically mentioned how her father had instilled in her

a strong work ethic from an early age and how she had recently seen that work ethic be recognized and praised by her superiors at her recent internship. "Kat" mentioned that she grew up in a family where a strong work ethic was highly valued and sees how that has transferred to her. She mentioned that her family helped her to understand that working hard for something increases one's appreciation of it as well as the feeling of fulfillment that comes with a job well-done. However, "Kat" was also one of the students who mentioned her struggle with balancing work with rest and characterized work as potentially addicting. So, while it is good that families teach their children the value of work and a strong work ethic, without teaching them the value of rest from their work, they may be pushing their students toward workaholism and eventual burnout.

It also became clear that the way students thought about calling and how they went about discerning or pursuing their calling was heavily influenced by the way their parents had talked about calling and how they had encouraged their children. Participants regularly mentioned how their parents encouraged them to pursue their interests, passions, and areas of giftedness. "Mary" said that her parents "always encouraged me to dream." She added, "Whatever I felt called to do, they encouraged me." This theme of parental support was a consistent piece of the family influence with students. Similarly, participants noted that parents often encouraged them to pursue a career path that they loved. Sometimes that has been due to a parent experiencing fulfillment in their career, but that sentiment has also been born out of a parent's frustration as well. "Lily" recounted her father's own circuitous career path and some of the frustration that he's experienced from not working in a job to which he really feels called. She mentioned the worry that he has for her and encourages her to prioritize working in an area of fulfillment and calling rather than prioritizing the perceived financial security that may come from another path.

Parents are often the ones who are encouraging their students toward a particular path as well. "Clark" described how his mother recognized specific qualities in him, such as care for others, a servant mindset, and an analytic, scientific mind, that might be best served in a nursing career. Time and again, students described the way parents talked about calling in the ways that the students know perceive and describe calling in their own lives, with the prominent issues of talent, passion, and fulfillment in one's work.

> ***The Influence of Family Economics.*** Students also shared how their families' economic situations shaped their early perceptions of vocation, calling, and work, as well as how those economic factors influenced some of their own decisions related to vocation, calling, and work. Of the 17 students who participated in the study, six of them directly addressed the issue of family economics. One of these students, "Krista", did not come from a family who was facing financial difficulty or hardship. Instead, she was influenced by witnessing what occurs when making more and more money becomes the driving force in the family culture. She shared how the singular focus on growing profits in her family's business led to low accountability when her father began to suffer from the stress, turned to drugs in order function, and slipped into addiction. Ultimately, her father went into recovery and left the family business, which included a significant decrease in income, in order to live a healthier life. Watching this as a child and teenager taught her the importance of determining what she really values. She said,

> We've just had to learn, like, we have to pick and choose what we value. And even though that was a good opportunity financially, and even though my dad took a tremendous pay cut from going and doing marketing for our small little church after he left that job, it was just what we had to value and like what we had to choose.

As a result, "Krista" is more interested in pursuing a career that allows her to serve others rather than being driven by a desire for a lucrative career. Although she is Public Relations major, she

stated, "I probably should have been a Social Work major." At this point, she plans to pursue graduate work in either social work or counseling.

While "Krista" had dealt with one aspect of the influence of family economics, the other students who alluded to the effect that financial struggle had on their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work. "Grant" began his time at Union as an Accounting major because he perceived it as a career path with strong earning potential. He characterized his family as lower middle class economically during his childhood and teenage years. As a result, he described his early years as being "brought up in a house where working was the way of life, and we were born to work." Work and one's career were first and foremost seen as a means to provide the most basic financial security and stability. As a result, "Grant" wanted a career that offered more financial potential so that he and his future family would not experience the same struggle as he did in his formative years.

Similarly, "Todd" grew up in a home where his parents were separated. He described his father's inability to maintain a job and provide financially for the family and how that led to his mother working long hours as a pharmacist just to survive. He said, "So I always saw work as just, you got to go do something, you got to give up a lot to just make some money to live on is also what is as it." He went on to describe his early negative perspective on career and work because in his experience, work is what kept him from being with his parents as much as he wanted. His father's lack of steady employment and his mother's overworking in order to provide disrupted his relationship with both of them. Over time, "Todd" developed a healthier understanding of work and has a sense of calling toward a couple of career paths, computer science and worship ministry, but his early experiences have definitely made him a more serious thinker about the concepts of vocation, calling, and work.

"Sabrina's" summary of her parent's influence seems to sum up the data well. She stated, "It (parental influence) is unquantifiable. I am so grateful for it, and I think my gratitude will only grow for the incredible gifts that my parents are." Overall, students recognized the immense influence their families, particularly their parents, had on them and expressed gratitude for how it had shaped them, even if some of the circumstances themselves had been difficult.

Theme 2: The Value of Modeling/Examples. In addition to the influence of family, students noted the importance of having models or examples that were a tangible lesson that assisted students in discerning what calling was or was not or what following one's call was or was not. As expected, family members were some of the primary models that students referenced, whether it was an example that students decided they wanted to emulate or whether it was an example that clarified for students what they did not want for themselves. For example, as mentioned earlier, "Hannah" witnessed how her father was not particular happy in his work and how that work took a physical toll on his body. Reflecting on that she said,

> There was never a moment that I was not proud of him, but there were times where it kind of made me sad... I was very grateful to him for it, but also knew that that's not necessarily the life that I wanted for myself.

On the other hand, "Hannah" had the example of her pastor, which was alluded to earlier to show her that there was another path and that work did not have to simply be the means of survival, but that it could also be fulfilling to both the worker and those the worker served.

Another example of the importance of examples and models is not nearly as personal, but it was a pivotal moment in "Lily's" life. Lily noted her love for animals, teaching, and performing as a child and teenager. She never really knew how that would or could work together until one day at the Nashville Zoo. As she recounted the story, her excitement was palpable. Talking about a zookeeper who was doing a show and explaining how he found his

way into that career, she said, "That was when it clicked and when I was like. I could do that for a living. That could be me, I want to I want to be him!" Even though this was someone she had never met, his example and his story of pursuing a career zookeeping and animal husbandry brought everything into focus for her. This was an interested story because for most participants the example or model they referenced was a family member, a friend, or maybe someone with whom they worked, but this story demonstrates that a pre-existing relationship may not be necessary to serve as model that students can look to as they are working to discern their career calling.

Theme 3: The Reality of Pressure and Anxiety Related to Discovering One's Calling. Other than the influence of family, there was no other issue as prominent as the pressure and anxiety that students experience as they are working through the process of discerning their calling in life and work. Students regularly communicated the seemingly inescapable pressure of knowing what their major is going to be and which career path they will take. Twelve of 17 participants specifically cited the influence of external and internal pressures and the anxiety that it creates. Two students noted that they had pre-existing mental health conditions that contributed to this, and while other participants' not sharing is not evidence that they are not living with mental health conditions, it is noteworthy that so many students dealt with anxious or depressive thoughts as they navigated questions of vocation, calling, and work.

Some students shared about general anxiety that they experienced as they were working through the process of finding the right major or figuring out how that major might lead them toward a particular career path. "Robert" spent a significant amount of time as a Business major. He described that season as "trying to fit into Business." He continued, "I was sitting in classes like accounting and thinking, I don't I don't want to do this my life." One student, "Lily", went

even further back and referenced the pressure that is put on students as early as in elementary school to figure out "what they are going to be when they grow up." She noted that this intensified in high school and that the perceived message from school administration was that students needed to know exactly what they wanted to do before they went to college.

Students who either arrived at Union University without a major or who began doubting their choice of major early were those most likely to talk about the anxiousness that comes with the discernment process. "Julie" came to college undecided about her major. Then she declared Nursing as her major. Now, however, she is a Business major. When asked if that level of change and uncertainty had created any anxiety for her, her response was, "Yes, all the time." She described times of feeling childish compared to the rest of her friends who seemed to know exactly what they were doing. As time has gone on, she has become more comfortable with uncertainty but acknowledges that anxious thoughts and doubts still creep into her mind. Likewise, "Grant" came to college looking to major in Accounting before switching to Nursing, and eventually finding his place as an Athletic Training major. He characterized that time as a time of isolation and academic decline. Thankfully, he had supportive family who helped him through that season of uncertainty and anxiety about his future.

A couple of students, whose pseudonyms will be withheld, disclosed that they had dealt with diagnosed mental health conditions for years. One of these students noted the anxiety and doubt that crept in when she found that her college courses were far more difficult and that she was no longer able to make an A in a class with very little effort. She said that she began to get anxious about her major and her chosen career path because of her academic struggles. She was interpreting struggle as an indicator that she had made a mistake. Thankfully, she had an advisor who encouraged her to persevere. She also was able to draw on some of what she had learned in

her years of therapy and apply those to her struggles. Looking back, she is able to say, "I feel like I had been called to be uncomfortable for a season...I had never felt that, and I think God was trying to show me that, like when things are hard, they're still good." Another student has experienced significant anxiety, depression, and doubt during her college years, some of that due to her struggle to figure out her calling as it relates to her future career path. In her pre-interview journaling, she noted that so many of the influential people in her life seemed to have a clear sense of calling and purpose. She described her lack of that sense of calling and purpose as "nerve-wracking." So, when asked about how she dealt with that tension, she mentioned that in addition to frequenting the university's counseling services, that she had also checked into mental health facility in the last year because the anxiety and depressive thoughts had been so overwhelming. She acknowledged that not all of these symptoms were directly related to her anxiety and doubts related to her calling, but they were some of the issues that had led her to a particularly unhealthy place. She noted that along with her mental health plan, she had also experienced a renewal in her faith and in some really encouraging friendships, which had brought her into a season of greater peace with herself and her future.

The issue of student mental health is at the forefront of many conversations in higher education. Cavanaugh (2016) noted the anxiety that is experienced by college students as they try to decide the direction for their lives, and the data from this study highlights the pressure that students put on themselves, as well as the external pressures that they may have felt from culture, family, and the overall educational system in finding their career calling. The research also indicates that students are comfortable talking about their mental health and are comfortable seeking out assistance with their struggles or unhealthy thoughts.

Theme 4: Less Influence from the Local Church Than Expected. Considering that all 17 participants come from a religious background, with 16 of those coming from a Christian background, the researcher expected to hear a lot about the influence of the local church. However, there was less mention of that than expected. When asked about the influences of family members, teachers, spiritual leaders, or coworkers on their understandings of or experiences of vocation, calling, and work, only five students explicitly mentioned their local church or their pastors as an influence.

"Jon", who himself senses a call to full-time church ministry employment, mentioned that for most of his life the local church and his spiritual leaders were an untapped resource. However, he noted that during his college years he has connected further with his church's pastors and relied on them for advice. He also mentioned the practical value that they had brought as they have given him opportunities to serve in various ways, which has helped him further clarify his calling to ministry. "Clark" mentioned that his local church helped him cultivate a servant mindset that has served him well as he cares for his current patients as a Certified Nursing Assistant and pursues his degree as a Nursing major. "Hannah" noted her experience working part-time in high school at her church. She was able to interact with and observe her pastor in new ways due to her working in the church office. She said, "Watching his passion for the job and his passion for people demonstrated to me the extent that how you serve others is not directly defined in the job description...He also showed me how fulfilling a job can be." This was an important revelation for Hannah because she grew up in a poor home where work and a career were not sources of purpose or fulfillment and where she watched her father's job deteriorate his physical health. So, to see someone else who worked hard and had a lot of responsibilities and enjoyed their work was a new perspective.

