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A Phenomenology of Calling among Undergraduates at a Public University: Reliance on Faith during an Intentional Career Decision-Making Process

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A PHENOMENOLOGY OF CALLING AMONG UNDERGRADUATES
AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY: RELIANCE ON FAITH DURING
AN INTENTIONAL CAREER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

by

Justin Arnold

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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A PHENOMENOLOGY OF CALLING AMONG UNDERGRADUATES
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AN INTENTIONAL CAREER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Justin Arnold, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2017

Recent studies in vocational psychology and student development have discussed the fact that many college students value spirituality, and that a spiritual calling is positively associated with desirable work traits (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011; Chickering, 2006; Dik & Duffy, 2012; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Hunter, Dik, & Banning, 2010). What has yet to be deeply explored is how undergraduates at a public university who believe they are called explore careers and make vocational decisions.

The purpose of this phenomenology was to describe and interpret the lived experiences of emerging adults at a public university who believe they are called by a Higher Power, who have explored careers, and who have tried to find a fit between a calling and a career. My research questions were designed to capture the lived experiences of spiritual emerging adults who were exploring careers as undergraduates and who were preparing to enter the workforce as adults.

Participants were recruited using purposeful sampling at a small Midwestern public university. Data were primarily gathered using open-ended questions during face-to-face interviews. I interviewed 12 participants who were between the ages of 20–23, who were currently attending the university or who had graduated within the past six months, who believed

they were called by a Higher Power, who had explored careers, and who had tried to find a fit between what they believed about calling and what they had learned from exploring careers.

The major findings of my study showed that emerging adults who believe they are called experience a calling as originating from a source external to the self (i.e., a Higher Power), that they respond to this external source with faith, and that faith initiates and sustains an intentional career decision-making process. The participants relied on faith to identify and work toward subjective goals through a career decision-making process that explored issues related to altruism, self-interest, psychology, and community. These findings suggest that career services providers who guide spiritual emerging adults should use a narrative lens, be familiar with calling themes and decision-making, and recognize an individual's need for authenticity.

My study affirms and adds to the student and career development literature on emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2014), the exploratory career phase (Super, 1957), meaning and career (Super, 1976), career construction (Savickas, 2005), student development and authenticity (Chickering, 2006), calling (Dik & Duffy, 2012), protean career orientation (Hall, 2004), student development and spirituality (Astin et al., 2011; Small, 2015), and vocational decision-making (Parsons, 1909). Areas for further research include longitudinal studies, studies with diverse groups, an examination of bias toward spirituality in public higher education, job readiness of and market demand for spiritual graduates, and calling among emerging adults who do not have access to universities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be.

Now put the foundations under them.

−   Henry David Thoreau

In the spring of 2007, I was trying to figure out how to implement my creative vision. I had been at a faith-based community development organization for five years as a teacher, board member, and coach, and in my heart I saw a future where young people would use the arts, humanities, leadership, business, and civics to flourish. This idea had taken ahold of me, and I became obsessed with figuring out how to found and operate a school with a whole-person philosophy that would develop strong relationships across sectors, be engaged in regional development, and identify clear career pathways for emerging adults. In response to this unction, I wrote down my vision, clarified it in a brochure, created a brand, launched a website, and went into a three-county region to test the waters.

I spent the next year networking, sharing my vision, and watching and listening to the reaction of people. As I talked to stakeholders in my community about a holistic, systems-based approach to education, a couple of things became clear: (a) People did not place a lot of value on my personal story, passion, or ministry license (they kept inquiring about an undergraduate degree); and (b) There was no need to start a new school because colleges and universities already existed (why make young people pay for a seminar when you could help them get a degree?). I responded to these two findings by going to college so I could (a) see for myself why

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a degree was important, (b) gain acceptable credentials, and (c) figure out how to implement my vision in a new environment (i.e., colleges and universities).

Now, as I write the acknowledgments for my dissertation, a decade has passed, and I can't help but reflect on what I have accomplished. Over the past 10 years I have completed an undergraduate degree in community and economic development, a master's degree in workforce training, a graduate certificate in wellness and transformation, and a doctor of philosophy degree in workforce education and development leadership. For all of my efforts, I now know why degrees are important, I have gained acceptable credentials, and I know how to implement my vision through colleges and universities. Most importantly, I have experienced a metamorphic change by responding to a calling: "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7, The New International Version).

This dissertation, although it can stand alone as cutting-edge research in the emerging cross-discipline field of calling and workforce development, also represents the completion of an academic campaign to put foundations under my castle. My journey from a 25-year-old activist to a 35-year-old social scientist was made possible through *self-reliance* (see the essay of the same name by Ralph Waldo Emerson). This point is important to note because, throughout all of my work, I had to "*learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages*." Yet, while I wrestled with ideas and worked toward goals, there have been a handful of people who enriched my life. I would like to acknowledge those people now.

Thank you to my parents and former mother-in-law. Being a single dad and full-time student was not easy or profitable. You helped me with holidays, bills, crises, and poise. No

matter how difficult it got for me, you still encouraged me to chase my dreams. I appreciate you all taking the time to listen, affirm, and exhort.

Thank you to my children. I have watched you grow from 8 to 18, 5 to 15, 4 to 14, and 3 to 13, and it has been extremely rewarding. After all of my studying and achievements, I think my greatest prize is that I have learned how to prepare you for college and a career. I look forward to helping you pursue your dreams.

Thank you to Jon for letting me stay with you in North Dakota. Over the years, as I took a break, drove across the country, and spent time with you, I have always been refreshed and gained a more positive perspective. Thanks for being you.

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Thank you to Joel for being available. As the other social scientist in the family, it was rewarding to have someone to bounce ideas off of and discuss methods with.

Thank you to Ken for taking the time to discuss work, management, and the global economy. Your firsthand experience and professional insights inspired me to try and bridge theory with practice.

Thank you to my dissertation chair, Sue Poppink. You were a reference point since my first semester as a doc student, and you helped me refine my communication style and become a better researcher. Your expertise in qualitative methods, and your constant push to explain myself, added a lot of value to my work. The suggestions you gave me made my arguments

clearer and my paper stronger. Working with you taught me valuable lessons about trust and professional relationships. Thank you.

Thank you to my committee members, Ramona Lewis and Mark St. Martin. You may have no idea how difficult it was to find PhDs who understood my topic, were willing to engage with it, and who gave constructive criticism. You impacted me in a powerful way when you modeled how to talk about faith and student development in a rigorous yet respectful way. I am so happy I was able to work with you.

Thank you to the staff, faculty, and students at Western Michigan University. Many of you added value to my work as a researcher, teacher, and professional. I am glad that I got to discuss calling, spirituality, and student development with such a diverse group of professionals. It provided a much needed opportunity to learn how to share my ideas and research with people who were very different from me. And a special thanks to Tina, Jim, and Tim.

Thank you to Katherine Manley. When I explained to you that I had a vision to help young people flourish and build careers, there wasn't a person who smiled bigger or held their arms open wider. It was an absolute treat to have you as a graduate advisor in my master's program, and I will be forever thankful that you pushed me to go into WMU's PhD program.

Thank you to the staff, faculty, and students in the School of Education at Ferris State University. I share your educational philosophy: T.E.A.C.H. (Transformative, Experiential, Assessment driven, Collaborative, and Holistic). The graduate education that I received at FSU gave me a great foundation for my later research on calling and work.

Thank you to Nancy Puglisi and Pam Clark. You provided a nurturing, academic environment where I could openly explore personally meaningful issues. The program you have

entrepreneurship, volunteering, and time with my children. Thank you for asking me to think big,

work hard, and keep dreaming.

Justin Arnold

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Bud Gould.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We need to temper our current heavy emphasis on rational empiricism and

professional and vocational preparation with increased efforts to help

students address issues of authenticity and spiritual growth.

(Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2005, pp. 23–24)

The quest for a calling is a lifelong pursuit, but it emerges full bloom

during the transition from youth to adulthood.

(Scott, 2007, p. 262)

For thousands of years, theologians and philosophers have discussed what it means to have a calling (Rehm, 1990). Historically, calling was understood to have a spiritual connotation, meaning the source of a calling was considered to originate from a Higher Power, and the purpose of a calling was to give the called a sense of meaning and direction in community life (Rehm, 1990). Now researchers have begun to explore what *calling* means in our modern society (Duffy & Dik, 2013).

An interest in how spirituality and religion affect work has been studied to one degree or another, but it wasn't until the last decade when calling itself became a serious research topic (Duffy & Dik, 2013). The surge in calling's popularity can be directly traced to the early-2000s work of the Lily Endowment, a private foundation that awarded over $200 million in grants to colleges and universities in the United States to "establish programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation" (VanZanten Gallagher, 2007).

The year 2007 is seen as the "tipping point" for calling research, and from that time until 2013 over 40 papers were published on calling (Duffy & Dik, 2013). Calling has now become a prominent research topic in the fields of management, organizational behavior, psychology, and education due to its prevalence in society (by people who are either pursuing or living a calling), as well as the positive traits associated with it, such as career maturity, career self-efficacy, and well-being (Duffy & Dik, 2013).

As calling has gained prominence among serious academic researchers, spirituality has simultaneously been experiencing its own renaissance in the academy (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011; Tisdell, 2001). Spirituality highlights the neo-classical view of calling, which suggests that a calling originates from a Higher Power (Dik & Duffy, 2012). Even when the spiritual literature does not expressly discuss calling, the themes of spirituality and calling are the same: "the further development of self-awareness, a sense of interconnectedness, and a relationship to a Higher Power" (Tisdell, 2001, p. 2).

The most widely cited definition of *calling* includes phrasing that gives room to acknowledge a person's spirituality, with the authors (Dik & Duffy, 2012) defining a calling as "a transcendent summons, especially as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating purpose or meaningfulness and that holds others-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation." Using the phrasing "a transcendent summons" that "originates beyond the self" acknowledges the spiritual dimension and the historical roots of calling, and gives room to discuss how a person uses belief in a Higher Power when constructing meaning about life and work.

Calling and spirituality have been studied among the population of traditional college students (Dik, Sargent, & Steger, 2008). Emerging adults in college are often interested in

discovering who they are and how they fit in with the world, and they often use spirituality and religion to find direction (Arnett, 2014; Lindholm, Millora, Schwartz, & Spinosa, 2011). Through surveys to measure calling among college students, it has been demonstrated that calling is positively associated with desirable work traits, such as career planning, vocational self-clarity, career self-efficacy, and career decision-making (Dik et al., 2008; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2013).

In addition to students' experiencing a calling and displaying the associated benefits, studies have shown that college students are also able to explain what a calling means to them and what it means to be spiritual (Astin et al., 2011; Hunter, Dik, & Banning, 2010). In one study of college students, "three primary themes of calling were identified: (a) Guiding Force, (b) Personal Fit/Eudemonic Wellbeing, and (c) Altruism" (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 181). Also, in a study on spirituality, college students described their spiritual life as including a(n) "(a) Spiritual Quest, (b) Ecumenical Worldview, (c) Ethic of Caring, (d) Charitable Involvement, and (e) Equanimity" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 4). For college students, calling and spirituality seem to have some overlap, with themes of identity creation (Guiding Force and Spiritual Quest), construction of meaning (Personal Fit/Eudemonic Wellbeing and Ecumenical Worldview), and connectedness (Altruism and Ethic of Caring).

Recent studies in vocational psychology and student development have shown that many college students value spirituality and that a spiritual calling is positively associated with desirable work traits (Astin et al., 2011; Dik & Duffy, 2012; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Hunter et al., 2010). What has yet to be deeply explored is how undergraduates at a public university who believe they are called are making vocational decisions. Even though studies have shown relationships between calling and desirable work traits, and described what spirituality and

calling mean to college students, there has yet to be a qualitative study that reveals how emerging adults use faith to explore careers and make vocational decisions.

Making wise vocational decisions based on the confidence that a *conclusion of fit* has been found between the self and work opportunities is a cornerstone of career development (Parsons, 1909). Since modern research on calling, spirituality, and career exploration is relatively new, career services providers have an opportunity to investigate the subjective experiences of spiritual college students in order to better understand how undergraduates who have discerned a calling are making conclusions of fit between what they believe they are called to do and real-world career opportunities. By understanding how spiritual emerging adults are making vocational decisions, career services providers can better support the authentic intentions of undergraduates who are using their time at college to transform their sense of calling into a viable career path.

Background

A recent seven-year qualitative study by Astin et al. (2011) used a survey of college students to demonstrate that "most students are searching for deeper meaning in their lives, looking for ways to cultivate their inner selves, seeking to be compassionate and charitable, and clarifying how they feel about the many issues confronting their society and the global community" (p. 4). Eighty percent of students identified themselves as "having an interest in spirituality" and "believing in the sacredness in life" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 3). Nearly 63% of students said that "my spirituality is a source of joy," 75% believed in God, and more than 66% said their religious/spiritual beliefs "provide me with a sense of strength, support, and guidance" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 3). Seventy-five percent of these students also reported a "sense of connection with God/Higher Power that transcends my personal self" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 3).

Eighty percent of students reported that "finding my purpose in life" was at least a "somewhat important" reason for attending college, and 75% of entering freshman reported that it was "very important" or "essential" that college "helps you develop your personal values" and "enhances your self-understanding" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 3).

When spirituality results in a person feeling inspired by a transcendent summons from an external source to demonstrate their beliefs in life roles, these motivations and behaviors can be self-defined as feeling called, as shown by one recent study (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 181). In a qualitative study, 295 college students were asked to define what "calling" meant to them, and "three primary themes were identified: (a) Guiding Force, (b) Personal Fit/Eudemonic Wellbeing, and (c) Altruism" (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 181).

"Guiding Force seemed to best capture responses citing God's will and gifts, a sense of destiny, and more general feelings of being pushed or driven by some unknown force" (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 181). "Personal Fit/Eudemonic Wellbeing reflected a sense of one's job matching one's own specific abilities well" and the accompanying happiness and intrinsic motivation that accompanies a positive match (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 181). "Altruism . . . referenced having a calling as leading to positive outcomes for society in a broad sense, as well as helping certain people specifically" (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 181). Spiritual emerging adults who believe they are called may be able to explain their experiences, which could inform the career development needs.

Calling, as well as the accompanying hope and wellbeing it provides for emerging adults during their transition into adulthood, is a relatively new topic to the academy, even though people have been searching for these things for thousands of years in philosophy and theology (Rehm, 1990). Research on spirituality in student affairs has grown since 2000, but it has mostly

focused on either trying to define concepts of spirituality or the spirituality of faculty (Astin et al., 2011). It was only as recent as 2010 when the American College Personnel Association (a leading student affairs association) launched a commission for spirituality, faith, religion, and meaning among college students.

As academic interest in calling and spirituality has increased in the past 10–15 years, questions have risen about the role of student service professionals in student spiritual development (Astin et al., 2011; Small, 2015). In particular, career services providers are being asked to figure out how to facilitate the incorporation of calling into vocational choice (Cunningham, 2016). The modern interest in spirituality, career, and calling in public universities can be traced to the work of the Lily Endowment during the beginning of the 21st century. The Lily Endowment, an Indianapolis-based, private family foundation, "encouraged colleges and universities to develop programs" to talk to students about work from the standpoint of purposeful vocation and personal values (Cunningham, 2016, p. 10).

Through the Lily Foundation's "Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation," private and public universities began engaging in "the current conversation about the purpose of American higher education" that addressed "the increasing desire on the part of undergraduate students to reflect on their futures" (Cunningham, 2016, p. 12).

This was a change from the norm. Many colleges have been preoccupied with tasks that seem "more immediate and practical sounding" than forcing students to think about their futures, especially the "thought processes that focus primarily on the world of work" (Cunningham, 2016, p. 3). The work of the Lily Foundation laid the groundwork for talking about spirituality and calling in public universities, especially in career exploration and vocational decision-making.

Obviously, some "institutions are better than others at providing students with the time, space, and necessary tools for undertaking" the reflection needed to feel prepared for a purposeful vocation, but many are most likely not ready to "ultimately inspire young people to explore their callings in life" (Cunningham, 2016, p. 6). Regardless of current limitations, "vocational exploration is an essential element of the undergraduate experience" when emerging adults are able to "reflect on their vocational choices and think about the shape their future lives will take" (Cunningham, 2016, p. 19). The challenge for career services providers, then, may be to better understand how students who believe they are called are discerning their calling, exploring careers, and choosing a meaningful vocation.

Problem Statement

For over 100 years, career services providers have helped young people come to vocational *conclusions of fit* by encouraging them to know themselves, learn about different lines of work, and use true reasoning on the relationships between these two groups of facts (Parsons, 1909). Career services providers hope to enable young people to take control of their lives and find work that they feel adapted to, by thinking about who they are and how they fit in with community life via work. This process of making work-related conclusions of fit is especially important for emerging adults (ages 18–25), who are in an exploratory phase of career development and in search of a vocational identity (Arnett, 2014; Super, 1976).

In the past decade, researchers have studied emerging adults to discover how *calling* and *spirituality* are leveraged during the exploratory phase (Astin et al., 2011; Duffy & Dik, 2013). This is due in large part to the work of the Lily Endowment during the early 2000s, which provided over $200 million in research dollars to colleges and universities for Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (Cunningham, 2016). Since that time, over 40 papers have

been published on calling, and it has been shown that many emerging adults are either interested in calling or are experiencing a calling, and that calling provides many positive career-related benefits (Dik et al., 2008; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2013). Simultaneously, academic interest in spirituality has increased, with researchers looking at the impact of spirituality on student development (Astin et al., 2011; Tisdell, 2001).

For emerging adults, a spiritual calling can provide a sense of purpose in work and encourage pro-social values, as well as help young people create a vocational identity (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2012). When emerging adults make conclusions of fit based on their calling, they may interpret work as "why I am here" or "who I am," which provides deep motivation, happiness, and well-being (Cunningham, 2016; Hirschi, 2011; Seligman, 2002). Central to the concept of calling is the belief there is a caller, which is most often identified as a Higher Power or guiding force (Dik & Duffy, 2012; Hunter et al., 2010). Emerging adults who want to live a calling believe they were created to complete career development phases and find a good fit in community life so they can help others and make a difference with their work (Rehm, 1990; VanZanten Gallagher, 2007). This pursuit of destiny is often undertaken out of a sense of obligation to a Higher Power (Rehm, 1990; VanZanten Gallagher, 2007).

What my study contributes to the emerging calling and spirituality literature is a qualitative study of emerging adults who believe they are called and are exploring careers at a public university. Although calling as a characteristic and concept has been studied among college students, there have been "relatively few qualitative studies" on this population, and it is unknown if there are any studies that have specifically examined the career decision-making process of emerging adults who believe they are called (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 179). Exploring the lived experiences of spiritual emerging adults in order to better understand how they make

vocational decisions could help career services providers to better support college students who are trying to answer a call.

What researchers have learned about calling over the past 10 or 15 years, from surveys of both attitudes and behaviors, literature reviews of concepts, and identifying themes, has provided the foundation for a discussion about addressing a spiritual calling in career development, mainly because so many emerging adults either desire or experience one (Dik & Duffy, 2012; Duffy & Dik, 2013). Since research has shown that so many college students either *want* to choose a career or *are* choosing a career based on a sense of spirituality or calling, it is important that career services providers understand how emerging adults who believe they are called are exploring careers and making vocational decisions (Duffy & Dik, 2013).

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this phenomenology was to describe and interpret the lived experiences of emerging adults at a public university who believe they are called by a Higher Power, have explored careers, and have made vocational choices. I have described, analyzed, and interpreted their subjective experiences of (a) being called by a Higher Power, (b) exploring careers, and (c) making conclusions of fit between their calling and potential careers. The following research questions were investigated:

1. How do emerging adults experience a calling from a Higher Power?
2. What career exploration experiences have they had?
3. What do they believe about how their calling fits with a potential career?

Conceptual Framework and Narrative

For my conceptual framework, I imagined the population under study as emerging adults who believe they are called (who are in the larger population of all American emerging adults),

and who are transitioning from pre-adult roles to adult roles, especially the role of full-time worker. I suggest that emerging adults who believe they are called are preparing to take on the adult role of full-time worker in a unique way from other groups in the emerging adult population. Specifically, as emerging adults who believe they are called are considering making the transition from student to full-time worker, they are looking for guidance from a Higher Power to inform their vocational choices.

I used Parsons' (1909) framework for wise vocational decision-making to explore the experiences of emerging adults who believe they are called (see Figure 1). Parsons' vocational decision-making framework suggests that emerging adults who are preparing to enter the workforce should obtain *knowledge of self* and *knowledge of work*, and then use *clear reasoning* to make a *conclusion of fit* between these two groups of facts. Using a decision-making narrative to explore calling, I believed, would help me capture the essence of calling among emerging adults who are preparing to take on the role of a worker.

I added *calling* to Parsons' (1909) category of *self-knowledge*. A calling is when someone experiences "a transcendent summons, especially as originating beyond the self" (Dik & Duffy, 2012). I believed that the participants would gain knowledge of self through a transcendent summons from a Higher Power, and by placing calling within a vocational decision-making framework, I hoped to understand if and how the participants in my study had found a conclusion of fit between their calling and a career. This search for conclusion of fit is important, from a vocational psychology perspective, because "discerning a calling is, after all, fundamentally about finding and establishing a fit" (Dik & Duffy, 2012, p. 112).

Population of Emerging Adults
Transitioning to Full-time Work

-Those Who Feel Called by a
Higher Power

-Others

1. Lived Experiences of Being Called by a Higher Power

(Black Box)

3. Conclusion of Fit From Vocational Decision-making

(Black Box)

2. Lived Experiences of Career Exploration

(Black Box)

Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

My conceptual framework suggests that the experiences of emerging adults who believe

they are called can be explored using an enhanced version of Parsons' (1909) theory of wise

vocational decision-making where *calling* is integrated into *knowledge of self*.

Before conducting my study, based on the calling literature, I was hopeful that

participants would be able to tell me about their calling. However, I was concerned that the

calling described by participants would be little more than a recitation of ideas they had heard

from a religious leader or their parents. This was also a concern among some of the faculty in my

doctoral program (not on my committee, just in my program). One faculty member suggested

that emerging adults who felt called were simply "primed" to believe in a calling. In other words,

there was no actual calling, just a use of language and influence from authorities. This was

echoed by another faculty member, who suggested that social-cognitive theory was the best way

for understanding calling because it would allow me to explore how family, social groups, and other relevant associations had influenced the participants' beliefs. The concerns raised by these faculty members (along with my own concerns about participants feeling religious pressure to give the "right" answers) made me wonder how participants would describe calling.

Another concern was one expressed in the literature and by practitioners: traditional college graduates do not have an adequate "knowledge of work" (Clydesdale, 2015; Cunningham, 2016). This lack of work knowledge could be for a multitude of reasons, such as not spending enough time in career exploration during their university experiences, not retaining the expertise of career services providers while in school, not considering how they will use their degree in the workplace after graduation, and so on (Clydesdale, 2015; Cunningham, 2016). However, in contradiction to the concern about the general lack of career readiness among college graduates, studies on calling have demonstrated that college students who believe they are called are more likely to have planned their career, have vocational clarity, and have developed career self-efficacy (Dik et al., 2008; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2013). I was not sure where my sample would fall on the scale of work knowledge.

From my perspective as a workforce educator, I believed that if the participants in my study felt called and wanted to interact with the world in a spiritual way, but they lacked knowledge about the world of work and hadn't thought about how to live their call by getting a job and building a professional career, there would be cause for concern. I also believed there would be a cause for concern if the essence of calling among the participants was nothing more than language and social influence (meaning, they gave spiritual interpretations to mundane events using a religious lens), since this might indicate a naïveté in career readiness and a lack of agency. As I designed my study, I was curious if my data would show that emerging adults who

believe they are called had yet to consider how they would live their calling after graduation in a job as a worker, and if calling would be little more than theological and ecclesiastical traditions.

Methods Overview

For my study, I used a phenomenological approach, which "seeks to explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individual lived experience" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 19). A phenomenological approach enabled me to explore how spiritual emerging adults at a public university are discerning a call from a Higher Power, exploring careers, and making vocational decisions. Describing and analyzing the experiences of traditional college students who believe they are called allowed me to better understand their thoughts, emotions, and concerns, while also giving them a voice in the literature.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews. The majority of the interviews were conducted in a private room at a public library (two were conducted on a bench outside of a library). I used purposeful sampling to interview emerging adults who self-identified as sensing a spiritual calling, meaning they believed a Higher Power had provided them with guidance for adult roles, including work. I gained access to these types of emerging adults through on-campus spiritual groups and an online professional social networking site. I sampled 12 students, seven females and five males (to reflect the gender demographics of my site). The sample was chosen based on participants who expressed an interest in learning more about my study and came to a scheduled meeting. I interviewed the first 12 participants who met for a scheduled meeting. I conducted face-to-face interviews with each participant and sent a follow-up question via email. In the interviews, I asked questions about their calling, their career exploration experiences, and their opinions about how calling and career fit together. During the interviews I used an audio-recording device.

Once I completed interviews with all 12 participants, I transcribed the data. I then used a phenomenological approach to identify themes among the participants. A phenomenology assumes "there is an *essence* to an experience that is shared with others who have also had that experience" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 20). Using this assumption to explore a phenomenon, "the experiences of those who participated in the study—those who have had a similar experience—are analyzed as unique expressions and then compared to identify the essence" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 20). I compared the data gathered from interviews in order to find the essence of the phenomenon under study, and then used my knowledge of the literature to identify themes among the participants. After comparing participants and identifying themes, I described my findings about the shared experiences of the participants and analyzed the essence. My findings revealed the lifeworld of the participants in my study.

Chapter 1 Closure

Although there have been many studies over the past 10–15 years that have demonstrated the positive relationship between calling and work and have shown that emerging adults have their own concepts of spirituality and calling, few (if any) studies have described how college students have used clear reasoning between a spiritual calling and knowledge of work to make mature career decisions based on a reasonable conclusion of fit between what they know about themselves and what they know about building a career. My study provides insights into the lived experiences of spiritual undergraduates at a public university who believe they are called and have explored careers. My study also gives spiritual college students a voice by revealing their lifeworld and suggesting that authenticity in student development is an important aspect of providing effective career services.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this phenomenology was to describe and interpret the lived experiences of emerging adults at a public university who believe they are called by a Higher Power, who have explored careers, and who have tried to find a fit between a calling and a career. The premise for my study is that spiritual experiences and religious beliefs can be leveraged by college students in career development (Astin et al., 2011; Dik & Duffy, 2012). Career services providers may be able to use this study to enhance the vocational guidance that is provided to spiritual students.

In order to better understand the choices of college students who are attempting to leverage their spiritual experiences and religious beliefs when making vocational decisions, I conducted a literature review of human development, higher education, career development, flourishing, wellness, spirituality, and calling. In doing so, I attempted to have a conversation about calling within the context of vocational psychology using a workforce development lens. Some noteworthy terms are as follows:

- *Awakening:* "A sense of wonder, awe, and connections to things perceived to be greater than [the self]" (Blumenkrantz & Hong, 2008, p. 99). This trait is relevant because "most students are searching for deeper meaning in their lives, looking for ways to cultivate their inner selves, seeking to be compassionate and charitable, and clarifying how they feel about the many issues confronting their society and the

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global community" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 4). An awakening can be an impetus for pursuing *ultimacy* and *sagacious competency*.

- *Belief:* I use *belief* interchangeably with *faith* (see definition below).

- *Calling:* "A transcendent summons, especially as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating purpose or meaningfulness and that holds others-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation" (Dik & Duffy, 2012). The transcendent summons, historically, has been ascribed to a Higher Power.

- *Career Development:* Pietrofesa and Splete (1975, cited in Conlon, 2004) stated that "career development is an ongoing process that occurs over the lifespan and includes home, school and community experiences related to an individual's self-concept and its implementation in lifestyle as one lives life and makes a living" (p. 779).

- *Career Readiness:* The National Association of Colleges and Employers (2017) states "the career readiness of college graduates is an important issue in higher education, in the labor market, and in the public arena" and defines career readiness as "the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace."

- *Career Services Provider:* The National Career Development Association (NCDA, 2017) defines a career services provider, in part, as "a person who works in any career development setting or who incorporates career development information or skills in their work with students, adults, clients, employees, or the public." In higher education, although a career center, career counselors, and/or career advisors may be primarily tasked with providing career services, other professionals (such as personal

counselors, academic advisors, and faculty) may also provide career services.

Competency areas for a career services provider, according to the NCDA, include

helping skills, knowledge of labor markets, career development models, and the

ability to work with diverse groups.

- *Emerging Adulthood:* Emerging adulthood is a period between 18–25 years old when

    young people are exploring their world, constructing an identity, and testing

    opportunities (Arnett, 2014). This is a modern theory of human development with a

    focus on young people in post-industrial countries who are putting off traditional

    adults roles (such as marriage and parenting) in order to pursue an education and

    learn about themselves and society.

- *Faith:* "Think of faith as a *way of knowing*. It may also help you to think of faith as a

    way of *construing* or *interpreting* one's experience. . . . Faith is that *knowing* or

    construing by which persons or communities recognize themselves as related to the

    ultimate conditions of their existence. . . . It is knowing or construing in which

    cognitive (the "rational") is inextricably intertwined with affectivity or valuing (the

    "passional"). . . . Faith is always relational. It is the response to one's sense of

    relatedness to the ultimate conditions and depths of existence. It is always bi-polar in

    the sense that faith is the binding of the self to the Transcendent. It is the awareness,

    the intuition, the conviction, of a relatedness to something or someone more than the

    mundane" (Fowler, 1974, pp. 207–208).

- *Flourishing:* The potential to flourish is society's (often untapped) capacity for

    happiness and well-being (Seligman, 2012). The elements of flourishing, according to

Seligman (2012), are Positive emotion, Engagement, positive Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA).

- *Higher Power:* In line with modern vocational psychology research, I do not "use language that recasts 'god' as a metaphor for awe-evoking mysteries of science [or a metaphor for nature], [instead of] an eternal being who cares for people on earth" (Dik & Duffy, 2012, p. 10). Instead, I recognize and respect the lifeworld of those with faith who believe in a Higher Power. Students who believe in a Higher Power often describe their faith as an "intimate, daily-lived relationship of love and guidance" that forms the basis of a "two-way transcendent relationship" (Miller, 2013, pp. 335–336). I recognize the difference between Theist and nontheistic religions, and submit that *Higher Power* is a generally acceptable generic moniker for a divine source of some kind, regardless of religious affiliation.

- *Religion:* Broadly speaking, *religion* refers to a set of beliefs and practices intended to aid the religious practitioner in relating to a transcendent dimension of existence. In this study, I assume religion can be analyzed using "Religious Studies, also known as Comparative Religion, the Science of Religion, or the academic study of religion, [which is] is a part of the human sciences, and engages in the analysis of cross-cultural religious phenomena" ("Religious Studies," 2017) and "a philosophical ["including metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics and value theory, the philosophy of language, philosophy of science, law, sociology, politics, history"] exploration of ["alternative beliefs about God, Brahman, the sacred, the varieties of religious experience, the interplay between science and religion, the challenge of non-religious philosophies, the nature and scope of good and evil, religious treatments of birth,

history, and death, and other substantial terrain"] that involves fundamental questions

about our place in the cosmos and about our relationship to what may transcend the

cosmos" ("Philosophy of Religion," 2013).

- *Sagacious Competency:* The ability to find and use wisdom (Forbes & Martin, 2004).

  It is way a way of learning that includes six main aspects: "freedom (psychological

  freedom/

  inner liberation, independence), good judgment (similar to self-governance and

  autonomy), meta-learning, social ability, refining values, and self-knowledge"

  (Forbes & Martin, 2004, p. 4).

- *Spirit:* The inner life, "the source of the capacity for creativity, the ability to grasp the

  sacred, and the capacity for love, intimacy, harmony, growth, compassion, goodness,

  and optimism" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 602).

- *Spirituality:* Spirituality includes "three main themes: the further development of self-

  awareness, a sense of interconnectedness, and a relationship to a Higher Power"

  (Tisdell, 2001, p. 2).

- *Ultimacy:* "The goal that students develop to the highest extent thought possible for a

  human . . . either through religious (becoming enlightened, satori, etc.), psychological

  (such as Maslow's 'self-actualization,' Jung's 'unus mundus,' or Roger's 'fully

  functioning person'), or some other unidentified means" (Forbes & Martin, 2004, p.

  4).

- *Vocation:* Historically, a vocation would "indicate God's calling, bidding, or

  summons. . . . A person called to a vocation was inspired by God to demonstrate

  talents, the manifestation of which gave evidence of the spiritual source and

contributed to the quality of the social spirit" (Rehm, 1990, p. 115). A vocation can be a career that provides a sense of fulfillment via life purpose, helping others, and using talents. Vocation can also apply to non-spiritual work, but its use implies that a person has chosen a field and devoted themselves to it (Parsons, 1909). Parsons (1909) wrote, "No step in life, unless it may be the choice of a husband or wife, is more important than the choice of vocation" (p. 3).

- *Vocational Guidance:* "The process of helping a person to develop and accept an integrated and adequate picture of himself and of his role in the world of work, to test this concept against reality, and to convert it into a reality, with satisfaction to himself and society" (Super, 1950). Super's definition can apply to a non-spiritual career.

- *Whole-Person Education:* Whole-person education is an approach to developing the total person through a humanistic philosophy, which is a framework for human development that suggests people have innate strengths and untapped potential, and a primary purpose for existing is to self-actualize (Dirkx, 1997; Schlitz, Vieten, & Amorok, 2007; Seligman, 2002).

- *Workforce Development:* "Workforce development has evolved to describe any one of a relatively wide range of national and international policies and programmes related to learning for work" (Jacobs & Hawley, 2009, p. 2537). "Workforce development represents a greater awareness about the connectedness of systems. Societies rely on their major institutions, such as schools, community colleges, universities, government agencies, unions, and organizations, among others, to acquire human competence" (Jacobs, 2014, p. 13).

Emerging Adults and Higher Education

Emerging adulthood is a phase of human development only recently observed and labeled, especially in developed countries (Arnett, 2014). Emerging adulthood is the period between ages 18–25 when young people are exploring their world, constructing an identity, and testing opportunities (Arnett, 2014). What makes this label distinct from previous concepts of the transitional stage between youth and adulthood is its recognition that young people are opting out of traditional adult roles (i.e., getting married, having children, purchasing a home, and starting a career) in favor of spending more time getting an education, exploring the self, and taking advantage of new freedoms (Arnett, 2014). Due to changing gender roles, values, and economies, society has largely sanctioned this new period of human development (Arnett, 2014). There are three main features of emerging adulthood:

- It is the age of *identity exploration*

- It is the most *self-focused* age of life

- It is the age of *possibilities*, when hopes flourish.