While a few students did have direct examples of the influence of the local church on their developing understandings of vocation, calling, and work, it was not as widespread as expected. In addition, there was no mention of the local church actually teaching about the concepts of vocation or calling. Instead, the church provided examples of how to pursue calling and an environment where participants could serve and discover areas of gifting.

Summary

There are many influences related to student understandings of and experiences of calling. However, the data demonstrates that the influence of one's family is not only the earliest influence, but also likely the most formative. Participants also noted the importance of having examples who model what it looks like to pursue one's calling, even over and above teaching about calling. Students also were transparent in their description of the anxiety and pressure they experience from both the internal and external expectations of knowing what they are called to do as it relates to their career. Finally, there was a surprising absence of data that demonstrated the local church's influence with participants' understanding of vocation, calling, and work, even though all 17 participants describe themselves as religious.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question in this study asked, "How do junior students at Union University describe the impact of the university's overall culture and programming, such as academic curriculum, co-curricular offerings, and student services, on their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work?" The data collected that was associated with this research question was extensive, and since each participant brings their own unique student experience, it generated some of the most dense and varied responses. As a result, several themes emerged. First, there was a consistent theme of the important role that faculty and stuff played in the

development of students as they developed their understandings of vocation, calling, and work. Likewise, many participants cited the general university community and their specific group of friends as being a source of encouragement and refining. Interestingly, several students also noted an overall culture of apathy among the student population that also leads to an underutilization of resources designed to help them wrestle with questions related to vocation, calling and work. These and other themes will be discussed in this section.

Theme 1: Students See University Faculty and Staff Support as Crucial. Every student that participated in the study noted the importance of support and encouragement from faculty members or university staff members. Whether it was a professor who took the time to personally engage in conversations with a student regarding vocation, calling, and work or it was the Counseling Services staff working with students who were experiencing some sort of anxiety related to their questions or doubts about their calling, students recognized the vital role faculty and staff have played in their developing understanding of their calling.

One particular area that shined in terms of their support of students was the Union University Honors Community. The culture that has been developed there seems to encourage students to think deeply and holistically about the concept of calling in life and in work. The Honors Community faculty culture was characterized as "intentional," "approachable," and "supportive." The students also noted that the curriculum was designed to make them think about how their faith was to integrate with every area of life, and work was an area of particular attention since that is where so much time in one's life is spent. "Shelby" who still was unable to identify a sense of calling to a particular career path described how the Honors Community helped to relieve some of the stress she was experiencing by helping her to see that a major did not necessarily equate with a lifelong career. This not only helped to ease her tension, but she

said it also helped her learn to love learning for its own sake. Dr. Scott Huelin, who serves as the Director of the Honors Community, was reference by multiple students for modeling and cultivating this supportive culture. One student also remembered Dr. Huelin commenting to graduating seniors as their annual Honors Banquet that, above all, their vocation, no matter what work they would do, was to serve the Lord.

Faculty members were also referenced for the general support as students encountered seasons of doubt regarding their calling and direction. One student recounted her academic struggles and how that led her to doubt that her chosen major was actually a part of her calling. She found encouragement from her advisor. He pointed out the strengths that he saw in her work and challenged her to persevere and work hard. She cited his encouragement as a turning point when she was thinking about changing her major to pursue another career path. Similarly, "Sabrina" started out as a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages major. However, she was not enjoying her classes and began to think about changing her major to Spanish with a minor in Secondary Education. She spoke to her advisor and was a little surprised to find how supportive he was of her changing majors, even though it would mean his major would lose a student. This kind of genuinely student-centered support and encouragement was a consistent throughout students' experiences.

Likewise, the university's staff and administration were highlighted as a formative part of the student experience. "Phillip" noted the example that a departmental director had set to student workers for balancing work and family. He noted that this staff member worked hard but also prioritized his family. Part of how this staff member did that was by developing his staff and student workers and delegating tasks and responsibilities to them so that he did not have to be physically present for every event or meeting. This intentionality helped "Phillip" have a better

understanding of the need for boundaries on one's work, especially since it was noted that "Phillip" already struggled with balancing work and rest. Since the anxiety and pressure related to students' discerning their calling was such a major theme in the data, it is not surprising that the Counseling Services department was also mentioned as a great support for students. For example, one student who was experiencing significant mental health distress related to her sense of purposelessness and aimlessness scheduled an appointment with Counseling Services, and the counselor recognized the severity of the student's situation and referred her to a residential facility for further care. According to that student, her time getting more focused treatment was a turning point for her and has led to her having a greater sense of purpose, identity, and calling in life, even though she still does not know for sure what her career path may look like. Another student also noted that the stress management skills she learned from Counseling Services helped her cope with the stress and anxiousness she experienced as an undecided major who at times felt inferior to her peers who seemed to know exactly what they wanted to do with their lives.

Students recognize that their professors are not merely teachers and that staff members are not merely performing administrative and operational tasks. Instead, students recognized that within the context of their particular roles, faculty and staff can also serve as guides for students as students are asking questions related to vocation, calling, and work. Faculty and staff have asked those questions themselves and are a resource to help students think through those questions. Interestingly, the majority of the comments about faculty and staff influence highlighted that much of this occurs in unstructured settings. While it is present in the classroom or through particular services, it is also integrated through the faculty and staff culture that prioritizes caring for and supporting students.

Theme 2: Students Identify University Community and Friends as Sources of Encouragement and Refining. In addition to the influence and support provided by the university's faculty and staff, participants often cited the overall university community, student organizations, and their friends as sources of encouragement and refining as they processed questions of calling, particularly as it relates to pursuing a particular career path.

Multiple students described a university culture that generally encouraged them to explore their various interests and experiment with different potential career paths as a means to discern the career calling. Whether it was exploring different kinds of work environments through on-campus employment, trying out a class outside of one's major, or changing majors altogether, students described an overall atmosphere that encouraged them to explore. Faculty advisors were never portrayed as being worried about losing a major from their department. Instead, faculty members seemed genuinely concerned with helping the student find where they fit best. One student, who had been struggling to pick a major because of her lack of any sense of calling as it related to her career, decided to become a Business major because she pursued an on-campus job in a coffee shop due to her lifelong interest in coffee. Perhaps because Union has such a strong tradition as a liberal arts institution, an environment has been cultivated that encourages exploration both in terms of academics and in relationship to discerning and pursuing one's career calling.

Within this overall culture, students also cited the encouragement and refining that came from strong friendships and involvement in various student organizations. Friends and roommates were second only to faculty and staff in terms of sources of support and encouragement during participants' experience at Union. One student noted that the friendships he had developed really challenged him to grow socially, which has helped him develop as a

person, particularly since he plans to pursue full-time church ministry. Another student talked about her roommate and how encouraging she has been when this particular student has struggled with her classes. The roommate always pointed her toward back toward her career calling and reminding her that one day, "You will think back to your time as a Chemistry student and you will think if I can get through that, I can get through this." In this way her friend was not only pointing her toward her calling but also reminding her that the perseverance being developed in a Chemistry class was actually building the perseverance necessary to tackle future challenges.

In addition to close friendship, students also described the support and refining experienced as they participated in or led in various student organizations. One student described how she developed specific organizational skills through a leadership position in her sorority that will be helpful for her in her anticipated future career. Similarly, another student discussed being selected by her sorority sister to lead their recruitment efforts and how she discovered and developed skills that confirmed a career path toward counseling through that process of working with students in the recruitment process. She cited the confidence that her sorority sisters placed in her as a huge source of encouragement and a turning point experience for her. Involvement in student organizations on campus continually appeared in the data as a place where students developed both soft and hard skills that helped them grow as people and helped them gain clarity regarding their career calling.

Theme 3: Students Recognize a Student Culture of Apathy and Underutilization of Resources and Services. One surprising theme that emerged through the data collection and analyzation process was student recognition of a culture of apathy among the broader student population at Union University. This apathy is expressed in multiple ways, but one particular

area that students recognized was the underutilization of resources and services designed to support students.

When participants reflected on their experience as students at Union University, they recognized that overall students are not seeking out opportunities to engage in conversations about vocation, calling, and work. They acknowledge that the university is attempting to engage students in these kinds of conversations and providing resources and services that are designed to support them as they ask questions related to their vocation and calling. However, they characterized the average student as being unwilling to really engage. When asked how the university could engage students in these conversations, one student stated that some of this is outside of the university's control. They noted that before the overall university culture could grow, the student culture would need to change.

One student who is working through how her calling and career intersect commented how the culture of apathy toward vocation, calling, and work affects someone who is working so hard to discern their calling. This student mentioned that a lot of students use calling language, but that it is not really discussed deeply or connected to a larger sense of life purpose or God's will. As this and other students encounter this kind of attitude among their peers it further confuses and discourages them in their own discernment process. Another student noticed the culture of apathy as well and said that he did not really think many students were genuinely wrestling with and seeking to discern their calling. Instead, he believes many students are just "going through the motions" both in terms of their personal spiritual lives and in their discernment of a career calling. He went on to say that his impression was that most students are "just aiming at something that's going to make me a good living."

In addition to commenting on the overall culture of apathy, students pointed to one tangible piece of evidence to support their description of the student culture. Students regularly commented on the general unwillingness of students to engage in the resources and support systems that are in place to help them navigate these questions of vocation, calling, and work. They also noted that students then complain about not being properly supported, even though they do not take advantage of the very resources that are there to provide them the support they claim is missing. Student talked about their own positive experiences utilizing resources like office hours with faculty members or their advisor or attending workshops and other events that are designed to help students think through questions related to calling and career. The faculty and staff support and influence that has already been addressed was often cultivated through these meetings during office hours rather than in classroom. This is where the professor became a mentor in addition to being a teacher as they shared parts of their own story with students, assisted students who were wrestling with questions related to calling and career, and encouraging them to explore various interests as a part of the discernment process. At the same time, however, these students recounted how friends, roommates, and classmates bemoaned the lack of support from faculty or staff, but never took the initiative to set up a meeting with their professor or advisor to talk through questions of calling or to attend a career fair or networking event. One participant stated that the issue is not that students do not know about the resources available to them; it is that they simply choose not to utilize the resources or that they are unwilling to take some initiative themselves.

A culture of student apathy and a lack of engagement was a surprising yet encouraging finding of this study. It was surprising in that the researcher did not expect participants to have that level of self-awareness about the general student culture. It was that level of self-awareness

that also made it an encouraging finding. Because participants were able to see this in themselves and their peers, they were also able to provide some insights about how to potential improve student engagement, which will be addressed in a later theme.

Theme 4: Student Views on the University's Chapel Program: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. Union University offer chapel two times per week during the spring and fall semesters, and students have a minimum number of chapels that they must attend. It is not surprising that this requirement is a sensitive subject for many students. However, the chapel program is also one of the main areas where the university can communicate to the larger student body about questions related to seeking God's will for their lives and how that integrates into various aspects of life, such as one's work. Student perceptions and experiences with chapel were broad and sometimes emotionally charged.

Students readily admit that chapel is a "touchy subject" with the general student body. Part of that sentiment is the fact that it is required. However, students also perceive a disconnect between the chapel presenters and content and with the student audience. One student noted that she does not connect with the majority of speakers because when they touch on topics of calling, it is often in relation to church leadership or serving as a missionary overseas. Their stories do not resonate with her, and she does not believe they understand what it is like for a student who is pursuing their calling toward the field of medicine and the struggles that are unique to that path.

Similarly, students noted that the content is often too closely designed to feel like a regular church worship service. For example, the chapel programming at Union often includes speakers preaching through a book of the Bible, and while students are not necessarily opposed to that, they would prefer alternate approaches, such as panel discussions or guest speakers who

are outside of traditional ministry roles. One student commented on a recent interview with the local county mayor and his discussion of how his faith is integrated into his work and political leadership. A female student commented on a female professor from the School of Business speaking in chapel about faith in the marketplace and how that was helpful and encouraging to her rather than another pastor speaking in chapel. One student also commented that they wish more chapel content was in response to student questions, feedback, and issues rather than pre-prescribed topics or sermons.

Even with some critical feedback, many students did comment that they had seen improvement in the chapel programming over their time as students at Union. Students referenced recent chapel series on Christian leadership and God's will and decision making as being particularly helpful as they thought through questions related to vocation, calling, and work. Another student, whose on-campus job is managing audio and video for chapel, noted that he had seen a lot of improvement in the chapel programming since his freshman year. He stated that he felt like it was now better suited for the general audience in the room.

Chapel was also another example that students cited as evidence of student apathy. Several noted how many students are not participating in the services and are instead working on assignments, talking with friends, or posting on social media. One student noted that traffic on the threads related to Union University housed on social media site Yik Yak skyrocketed during chapel and that the comments were often disrespectful or mocking. One student described the content posted to the site as "some real darkness". So, while the chapel programming may be improving, university administration charged with leading chapel still has some work to do in order to engage a larger percentage of students in worship and in the content being shared from the stage.

Theme 5: Students Recommend More Integration and More Voices as They Seek, Discern, and Fulfill Their Calling. During the data collection process, it was almost unavoidable that students would make recommendations about how the university could continue to improve in their support of students. Therefore, the researcher sought to direct those recommendations toward how the university could better engage students in conversations related to vocation, calling, and work. A key theme within student recommendations was greater integration and more voices.

Students recognized the organizational disconnect between the academic side and the student services side of the university. Students regularly talked about breaking down these organizational silos by pursuing greater integration and cooperation between faculty and staff. In discussing how to integrate the work of faculty and the university's career center more effectively, one student reflected on how another professor had encouraged the class to utilize another service on campus, the Writing Center. This professor assigned a major paper and offered incentives to students who visited the Writing Center for assistance in the development of their paper, but he did not punish those who chose not to use the service. The student stated that while he had initially visited the Writing Center to earn the extra points and one-week extension, his experience taught him the value of the Writing Center, which led to him using their services again. He recommended that professors design something similar to encourage students to engage with the career center so that they could learn the value of that service and become more likely to take advantage of it.

Students cited greater integration as a valuable strategy because of how busy many of them are. A more integrated approach between various departments would allow conversations about vocation, calling, and work to be infused in classes, workshops, and other campus

programming without the need to create another program that students have to decide whether or not they will attend. Other examples of these opportunities included chapel, Life Groups, which is a small group discipleship program for freshmen, and Residence Life programming. These are all programs that are already operating. Therefore, it would not add anything new to schedules or to the university budget. It would simply require more intentional integration and cooperation between departments.

In addition to more integration, students were clearly asking for a broader group of voices speaking to them about issues related to vocation, calling, and work. As mentioned earlier, students tended to disengage from discussion of calling when it was predominantly led by those working in some sort of full-time Christian ministry, such as a pastor, missionary, or theology professor. Instead, students mentioned wanting to hear the voices of their peers, their professors, the university staff. They wanted to hear from current students who are wrestling with the questions they are wrestling with related to vocation, calling, and work. They also wanted to hear from professors from a broader range of academic disciplines, such as the sciences, Business, or Engineering, since these areas are not seen as helping professions and can easily be disconnected from discussions around vocation or calling. Also, the female students were very clear in their desire to hear from more female voices, whether they be alumni, faculty, staff, or current students. For this study's participants, a broader range of voices increases the likelihood of relatability with those in the audience, which increases the likelihood of engaging more students in important conversations on vocation, calling, and work.

Theme 6: Students Recommend Utilizing Student-Led Environments Supported by Faculty and Staff to Engage Students in Conversations About Vocation, Calling, and Work. In addition to the recommendations around greater integration and a broader set of

voices, participants continually recommended utilizing student-led environments or programming rather than something new that was developed and led by faculty and staff. Students recognized the need for faculty and staff involvement in the logistics or content development but strongly recommended that the environments themselves be led by students.

Students made it very clear that while they appreciate the support that they receive from faculty and staff, they also believe the way to engage more students in conversations on vocation, calling, and work is through other students. Therefore, as they discussed ways to integrate these conversations more effectively into the student experience, it became apparent that they were selecting student-led environments such as Life Groups, Residence Life events, or other student organizations. Even when students discussed the idea of new programming related to vocation, calling, and work, such as a short-term book club or discussion group, it was always with the understanding that it be student-led, with faculty or staff support operating in the background and in the planning phases. As one student noted, "As soon as an adult is talking, people tend to zone out." Another student encouraged faculty and staff to utilize student leaders in this way again because of the relatability factor. He noted the value of the student-to-student influence and that there were a lot of students who he thought would be willing to serve in that kind of capacity, if they were resourced and trained by faculty or staff sponsors.

Summary

In general, students had a positive perception of their experience at Union University. They recognized the value of a supportive community of faculty, staff, and friends. However, they were also realistic. They perceived weaknesses in the student culture. They were transparent in their critiques and recommendations for greater student engagement in conversations about vocation, calling, and work. There was little to no animosity toward the university or bitterness

toward their experience. Overall, they appreciated the university and their experience, but they also seemed to care about the university enough to be honest about perceived shortcomings or improvements that could be explored.

Research Question 5

The fifth research question in this study asked, "How do junior students at Union University describe the university's career center's effectiveness in addressing and interacting with student perceptions of vocation, calling, work, and career over the course of their academic career?". Of the 17 participants, six had not visited the career center, and only one student said they had had several appointments. Therefore, the researcher was interested in not merely hearing about the experience of those students who had engaged with the center but was also interested in hearing why so many students had not engaged with the center and its staff. What perceptions did these students have that led them and potentially others to ignore or overlook The Vocatio Center? Based on the participants' data, a few themes emerged. First, students have a very practical, if not pragmatic, view of the The Vocatio Center for Life Calling and Career at Union University. Also, The Vocatio Center has a generally low profile on campus, which makes it easy for students to overlook. Finally, the students who have utilized the services of The Vocatio Center have generally had positive experiences with its staff and services, and the center has a good reputation among those students.

Theme 1: Students View The Vocatio Center Primarily as a Place for Practical Resources. As students discussed their interactions with or perceptions of The Vocatio Center for Life Calling and Career, a dominant theme emerged, namely that students view the center as a place to access practical resources such as resumé development, mock interviews, or on-campus employment. Conversely, most students did not see the center as a place to discuss

broader philosophical questions of vocation or calling. Even the students who had visited the center multiple times characterized their appointments in more practical terms with a focus on resumé development, processing on-campus employment paperwork, or assistance with an internship search. Only three students mentioned having deeper conversations with Vocatio Center staff that was related to discerning their calling. All three of these students were students who had either been undecided majors or had changed their major at some point. While it is encouraging that these students saw the center as a resource for students in their situation, none of the other seven student who specifically mentioned either being undecided or having changed majors saw the center as a place to talk through their questions.

As a result of this general perception, students mentioned that they had not visited The Vocatio Center because they felt like they had a good idea of how to develop their own resumé, because they were unsure that the staff had the necessary expertise to prepare them for their specific field, or because they only planned to visit the center as they were preparing to look for jobs after graduation. One student stated, "People don't see The Vocatio Center as necessary until they're a senior." In other words, they did not recognize the value or relevance to them at this point in their time as a student. One student even stated that she and other students viewed The Vocatio Center as a "last resort" when one did not know what to do, and that many students viewed it as embarrassing to have to visit the center. While this student's response was far and away the most negative, it was an interesting perspective that, if accurate, provides Vocatio Center staff with valuable information about the students they want to serve and support.

Time after time, students described perceptions or experiences with The Vocatio Center that focused almost exclusively on the practical resources that the center provides. Very few considered it a place to have deeper conversations about their calling. When asked if they

believed that was the predominant perception of students across campus, participants indicated that they believed that was an accurate assessment. If this is true, then The Vocatio Center staff has an opportunity to both highlight the value of their practical services to students who may not recognize it, while also helping students understand that the center is also equipped to assist students as they wrestle with questions of vocation, calling, and work.

Theme 2: Low Student Awareness of The Vocatio Center Leads to It Being an Afterthought for Many Students. Somewhat related to the student culture of apathy that has already been addressed and the above theme regarding the center's practical resources, there was also a recognition on the part of students that The Vocatio Center is not the most visible department on campus, meaning it is not an area that students regularly think about. This low awareness level then leads to the center and its resources being an afterthought or a missed resource. One student who had some engagement with the office even commented that he thought it was a great resource but that it was underestimated by most students. Another student said that they believed most students appreciated it was there and wished they used it more, but that it was easy to forget about or overlook. Still another student said that they felt like students do not really know what the center offers and therefore, overlook its services.

These responses demonstrate that there is still a need to strengthen The Vocatio Center's presence on campus so that every student has a clear understanding of the mission of the office and the resources that it offers. It is also an opportunity for the department to reimagine how it markets itself and its services to students. Similarly, it is also an opportunity to brainstorm even more effective ways to deliver its services to students, perhaps by pursuing greater integration with academic departments in keeping with the student recommendations in Research Question 4's findings.

Theme 3: The Vocatio Center Has a Good Reputation Among Students Who Have Used Its Services. While The Vocatio Center does appear to have some work to do in boosting its profile among students, it does enjoy a good reputation among those students who have used its services. Not one student who has had interactions with The Vocatio Center's staff had a negative comment.

The Vocatio Center team was consistently praised for how welcoming and warm they were with students. Students were appreciative of the time that the staff took to ask questions, listen, and to work with the students to help them with their resumé, interview skills, or internship search. Likewise, most students also agreed that the overall student perception of the Vocatio Center staff and its services is positive, even among those who have not used those services. One student commented,

> People who haven't been when I mention, oh yeah, I went to The Vocatio Center, or someone says they're going to The Vocatio Center to do this, and they're like, oh, like I've never been, but I heard that it's really helpful. And so, I've only really heard positive things about it.