(Arnett, 2014, p. 8)

Emerging adulthood is a time when young people try to figure out who they are, what they want, and what is possible. As early as the 1970s, this freedom was not available to young adults (Arnett, 2014). Young people were expected to marry early, have children, and begin careers in their early 20s. Now, on average, people are suspending adult roles and putting off traditional cultural responsibilities until their late 20s, sometimes even until their early 30s (Arnett, 2014; Jay, 2012). Today's emerging adults are no longer "prevented from using their teens and twenties for exploration," and they are allowed (or expected) to "move into adulthood gradually, at their own pace" (Arnett, 2014, p. 7).

During the period of emerging adulthood, young people are figuring out who they are, what they want to do with their lives, and how they want to participate in society (Arnett, 2014). They explore vocational identities, asking themselves questions like, "What kind of work am I good at?" and "What kind of work would I find satisfying for the long term?" (Arnett, 2014, p. 9). This type of self-focused identity exploration helps emerging adults "develop skills for daily living, gain a better understanding of who they are and what they want from life, and build a foundation for their adult lives" (Arnett, 2014, p. 13). The potential for the period of emerging adulthood is that it can prepare young people for fulfilling and conscious participation with life and work.

The period of emerging adulthood is important because it lays the foundation for the rest of the adult life: "In a rare study of life-span development . . . [it was found] while important events took place from life to death, those that determined the years ahead were most heavily concentrated during the twenty-something years" (Jay, 2012, p. xv). Even so, U.S. universities may not adequately prepare emerging adults to explore their vocational identity, examine their work and life values, and decide how to transform their hopes into economic opportunities and fulfilling adult roles.

Incoming college students want to understand how to make the leap into adult responsibilities, especially financial independence and work opportunities (Cunningham, 2016). The catch is that many "high school seniors graduate and come to universities with a remarkably materialistic view of what a college education can provide" (Bok, 2010, p. 166). Despite the potential of the emerging adult phase, young people may have an oversimplified purpose for attending college: a college degree leads to a better paying job and higher quality of life. This concept of college is lacking because it assumes a simple transaction (college degree = better

life) without acknowledging the necessary process of identity, values, and meaning development,

let alone an appreciation of adult responsibilities, including work and citizenship (Bok, 2010;

Clydesdale, 2015).

After reflecting on the state of U.S. universities, the former president of Harvard

University concluded that "making a lot of money [has become] the preeminent reason for

attending university" (Bok, 2010, p. 167). This oversimplification of the higher education

experience is partly due to our changing economic and political climate, one where globalization

and economic depressions have caused various university stakeholders to question the value of a

college degree and demand a pay-off for the high costs associated with higher education.

The transactional attitudes of many incoming freshmen represent a dramatic change from

what they were just 50 years ago, when universities were thought of as a place to "develop

values and a meaningful philosophy of life" (Bok, 2010, p. 167). The quid pro quo attitude of

college students is cause for concern because "a majority of freshmen arriving at [university] are

already on the wrong path to a full and satisfying life" (Bok, 2010, p. 167). Unless these attitudes

of emerging adults and, on a larger scale, the attitudes of society, are directly addressed,

universities may be fully unprepared to help guide emerging adults down a meaningful path.

Erik Erikson "conceptualized three primary planes in the human's sequential

development of internal standards for the self. These are the moral plane of childhood, the moral-

ideological plane of adolescence, and the moral-ethical plane of adulthood" (Hoare, 2009,

p. 193). College students, ideally, have developed the moral character traits of trust, autonomy,

initiative, industry, and sense of self through the identity crises of childhood and adolescence,

and (hopefully) are in a psycho-social position to take on adult roles as they develop into ethical

adults (Erikson, 1963). With this life cycle approach in mind, career services providers could help emerging adults create a mature, ethical, adult identity.

The Importance of Guidance

Once freshmen begin their university experience, universities may do an inadequate job of preparing students to take on traditional adulthood roles. Why? There simply isn't enough time: "Whether vocational or not, college majors consume up to half of all the courses students take in college" (Bok, 2010, p. 167). When you consider the amount of general education courses students are expected to take, "there is little time left to accomplish all of the other ambitious aims of a liberal arts education—[such as] preparing for citizenship," developing values, and creating a meaningful life philosophy (Bok, 2010, p. 167). Although universities aim to develop emerging adults into empowered citizens, there is often no "conscious plan to help undergraduates acquire skills and interests to enrich their lives later" (Bok, 2010, p. 167).

The traditional tasks that mark adulthood (i.e., marriage, raising children, completing education, long-term jobs) are seen as self-managed responsibilities and goals where young people "accept responsibility for yourself, make independent decisions, and become financially independent" (Arnett, 2014, p. 15). The period of emerging adulthood is a time when young people make "independent decisions about what kind of person they wish to be and how they wish to live" (Arnett, 2014, p. 16). Not only can young people be guided to become successful adults who can take on traditional roles and provide for themselves, but they can also be encouraged to become ethical citizens. And while learning how to positively impact society as a well-rounded person is the aim of a liberal arts education, some scholars are concerned that the universities may be missing the mark (Clydesdale, 2015; Cunningham, 2016).

Being intentional about exploring opportunities and roles associated with adulthood, and translating that learning into realistic expectations and goals during emerging adulthood, is vital (Clydesdale, 2015; Cunningham, 2016). Many teens and 20-somethings, because of a lack of wise guidance, naively wander through emerging adulthood thinking it is a life phase without consequences, a moment in time that is meant to be glamorized and treasured (Jay, 2012). These same people may experience a rude awakening in their late 20s and early 30s, with feelings that time has passed them by and life has forgotten them, and that no one prepared them to become adults. Those who have not lived with intention during emerging adulthood often feel dismayed because they thought everything would simply come together once their 20s ended (Jay, 2012). It is not enough to simply explore the world; emerging adults also have to "make commitments along the way [in order to] construct stronger identities" (Jay, 2012, p. 7).

An article by Higbee (2002) gives suggestions for how to apply Chickering's Theory of Student Development to student success: Help students develop interpersonal and social competence, help them build their personal confidence, help them become aware of their feelings and trust their emotions, and help them become autonomous. Emerging adults, during their developmental period of hopefulness and possibilities, and in light of their transactional attitudes about universities, have to be guided to take on adult roles successfully. They must learn that resources are not limitless, and there are relatively few possibilities in which they will feel fulfilled, authentic, and productive (Jay, 2012).

Because the foundation for traditional college students is laid during their time in higher education, proper guidance is paramount. It is during these formative years at university when students should become "career ready," which the National Association of Colleges and Employers (2017) defines as "the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that

broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace." With these stakes in mind, some researchers are suggesting that universities should become more intentional about helping emerging adults to transition into adulthood and find a vocation (Clydesdale, 2015; Cunningham, 2016).

Preparing Students for the World of Work

Upon graduation, most graduates will participate in economies as workers as they compete to sell their labor to firms for income. As the nation's workforce, the ability of graduates to effectively trade their labor for wages is based on several factors, including supply, demand, pricing, skills and knowledge, and government regulation (Mankiw, 2011; Mathew, 2013; McConnell, Brue, & Flynn, 2008; O'Sullivan, 2008). Traditionally, these economic decisions have been viewed as a rational exchange between buyers and sellers, as each is guided by self-interest and tries to maximize utility (Mankiw, 2011; Mathew, 2013; McConnell et al., 2008; O'Sullivan, 2008). However, this traditional view is being expanded on the basis that the objective methods of economics do not take into account some subjective issues of work, such as well-being.

Economies include more than markets and trade; they also include people. The New Economics Foundation (2016), a leading think tank on progressive economics, believes "a successful society is one where economic activity delivers high levels of sustainable wellbeing for all its citizens." The New Economics Foundation suggests that a successful society would ensure sustainable well-being for all citizens, which is achieved through both economic opportunities and a concern for personal mental health.

The World Health Organization (2016) claims that

mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

If the New Economic Foundation's mandate for sustainable well-being is to be followed, and the World Health Organization's definition of mental health is valued, then there is an opportunity for higher education to prepare emerging adults to compete in the workforce while also promoting personal and social well-being.

What does sustainable well-being look like, and how can it be measured as part of a holistic approach to economic analysis? Another progressive economic think tank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2016), has created The Better Life Initiative, which asks, "Are our lives getting better? How can policies improve our lives? Are we measuring the right things?" OECD's initiative measures personal well-being and economic progress in nations with the Better Life Index, which is a tool for holistic economic analysis. The index measures traditional economic criteria, such as housing, income, jobs, and education, while also adding topics related to well-being, such as civic engagement, health, life satisfaction, and work life balance. The idea behind the Better Life Index is to help economic stakeholders not only to measure objective criteria for earning potential (such as a college degree), but also to look at more subjective criteria, such as asking if people are satisfied with life, if their work allows them to participate in family and recreational activities, and if they feel healthy.

To put it another way, the Nobel Laureate in Economics, Edmund Phelps (2013), states, "Few would deny that lives of earning and wealth accumulation do not offer the gratification and pride that lives of creation and innovation offer" (p. 287). A holistic economic philosophy simply

recognizes what we all know to be true: Money doesn't buy happiness, and young people, when they are unaware of how to pick and build a satisfying career, may struggle to find their place in a competitive global economy, especially if they have not been given the tools to cultivate personal mental health and pro-social attitudes.

In light of the modern public health attention to personal well-being and sustainable economies, a holistic workforce development strategy is one where actors and institutions choose to demonstrate concern for workers and proactively provide time and experiences to consider human development and potential (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2011). Helping the future workforce consider human development and potential requires more than a transaction between a student and a university (i.e., money and time for a degree); it involves transformational leadership and discussions on morality (Burns, 1978).

These deeper issues of social relationships within the world of work provide a pathway to a new economy where workers can feel a sense of communal belonging and personal meaning (Senge et al., 2011). People feel as if they belong when they are accepted for who they are and when they are challenged to reach their full potential as an individual. People feel as if they have opportunities for growth when they can examine their values and figure out how to live authentically through applied learning. And people feel secure when they are able to connect with others in a kind and loving way. This sense of purpose, morality, and connectedness is driving the conversation about tomorrow's economic participants (Senge, 2011). When thinking about economies in a holistic way, happiness becomes as important as market competition.

Emerging Adults, Work, and Happiness

Happiness is an important measurement of the productivity and potential of a workforce: "Happy people are more optimistic, more sociable, and more enterprising, and they tend to be

more successful in their private economic and social activities" (Frey, 2010, p. 10). Not surprising, then, is how "economic policy is concerned, in part, with how institutional conditions on happiness . . . affect individual wellbeing" (Frey, 2010, p. 12).

When preparing students for the world of work, universities could help students think through institutional conditions on happiness. Research suggests that "work can . . . enhance general health and wellbeing . . . by providing financial security, promoting social participation and improving overall quality of life" (Walker & John, 2012, p. 118). When it comes to happiness and work, universities have an opportunity to help students think holistically about how jobs affect their health and well-being, and they are in a unique position to provide students with tools for considering financial security, social participation, and quality of life.

On a more aggregate level, work can contribute to public well-being when the workforce is empowered to consider its health and happiness. As cited in Walker and John (2012), one study found that work can be good for enhancing public well-being for the following reasons:

- Employment is an important means for obtaining material assets for engagement in society;

- Work fulfills psychosocial needs;

- Work defines identity, social roles, and status within society; and

- Employment and social economic status are factors in social differentials in physical and mental health and mortality.

(Walker & Walker, 2012, p. 118)

Work is vital to personal well-being, and public well-being is enhanced when workers are happy: "As work forms a significant part of life experience, it potentially has a substantial impact on our physical and psychological health—and, ultimately, our wellbeing" (Walker & John,

2012, p. 115). In light of the importance of work on adult happiness and health, universities could take on the responsibility of helping students consider what kind of work will make them happy, how to engage in life experiences that contribute to well-being, and how to judge whether or not the requirements of work are contributing to their personal health.

If universities have an opportunity to help students explore issues of happiness and play a unique role in getting the workforce to consider issues of public health, the question arises as to how effective universities are at achieving these ideals. It is the opinion of some researchers and practitioners in higher education that the happiness of graduates is fortuitous at best (Bok, 2010). Graduates may have picked up some satisfying interests and healthy habits during their university experience, but the slightly increased levels of happiness in college graduates is "largely due to the fact that people who go to college get better-paid jobs [and not] because universities have given them the breadth of interests and capabilities to live richer, more fulfilling lives" (Bok, 2010, p. 169).

As some researchers and professionals are asking whether obtaining a degree and good-paying job is the best mission for higher education, and whether these goals are really in the best interest of society, the idea of career development itself is evolving: "Recent shifts within the nature of work . . . [are] making the link between career development and human development more obvious" (Pipkins, Rooney, & Jaunarajs, 2014, p. 35). It is becoming less acceptable to separate the private from the public, and modern career theories are being developed to address these social shifts (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Hall, 2004). People are making meaning of work, and they want jobs that are fulfilling.

Making meaning of work is an important part of the emerging adult phase. The "monumental task of emerging adulthood is coming to terms with what consistently and

dependably unites all the disparate parts of one's life" (Siner, 2015, p. 22). Universities could help emerging adults integrate their personal and social lives into a whole identity that allows them to effectively participate in the world of work while they build a life of happiness and health. "This task of learning how to feel at home in a complicated and sometimes alienating world [requires] a certain type of nurturing environment" (Siner, 2015, pp. 22–23). What could be more nurturing than an *alma mater*?

As emerging adults, traditional students are in a stage of development that "consists of probing commitments, where people realize that meaning is relative and they begin to assert their own voices" (Siner, 2015, p. 23). Universities, then, have a real opportunity to nurture the voice of emerging adults and assist them as they find relative meaning. This empowerment will become important later in life as emerging adults struggle to find their place in the world as adult citizens and workers.

Career Development History and Theory

Helping young people reflect on who they are, explore the world of work, and then make vocational decisions that will lead to personal happiness can be the goal of career development (Hall, 2004; Parsons, 1909). Historically, career development theory has sided with modern progressive economic and public health appeals in that the student or client is seen as important, and the life-impacting outcomes of their career development decisions are considered (Hall, 2004; Parsons, 1909). The push from business, government, parents, and students, however, may muddy the conversation about meaning within career development (Bok, 2010; Hall, 2004).

Over the past 100 years, meaning and self-awareness have been incorporated into career development and student services. Williamson (1935, 1936) suggested that people perform best at work when the job matches their abilities. Frankl (1984) wrote about how meaning and a

search for purpose contribute to human motivation. Super (1957) suggested phases of human development, where adolescents develop a self-concept and young adults explored careers in order to implement a career self-concept. Holland (1973) claimed vocational choices were best made by finding satisfaction through matching a worker's personality to a complementary work environment. Savickas (2005) suggested that "students should approach career choice tasks with concern for their futures, a sense of personal control over their careers, [and] the curiosity to experiment with possible selves and explore social opportunities" (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011, p. 357). And Hall (2004) suggested a Protean career theory, which "describes a career orientation in which the person, not the organization, is in charge, where the person's core values are driving career decisions, and where the main success criteria are subjective (psychological success)" (p. 1).

Career development in student services has embraced the creation of a vocational identity through applied learning and clear reasoning since its inception in the early 1900s, and it has often included a discussion on fulfillment (Hall, 2004; Parsons, 1909). As the shift in public attitudes about universities has taken place over the past couple decades, however, it is argued that identity and meaning are losing their place in career services (Clydesdale, 2015; Cunningham, 2016). This change, fueled by important issues such as economic changes and the return on investment for the high cost of a college degree, can be discussed in the context of career theory in order to offset social pressures. Although vocational guidance is about helping people find and keep a job, it is also concerned with helping people take on work roles in a way that will provide them with satisfaction (Parsons, 1909; Super, 1950).

Vocational guidance began with workforce development, which is a systems approach to education that crosses sectors (Jacobs, 2014). One of the first attempts at workforce development

occurred when the Douglas Commission convened in 1905. The Douglas Commission "consisted of nine citizens who represented the interests of manufacturing, agriculture, education, and labor" (Barlow, 1976, p. 52). By sharing information about the economic environment, and identifying what skills were needed by workers to succeed in the economy, the Douglas Commission laid the foundation for applied learning in career services by suggesting that education should be directly tied to real-world work environments and skill needs.

Around the same time, the Father of Vocational Guidance (as he is now known), Frank Parsons, was doing influential work as well. An "engineer by training and a social reformer by personal commitment," Parsons gave a lecture in 1906 titled "The Ideal City" in which he "discussed the need for young people to receive assistance in the choice of a vocation" (Harris-Bowlsbey & Niles, 2009, p. 14). Interest in Parsons' ideas intensified after his lecture, and in 1909 his work *Choosing a Vocation* was published posthumously. His approach to vocational guidance for youth became known as the "Parsinian approach," which outlined "three steps or requirements for helping someone make an occupational choice":

1. Develop a clear understanding of yourself, aptitudes, abilities, interests, resources, limitations, and other qualities.

2. Develop knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work.

3. Use "true reasoning" on the relations between these two groups.

(Harris-Bowlsbey & Niles, 2009, p. 15)

The Parsinian approach was developed "against a background of social (e.g., rapid urbanization, child labor, immigration), economic (e.g., the rise of industrialism and the growing

division of labor), and scientific (e.g., the emergence of human and behavioral science) changes occurring in the United States" (Harris-Bowlsbey & Niles, 2009, p. 15).

The changes being witnessed by Parsons required career services that could help young workers match their skills with job opportunities. This approach "fit nicely with the positivism and objective methodology" of the 20th century, and it became the foundation for what is now known as the "trait-and-factor" approach to career development (Harris-Bowlsbey & Niles, 2009, p. 15).

The trait-and-factor approach suggests that career development is an exercise of both self-awareness and environmental knowledge, where career adjustment is achieved by better matching worker traits with work demands (Harris-Bowlsbey & Niles, 2009, p. 15). Today, the theory behind most career assessments that help workers find a match between who they are and actual job opportunities can be traced back to the work of Frank Parsons.

Parsons' initial theory suggested that young people would be most happy by finding a job that best suited their values, interests, and skills (Parsons, 1909). As his theory was translated into assessments and administered through advising, over time it lost some of its subjective emphasis and grew into a more objective rate and match method (Zunker, 2012). Assessments regained some of Parson's initial emphasis on self-awareness during the mid-century as researchers began to suggest that more affective, subjective measures and methods should be integrated into career exploration and development (Zunker, 2012, p. 46). In the latter half of the 1900s, career services providers also began to intentionally integrate health, happiness, and well-being into career theories. This led to the self-concept and personal values being more intentionally integrated into career development (Zunker, 2012, p. 46).

Some important developments in career theory happened as researchers gained a renewed interest in subjective measures. Some of these developments came from Donald Super (1976). Super suggested "although the vocational self-concept is only part of the total self-concept, it is the driving force that establishes career patterns one will follow throughout life" (Zunker, 2012, p. 46). With the vocational self-concept being acknowledged as such a preeminent force in human development, an emphasis on nurturing the person for a career, and not just matching the person with a job, returned to center stage.

In the discussion of emerging adults taking on adult roles that provide happiness, Super's observation about the vocational self-concept becomes vitally important to career services providers: "The major practical application here is that individuals implement their self-concepts into careers as a means of self-expression" (Zunker, 2012, p. 46). Super's work suggests that people have a responsibility to decide who they are and what they want to do, and that this vocational self-concept is not so much driven by marketplace demands as it is by personal reflection.

In regard to career development, Super (1976) suggested that emerging adults (ages 15–24) were in an "exploratory stage" where life and career "choices are narrowed but not finalized" (Zunker, 2012, p. 46). Super suggested that the tasks completed during the exploratory career stage are "specification" and "implementation" where emerging adults "move from a tentative vocational preference towards a specific vocational preference" and "complete vocational preferences and enter employment" (Zunker, 2012, p. 47).

As Super's ideas gained ground, it became clear that emerging adults needed more than information about the world of work and objective assessments; they also needed help clarifying their values and making meaning of their experiences. It has even been suggested that "career

development interventions in the 21st century must be directed toward helping people clarify and articulate the meaning they seek to express in their career activities" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009, p. 28). Creating a vocational identity, then, is of tantamount importance during the emerging adult phase because it positions traditional students to express themselves in their future work.

The creation of a vocational identity "refers to the conscious awareness of one's occupational interests, abilities, goals, and values and the structure of meanings in which such self-perception is linked with career roles" (Hirschi & Herrmann, 2012, p. 310). Vocational identity "is a core construct in career and life-span development" (Hirschi & Herrmann, 2012, p. 311), and it is "only reached after a thorough phase of identity crisis and exploration" (Hirschi & Herrmann, 2012, p. 312). Emerging adults are in a phase where they are questioning their identity, exploring their voice, and making meaning. Participating in these activities with conscious awareness can lead to the construction of a positive vocational identity.

Universities that are aware of the long-term psychological importance of creating a positive vocational identity can nurture students as they create one. In traditional college students, emerging adults can intentionally explore the world of work in order to answer "existential questions, and create a vocational identity that produces psychological adjustment, life satisfaction, and a sense of meaning" (Hirschi & Herrmann, 2012, pp. 310–311). By going through this process of self-discovery and work exploration, emerging adults can achieve a vocational identity.

As emerging adults create a vocational identity, they may "be looking for meaning in their lives . . . [they] may also begin to develop pro-social life goals and values and start to reflect on how they may be productive and serve others" (Adams, 2012, p. 65). These traits may

lead to a more satisfied workforce as emerging adults form "a sense of purpose (Damon, Menon, & Bronc, 2003) and skills and abilities that benefit both the self and society (Scales & Benson, 2004)" (Adams, 2012, pp. 65–66).

Some researchers and practitioners would argue that, in light of the kind of challenges awaiting students after graduation, and the natural inclination to search for a sense of purpose during the traditional college-age years, it is the responsibility of universities to prepare "students for career development and decision-making across the lifespan" so they "leave college better equipped to navigate today's complex world of work throughout their professional lives" (Pipkins et al., 2014, p. 36). A lifespan career development philosophy that includes purpose is a higher goal than matching students with a job and teaching them the necessary technical skills for a job via a degree major.

Career development theory recognizes that happiness is an important part of career development (Hall, 2004; Parsons, 1909). The context for careers—economies—can be viewed as a place where workers can find happiness: "Economics is—or should be—about individual happiness. In particular, the question is: How do economic growth, unemployment, inflation, and inequality, as well as institutional factors such as good governance, affect individual wellbeing?" (Frey, 2010, p. 3).

Perceiving the role of happiness in economies requires career services providers and universities that will consider objective measures of success (such as a college degree and income) side-by-side with subjective measures of well-being (such as happiness and health). When holistic methods are applied, emerging adults may be able to better craft vocational identities and learn career development strategies that lead to an identity-based career.

Emerging Adults and Identity-Based Jobs

Emerging adults want more than a job; they "aspire to find a job that will be an expression of their identity" where they can "be a better person" and "hopefully do some good for others" (Arnett, 2014, p. 169). This idealistic concept of work does little to prepare young people for the real world, where finding an identity-based job, one that engages the highest self and allows opportunities for doing good, often takes four years or more to find and is not easily found (Arnett, 2014, p. 173). The aspirations of emerging adults, however idealistic, are noteworthy in that they offer a starting point for developing a vocational identity that can, if combined with wisdom, lead to a fulfilling life.

In his seminal work *Learning for Tomorrow*, educational philosopher Alvin Toffler (1974) wrote, "A significant part of education must be seen as the process by which we enlarge, enrich, and improve an individual's image of the future" (p. 13). In regard to universities and career development, Toffler's mandate informs an educational philosophy where a chief concern is to prepare emerging adults to take on adult roles through processes which "enlarge, enrich, and improve" the vision of young people. This philosophy would require universities "to help learners cope with real-life crises, opportunities and perils" (Toffler, 1974, p. 13).

Using Toffler's (1974) future-based philosophy to undergird happiness-preoccupied career development, one could see where universities could play a key role in shaping a student's vision of the future during the idealistic phase of the modern human life span. If freshmen are coming to college not wanting to invest in developing a life philosophy and creating an identity (because of a misunderstanding of the purpose of higher education), and are, instead, interested in walking through the front doors of the college, picking up a degree on their way out the back door, and then landing an identity-based job, then universities have a real opportunity to help

emerging adults create a more realistic and holistic life plan by showing students how to explore the world of work and develop a manageable career path.

Preparing students to find and keep an identity-based job is one way universities can help emerging adults take charge of their future as they pursue happiness. In one recent study, "people across the globe were asked what makes them successful, happy, and healthy, and what is most important in their lives" (Pipkins et al., 2014, p. 35). The answer? "Of the five essential components of wellbeing (social, physical, community, financial, and career), *career* is the most important predictor of wellbeing" (Pipkins et al., 2014, p. 35). Since the groundwork for choosing a fulfilling career occurs during emerging adulthood, universities can help students think about their future and prepare for real-life work-based opportunities and challenges in an effort to help students enhance the most important predictor of well-being—*their career*.

Looking at the future and learning how to deal with challenges and opportunities can help emerging adults pragmatically think about how to become a moral leader who can actually use work as a way to do good for others. Moral leaders, according to Burns (1978), are people who have a relationship with their followers. Moral leadership occurs when the leader and the follower share "mutual needs, aspirations, and values" (Burns, 1978, p. 4). Burns suggests moral leadership is the highest form of leadership, going above and beyond even transformational qualities. Since many emerging adults want to positively impact society with their work, it may be valuable for students to consider moral leadership during their time at college and in career development.

Enlarging the vision of students to consider moral leadership can create opportunities to reframe jobs by making work an outlet for expression instead of a simple transaction (e.g., labor for wages). The empathy, altruism, and intelligence needed to become a moral leader is

developed when people consider the future and make decisions about how they want to interact with society and economies (Burns, 1978).

Moral leaders take responsibility for their commitments and deliver on promises for social, political, and economic change (Burns, 1978). Since emerging adults want to become better people and do good in the world, it would make sense if they spent some time considering how to act as moral leaders in their careers. If emerging adults do not spend adequate time thinking about how to live their values in work after graduation, the workforce may become a group of workers who can discuss a philosophy of global justice and social responsibility but who are unable to accomplish any actual change:

> The ultimate test of moral leadership is its capacity to transcend the claims of the multiplicity of everyday wants and needs and expectations, to respond to the higher levels of moral development, and to relate leadership behavior—its roles, choices, style, commitments—to a set of reasoned, relatively explicit, conscious values. (Burns, 1978, p. 46)

Preparing students to be global citizens who are aware of their responsibilities and impact on communities has been a main theme for many future-oriented educators (Braun, 1983; Reimers, 2009; Watras, 2010), and its importance was demonstrated by the title of the 1993 annual meeting for the Association for Continuing Higher Education: "A Call to Consciousness: Continuing Education for a Global Perspective." Being moral leaders implies that people are concerned about more than transactions or objective success; they are also concerned about public well-being. Modern career theories suggest that moral leadership can be an integral part of career development (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Hall, 2004).

Whole-Person Education

The process of encouraging emerging adults to become moral leaders is grounded in a philosophy of *holism*, which is a "philosophy which considers the whole-person within the larger context of the individual's life. The wisdom of [holism] honors the interdependent relationship between body, mind, spirit and community" (Center for Successful Aging, n.d.). Holism, or *whole-person education*, embraces the task of creating moral leaders and seeks to help students find pathways toward personal wellness and community engagement (Dirkx, 1997; Seligman, 2002).

Whole-person education is an approach to developing the total person through a humanistic philosophy. In this study, I am not using the term *humanistic* to signify a denial of the supernatural or the Divine (as it is sometimes used), but as a term that signifies a paradigm of human development where the innate strengths, goodness, untapped potential, and desire to self-actualize found in humans is celebrated and supported (Dirkx, 1997; Seligman, 2002). Humanism seeks to promote personal growth by intentionally fostering emotional, spiritual, and affective development in order to help students achieve personal and social maturity (Combs, 1981; Valett, 1977). "Humanistic education maintains that what students experience about themselves and their world is far too important for education to overlook" (Combs, 1981, p. 449). Humanist, whole-person education

1. Accepts the learner's needs and purposes and develops experiences and programs around the unique potential of the learner;

2. Facilitates self-actualization and strives to develop in all persons a sense of personal adequacy;

3. Fosters acquisition of basic skills necessary for living in a multicultured society, including academic, personal, interpersonal, communicative, and economic proficiency;

4. Personalizes educational decisions and practices (to this end it includes students in the processes of their own education via democratic involvement at all levels of implementation);

5. Recognizes the primacy of human feelings and uses personal values and perceptions as integral factors in educational processes;

6. Develops a learning climate that nurtures learning environments perceived by involved individuals as challenging, understanding, supportive, exciting, and free from threat; and

7. Develops in learners genuine concern and respect for the worth of others and skill in conflict resolution.

(Combs, 1981, p. 446)

Whole-person education facilitates student-centered learning. It believes people have potential, and that their potential comes from simply being human, and that being human is reason enough to respect and honor the individual (as opposed to more teacher-centered philosophies that claim respect and honor are deserved only by those in certain positions or with certain credentials). Whole-person education transcends the knowledge-based paradigm of academics in order to explore issues of emotion, experience, spirit, and relationships (Combs, 1981).

Whole-person education seeks to develop the values, consciousness, spirituality, emotions, and intuition of students and seeks to help them engage with the world in powerful

ways while promoting personal wellness (Richards, 1980; Watts, 1982). Whole-person education is a type of learning where students develop the affective and cognitive domains, build character, and improve their intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Integrating a whole-person approach into university career development can more fully prepare students to live well and flourish after graduation.

Some of the issues tackled by whole-person education, as outlined in a recent special issue of *The British Journal of Guidance & Counseling*, could include the impact of fathers, sexual orientation, public and private identity, emotional well-being, resilience, and the "supreme importance of 'relationship' in everything that a school does to promote person, social and emotional development" (Best, 2008). These issues introduce soft-skills, work ethic and ethics, and character into the discussion of career preparation, which are topics which many young adults in the workforce currently lack (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011). By addressing these issues in the context of career, students are able to examine their values and behavior and make decisions about how they want to more fully engage with the world around them.

Whole-person education is an attempt to help students become "all rounded" by cultivating their "ethics and values, intellect, physical fitness, social skills, and aesthetics according to their individual strengths . . . [in hopes] that students will become lifelong learners and critical thinkers who are innovative and able to change" (Kwok-Wah, 2011, p. 55). This type of education seeks to nurture the physical, social, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of humanity (Berdahl, 1995). Whole-person education is an intentional cultivation of the entire human being in order to produce high-functioning workers, family members, and citizens. This type of

education positions workers to contemplate their health, relationships, and achievements across the lifespan by teaching them to find and use wisdom.

Sagacious competency, or the ability to find and use wisdom, is a hallmark of whole-person education (Forbes & Martin, 2004). Seeking wisdom is a way of learning that includes six main aspects: "freedom (psychological freedom/inner liberation, independence), good judgment (similar to self-governance and autonomy), meta-learning, social ability, refining values, and self-knowledge" (Forbes & Martin, 2004, p. 4).

Sagacious competency prepares students to become globally conscious, which means "preparing students with the skills and ethical dispositions to invent a future that enhances human well-being globally" (Reimers, 2009, p. 42). Sagacious competency, at its core, involves teaching students how to create a life trajectory where they can consider how to help others and make a difference in the world through their relationships and work.

A life trajectory is a long-term "general arc established by structural and cultural contexts" (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 52). There are individualistic and traditionalist trajectories, where people either value their private life and leisure or they take on traditional gender, work, and family roles (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 52). But there is also an interdependent trajectory, one where people "intentionally join or create (if necessary) other-oriented communities to generate a sense of belonging" (Clydesdale, 2015, p. 52). Sagacious competency helps students create and follow an interdependent arc by asking them to how they will invent a future that enhances human well-being globally.

Showing students how to launch into an interdependent life trajectory, one that considers the entire lifespan and how life and work relates to the common good, requires a futurist, humanistic approach. Futurists believe we are in a time of human evolution where the

technology of the mind and context of our existence are transforming (Gangadean, 2006; Hubbard, 1983). Futurists use a future-oriented perspective to conceptualize a world filled with creativity, technology, connectedness, social justice, and the full actualization of human potential: "The futurist actively seeks to clarify, communicate, and create a vast array of future possibilities for others" (Norris & Salomon, 1983, p. 2). Futurists are not content with the current limitations of education; they seek to transform education so that it meets the needs of future generations. Hood (1984) described futurism in this way:

> [Futurism is] a movement believing that a positive future world may be created through wise decision-making and futuristic planning. Present societal conditions have provided an impetus for a futuristic focus, and various authors, think tanks, techniques, and organizations have contributed to the wide acclaim and respect given futurism today. The three different approaches to futurism are crisis futurism, evolutionary futurism, and spiritual futurism; and they must be merged into a new synthesis as the best hope for a positive future. Three basic principles of futurism are the unity or interconnectedness of reality; the crucial importance of time; and the importance of ideas, which provide the substance about a time that has not yet been. Future-oriented persons share many characteristics, including a high level of creativity. (Hood, 1984, p. 1)

Futurism is a natural expression of sagacious competency because it focuses on life planning, human potential, economic and social security and growth, global awareness, and cultural competence. And, with its emphasis on forecasting, futurism provides tools and techniques for educators who want to help students not just find their place in the world but to imagine and create a place for themselves in a changing world, or to help students create positive change that can shape the future through ideas and actions.

Whole-person educators use futurism in a variety of curriculums and administrative functions, from home economics courses and MBA programs, to student services and counseling, and institutional planning and policy making (Brun, 1976; Fazio, 1988; Gary, 1979; Groff, 1982; Norris & Salomon, 1983; Peterson, 2006; Torrance, 1980). Futurism is an educational philosophy that intentionally helps students connect their values and actions with the important concepts of global interconnectedness and social justice. By incorporating whole-person education and futurism into career development, universities may be able to help young people better achieve the desired outcome of self-expression in work.

Equipping Students to Flourish

The potential to *flourish* is society's (often untapped) capacity for happiness and well-being (Seligman, 2012). The elements of flourishing, according to Seligman (2012), are Positive emotion, Engagement, positive Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA). Flourishing is influenced by a variety of personal and interpersonal factors, such as personal skills and education, family life, the geographic and political landscape, as well as socioeconomic factors. A good economy, according to Phelps (2013), is one that would permit a person to flourish in the midst of business and industry, schools, and government regulation. Knowing this, universities could discuss PERMA in career development in order to facilitate a flourishing workforce.