So, while there are some misconceptions about The Vocatio Center's services and there is a need to raise the department's profile on campus, the Vocatio Center staff would be working from a place of strength as they continue to reach out to students to share their mission and their services. There does not appear to be a need to rebrand the department in order to repair any shortcomings of the past. Instead, the students seem to like and appreciate the work of The Vocatio Center. Therefore, the main job of the department would be to build on their success to ensure that students more fully understand the work of The Vocatio Center and to keep it visible to students so that it does not inadvertently become an afterthought.

Summary

While The Vocatio Center for Life Calling and Career has a positive reputation among the students who have utilized its services, it still has a tremendous opportunity for growth. There is still work to be done to increase its visibility among students and to position itself as the primary place for students to visit not only when they need practical help, such as resumé development, but also when they need to think through and discuss deeper questions of vocation, calling, and work.

Summary of Findings

The data collected in this study demonstrated that overall students present a developing or emerging understanding of vocation, calling, and work. There was very little discussion of students having an epiphany of what they would do with their life and work. Even those who had defining moments did not have all the answers. The study also confirmed that students have little to no theological conceptualization for the term vocation. Instead, the term calling seems to carry the most theological weight with them. They tend to view calling as an overarching life purpose that has implications for various aspects of life, particularly as it relates to work. When thinking about calling, participants described calling as that place where talent and passion intersect and that brings purpose and fulfillment to life.

The primary motivating factor in student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work was the family. Those formative experiences with family, whether positive or negative, shaped the way students thought about vocation, calling, and work. Union University's influence on student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work was most directly exerted through student relationships and interactions with faculty and staff. Whether it was through structured teaching, informal conversations, or through setting an example for students to follow, faculty and staff are

the most formative influences in the campus life and culture. The study also found that the university's calling and career center has a positive reputation on campus, particularly among those who have utilized its services. However, it also suffers from low awareness among students and an oversimplification among students about its services that may be attributed to what was described by students as a culture of apathy that runs throughout the general campus culture.

<center>**Evaluation of the Research Design**</center>

This section will highlight a few of the strengths and weaknesses related to the research design for this study. These are offered not only for transparency and credibility but in hopes that future studies may be able to strengthen the design to gather even more robust data.

Strengths of the Research Design

A qualitative phenomenological design was an appropriate approach for this study since the researcher sought to gather information from individuals about their lived experiences and perceptions of vocation, calling, and work (Creswell, 2018). The researcher could then look at the various individual perspectives and "make assertions regarding what something is like from an insider's perspective" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 233). This study accomplished that goal by exploring individual experiences and perceptions of vocation, calling, and work among juniors at Union University and then identifying common themes related to those experiences and perceptions.

The researcher was able to gather data from 17 junior students at Union University, using interviews, as well pre- and post-interview journaling activities. As a result, the researcher was able to gather rich, detailed data about student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work, as well as the influences related to those perceptions. This data allowed the researcher to gain greater insight as well as share those insights in the findings of Chapter Four. This study identified what

students mean when they hear or use the terms vocation, calling, and work. It also identified both the personal and university-related influences that have helped in the formation of those definitions and perceptions. Some of the themes that emerged confirmed some of the researcher's assumptions, such as students not having a theologically rich understanding of the word and concept of vocation. However, other themes were unknown and unexpected until the data began to be analyzed, such as a culture of student apathy reported by the participants in the study. This finding surely has an impact on how students understand vocation, calling, and work, and especially impacts how well the university can engage and support students in their discernment process. As a result of utilizing this method, the researcher has a greater understanding of the student experience and a greater appreciation for students' perspectives.

Weaknesses of the Research Design

While a qualitative phenomenological design was appropriate for gathering the kind of data sought by the researcher, it is not without some weaknesses. Perhaps the most obvious, even inherent, weakness of the research design employed in this study is that the researcher was limited in constructing his sample to only those students who responded to the invitation to participate and completed the consent form and demographic survey. Similarly, the researcher was further limited by potential participants who completed those steps and were selected to participate but who failed to respond when contacted regarding their selection. As a result, the researcher was not able to construct a sample as broad and as diverse as he had hoped, especially in terms of ethnicity.

Another weakness related to this study's design is that it is limited to only one setting. The researcher was limited by time and accessibility to complete this study and therefore, chose to limit the research to one setting in order to glean a rich description of student perceptions of

vocation, calling, and work in a particular context. While this study provides a reliable description of student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work at Union University, a design that incorporated participants from other settings could provide a broader picture of student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work on Christian college campuses. Such a design could also create the opportunity for comparative analysis between settings.

Summary

Chapter Four has provided a detailed overview of the research project and the analysis and findings of the data collected in this qualitative phenomenological study. Relevant information about the recruiting process and sample group was shared. In addition to sharing, the steps taken in the coding process, the researcher also shared the findings and emerging themes related to each research question. Final conclusions, implications, and applications are now shared in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Five highlights the conclusions, implication, and applications of this qualitative phenomenological research study. Conclusions are arranged in relation to the research questions of this study and are presented as the study's answers to those questions. Implications and applications are shared based on the overall findings of the study. Limitations of the study will also be noted. Finally, suggestions for further research will be offered.

Research Purpose

The purpose of the study is to explore perceptions of vocation, calling, and work among junior classification students at Union University. Similar to Waalkes (2015), the researcher defined vocation in relation to "the primary calling to discipleship" (p. 137) rather than the more mainstream definition of the word to refer to one's job or career. The researcher defined calling as

> a transcendent summons experienced as originating beyond the self to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation (Dik & Duffy, 2012, p. 11).

Finally, work was defined in reference to one's job or career.

Research Questions

The following research questions served to guide this study:

RQ1. How do the junior students at Union University describe their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work?

RQ2. How do the junior students at Union University describe the relationship between their faith and their work or future career?

RQ3. What are the common factors junior students at Union University describe as having impacted their view of vocation, calling, and work?

RQ4. How do junior students at Union University describe the impact of the university's overall culture and programming, such as academic curriculum, co-curricular offerings, and student services, on their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work?

RQ5. How do junior students at Union University describe the university career center's effectiveness in addressing and interacting with student perceptions of vocation, calling, work, and career over the course of their academic career?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

Conclusions

Research Question 1 asked "How do the junior students at Union University describe their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work?". The findings of this study answered that question by revealing the developing or emerging understanding of students as it relates to those terms both in general concept and in their individual experiences. Simply stated, students' understandings and views of vocation, calling, and work tended to develop over time. The study answered this research question in detail by confirming the researcher's assumption that students would understand and perceive the concept of vocation almost exclusively in relationship to their job or career rather having a more theological understanding of it. Instead, students usually used the term calling holistically to refer to both their life calling, especially as followers of Jesus Christ, and their career calling. Student most often discussed the discerning of that calling in terms of the intersection of their talents and passion and as a source of purpose or fulfillment.

Research Question 2 asked, "How do the junior students at Union University describe the relationship between their faith and their work or future career?". The study answered this question by demonstrating that students have a broad and biblical understanding of work. They recognize both the inherent goodness and value of work as described in Genesis 1 and 2, while also recognizing the limitations and frustrations associated with work as outlined in Genesis 3. They also do not limit the idea of work to simply one's employment. Instead, they see work as

connected to other arenas of life such as marriage, parenting, or volunteering with a local church or organization. Since students tended to view calling as a spiritual, overarching, and holistic call on their life and vocation as their job or career path, they described that life calling as the driver of their understandings of vocation and career. In other words, their understanding of their life's calling guides the decisions they make regarding their potential career path.

Research Question 3 asked, "What are the common factors junior students at Union University describe as having impacted their view of vocation, calling, and work?". This study answered that question by clearly demonstrating the supreme influence of students' family background on their views of vocation, calling, and work. As students listened to their parents talk about vocation, calling, and work, witnessed them go about their careers, or experienced both the victories and the struggles their family faced, their own views of vocation, calling, and work were formed. The other significant influence uncovered by this study was the pressure and anxiety students experienced by both the internal and external expectations to identify and pursue their callings. Finally, the general absence of the local church's influence in the data was a surprising finding related to answering this research question.

Research Question 4 asked, "How do junior students at Union University describe the impact of the university's overall culture and programming, such as academic curriculum, co-curricular offerings, and student services, on their perceptions of vocation, calling, and work?". This study answered question by demonstrating the value of university faculty and staff support of students. Whether they were verbally teaching about vocation, calling, or work, counseling a student during a time of uncertainty and indecision, or simply setting an example that helped a student envision what following a calling looked like, faculty and staff were the most significant university influence on student perceptions and experiences of vocation, calling, and work. A

related answer to this question highlighted a culture of apathy among students that serves as a potential obstacle to the university more effectively supporting students in the areas of vocation, calling, and work. Students also offered recommendations as to how the university might be able to engage more students in conversations of vocation, calling, and work.

Research Question 5 asked, "How do junior students at Union University describe the university career center's effectiveness in addressing and interacting with student perceptions of vocation, calling, work, and career over the course of their academic career?". The student answered this question by discovering that The Vocatio Center for Life Calling and Career at Union University has a good reputation among the students who have engaged with the office and utilized its resources. Participants also communicated that other students that they knew had a similarly positive perspective on the office. However, this study also revealed opportunities for The Vocatio Center to strengthen its engagement and service to students. The study revealed that many students view the career center purely as a practical resource rather than a holistic resource that can assist them as they wrestle with questions of vocation, calling, and work. Similarly, an overall low awareness of the department among the students leads to The Vocatio Center becoming an afterthought. Therefore, the center has opportunities to strengthen its work with students.

Implications and Applications

This section will address implications of this study's conclusions in relationship to the broader literature. It will discuss a few of the important applications to the study's findings. These applications seek to offer answers the question of what is to be done with the information that has been uncovered in this study. It will seek to provide general action steps for Christian

higher education leaders to consider as they seek to strengthen their support for students who are navigating issues related to vocation, calling, and work.

Implications of Conclusions Related to the Broader Literature

The conclusions of this study connect to the broader body of literature in various ways. This sections spotlights a few key ways this study intersected with the current body of literature.

Students' Perceptions of Vocation and Calling. The findings of this study demonstrated that college students on Union University's campus are likely lacking a theologically robust understanding of calling as described by Waalkes (2015), Veith (2011), or Pfeiffer (2014). Instead, the historical and theologically informed definition of vocation had all but been lost for the overwhelming majority of participants in this study. Vocation has simply become a synonym for one's profession or career. On the other hand, students' understandings and perceptions of calling are consistent with the definition and description outlined by Dik and Duffy (2012). One might go so far as to say that theirs is a Christianized version of Dik and Duffy's description of calling since for these students the "transcendent summons" (Dik & Duffy, p. 11) is God himself. Students also regularly discussed calling in terms of providing purpose, meaning, or fulfillment, which further aligns with Dik and Duffy (2012), as well as Schnell (2013) and Hunter et al. (2010). In general, it seems appropriate to argue that participants in this study have substituted the idea of calling for the historical and theological doctrine of vocation. They discuss calling as overarching and holistic but acknowledge areas of calling, such as one's career, underneath the umbrella of this broader concept of life calling.