The elements of flourishing are developed by taking on adult roles in a holistic way. To prepare to flourish, students could be encouraged to consider "positive emotions," which are the facets of a "pleasant life" that can be subjectively measured by "happiness and life satisfaction" (Seligman, 2012, p. 16). "Engagement" could be promoted, which is when a person participates in activities that produce "subjective wellbeing variables: pleasure, ecstasy, comfort, warmth,

and the like" (Seligman, 2012, p. 16). Emerging adults could learn how to cultivate "positive relationships" by interacting with other people and being kind (Seligman, 2012, p. 20). The search for "meaning" could be stimulated in students, which is "belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self" (Seligman, 2012, p. 17). And students could be enriched with the idea of living an "achieving life, a life dedicated to accomplishment for the sake of accomplishment" because accomplishment is what helps humans do more than "satisfy their own biological needs" as they "exert mastery over their environment" (Seligman, 2012, pp. 19–22).

The potential of traditional students to flourish via positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment could be tapped during emerging adulthood. Unfortunately, many students come into college with big dreams and high hopes, but their flame is soon quenched once they are unable to see how school provides a pathway to a satisfying life and meaningful career (Symonds et al., 2011). Schools can help students hold on to their hope by cultivating their innate desire to flourish and by showing them how to be optimistic.

Optimism is a personal choice (Seligman, 2006), which makes it distinct from a mechanistic approach toward life and career, one that prescribes obtaining a degree, securing employment, and saving for retirement as the natural trajectory of life. More than teaching people how to passively participate in economic systems, optimism teaches people to believe in themselves (by developing a sense of agency) and encourages them to develop resilience, grit, and vision (Seligman, 2006). This type of positive psychology-based approach to human development is relatively new, and it may be fitting to our modern times where emerging adults

are putting off traditional adult roles in order to explore the world through education and create a meaningful identity (Arnett, 2014).

Before the 1960s, dominant theories of psychology focused on the power of the world, base human nature, genetics, and the lasting effects of childhood experiences (Seligman, 2006). For many decades, people were considered to be "products of their environment," who were either "pushed or pulled by external events" (Seligman, 2006, p. 8). These early theories suggested that "unresolved childhood conflicts drove adult behavior," that "behavior was repeated only when reinforced externally," that "behavior resulted from fixed action patterns determined by our genes," and/or that people are "goaded into action by the need to reduce drives and satisfy biological needs" (Seligman, 2006, pp. 8–9).

Starting in the mid 1960s, "the favored explanations [of human behavior] began to radically change" as theories shifted from "the power of the environment to individual expectation, preference, choice, decision, and control" (Seligman, 2006, p. 9). This caused a transformation in society as people came to believe humans had "a measure of choice and therefore personal control over their own lives," which led to a culture that deemed "personal fulfillment a legitimate goal, even a sacred right" (Seligman, 2006, pp. 9–10). Permitting and fostering a sense of personal fulfillment in society became an accepted theory of psychological health.

As a progressive society, once theorists suggested that humans are not helpless puppets of genes and circumstances, and that humankind has the freedom of choice and a modicum of control over life, psychologists turned to "understanding how the individual's sense of personal control determines his fate" (Seligman, 2006, p. 16). One finding was that hope is an important

factor in determining whether or not someone feels helpless or optimistic; which, in turn, influences their ability to be healthy, happy, and well (Seligman, 2006, p. 48).

Hope is a cognitive strength where a person can optimistically explain historical and current circumstances, judge risks and obstacles in anticipation of future events, and set goals and take action (Shorey, Little, Snyder, Kluck, & Robitschek, 2007). In order to demonstrate hope, people must believe they have control over their lives and that they can find a way to achieve their goals: "Agency and pathways thinking are central to the definition of hope" (Shorey et al., 2007, p. 1918). Hope, the kind that involves agency and pathways thinking, is not disconnected from career theory or economic realities. The type of hope described by positive psychology is one where individuals know what they are capable of, see where they want to go and how they intend to get there, and determine to work toward an ultimate destination (Seligman, 2006; Shorey et al., 2007). In this way, hope is a character strength, not fantasy, whimsy, or delusion.

There are several characteristics of hope: "(1) personally valued goals; (2) the ability to generate strategies (pathways) to achieve those goals; (3) the motivation to apply those pathways in the goal-pursuit process (agency)" (Shorey et al., 2007, p. 1918). Hope is the ability to have personal goals, see pathways toward goal-achievement, and possess a sense of agency. While students often come to university wanting to experience hope, the negative outcomes of being in a university environment are documented: some students give up and walk away from college because they have no personally valued goals, no ability to generate pathways, and no motivation or sense of agency (Symonds et al., 2011).

Being taught that flourishing is a social right, and being shown how to use optimism and hope to participate in an economy as an adult, produce positive psychological traits in people as

they try to build a meaningful life (Seligman, 2006; Shorey et al., 2007; Symonds et al., 2011). University students, if adequately and appropriately prepared to flourish, have the potential to overcome many of the negative psychological conditions that plague modern workers, such as feeling as if they are the product of their environment, experiencing pessimism and helplessness, and struggling with depression (Seligman, 2006; Symonds et al., 2011). Preparing students to develop their own potential to be hopeful and optimistic can produce "authentic happiness"— which is happiness that comes from within and not from conditioning, genes, or experiences (Hirschi & Herrmann, 2013). This type of happiness is known as "virtue" (Seligman, 2002, p. 132).

Cultivating a virtuous life can lead to authentic happiness (Seligman, 2002). The six virtues discussed in positive psychology include "wisdom and knowledge, courage, love and humanity, justice, temperance, and spirituality and transcendence" (Seligman, 2002, p. 133). These virtues are "the core characteristics endorsed by almost all religious and philosophical traditions" (Seligman, 2002, p. 132). Universities that want to prepare students to flourish, then, could attempt to foster these six virtues, especially since the "reality of the industrial revolution, we now know, is that money cannot buy happiness" (Seligman, 2002, p. 165).

Graduates who can live a satisfying life is the expected end of holism and futurism in higher education: "Our economy is rapidly changing from a money economy to a satisfaction economy" as the "lure of a lifetime of great riches at the end of several years of grueling eighty-hour work weeks as a lowly associate has lost much of its power" (Seligman, 2002, p. 165). Since many emerging adults do not want to spend their whole life putting off happiness, and they want to find happiness after graduation in appropriate life roles, universities can show them how to find what they are looking for (Clydesdale, 2015; Cunningham, 2016).

As society has progressed past the Industrial Revolution and has integrated theories from positive psychology into the culture, people no longer believe that feeling unfulfilled is a prerequisite for work (Seligman, 2002). Workers believe their lives have meaning, and they want to be connected to something bigger than themselves. Especially among emerging adults, workers are looking for ways to achieve their dreams that will connect them with others and make them feel good (Arnett, 2014). The research is showing that people want to find motivation in their work, which only happens as they use their strengths and exercise their virtues (Seligman, 2002, p. 166).

Today, living well and experiencing well-being have become a centerpiece of progressive social and economic policy. For example, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) promotes well-being as an important factor in public health. Using modern research on the topic, the CDC has devoted part of its website to explaining public well-being and educating the public about why well-being matters:

> Well-being is a positive outcome that is meaningful for people and for many sectors of society, because it tells us that people perceive that their lives are going well. Good living conditions (e.g., housing, employment) are fundamental to well-being. Tracking these conditions is important for public policy. However, many indicators that measure living conditions fail to measure what people think and feel about their lives, such as the quality of their relationships, their positive emotions and resilience, the realization of their potential, or their overall satisfaction with life—i.e., their "well-being." ("Well-being," 2016)

By taking into account modern thinking about well-being, universities can help students prepare to live well. Well-being, as a metric of economic and social health, "includes the

presence of positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness), the absence of negative

emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety), satisfaction with life, fulfillment and positive functioning"

("Well-being," 2016).

Using the factors of well-being as a guide (i.e., the presence of positive emotions and

moods, the absence of negative emotions, satisfaction with life, fulfillment, and positive

functions), universities may be able to help students integrate wellness into the career

development through open discussion about how the presence of these factors affect health and

career.

According to progressive economic thought, the desire to flourish, the desire to achieve

personal well-being while providing for basic needs and contributing to the common good,

should be anticipated and fostered in a good economy (Phelps, 2013, pp. 285–288): "An

economy is good if and only if it permits and fosters the good life," which is a life marked by

"the extent to which one feels happy, healthy, and fulfilled" (Phelps, 2013, p. 288).

Spiritual Formation and Flourishing

In whole-person education, discovering and developing a good life is a primary goal:

In holistic education, the goal [is] that students develop to the highest extent thought

possible for a human . . . either through religious (becoming enlightened, satori, etc.),

psychological (such as Maslow's "self-actualization," Jung's "unus mundus," or Roger's

"fully functioning person"), or some other unidentified means. (Forbes & Martin, 2004,

p. 4)

For many students, a spiritual life provides a path for finding and demonstrating a good life

(Astin et al., 2011).

Emerging adults engage their spiritual nature through religion and spiritual activities and/or teachings. Spirituality includes "beliefs and practices that are grounded in the conviction that there is a transcendent (nonphysical) dimension of life" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 600). According to positive psychology, spirituality is a universal phenomenon: "All cultures have a concept of an ultimate, transcendent, sacred, and divine force" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, pp. 600–601). The concept of spirituality as a character strength has been applied in cultures at "different historical moments, and in different cultural contexts . . . [and has been used as a synonym] for wisdom, intelligence, the capacity to reason, and the soul" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 602).

Spirituality is a universal phenomenon. Peterson and Seligman (2004) suggest that a concrete definition of spirituality comes from the Christian Bible, which describes the spiritual character of man as the "breath of life," which is "believed to be the source of the capacity for creativity, the ability to grasp the sacred, and the capacity for love, intimacy, harmony, growth, compassion, goodness, and optimism" (p. 602). Spirituality, then, is a character strength demonstrated by a person's eagerness to connect with a transcendent dimension of existence through beliefs and practices expressed by specific virtues with the aim of promoting personal and social well-being. By being spiritual, emerging adults seek to unleash their full potential for love, intimacy, harmony, growth, compassion, goodness, and optimism.

According to modern thoughts on health and wellness, "Some of our behavior is overtly purposed to explore the spiritual, to transcend our everyday existence, and seek connection with something greater than we are" (Arloski, 2009, p. 6). According to wellness scholars, the highest levels of health and wellness include the discovery of meaning and a pursuit of fulfillment through spirituality, which is the inner life of a person that seeks to connect with something

greater than the self (Schlitz et al., 2007). The spiritual life can be described as the quiet, hidden voice of the heart that continually encourages a person to reach his or her full potential and self-actualize (Arloski, 2009).

Research has shown that spirituality is a vital factor in learning about and actualizing human potential (Benson & Roehlkepartain, 2008; Duffy, 2006; Rehm, 1990; VanZanten Gallagher, 2007). When individuals purposefully seek to cultivate their spiritual nature, they are engaged in a practice of spiritual wellness, which is when a person consciously cultivates his or her spiritual health (Arloski, 2009). The outcomes of spiritual wellness can be the construction of a healthy and empowered identity, guidance and assurance from a Higher Power, a transcendent approach toward life and work, and confidence in making life choices based on a future-oriented life plan and an optimistic self-image (Benson & Roehlkepartain, 2008; Duffy, 2006; Rehm, 1990; VanZanten Gallagher, 2007).

Universities that choose to support the lived experiences of young people can frame spirituality as being "the inner, subjective life" that is contrasted with "the objective domain of observable behavior and material objects" (Lindholm et al., 2011, p. 4). Once spirituality is framed as the subjective inner life, it can be explored through qualitative research.

One qualitative study on spirituality among college students demonstrated how students experience spirituality as a form of moral leadership development, and identified five themes: "spiritual quest, ecumenical worldview, ethic of caring, charitable involvement, and equanimity" (Lindholm et al., 2011, p. 4). This study described the spiritual phenomenon experienced by students: a "spiritual quest" is when students are trying to answer "life's big questions"; an "ecumenical worldview" is a "global worldview that transcends ethnocentrism and egocentrism"; an "ethic of caring" is "a sense of caring and compassion for others"; "charitable involvement" is

a "lifestyle that includes service to others"; and "equanimity" is the "capacity to maintain one's sense of calm and centeredness, especially in times of stress" (Lindholm et al., 2011, p. 4). By using qualitative research, universities can better understand the lived experiences of spiritual emerging adults.

Other research shows that spirituality is a transcendent lifestyle that touches on "three main themes: the further development of self-awareness, a sense of interconnectedness, and a relationship to a Higher Power" (Tisdell, 2001, p. 2). Universities that honor the lived experiences of students can design guidance policies that take into account students' desire for self-awareness, their sense of interconnectedness, and their relationship to a Higher Power.

The themes of spirituality, in whole-person education, can be embraced, even by a secular institution, since they are the lived experiences of the student. Even a relationship with a Higher Power can be directly addressed, simply because many emerging adults self-identify as communing with one (Astin et al., 2011; Emmons, 2005; Hunter et al., 2010; Tisdell, 2001).

Many people who commune with a Higher Power do not define their Higher Power as a metaphor or a symbol, but as an external force or personality (Dik & Duffy, 2012). Refusing to define a Higher Power as a metaphor or symbol is in line with modern calling research, which defines *calling* as being experienced as a summons from a transcendent source (Dik & Duffy, 2012).

Modern calling research can replace the old psychoanalytical, anthropological, and sociological views of faith, where belief is interpreted by researchers as a magical series of stories, artifacts, and practices, and the believer is assumed to be pathological, superstitious, or belonging to savage or unevolved cultures (Finegan, 2012; Vitz, 2000). Instead of minimizing

the beliefs of students by using academic theories, universities can respect the lived experiences of emerging adults and respect the descriptions of faith given by students.

Spiritual discrimination, minimization, or rejection can be the result of institutions requiring students to ignore their "relationships and experiences," as educators refuse to "acknowledge [the spirit's] presence within the teaching and learning environment," and do not respect "[the spirit's] sacred message, [give] it space and consideration, [or provide it] a voice through which to be heard" (Dirkx, 1997, p. 83). The outcome of teaching students to ignore their lived experiences and personal desires "describes a world that has lost some of its allure and now seems lifeless in certain ways" (Lathangue, 2012, p. 74).

For many emerging adults, spirituality is a vital part of their human development (Astin et al., 2011). The impact of spirituality on development "sometimes quickly, sometimes gradually, but in all cases dramatically and permanently changes the person's worldview to one of being more loving, kind, compassionate, altruistic, connected to others, and dedicated to toward creating a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world for all" (Schlitz et al., 2007, p. 9). Transformative spiritual experiences include peak experiences and religious beliefs (Maslow, 1962). Whole-person education embraces spirituality and religious values because they are a natural and universal part of the human experience.

Unlike other educational philosophies, whole-person education does not neglect the spiritual nature of humanity, which is the creative nature and our innate desire to search for meaning (Arloski, 2009; Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, & Whitworth, 2011). The spiritual nature is characterized by life-giving energy or an animating vital force, which is thought to be "the inspiration and infusion of creative ideas, the life of all things, and the inner self that lies hidden yet colors our thoughts and actions" (Slater, 2005, p. 60). Holism explains

spirituality as the "vital nature of finding meaning and purpose in our lives, and how central this is to our own pursuit of higher levels of wellness" (Arloski, 2009, p. 7). In this way, whole-person education encourages students to live "according to values or a calling or power greater than oneself" (Kimsey-House et al., 2011, p. 5).

Whole-person education honors the spiritual nature of humanity as students are asked to "actively strive to experience the source of their existence by actions that enhance their awakening, enlightenment, freedom and wholeness" (Slater, 2005, p. 60). Whole-person education makes room for transcendence and for transpersonal experiences and noetic knowledge, precisely because students seek out and experience these types of living and learning. From an educational perspective, "the belief in another reality beyond ordinary existence and experience can manifest itself in everyone, and thus perhaps it can be fostered and enhanced by education" (Slater, 2005, p. 60). Whole-person education affirms the spiritual aspects of humanity as valuable and normal and helps students explore how to incorporate their spiritual wellness into adult roles that facilitate well-being.

In addition to unexpected, reflective, and subjective inner experiences, spiritual transformation also occurs through spiritual practice, such as interactions with spiritual teachers and/or the practice of religion (i.e., studying sacred texts, learning faith traditions, and participating in ceremonies or rituals) (Bowen, 2011; Warms, Garber, & McGee, 2008). Although these topics may be taboo to some, to the spiritual practitioner, they are a normal part of his or her everyday life. By asking students how their spirituality facilitates personal meaning and decision-making, universities can engage the whole-person and help students learn how to flourish at a high level in a good economy.

When considering the spiritual formation of emerging adults, the seminal work of Fowler (1974) on faith development could be considered. In his journal article, Fowler asks the reader to "think of faith as a way of *knowing*. It may also help you to think of faith as a way of *construing* or *interpreting* one's experience" (p. 207). Fowler's suggestion implies that faith is not simply a set of ecclesiastical tenets used to perform rituals; it is the essence of a person's being which is used to construct meaning.

According to Fowler (1974), faith can be conceptualized as a meaning-making process where people learn to "recognize themselves as related to the ultimate conditions of their existence" (p. 207). Fowler discussed several stages of faith consciousness development. Stanard and Painter (2004) suggested that college-age students are most likely in State IV of faith development. In Stage IV, "the strategy of appeal to authority, or appeal to consensus, and of handling conflict by hierarchialization or compartmentalization has failed" (Fowler, 1974, p. 216). Of particular importance to those in transition from teenager to adult is that "the balance for world-synthesis shifts more clearly to oneself" as "the striving for coherence between dimensions of life comes up against certain unavoidable polarities" (Fowler, 1974, p. 216). In Stage IV of faith development, according to Fowler, "the balance of responsibility for world-synthesis" has shifted primarily to the self, as opposed to a religious leader or parent (p. 216).

After developing through State IV, "Stage V generally involves a reappropriation (and reinterpretation) of one's past, and of the significance persons and groups whose examples and teachings influenced its growth in faith-knowing," for better or for worse (Fowler, 1974, p. 217). Stage V development is characterized by "a complex coherence in which the various dimensions and communities of life are held together in mutuality with and through its apprehension of the meaning of life and the imperatives of the Ultimate" (Fowler, 1974, p. 217).

Those in Stage VI want "to characterize an integration of life and faith in which immediacy of participation in the Ultimate is the fruit of development, of discipline, and, likely, of spiritual genius" (Fowler, 1974, p. 217).

Emerging adults who are working through stages IV–VI, according to Fowler (1974), have already progressed through the first three stages of faith development.

Stage I: Intuitive-Projective is "faith-knowing stimulated by first encounters with death, awareness of limits of knowledge and power, and with the moods and visible practices of significant adults" (Fowler, 1974, p. 214). During State I, there is "little distinction between fact and fantasy; no categories for anything like natural-supernatural. . . . Knowing and feeling tend to be fused . . . Deity as Cause or Creator understood in magical terms" (Fowler, 1974, pp. 214–215).

Stage II: Mythic-Literal is a "beginning differentiation of verified facts from pure speculation or fantasy. Basis of verification primarily appeal to trusted authority, though in relation to matters of physical experience there is considerable reliance on now available inductive and deductive logic" (Fowler, 1974, p. 215). During Stage II there is "less magical thinking. Notions or constructs of underlying such distinctions as natural and supernatural have appeared" (Fowler, 1974, p. 215).

Stage III: Synthetic-Conventional is characterized by "the experience-world or reality is now segmented into different spheres or dimensions," such as family or home, school, work, religious organization, peers, and/or leisure (Fowler, 1974, p. 215). Clashes between the spheres emerge and are resolved either through "hierarchal subordination" or "compartmentalization" or both (Fowler, 1974, p. 216). In this state, "the increase of trust in one's own judgment applies primarily to choose and evaluate authorities, rather than taking responsibility for directly solving

the inter-authority dissonance" (Fowler, 1974, p. 216). During Stage III, "constructs underlying the distinction of value-knowing from fact-knowing emerge, constituting the basis for practical distinctions between subjectivity and objectivity" (Fowler, 1974, p. 216).

Fowler's (1974) theory of faith development suggests typical patterns—such as "collapsing tensions in either complete hedonism (relativism) or complete subordination (absolutism)" or "commitment to an ideologically grounded community whose discipline and/or charismatic leadership offer ready-made solutions"—are employed during State IV (p. 216).

Fowler's (1991) later work on faith consciousness development reveals that he describes faith in three parts: (1) "personal trust in and loyalty to a center of values," (2) "trust in and loyalty to images and realities of power," and (3) "trust in and loyalty to a shared master story or core story" (p. 32). These suggestions are sometimes applied by professionals who conceptualize faith as (a) needing a person (such as a religious leader) or institution to provide a sense of worth, (b) being scared and wanting self-vindication, and (c) holding onto childhood stories in our subconscious. These concepts of faith are patronizing and could be characterized as psychologism (which phenomenologically inspired guidance would seek to avoid). There are more respectful ways to guide emerging adults who have faith.

Honoring the Gift

Albert Einstein once said, "The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift." During the phase of emerging adulthood, many young people are trying to figure out who they are by honoring both their intuition and a natural desire to find meaning (Astin et al., 2011). In higher education, however, students are sometimes taught to ignore their intuition and distrust the meaning found in spirituality. Instead of affirming the lived experiences of students, higher

education sometimes provides a framework for life that does little to facilitate personal fulfillment (Speck & Hoppe, 2007; Vitz, 2000).

The academy, in general, tends to see whole-person education, especially education that involves spirituality, as belonging to private colleges and the realm of theology (Speck & Hoppe, 2007). Some scholars "consider spirituality to be outside the domain of academic scholarship" (Speck & Hoppe, 2007, p. ix). Some faculty members argue that reason should be absent of faith, and they treat reason without faith as a prime motivation for educating emerging adults, asserting that an enlightened civil society should be more reasonable than spiritual. Asking students to be reasonable instead of a spiritual is a false dilemma. The "assumptions behind such assertions are both enormous and insidious, especially linking faith to violence" (Speck & Hoppe, 2007, p. ix). Such "relegation" of all matters spiritual to either theological education or a vilification of faith "is dismissive" (Speck & Hoppe, 2007, p. xi).

Historically, "spirituality has been . . . consistently and positively focused on the search for meaning" (Speck & Hoppe, 2007, p. xii). Spirituality is a universal human trait where people want to understand how to live a fulfilling life. The attempt to rewrite history and distort universal experiences by claiming spirituality is a source of violence while reason is the source of salvation is disingenuous. "To make . . . spirituality . . . the foil for reason is intellectually dishonest" (Speck & Hoppe, 2007, p. xii). Spirituality "has been such a staple of human existence that to attempt to eliminate it from the academy in any meaningful way is to commit an intellectual lobotomy" (Speck & Hoppe, 2007, p. xii).

The academy, in many ways, is opposed to spirituality because of an extreme stance on the implications of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment "aimed to limit knowledge to what could be ascertained via the scientific method" (Speck & Hoppe, 2007, p. 4). For many

academics, this approach is "objective in that it relies on reason and eliminates subjectivity" by "concentrating on what can be measured quantifiably in the natural or seen world" (Speck & Hoppe, 2007, p. 4). This approach to science treasures the "sensate realm," and "either minimizes anything that cannot be apprehended by the senses and studied scientifically or discards it altogether" (Speck & Hoppe, 2007, p. 4). As such, spiritual beliefs, values, and experiences become "arbitrary matters of subjective or cultural choice" (Speck & Hoppe, 2007, p. 4).

The extreme worldview of the academy can force spiritual emerging adults to accept a "reasonable" approach to identity development: students are asked to create a "public" and a "private" self (where their private spiritual beliefs and experiences are minimized and kept separate from "real knowledge" and the public realm), and where "any belief in anything existing outside the natural world is a fool's approach" to education, even going so far as to define spiritual beliefs and experiences as "anti-intellectual and dangerous" (Speck & Hoppe, 2007, pp. 4–5). This approach to identity development minimizes or rejects spirituality and quiets the voice of the student.

A "reasonable" academic culture may require emerging adults to ignore their spiritual nature and rely solely on logic and the five senses (touch, taste, feel, hear, and see) to make meaning of the self and society. This approach can lead to "dry, desiccated, and thin academic intellectualism" where we examine our physiology and material world without answering existential questions (Miller, 2005, p. 28).

The type of thinking that separates education from experience is called "naïve realism," and it occurs when we limit our perception of thinking to simply analyzing data instead of realizing human beings always give empirical data meaning (Miller, 2005, p. 29). By combining

mental images and feelings with data, we make sense of our world. Our perceptions of the natural world are empirically subjective. Spirituality helps emerging adults avoid the pitfall of naïve realism by allowing them to consider how they feel about what they are learning.

Human beings are not machines. We do not mindlessly gather data and then spit out an analysis. We are emotional beings who "sense" more than what we perceive via our five senses, and we sometimes experience a knowing or intuition that is disconnected from logical thought. For spiritual people, their intuition provides a sense of self and possibility that "comes to [them] directly through [their] subjective experiences or inner authority . . . [it] might take the form of an intuition that helps guide [their] decisions, or an epiphany that leads to a creative breakthrough" (Schlitz et al., 2007). This type of spiritual insight can be minimized by public universities because it does not come from "the objective study of the external world" (Schlitz et al., 2007).

People assign meaning to facts, and they have deep feelings about what they experience and learn. The senses may "provide content for our thinking, feeling, and willing," but it is our spiritual nature that gives that content meaning (Miller, 2005, p. 39). To understand human nature, some educators argue, we simply have to look at the child: "The stuff that comes with the child . . . is not science, logic, or mathematical skill. It is soul stuff. It is imagination, heart, and creativity. It is spirit and vision" (Miller, 2000, p. vii). Spirituality can be at integrated into education, on equal standing with thought and empiricism. Why? Because "educating a person is when their innate being has been led out, enticed and appreciated" (Miller, 2000, p. vii). The spirit of emerging adults can be led out, enticed, and appreciated by universities who acknowledge the imagination, heart, creativity, and vision of students.

In the minds of some scholars, when the academy chooses to relegate spirituality to the private domain, it has forgotten its purpose, which is to "help students learn who they are, to search for a larger purpose for their lives, and to leave college as better human beings" (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010, p. 3). The call for universities to embrace the spirituality of students is "not one that flows from an administrative mandate, but one that arises in the energized space between caring and thoughtful human beings" (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010, p. 12). If universities choose to overcome stigmas about spirituality and act as caring and thoughtful humans, they will be able to embrace the spirituality of college students.

Regardless of personal opinions about spirituality, universities should have an inclusive culture. An inclusive culture has an "emphasis on fairness, resource sharing, and concern for the wellbeing" of all students (Opotow, Gerson, & Woodside, 2005). Inclusive cultures protect students from social shaming, which is a "self-conscious experience in which individuals feel that a weakness or vulnerability has been exposed not only to others but also to themselves leaving them feeling deficient and humiliated" (Leitch, 1999, p. 1). It is important that universities respect the sacred beliefs of students and do not "use language that recasts 'god' as a metaphor for awe-evoking mysteries of science [or a metaphor for nature], [instead of] an eternal being who cares for people on earth" (Dik & Duffy, 2012, p. 10).

The academy, until very recently, was reluctant to deal with students' spiritual lives. There are several reasons for this. It is new (at least, to some faculty members and administrators), and academic researchers are uncomfortable when they hear terms that are not normally discussed in their circles (Astin et al., 2011, p. 6). Many "faculty members associate spirituality with religion, and since universities are secular, they assume religion has no place in the academic environment" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 6). The "extreme positions of faculty ignores

the fact that our colleges and universities are already deeply involved with students' personal lives," which already include spirituality (Astin et al., 2011, p. 6). Higher education is now under "increasing criticism for what many see as its impersonal and fragmented approach to undergraduate education" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 7).

When universities ignore the true lives of students, "we encourage a kind of fragmentation and a lack of authenticity, where students . . . act either as if they are not spiritual beings, or as if their spiritual side is irrelevant to their vocation or work" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 7). This insistence on a separation between the private and public self is unhealthy, and it does not value the subjective experience of the student in an appropriate way.

Instead of separating the intuitive from the rational, universities can promote exploration and integration. "The secular institution is the ideal place for students to explore their spiritual sides because, unlike many sectarian institutions, there is no official perspective or dogma" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 6). By transitioning away from an impersonal approach to education, universities can help emerging adults learn how to become whole people, people who can connect their minds with their spirit, and who are not only competent in academics, but who also have a sense of self with defined values about relationships, work, and societal roles.

A quote from Alvin Toffler (1974) sums up why the opinions of faculty and administrators are so important: "All education springs from some image of the future. If the image of the future held by a society is grossly inaccurate, its education system will betray its youth." An image of the future that is void of spirituality is grossly inaccurate because it takes an extreme position, which is "the position that regards the human mind as singular, isolated, and incapable of either transcendence or depth experience precisely because there is no transcendent

or depth reality to experience" (Bache, 2008, p. ix). Our education system can create a vision for the future where the spirituality of emerging adults is integrated into meaningful life trajectories.

The shift in the academy toward celebrating the human experience is, according to some researchers, inevitable: "The spiritual awakening that is slowly taking place counterculturally will become more of a daily norm as we all willingly break mainstream cultural taboos that silence or erase our passion for spiritual practice" (Hooks, 2000, p. 82). This shift could influence universities to provide more direct opportunities for spiritual wellness because they "recognize what is already inherent within our relationships and experiences, [they] acknowledge [a spiritual dimension] with the teaching and learning environment, to respect its sacred message" (Dirkx, 1997, p. 83).

The outcome of transitioning to whole-person education is "the heretofore silencing of the spiritual voice through privileging the academic voice [will be] increasingly . . . drowned out by the emphatic chorus of those whose underlying versions of truth cry out 'We are a spiritual people!'" (Dillard, Abdur-Rashid, & Tyson, 2000, p. 448). By giving a voice to emerging adults, universities can help them integrate their spirituality into thoughtful, wise career and life plans.

Positive Outcomes of a Spiritual Life

In the opinion of an education scholar and former university president, enhancing the well-being of society requires, in part, an unrestricted religious practice and the ability to give back to others, especially in the context of a free and democratic society (Bok, 2010). Using this worldview, the free practice of religion is supported because it "provides a lasting source of happiness for many people . . . [including the belief] that one's life and work have a purpose and meaning that make them seem worthwhile" (Bok, 2010, pp. 21–22).

A society that considers how spirituality and the free practice of religion affect personal well-being, and how personal well-being affects economies, can support personal wellness by openly discussing and providing opportunities for the good practices associated with health, religion, altruism, and freedom. In contrast, "common sense suggests that a lack of meaning and purpose in what one does should make one's existence seem pointless, diminish one's sense of self-worth, and eventually rob daily life of much of its intrinsic interest" (Bok, 2010, p. 22).

Spiritual people see their lives as sacred, and they want to build a sacred life's work that includes "awareness or awakening, interconnecting and belonging, and a way of living" (Petersen, 2008, p. 125). This desire for connectedness and meaning can be translated into "relatively explicit, conscious values" that determines how emerging adults work and live (Petersen, 2008, p. 125). More than just a nice idea, spiritual wellness motivates people to be active and ethical in their citizenship and careers. Education that incorporates spirituality has the "aim [of] personal and social transformation through the cultivation of conscious and willful awareness" (Petersen, 2008, p. 126). The positive outcomes of spirituality are well documented:

1. Among young people in particular, being religious is associated with reduced smoking, drug, and alcohol use. Young people who engage in religious practices (like going to church) are also more likely to have better grades and delay having sex.

2. Being religious has positive benefits for relationships. People who actively participate in religious activities and who view religion as important are less likely to experience conflict in their marriage and more likely to perceive their spouses as supportive. Religious parents are also more likely to parent consistently and less likely to have highly conflictual relationships with their teenagers.

3. Religious beliefs and practices are predictive of other virtues such as altruism, volunteerism, kindness, and forgiveness. Similarly, churches that actively promote displays of these values (especially volunteerism and philanthropy) are associated with community well-being.

4. Finally, religious beliefs are broadly associated with the ability to cope with stressful life events. Prayer and the social support from a religious community play a strong role in positive coping.

(Dean, 2017)

The benefits of spirituality are obvious, and they can be easily incorporated into student development. Still, spirituality may not be seen as a natural part of the mainstream university experience. On many university campuses, the opportunity for spirit and student development to intersect (apart from autonomous student groups) primarily occurs through wellness education. In many university wellness centers, there is an emphasis on developing the whole person, which includes the spirit. However, this understanding of wellness is not always a part of the broader culture of the university.

Taking a note from wellness centers, universities could create campus cultures that include spirituality in the conversation about adulthood. For example, the wellness center at Vanderbilt University defines "spiritual wellness" as "a positive perception of meaning and purpose in life," and encourages the spiritual growth of emerging adults through "spiritual experiences," which include:

- Being open to different cultures and religions;
- Giving your time to volunteer or participate in community service activities;

- Spending time defining personal values and ethics and making decisions that complement them;

- Spending time alone in personal reflection;

- Participating in spiritual activities;

- Participating in activities that protect the environment;

- Caring about the welfare of others and acting out of that care.

("Wellness Wheel," 2017)

Vanderbilt's definition and suggestions for spiritual wellness are fairly standard among public university wellness centers. In the field of wellness, spirituality is seen as a psychological strength, something that can be understood and intentionally developed in order to produce beneficial results. Likewise, in positive psychology, spirituality is viewed as a character strength that contributes to a person's well-being (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). If universities more fully integrate modern concepts of spiritual wellness into the broader culture, students may be better equipped to develop sagacious competency.

> An emphasis on a spiritual life, with its connection to community and work, is beginning to displace the strict focus on rationality, particularly from a Eurocentric perspective, as the only valid form of knowledge. Many scholars doing cultural work in communities or in the reformation of the academy have worldviews deeply embedded in the spiritual. (Tisdell, 2001, p. 5)

The direction of public higher education, then, may be changing from a place where spirituality is kept private to a place where spiritual worldviews, spiritual wellness, and cultural spiritual norms become more fully integrated into the mainstream (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012).

Spiritual wellness, the kind where people work to become conscious of the well-being of others as they purposefully try to form connections, show love and kindness, and display socially responsible ethics, is a primary function of spirituality: "The connection between spirituality and a commitment to social justice education and community work" has been documented (Tisdell, 2001, p. 1), and it is this connection that inspires emerging adults to figure out how to make a difference in the world as spiritual adults.