Student Anxiety. This study's finding regarding student anxiety related to discerning one's vocation or calling relates directly to themes that were highlighted in the literature. Clydesdale (2015) and Cavanaugh (2016) both warned readers of the double-edged sword of

seemingly unlimited choices for students when determining their life's direction or career path. This is just one of the leading issues that students are dealing with as they navigate questions of vocation, calling, and work. Student anxiety is just one of the many elements at play that contribute to both individual and collective fragmentation on the college campus (Glanzer et al., 2017; Wells, 2016).

Vocational Discernment Resources. Finally, in terms of campus culture, programming, and services, this study's conclusions clearly support the need for some form of intentional vocational discernment processes or programming for students as described by Vos (2017) and Roels (2017). The fact that so many students did not engage with the university's calling and career center speaks to the lack of a vocational discernment infrastructure. Similarly, since most students also view the calling and career center as a place to get practical resources, such as resumé assistance or interview preparation, they often overlook it early in their discernment process, exactly when the department could be of the most assistance. While it is noteworthy that so many participants were able to find support and assistance from faculty and staff, this usually required the student seek out that support rather than the university proactively engaging the student community with a plan to follow and resources to use. It is the researcher's belief that the student recommendations regarding the integration of services demonstrates that students want to see a more intentional and cohesive effort on the part of the university to engage student in the questions of vocation, calling, and work.

Application of Findings to Practice

This section specifically addresses the application of findings and offers practical recommendations for next steps that are rooted in the findings of this study. These

recommendations will need to be applied carefully by leadership in Christian higher education so that they are in keeping with the overall convictions and context of the specific institution.

Decide How to Talk About Vocation, Calling, and Work. This study confirmed that students participating in this study had almost no theological understanding of the word vocation. In addition, the word calling was so encompassing that it could refer to one's overall life calling or to a specific area of one's life, such as one's career path. Student descriptions of calling also relied heavily on ideas related to skill, passion, purpose, and fulfillment, whereas a biblical and theological understanding of vocation as primarily one's following of Christ also leaves room for recognizing the place of struggle or even suffering in one's faith journey. Without this grounding, it is easier for students to interpret their calling in a particular season as that which is easiest, most lucrative, or seems to offer the most happiness. Therefore, it would be helpful for Christian higher education institutions and their leaders to clarify what is meant by the terms vocation, calling, and work.

This relates closely to Roels' (2017) research on the NetVUE program as well. When an institution has clarity about how it speaks about vocation, calling, and work, and what that means, it can then begin to permeate that throughout the institutional culture. Each person in the organization from the President, to board leadership, to faculty and staff members, to the newest freshman who shows up each fall should have a grasp on what the university means when it speaks on vocation and how, if at all, it differs from when it speaks about calling. This consistency is necessary so that services and support can be guiding students toward the same goal, regardless of whether the student is a ministry major, a business major, or is currently undecided. As this study demonstrated, students are coming with various views on vocation, calling, and work that have been shaped by their experiences, their family background, and their

own skills, preferences, and passions. In order to both properly form students in biblical truth and correct any personal misconceptions that may have developed regarding vocation, calling, and work, the university must develop its own way of thinking about and talking about these issues that is easy for students to grasp and see in action during their student experience.

Clarity and consistency of message is necessary for a cohesive vocational discernment process to be implemented on campus, and it is a vital first step in relationship to the other recommendations for practice that are to be shared.

Integrate Vocational Discernment Programming with Existing Programming. The number one recommendation from students when discussing how the university might be able to engage students more effectively in conversations around vocation, calling, and work was that the university should pursue greater integration. The students' rationale was that students, faculty, and staff are all busy. Therefore, adding something new to everyone's schedule might not be feasible. However, integrating vocational discernment content into currently existing programming or environments allows the university to embed questions and concepts related to vocation, calling, and work at various points along a student's journey.

How this is implemented will and should vary from institution to institution as institutional leadership defines how the institution talks about vocation, calling, and work and its strategy for engaging students in this dialogue. In the case of Union University, students recommended ideas such as utilizing Life Groups, which are small group Bible study and discipleship groups for incoming freshmen that are led by upperclassmen students, for integrating vocational discernment concepts into existing programming. These groups are overseen by the Office of University Ministries. However, University Ministries could partner with The Vocatio Center for Life Calling and Career to design both a theologically rich and

practically helpful resource the introduces new college students to the concepts of vocation, calling, and work and how Union University thinks about these things. Similarly, other groups on campus, such as fraternities and sororities or discipline-specific clubs could work together with The Vocatio Center for Life Calling and Career to more intentionally develop their members and assist them in answering questions related to vocation, calling, and work.

Related to the issue integration, students also mentioned including more voices. This would allow perspectives beyond The School of Theology and Missions or The Vocatio Center for Life Calling and Career to speak into the broader conversation. When topics of calling are addressed in the university's chapel, they are often addressed by a lone speaker from either a local church or from The School of Theology and Missions. Rightly pursuing integration would invite other voices from various departments or from outside of campus who also share the university's perspectives on vocation, calling, and work. One student alluded to the local county's mayor interview in chapel as being particularly helpful and an example of inviting broader voices to participate. Student agreed that hearing from faculty or staff in various departments or from professionals outside of a church ministry context helped them better related to the speaker and therefore, pay attention and engage with the content of the message. Therefore, approaches such as interviews and panel discussions could be helpful to engaging more students in discussions of vocation, calling, and work.

There are almost limitless examples of how university administration can pursue a more integrated approach to guiding students through the vocational discernment process. This may be a particularly helpful approach for an institution that does not have the means to entirely reinvent their structures for supporting students. It would allow them to instead adapt what they are

currently doing to align with the university's definitions of vocation, calling, and work and pursue greater integration with other academic and student services departments.

Include Vocational Discernment in Faculty and Staff Hiring and Development. As a supplement to pursuing greater integration of vocational discernment across the campus culture and programming, Christian higher education institutions may want to consider including vocational discernment in the hiring and development process for faculty and staff. This study demonstrated that students seek out and expect support and encouragement from faculty and staff members on their campus. If that is the case, would it not make sense for faculty and staff to be prepared to provide this kind of support? Union University is not an institution where faculty are primarily seen as researchers. Instead, they are teachers and mentors to their students. Scholarship is a part of their responsibility, but it is not the primary responsibility. This may be the case on various Christian campuses. Therefore, Christian institutions who have this expectation of their faculty and staff should discuss it in the hiring process and provide professional development opportunities to help faculty and staff provide the best support possible to their students.

As an institution defines vocation, calling, and work in its context, it should include corresponding language in job postings for faculty and staff who work directly with students. Questions related to experience supporting students through vocational discernment could be included in the interview process. This would not only further ensure that the best possible candidates are hired, but it also would encourage potential faculty and staff to think through questions of vocation, calling, and work more deeply than they would normally and reorient them to understand the university's perspective and expectations for supporting students through their own journeys of understanding vocation, calling, and work.

Likewise, faculty and staff development could include reviews of how well students are being supported and resources of current research and best practices in the areas related to vocational discernment, particularly through the lens of a Christian worldview. It is not enough for faculty and staff to be sympathetic to students' concerns, but they must also be equipped with the latest research and resources to support them in their efforts to assist students navigating their questions about vocation, calling, and work and how that relates to picking a major, changing a major, or determining a particular career path. Faculty chairs and deans may even want to encourage faculty to explore research opportunities that address the intersection of their particular discipline and issues related to vocation, calling, and work. These projects would not only be beneficial to faculty member's own professional development, but the findings could provide greater understanding to faculty and staff who are working to support students.

Since the Christian liberal arts education has always seen itself as a formative, even transformative endeavor, the faculty and staff of these institutions should not only be capable in their particular tasks. They should also be selected and developed with the formation of their students in mind. In this case, including vocational discernment expectations in the hiring and development process communicates the priority of student development in the university's culture, while also providing the necessary research and resources to equip faculty and staff for this work.

Provide the Most Robust Counseling Support Possible. Considering the overwhelming responses of students that expressed the pressure and anxiety that they have experienced related to understanding and pursuing their vocation or calling, it would be wise for Christian higher education institutions to explore how to provide the most robust counseling support possible to students. Whether this means expanding counseling staff or investing in

telehealth options, Christian higher education leaders should evaluate whether the services they are currently providing are in line with the volume of demand. Some students will simply be dealing with anxiousness or temporary depressive emotions that can be addressed more easily. However, there are other students who will be dealing with pre-existing, diagnosed anxiety or depression conditions, which could be aggravated by the uncertainty that can often come in the middle of a student's vocational discernment process.

Relatedly, it is also important to continually remind faculty and staff in other departments of the university's counseling services and to refer students to those services when they believe a student needs support that is outside the faculty or staff members skill set. Conversely, counseling service staff and leadership should be reminded of the other support available to students, particularly as it relates to vocation, calling, and work. In the case of Union University, the counseling services staff should be well aware of the support that The Vocatio Center for Life Calling and Career can provide to students so that the counseling services team is not taking on more than necessary. In addition, it is beneficial for the student to feel supported on various fronts as he or she is dealing with the anxiousness that can arise from uncertainty related to one's calling. This will also further the cause of the earlier recommendation related to integration of services. As students see departments working together for their support, it is likely they will feel more at ease, even in their uncertainty.

Feature the Calling and Career Center in the Vocational Discernment Journey. A Christian institution's calling and career center sits at the heart of this research and discussion. On most campuses, this office is probably staffed by individuals who sincerely desire to guide students in questions related to vocation, calling, and work. These teams have also almost certainly devoted more time to reading and studying the related issues. Therefore, they should be

featured heavily as Christian higher education institutions seek to refine and strengthen their support of students who are asking questions related to vocation, calling, and work.

The career center staff should have a prominent voice in helping institutional leadership define the common language to describe vocation, calling, and work in the campus and organizational culture. The department should be highlighted not only as a practical resource for crafting a resumé or for finding an internship, but also as a helpful and supportive place for those who are asking difficult question related to their vocation and calling. The university should strive to have such an effective calling and career services staff that it is the first place that faculty members send their students for additional support and resourcing. Similarly, faculty members should come to trust the career services team so much that they do not hesitate to invite them to class to discuss issues or field questions related to vocation, calling, and work in a discipline-specific setting.

When pursuing integration across departments, the calling and career center can provide helpful and current research related to both practical student outcomes and deeper philosophical or theological understandings of vocation, calling, and work so that content for ongoing small groups or special workshops is both relevant and formative as students consider what it means to pursue their vocation, calling, and work. Each university invests significant financial resources into their calling and career centers each year. This is an opportunity to see the return on that investment as the calling and career staff take an important lead role in shaping the university's vocational discernment process for students and invites the broader university community to partner in the work of supporting students in their vocational discernment journeys.

Research Limitations

This study focused on the perceptions and experiences of vocation, calling, and work of junior classification, traditional undergraduate students at Union University, a distinctly Christian university. Therefore, the vast majority of students that participated in the study come from a religious background. Sixteen of the 17 students in this study considered themselves to be Christians. One student identified as a Muslim. As a result of the religious commitment of the participants, the findings of this study will be most transferable to religiously affiliated colleges and universities. That does not mean state institutions or small private colleges with no religious affiliation can glean nothing from the findings, but this study focuses on the phenomenon of student experiences with vocation, calling, and work in a particular setting, that of a Christian university.

Related to this first limitation is the fact that the study focused on student perceptions and experiences of vocation, calling, and work on only one campus. Each higher education institution has its own unique constituency and culture, its own mission and programming. Therefore, the nuances of this study should not be expected to apply uniformly across institutions, even if those institutions are distinctly evangelical Christian institutions, similar to Union University. Instead, care should be taken to look at the broader application of these findings to another institution's specific context.

In addition to limitations related to the setting of the study, there is the limitation related to the fact that participation in the study was completely voluntary. Even though the researcher utilized a purposive sampling method to select participants from a broader group of students who responded to the invitation to participate and completed the informed consent form, he was still bound by who those respondents were demographically. One example of the limitations that this

created was a lower level of ethnic representation than the researcher had wanted. There were no participants from an African American background. However, only one African American student responded to the invitation to participate and completed the consent form. When informed that they had been selected to participate, the student never responded to the researcher to schedule a time to conduct the data collection interview. As a result, while the findings of this study are representative of the perceptions and experiences described by its participants, it cannot be assumed to representative of every student or demographic group.

The limitations of this study deal primarily with the area of transferability. Due to specifics of this study, namely the perceptions and experiences of junior classification traditional undergraduate students on a Christian university campus, there are some inherent limitations. However, the broad principles revealed in the findings of this study will be helpful to higher education leaders in broader contexts of higher education. Due to the analysis procedures and member checking practices, limitations related to confirmability and reliability were minimized.

Further Research

The purpose of the study is to explore perceptions of vocation, calling, and work among junior classification students at Union University, and as expected, the process of conducting this study and analyzing its findings has shed light on opportunities for further research in this area.

In contrast to a study on a distinctly Christian college campus, it would be interesting to see the results of a similar study conducted on a public university campus in the United States, particularly in the same general geographic region. Such a study could provide valuable comparative data to this study. It could answer questions about how differently students on private Christian campuses and public campuses think about vocation, calling, and work and what similarities and differences are at work related to the university culture and programming's

impact and the university's career center's particular influence on student's developing perceptions and experiences of vocation, calling, and work.

Another possible area for further research that was borne out of one of this study's limitations would be a similarly structured study that focuses on ethnic minorities. This is a gap in the data collected in this study, and learning more about the perceptions and experiences of these students related to vocation, calling, and work would add valuable perspective to the body of knowledge, as well as to the various practices related to student services on the college campus.

Since the students participating in this study so clearly identified the term vocation with one's job or career, it might be helpful for future researchers to conduct a broad quantitative study on multiple Christian campuses to confirm whether this is specific to Union University's student population or if it is the norm on Christian college campuses. Such a study would help determine more precisely how much the mainstream use of the word vocation has influenced student understandings of vocation as compared the historical and theological concepts associated with the word.

Further exploring the influence of a university's career center offers another opportunity for further research. A comparative study between students who have regularly used calling and career services on their campus versus those who have not could further explore qualitative differences in student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work. Researchers could further enrich such a study by adding a basic quantitative aspect that reveals what percentage of students on the campus have used calling and career services, including how many times they have used those services. Such information would prove helpful to career services professionals to

determine their reach on campus, and the qualitative date could potentially provide support for expanding services or altering the mission and vision of the department.

Finally, this study highlighted the fact that student perceptions of vocation, calling, and work are constantly emerging and developing as students learn and experience new things. Therefore, a longitudinal study that interviews a sample group of students as incoming freshmen and then follows up with them again on either a yearly basis or as graduating seniors to gather more data could further explore the specific developments in their perceptions and experiences of vocation, calling, and work over their career as students at the university. Such a study could create clearer narratives of student experiences and how the people, programming, and culture of the university influenced their understandings of vocation, calling, and work.

Summary

This study has provided rich, qualitative data from college students on a Christian university campus about their perceptions and experiences of vocation, calling, and work. In addition to their own emerging definitions and understandings, participants were able to identify the influential forces in their understandings of these concepts, both in their individual histories and in their shared experience as student at Union University. The findings of this study have provided researchers and higher education leaders with more insight into what students are thinking and experiencing, as well as what factors on campus are shaping students' perceptions and experiences of vocation, calling, and work. While this study does not provide an exhaustive understanding of the phenomenon of the student experience of vocation or calling, it does provide greater understanding and opportunities for study that will further broaden the body of knowledge related to this subject. In order for higher education leaders to serve and support their students more effectively, they must understand them more clearly. This study is but one step in

that journey toward greater understanding of the students that higher education leaders are called

to serve.

REFERENCES

Allen, J. K. (2018). *Being a Christian.* B&H Publishing.

Baggett, J.A. (2000). *So great a cloud of witnesses: Union University 1823-2000.* Union University Press.

Ballor, J. J. (2017). The reformation of vocation. *Journal of Markets and Morality, 20*(2), 325-341. Retrieved from http://bi.gale.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/global/article/GALE|A545339525?u=vic_liberty

Barna trends 2018: What's new and what's next at the intersection of faith and culture. (2017). Baker Books.

Bechtold, J. I. (2017). The idea of calling presented in light of high-impact practices in a general education course and beyond. *Christian Higher Education*, 16(1-2), 79-91. https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2017.1249765

Beeley, C. A. (2016). Christ and human flourishing in patristic theology. *Pro Ecclesia: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology, 25*(2), 126+. https://doi.org/10.1177/106385121602500201

Beers, S. & Beers, J. (2008). Integration of faith and learning. In Stephen T. Beers (Ed.), *The soul of a Christian university: A field guide for educators* (pp. 51-73). Abilene Christian University Press.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (1st ed.). Doubleday.

Bernstein, J. (2004). The low-wage labor market: Trends and policy implications. In Ann C. Crouter & Alan Booth (Eds.), *Work-family challenges for low-income parents and their children* (pp. 3-34). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1802-1811. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870

Braskamp, L., Trautvetter, L., & Ward, K. (2006*). Putting students first: How colleges develop students purposefully.* Anker Publishing.

Carson, D.A. (1997). Can there be a Christian university? *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology 1*(3), 20-38. http://d3pi8hptl0qhh4.cloudfront.net/documents/sbjt/sbjt_1997fall3.pdf

Caruth, G. D. (2013). Demystifying mixed methods research design: A review of the literature. *Mevlana International Journal of Education, 3*(2), 112-122. http://dx.doi.org/10.13054/mije.13.35.3.2

Cavanaugh, W. T. (2016). Actually, you can't be anything you want (and it's a good thing, too). In David S. Cunningham (Ed.), *At this time and in this place: Vocation and higher education* (pp. 25-46). Oxford University Press.

Cawley, B. D., & Snyder, P. J. (2015). People as workers in the image of God: Opportunities to promote flourishing. *Journal of Markets and Morality, 18*(1), 163.

Chandler, D. J. (2015). Whole-person formation: an integrative approach to Christian education. *Christian Education Journal, 12*(2), 314+. https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A429498255/ITOF?u=vic_liberty&sid=ITOF&xid=fb798d6d

Clydesdale, T. (2015). *The purposeful graduate: Why colleges must talk to students about vocation.* University of Chicago Press.

Coil, J. C. (2016). *A narrative study of calling in Christian university sophomores* (Order No. 10167745). Available from ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Social Science Premium Collection. (1845053253).

Conner, S. L., Daugherty, D. A., & Gilmore, M. N. (2012). Student retention and persistence to graduation: Effects of an introductory life calling course. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice, 14*(2), 251–263. https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.14.2.f

Conyers, A. J. (2003). Vocation and the liberal arts. *Modern Age, 45*(2), 123-131

Cremen, S. N. (2019). Vocation as psyche's call: A depth psychological perspective on the emergence of calling through symptoms at midlife. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance, 19(*1), 41-61. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-018-9367-4

Creswell, J. W. & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Cunningham, D. S. (2016). Time and place: Why vocation is crucial to undergraduate education today. In David S. Cunningham (Ed.), *At this time and place: Vocation and higher education* (pp. 1-19). Oxford University Press.

Darling, D. (2018). *The dignity revolution: Reclaiming God's rich vision for humanity.* The Good Book Company.

Davidson, K., Davidson, S. M., & Campbell, E. L. (2017). Talking with students about faith-based career anxiety. *International Journal of Christianity & Education*, *21*(3), 213–224. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056997117712529

De Muynck, B., Vos, P., Hoogland, J., & Van der Stoep, J. (2017). A distinctive of Christian higher education: Educating for vocation. *Christian Higher Education,* 16(1-2), 3-10. https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2017.1251151

Dik, B. J. & Duffy, R. D. (2012). *Make your job a calling: How the psychology of vocation can change your life at work.* Templeton Press.

Dockery, D. S. (1997). The Great Commandment: A paradigm for Christian higher education. *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology,* 1(*3),* 50-57. http://d3pi8hptl0qhh4.cloudfront.net/documents/sbjt/sbjt_1997fall5.pdf?_ga=2.120945422.705140895.1553688241-2095816208.1547748038

Domene, J. F. (2015). Trajectories of calling in undergraduate students with varying career expectations. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 34*(4), 315-324.

Douglass, R. P., Duffy, R. D., & Autin, K. L. (2016). Living a calling, nationality, and life satisfaction: A moderated, multiple mediator model. *Journal of Career Assessment*, *24*(2), 253–269. https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072715580324

Duffy, R. D., Allan, B. A., & Bott, E. M. (2011;2012;). Calling and life satisfaction among undergraduate students: Investigating mediators and moderators. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 13*(3), 469-479. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-011-9274-6

Dreher, R. (2018). *The Benedict option.* Sentinel.

Ellsworth, T., Abernathy, M., & Union University. (2008). *God in the whirlwind: Stories of grace from the tornado at Union University.* B & H Pub. Group.

English Standard Bible. (2008). Crossway. (Original work published 2001)

Erwich, R. & Van der Stoep, J. (2017). Longing for a better world: Hope in professional practices. *Christian Higher Education, 16*(1-2), 107-115. https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2017.1250533

Feenstra, J. S., & Brouwer, A. M. (2008). Christian vocation: Defining relations with identity status, college adjustment, and spirituality. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 36(*2), 83-93. https://doi.org/10.1177/009164710803600201

Glanzer, P. L., Alleman, N. F., & Ream, T. C. (2017). *Restoring the soul of the university: Unifying Christian higher education in a fragmented age.* IVP Academic.

Glanzer, P. L., Hill, J. P., & Johnson, B. R. (2017). *The quest for purpose: The collegiate search for a meaningful life.* SUNY Press.

Hagenbuch, D. J. (2008). Marketing as a Christian vocation: Called to reconciliation. *Christian Scholar's Review, 38*(1), 83-96.