Spiritual people connect with a Higher Power and seek to acknowledge their life's purpose, with the focused intention of making the world a better place by working toward the common good by removing economic and social barriers. However, the emphasis on how spiritual practice translates into social justice and community work is sometimes lost as the academy seeks to limit spirituality to discussions of creation and the after-life, and/or coping with crisis (Vitz, 2000). For spiritual practitioners, however, being spiritual explicitly implies that they will be moral leaders who act with kindness, show concern for others, and use an ethical framework to conduct business and live in communities (Astin et al., 2011).

Many spiritual people want to change the world with their economic, social, and political ideas. Think of Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, the Dali Lama, and Nelson Mandela. These were and are people who used or use their spirituality to directly influence social change through moral leadership that transcended or transcends a religious building and intellectual discussion. Universities that facilitate a spiritual wellness (that is, the seeking of a higher purpose, full potential, and virtuous flourishing) can help students go on a quest for meaning as they are encouraged to explore personal values, societal roles, and their unique self.

College Students and the Meaning of Life

As universities become more inclusive, scholars are discussing how to integrate contemplative, spiritual inquiry into school cultures (Laurence, 1999; Subbiondo, 2011; Tisdell, 2001; Zajonc, 2003). This is not a sanctioning of one religion over another, but an acknowledgment that young people are searching for meaning through spirituality. In order to better understand the naturally occurring spiritual quest of college students (Astin et al., 2011), educational leaders can learn how students consider altruism, spirit, morality, and connectedness as they create an adult identity.

As discussed in a special winter 2014 issue of *Liberal Education*, with a cover story "exploring purpose and vocation in college," researchers suggest that universities can encourage students to contemplate how they plan to impact the common good through work (Husic, 2014). These researchers suggest that a more engaging and active type of learning "could sustain abundant lives for emerging adults, an education in which intellectual and applied learning could converge with resources from moral and theological traditions" (Roels, 2014, p. 1). These exhortations align closely with modern career theories that emphasize choosing a "path with heart" and finding a personal calling (Hall, 2004, p. 9).

A spiritual quest has the ultimate goal of facilitating a spiritual awakening. Awakening to humanity's spiritual nature occurs when people are given the opportunity to explore religious or spiritual teachings in order to find a sense of purpose (Dirkx, 1997; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Hall, 2004; Schlitz et al., 2007). An awakening can be facilitated, as through cultural traditions that promote coming of age ceremonies and other rites of passage (Blumenkrantz & Hong, 2008; Miller, 2013). An awakening can be purposefully designed to help young people "experience a

sense of wonder, awe, and connections to things perceived to be greater than themselves"
(Blumenkrantz & Hong, 2008, p. 99).

In many faith traditions, children are awakened spiritually through rites of passage
ceremonies (Blumenkrantz & Hong, 2008; Miller, 2013). A rite of passage ceremony is when
young people are expected to transition from childhood to adulthood. This period in a person's
life is marked by an expectation that the individual will take on the responsibilities of thinking
about others and contributing to the community at large. It is also a time when social traditions
and cultural secrets are passed down from one generation to another in order to maintain
communal continuity and ensure familial legacy. Rites of passage are a time when "the
transformation and transcendence of the children begins and is honored and celebrated by the
children's community" (Blumenkrantz & Hong, 2008, p. 99). The rite of passage is used to meet
the universally human spiritual, personal, and social desire to have a Higher Power revealed,
develop a sense of self-awareness and empowerment, and take on a communal role.

When students cannot get the recognition, celebration, and direction that accompanies
traditional rites of passage ceremonies, they may feel hopeless, alone, and uncertain. This
experience of alienation is so "typical that it has a cultural name of its own: the Sophomore
Slump" (Miller, 2013, p. 334). It is a time when young people without a spiritual awakening are
trying to "figure out what it all means" but are not able to find satisfying answers (Miller, 2013,
p. 334). It is during this period when young people who do not experience a spiritual awakening
may begin to feel depressed and may experiment with alcohol, substance abuse, and other at-risk
behaviors (Miller, 2013). Inviting students to investigate the meaning of life, contemplate their
existence, and define their values gives them an opportunity to become equipped to deal with the
anxiety and pressure of transitioning into adulthood.

Clinical research finds that spirituality is the most protective factor against depression and substance use and abuse during adolescence known to medical science. Nothing known to research is as profoundly and pervasively protective against onset of a lifetime course of mental disorders as personal spirituality. (Miller, 2013, p. 4)

Spirituality helps young people make a healthy transition into adulthood. Distinct from religious traditions or doctrine, the type of spirituality that sustains and guides people during trying times is an "intimate, daily-lived relationship of love and guidance, from the sacred Higher Power. . . . Research findings indicate that the two-way transcendent relationship basically conquers all" (Miller, 2013, pp. 335–336). The support people get from a Higher Power helps them overcome at-risk behaviors and choose healthy behaviors and develop a sense of direction and purpose through positive life and work choices (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Miller, 2013).

In their spiritual quest, emerging adults "grapple with the big questions in life: Who am I? What are my values? Do I have a mission in life? Why am I in college? What kind of person do I want to be? What sort of world do I want to help create?" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 1). These questions are "fundamental to students' lives" and "students are preoccupied" with answering them (Astin et al., 2011, p. 1). While researchers and universities have largely ignored the spiritual development of students, students themselves have highly valued spiritual development and seek answers to life's most meaningful questions (Astin et al., 2011, p. 2). Instead of facilitating a spiritual quest, universities "put a lot of emphasis on test scores, grades, credits, and degrees, while neglecting students' inner development" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 2).

Students care about their spiritual life, and some view college as an opportunity to go on a spiritual quest. In one qualitative study, four in five students identified as "having an interest in spirituality" and "believing in the sacredness in life" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 3). In the same study,

nearly 66% of students agreed with the statement "My spirituality is a source of joy," 75% believed in God, and more than 75% agreed with the statement that their religious/spiritual beliefs "provide me with a sense of strength, support, and guidance" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 3). Seventy-five percent of these students also reported a "sense of connection with God/Higher Power that transcends my personal self" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 3). Eighty percent of students reported that "finding my purpose in life" was at least a "somewhat important" reason for attending college, and 75% of entering freshman reported that it was "very important" or "essential" that college "helps you develop your personal values" and "enhances your self-understanding" (Astin et al., 2011, p. 3).

Astin et al. (2011) showed that the spiritual experiences of students are marked several distinct phenomenon: "the meaning and purpose of our life and work," "our sense of connectedness to others and the world around us," and "experiences that are not easy to talk about, such as intuition, inspiration, the mysterious, and the mystical" (p. 4). For these college students, spirituality gave them a sense of meaning and direction that directly influenced their career and life decisions as they transitioned into adulthood.

The study by Astin et al. (2011) revealed that "most students are searching for deeper meaning in their lives, looking for ways to cultivate their inner selves, seeking to be compassionate and charitable, and clarifying how they feel about the many issues confronting their society and the global community" (p. 4). This awakening is not conformity to unchallenged religious rules or unquestioned acceptance of mystical claims; rather, it is an opportunity for young people to voice and explore deep spiritual concerns as they create an identity. In lieu of a rite of passage ceremony, young people are asking themselves big questions and trying to find the answers on their own. These questions include:

How do [we] develop [our] deepest, fundamental commitments? How do [we] connect to

others and the world around [us]? How do [we] find [our] place in [our] family,

community, world, and universe? How do [we] come to terms with issues of meaning,

purpose, and identity beyond [ourselves]? (Quinn, 2008, p. 74)

Spirituality is transcendent, meaning it is bigger than our cultural norms and taboos.

When universities do not directly address spirituality, students will still explore it on their own.

The spiritual quest that many emerging adults embark on will happen whether or not public

universities sanction it. However, since institutions of higher education play an important role in

helping emerging adults develop into citizens and workers, it makes sense to question how

universities can help students figure out how to be loving and fulfilled adults who can integrate

spiritual beliefs into adult roles.

For many people, the meaning of life is found by looking to a Higher Power and

receiving a calling (Dik & Duffy, 2012). Over the past 10–15 years, there has been a renewed

interest in "calling" and its impact on vocational psychology (Dik & Duffy, 2012). As

researchers have explored calling, they have found that some emerging adults feel summoned by

a Higher Power to approach life roles with a set of well-reasoned values. In one such study, it

was discovered that some college students believed God had laid out a plan for their lives, and

these students "stressed the importance of a strong fit between their gifts, passions, and sense of

purpose with a particular job" as they tried to follow a divinely revealed path (Dik & Duffy,

2012, p. 8).

The research on calling has produced two views on the topic: a neoclassical view and a

modern view (Dik & Duffy, 2012). "Neoclassical callings originate from an external source and

emphasize a social duty. . . . In contrast, modern callings arise from within and emphasize

individual happiness [derived from pleasure]" (Dik & Duffy, 2012, p. 9). For many emerging

adults, calling is a spiritual vocational identity with the prime distinction of having a *caller*.

Maintaining the integrity of the literal, historical, and experiential use of calling is important

because emerging adults who sense a calling are referring to a "command, request, or invitation

[from an external source] to go somewhere or do something" (Dik & Duffy, 2012, p. 11).

In my study, I have chosen to use the neoclassical version of calling since the people who

identify as "spiritual" experience their calling as originating from a guiding force, external

forces, or a sense of destiny (Dik & Duffy, 2012, pp. 7–8). The definition of calling referenced in

much of the literature also takes a neoclassical approach, choosing to define calling as "a

transcendent summons, especially as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life

role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating purpose or meaningfulness and that holds others-

oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation" (Dik & Duffy, 2012, p. 11).

In the literature, when a neoclassical view of calling is used to understand how spiritual

people make meaning of life and work, it often leads to a discussion of vocational identity and

the desire for a person to invest in a life's work (Rehm, 1990; Scott, 2010; VanZanten Gallagher,

2007). This discussion is based, in part, on the historical use of the Latin word *vocatio* as a

precursor to the modern use of the word vocation. *Vocatio* was historically used to "indicate

God's calling, bidding, or summons. . . . A person called to a vocation was inspired by God to

demonstrate talents, the manifestation of which gave evidence of the spiritual source and

contributed to the quality of the social spirit" (Rehm, 1990, p. 115).

Using *vocatio* to describe a particular work orientation allows researchers to

conceptualize work as a calling where people can "love and serve others" and where works

"involves a sense of the transcendent, of purpose, and of community" (VanZanten Gallagher,

2007, p. 34). Using a *vocatio* construct, a vocation "includes an occupation . . . but it also involves civic responsibilities, family life . . . and consumer habits" (VanZanten Gallagher, 2007, p. 34). Spiritual individuals, then, are interested in more than finding and obtaining a job; they are also concerned about "identifying one's gifts and abilities . . . and recognizing the needs of the world" in order to make a positive social impact with their life's work (VanZanten Gallagher, 2007, p. 34).

In a broad sense, a *vocatio* or calling is a spiritual lifestyle. In a more specific sense, a *vocatio* or calling enables a person to demonstrate certain attitudes and behaviors in the workplace. Studies have shown that approaching a career as a *vocatio* positively correlates with career decidedness, career decision self-efficacy, and intrinsic motivation (Galles & Lenz, 2013, p. 240). Why such commitment, conviction, and passion for work? Because people with a calling see "no difference between who they are and what they do for work" (Scott, 2010, p. 103). To put it another way, to those with a calling, "Work comes from inside out; work is the expression of our soul, our inner being. . . . Work is an expression of the Spirit at work in the world through" people (Scott, 2010, p. 103). Those with spirituality as a character strength, then, are often searching for ways to apply their spiritual experiences and beliefs in a concrete way through their vocation as they express their inner life in an external environment.

Openly discussing the concept of *vocation*—of a spiritual calling—enables students to explore deep spiritual questions and discover opportunities for finding and executing a life's work. Using a *vocatio* lens when thinking about careers can give emerging adults an opportunity to think seriously about who they want to be as human beings and consider how they will interact with the world. Instead of choosing a career based on external forces and being taught to conform to a set of social norms, students who learn how to develop a *vocatio* path could,

ultimately, find "a life's work, a true vocation, [which] could be an expression of each individual student's own spirit and heart" (Scott, 2010, p. 103).

When emerging adults are engaged on the topic of calling, they have something to say. In one qualitative study, 295 college students were asked to define what "calling" meant to them, and "three primary themes were identified: *Guiding Force*, *Personal Fit/Eudemonic Wellbeing*, and *Altruism*" (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 181). "Guiding Force seemed to best capture responses citing God's will and gifts, a sense of destiny, and more general feelings of being pushed or driven by some unknown force" (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 181). "Personal Fit/Eudemonic Wellbeing reflected a sense of one's job matching one's own specific abilities well" and the accompanying happiness and intrinsic motivation that accompanies a positive match (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 181). "Altruism . . . referenced having a calling as leading to positive outcomes for society in a broad sense, as well as helping certain people specifically" (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 181). The themes of calling held by college students developed by Hunter et al.'s (2010) qualitative study reflects the current literature on calling (Duffy & Dik, 2013).

Helping emerging adults answer a calling is in line with a traditional liberal arts philosophy: "The purpose of a liberal arts philosophy is to free student minds and hearts for life, work, and citizenship" (Roels, 2014, p. 12). According to a recent study, "students yearn for support in their search for personal meaning," and more than 75% of students want a university experience that will help them understand who they are as they develop personal values and are encouraged to express their personal spirituality (Barbezat & Bush, 2014, p. 16).

To better address the needs of spiritual students, especially those who desire to approach work as a *vocatio*, universities could use protean career theory to help guide emerging adults (Hall, 2004). "Protean" was first used in an academic journal in 1976, where it was used to

"describe a career orientation in which the person, not the organization, is in charge, where the person's core values are driving career decisions, and where the main success criteria are subjective (psychological success)" (Hall, 2004, p. 1). Protean career theory stems from a way of conceptualizing work that believes workers have permission to think about their career in terms of "personal identity, independence and freedom of choice, reshaping work around family priorities, and life satisfaction" (Hall, 2004, p. 2).

Protean career theory allows a person to challenge traditional career orientations. Traditional career orientations may advance an external view of career and life that conceptualizes work as "an organization being in charge, having the core value of advancement, possessing the success criteria of position level and salary, and treasuring the key attitude of organizational commitment" (Hall, 2004, p. 4). Using a traditional career orientation to socialize students may snuff out the flame of their *vocatio*. In contrast, in a protean career, "the central issue is a life fully worth living" (Hall, 2004, p. 9).

Protean career theory allows emerging adults to "pursue one's path with the intensity of a calling," which involves the following activities and attitudes:

- See your work as a calling (an invitation to which you choose to respond);

- When this work serves a community (not just self and family);

- When career decisions involve discernment (listening, deep reflection, prayer) to know the right path;

- When it engages your quintessential self or "genius"; and

- When you are using your gifts ("charisms") as a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

(Weise et al., cited in Hall, 2004, p. 9)

Protean career theory orients people to careers in a way that allows them to pursue a calling or *vocatio*-type career, which is the "place where your deep gladness and the world's hunger meet" (Hall, 2004, p. 9). It is a career concept that "encompasses the extent to which an individual demonstrates self-directed and values-driven career orientations in their personal career management" (DeVos & Soens, 2008, p. 450). In contrast, more traditional career orientations are demonstrated when people "take a more passive role in managing their career and are more likely to seek direction from the organization" (DeVos & Soens, 2008, p. 450).

As a career orientation, a protean one is "important for individuals in order to make career decisions that lead to subjective success" (DeVos & Soens, 2008, p. 450). For emerging adults who are spiritual and who desire to respond to a calling and invest in a life's work, a protean career orientation is an important tool because it provides the basis for a career orientation that includes a "whole-life perspective, developmental progression, a values-driven attitude, and self-directed career management" (Briscoe, Hall, & Frautschy DeMuth, 2005, p. 31). Protean career theory can help career services providers better support emerging adults explore and manage values-driven, identity-based careers.

According to Dik and Duffy (2009), "Surprisingly little research within counseling and vocational psychology has investigated individuals' experiences of purpose and meaningfulness in the work role" (p. 425). By placing career development within the context of public higher education and discussing how career services providers can provide vocational guidance to spiritual students, I hope that my study will contribute to a better understanding of how emerging adults who believe they are called are choosing vocations through communion with a Higher Power, an others-oriented values system, and an exploration of themselves and the marketplace.

Chapter 2 Closure

Emerging adulthood is an optimistic and self-focused period between ages 18–25 when young people are exploring their world, constructing an identity, and testing opportunities (Arnett, 2014). The period of emerging adulthood is important because it lays the foundation for the rest of the adult life: "In a rare study of life-span development . . . [it was found] while important events took place from life to death, those that determined the years ahead were most heavily concentrated during the twenty-something years" (Jay, 2012, p. xv). Emerging adults want to understand how to make the leap into adult responsibilities, especially financial independence and work opportunities. The catch is that many "high school seniors graduate and come to universities with a remarkably materialistic view of what a college education can provide" (Bok, 2010, p. 166).

Emerging adults, during their developmental period of hopefulness and possibilities and in light of their transactional attitudes about universities, could benefit from guidance as they seek to take on adult roles. They "must learn that resources are not limitless, and there are relatively few possibilities in which they will feel fulfilled, authentic, and productive" (Jay, 2012). Until emerging adults learn how to make independent decisions to meaningfully participate in an economy and communities, and until they are able to become financially independent and on traditional adult roles, they may hold onto expectations about work and life that are more idealistic than realistic (Erikson, 1963; Jay, 2012).

Upon graduation, most graduates will participate in economies as workers as they compete to sell their labor to firms for income. As the nation's workforce, the ability of graduates to effectively trade their labor for wages is based on several factors, including supply, demand, pricing, skills and knowledge, and government regulation (Mankiw, 2011; Mathew,

2013; McConnell et al., 2008; O'Sullivan, 2008). Traditionally, these economic decisions have been viewed as a rational exchange between buyers and sellers as each is guided by self-interest and tries to maximize utility (Mankiw, 2011; Mathew, 2013; McConnell et al., 2008; O'Sullivan, 2008). However, this traditional view is being expanded on the basis that the objective measurements of traditional economic theories do not take into account some subjective issues of work, such as well-being.

Emerging adults are in a stage of development that "consists of probing commitments, where people realize that meaning is relative and they begin to assert their own voices" (Siner, 2015, p. 23). As they are learning to find their voice and making meaning of life, it is important for emerging adults to consider issues of well-being and work: "As work forms a significant part of life experience, it potentially has a substantial impact on our physical and psychological health—and, ultimately, our wellbeing" (Walker & John, 2012, p. 115).

Helping young people reflect on who they are, explore the world of work, and then make vocational decisions that will lead to personal happiness is a goal of career development (Hall, 2004; Parsons, 1909). Super (a leader in career theory) suggested, "Although the vocational self-concept is only part of the total self-concept, it is the driving force that establishes career patterns one will follow throughout life" (Zunker, 2012, p. 46). In the discussion of emerging adults taking on adult roles that provide happiness, Super's suggestion becomes vitally important: "The major practical application here is that individuals implement their self-concepts into careers as a means of self-expression" (Zunker, 2012, p. 46).

Emerging adults want more than a job; they "aspire to find a job that will be an expression of their identity" where they can "be a better person" and "hopefully do some good for others" (Arnett, 2014, p. 169). This idealistic concept of work does little to prepare young

people for the real world, where finding an identity-based job, one that engages the highest self and allows opportunities for doing good, often takes four years or more to find and is not easily found (Arnett, 2014, p. 173). Discussing the realities of searching for an identity-based, fulling job can help prevent graduates from becoming burned out by real-world job-hunting experiences.

Universities can use whole-person education to prepare graduates for life and career. Whole-person education is an approach to developing the total person through a humanistic philosophy, which is a framework for human development that suggests people have innate strengths and untapped potential, and that a primary purpose for existing is to self-actualize. Humanism seeks to promote growth by fostering emotional, spiritual, and affective development, and to help students achieve personal and social maturity (Combs, 1981; Valett, 1977). "Humanistic education maintains that what students experience about themselves and their world is far too important for education to overlook" (Combs, 1981, p. 449).

Career development can equip the whole-person. Starting in the mid 1960s, "the favored explanations [of human behavior] began to radically change" as theories shifted from "the power of the environment to individual expectation, preference, choice, decision, and control" (Seligman, 2006, p. 9). This caused a transformation in society as people came to believe humans had "a measure of choice and therefore personal control over their own lives," which led to a culture that deemed "personal fulfillment a legitimate goal, even a sacred right" (pp. 9–10). Permitting and fostering a sense of personal fulfillment in economies became an accepted theory of psychological health.

In whole-person education, discovering and developing human potential is a primary goal. It is believed that a person's capacity to learn, grow, and contribute is what enables them to be happy, healthy, and fulfilled.

In holistic education, [reaching one's full potential is] the goal that students develop to

the highest extent thought possible for a human . . . either through religious (becoming

enlightened, satori, etc.), psychological (such as Maslow's "self-actualization," Jung's

"unus mundus," or Roger's "fully functioning person"), or some other unidentified

means. (Forbes & Martin, 2004, p. 4)

For many students, a spiritual life provides a path for finding and demonstrating their full

potential.

Spirituality helps emerging adults become globally conscious moral leaders who invest in

communities as they seek to help others and do good (Astin et al., 2011; Dik & Duffy, 2012).

Spiritual people see their lives as sacred, and they want to build a sacred life's work that includes

a positive "awareness or awakening, interconnecting and belonging, and a way of living"

(Petersen, 2008, p. 125). This desire for connectedness and meaning can be translated into

"relatively explicit, conscious values" that determine how emerging adults work and live

(Petersen, 2008, p. 125). More than just a nice idea, spirituality motivates people to be active and

ethical in their citizenship and careers. Education that incorporates spirituality has the "aim [of]

personal and social transformation through the cultivation of conscious and willful awareness"

(Petersen, 2008, p. 126).

Modern research shows that many emerging adults are interested in a spiritual quest,

which is a quest for meaning (Astin et al., 2011). Because of the growing acknowledgment of

spirituality, and an emphasis on providing support for all student populations, some researchers

are suggesting that educators consider how to integrate contemplative, spiritual inquiry into

school cultures (Laurence, 1999; Subbiondo, 2011; Tisdell, 2001; Zajonc, 2003). This is not a

sanctioning of one religion over another, but an acknowledgment that young people are searching for meaning through spirituality.

For many, the meaning of life is found as people look to a Higher Power and discern a calling. Over the past 10–15 years, there has been a renewed interest in "calling" and its impact on vocational psychology (Dik & Duffy, 2012). As researchers have explored calling, they have found that some emerging adults feel summoned by a Higher Power to approach life roles with a set of well-reasoned values. In one such study, it was discovered that some college students believed God had laid out a plan for their lives, and these students "stressed the importance of a strong fit between their gifts, passions, and sense of purpose with a particular job" as they tried to follow a divinely revealed path (Dik & Duffy, 2012, p. 8).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

For my study, I conducted a phenomenology, which has the aim of revealing the hidden lifeworld of participants (Husserl & Carr, 2006). This qualitative "approach to research is primarily concerned with questions around the nature of our subjective experience" (Langdridge, 2008). By describing and analyzing subjective experience, I tried to "[discover] the essential structures of our consciousness . . . [with the] task of clarifying our knowledge and the meaning of it . . . through a descriptive investigation" (Peucker, 2008, p. 315). A descriptive investigation of consciousness empowers the "I" to have a voice in the midst of naturalistic positivistic science, with its "push for objectivity [that has] almost extinguished the living and subjective understanding of experience from which all human activity emerges" (Prosser, Tuckey, & Wendt, 2013, p. 321).

The purpose of this phenomenology was to describe and interpret the lived experiences of emerging adults at a public university who believe they are called by a Higher Power, have explored careers, and who have tried to find a fit between a calling and a career. I have described, analyzed, and interpreted their subjective experiences of (a) being called by a Higher Power, (b) exploring careers, (c) and making conclusions of fit between their calling and potential careers. My research questions are as follows:

1. How do emerging adults experience a calling from a Higher Power?
2. What career exploration experiences have they had?
3. What do they believe about how their calling fits with a potential career?

Research Design and Rationale

For my study, I used a phenomenological approach, which "seeks to explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individual lived experience" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 19). A phenomenological approach allowed me to achieve an empirical understanding of calling among emerging adults as I collected data through interviews and then analyzed the data for the structure and essence of the experience among participants. Describing and analyzing the intention and experiences of undergraduate students who conceptualize work as a calling gave me insight into how this particular group makes sense of calling as they explored careers and tried to find a fit between their knowledge of self and their knowledge of work.

A phenomenology assumes "there is an essence to an experience that is shared with others who have also had that experience" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 20). By conducting interviews with emerging adults who believe they are called, I was able to learn about calling by describing the intentions of the participants and then analyzing what their experiences had in common. Using the assumption that shared experiences have an essence, I explored calling in order to describe "the experiences of those who participated in the study" so I could "[analyze the experiences of the participants in my study] as unique expressions and then [compare the individual experiences to the other participants who had similar experiences in order] to identify the essence" of calling (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 20). It made sense to use phenomenological assumptions for my study because I wanted to identify the structure and essence of calling among emerging adults. The identification of the structure and essence of calling among the participants in my study was determined by exploring their subjective experiences.

[A phenomenological approach is] primarily concerned with questions around the nature of our subjective experience. Attention is on the specific ways in which individuals consciously reflect on and experience their lifeworld. The person is viewed as a conscious actor who actively constructs meaning. That is not to say that everything is within conscious awareness and control, not at all, but rather that this aspect— communication of our lived experience—is all we can have access to when attempting to understand the way the world appears to people. (Langdridge, 2008, p. 1128)

A phenomenology attempts to understand the way the world as it appears to participants. Using a phenomenology to explore how the world appears to emerging adults who believe they are called allowed me to capture their subjective experiences and consciousness. By studying the subjective experiences of emerging adults who believe they are called, I was able to better understand how their intention informed their construction of meaning. Learning how the participants in my study informed their construction of meaning was important because it provided self-evident truth (i.e., truth that is experienced). For Husserl (1859–1938), the father of phenomenology, science that reveals self-evident truth is a main purpose of phenomenological studies.

In Husserl's hands phenomenology began as a critique of both psychologism and naturalism. . . . Husserl argued that the study of consciousness must actually be very different from the study of nature. For him, phenomenology does not proceed from the collection of large amounts of data and to a general theory beyond the data itself, as in the scientific method of induction. Rather, it aims to look at particular examples without theoretical presuppositions . . . before then discerning what is essential and necessary to these experiences. ("Edmund Husserl (1859–1938)," 2017)

A phenomenological approach to research does not use naturalism or psychologism to study consciousness. *Naturalism* is "the thesis that everything belongs to the world of nature and can be studied by the methods appropriate to studying that world (that is, the methods of the hard sciences)" ("Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)," 2017). *Psychologism* is "the mistake of identifying non-psychological with psychological entities" which stems from the prejudices of anthropological relativism ("Psychologism," 2007). Husserl and Carr (2006) argued that naturalistic positivistic science, under the guise of rational critical inquiry, could threaten the ethics and values of society by obscuring the experiences and intention of participants. The attempt to reveal self-evident truth fueled Husserl's argument for qualitative methods that could best capture the *lifeworld*.

> The term "lifeworld" has a long heritage within social theory. Seamon (1979), in his history of the term, explains that the origins of the concept revolve around the preconditions that underpin our conscious understanding of and communication about lived experience. The phenomenologist Husserl (1970) first used the term *Lebenswelt* (or lifeworld) as a term to explain that, in the modern world, the push for objectivity had almost extinguished the living and subjective understanding of experience from which all human activity emerges. In short, the lifeworld refers to the consciousness of a realm of everyday lived experience prior to our efforts to rationalise it. It is an ever-present realm that is collective, taken-for-granted and increasingly elusive if we try to articulate it objectively. (Prosser et al., 2013, p. 321)

The lifeworld is where "sense-bestowal" takes places, which is different from the "symbolic-technical art" of the naturalistic sciences, such as mathematics and physics (Husserl, 2013, p. 6). When naturalistic sciences seek to rationalize experience, "true knowledge" is

abdicated, as "outward visible generalities" are described by "physicalism" with its "incomplete and purely descriptive" methods (Husserl, 2013, p. 7). While symbolic-technical arts are used to measure what is seen, what is unseen is measured through the communication of experience, which, in turn, reveals the lifeworld. In this way, phenomenologists suggest that meaning does not come from the stars but from humans.

> Positivist reductionist objectivism [is] a misunderstanding of science as a derailment of the ideal of a humanistic science. Positivism attains an inauthentic worldless exactness where all things are seen to be mere objects and, therefore, as objects, can now be subjects to "systematic approximations, in terms of its unconditionally universal elements and law." We must pay close attention: this is where Husserl comes in, with the reassertion of the world as universal elements and laws, which are universal *but only because of their rootedness in lebebsswelt-worldhood. . . .* Positivism has missed the very point of science, it has left out the transcendental character of the "I." (Smith, 2006, pp. 29–30)

The transcendental character of the "I" is captured by studying the lifeworld. Capturing the lifeworld through a description and analysis of intention comes only from gaining insight into the hidden life of participants. If the hidden life of participants is ignored, then the results of scientific knowledge are derailed by an inauthentic worldview: "The reductionist objectification of the world allows for 'clear and distinct' but nevertheless uncritical knowledge" because it does not account for the "intimate human subjectivity which escapes reduction" (Smith, 2006, p. 30).

Husserl (2015) suggested that contemporary science and the accompanying conventional wisdom are merely byproducts of time and social groups, and that era and culture do not always

adequately convey the lived experiences and consciousness of participants. For Husserl, what really mattered in the pursuit of objective evidence was not unquestioned support of theories but an empirical study of the lifeworld.

> By the "lifeworld," Husserl meant the tissue of intersubjective background understandings that first makes scientific objectifying knowledge meaningful. In Husserl's thesis, the lifeworld had become occluded under the impact of the norms of naturalistic positive science set down by Galileo and Descartes in the 17th century and enshrined in Leibniz's project of *mathesis universalis*. (Harrington, 2006, p. 341)

Phenomenologists come to know humanity not through physics, but through spirit, which is the "the locus of our cares and endeavors" where "we come to knowledge of ourselves by stepping outside of the natural world of custom and into the free world of the spiritual sphere" (Smith, 2006, p. 30). When the "spiritual structure of our present and historical life is illegitimately weighed down by a naturalistic interpretation, by artificially and inappropriately applied exactitudes, we have leapt into the realm of absurdity and alienation, and are steps away from barbarity" (Smith, 2006, p. 30).

In Husserl's view, "the supposed success of the positivistic sciences is actually a failure, for science of this sort has failed to grasp that which is its natural entelechy, namely, the world of consciousness and the question of the meaning of man" (Smith, 2006, p. 28). From this perspective, researchers who attempt to make career services or workforce education into a positivist science may "not be concerned with the broader questions of philosophy" and, thus, "narrow its scope away from the arduousness of philosophy [in order to achieve] superficial success" (Smith, 2006, p. 29). By choosing to study the lifeworld of emerging adults who believe

they are called, I am taking on the appropriate role of a phenomenologist by acknowledging the

world of the spirit, regardless of whether or not spirit has been culturally approved.

Like other phenomenologists, "what is initially attractive in these renderings of the

lifeworld concept is its capacity to respond to the challenge of better exploring the unarticulated

aspects of interaction between work, home and community lives" (Prosser et al., 2013, p. 321).

As a phenomenologist, I want to understand why someone in their emerging adult phase would

rely on religious experiences and faith-consciousness to find their place in this world. Exploring

the role of spirit in vocational decision-making should add depth to the current literature on

calling by revealing self-evident truth.

According to the literature, calling results from a transcendent summons from an external

source (Dik & Duffy, 2012), which implies that the intention of emerging adults who believe

they are called is to refer to and occupy themselves with a spiritual obligation that has been

discerned by the subject at some time and in some place through some means, and which now

motivates them to refer to their source of calling and respond to the perceived summons via their

intuition, imagination, memory, and image consciousness (Marbach, 2012). My phenomenology

is designed to capture the intention of emerging adults who believe they are called by learning

more the process of receiving and responding to a transcendent summons from an external

source. The use of phenomenology to explore calling from the perspective of the "I," and then

discover the essence of calling by comparing those who have had similar experiences with one

another in order to identify an objective structure, although historically accurate, is currently

being debated:

> The question of faith figures prominently in the current debate concerning the
>
> "theological turn" in phenomenology. However, the meaning of faith and belief (and their

relationship with reason) has been unthinkingly assumed or, even worse, ignored too often during this debate on phenomenology and its relationship to both theology and religion. The prevalent assumption in this instance has been the faith–reason dichotomy, whereby the concerns and idiom of theology (faith) are seen as completely alien to and incompatible with the province of philosophy and phenomenology (reason). (Finegan, 2012, p. 281)

A dualistic worldview that seeks to separate faith from reason is not a historically accurate approach to science, at least not within phenomenology. Husserl believed that an empirical investigation of belief was the best way to reveal the intention of those who had faith: "Husserl believed that it is only through phenomenology that one comes properly (i.e., non-naïvely) to understand God and his transcendence" (Finegan, 2012, p. 285). What Finegan suggests, and what Husserl championed, is that through a phenomenological study, by leveraging the phenomenological concepts of teleology (discerning purpose) and entelechy (realizing potential), researchers could investigate the intentions undergirding faith-consciousness.

Using a phenomenological approach to study calling, the researcher is not necessarily seeking to answer questions about theology, but rather exploring the lifeworld of the subject who has discerned purpose and who wants to realize his or her potential due to feeling called. Exploring the religious experiences and faith-consciousness of the "I" was "considered a legitimate and important task for phenomenology" by Husserl (Finegan, 2012, p. 288). Faith-consciousness is grounded in belief, which is "a particular world-view or set of metaphysical tenets (and, even more fundamentally, the belief in a world transcendent to my perceptions)" (Finegan, 2012, p. 283). Exploring the spiritual worldview of emerging adults who believe they are called falls within the historic purposes of phenomenology.

If a researcher were to decide that faith is illogical and that belief has no place next to reason, and so refuses to study calling out of reverence to dualistic worldview, then that researcher would put himself or herself at odds with the phenomenological method, which does not diminish or assume the experiences of people in order to promulgate a personal or societal bias against spirit. Using intellectual domination to ignore or dispute the lifeworld of participants who believe they are called is the antithesis of a phenomenology, which seeks to reveal that which has been obscured by a naturalistic reductionist approach to science.