Henry, C. F.H. (1997). The Christian pursuit of higher education. *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology, 1*(3), 6-28. http://d3pi8hptl0qhh4.cloudfront.net/documents/sbjt/sbjt_1997fall2.pdf

Hiebert, P. G. (2008). *Transforming worldviews: An anthropological understanding of how people change.* Baker Academic.

Hunter, I., Dik, B. J., & Banning, J. H. (2010). College students' perceptions of calling in work and life: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 76*(2), 178-186. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2009.10.008

Huston, A. C. (2004). Childcare for low-income families: Problems and promises. In Ann C. Crouter & Alan Booth (Eds.), *Work-family challenges for low-income parents and their children* (pp. 139-164). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Johnson, S. (1990). Education in the image of God. In Jack L. Seymour & Donald E. Miller (Eds.), *Theological approaches to Christian education* (pp. 124-145). Abingdon Press.

Kalleberg, A. L. & Marsden, P. V. (2019). Work values in the United States: age, period, and generational differences. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 682*(1), 45-59. https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177/0002716218822291

Keller, T. (2012). *Every good endeavor: Connecting your work to God's work.* Penguin.

Kelly, P. W. & Schaffert, C. (2019). Generational differences in definitions of meaningful work: A mixed methods study. *Journal of Business Ethics, 156*(4), 1045-1061. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s10551-017-3621-4

Kilner, J. F. (2015). *Dignity and destiny: Humanity in the image of God.* Eerdmans.

Kleinhans, K. A. (2016). Places of responsibility: Educating for multiple callings in multiple communities. In David S. Cunningham (Ed.), *At this time and in this place: Vocation and higher education* (pp. 99-121). Oxford University Press.

Krahn, H.J. & Galambos, N. L. (2014) Work values and beliefs of 'Generation X' and 'Generation Y', *Journal of Youth Studies*, *17*(1), 92-112. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1080/13676261.2013.815701

Langer, R., Hall, M. E. L., & McMartin, J. (2010). Human flourishing: The context for character development in Christian higher education. *Christian Higher Education 9*(4), 336-360. https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2010.492738

Lee, A. (2017). *Ministry longevity, family contentment, and the male clergy family: A phenomenological study of the experience of ministry*. [Doctoral dissertation, Liberty University]. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/1484

Leedy, P.D. & Ormrod, J.E. (2019). *Practical research: Planning and design* (12th ed.). Pearson.

Lent, R. W., Morris, T. R., Penn, L. T., & Ireland, G. W. (2019). Social–cognitive predictors of career exploration and decision-making: Longitudinal test of the career self-management model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 66*(2), 184-194. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1037/cou0000307

Lingenfelter, S. G. (2008). *Leading cross-culturally: Covenant relationships for effective Christian leadership.* Baker Academic.

Maehr, M. L., & Braskamp, L. A. (1986). *The motivation factor: A theory of personal investment*. Lexington Books.

McNarry, G., Allen-Collinson, J., & Evans, A. B. (2019). Reflexivity and bracketing in sociological phenomenological research: Researching the competitive swimming lifeworld. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11*(1), 138-151. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2018.1506498

Moser, D. & Fankhauser, J. (2018). *Ready or not: Leaning into life in our twenties.* Colorado Springs: NavPress.

Nahnfeldt, C. (2018). Vocation and encounter: A Scandinavian theological reflection on everyday life as Christians. *Dialog, 57*(2), 91-98. https://doi.org/10.1111/dial.12388

Newberry, B. (2005). The challenge of vocation in engineering education. *Christian Scholar's Review, 35*(1), 49-62.

Oldendick R.W. (2012) Survey research ethics. In Lior Gideon (Ed.), *Handbook of survey methodology for the social sciences*. Springer. https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/978-1-4614-3876-2_3

Pazmino, R. W. (2010). Christian education is more than formation. *Christian Education Journal*, *7*(2), 356+. http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A239092343/AONE?u=vic_liberty&sid=AONE&xid=14ae6a5f

Pfeiffer, A. (2014). Christian vocation and the mission of God: A missing link? *Lutheran Theological Journal, 48*(3), 160-171.

Plummer, R. L. (2018). A New Testament professor's rediscovery of the doctrine of vocation. *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology, 22*(1), 9-20. http://equip.sbts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/SBJT-22.1-NT-Vocation-Plummer.pdf

Presser, H. B. (2004). Employment in a 24/7 economy: Challenges for the family. In Ann C. Crouter & Alan Booth (Eds.), *Work-Family Challenges for Low-Income Parents and Their Children* (pp. 83-106). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Riswold, C. D. (2016). Vocational discernment: A pedagogy of humanization. In David S. Cunningham (Ed.), *At this time and in this place: Vocation and higher education* (pp. 72-95). Oxford University Press.

Roberts, C. & Hyatt, L. (2019). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation* (3rd ed.). Corwin.

Roels, S. J. (2017). Educating for vocation: Weaving educational ideas with institutional practices. *Christian Higher Education*, 16(1-2), 92-106. DOI: 10.1080/15363759.2017.1249767

Rotman, M. (2017). Vocation in theology and psychology: Conflicting approaches? *Christian Higher Education, 16*(1-2), 23-32. https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2017.1249763

Sawhney, G., Britt, T. W., & Wilson, C. (2020). Perceiving a calling as a predictor of future work attitudes: The moderating role of meaningful work. *Journal of Career Assessment, 28*(2), 187-201. https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072719848981

Schnell, T., Höge, T., & Pollet, E. (2013). Predicting meaning in work: Theory, data, implications. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 8*(6), 543-554. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2013.830763

Schuurman, D. (2004). *Vocation: Discerning our callings in life*. W.B. Eerdmans Publishing.

Setran, D. (2018). From worldview to way of life, *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care, 11*(1), 53–73. https://doi.org/10.1177/1939790917753171

Shatzer, J. (2019). *Transhumanism and the image of God: Today's technology and the future of Christian discipleship.* InterVarsity Press.

Sherlock, C. (1996). *The doctrine of humanity.* InterVarsity Press.

Shimizu, A. B., Dik, B. J., & Conner, B. T. (2019). Conceptualizing calling: Cluster and taxometric analyses. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 114*, 7-18. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2018.07.006

Simmons, E. (2016). Vocation as the nexus of faith and work. *Dialog, 55*(1), 3-5. https://doi.org/10.1111/dial.12215

Smith, J. K. A. (2009). *Desiring the kingdom: Worship, worldview, and cultural formation.* Baker Academic.

Sullivan, W. M. (2014). Exploring vocation: Reframing undergraduate education as a quest for purpose. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 55(4), 6-13. DOI: 10.1080/00091383.2014.925753

Thompson, D. (2019, Feb. 24). Workism is making Americans miserable. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com

Twenge, J.M. (2010). A review of the empirical evidence on generational differences in work attitudes. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 25*(2), 201-210.

https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s10869-010-9165-6

Union University. (n.d.-a). About Union. http://www.uu.edu/about/

Union University. (n.d.-b). Excellence-Driven. https://www.uu.edu/about/Excellence-Driven.cfm

Union University. (n.d.-c). Christ-Centered. https://www.uu.edu/about/christ-centered.cfm

Union University. (n.d.-d). People-Focused. https://www.uu.edu/about/people-focused.cfm

Union University. (n.d.-e). Future-Directed. https://www.uu.edu/about/future-directed.cfm

Union University. (n.d.-f). New Academic Building. https://www.uu.edu/jackson/buildings/new-academic-building/

Union University. (n.d.-g). Samuel W. "Dub" Oliver. http://www.uu.edu/president/oliver/

Union University, (n.d.-h). United In Spirit. Grounded In Truth. https://www.uu.edu/about/strategic-plan/

Union University. (n.d.-i). Vocatio Center for Life Calling and Career. http://www.uu.edu/studentlife/vocatio-center/

Union University. (n.d.-j). Vocatio Center-Get Started. http://www.uu.edu/studentlife/vocatio-center/students/get-started/

Van Vuuren, M. (2017). Called to do meaningful work: A blessing or a curse? *Christian Higher Education, 16*(1-2), 47-54. https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2017.1251245

Veith, G. E. (2011). Vocation: the theology of the Christian life. *Journal of Markets & Morality 14*(1), 119-131. http://bi.gale.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/global/article/GALE|A266630067?u=vic_liberty

Veith, G. E. (2018). Christian secularism: Vocation in the postmodern world. *Lutheran Theological Journal. 52*(1), 25-35.

Vos, P. (2017). The relative good of work: Reconsidering vocation eschatologically. *Christian Higher Education, 16*(1-2), 11-22. https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2017.1249762

Wadell, P. J. (2016). An itinerary of hope: Called to a magnanimous way of life. In David S. Cunningham (Ed.), *At this time and place: Vocation and higher education* (pp. 193-213). Oxford University Press.

Waalkes, S. (2015). Rethinking work as vocation: From protestant advice to gospel corrective. *Christian Scholar's Review, 44*(2), 135-153.

Ward, R.H. (1975). *A history of Union University.* Union University Press.

Wells, C. A. (2016). Finding the center as things fly apart. In David S. Cunningham (Ed.), *At this time and in this place* (pp. 47-71). Oxford University Press.

Wells, C. A. (2018). For such a time and place as this: Christian higher education for the common good. *Christian Higher Education, 17*(1-2), 1-7

Wellum, S. J. (2009). Editorial: The urgent need for theological anthropology today. *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology,13*(2), 2-3. https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/equip/uploads/2009/10/sbjt-2009summer-wellum.pdf

APPENDIX A: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear [Recipient]:

As an employee of Union University and a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to explore perceptions of vocation, calling, and work among junior classification students at Union University, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be between 18 and 22 years old, a junior by credit hours at Union University, and in at least your third year of college. Additionally, any juniors who transferred to Union must have been enrolled at Union no later than August 2021. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a pre-interview journaling activity (30 to 60 minutes), to participate in an in-person interview (90 minutes to two hours), and to complete a post-interview journaling activity (15 to 45 minutes). All data and data analysis will be made available to corresponding participants for member checking of the data and analysis. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain protected and confidential.

To participate, please click here.

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read and signed the consent form, please click the button/link to proceed to the demographic survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

Participants will receive gift cards (Chick-fil-a, Amazon, etc.) as tokens of appreciation for their participation in the study.