The acknowledgement of belief and transcendence among participants "allows the phenomenologist to distinguish between consciousness directed inwardly (such as towards internal perception) and outwardly (such as towards social community)" (Finegan, 2012, p. 287). A phenomenology, then, can be used to understand the internal dialogue of the subject (in regard to faith) while simultaneously capturing how the person who feels called chooses to interact in socioeconomic and political spheres. While some modern researchers may argue that faith has no place in science, Husserl himself suggested that the exploration of faith-consciousness is important, discussing the "eidetic analysis of religion-constituting intentionality" in his letters (Finegan, 2012, p. 288).

Investigating how spirit influences vocational decision-making is in line with the foundational underpinnings of phenomenology. Husserl "viewed a phenomenology of faith-consciousness as interwoven with a phenomenology of moral oughts, norms, and absolutes. For him, the intuition of values underlies all faith (in teleology, meaningfulness, religion, etc.)" (Finegan, 2012, p. 288). Exploring faith-consciousness and its relationship to work provides an opportunity for researchers to better understand the moral oughts, norms, and absolutes of the "I" as researchers discover how participants are intuiting values derived from faith. By

understanding what is absolutely necessary for a calling (i.e., a relationship with a Higher

Power), "faith is not so much a lack of theoretical knowledge but a possibilizing *sine qua non*"

(Finegan, 2012, p. 289).

Regardless of whether or not a researcher subscribes to the existence of a Higher Power,

using a phenomenological approach to study emerging adults who believe they are called by a

Higher Power can be seen as valid. Drawing on a Husserl-led phenomenological approach to

belief, "phenomenology is bound up in the accomplishment of the *telos* of reason and manifests

itself in the non-naïve overcoming of scepticism and irrationalism" (Finegan, 2012, p. 289). The

act of looking for self-evident truth does not, in itself, require the researcher to believe in the

existence of a Higher Power, but looking for self-evident truth within the communication of

experiences by spiritual participants does allow the researcher to become enlightened by the

lifeworld of the "I."

A goal of phenomenologists who study calling can be to explore how religious

experiences and faith-consciousness influence vocational decision-making as the researcher

learns about how the "I" uses *intention*—or the subject's *consciousness of feeling called*—to

form judgments and explain decisions. Even if a phenomenologist does not personally have faith,

that person can overcome skepticism and irrationalism through an empirical data-gathering

process, which is what contributes to the validity of a study on calling. Belief, for the researcher,

is not belief in a Higher Power but belief in the goals and methods of a phenomenological study:

"Without belief in the integrity of the phenomenological project, phenomenology is both

groundless and aimless in its ambitions" (Finegan, 2012, p. 289).

Phenomenologists in the fields of career services and workforce education have an

opportunity to use empirical studies to explore and describe a moral lifeworld stimulated by

faith-consciousness within the context of career development over the lifespan, which is in the spirit of Husserl's efforts to inform science with the lifeworld of participants. This empirical task of studying calling builds on Husserl's work, which was to find a mature ethical theory within qualitative science.

> [Husserl's] mature ethical theory [was] based on a strong concept of a free and active ego capable of shaping its life autonomously through its own will with a more Aristotelian theory of the virtues that help us to shape our lives in order to reach happiness or *Eudaimonia.* (Peucker, 2008, p. 307)

> For the phenomenologist involved in career services and workforce education research, there can be an assumption that human beings are capable of shaping their lives as independent agents, and that this shaping of life is executed via a will that is driven to reach a virtue-rooted happiness. By using this assumption to explore the lifeworld of emerging adults who believe they are called, researchers can obtain true knowledge about the ethical world-shaping of participants, which could lead to the development of curriculums and counseling that support the spiritual search for *Eudaimonia* as researchers become more willing to describe a genuine human experience. This ethical theory was expanded by Husserl as he wrote a series of articles about "renewal" (Peucker, 2008, p. 309).

> "Renewal" [*Erneuerung*] is the expression Edmund Husserl used in a series of articles appearing in the early 1920s for the process of social, political and ethical transformation of human culture (1922–1924). As an "absolute ethical demand" renewal consists in the struggle towards a "better humanity" and a "genuine human culture." (Steinbock, 1994, p. 449)

In Husserl's 1922–1924 articles on renewal, "phenomenology is conceived in these essays primarily as an ethical task" that appeals to humanity's better angels by describing positive norms and influencing culture (Steinbock, 1994, p. 453). Husserl understands culture as a communal set of "intellectual, artistic, political, or religious norms" that are "brought about by human accomplishment" which are integrated into a community "through the process of normalization" (p. 453). In a phenomenology, the intellectual, artistic, political, or religious norms brought about by human accomplishment through the process of normalization are not given precedence over subjective experience. Instead, the lifeworld is highlighted in order to satisfy an absolute ethical demand for showcasing a genuine human culture.

For the phenomenologist, "Husserl portrays science not only as a trait in the development of humanity, but as influencing and guiding the self-development of humanity of which it is conscious" (Steinbock, 1994, p. 453). In this way, science is not defined as an objective pursuit, but rather as an unseen hand that aids in social change and that has, at least in part, been invented by society itself in order to further normalization. As both the means and the end, science, when striving for naturalistic objectivism, denies the lifeworld and so denies the truth. The ethical charge for a phenomenological study of calling comes from describing the sense-bestowal of participants in an attempt to clarify symbolic-technical fields. Without sense-bestowal, as revealed by the lifeworld of participants, science is hampered by positivistic reductionism, which leads to the constriction of truth. "When the spheres of moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive communication start to become narrowed down by the sphere of science and technology under conditions of advanced capitalist administration, the lifeworld is threatened with 'colonization by the system'" (Harrington, 1994, p. 341).

The ethical function of the phenomenologist is to protect the lifeworld of the subject by giving a voice to the "I." Husserl (2015), as a social scientist, empowered the "I" by illuminating science with the lifeworld and an ethical theory. He advanced the "tenets that moral insights based on feeling could be universalized through cognition; that these insights, like logical judgements, enjoyed the corroborating evidence of pure perception; and that the chief practical impetrative was to choose the best among possible options" (Gubser, 2009, p. 44). For the phenomenologist studying calling, Husserl's contributions to this qualitative method allow for a subject's moral insights based on feelings, and the pure perception of participants, to be used as corroborating evidence in support of the existence of calling.

> The lifeworld has a systematic and historic priority over any scientific theory or worldview. Science and the lifeworld are compatible and unifiable in some way and at some time, whereas the analysis of the lifeworld [through phenomenology] will bring to light the fundamental meanings that made science possible. (Mircica, 2011, p. 185)

Following in the footsteps of Husserl, modern phenomenologists can define phenomenology as "the discipline that discovers the essential structures of our consciousness . . . [with the] task of clarifying our knowledge and the meaning of it . . . through a descriptive investigation" (Peucker, 2008, p. 315). This ethical approach to research carries with it a "demand for a phenomenological analysis of our emotive and volitional consciousness" (Peucker, 2008, p. 315). As a researcher, my study aims to reveal the feelings and will of participants by describing their lifeworld. Describing the feelings and will of participants, and analyzing the purposive vocational decisions of spiritual emerging adults in order to clarify our knowledge and shared meaning of calling, is an archetypical phenomenological study.

A close look at Husserl's seminars reveals "a tension between the description of moral phenomenon and the prescription of proper conduct" (Gubser, 2009, p. 44). In my study, through data collection and analysis, I describe the intention of participants who believe they are called, analyze the structure of calling among participants who have had similar experiences, and then make suggestions for how social scientists may appropriately respond to the lifeworld of participants who believe they are called. This study may contribute to the knowledge of career services providers and workforce educators by clarifying what it means to believe they are called. My study, while offering a description of the lifeworld and an analysis of the structure of calling, does not seek to prescribe calling as a universal career orientation, although I do recognize that this tension exists. In recognizing said tension, let it suffice to say that my intention is to highlight the lifeworld of those who believe they are called in order to preserve the world-shaping consciousness of the spiritual "I."

> For the phenomenologist, participants' experiences form the data. The aim is to describe these experiences in order to make them visible in the participants' own terms. In other words, the aim is to try and get as close an understanding of the participants' lived experiences, as is possible. (Langdridge, 2008, p. 1129)

Using the experiences of the participants in my study as data, and describing these experiences in order to make them visible, is the purpose of a phenomenology. As I completed my study, I became aware that, while my participants felt called and wanted to find a vocation, some did not feel like their university understood or supported their calling decision-making. As a phenomenologist, these data concerned me, as they should concern anyone who values phenomenological methods and goals. Using the data to make the experiences of my participants

visible, I wrote Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation in the participants' own terms and tried to get as close as I could to capturing their lived experiences.

By using data to describe the ignored or misunderstood phenomena of calling, I wanted to help career services providers and workforce educators achieve a non-naïve understanding of faith. This attempt at describing calling goes against a dualistic worldview of faith versus reason, or religion and the academy, but it was important for me as a researcher to showcase the lifeworld of spiritual students. Hopefully seeing emerging adults who believe they are called as a self-evident truth may contribute to "the recovery of human ideals as a domain of the life experience" promised by phenomenology (Gubser, 2009, p. 45).

In recent years, "there has been a growth in phenomenologically informed narrative theories and methodologies" in critical social psychology (Langdridge, 2008, p. 1126). Phenomenologically informed narrative theories and methodologies could be used to improve career services and workforce education. Narrative theories give credibility to the lifeworld, which is an outgrowth of Husserl's work, who "sought to radically change the nature of philosophy itself by focusing on the perception of the 'things in their appearing' (i.e., a focus on the way the world appears to people)" (Langdridge, 2008, p. 1127).

My study seeks to continue the phenomenological tradition in the fields of career services and workforce education by studying calling, career exploration, and the search for vocation among emerging adults in order to reveal the lifeworld of spiritual college students and create a narrative lens for and structural analysis of emerging adults who believe they are called. With these lofty goals in mind, perhaps my study will give the "I" a voice in the midst of potential cultural capitalistic, scientific, and technological colonization.

Reflections on My Identity

When I was 20 years old, I felt called to join a church and learn how to serve, teach, and lead. I joined a non-denominational Christian church with a community development mission, became a licensed minister, and (over a period of several years) became the educational program manager for the organization. Through spiritual formation and volunteer activities, I grew in my relationship with a Higher Power, became more self-aware, and made values-based decisions for how I would interact with my family, workplace, and community. As I grew in knowledge about myself and thought about the kind of work I wanted to invest my life in, I believed that preparing young people for meaningful careers, community leadership, and family life—apart from a religious organization—seemed like a good fit between my calling and a career.

I resigned from being a pastor in 2008 after deciding to go to college so I could learn more about teaching, leading, work, and community development. I attended a community college with the goal of transferring to a university for an undergraduate education. I was also interested in pursuing a master's degree of some kind. As a student, I learned about getting a job and building a career, and how to create and build development programs that didn't involve proselytizing. Although I still felt called, during my time as an undergraduate and graduate student, I focused on learning how to participate in organizations and society without using a traditional evangelical worldview. And, while a student and volunteer, I tried to apply my desire for a vocation to the fields of regional economic development, business management and organizational development, and workforce training and development, with varying degrees of success.

At age 31, after studying and working in economic and workforce development, I entered a Ph.D. program in educational leadership at a research university. During my first class (which

was a seminar on doctoral research), I reflected on how, during my time as a student in a community college, a liberal arts university, and a technical graduate program, I did not feel as though I could be authentic (in regard to my faith and search for vocation). I also thought about how, in economic and workforce development, most decisions were driven by top-down mandates from government, industry, schools, and/or nonprofits. These reflections made me wonder if there were people who, like me, had decided at a young age that they wanted a vocation, if they had experiences similar to mine, and if there was a good way to help young people who felt called to find and follow a clear career path. I also wondered if there was an alternative to top-down economic and workforce development strategies. By the end of my first semester, after conducting a thorough literature review, I serendipitously found *calling* in the vocational psychology literature. I spent the next two and a half years exploring calling, and another year working on a proposal with my chair.

As I reflect on my identity, I am aware that I spent six years in a faith-based community development organization coaching people to answer a call and find a vocation. I am aware that, after retiring from being a licensed minister, I spent time at a community college, liberal arts university, technical graduate program, and a research university exploring economic and workforce development, and that, during that time, I did not feel I could live authentically. I am aware that, throughout my career as a student, as I engaged my community—in government, education, business, nonprofit, and religious organizations—that people did not really seem to understand how calling worked, what the benefits of it were, and why it should be discussed. And I am aware that I used a Ph.D. program to try and synthesize calling with career and human development theories for three reasons: (1) because I was trying to find a fit for my calling, (2) because I wanted to better help people who felt called to find a fit for theirs, and (3) because I

saw a need in society for whole-person education that recognized and affirmed the lifeworld of spiritual people.

By using reflections on my identity to gain awareness about myself, it becomes clear that my topic is something that I have lived and loved over the past 15 years. I tried to not allow my experiences and passions cloud my work as a researcher. To preserve the integrity of my study, during my literature review, interviews, analysis, and discussion, I used appropriate research methods. For example, when the participants in my study discussed prayer, although I knew what prayer meant to me, I didn't want to assume what the participants meant by prayer, so I asked them to explain what prayer meant to them. For another example, I set aside my religious beliefs about calling and used literature in the fields of education, vocational psychology, health and wellness, spirituality, religious studies, economic and workforce development, and career development to conceptualize calling. By reflecting on my own identity, clarifying my assumptions, and making a conscious effort to bracket off my experiences and passions from my study, I attempted to minimize the influence of my personal lifeworld on my study as I let the literature and participants speak on their own.

Population

The population being studied was emerging adults who attend a public university (or who have graduated within the past six months) and who self-identified as (a) feeling called by a Higher Power, and (b) having had career exploration experiences. Some of the features of an emerging adult include being between the ages of 18–25, having yet to take on traditional adult roles (such as marriage and raising children), and being in a phase of career development that includes identity exploration (Arnett, 2014). My belief was that the key characteristics of the emerging adult phase—*identity exploration, hope in potential opportunities, and self-focus*—

would provide a deep resource of meaning making and lived experiences that could be captured by interviews.

Sample, Sampling Strategy, and Numbers

I recruited participants for my study by contacting leaders at religious organizations, administrators of university programs (such as "career services" and "student life"), leaders of university student groups that had a religious purpose, and through an online professional social networking site. As I received responses, I interviewed emerging adults who were either current students or had graduated within the past six months, who self-identified as feeling called by a Higher Power, and who wanted to discuss feeling called and exploring careers. I interviewed 12 participants.

I used a purposeful sampling strategy, which is common for qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Purposeful sampling means that "the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). In this case, I purposefully sampled emerging adults at a university (or who had graduated in the past six months) who felt called by a Higher Power and had explored careers.

As soon as I was contacted by a potential participant, I scheduled a time to meet so they could learn more about my study and possibly be interviewed (the determining factor of being interviewed was for the participant to meet with me at the scheduled time, read the Informed Consent form, want to be interviewed, and sign the form). I interviewed the first 12 participants who responded to my call for participants (regardless of which recruitment method was used). Interviewing 12 participants falls within the range recommended for a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013, p. 157). Of the 12 participants, I chose to interview seven females and five

males in order to reflect the gender distribution of my site. I reached capacity for male participants first. All male students who contacted me after I had reached capacity were notified that I had reached capacity for male participants. After I reached capacity for female participants, I notified students who contacted me that I had completed my study.

Site

The site for my study was a small Midwestern regional public university. The site for my study provides a liberal education for just under 22,000 undergraduate students, and it is not affiliated with any religion. The student gender distribution is 59% female and 41% male. Since the site is not affiliated with any religion, I was able to study emerging adults who felt called in a public university setting.

Data Collection Planning

Access

To gain access to emerging adults at a public university who felt called, I received site permission from appropriate university personnel after getting Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for my study. I then tried to gain access to participants through several ways: (a) by contacting university program administrators through email, (b) by contacting student religious group leaders through email (and one visit to a student religious group), (c) by contacting leaders of local religious organizations through email and site visits, and (d) by contacting students directly through a professional online social networking website. I sent recruiting emails to about 75 university program administrators and student religious group contacts, 50 local religious organizations, and 500 student profiles on a professional social networking website. I visited five local religious organizations and one student religious organization.

I identified university program (such as "career services" or "student life") administrators and student religious group leaders by using my site's website. Once I obtained contact information, I sent an email to the contact that included an introduction to myself and my study, my contact information, and a request to pass along my call for participants to students. The response I received from these administrators and leaders led me to pursue other ways of contacting students (mainly because the summer semester had started and most of the students had left campus).

Since the site of my study draws students from the local region, and many of the students had gone home for the summer, I asked my IRB to amend my recruitment methods to include contacting religious organizations in the region and using an online professional social networking site. I used the websites of local religious organizations to identify contacts, and then I sent a call for participants via email to those contacts. I also visited some religious organizations in order to make contact with leaders. Simultaneously, I used an online professional social networking site to contact students who had the site of my study listed as their current school. I provided those students with a description of myself and my study, gave them my contact information, and told them to contact me if they were interested in learning more about my study.

In all cases, whether participants were recruited through an organizational contact or a professional social networking site, all participants had to self-identify as feeling called by a Higher Power, being an undergraduate at my research site, having explored careers, and having an interest in sharing their story in an interview for a research study. After getting a positive response from a potential participant, I scheduled a meeting with the individual at one of two public libraries (one was at the site of my study and the other was in a town 45 minutes away

from campus). The choice of library was left up to the participants. Upon meeting them, I provided an Informed Consent form for their review (see Appendix A). The form included a description of the phenomenon being studied, an explanation of the data collection methods, my contact information, and contact information for my dissertation chair and university IRB.

At the conclusion of my study, I had gained access to six participants through student religious groups (either by emailing contacts or by the one site visit), three participants through a professional social networking site, and three participants through introductions from other participants in my study. As previously stated, all participants met me at one of two public libraries. Ten of the 12 interviews took place inside, and two took place outside on a bench. On average, the interviews lasted about 30 minutes, with two shorter outliers (under 15 minutes) and one longer outlier (over an hour).

I was very surprised by how conscious of calling, career exploration, and fit the participants were when being interviewed. Most needed almost no prompting, and they were able to easily answer my open-ended questions with descriptions of faith, motivation, and expectations, all while relying on their personal experiences as evidence. Their intention seemed to be completely focused on calling, career, and fit, and most questions from me were asked simply to clarify their answers. For example, if a participant described "calling is in scripture," I would ask something like "What scripture? What does it say?"

Although the interviews were short, a wealth of data was gathered. Because the participants were so conscious of their experiences, and intentional in their choices and beliefs, there was more than enough evidence to analyze, code, and develop themes that could reveal the essence of calling among participants. In retrospect, however, it may have been useful to design

the study with a second or third round of interviews—not because the research questions weren't answered, but because there were emerging themes that could have been further explored.

For example, after the ninth interview, I noticed that when discussing calling, the intention of participants was not really focused on the university. After discussing this with my chair, I created a fourth interview question. This fourth question was used to follow up with participants and get clarification as to why the university did not seem to be a focal point for the participants when discussing calling. However, since a second round of interviewing was not part of the design, and since I believed the best way to ensure a response was through email (rather than try to set up a second meeting), the fourth question was emailed to the first 10 participants and asked in-person during the last two interviews.

Rapport

Once potential participants had read the Informed Consent form and signed it, I developed a rapport with my interview participants by introducing myself, trying to put them at ease, and letting them know that I valued their time and wanted to learn about their calling and career exploration experiences. I believe that by creating a relaxed environment (through body language and communication style), and showing an interest in and respect for the experiences of the participants, I helped put them at ease and they became willing to open up and share their stories (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 118).

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Instrumentation

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The data collection instruments I used in my phenomenology were interview questions. The first three interview questions were directly tied to my research questions, and each interview question had a set of prompts (see Table 1). By linking the interview questions to the research questions, all three research questions were explored during the interview. The fourth

interview question was asked as a follow-up question. The follow-up question was designed after the first nine participants had been interviewed. My four interview questions were as follows:

1. First, I'd like to talk with you a bit about your experiences with having been called by a Higher Power. Please tell me about that.

2. For many, the years in college are a time of exploration. I'd like to understand your experience with career exploration. Could you tell me about that?

3. Finally, I'd like to understand how your experiences with a Higher Power and your experiences with career exploration converge, or fit together. Please tell me about how the two fit together.

4. In the interview, I noticed we talked mostly about your Higher Power and spiritual life, your personal values and choices, experiences with ambiguity and difficult emotions, your faith-based community and friends, and what you learned from job-based learning, such as internships or informational interviews. I am interested in why you think your university wasn't more of a focal point. Why do you think that is?

Table 1

Instrument

Research Questions	Interview Questions and Prompts
	Hello. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me about feeling called and exploring careers. I am very interested in learning more about your spiritual and career exploration experiences, and how you see yourself living a calling and pursuing a career after graduating from college.
1. How do emerging adults experience a calling from a Higher Power?	Question #1 First I'd like to talk with you a bit about your experiences with having been called by a Higher Power. Please tell me about that. Prompts • What do you believe they are called to be or do? • How has a Higher Power been involved? • What else was involved? Who else? • Why was it important to you to answer a calling?
2. What career exploration experiences have they had?	Question #2 For many, the years in college are a time of exploration. I'd like to understand your experience with career exploration. Could you tell me about that? Prompts • Were there any careers that interested you? • Did you ever change your mind about careers? • What drew you to a particular career? • Were there any events or opportunities involving career exploration? • Were there people who helped you explore careers?
3. What do they believe about how their calling fits with a potential career?	Question #3 Finally, I'd like to understand how your experiences with a Higher Power and your experiences with career exploration converge, or fit together. Please tell me about how the two fit together. Prompts • Tell me about the career you chose and why you chose it. • Tell me about how responding to a Higher Power played into exploring careers and making career choices. • Tell me about how career exploration played into how your relationship with a Higher Power. • Does the career you chose allow you to live your calling at work? • What do you think your life will be like as you try to live a calling and build a career? • Do you believe the career you chose is a good fit for you and your calling?

Table 1—Continued

Research Questions	Interview Questions and Prompts
	Follow-up Question In the interview, I noticed we talked mostly about your Higher Power and spiritual life, your personal values and choices, experiences with ambiguity and difficult emotions, your faith-based community and friends, and what you learned from job-based learning, such as internships or informational interviews. I am interested in why you think your university wasn't more of a focal point. Why do you think that is?

Data Collection Planning: Institutional Review Board

According to Creswell (2013), "Permissions [for research] need to be sought from a human subjects review board" (p. 152). Since my research involved human participants, I filled out the necessary paperwork and submitted it to Western Michigan University's Human Subjects Intuitional Review Board (HSIRB). Since the participants in my study were not a vulnerable or protected class, a review of my proposal by the HSIRB was expedited. My study was approved and I was given an IRB-stamped Informed Consent form for the participants in my study to review and sign (see Appendix B).

Data Collection Procedures

Collecting Data

I collected data primarily from face-to-face interviews after meeting participants at a public library. I used interviews to collect data because I was "trying to learn something new, rather than test something that is known" (Richards, 2009, p. 13). Since researchers already know that most emerging adults are in an exploratory career development phase where they are trying to create a vocational identity and make career choices, and that many emerging adults place value on personal spirituality and can describe the concept of a calling in their own words,

using interviews allowed me to learn about the experience of trying to find a good fit for one's

calling in a career. Interviews allowed me to capture the essence of this shared experience by

"studying people's accounts . . . of their sometimes private thoughts and behaviors" (Richards,

2009, p. 13).

In qualitative research, an interview is "a way you can explore someone else's

experience" (Richards, 2009, p. 42). Interviews gave me insight into the lived experiences of the

participants in my study that I may not have been able to otherwise discern. By interviewing

participants I gained knowledge about the inner lives of emerging adults who have tried to

synthesize multiple life theaters into a coherent identity. My goal was to interview each subject

once during a one-hour interview. All interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder.

During interviews I asked open-ended questions and used prompts as needed.

Trustworthiness in Data Collection

Before conducting the study, I tried to purposefully "gain clarity about my own

perceptions" so that I could "bracket off my own experiences from" the participants in my study

(Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 148). Between the years of 2013–2016, I researched calling and

spirituality in the vocational psychology and higher education literature while conducting field

projects at institutions of higher education, participating in a professional Ph.D. program, and

working with an advisory committee. Conducting an extensive literature review, executing field

projects, talking with other scholars and professionals, and being guided by an advisor and

dissertation committee helped shape my study.

In order to challenge my Christian-pastoral bias, I conducted a literature review on topics

related to a spiritual calling, such as holistic health, spirituality (as a positive psychology

concept), Eastern religions, New Age teachings, and earth-based religions (such as Wicca and

Native American Shamanism). I did this to uncover common themes among spiritual traditions, world religions, and religious practitioners/spiritual people. I also explored spirituality in the higher education and student services literature and in professional organizations.

To learn how to participate in the conversation about calling and spirituality in higher education, I conducted four field projects. In one, I traveled to a private university and learned about their Christian-based Life Calling Institute. In a second, I worked with the wellness center at a public university to identify campus expressions and outlets for student spirituality. In a third, I was a participant-observer in six graduate-level courses in a wellness program where issues of spirituality were addressed using a universal lens. And in a fourth project, I shadowed a public community college career center where I interviewed the director several times and sat in on committee meetings.

While conducting a literature review and executing field projects, I participated in a professional doctorate of philosophy program for educational leadership. Students in the program included mostly mid-career adults in one of four educational fields: career and technical education, higher education, K-12 education, and workplace learning. Discussing the literature and my ideas with colleagues, getting feedback from professors, and using coursework to refine theories and methods helped me challenge my biases and use the social sciences to explain and explore the phenomenon.

My study was developed under the guidance of a doctoral dissertation committee chair and was overseen by a three-person graduate committee (which included my committee chair). My dissertation chair and entire committee worked diligently to make sure my biases were uncovered, my literature review was complete, my methods were sound, and my study was conducted with academic rigor. My chair has expertise in qualitative research, one committee

member is a faculty coordinator and professor for higher education and student affairs, and one committee member is the director of the university career counseling center and a professor of holistic health and wellness.

Before writing my dissertation proposal, I spent 2.5 years studying calling in the literature, designing and executing field projects to better understand the college student experience with wellness and career development in context, and talking with professionals and professors while completing coursework for a Ph.D. in educational leadership. I then spent another year fine-tuning my proposal under the guidance of a dissertation chair and committee. This process of reflexivity helped me design a trustworthy study where my bias could be identified and managed.

Storing Data

All interviews were recorded on an audio-recording device and then transcribed into Microsoft Word files and stored securely on a computer hard-drive. A copy of the files was also stored on a flash drive (in case the integrity of the files on the computer was compromised). Once the data were transcribed and my dissertation was complete, I removed the digital data from a secure computer and stored them on a flash drive in a locked location. All data and consent forms will be stored separately in the Primary Investigator's office for at least three years after the study closes.

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Data Analysis

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In qualitative research, data analysis "consists of preparing and organizing the data . . . then reducing the data into themes . . . and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or discussions" (Creswell, 2013, p. 180). This is an analytic approach where the "researcher tries to

discover the essence of the shared experience between his/her research subjects" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 79). This analytic process includes:

- The close, line-by-line analysis of the experiential claims, concerns, and understandings of each participant (e.g., see Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006).

- The identification of the emergent patterns (i.e., themes) within this experiential material, emphasizing both convergence and divergence, commonality and nuance (e.g., see Eatough & Smith, 2008), usually first for single cases, and then subsequently across multiple cases.

- The development of a "dialogue" between the researchers, their coded data, and their psychological knowledge, about what it might mean for participants to have these concerns, in this context (e.g., see Larkin et al., 2006; Smith, 2004), leading in turn to the development of a more interpretive account.

- The development of a structure, frame, or gestalt that illustrates the relationships between themes.

(Smith et al., 2009, p. 79)

Analysis Steps

For my analysis, I transcribed the recorded interviews into written transcripts. I then reviewed the transcripts. I first looked for the experiential claims and concerns of the participants, and then I attempted to "describe the personal experiences [of the participants in my study] with the phenomenon" by "develop[ing] a list of significant statements" and grouping them into categories in order to identify themes among the participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). I then used inductive analysis to develop themes among research participants, and then used deductive analysis to try and an answer my research questions.

The process of data analysis I used is referred to as "coding" (Creswell, 2013, p. 180). Coding is a process of "defining, describing, and interpreting the data" that "involves aggregating the text . . . into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to the code" (p. 184). The process of coding and finding themes in data is detailed by Moustakas (1994):

> Organization of data begins when the primary researcher places the transcribed interviews before him or her and studies the material through the methods and procedures of phenomenal analysis. The procedures include *horizonalizing* the data and regarding every horizon or statement relevant to the topic as having equal value. From the *horizonalized* statements, the *meaning or meaning units* are listed. These are *clustered* into common categories or *themes*, removing overlapping and repetitive statements. The clustered themes or meanings are used to develop the *textural descriptions of the experience*. From the textural descriptions, structural descriptions and an integration of textures and structures into the meanings and essences of the phenomenon are constructed. (pp. 118–119)

This process of coding, identifying sub-themes, and describing themes enabled me to answer my research questions using qualitative evidence. I used the themes to describe the shared essence of the phenomenon being studied, and I wrote "a composite description of the phenomenon" with tables and discussions (Creswell, 2013, pp. 193–194).

My data collection instrument used criteria from theories of spiritual calling and vocational decision-making in order to explore the phenomenon being studied. I assumed these fields would be used to explain the coding and themes, should the essence of the experience of the participants warrant it. I used an emergent design, meaning I needed to see what the data

revealed before I knew how to code them (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). Using an emergent design gave me the ability to write a pertinent follow-up question after I had conducted nine interviews.

As I developed a dialogue with my data, I began to question why the university was not discussed as a focal point for discerning a calling, exploring careers, and choosing a vocation. After the ninth participant was interviewed, I brought this concern to my chair and developed a follow-up question for all interview participants that asked why they thought the university was not more of a focal point while they were trying to find a fit between their calling and a vocation.

Trustworthiness in Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) suggests that data analysis in qualitative studies can be validated by using triangulation. Triangulation "involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective" (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). I used evidence in the literature to explain codes and themes found among my research participants.

Peer review is another way to establish the trustworthiness of a qualitative research study (Creswell, 2013). My study was reviewed by a three-person committee made up of Ph.Ds. who each brought rich expertise and backgrounds to the review process, including knowledge and experience in qualitative research, student services, and university career counseling.

Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations of a study are the boundaries of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 76). My study sought to explore the experiences of emerging adults who felt called by a Higher Power and explored careers while at a public university, and all 12 participants in my study identified as Christian (there was no response from Buddhist, Wiccan, Muslim, or Jewish campus spiritual groups). Because of these boundaries, I am not exploring the differences between religious practices or faiths, nor am I looking at the sense of destiny or social

responsibility experienced by emerging adults who are motivated by a source of calling other than a Higher Power. This study examines spirituality as it relates to career exploration and vocational identity. As such, some matters of spirituality that are irrelevant to the study were not intentionally explored.

The limitations of my study are that it sought to understand vocational conclusions of fit among emerging adults who believe they are called and who are preparing to take on adult work-roles after graduating as undergraduates from a public university. This means my study may not provide a glimpse into similar phenomena being experienced by adolescents, teenagers, adults, graduate students, or emerging adults in some other type of postsecondary program, and it may not be applicable to populations who do not believe they are called by a Higher Power.

While the results of the study "may be transferable, they are not generalizable" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 76). The study is "bounded and situated in a certain context," specifically, a particular group of participants at a particular public university (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 76). The results of the study may change, if replicated, depending on the demographic and geographic conditions.

Chapter 3 Closure

My study is a phenomenology of 12 emerging adults at a public university who self-identified as feeling called by a Higher Power and who had explored careers. By interviewing 12 undergraduates, I hoped to better understand how emerging adults at a public university experienced a calling and career exploration, and how they made conclusions of fit between their calling and a career. Once I completed the interviews, I coded the transcribed interviews and used an inductive analysis to develop themes among the participants. Once an inductive analysis was complete, I used a deductive analysis to answer my three research questions:

1. How do emerging adults experience a calling from a Higher Power?

2. What career exploration experiences have they had?

3. What do they believe about how their calling will fit with a chosen career?

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, I describe the subjective experiences of the participants in my study using the data collected through interviews. These descriptions are intended to give a voice to the "I" by getting as close to their lived experiences as possible and by using their own words. After describing the individual experiences, I present an analysis of the themes that were developed. The themes presented are meant to describe the essence of calling among the participants in my study. To support the identified themes in my analysis, as empirical evidence, I use descriptions of experience and intention as described by the participants in my study.

The purpose of this phenomenology was to describe and interpret the lived experiences of emerging adults at a public university who believe they are called by a Higher Power, who have explored careers, and who have tried to find a fit between a calling and a career. I described, analyzed, and interpreted their subjective experiences of (a) being called by a Higher Power, (b) exploring careers, (c) and making conclusions of fit between their calling and potential careers. My research questions are:

1. How do emerging adults experience a calling from a Higher Power?

2. What career exploration experiences have they had?

3. What do they believe about how their calling fits with a potential career?

Participant Profiles

All participants claimed to have experienced a call from a Higher Power and explored careers, and they wanted to share their experiences with me for my study. In this chapter, I will

switch from using the language of "Higher Power" to "God" and use masculine pronouns, since

that is how the participants described their experiences with calling and a Higher Power. Table 2

provides a summary of the characteristics of the participants in my study, including their gender,

age, year at the university, religion, and race. Participants' majors varied, with three in public

administration, two in medicine, two in secondary education, three in business, and two in

communications. All participants have been given a pseudonym.

Table 2

Participant Characteristics

Participant	Gender	Age	Year	Religion	Race
Amelia	Female	20	Junior	Christian	Caucasian
Sophia	Female	20	Senior	Christian	Caucasian
Hadden	Male	20	Junior	Christian	Caucasian
Justis	Male	21	Senior	Christian	Caucasian
Jon	Male	23	2nd year senior	Christian	Caucasian
Terri	Female	20	Junior	Christian	Caucasian
April	Female	20	Senior	Christian	Caucasian
Jessica	Female	21	Graduate[a]	Christian	Caucasian
Ken	Male	21	Senior	Christian	Caucasian
Daniel	Male	22	Graduate[a]	Christian	Caucasian
Amber	Female	22	Graduate[a]	Christian	Caucasian
Annie	Female	23	Graduate[a]	Christian	Caucasian

[a]Graduated within 6 months of study.

Amelia

Amelia was a 20-year-old female. She described a calling as God having a plan for a

person's life, and it is the person's obligation to discover the plan of God while trying to discern

between the will of the self and the plan of God. In regard to knowing the plan of God, she said, "It's definitely a learning process. It definitely can be difficult for me to really understand, to see where God wants me to go." She believes that learning about God and His plan for a person is part of the maturing process: "It definitely comes with maturing and growing older and gaining more experiences, which gains more knowledge, so you grow as a person."