Sincerely,

Matt Bowman
Director of Graduate Admissions, Union University College of Education

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: Perceptions of Vocation, Calling, and Work Among College Students from Union University: A Phenomenological Study

Principal Investigator: Matthew S. Bowman, Ph.D. Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be between 18 and 22 years old, a junior by credit hours at Union University, and in at least your third year of college. Additionally, any juniors who transferred to Union must have been enrolled at Union no later than August 2021. By accepting the invitation, submitting this consent form, and completing the demographic survey, you are indicating that you meet these participation requirements and are willing to participate. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore perceptions of vocation, calling, and work among junior classification students at Union University. Students will be asked to share their understandings and experiences of calling or vocation as it relates to life and work. In addition, students will be asked to reflect upon and describe the influences and factors, including their college experience, that have shaped those understandings of vocation, calling, and work.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a pre-interview journaling activity. One week prior to the in-person interview, the participant will be asked to complete a journaling activity focused on three questions. The time required will be dependent upon the individual participant, but participants are encouraged to spend at least an hour reflecting upon these questions. This journaling activity will be submitted to the researcher at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled interview.
2. Complete an in-person interview. This interview includes both pre-determined questions and questions that arise from the researcher's review of the pre-interview journaling activity. The interview is expected to be completed within a range of 90 minutes to two hours. The interview will be audio/video recorded in order to ensure accuracy of participant data.
3. Complete a post-interview journaling activity. Within 24 hours of the interview, the researcher will send the participant a post-interview journaling prompt for further reflection and/or clarification on the participant's part. This activity consists of only one question. The time required to complete the activity will vary based on the participant, but participants are encouraged to give serious thought to the prompt and provide whatever additional reflections or clarification they deem appropriate.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include greater insight into college students' perceptions of calling and vocation as it relates to life and work. Union University will benefit in having a greater understanding of its students so that it might better support and equip them for young adulthood. Likewise, Christian colleges, universities, and ministries to college students will benefit from understanding student perceptions in order to better serve and support them through their college experience and transition into the early post-college years. Finally, the broader fields of study that focus on college student success and development and vocational psychology will benefit from the contribution of data and findings from this study.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms/codes. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked drive and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked drive for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Participants will receive gifts cards (Chick-fil-a, Amazon, etc.) as tokens of appreciation for their participation in the study. Gift cards will be awarded after the participant has concluded all three phases of the data collection process.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Union University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Matthew (Matt) Bowman. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact the researcher at ███████████████████████████████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. John Cartwright, at ██████████████████.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

This survey is to be completed by participants after accepting the invitation to participate and submitting the informed consent form. This data will be used to develop a sample group of participants that reflect the various demographic groups on campus.

Thank you for accepting the invitation to participate in this study and submitting your informed consent form. Please complete following demographic survey. The data collected in this survey will be protected along with all data in this research study.

1. Your name

2. Your gender

3. Your age

4. Your ethnicity

5. Your academic major and minor

6. Are you a first-generation college student in your family?

7. Would you consider yourself a Christian?

8. How many years have you been enrolled at Union?

APPENDIX D: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DECISIONS

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 2, 2022

Matt Bowman
John Cartwright

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-33 Perceptions of Vocation, Calling, and Work Among College Students From Union University: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Matt Bowman, John Cartwright,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Research Ethics Office

UNION UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

To:	Matt Bowman
From:	⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛ Chair, Institutional Review Board
Protocol:	#0922-01392 "Perceptions of Vocation, Calling, and Work Among College Students from Union University: A Phenomenological Study"

This is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved the above referenced protocol. This project was reviewed in accordance with all applicable statutes and regulations as well as ethical principles.

Approval of this project is given with the following obligations:

1. At the end of one year from the approval date, if the project is not finished or terminated, a Continuing Review application must be completed and approved to continue the project. If approval is not obtained, the human consent form is no longer valid and accrual of new subjects must stop. Continuing review is not required in instances where such review does little to protect subjects (e.g., where data collection is complete and only data analysis is still being performed).

2. Any adverse effects must be reported to the IRB on the Adverse Effects Form. Adverse events should be reported to the IRB within 10 working days. Examples include unexpected complications in a subject, missteps in the consent documentation, or breaches of confidentiality.

3. No change may be made in the approved protocol without board approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards or threats to subjects. Such changes must be reported promptly to the board to obtain approval.

4. The stamped, approved human subjects consent form must be used (if applicable). Photocopies of the form may be made.

If you have any questions, please call the Institutional Review Board office at 731.661.5580. The forms referred to above can be found on the Institutional Review Board website at http://www.uu.edu/programs/irb/.

September 19, 2022

_____   _____
Chair, Institutional Review Board   Approval Date
Union University

APPENDIX E: PRE-INTERVIEW JOURNAL ACTIVITY

Please spend some time over the next few days responding to these questions. Please be open and thorough in your responses, as this will provide valuable background information that will guide our upcoming interview. Please submit your response to Mr. Bowman no later than 48 hours prior to your scheduled interview.

1. How would you define the following terms: Vocation? Calling? Work?

2. To the best of your ability, please describe your past perceptions of work as a child or teenager. How did your early experiences with work (yours or others; paid or unpaid) affect your attitudes toward and perceptions of work?

3. Have you ever felt a sense of calling? If so, when did you first sense a calling in your life? Please describe in detail that season of your life. How would you describe that sense of calling at that time?

4. Please tell me a little about the past influences in your life. How would you describe them and your relationships with them? What, if any, impact did they have on your understandings of or your experiences with vocation, calling, and/or work?

APPENDIX F: PERSONAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Follow-up questions built on pre-journaling activity responses.

1. Given what you shared in the journaling activity and what we've discussed today, how would you now describe your current sense of calling?

2. Please describe how your experiences during college have confirmed, refined, or changed your perceptions of vocation, calling, and/or work. Did campus life or curricular offerings factor into your current understandings of vocation, calling, and/or work? If so, how?

3. Please describe your engagement with the university's career center. What is your view of the campus career center? How would you describe your experiences?

4. As you reflect, describe how, if at all, this university understood and interacted with your understanding of vocation, calling, and work or your sense of calling in life or toward a particular field?

APPENDIX G: POST-INTERVIEW JOURNAL ACTIVITY

Please spend some time reflecting back on the first journaling activity and our recent interview. Then spend some time sharing any additional reflections you have thought of regarding your experience and perception of calling. Please return this to Mr. Bowman within 72 hours of receiving.

1. After having some time to reflect on your previous journaling and our conversation, are there any items you'd like to further explain or maybe correct in regard to your perceptions of vocation, calling, and work? Is there anything you would like to elaborate on regarding your experience of calling, understanding of work, or the factors that influenced those perceptions, including your student experience?

APPENDIX H: POST-DATA COLLECTION REFLEXIVE DOCUMENT

This form is to be completed by the researcher after each phase of data collection (pre-journal activity, interview, post-journal activity) in order for researcher to reflect on the data and identify and bracket potential biases or preconceptions so that the data most clearly reflects the participants experiences and thoughts.

1. Describe the relationship that is developing with the participant.

2. Describe your responses, thoughts, disagreement/agreements with the participant's account.

3. Describe how the participant reacted to the questions posed. Did they seem agitated, engaged, confused, etc.?

4. Describe how you responded to the participant's answers. (Specific to interview debrief)

5. Should anything be changed, clarified, or developed for subsequent interviews?

APPENDIX I: INSTRUMENT REVIEW BY PANEL OF EXPERTS

The research instruments were reviewed by a panel of experts comprised of undergraduate faculty members. This section includes a summary of both their credentials and their responses from the review.

A group of 12 individuals were invited to serve as a panel of experts to review this study's instruments. All invitees hold terminal degrees (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.) and serve in various academic departments at Union University, including the School of Business, the School of Theology and Missions, the College of Education, the School of Social Work, the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, and the College of Arts and Sciences. Their knowledge of the traditional undergraduate population positioned them as a helpful resource in determining the effectiveness of the study's instruments.

Overall, the six faculty members who responded to the invitation to participate provided very positive feedback and were complimentary of the basic design of the study and the wording of the individual instruments. One member of the panel expressed slight concern that the design might leave the researcher "at the mercy of the expressiveness of the students" who would participate. However, he also acknowledged that including journal activities in the data collection should help encourage sharing from participants who might not be as expressive in a personal interview. Another panelist commented on the inclusion of the post-interview journaling activity as an excellent choice because it allowed students to add to their data after the interview when new thoughts might arise as a result of having spent time thinking about and discussing vocation, calling, and work and the influences on their perceptions. The three-pronged approach to data collection was a consistently complimented approach.

Most of the constructive feedback were recommendations of minor word choice that were not adopted into the final versions of the instruments simply because such changes would not have added clarity to the existing questions. Often the recommendations were either redundant, too specific, or were more appropriately incorporated into follow-up questions, which was helpful to the researcher in thinking through potential follow-up questions.

In all the panel of experts provided confirmation that the instruments for this study would effectively elicit the kinds of responses that the researcher desired. Their feedback also assisted in the development of follow-up question ideas to use in the personal interview.

APPENDIX J: SAMPLE MEMBER-CHECKING DOCUMENT

The following is a sample of the kind of document sent to participants via email inviting them to review the codes that were specific to their data, as well as the themes that were emerging from the overall data set.

Participant -----: Codes and Themes

Based on analyzing the data from your journaling activities and our interview, the following codes were assigned:
- An emerging or developing understanding of one's calling over time
- Calling=Intersection of talent and passion
- Calling applies across aspects of life
- Calling=Spiritual or supernatural draw
- No definite sense of calling yet
- Vocation=Job or career
- Vocation or career flows from calling
- Work=Broader than paid employment
- Work=Actual effort or action
- Work and faith intersection
- Family influence
- Pressure/Anxiety related to calling/career choice
- Univ. faculty/ staff influence
- Recommendation related to university experience
- Importance of experimentation/trying things in the discerning process
- University experience discussion
- University changed a negative view of work
- Honors Community influence
- Vocatio Center is often an afterthought for students
- Vocation Center does have a positive reputation among those who have used it

Combining your data with the data collected from the other study participants the following themes have been identified. These may not all apply to you.
- The primacy of family influence
- Emerging understanding of one's calling and role of experimentation
- The reality of pressure/anxiety related to one's calling or career
- Theologically thin view of vocation (as defined by researcher)
- A holistic view of calling
- Calling as the intersection of talent and passion and as a source of purpose or fulfillment
- Broad and biblical understanding of work
- The value of modeling/examples
- Calling as a supernatural or spiritual draw
- Less influence from the local church than expected
- Calling guides student perceptions of vocation and career

- University faculty/staff influence and support
- University friends as sources of encouragement
- Culture of student apathy and of underutilizing university resources and support services
- University chapel: The good, the bad, and the ugly
- Students appreciate the university but are also realistic about it
- Vocatio Center=Practical resources (resumes, etc.)
- Vocatio Center=An afterthought/low awareness
- Vocatio Center=Generally positive feedback from those who've utilized its resources
- Student Recommendations: More integration and more voices as it related to helping students seek, discern, and fulfill their calling
- Student Recommendations: Utilize student-led environments guided/supported by faculty/staff as it relates to engaging students in conversations about vocation, calling, and work

Please take time to look over these codes and themes. If you need any clarification or if you see something that seems inconsistent with your journaling or interview, please let me know. For the sake of timeliness with reporting my findings, please contact me no later than the end of the day Friday, May 12 with your approval of my codes and themes or any concerns or questions you may have. If I have not heard from you by Saturday, May 13, I will take that as your confirmation and proceed with reporting my findings through my doctoral dissertation.

Thank you again for your participation in my research study. It was good to connect with each student and hear the varying perspectives. It is my hope that our work will help Union and other institutions like Union better understand and serve students as they seek to understand God's call on their lives.

Matt Bowman