In order to discover God's plan for her, Amelia prays, journals, looks for external affirmations, and reflects on her experiences. Through prayer, Amelia believes God reveals his plan to her and speaks to her. In journaling, Amelia reflects on her life and "can almost see the bread crumbs or the fingerprints of how God is shaping my life." External affirmations come from experiences that provide a sense of serendipity or encouragement (i.e., feeling like an opportunity is an "open door" from God, engaging with a supportive community, etc.). As Amelia reflects on her life, she looks for the work of God in her life, such as a demonstration of talents or a sense of fulfillment. Amelia believes these spiritual experiences are God's leading in her life.

While attending a public university, Amelia primarily used her major's coursework as a source of career exploration while also leveraging internships and volunteer experiences to better understand the world of work. She worked at several nonprofit organizations, a summer camp, and in a university department. Amelia believes that career choice is based on knowing the self and learning from experiences: career exploration "starts with your vocational skills and growing . . . it's those little hobbies or the little things that you love to do." Amelia also described finding a fit between the self and fulfilling work: "definitely just kind of grows and it uses your interests and your hobbies and what you are passionate about."

As Amelia tried to find a fit between responding to God's plan for her life and figuring out what kind of work she would like to do, she prayed, paid attention to what she was interested in and felt she was good at doing, and looked for a major that would provide a pathway to a career that matched her God-given gifts and what she had learned about her interests and passions through experiences. She stated, "For me, I've always loved to help others and interact with others . . . [now] when I see kiddos who have poor income or just sad home lives or need extra help with homework or just someone to encourage them . . . that's what I do."

For Amelia, earnestly trying to discover and respond to God's plan, and investing in a major and work experiences, does not mean that she knows how everything will work out: "I know I want to go into the nonprofit field, but I'm only 20 years old . . . so I kind of have this small vision of the path that God is guiding me to." The unknowns of the future and the ambiguity of adult life are not a concern to Amelia: "There's kind of an excitement within the unknown knowing that your book has already been written, and now you get to experience each new page, and it's going to be something great."

As Amelia tried to answer God's call, explore careers, and choose a vocation, she formed an opinion about her college experience:

> When you're at college you're kind of in a college bubble. You're always focusing on your next exam or your homework or your projects. . . . If you want to really engage with the economy or politics . . . or [with] what's happening in the world, you really have to do it on your own.

Amelia did go to the university career center, talk to a career advisor, take a career assessment, talk to her professors, and interact with her classmates. For her, though, her primary career services provider was God, as she believed "God knows the plan, and if you keep praying, keep

looking that plan will kind of unfold while you're also kind of experiencing the world around you and making the most of your day."

Sophia

Sophia was a 20-year-old female. She described a calling as an idea originating in her experiences growing up and going to church. For her, originally, calling was associated with a call to ecclesiastical work: "It was an idea that I think I first got exposed to terms of pastors and the idea that pastors were called . . . and then I just kind of associated it with being called to ministry or church." As she has grown, her ideas about calling have changed. She now defines calling as "something deeper than just an interest." For Sophia, calling encompasses all fields:

> I 100% believe God is good and that he created people for specific purposes . . . and God wants what's best for you. He created you to do something and to be passionate about something. And that's supposed to be fulfilling for you.

She conceptualizes calling as "that passion that lights your heart on fire . . . almost [like it is your] identity."

In order to discern God's call for her, Sophia prays, looks for feelings of peace and contentment, and tries to follow God's leading. In prayer, Sophia talks to God, journals, waits for inspiration, meditates on and acknowledges God, and tries to commune with him through a two-way relationship. Using feelings of peace and contentment, for Sophia, is a signal that she is "going in the right direction." Following God's lead, for Sophia, means living a life according to a set of values where she can maintain healthy relationships and foster a psychology of well-being.

Sophia's career exploration began in high school. She was very interested in exercise science and fitness training, and considered the possibility of owning a gym one day. In high

school, she "spent a ton of time in weight rooms and working out," and even interned at a gym where she designed exercise programs, and then came to the university as a student-athlete. When she got involved with the exercise science major, she "wasn't feeling challenged by the career opportunities . . . [and felt] limited . . . and that really scared me."

As Sophia reflected on her career exploration experiences, she realized "what I loved about it was the component of working directly with people and communicating. But it was also very much that I wanted to help them have a healthier life." During her sophomore year, after not feeling challenged in her major, she had people ask her if she ever considered going into medicine and becoming a doctor. She was already starting to "look in those directions," and having those conversations piqued her interest. She started thinking about it and talking to her parents.

Sophia found a fit between her calling and the world of work as she began looking into medicine, because being a doctor

> took everything that I was passionate about, it took everything I was interested in, and even things outside of the human body. It took my leadership capacity, and it took my caring for individuals and the fact that I'm an extrovert and love to interact one-on-one, in groups, I just love people. So it took all these different aspects of who I am and it made them . . . it fit all of those.

For her, a fit for her calling was found in an area where she could do what (she believed) she was made to do.

After choosing to go into a medical field and wanting to pursue a graduate degree in medicine, Sophia began conducting informational interviews with doctors and participated in an intense internship at a nationally recognized university hospital. She did this to learn more about

the day-to-day job of being a doctor, and so she could decide what kind of doctor she wanted to

be (both in terms of field and character). She has decided that being a doctor is "about caring. It's

about making that person, even if you can't fix what's wrong with them, making them feel heard

and understood." For her, living her calling as a doctor is about showing love to patients.

For Sophia, her major sources for discovering her calling, career exploration, and

choosing a vocation were her time spent with God, her parents, her university hospital internship

and informational interviews with doctors, and her peer community (which was an on-campus

religious student group). When asked why the university wasn't more of a focal point, Sophia

responded:

> The university itself comes secondary to those other factors such as friend groups and a
>
> sense of calling . . . [and] what really makes a difference is the effort you put into [your]
>
> education . . . so I see the other factors as more important than the actual building and the
>
> name [of the university] on the diploma to be secondary to the people you surround
>
> yourself with and to chasing your passion because those things will make you more
>
> successful in the long run.

Hadden

Hadden was a 20-year-old male. He defined a calling as being in the context of "we [as

Christians] have a job. That is to tell people about Christ's love . . . we are supposed to share the

love and joy that he brings to our life." Within that context, Hadden believes a calling comes

from "overwhelming nudges of the Holy Spirit working in us." This calling is a personal call

where God works to try to get a person to do what he wants them to do, with a particular set of

character traits and attitudes, and in a particular project or life role. For Hadden, this involved

making himself available to help others, leading a Bible study, and figuring out what kind of career would provide an opportunity to make his future wife and children a priority.

For Hadden, responding to God's call means recognizing the work of the Holy Spirit in his life. When the Holy Spirit was working in him, Hadden believed, he would see a need and feel compelled to meet the need. If he responded to the work of the Holy Spirit, other people would be helped and he would get a sense of peace. If he didn't respond, he felt he would miss out on an opportunity to do God's will and help others. This calling was different than just wanting to do something nice for people: "It's not something I feel like I should do. It's something I am called to do." For him, "a calling in my life is feeling a push. Following that push, and helping others identify that [push] as well." These pushes are based on a promise from God: "[If you follow me] your life will be better . . . other people's lives will be changed. The community will be built."

For Hadden, career exploration was looking into things he was interested in by attending events, talking to people, and thinking about different fields. This included an exploration of finance, marketing, sales, and entrepreneurship. While exploring different lines of work, Hadden kept several things in mind: he wants to do something that would let him provide for a future family and spend time with them, he wants to be financially secure and be able to invest financially in causes he cares about, he wants to impact the people he works with by showing them love, and he wants to do something he enjoys doing and he is good at.

Finding a fit for Hadden means exploring careers and then "wrapping that back to calling." For him, his identity was in his calling, not his job. He feels he is called to be like Barnabas in the Bible, a man who "walked with God's people. . . . He continually encouraged them and built them up. He was a man of honor. A man of integrity . . . a more wealthy man. He

helped fund things." For Hadden, even though he doesn't know exactly if he will end up in sales or finance or marketing or entrepreneurship, he does want to go into business, have a family, help others, and use his gifts.

Hadden did make a distinction between himself, who found an identity in God, and those students who found an identity in what they were doing at the university. When reflecting about his peers, he said, "We [Christians] didn't have the worries of the world because our identity isn't in our school." Hadden said, "College isn't much of a focal point because the Holy Spirit and career choices are what shape my college experiences; the two of these are what guide and motivate me." In his mind, it didn't matter what university he went to; it just mattered that God was calling him to a career in business, and he needed to respond to those nudges.

Justis

Justis was a 21-year-old male. He described calling as trying to live a lifestyle of faith, one that is more than "just a set of rules I need to follow to get a certain thing or to obey a certain thing to get this prize of heaven." For Justis, the calling is about separating from his parents and figuring out how to make decisions on his own that incorporate faith into his lifestyle choices. Living a lifestyle of faith, according to Justis, is demonstrated through intention, service, and gratitude. This lifestyle should result in more intimacy with God, more authority to talk about religion (because of first-hand knowledge), and helping others experience joy and peace.

Justis tried to discern God's call by developing "intimacy with God" through meditation, prayer, reflection, and memorizing scripture. These were spiritual acts designed to help Justis learn more about God and get closer to him (similar to how spending time getting to know a person lets you learn more about him or her and brings you closer together). As he grew spiritually, Justis tried to "hear God calling me," which was achieved by responding to feelings

(such as a sense of peace or feeling as if an opportunity was presented by God) or having scriptures or song lyrics "stick out to me" during times of searching for answers and/or direction. As he responded to God's call, he looked for positive outcomes from his choices and work: "You called me to do that and there were some beautiful results here." These evaluations helped him learn to trust God.

For career exploration, Justis has mainly relied on discerning a career through coursework in a major. He came to the university because he had peace about it and believed God was leading him there. He came in as an engineering major because he liked math, but he did not enjoy his engineering classes. He decided "this is not the passion God has given me" so he transferred into math education. This choice was facilitated by university career services, which gave him some options for majors where he could apply his engineering coursework.

For finding a fit between his calling and his career exploration experiences, Justis believed "God directed me in the direction" of math education, and that math education was a better fit for his talents and interests. He has a "passion for people" and had "ideas about how to be an awesome teacher." However, after spending a couple semesters in secondary math education courses, he "has not felt super great. . . . I just felt less peace [and more] uneasiness about the idea of continuing along the path of education." He has talked to advisors and counselors and plans to complete a secondary education degree, but he doesn't think that will be his ultimate career.

Going forward, Justis believes "I can trust that God is going to use [my education] in some way, and I don't know exactly what that looks like, but I do know that God called me to math education for a period of time and now he's kind of calling me away from that." Justis wants a career where he can do "something I absolutely love." He wants a career where he can

make money, support his future family, do something he has a passion for, and make a difference in the world. But he has not "figured [it all] out yet."

Justis went back to the career center after feeling like secondary education wasn't a good fit for him. He "didn't feel like they really understood what I was saying." He felt like the career advisors didn't understand that he wanted to help people and impact the world, and that they just were trying to get him on a professional path and become a "cog in the system." He felt like "they didn't have faith at all and they weren't coming from a faith perspective, so even the concept of 'I feel like I'm being called in this direction' wasn't something they knew how to support because they didn't understand spirituality."

Jon

Jon was a 22-year-old male. He described calling as being bigger than a career: it is "how I live habitually . . . it can be a part of what I do but it's not, to me, it's not just a job." This broad sense of calling, for Jon, was grounded in an evangelical worldview: "As a Christian, [making disciples of all nations] is essentially my calling." From this broad sense of calling, Jon indicated a sense of responsibility to make disciples, share his faith, spread the gospel, and live a life consistent with scripture, which (to him) meant he should be a follower of Christ, love God, and love other people.

Jon discovered this calling by reading scripture, participating in on-campus ministry groups, and attending church services in order to learn from a pastor. Through study and honing his discernment, Jon believes that God will show him what kind of career he should pursue while responding to the general call given to all Christians: "Whatever form that takes, whether that's me as a pastor, a missionary, or working a nine-to-five job at an office." The calling will be revealed, Jon believes, as he studies the Bible, tries to understand how to put what he reads into

action, and becomes "more in tune with the Holy Spirit." According to Jon, the Holy Spirit "guides us, he leads us, so I attempt to discern what I'm being led to do."

For career exploration, Jon had been a student teacher and decided he didn't like the "politics," "drama," and bureaucracy involved with secondary teaching, and that he felt out of place as a male in a "female-dominated profession." He had gotten into the profession because he had volunteered in his church, working with the youth, for years before coming to college, and he believed that going into secondary education was a natural progression. However, after being a student teacher, he lamented that it wasn't what he thought it would be: "It seems like education [was more like] a business than [a] school . . . [where you are] just trying to improve scores . . . I don't see why I'd want to spend my life doing that."

Jon knows he enjoys helping kids and wants to be involved with ministry, but he doesn't know what kind of job he will have down the road. He had just recently decided not to pursue teaching any longer and is looking for a different career path. As he looks for a new path, he is considering what he is good at, what his interests are, what he is passionate about, and where God is leading him to go. Although he is unsure where he is going, he believes he is called to allow scripture and faith to inform how he interacts with co-workers, behaves in the workplace, and conducts himself. Namely, he should be a man of "good character, good moral integrity."

Jon did not respond to my follow-up question about the role of the university in his search to live his calling in a career.

Terri

Terri was a 20-year-old female. She described a calling as seeing how God can use difficult times as a way to get you to help others and empathize. She felt that God had allowed her to experience heartache and challenges so that she could make a difference with her work

and better understand the issues surrounding particular situations. The two main experiences she discussed were growing up with a parent and extended family members who had a terminal disease, and becoming depressed from witnessing all the suffering: "I felt like God had me go through those experiences so that I'll [recognize mental health symptoms and better empathize with] patients. . . . It kind of gives me a passion to want to help [patients] because I've seen my own family suffer."

Terri stated, "I feel like everyone has a plan, like God has a plan for their life." As she reflected on her own struggles coping with family members who had a terminal illness, and on the struggles of her family members, she had a particular moment of clarity when she "looked back at my life and realized all the events" had happened to prepare her for a career in patient care. She felt all the experiences with illness and depression "made sense" as she reflected on her passions (i.e., wanting to help people, wanting to make a difference with her work). When she found her major, "it just seemed so perfect it was unreal."

Terri believes that "everything happens for a reason" and that a calling can be like "a sudden urge . . . out of nowhere." As a Christian, Terri believes that God is leading her, and it is her duty to follow God's call. When she began making meaning of her life by "knowing God is putting me where he wants me to be" and had a "really strong passion in my heart," she started exploring medical careers by watching YouTube videos of health professionals who were discussing their job, and by deciding to be the kind of professional who would "recognize [depression and anxiety] in my patients" and "take note of [their psychological issues] and be there to help them."

For Terri, the call of God involved both his plan for her life (including reasons for why she had gone through difficult times), and an urge and passion to pursue a particular line of

work. She did look at three careers in health fields. As she explored these fields, she considered potential earnings, time spent at college, and return on investment for a degree. These career exploration experiences did influence her decisions. For instance, she did not want to get a master's degree and doctoral degree in a particular specialty, carry a large student loan debt, and cap out at a $85,000 annual salary. She didn't believe the salary warranted the investment.

Based on her personal interests, Terri decided she wanted to go into a medical field where she wouldn't have to deal with blood. As she explored different health careers (by looking at degree requirements and salary expectations in the field), she serendipitously came across a health profession which met her interests and only a baccalaureate. As she thought about her own life and her faith, she believe God revealed why he had her go through difficult times and urged her to pursue this particular degree: in order to help others in similar circumstances.

When asked why the university wasn't more of a focal point in her spiritual formation and career development, Terri replied,

> I believe that God has a plan and purpose for me. He prepared me to be what I believe he wants me to be by having me deal with many situations throughout my life that will help me have a better passion and drive to help my patients.

She believes God and her life experiences prepared her for work by giving her motivation to help others, and by helping her mature and develop character as she overcame hardships. Because God has a plan for her and is leading her, she believes, she was led to her university in order to complete the radiation therapy program. In her mind, she didn't need the school to help her; she had God and her faith-based student organization as her support structure.

April

April was a 20-year-old female. She described a calling in this way: "Being a religious person I have always felt that I'm going to be where God needs me to be." Experiencing calling was described as coming to university, going into nursing, and having a "constant reminder" or nagging feeling that nursing wasn't where she was supposed to be, and a feeling that she was being "pushed somewhere else."

For April, answering God's call involved honoring her feelings of discontent and the sense of God pushing, even though her family members were all in nursing, and they felt like she should be a nurse. Resisting social pressures is what convinced her the call was from God: "It's a really big leap of faith to leave something [such as nursing] and change to something where I'm just going to go where I need to be."

To explore careers, April first tested the field of pediatric nursing. This was because she had volunteered at her church's nursery in high school, and she had several siblings, and her older sibling had children, so she was "brought up . . . with a big heart and I really enjoy" working with children. When she came to the university, she started volunteering in order to better understand the world of work and her interests. She "wrote" for a local children's hospital, but "that wasn't personal enough for me. I wanted something more directly interacting with kids." Then she volunteered at a children's charity and did administrative work, but didn't really like that either. Finally, she volunteered with another children's charity and worked in event planning. At this nonprofit, she got to "do all their social media, event coordinating, [client intakes], interviews" and really enjoyed that kind of work.

In order to find a fit between her calling (which, again, to her meant being in the right place where God wants her to be) and a job, she kept doing volunteer work and internships: "I

guess that through each career that I tried . . . I felt that I was getting a closer, but not quite right." She was planning to work at a nonprofit working with young females who have been involved with sex trafficking, and that didn't feel right, "like a gut feeling," so she turned it down. Then a couple of days later she got an internship with the nonprofit in event planning. She believes this series of events was God leading her to the right place.

April did not respond to my follow-up question about the role of the university in her search to live her calling in a career.

Jessica

Jessica was a 21-year-old female. For Jessica, a calling is more than a career; it is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ: "I've always known God existed from a very young age. I knew that he was there. I knew that there were consequences for my actions and there was a certain way to behave." This belief in God progressed from a moral-ideological faith to an ethical faith; as she "grew up, I started to understand who Jesus was and how he was calling us to a personal relationship with him." Through a personal relationship with Jesus, Jessica believes "God can completely uproot everything I could think of and make it a million times more . . . there is a calling to be something so much greater than anything I could come up with."

Coming to a realization that, while God was calling everyone, he was also calling her personally, Jessica spent the majority of her time at university investing in her spiritual formation. She read books about philosophy and theology, prayed every day, tried to answer big questions about existence and eternity, tried to live and speak in a manner consistent with her values, lived at a faith-based sorority, went to weekly church services, attended religious conferences, and participated in an international faith-based student group that had a strong

presence on her campus. She did this because her "relationship with the Lord" was her "number one priority."

Jessica did not spend a lot of time at her university exploring careers. As she neared degree completion, she realized she needed a job and would spend "hours [a day] online applying for jobs." She doesn't know what she wants to do for work, but she does feel stifled by the values of her current workplace: "The entire goal is to grow [your network, wealth, skills, etc.] but I'm like, when nobody cares about the end goal . . . what's the point?" It was a conscious decision to not focus on career: "I wasn't really focused on finding a career yet. I was focused on school and finishing school . . . and what it meant to be on your own." Jessica believed a career "would fall into place once I figure all this stuff out," meaning, figuring out what kind of person she wanted to be.

As far as finding a fit between her calling and a career, Jessica states, "I am going to have to learn how to be [a] Christian in the workforce," meaning, she is going to have to figure out how to be part of an organization and work with people that seem to have a different set of values than she has. She seems to know about only two lines of work: the restaurant industry (where she has worked since high school) and "corporate America." She knows she wants to get out of the restaurant industry and is coming to terms with working in a business setting (her degree is in business administration). She sees work as an opportunity to listen to the Holy Spirit in everyday circumstances, doing whatever the Lord "tells me to do," and think about how she will "give back" and "serve others" in the workplace. She is also trying to become a more discreet and open person: "Everybody thinks that if you are completely on fire for the Lord, you're going to be some crazy hippy screaming from the rooftops . . . but it's not really as flashy as that . . . there's a way to have professional conversations."

Jessica felt that her university was at odds with her faith: "I anticipated college to be a huge test of my faith, and an insult to my Christian habits, and [that my desire to hold onto my] values [would be] pushed to the limit." When she arrived on campus, she felt like "the party culture, relativism, monomania were prominent in the students." She felt that American universities have a lot of "stigmas," and she did not think the goal of the university was her spiritual formation, so she looked for resources elsewhere.

Ken

Ken was a 20-year-old male. Ken described calling in this way: "I think a lot of people expect it to be incredibly specific, but I see it as a calling in my life to serve, [which is] maybe in a broader sense." This broad calling is a command from God to "love God and love others." Loving God involves more than a mindset of affection; "we're called to walk with God," meaning, Christians are called to "rely" on God and "experience" God.

The way Ken relies on and experiences God is through reading scripture, prayer, and responding to the Holy Spirit. In the Bible, Ken believes, "there is a lot of narrative around calling in the Bible . . . [but] it's not like you can project that specific situation onto a person's life today." Ken starts with reading and contemplating scripture in order to understand God and his call, and then prays and listens to the Holy Spirit: "Prayer is communication with God" and "I talk to the Holy Spirit . . . I'd say it's like a dialogue in my mind with the Spirit of God that guides me through certain situations."

Ken explored careers by coming to college with an interest in finance because "I was good with numbers and business sounded cool." As he took courses, he realized he liked being creative and communicating, so he switched his major. He completed a business internship doing data analysis and discovered that the title of a job does not necessarily correspond to the job's

tasks and duties. Through that experience, he wanted to find work that was "fun and exciting."
He is trying to figure out if work is ambiguity and minutia, or if there is a job he can do that will
be rewarding by piquing his interests and leveraging his skills.

Ken has a clear concept for finding a fit between God's calling and a career. He asks
himself four questions about work and conceptualizes it as four overlapping circles: (1) What am
I good at? (2) What am I passionate about? (3) What significant need in the world do my skills
and interests meet? and (4) How does my work glorify God? He also believes that he needs to
ask himself "why" he is doing what he is doing, and that there should be a purpose to his
choices. He stated, "I don't necessarily think God cares what you're doing," as much as why you
are doing it. Ken believes it is the responsibility of the person to answer these four questions
about work and then choose something that makes sense while trying to "glorify God."

When asked about the role of the university in his pursuit of calling and career
exploration, Ken stated,

> The reality is my university has been the launching pad for everything. I discovered on a
> class trip that I loved business—relationships with professors . . . have led to project and
> job opportunities . . . [but] if I had not gotten involved with [a student religious group], I
> would never have met many of the people who helped shape these transformative years
> of my life."

While noting the importance of attending the university, Ken also noted, "I believe God has
orchestrated the whole thing and has used classes, professors, friends, student organizations, and
university events all as guideposts to lead me toward my calling."

Daniel

Daniel was a 22-year-old male. He described a calling as believing God is real: "I was raised Christian. My parents didn't really put a huge amount of pressure on us to become Christians . . . so I really didn't make my faith my own until college." At the end of his freshman year, Daniel was bored with classes, had participated in some at-risk behaviors, felt like his didn't have good friends, and felt ashamed for an addiction he had: "And I realized, you know, maybe this isn't what I should be doing. So I started thinking about the intangible things that I wanted out of a career and out of what I wanted to do with my life." After that first year, Daniel got closer to God, and believed that God began relating to him like a father or best friend. By building a "personal relationship" with God, Daniel believed he was answering God's call.

To build a relationship with God, Daniel began "seeking him in earnest, you know, daily or almost daily. Actually bringing my troubles to him and trusting him with the darkest parts of me." He also began reading scripture, and he found a "community of believers" whom he believed had "my best interests at heart and who would seek to build me up rather than just get what they could." This relationship with God, along with personal Bible study and participation with a religious student group, helped Daniel "understand who [God] is now and what he wants for everyone and how genuine and beautiful that is and how much redemption is available through him."

Daniel began his career exploration as a freshman: "When I came to college, I was very much about, you know, what type of career is going to get me the most money." After answering God's call, Daniel thought about who he was and what he wanted to do with his life. He decided,

> First and foremost, I wanted to work with people . . . so I kind of crafted together this type of major and minor combination [that focused on my interests], very prayerful and very slowly over the next year or so.

He then set priorities: "Number one, I want to do what God tells me to do . . . number two, I have to provide financially for my wife and I. Then third, is like I want to be fulfilled in my work."

As Daniel prioritized his career goals, found coursework that interested him and seemed like a better fit, and answered God's call, he used coursework to find a good fit for himself in the marketplace. This involved learning about different classes and majors and thinking about where the degree options would lead him. As he tried to visualize what kind of opportunities different degrees would provide, he switched his major for a specialist focus to a generalist focus.

Daniel believes his career discernment "has been mostly through conversations" and he talked to different professionals and tried to learn about different fields. He became more convinced that his chosen major was a good fit as he took courses and ended up enjoying them, felt a sense of flexibility in how he could use his degree in the future, and as he was

> taking internships that I could get, taking jobs that I could get, reaching for any sort of opportunity in the jobs that I had just [to do] anything extra, you know, try out, see if you like it. And then just trying to get connections and trying to network and learn about the industry.

Daniel feels like his time spent in a religious student group was his "most rewarding time" at college. He really enjoyed the time spent learning about God with other young people, being built up in his faith, and building up the faith of other students while being a part of a supportive community. He felt like it was his personal decision to answer God's call that

empowered him to overcome difficulties, become his own person, and chart a course where he could build a satisfying career and life that was based on purpose.

Amber

Amber was a 22-year-old female. She described a calling as "receiving some kind of direction towards something." For her, calling "comes in bits and pieces, not necessarily . . . I haven't felt a call in my life to some huge goal. So, for me, that's things like changing my major when I was in college." Amber has experienced a calling in this way:

I think that [discerning God's calling has] taken the form of looking for answers to questions and finding them through a feeling of peace or unrest in response to those questions. As well as getting advice from people I respect.

Amber actively seeks to hear God's calling when making life choices, and she consistently tries to figure out how to respond. She "look[s] for answers in God's word, so the Bible. For me, I think that means studying it on a daily basis as best as I can." "Other people's stories and experiences" have also helped her figure out how to respond to God's call as she "learned things that applied to my own life." "Through a life centered in prayer" Amber asks God questions and is "actively listening for how he could be responding." She does this because "I'm really trying to discern what my future looks like." By being an active listener, Amber believes she will know "what God's will for my life is" so she can align her life choices with his plan.

To explore careers, Amber considered different majors that closely matched her interests in helping other people and making a difference in her work. She started her college career in secondary education, then looked at social work, and (finally) settled on nonprofit administration. While exploring majors, she talked to advisors and went to career fairs. As a

nonprofit administration major, one of Amber's degree requirements was taking an internship with a nonprofit organization. She chose to intern with a religious student group, and the internship became her main career exploration experience.

Amber began her internship with an entry level office role. Over time, she began taking on more responsibilities and becoming more involved in different activities. Eventually, she became a core leader in a student group. At the end of her college career, she managed two interns, led one of three rotating leadership teams, taught other people, became "involved in staff conversations and their meetings," and had "a voice in some of what goes down" in the student group. Amber believes that God directed her to nonprofit administration and used the internship to teach her how to lead.

As Amber searches for a career where she can lead by using her experiences, education, and skills, she is looking for God's guidance: "I've sought out opportunities, and some doors have opened, and some doors have closed. . . . And some things have been really clear and some things have been really confusing. But I genuinely believe God has been in every one of those steps." She has not picked a specific job, but she looks at how (in her mind) God led her to a degree that was fulfilling and an internship where she developed her skills, and she believes God has a plan and will show her what comes next.

In regard to her college experience, Amber was a little discouraged by the university career services providers. She had gone to the career center with a hope of trying to figure out how to leverage what she had learned in her internship. She was excited about what God had done, had a vision for what she could do, and knew she had gone from a front desk worker to a leader. However, when she went to the career center, she felt that all they saw was a college student with little experience except being a waitress (a part-time job she had held). She felt like

the career services providers "sold me short." Amber believed "the more powerful experience" of going to college was being a part of the religious student group.

Annie

Annie was a 23-year-old female. She described a calling in this way:

[A calling] means the sense that the Christian God that I believe in has laid out meaning and purpose for me, whether that be professionally or in a family setting, or relationally. He has purposes for my time while I'm alive here, and that calling [carries with it] a sense of responsibility.

For Annie, discerning and responding to God's plan has future repercussions. For instance, because she discerned God's call to go to college and get a degree in nonprofit administration, the job she was just offered during her last semester at the university was a part of God's plan and the direct result of her taking responsibility for following his plan.

Annie discerns God's call in several ways. One, she reads the Bible and believes God's call is laid out in scripture. For example, when the Bible says "care for orphans and widows," that gets incorporated into how she views her call. In other words, the core values are in scripture, but not "a ton of structure in what it has to look like, application-wise." For more specific application, Annie looks for opportunities that "come across" or that she "walks into." She believes opportunities are God at work. She also looks for "outside affirmation without prompting." For example, she may be praying and asking God questions, and then a Christian friend happens to talk to her about that issue later on. She sees this as God working "as he connects his body." She also prays and asks God questions. She looks for answers from God in her feelings: "Do I have peace about what I am doing?" To sum up her philosophy on responding to God's call, Annie believes, "Faith first. Then facts. Then feelings."

For career exploration, Annie began her career search as a freshman focused on anthropology "because [it] just sound[ed] kind of interesting." As she increased the breadth of her search, she decided

> I don't have any interest in working in a career that doesn't serve people . . . [and] I couldn't find any personal fulfillment in my accounting classes or in my economics courses, or in my art classes. But I found a lot of personal potential when I [switched my major to something where I could practically help people].

Annie sees herself as having the potential to be an executive leader who is a "passion-driven person" who can "work my ass off towards that mission or purpose" and who can "have a positive impact on the community."

To be a more competitive job seeker after graduation, Annie pursued several internships. She "realized early on that my degree was not gonna compete well with a lot of other degrees unless I had a lot of experience to back it up with." She chose two nonprofit organizations to intern at, and then a public organization. Through these experiences, she saw that "at these different places, none of these people had degrees in nonprofit administration. They all had degrees in a specialty," such as accounting, management, operations, or human resources. These experiences also made her sure that she wanted to "end up being a high level administration with a nonprofit." These experiences help her find a fit between her call and career.

When asked about the importance of the university on her calling and career exploration, Annie stated,

> It seems like universities are quickly losing their value because they exist everywhere. They exist online . . . universities like [mine] are becoming pretty normal . . . I could have

gotten this education anywhere. I don't think it's worth what I paid. I think my

internships are worth way more.

Annie believes she picked her degree based on "personal conviction" that was "not based [on

help from] the university."

Presentation of Themes

Upon analyzing the data, I developed five themes that captured the essence of calling

among the participants in my study: *worship God*, *work as a vocation*, *flourish as adults*, *be

awake*, and *become career ready*. Each theme has six subthemes, which are characteristics

associated with the theme (see Table 3). For example, the theme of *worship God* has the

subthemes of *belief*, *distinction*, *prayer*, *feelings*, *scripture*, and *affirmation*. The themes and

subthemes I developed describe the essence of calling among the 12 participants in my study.

The themes and subthemes were developed by comparing the data gathered during interviews

with relevant literature.

Table 3

Presentation of Themes

Themes and Subthemes				
Worship God	Work as a Vocation	Flourish as Adults	Be Awake	Become Career Ready
Belief	Benevolence	Engagement	Transcendence	Interests
Distinction	Purpose	Relationships	Ownership	Skills
Prayer	Guidance	Happiness	Self-governance	Work-based Learning
Feelings	Ambiguity	Meaning	Refining Values	Environment
Scripture	Reflection	Grit	Meta-learning	Reasonableness
Affirmation	Passions	Hope	Future Self	Decidedness Fit

The five themes I developed describe the *intention—*or *conscious awareness and focus of attention—*of the subjects in my study. The themes and subthemes were created after the data were analyzed for "experiential claims, concerns, and understandings of each participant" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 79). Then the coded data were analyzed in order to identify "emergent patterns (i.e., themes)" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 79). The presentation of themes and subthemes is not an indication of the intensity of the theme or subtheme, or of a participant's proficiency with the theme or subtheme; it is simply an acknowledgment that the theme or subtheme exists. The themes and subthemes are meant to capture the essence of calling among the participants by recognizing their experiences and beliefs.

When discussing themes in this chapter, I will discuss each theme and subtheme in a section that has a heading and a table. The table will demonstrate the relationship between the subtheme—or *theme characteristic—*and each of the 12 participants in my study. These tables and associated descriptions of themes and subthemes will provide a description and analysis of the essence of calling among the participants in my study. Within each theme section, as I describe and develop the theme and subthemes, I will use quotations from the participants in my study as supporting evidence.

The themes and subthemes I developed should not be considered an exhaustive list but, instead, as a sensible attempt to capture the essence of calling among the participants. The themes and subthemes were developed by carefully analyzing the descriptions of the participants and then comparing the evidence of calling from their descriptions to the literature. For example, since several participants described showing resilience during trying times, I decided to use the word "grit" from the positive psychology literature to capture their experiences (Duckworth,

2016). There may be more or fewer themes and subthemes of calling among the participants than I described, and a different researcher may have developed different themes and subthemes.

As I developed themes from the coded data, I tried to best capture the intention of the participants around their stated priorities, and then organize subthemes under a theme in order to provide a rich description of the experiences of the participants. I eliminated subthemes that seemed duplicative by combining them, such as when I took a subtheme of "altruism" that was originally under the "flourish as adults" theme and combined it with "benevolence" under the "work as vocation" theme, but there still may be some overlap among themes and subthemes. The themes and subthemes presented in this paper went through more than 10 and perhaps as many as 20 versions before I settled on the final version. Perhaps more changes could be made to the themes and subthemes that would make capturing the experiences of the participants even more accurate.

The themes I developed used qualitative evidence to describe the essence of calling among the participants, and the subthemes further reveal their conscious intentions and subjective lifeworld. In retrospect, however, the essence of calling among the participants was complex, and it required a certain amount of dexterity to capture. To be sure, there is room for discussion and debate as to what themes and subthemes would be most appropriate for describing the essence of calling, and whether there should be more or fewer categories, and whether the categories are too symmetrical. That being said, it can be stated with certainty that some of the themes developed from participant descriptions could include worshipping God, wanting a vocation, flourishing as adults, being awake, and becoming career ready.

The Intention of Participants Was to Worship God

The intention of the participants was to worship God. Although none of them explicitly said "worship," the behaviors and attitudes described by the participants demonstrate a Christian expression of worship, which is a lifestyle of service where a person seeks to honor God and conform to his will and word. Worship has its roots in the priesthood, where priests served God by setting apart their lives in order to conduct themselves in accordance with a sacred office. In Christianity, it is sometimes said that God wants a kingdom of priests, meaning all believers have a spiritual priestly office. Being aware of worship caused the participants in my study to place God in a higher position than the self, college, work, and society. For example, when asked why the university wasn't more a focal point in her career exploration, Amber stated, "For me, my allegiance is . . . to the Lord in my whole life." Table 4 provides a summary of the distribution of Theme 1 characteristics among the participants.

All participants described how they have chosen to listen to God and obey him. These choices are an act of Christian worship: "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5, New International Version, 2011). *Worshipping God*, among the participants in my study, indicated a conscious awareness and/or focus of attention on *belief*, *distinction*, *prayer*, *feelings*, *scripture*, and *affirmation*.

Table 4

Theme 1: Worship God

Participant	Theme Characteristics					
	Belief	Distinct	Prayer	Feelings	Scripture	Affirmation
Amelia	X	X	X	X	—	X
Sophia	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hadden	X	X	X	X	X	X
Justis	X	X	X	—	X	X
Jon	X	X	X	X	X	X
Terri	X	X	—	X	—	X
April	X	X	X	X	—	X
Jessica	X	X	X	—	X	X
Ken	X	X	X	X	X	X
Daniel	X	X	X	X	—	—
Amber	X	X	X	X	X	X
Annie	X	X	X	X	X	X

Belief. Belief is a characteristic of worship where a participant described communing with a personal God. All 12 participants believe God is real and that he interacts with them. To the participants, he is as real as the university where they take classes, the jobs they have worked at, the activities they have participated in, and the people in their lives. To the participants, God is not an idea, a theology, a set of rules, or a symbol. He is a powerful, living God, meaning, he has the ability to influence the social world and to interact with them as individuals. This belief, for 5 of 12 participants, included a description of the Holy Spirit "working in them" or "giving" gifts or guidance. Whether or not they mentioned the Holy Spirit, the participants all described God as someone who interacted with them by sharing his opinions, thoughts, and feelings, and exerting influence over them and their world.

Distinction. Distinction is a quality of worship where the participant regarded God as being distinct from the biology or psychology of the self. All 12 participants described God as being distinct from the self, meaning he was seen as separate from the self. Interpreting God as being distinct from the self motivated all 12 participants to actively try to discover the will of God, seek clarification between the will of God and the self and social influences, and make decisions that would satisfy a distinct entity. The distinct person of God was called either God or the Holy Spirit: "To me, [calling] is overwhelming nudges of the Holy Spirit working in us" (Hadden).

Prayer. Prayer is a subtheme of worship where the participants talked to God and listened to him, or tried to align the self with their knowledge of God and the Bible. In this way, prayer served as a conduit for connecting with a transpersonal source. Eleven of 12 participants described prayer as a way to commune with God. Prayer was described in different ways, but its essence was as an activity where participants spoke to God, tried to understand God's ways and thoughts, and tried to align the self with God by coming into agreement with what the participants discerned to be God's will. This process provided a sense of intimacy, encouragement, openness, and/or communication for the participants as they worked through concerns, ambitions, and questions by talking, thinking, quietly sitting, and/or listening.

For some of the participants, God spoke to them during their prayer time. For example, when considering her major, Amelia stated, "I was praying about it, and he's like, 'you love nonprofits. You love working with people. You should try this major.'" Other participants indicated they did not hear an audible voice. Instead, they interpreted different emotions or thoughts as being inspired by God. This process of prayer was captured by some participants through journaling.

Feelings. Feelings were a subtheme of worship where participants regarded how they felt as indications of God's influence, even when their feelings contradicted what they wanted to do or what was expected of them. Ten of 12 participants indicated that they relied on, to some degree, their feelings in order to interpret the will of God. These feelings could be in the form of anxiety (when God did not want them to make a particular life choice), or a sense of peace (if they were making the choice that most aligned with the will of God). Sometimes the participants experienced God as a nagging feeling that something wasn't quite right, and at other times it was a feeling of joy that encouraged them to continue in some endeavor. These feelings were also described as intuition, or a "gut feeling" (Annie) or "something that I know as a truth" (Sophia). Most participants indicated that they actively tried to discern the difference between a feeling originating from the self and a feeling originating from God.

Scripture. Scripture was a subtheme of worship in that many of the participants regarded reading the Bible, referencing the Bible, and/or remembering the Bible as a way for them to serve God and stay in the path he wants them on. Eight of the 12 participants believed that the Bible facilitated communion with God. They read the scriptures to better understand who God is, what he expects from people, and how he has worked in the past. The Bible, for 8 of 12 participants, was a benchmark for understanding how God interacts with people and how people should interact with him and the world. Several participants specifically indicated that the words of Jesus in the Bible to "love God and love others" expressed the general call for all Christians (Jon, Jessica).

Affirmation. Affirmation held the intention of many of the participants in their worship of God as they looked for external sources to complement their beliefs and feelings. Eleven of 12 participants looked for external affirmations to confirm their interpretations of God's will. This

could include getting unsolicited advice from peer group members and/or community leaders, talking over situations with friends and family members, having opportunities appear or cease, being involved in circumstances that provided a sense of comfort or glee, or evaluating the outcomes of choices (especially choices that had been initiated by God). For 11 of 12 participants, these affirmations were described in different ways, but all involved an external source encouraging or clarifying God's will.

When asked about calling, career exploration, and finding a fit, the participants described worshipping God. Worship of God, with the implication of honoring God by sanctifying one's life in service to God, was demonstrated by a belief in God as a personal and interactive deity who is distinct from the self and this world. Worship was maintained through reading scripture and prayer. As the participants built a relationship with God through reading, thinking, and praying, many used their feelings, knowledge of scripture, and external sources of affirmation as they set their intention on worshipping God while responding to a call, exploring careers, and trying to find a fit.

The Intention of Participants Was to View Work as a Vocation

Because they believed God was calling them, the participants in my study chose to view work as a vocation they could invest in (instead of a job they had to get, or career where they could use their skills). In choosing to view work as a vocation, the participants interpreted work as an opportunity to demonstrate God's love and do what they were created to do. This is in line with contemporary vocational psychology research, where calling is seen as work orientation that can be chosen (Dik & Duffy, 2012). The subthemes of *work as a vocation* include *benevolence*, *purpose*, *guidance*, *ambiguity*, *reflection*, and *passions* (Table 5).

Table 5

Theme 2: View Work as a Vocation

Participant	Theme Characteristics					
	Benevolence	Purpose	Guidance	Ambiguity	Reflection	Passions
Amelia	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sophia	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hadden	X	X	X	X	X	X
Justis	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jon	—	X	X	X	—	X
Terri	X	X	X	X	X	X
April	—	X	X	X	X	X
Jessica	X	X	X	X	X	—
Ken	X	X	X	X	X	X
Daniel	X	X	X	X	X	—
Amber	—	X	X	X	X	X
Annie	—	X	X	—	X	X

Benevolence. Benevolence is a worldview where the subscriber believes there is a loving God looking out for them. Seven of 12 participants described God as being benevolent. This belief that God is loving and helpful comes from personal experience and from reading scripture. Sophia stated, "God wants what's best for you." This belief in God's good intentions and kind character was used to interpret the actions of God in their past, present, and future, and in scripture. It also inspired many of the participants to want to show love to others.

Having a benevolent worldview is used as a motive for trusting God and responding to him: "You got to trust what God said, not just because you're not feeling it, you're now seeing the result, like you have to trust what God is saying . . . [because] he doesn't fail, he doesn't

forget his promises" (Terri). Believing God is benevolent inspired the participants to both answer his call and be motivated them to be benevolent themselves. Showing benevolence at work was described as acts of kindness, attitudes of empathy and compassion, and the desire to be helpful and friendly. Viewing work as an opportunity to express benevolence is a hallmark of vocation.

> I want it to be my profession to help people because I want it to be something that I give my mind to, and something that I give all of my time to and my energy to. That, for me, lines up with what Scripture and conviction says we are to do for this world, is to love people and to care for them. (Annie)

Purpose. Purpose is an awareness of meaning, or the belief that God has a reason for doing something. Purpose is a subtheme of vocation because it provides pathways thinking whereby the participant can have a sense of hope and optimism in events and choices (since God is control and has a purpose for what is happening). All 12 participants described a belief that they were created by God and that he had a purpose for their lives. Purpose was sometimes described as a plan: "I have always felt that I'm going to be where God needs me to be" (April). Believing God has a purpose or plan for them fueled their exploration of vocation and how they make sense of work.

The participants, being convinced that they were alive for a reason and that God had a plan for their lives, actively tried to discover what that purpose was. For some of the participants, purpose was on a grand scale and was used in the development of a foundational philosophy on life (Ken). For others, purpose was very specific, such as a particular job (Terri). Regardless of the scope of purpose, 12 of 12 participants believed that their work had purpose.

To me, [calling] means the sense that the Christian God that I believe in has laid out meaning and purpose for me, whether that be professionally or in a family setting, or relationally. He has purposes for my time while I'm alive here, and that the calling is a sense of responsibility. Yeah. A responsibility to respond to that. (Annie)

Guidance. Traditionally, guidance is a subtheme of vocation, since vocation is being guided by God into a line of work (instead of doing whatever job is available or what career is recommended). All 12 participants described being guided by God into a field, particular job, major, learning experiences (such as internships or volunteer activities), and/or way of life.

Seeking God's guidance was a theme among all participants. Looking for and responding to God for guidance required an investment of listening, thinking, and taking action, either by adjusting their life trajectory or changing their behaviors, attitudes, or expectations. The guidance of God was often described as an ongoing process filled with trial, error, and evaluation: "It's definitely a learning process. It definitely can be difficult for me to really understand, to see where God wants me to go" (Amelia).

The guidance of God was described as something external to the self that had to be discerned and followed with free will. Hadden stated, "[God's guidance] is something that is overwhelmingly saying, 'It doesn't matter what you think. You have a choice. You cannot do it and I'll still love you . . . but if you do this, I'm going to bless you.'" Amelia stated, "There's always moments in life where you're not really sure which way to go because that's where you're trying to balance, 'Is it my plan, or is it God's will?' and you're trying to blend both of those together." The participants expressed an earnestness in following God's guidance. For some participants, calling was described as being synonymous with guidance.

Ambiguity. Ambiguity is a subtheme of vocation that indicates a period or state of not knowing, and/or of having too much information to sort through. Like a job search or career exploration, the search for a vocation also has its ups and downs and times of unknowns. While the participants did describe a conviction that they were created for a reason, and that God was guiding them, 11 of the 12 participants also described experiences with ambiguity and attempts at managing the emotions and concerns of not knowing. In times of ambiguity, viewing work as a vocation provided valuable reassurance as participants placed their trust in God's benevolence and purpose.

> So, I think that, as far as career exploration goes, I've sought out opportunities, and some doors have opened, and some doors have closed, if you want to use the Christianese term. And some things have been made really clear and some things have been really confusing. But I genuinely believe that God was in every one of those steps, and that the place where I found myself now is a more grown version of who I was when I came here [to the university], and a version of myself that I couldn't have pictured. And I think that only God can orchestrate that. (Amber)

Reflection. Since participants were focused on viewing work as vocation, many cultivated an awareness of God's work and their response by reflecting on their past. To better discern God's guidance and purpose, and to deal with ambiguity, 11 of the 12 participants used reflection. The participants reflected on who God was to them, what God had done in their lives, the experiences they had with and without God, and then they tried to make sense of their present and future based on those reflections.

This process of reflection could involve reflecting on a difficult time in their life with at-risk behaviors and deciding that God had helped them overcome those behaviors and learn how

to contribute to society in some way (Sophia, Daniel). Reflection could also include a time when they done what God wanted them to do, and the results were positive (Ken, Jessica). Reflecting on positive outcomes gave the participants hope that God was with them, and he could be trusted to repeat past successes if his guidance was followed (Hadden, Amber). Reflection also helped some of the participants see God-given meaning in their work (which is what a vocation is):

> Right now I'm going to be, I'm going to school to be a radiation therapist and they deal with cancer patients. I feel like I've been called because growing up a lot of my family members from both sides of the family, mom and dad, all had cancer, so far everyone besides my brother and dad. I feel like being exposed to that it's just something that'll help me be used to dealing with those patients, dealing with cancer and stuff. It kind of gives me that passion to want to help those because I've seen my own family suffer. I want to be that kind of radiation therapist that those patients, or like my mom would have to deal with. I want to be that kind of person. If she were to have to go to radiation I want me to be the kind of person to help her. It just kind of gives me that passion. . . . All those events growing up I feel all led to this. It just seemed like a perfect fit to me. (Terri)

Passions. Passions were a cause or vision the participants had for their work. Ten of 12 participants described an interest in finding work that would allow them to pursue or live their passions. Passions seemed different from happiness (a characteristic in the *flourishing* theme) in that happiness was a feeling of enjoyment or serenity or satisfaction, where passion was the pursuit of a goal or the advancement of a cause (although, pursuing one's passions or doing what one was passionate about was described as a source of happiness). Passion was described by the participants as the pursuit of an achievement and the accompanying zeal, usually directed or

given by God. Viewing work as an opportunity to combine God-given passions with a career is a vocational attitude.

When asked about calling, career exploration, and finding a fit, the participants described viewing work as vocation. Viewing work as a vocation, with the implication that work is a call from God where a person receives purpose and gifts to serve the common good, was described as being rooted in a belief that God is benevolent, he created them for a reason, and he has a plan. Believing God is benevolent and purposeful inspired the participants to look to him for guidance as they set their intention on viewing work as a vocation while responding to a call, exploring careers, and trying to find a fit. In this process, the subjects experienced times of ambiguity. While viewing work as a vocation, the participants used reflection and passion-identification to inform college and career decisions.

The Intention of Participants Was to Flourish as Adults

For the participants in my study, calling was not just about finding a job; it was also about *flourishing as adults* in different roles and theaters. When asked about calling and career exploration, the participants would discuss *engagement*, *positive relationships*, *happiness*, *meaning*, *grit*, and *hope* (Table 6). This intention to flourish as adults was described by participants as making psychological, economic, and social choices to enhance well-being. Flourishing, although inspired by a spiritual life, was not explicitly religious (in the same way that worshipping God or viewing work as a vocation was).

Flourishing, while having some crossover with the vocation theme (*purpose* is related to *meaning*), more directly considers issues of personal health and wellness (although an investment in flourishing may be due to worshipping God). Where worship is about serving God, and vocation is mainly considered to be developing a spiritual work orientation inspired by God,

flourishing as adults captures the intention of the participants in my study as they described a desire to have positive emotions, engage with communities, develop positive relationships, find meaning, demonstrate grit, and keep an attitude of hope or optimism. However, even though flourishing is a separate theme, the influence of worship and vocation is still present.

Table 6

Theme 3: Flourish as Adults

Participant	Theme Characteristics					
	Engagement	Positive Relationships	Happiness	Meaning	Grit	Hope
Amelia	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sophia	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hadden	X	X	X	X	X	X
Justis	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jon	X	X	—	X	X	X
Terri	X	—	X	X	X	X
April	X	—	X	X	X	X
Jessica	X	X	—	X	X	X
Ken	X	X	X	X	X	X
Daniel	X	X	X	X	X	X
Amber	X	X	X	X	X	X
Annie	X	X	X	X	X	X

Engagement. Engagement is the intention of having focused attention on an activity or relationship. It is a characteristic of flourishing because it suggests the person wants to invest in personal growth, relationships, and achievements. In contrast, someone who is not engaged may neglect his or her growth and health, withdraw from society, and not be concerned about

accomplishing a dream. All 12 participants described being actively engaged with living a life of faith, knowing the self and growing, connecting with others in a positive way, and discovering ways to leverage their college degree into a viable career path.

The engagement described by the participants seemed to motivate them to come to college, find a degree that seemed interesting, grow as people, seek out professional development experiences, and try to connect with the world around them. When several of the participants described periods of at-risk behaviors, they would also describe how they analyzed their motives of engagement, and the consequences of the types of engaging behaviors they invested in, and then adjust their motivations and behaviors in order to achieve more satisfying results from engagement.

Relationships. Relationships are the interactions and connections between people. The participants in my study described how they pursued and were aware of relationships that provided a positive benefit, such as love, influence, or support. They also described how some relationships were unfulfilling or harmful. The participants in my study described seeking out positive relationships for support and choosing to find ways to end negative relationships.

In my study, 10 of 12 participants described the importance of positive relationships to their well-being and calling decision-making, citing the value of friends, parents, and peer groups. Most notably, many of the participants discussed how vital faith-based student organizations were to their development while attending university. The participants in my study sought out faith-based student organizations where their desire to worship God and find a vocation was understood, supported, and encouraged.

Happiness. Happiness is a feeling of joy, satisfaction, and/or excitement. Ten of 12 participants discussed a desire to find happiness in their work, or they expressed the idea that

God wanted them to be happy in their work, or they discussed how work gave them a sense of pride (in the positive sense). Happiness could mean a sense of joy derived from doing the job-required tasks, enjoyment from learning and growing in ability and responsibility, pleasure from helping others, and emotions of excitement or contentment, or it could mean getting pleasure from being authentic and doing what you feel is right or good. This happiness was described in the Aristotelian sense of virtue and fulfillment in life and work (in contrast to hedonistic happiness that comes from pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain).

Meaning. Meaning is the psychological process of giving significance or definition to events and choices. Meaning is different from purpose in that purpose (as subtheme of vocation) is about God's reason for doing something, where meaning is how a person interprets what happens to them. In this way, a person can be aware of God's purpose while simultaneously thinking about what the purpose of God means.

Trying to make meaning of the world of work could include thinking about how to live a calling in the workplace; how and why they would do certain types of work; how they would interact with co-workers and customers; how they would share their faith with others; how others might treat them because of the behaviors and attitudes; opportunities for networking and wealth creation; what their income and quality of life would be; how work would affect their volunteer, family, and community interests; and how they would feel working in a job. Some participants expressed all of these characteristics; others described only a few—but all tried to give spiritual meaning to work.

> I think I had to come to grips with the fact that I probably might want to work in
>
> corporate America or if I want to work in basically any career that's not mission. I'm

going to have to practice how to basically do that Christian work/life balance. I'm gonna

have to learn how to be that Christian in the workforce. (Jessica)

Grit. Grit is resilience, the ability to show resolve. It is a character trait that is developed

over time as people go through hard times and make difficult decisions. All 12 participants

described situations in which they had to have strength of character and show resolve. Whether it

was living according to a set of ethics in the midst of a group with conflicting values (Jessica),

overcoming depression and at-risk behaviors (Sophia, Terri, Daniel), showing courage after

losing a baby and going through a divorce (Annie), finding inner strength when the university

didn't seem to acknowledge spiritual needs (Justis, Amber), being injured as a student athlete

and having to rethink the university experience (Hadden), or changing majors while dealing with

social pressures (Jon, April), the participants described times of having to press on during

difficult times and find ways to overcome challenges.

Hope. Whereas grit is showing resolve, hope is the ability to demonstrate agency and

pathways thinking while being optimistic that difficulties are short-term, explainable, and

surmountable. While working to choose a major, find a vocation, and conceptualize a flourishing

adult life, 12 of 12 described thoughts and experiences of how hope—agency and pathways

thinking fueled by optimism—helped them find a way to realize their potential. Even if they

weren't exactly sure where they would end up in life, they expressed an attitude of hope as they

described a commitment to figuring out a plan out and taking the necessary steps to achieve their

goals.

When asked about calling, career exploration, and finding a fit, the participants described

an intention of flourishing as adults. To enhance personal and social well-being after graduation,

the participants described how they chose to engage with the self and the world. Through

intentional engagement, the participants described wanting to be happy, have positive

relationships, and have a sense of meaning. As they prepared for life and work after college, the

participants described using grit and hope to overcome challenges, negative and unhealthy

situations, and suffering. Wanting to flourish as adults held the attention and focus of the

participants while they responded to a call, explored careers, and tried to find a fit.

The Intention of Participants Was to Be Awake

The participants described being aware of an awakening and having their attention set on

being awake. An awakening is when a person becomes conscious of the whole self, other people,

and the world we live in, and they conclude that there is an interconnectedness in society that

should be cultivated by gaining wisdom and investing in the potential of the self. The

characteristics of an awakening include *transcendence*, *ownership*, *self-governance*, *refining*

values, meta-learning, and the *future self* (Table 7).

Table 7

Theme 4: Be Awake

Participant	Theme Characteristics					
	Transcendence	Ownership	Self-Governance	Refining Values	Meta Learning	Future Self
Amelia	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sophia	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hadden	X	X	X	X	X	X
Justis	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jon	X	—	X	—	X	X
Terri	X	X	X	—	X	X
April	X	X	X	—	X	X
Jessica	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ken	X	—	X	X	X	X
Daniel	X	X	X	X	X	X
Amber	X	—	X	—	X	X
Annie	X	X	X	X	X	X

Transcendence. Transcendence suggests that a person's experiences extend past the biological, physical (what we perceive with our senses), material (what we can obtain), and ordinary (conventional or the status quo); that a person relies on transpersonal experiences and noetic knowledge to make decisions; and that a person's worldview has progressed past ethnocentrism and egocentrism to incorporate a metaphysical approach to understanding generational, global, and eternal issues. All 12 participants described transcendent experiences and beliefs.

Ownership. As part of an awakening, people see how their life affects others and they take personal ownership of their decisions. Nine of 12 participants discussed how God's call required them to take ownership of their adult lives and make an intentional investment in their own spiritual formation: "[You need to be able to] develop your own opinions rather than, 'this is what mom and dad believe, so this is what I believe now'" (Amelia).

Ownership, to the participants in my study, was about being conscious of the transition between being a teenager and an emerging adult, and treating adult roles with a sense of honor and duty. Making the distinction between "following rules" (which were set by religious organizations and parents) and taking personal responsibility for adult roles and personal growth was a conscious process that helped the participants "wake up" and see how their decisions impact the self and the world.

> I have grown into starting to make my own decisions, as I'm not my parents, in my parent's home anymore and having them make a lot of decisions for me; it's been a process of how do I figure out how to make these decisions, but also involve my faith and let my faith be the thing that's directing these decisions, because that's how I want to live my life, I want my faith to be a lifestyle. (Justis)

Self-governance. Self-governance is when people feel a sense of agency and autonomy, or psychological freedom, and they leverage their internal dialogue and self-talk to make sense of the self and social world. These attitudes and feelings of empowerment and inner liberation allow individuals to find their voice as they learn to rely on their inner dialogue to make life decisions that feel authentic. Self-governance enables people to make personally meaningful choices as they use critical thinking and problem-solving skills to interact with information, people, and groups. All 12 participants described self-governance vis-à-vis submission to God as

they chose to listen to God, figure out how to respond to him, and use their university experiences to look for a vocation, regardless of competing influences.

Refining values. Refining values is a process of making subjective judgments about right and wrong and clarifying personal ethics. Eight of 12 participants talked about going through a process where they intentionally evaluated and refined their values. For the participants, this meant honoring God, the Bible, and what they had learned from experiences by having a well-thought-out code of ethics that they kept in mind throughout the day and in various circumstances, even amongst groups or cultures that were not supportive of their values. Sometimes this intention was described as wanting to "glorify God," meaning they would choose to live in such a way so as to bring honor to God by following his teachings.

Meta-learning. Meta-learning is when individuals become aware of how they learn and why they are learning, and then make decisions about how they want to learn and what they are learning. Meta-learning involves incremental adjustments as new information is gained and a critical assessment of information and choices is made. All 12 participants described experiences of meta-learning (notably, in regard to a college major; 11 of 12 participants changed majors based on disinterest in the subject matter, with the 1 participant of the 12 who did not changed majors adding a second major to more fully capture his interest). All 12 participants used meta-learning to make decisions about adult life, school, and work.

Future self. Awakening to the future self is when someone is able to see past the moment and begin to think abstractly and strategically. Working toward an imagined future self involves evaluation, impulse control, and planning skills (in other words, the development of the executive functions). All 12 participants used a projection of the future self, often in some imagined context, to make decisions about their major, life, and/or vocation.

The future self is a composition of the imagination where one tries to predict outcomes associated with life choices and conceive multiple future scenarios in order to pick the most pleasant scenario to work toward. Picturing the person they would like to become, or the situation they would like to be in, allowed participants to make choices in the present that would facilitate their vision of the future. Also, if a future self or scenario were not satisfactory, that vision would cause the subject to make decisions in the present in order to prevent those future characteristics or events. Making decisions based on the future allowed the participants to feel like active participants in their life design.

When asked about calling, career exploration, and finding a fit, the participants described an awakening and/or the behaviors and attitudes associated with being awake. Being awake implies that individuals are self-aware, they consider issues of connectedness and consequences, and they work to reach their potential and improve society. Among the participants, being awake was characterized by degrees of personal ownership, self-governance, meta-learning, and the future self. This intention could be categorized as being awake because of how the growth-consciousness of participants was intertwined with spirituality, the whole person, and transcendence. Being awake held the attention and focus of the participants while they responded to a call, explored careers, and tried to find a fit.

The Intention of Participants Was to Become Career Ready

The participants in my study were of aware of career readiness, and they were focused on becoming career ready. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2017) defines career readiness as the "requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace." For the participants in my study, becoming career ready was described with subthemes of *interests*, *skills*, *work-based learning*, *environment*,

reasonableness, and *decidedness/fit* (Table 8). The participants in my study actively tried to become career ready by aligning their skills and interests with work. They used work-based learning experiences to learn about themselves and prepare for the world of work. They considered different work environments and thought about what types of environments they were best adapted to. And they used reason to decide on a career and make conclusions of fit between the self and work.

Table 8

Theme 5: Become Career Ready

Participant	Theme Characteristics					
	Interests	Skills	Work-based Learning	Environment	Reasonableness	Decidedness/Fit
Amelia	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sophia	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hadden	X	X	X	X	X	X
Justis	X	X	—	X	X	—
Jon	X	X	X	X	X	—
Terri	X	—	X	X	X	X
April	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jessica	—	—	X	X	X	—
Ken	X	X	X	X	X	X
Daniel	X	X	X	X	X	X
Amber	X	X	X	X	X	X
Annie	X	X	X	X	X	X

Interests. In career readiness, an *interest* is a work factor that motivates a person to pursue a particular line of work. When asked about career exploration, 11 of 12 participants

described how choosing a college major was based on finding a major that was interesting and believing that the major would lead to a career that fit their interests. If a major did not seem interesting (i.e., if they did not feel engaged with the coursework, or if the career pathways facilitated by the major did not capture their attention and provide motivation), the participants would switch majors. Eleven of 12 participants changed their major in order to pick a major that more closely matched their interests. All 12 participants seemed to conceptualize choosing a major as initiating and charting a career path.

      Skills. Skills are the ability to do jobs tasks well and effectively manage job duties. Ten of 12 participants described using reflection, a college major, and work-based learning activities to better understand what they could do well, to identify and develop their skills, and to figure out what skills were required in different lines of work. The participants in my study were not concerned solely with spiritual or religious phenomenon as they pursued their calling. They wanted to find out if they could do a job, and what different jobs would require of them. There was a consciousness of skills as they chose a major, pursued a career, and responded to God's call.

      Work-based learning. Work-based learning is learning that takes place outside of the classroom. Work-based learning gives students an opportunity to explore knowledge, skills, and attitudes specifically associated with a job or career. Work-based learning activities include having a job, volunteering, internships, job shadowing, networking, informational interviews, career fairs, and personal research. Eleven of 12 participants described using work-based learning to explore jobs, choose a career, and become career ready.

      Environment. The participants in my study were conscious of work environments. They were aware that different industries had different types of work environments, and they actively

reflected on, thought about, and experimented with different types of work environments they would like to work in. All 12 participants described the types of work environments that they found interesting, or that they felt would be good a match for their personality and goals. They also discussed the types of work environments that they felt uncomfortable working in. Conceptualizing and experiencing work environments helped the participants make decisions about work and careers. Sometimes a work environment would nullify a participant's passions and interests:

> [Secondary teaching] just didn't fit my skillset. I mean, my passion for young people, I think it was just a lot of the planning, a lot of the . . . It's a very detailed profession, and there's a lot of politics that goes into it. (Jon)

Reasonableness. All 12 participants described using reason to think about the self, God, and work, and then make informed decisions about the type of work they would like to do and the kind of career they would like to pursue. The reasonableness displayed by the participants was a conscious process of learning and decision-making based on experience, motivations, and facts.

Describing the fact finding and information gathering experiences showed that calling was not blind faith; it was intentional career development. The participants would learn about the world of work, learn about the self, and make decisions based on the type of work they wanted to do and the person they wanted to be. In this way, for people who believe they are called by God, career readiness in the vocational decision-making process was more than listening and responding by faith. Career readiness involved reasoning.

Decidedness/Fit. Decidedness/fit is an indication that individuals have decided on a career that they believe is a good fit for them. Nine of 12 participants have decided on a career

field and chosen a field or job that they believe is a good fit for them and God's call. Amelia, Amber, and Annie chose to go into nonprofit administration, with Annie wanting to become a director of a nonprofit organization (eventually). Sophia has decided to go into medicine and wants to pursue a doctorate of medicine degree after graduating. Hadden believes a career in business, specifically, in marketing and sales, is for him. Terri wants to be a radiation therapist. April wants to go into health communications, and Daniel wants to go into general communications. Ken wants to go into business and is interested in both finance and creative aspects. Of the three participants who haven't found a fit, one subject (Jessica) majored in business, is working in business, and is trying to "come to terms with working in corporate America." The other two participants (Justis and Jon) who have yet to find a fit both majored in secondary education and are now exploring other fields.

When asked about calling, career exploration, and finding a fit, the participants described investing in career readiness. This suggests that the consciousness of the participants was on both spiritual and practical matters. Among the participants, career readiness was developed by identifying personal interests and a college major that let them pursue their interests in work, identifying personal skills and making opportunities to use and improve their skills in workplaces, pursuing work-based learning opportunities (such as internships or informational interviews), considering different work environments, using reason to consider groups of facts (such as knowledge of the self and knowledge of work), and deciding on a career based on believing a good fit had been found. Becoming career ready held the attention and focus of the participants while they responded to a call, explored careers, and tried to find a fit.

Chapter 4 Closure

The 12 participants in my study were able to clearly describe their experiences with calling, career exploration, and finding a fit between calling and career. They were aware of what calling meant to them and why they were responding to a calling from a Higher Power, and they were able to share their lifeworld through conversation. The participants in my study were also able to define what career exploration meant to them, what types of career exploration experiences they had, and why career exploration was important to them. And trying to find a fit between calling and career was something they were conscious of and able to describe.

After recording and transcribing the descriptions given by participants, I analyzed the data to identify and develop themes. By analyzing the data and using my literature review, I developed five themes that captured the consciousness of the participants*: the intention of participants was to worship God*, *the intention of participants was to view work as a vocation*, *the intention of participants was to flourish as adults*, *the intention of participants was to be awake*, and *the intention of participants was to become career ready*. Each of these five themes had six theme characteristics, or subthemes, that were developed. I used data from interviews as evidence of themes and subthemes among the participants in my study. By developing themes and subthemes, I was able to describe the essence of calling among the participants in my study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of my phenomenology was to describe and interpret the lived experiences of emerging adults at a public university who believe they are called by a Higher Power, have explored careers, and were trying to find a fit between their calling and a career. After describing the lived experiences of the participants in my study, and then interpreting the essence of calling among them and developing a structure of calling that included five themes, I used the empirical data gathered in interviews to answer my three research questions. In this chapter, I discuss the major results of my study, including what I learned about calling decision-making and how the data answered my research questions.

After a discussion of the major results of my study, I discuss the relationship of my study to existing studies, including how the findings affirmed, added to and/or disputed studies and theories on emerging adults, calling, spirituality, guidance, and career development. I then discuss the implications of my study on future research (including longitudinal studies, universities and career services providers, job readiness, addressing religious barriers, and studying groups that are different from my sample). Then I discuss the implications of my study on workforce education for emerging adults who believe they are called but who do not have access to a public university. I end the chapter with a discussion of my concluding thoughts on the study.

Analysis and Discussion of Major Results

The three major results of my study were being able to answer my three research questions, learning about the role of calling in Parsons' (1909) vocational decision-making model, and designing a model that captured the lifeworld of emerging adults who believe they are called, had explored careers, and were deciding how their calling fit with a career. I will first discuss how I used the data I gathered through interviews to answer my three research questions, then discuss the role of calling in Parsons' (1909) framework for vocational decision-making, and then discuss a calling decision-making model I designed that is based on the lifeworld of the participants in my study.

Research Questions

In the past decade, researchers have studied emerging adults to discover how calling and spirituality is leveraged during the exploratory phase (Astin et al., 2011; Duffy & Dik, 2013). This is due in large part to the work of the Lily Endowment during the early 2000s, which provided over $200 million in research to colleges and universities for Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (Cunningham, 2016). Since that time, over 40 papers have been published on calling, and it has been shown that many emerging adults are either interested in calling or are experiencing a calling, and that calling provides many positive career-related benefits (Dik et al., 2008; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2013). Simultaneously, academic interest in spirituality has increased, with researchers looking at the impact of spirituality on student development (Astin et al., 2011; Tisdell, 2001).

What my study contributes to the emerging calling and spirituality literature is a qualitative study of emerging adults who believe they are called and are exploring careers at a public university as they are making vocational decisions based on finding a conclusion of fit

between what they believe their calling is and what career opportunities they have learned about. Although calling as a characteristic and concept has been studied among college students, there have been "relatively few qualitative studies" on this population, and it is unknown if there are any studies that have specifically examined the career decision-making process of emerging adults who believe they are called (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 179). Exploring the lived experiences of spiritual emerging adults in order to better understand how they make vocational decisions could help career services providers to better support college students who are trying to answer a call.

Before answering my research questions, I described how the participants answered my interview questions (in chapter 4). After I described how they answered my interview questions, I analyzed the data and developed themes of calling among the participants. After developing and describing themes among the participants, I used the empirical data gathered in interviews to answer my three research questions:

1. How do emerging adults experience a calling from a Higher Power?

2. What career exploration experiences have they had?

3. What do they believe about how their calling fits with a potential career?

Research Question 1. In regard to Research Question 1 ("How do emerging adults experience a calling from a Higher Power?"), I found that the emerging adults in my study experience a calling from a Higher Power through a two-way transcendent relationship with "God." This relationship is transcendent in that it takes priority over every other relationship, commitment, and role, and it is not dependent on the current era, a social group, or an ideology; it is dependent on a relationship. This relationship is facilitated through prayer, feelings, listening, reading the Bible, supportive communities, and experiences.

The participants in my study believe a Higher Power is guiding them. They believe a Higher Power is revealing truth, providing direction, speaking to them, giving them understanding, and being a source of inspiration. They are open to this guidance due to a fundamental belief that there is a Higher Power and that it interacts with them. The calling from a Higher Power, for many of the participants, is a result of a belief in Christian theology (i.e., "the work of Jesus on earth reconciled believers to God") and the Bible. Most participants described calling as knowing that God has a plan for them and that He wants them to live according to His ways and will.

As a result of belief, the participants in my study evaluated their environment based on what they believed and adjusted the self accordingly. If they believed that a Higher Power wanted them to attend a particular college, they attended that college. If they believed that a Higher Power wanted to them to show love to others, they tried to do so. The beliefs of the participants informed their cognition and executive functions as they worked toward some goal. The goals the participants work toward are the result of a belief in a Higher Power's guidance, belief in the Bible, or personal decisions that were based on what they believed would best serve the purposes of their Higher Power.

The participants believed the call of a Higher Power is supreme, meaning, there is nothing more important than discerning the call and responding to it. Regardless of what was happening in their lives—good or bad, helpful or harmful, prosperous or destitute—they would look to a Higher Power, even during periods of ambiguity, disappointments, or challenges. In this way, the calling of a Higher Power was experienced as being external from the self, and not dependent on circumstances, needs, desires, or influences. This is an interesting point, since the literature suggests that some people struggle with answering a call because of perceived

limitations, a lack of resources, and other psychological, social, or material obstacles (Dik & Duffy, 2012).

A calling from a Higher Power was not necessarily a call to a job or career. Instead, it was a call to a way of life. The way of life inspired by a call was a life of belief where the participant believed in God, believed in scripture, and took action to align the self and one's life trajectory with one's beliefs. However, this belief was not purely theological in nature. By following the guidance of a Higher Power and trying to align one's life trajectory with belief, the participants would use learning, cognition, and executive functions to identify and work toward some life and career goal(s).

Research Question 2. In regard to Research Question 2 ("What career exploration experiences have they had?"), it was found that most of the participants had a variety of career exploration experiences. These experiences sometimes began before coming to college, usually in high school. For example, several had volunteered in their church during high school, and at least one had participated in an internship program during high school. Several of the participants discussed talking with their parents about different careers during high school before coming to college.

While at college, the participants had a variety of career exploration experiences. The most commonly described "career exploration experience" was choosing a major. Almost all of the participants described choosing a major as a career exploration experience, conceptualizing a major as a pathway to a career. The participants would "explore a career" by learning about a college major's course content, talking to faculty, interacting other students in the major, and developing a career vision (i.e., job options, career paths, work demands, etc.). Based on this "career exploration," 11 of 12 participants switched majors.

Some other career exploration experiences included participating in an internship during college, working at a job, participating in informational interviews with professionals in a field, watching online videos of professionals discussing their job and career, going to events (such as career fairs or professional networking events), and talking with friends and trusted authority figures. These experiences, although varying in degree and scope among participants, helped participants explore careers. Notably, only a small number of participants mentioned using their university's career center to explore careers.

The fact that the participants were so engaged with career exploration was interesting. None of the participants I interviewed described a "typical" college experience of going to parties, barely passing classes, attending sporting events, and then leaving college without any clue as to how to use their major to find a job and build a career. All participants were very intentional about exploring careers and trying to figure out how they would use their major and time at school to find a job and build a career after graduation. Most participants were extremely goal- and future-focused.

Research Question 3. In regard to Research Question 3 ("What do they believe about how their calling fits with a potential career?"), I learned that calling did not necessarily equate directly to a career choice. In other words, there was not a formula of "what is my calling?" and "what have I learned about careers?" that always efficiently produced a solid answer. Instead, there was a decision-making process where participants described having a belief in a calling, exploring careers, and then trying to find a fit through learning and clear reasoning.

For many of the participants, calling was a belief about how they should live their life, what kind of person they should be, and their relationship with a Higher Power. As they learned about careers and thought about the type of career they would like to build and the type of

worker they'd like to be, they relied on belief to make decisions. In other words, they consistently considered what they knew about a Higher Power and then made career decisions based on their beliefs. Their awareness was focused on how to remain true to their beliefs as they prepared to enter the workforce and build a career.

Some participants believed that it didn't matter to their Higher Power what specific job they ended up in, as long as they remained committed to their Higher Power, true to their beliefs, and worked at a job they felt adapted to. Others believed more strongly that the career they were pursuing was the direct result of a Higher Power's plan. Regardless of where they fell on the spectrum of "God's will," all participants used belief during an intentional decision-making process as they communed with a Higher Power, explored careers, chose a major, and made choices about the line of work they would try to get into and work-orientation they would assume after graduation.

Calling and Parsons' (1909) Theory of Vocational Decision-Making

For my conceptual framework in Chapter 1, I described how the population I was studying consisted of emerging adults who believe they are called (who are in the larger population of all American emerging adults), and who are transitioning from pre-adult roles to adult roles, especially the role of full-time worker. I suggested that emerging adults who believe they are called are preparing to take on the adult role of full-time worker in a unique way from other groups in the emerging adult population. Specifically, as emerging adults who believe they are called are considering making the transition from student to full-time worker, they are looking for guidance from a Higher Power to inform their vocational choices.

I used Parsons' (1909) framework for wise vocational decision-making to explore the experiences of emerging adults who believe they are called. Parsons' vocational decision-making

framework suggests that emerging adults who are preparing to enter the workforce should obtain *knowledge of self* and *knowledge of work*, and then use *clear reasoning* to make a *conclusion of fit* between these two groups of facts. Using a decision-making narrative to explore calling, I believed, would help me capture the essence of calling among emerging adults who are preparing to take on the role of a worker.

I added *calling* to Parsons' (1909) category of *self-knowledge*. A calling is when someone experiences "a transcendent summons, especially as originating beyond the self" (Dik & Duffy, 2012). I believed that the participants would gain knowledge of self through a transcendent summons from a Higher Power. And, by placing calling within a vocational decision-making framework, I hoped to understand if and how the participants in my study had found a conclusion of fit between their calling and a career. This search for conclusion of fit is important, from a vocational psychology perspective, because "discerning a calling is, after all, fundamentally about finding and establishing a fit" (Dik & Duffy, 2012, p. 112). My conceptual framework suggests that the experiences of emerging adults who believe they are called can be explored using an enhanced version of Parsons' (1909) theory of wise vocational decision-making where *calling* is integrated into *knowledge of self* (see Figure 1 in Chapter 1).

As I conducted my study, I asked open-ended questions about calling, career exploration, and finding a fit between a calling and career. After gathering data from interviews, it became clear that the participants did not conceptualize calling as replacing their knowledge of self. The participants would describe knowing the difference between the self and a Higher Power and actively attempting to discern these differences. For the participants in my study, calling did not replace knowledge of self. The participants were aware of their personality, talents, wants, needs, hurts, skills, emotions, interests, and so on. They described calling not as a furtherance or

illumination of the self, but as guidance from a Higher Power and/or an ideal worldview structured by belief.

Despite calling not being a suitable replacement for knowledge of self, all of the participants were intentional about finding a fit between what they believed they were called to do and what they had learned in career exploration. While Parsons' (1909) framework may not perfectly capture the lived experiences of participants who believe they are called by replacing knowledge of self with calling, it still provides a conceptual framework for a research instrument that can capture data about calling, career, and fit experiences. The result of using Parsons' framework to inform the framework for my study is that I learned that participants who believe they are called are considering groups of facts and using clear reasoning between groups of facts to make career decisions (including a conclusion of fit). The groups of facts considered by participants went beyond Parsons' (1909) categories of knowledge of self and knowledge of work, and included knowledge of a Higher Power and knowledge of community.

Calling Decision-Making Model

A major result of my study was learning how emerging adults who believe they are called by a Higher Power make decisions about the fit between their beliefs and real-world career opportunities. While other studies have identified themes in regard to how emerging adults conceptualize calling, or how they describe their spirituality, my study is one of the only qualitative studies that has explored the lifeworld of emerging adults who believe they are called while they were making vocational decisions (Astin et al., 2011; Hunter et al., 2010). From a phenomenologist's perspective, revealing the lifeworld of career decision-making by emerging adults who believe they are called is important because it reveals subjective meaning-making before a "colonization by the system" can take place (Harrington, 1994, p. 341).

My calling decision-making model demonstrates that a calling is experienced as originating from a *Higher Power*. Once individuals *believe* they are called by a Higher Power, they have a *spiritual awakening*. This spiritual awakening leads to people using *optimism* to *explore* the self and the world. As people engage in exploration, they process issues in four cognitive categories: *self-interest*, *altruism*, *psychology*, and *community*. These four categories lead to the creation of a cognitive map. As this map is created, individuals *clarify* their intentions and use their *executive functions* to *authentically* pursue relevant *goals*. This process demonstrates how undergraduates rely on *faith* in a Higher Power during an international career decision-making process.

After analyzing the descriptions of the participants and considering their experiences in light of my literature review, I concluded that the essence of their experiences could be captured by a *calling decision-making model* (see Figure 2).

In my calling decision-making model, I suggest that calling is experienced as originating from a *Higher Power* (Astin et al., 2011; Dik & Duffy, 2012; Tisdell, 2001; VanZanten Gallagher, 2007). In the case of the participants in my study, this Higher Power was viewed as "God." The participants believed that God was calling them to a particular way of life, and so they responded by forming a paternal relationship with God and engaging in a career decision-making process.
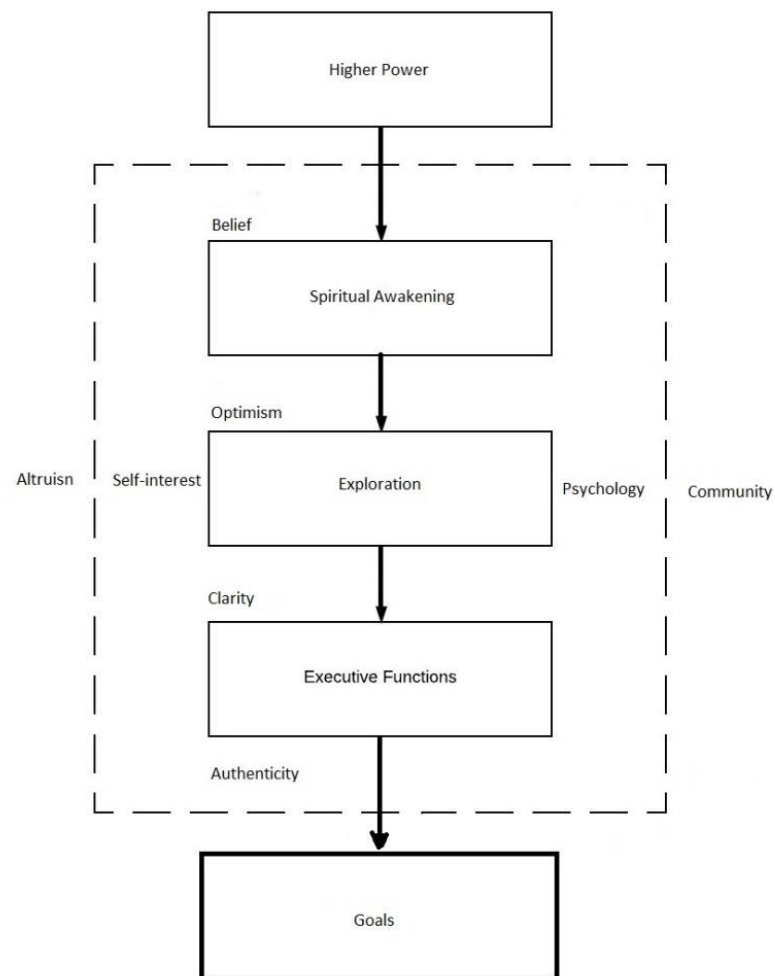
Figure 2. Calling decision-making model.

    Belief in a Higher Power is what initiates the calling decision-making process in a person.

Belief is "a particular world-view or set of metaphysical tenets (and, even more fundamentally,

the belief in a world transcendent to my perceptions)" which is "not so much a lack of theoretical

knowledge but a possibilizing *sine qua non*" (Finegan, 2012, p. 289). Having belief motivates

people to make decisions about calling because they believe answering a call is not only

possible, but also the best course of action.

Belief leads to a *spiritual awakening* where a person considers the transcendent, mystical, creative, and energetic aspects of human existence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This awakening leads to thoughts, feelings, senses, and reflections whereby a person tries to answer life's big questions ("Who am I? Why am I here?"). Through spiritual formation, the person builds a relationship with a Higher Power, learns about the self, and begins to look for and discern interconnections in society (Tisdell, 2001). This spiritual life facilitates a career orientation where work is seen as an opportunity to use one's gifts and help others in response to God's love and guidance.

As a person becomes awake to a Higher Power, the potential of the self, and opportunities for positive social change, they become *optimistic*. Optimism is a character trait where individuals view the self positively and believe their choices can make a difference (Seligman, 2006). Those who are optimistic are hopeful, which means they have a sense of agency and use pathways thinking to make choices (Shorey et al., 2007). This sense of optimism motivates a person to enter a period of *exploration* in order to discover how to best answer a call (Gubser, 2009).

During the calling decision-making process, a person will *explore* the self and the world through learning and meaning-making. He or she gathers information, engages that information with cognitive, affective, experiential, and social resources, and tries to make sense of life. The gathered information is organized into four cognitive categories: *self-interest*, *altruism*, *psychology*, and *community*. These four categories contribute to the creation of a schema, or mental model, of existence.

The category of self-interest contains information about how a person can turn one's ambitions and skills into a viable trade. The category of altruism contains information about

caring for others and showing empathy. The category of psychology includes how a person thinks, feels, reasons, and imagines. The category of community includes experiences and interpretations of social life. People use these categories to make sense of a calling and their options for responding to a call.

As people explore, they use learning and meaning making to *clarify* their intentions. Intention is what a person chooses to focus their attention on and what they are aware of (Marbach, 2012). This voluntary, goal-oriented theory of clarified intentions is affirmed by modern positive psychology, which suggests that "individual expectation, preference, choice, decision, and control" can be more influential than relationships, environment, or genetics (Seligman, 2006, p. 9).

As the intentions of individuals who believe they are called become clear, they will use their *executive functions* to manage the self and manage one's resources. The executive functions "are a set of processes that all have to do with managing oneself and one's resources in order to achieve a goal" (Cooper-Kahn & Dietzel, 2008, p. 9). Executive functions include impulse control, flexibility, emotional control, initiative, working memory, planning and strategy, organizing and managing resources, and self-monitoring (Cooper-Kahn & Dietzel, 2008, pp. 12–14).

As individuals manage the self and their resources in order to respond to a Higher Power, they are aware of a need to be *authentic* (Chickering, 2006). Authenticity, in the case of people who believe they are called, is a desire to be true to themselves and their Higher Power, and to make good decisions based on reliable information that will lead to achieving goals that are in line with beliefs. Steered by authenticity, the person who feels called will work toward *goals* that

provide a subjective sense of success via life roles, work behaviors, and accomplishments (Hall, 2004).

Throughout an intentional career decision-making process, participants relied on *faith* in a Higher Power to discern a calling, explore careers, and make conclusions of fit between a calling and a career. It would be helpful to remember Fowler's (1974) definition of faith (which I used in the definitions section of Chapter 2):

> Think of faith as a *way of knowing*. It may also help you to think of faith as a way of *construing* or *interpreting* one's experience. . . . Faith is that *knowing* or *construing* by which persons or communities recognize themselves as related to the ultimate conditions of their existence. . . . It is knowing or construing in which cognitive (the "rational") is inextricably intertwined with affectivity or valuing (the "passional"). . . . Faith is always relational. It is the response to one's sense of relatedness to the ultimate conditions and depths of existence. It is always bi-polar in the sense that faith is the binding of the self to the Transcendent. It is the awareness, the intuition, the conviction, of a relatedness to something or someone more than the mundane. (pp. 207–208)

The participants in my study were conscious of their reliance on faith in a Higher Power during an intentional career decision-making process. They relied on faith to become intentional about being spiritual people, exploring the self and the world, and using their executive functions. Their faith resulted in a conscious awareness of authenticity, of the self and resources, and of attempts to set and work toward achievable goals. Their faith made them intentional about deciding what kind of person they would become, and how they wanted to interact with the world around them. By relying on faith, they were able to navigate career decision-making with agency and efficacy.

For all the benefits of relying on faith, the participants described not knowing if their university (in general) or university career services providers understood or embraced their faith. I suggest that the participants may have benefited from an inclusive university community and more knowledgeable career services providers. The participants may have also benefited from a university culture and career services providers who intentionally reached out to them and voiced an eagerness for integrating faith into vocational guidance. The definition of vocational guidance, in the context of calling decision-making, would fit the traditional definition:

> The process of helping a person to develop and accept an integrated and adequate picture of himself and of his role in the world of work, to test this concept against reality, and to convert it into a reality, with satisfaction to himself and society. (Super, 1950)

Based on the evidence gathered in my study, it is suggested that undergraduates at a public university who believe they are called could benefit from vocational guidance, as long as the university didn't reframe or minimize their faith, and if career services providers openly acknowledged and supported the role of faith in career decision-making. It also seems vitally important that the role of faith should not be assumed. Instead, faith should be discussed, and authenticity and a personal narrative supported, as career services providers prepare to provide guidance that acknowledges how a calling is different from a job or career, and how faith in a call is the beginning of an emerging adult's lifelong career journey.

Relationship of Results to Existing Studies

I will now present an analysis of the relationship of the results of my study to existing studies and academic discussions. I examine existing studies and academic discussions on emerging adults, calling, spirituality, guidance, career development, and rational self-interest. After conducting an analysis on the relationship between the results of my study and existing

studies and academic discussions, I was able to show how my study affirmed, added to, and/or

disputed studies and discussions in the literature (see Table 9).

Table 9

Comparison of Research

Comparison Summary Between Arnold (2017) and Previous Research	Previous Research
Emerging Adults • Emerging adults are putting off traditional adult roles to attend college and explore opportunities. • Emerging adults are seeking to apply a self-concept to work and a career. • Emerging adults are autonomously shaping their lives with subjective choices. • Emerging adults, if belief is present, will explore issues of purpose and vocation at college.	Affirms: Exploratory career phase (Super, 1957); Emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2014); Free and active self autonomously shaping life to achieve eudemonia (Peucker, 2008) New Find Adds to: Purposeful graduates (Clydesdale, 2015); Search for vocation at college (Cunningham, 2016)
Calling • Calling is experienced as originating from a source beyond the self. • The source of a calling is experienced as a relationship with a Higher Power. • Calling results in a life and work orientation that considers eudemonia, strengths, and community. • Calling is an ongoing process of exploration, discovery, and decision-making that relies on belief. • Calling is experiential, transcendent, and intentional.	Affirms: Approach life roles with others-oriented values and sense of purpose (Dik & Duffy, 2012); Themes of (a) Guiding Force, (b) Personal Fit/Eudemonic Wellbeing, and (c) Altruism (Hunter, Dik, and Banning, 2010); Eudemonia and career (Hirschi, 2011); Scope of calling includes occupation, civic life, family life, and consumer habits (VanZanten Gallagher, 2007); Faith is a way of knowing that leverages cognitive and affective resources (Fowler, 1974) New Find Adds to: Transcendent summons originating beyond the self (Dik & Duffy, 2012); Inspiration from a Higher Power to use gifts and contribute to society (Rehm, 1990); Faith is intentional (Finegan, 2012)

Table 9—Continued

Comparison Summary Between Arnold (2017) and Previous Research	Previous Research
Spirituality • Spiritual people are on a spiritual quest to understand the world, love and serve others, and trust a Higher Power. • Spirituality is a positive character trait that contributes to personal wellness and whole-person development. • Spiritual people are futurists who consider issues of personal growth, interconnectedness, and positive social change. • Spiritual people are engaged in conscious and purposeful awareness of the self and world. • Spiritual people receive direction, affirmation, and knowledge from a Higher Power.	Affirms: Themes of (a) Spiritual Quest, (b) Ecumenical Worldview, (c) Ethic of Caring, (d) Charitable Involvement, and (e) Equanimity (Astin et al., 2011); The further development of self-awareness, a sense of interconnectedness, and a relationship to a Higher Power (Tisdell, 2001); Religious peak experiences (Maslow, 1962); Conscious and willful awareness (Petersen, 2008) New Find Adds to: Spirituality is a positive character trait (Peterson & Seligman, 2004); Spirituality is a contributor to personal wellness/flourishing (Seligman, 2012); Spirituality promotes sagacious competency (Forbes & Martin, 2004); Creating positive change through futurism (Hood, 1984); Whole-person education (Richards, 1980; Watts, 1982)
Guidance • The experiences and consciousness of emerging adults who believe they are called should be revealed via an exploration of the lifeworld. • The experiences of emerging adults who believe they are called can be understood using a narrative lens. • Emerging adults who believe they are called want to explore spirituality in college alongside of academics and career. • Emerging adults who believe they are called need guidance that will celebrate authenticity. • Emerging adults who believe they are called would benefit from career development methods that support the pursuit of subjective success.	Affirms: Protean career theory (Hall, 2004); Authenticity and spirituality in higher education (Chickering, 2006); Tempering empiricism and vocational guidance with spirituality and authenticity and spiritual growth (Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2005); Phenomenology (Prosser, Tuckey, & Wendt, 2013) New Find Adds to: Transpersonal psychology (going beyond or transcending the individual) (Shapiro, Lee, & Gross, 2002); Understand the way the world appears to people (Langdridge, 2008); Using a narrative lens to serve spiritual clients (Bott et al., 2017) Disputes: Redefining spiritual experience solely as metaphor, symbol, shared master story, need for approval from leaders, a subconscious need for vindication, fear of being alone, the ego working out childhood issues, or a brain function (Fowler, 1991; Jung, 1964)

Table 9—Continued

Comparison Summary Between Arnold (2017) and Previous Research	Previous Research
Career Development • Emerging adults who believe they are called are exploring the self and world of work in order to apply their self-concept in a career. • Emerging adults who believe they are called rely on a belief in a Higher Power as they make meaningful vocational decisions. • Emerging adults who believe they are called accept ambiguity and disappointments as a natural part of life. • Emerging adults who believe they are called choose to be optimistic while desiring to lead positive social change.	Affirms: Exploratory career phase (Super, 1957); Career and meaning (Super, 1976); Career construction (Savickas, 2005); Protean career orientation (Hall, 2004) New Find Adds to: Wise vocational decision-making (Parsons, 1909); Calling as a work-orientation (Dik & Duffy, 2012) Disputes: Christians should be associated with just world beliefs, social dominance orientation, and right-wing authoritarianism (Christopher, Zabel, Jones, & Marek, 2008); Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism (Weber, 1958)
Self-interest and Altruism • Emerging adults who believe they are called are making rational, voluntary decisions about work. • Emerging adults who believe they are called consider how to use their college degree, experience, skills, and labor to compete in markets. • Emerging adults who believe they are called want to help other people in their work. • Emerging adults who believe they are called use values and ethics to navigate the world of work.	Affirms: Rational self-interest (Smith, 1776/1976); Enlightened self-interest (Spaeth, 2011); Self-interest and other-orientation (De Dreu & Nauta, 2009); Civilized market economies (Ulrich, (2008) New Find Adds to: Altruism and self-interest (Flynn & Black, 2011); Self-interest and morality (Walsh & Lynch, 2004) Disputes: Rational egoism (Rand, 1964)

Emerging Adults

Super (1957) suggested that people develop a self-concept during adolescence and then try to implement their self-concept in a career during the exploratory phase of life (e.g., the late teens and early 20s). Some of the emerging adults I interviewed did indeed discuss the self-

concept they had developed during adolescence, and they described how their self-concept was challenged and refined in college. Perhaps this is an area for further research (e.g., how the self-concept evolves over time while in college through calling decision-making). All participants described using their time at college to explore the self, the world, and career opportunities. The results of my study show that emerging adults are in an exploratory career phase.

The theory of emerging adulthood suggests it is a human development phase that takes place between the ages of 18 and 25, especially in post-industrial countries. Emerging adulthood is when young people delay taking on traditional adult roles (such as marriage and parenting) in order to pursue an education, explore the self, and find their place in the world at their own pace (Arnett, 2014). The participants in my study did exactly as the theory suggests, with all 12 participants using their time in college to complete an education, explore the self, and find their place in the world, all without taking on traditional adult roles while in school.

Clydesdale (2015) suggested that students "can be engaged with questions of meaning and purpose" and that these reflections could "positively impact the choices students [make] and the futures they [plan]" (p. 3). The participants in my study had engaged with questions of meaning and purpose, and through calling decision-making, their choices and planned futures had been positively impacted. My study demonstrates that emerging adults at college are capable of and willing to discuss meaning, purpose, choices, and planning.

Cunningham (2016) discussed how emerging adults throughout history have not always had the "opportunity to undertake any significant degree of vocational reflection and discernment," and that "vocational exploration and choice for emerging adults varies widely according to socio-economic location, access to education, degree of political freedom, and a whole range of attributes determined by personal identity" (p. 21). The results of my study show

that, given the resources and opportunity, spiritual emerging adults will use their college education to explore a calling.

Calling and Vocation

The definition of *calling* most often quoted in the literature is Dik and Duffy's (2012) definition: "A calling is a transcendent summons, especially as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating purpose or meaningfulness and that holds others-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation." This definition was affirmed by the data I collected in interviews. The participants described a calling as transcendent and as originating beyond the self and from a Higher Power. Due to their belief in calling, the participants wanted to demonstrate purpose and help others through various life roles (i.e., worker, spouse, parent, student, and/or volunteer).

Hunter et al. (2010) developed "three primary themes of calling" among college students, which included "(a) Guiding Force, (b) Personal Fit/Eudemonic Wellbeing, and (c) Altruism" (p. 181). The participants in my study gave descriptions of their experiences that were similar to the themes found by Hunter et al. The participants believed that a Higher Power was acting as a guiding force in their lives. They viewed choosing a career as an opportunity to find a personal fit between a job and their interests/talents, and they wanted to enjoy their work. And most participants described a desire to be altruistic.

The participants in my study described finding a fit between their calling and a possible career in a way that was similar to how finding a vocation has been described in the literature. For example, VanZanten Gallagher (2007) described vocation as a career-orientation where a worker wants to "love and serve others" and where work "involves a sense of the transcendent, of purpose, and of community" and "includes an occupation . . . but it also involves civic

responsibilities, family life . . . and consumer habits" (p. 34). Preparing for a vocation involves "identifying ones gifts and abilities . . . and recognizing the needs of the world" (VanZanten Gallagher, 2007, p. 34). The participants in my study described their career exploration as a search for a vocation.

While engaged in a calling decision-making process, most of the participants in my study had clarified the direction in which they would like to take their career, and most of them had made a career choice. Although calling was bigger than a career (it was a lifestyle), calling decision-making (for most) did result in choosing a career path. This alignment of a career path with a calling relates to the literature on vocation, which suggests that a vocation

indicate[s] God's calling, bidding, or summons. . . . A person called to a vocation was inspired by God to demonstrate talents, the manifestation of which gave evidence of the spiritual source and contributed to the quality of the social spirit. (Rehm, 1990, p. 115)

The decision-making process, however, clarifies how a vocation is chosen.

As a researcher, I am ethically required to reveal the lifeworld of the participants in my study without allowing their stories to be "colonized by the system" (Harrington, 1994). The participants in my study described a calling as experiences throughout their daily lives where they were aware of a Higher Power. In order to respond to a Higher Power, they consciously made decisions to pursue subjective goals. An overemphasis on empiricism, objectivism, psychologism, and the natural sciences may minimize these experiences to a learned response to traditional and charismatic authorities, or a learned response to community psychology (i.e., the language and stories of groups). Colonizing the experiences of people who believe they are called is unethical.

Spirituality

In the wellness and positive psychology literature, spirituality is defined as "the source of the capacity for creativity, the ability to grasp the sacred, and the capacity for love, intimacy, harmony, growth, compassion, goodness, and optimism" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 602). During the calling decision-making process, the participants described using their spirituality as their primary source for life and work decisions. In this way, my study affirms the definition of spirituality in the literature by demonstrating how emerging adults are leveraging spirituality to be creative, grasp the sacred, demonstrate positive qualities (love, intimacy, harmony, growth, compassion, goodness, and optimism), and flourish.

My study showed that spiritual people who have a calling are not consumed with discussing creation, the afterlife, the historical accuracy of scripture, or theology. Instead, they are concerned with growing as people and making a positive impact in the world. The intentions of the participants in my study were focused on a lifestyle of virtue and contentment, which relates to the literature on *eudaimonia*, which is happiness derived from virtuous living (Peucker, 2008). My study relates to the discussion of eudaimonia in the literature, which suggests that spiritual character (people who live according to a set of values and purpose) is in contrast to hedonistic character (people who pursue pleasure, avoid pain, and pursue material gain).

Tisdell (2001) conducted a literature review on spirituality and identified three themes of spirituality: "the further development of self-awareness, a sense of interconnectedness, and a relationship to a Higher Power" (p. 2). My study affirms these findings. The participants in my study described learning about the self, having a sense of connection and being aware of their influence on others, and having a relationship to a Higher Power.

In a qualitative study of spirituality among college students, Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) identified five themes: "(a) Spiritual Quest, (b) Ecumenical Worldview, (c) Ethic of Caring, (d) Charitable Involvement, and (e) Equanimity" (p. 4). My study affirmed that spiritual college students are indeed seeking answers to life's big questions, they have an interest in connection and unity, they care deeply about helping others, they want to give to others by serving, and many of them described how a belief in calling gave them a sense of peace.

One trait of spirituality can be religious peak experiences. Maslow (1962) discussed religious peak experiences, in part, by describing them from the subjective perspective of a person: "[It was as if] they had really seen the ultimate truth, the essence of things, the secret of life, as if veils had been pulled aside" (p. 9). Many of the participants in my study described having religious peak experiences and described how these experiences provided some direction for their life and career exploration. These peak experiences were inspirational thoughts, feelings, and convictions resulting from prayer, reflection, and studying scripture.

Guidance

My study disputes the suggestion that spiritual experience should be redefined solely as metaphor, symbol, shared story, need for approval from leaders, a subconscious need for vindication, fear of being alone, the ego working out childhood issues, or a brain function (Fowler, 1991; Jung, 1964). From a phenomenological view, calling decision-making that relies on belief is a hidden process occurring in the inner life as a person learns about his or her environment and uses intention and optimism to work toward some goal while engaging in a relationship in a Higher Power.

Taking a phenomenological view, it does not seem ethical to use a purely Jungian, ego, or neurological-based approach for guidance, since these methods can seek to rationalize the

subjective lifeworld of spiritual emerging adults. Instead, a transpersonal approach to guidance is suggested. Transpersonal theories and methods are designed with the intention of validating spirituality and "going beyond or transcending the individual" (Shapiro et al., 2002, p. 18). Using transpersonal methods could facilitate guidance that better supports the lived experiences associated with calling, spirituality, self-awareness, personal development, a Higher Power, and a sense of interconnectedness.

Similarly, the suggested parameters for authenticity in guidance were affirmed by my study: "[In higher education] we need to temper our current heavy emphasis on rational empiricism and professional and vocational preparation with increased efforts to help students address issues of authenticity and spiritual growth (Chickering et al., 2005, pp. 23–24). In my study, the participants' decision-making relied on belief, and they were open about how vital belief was to their cognitive and executive functions. I am sure the participants in my study would have benefited from someone at their university being able to temper rational empiricism and professional preparation with an effort to help them directly address their calling beliefs.

In my study, as the participants thought about how they could live their call in a career, a "central issue [was] a life fully worth living" (Hall, 2004, p. 9). Protean career theory gives room for students to think about the kind of life they think would be worth living, instead of only telling students how to get a job. Protean career theory would be an appropriate method of guidance for students, since it emphasizes "personal identity, independence and freedom of choice, reshaping work around family priorities, and life satisfaction" (Hall, 2004, p. 2).

Career Development and Economic Systems

One popular framework for interpreting the spiritual lives of people within the context of work and career is Weber's (1958) theory of the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,

which suggests that Christians have an ethical framework that advances capitalism. This ethical framework is described as a values-system of gaining wealth, being frugal, and working hard, and it is said to be directly connected to religious beliefs. Although using this framework to interpret the choices of Christians is popular, it does not adequately capture the spirit, intention, cognition, or choices described by the subjects in my study.

The subjects in my study described their motivation as wanting to be faithful to their Higher Power and to live a life of eudemonia where they served others and made a positive impact on society. They were focused on these goals as they worked toward completing a college degree and finding a career path. However, if Weber's (1958) theory were to be applied, the motivations of the participants in my study would most likely be unfairly characterized as "just world beliefs, social dominance orientation, and right-wing authoritarianism," instead of what they actually were—calling decision-making where a person relied on belief to find a vocation and serve others (Christopher, Zabel, Jones, & Marek, 2008, p. 473).

The fact that Weber's (1958) theory may be uncritically applied simply because participants identify as Christian is a point of concern when providing career services to emerging adults in their exploratory state of career development. Instead of broadly applying a general theory of Christianity that may or not be correct, career services providers who work with Christians should use theories that acknowledge the lifeworld of students who believe they are called, including eudemonia and career (Hirschi, 2011), meaning and career (Super, 1976), career choice (Holland, 1973), career construction (Savickas, 2005), and wise vocational decision-making (Parsons, 1909).

Granted, the career development theories that are affirmed by my study (Hirschi, 2011; Parsons, 1909; Savickas, 2005; Super, 1957, 1976) focus on the individual, whereas Weber's

(1958) theory seeks to explain social influences on the macroeconomic system (i.e., how

Protestant beliefs provide a fruitful ground for capitalism). However, with all of the social

scientific research on the negative externalities and implicit class issues associated with

capitalism in our modern times, it could be a detriment to Christian students if their religion is

labeled as a primary source and sustaining force for our national woes.

Since the results of my study dispute the traits associated with the Protestant ethic ("just

world beliefs, social dominance orientation, and right-wing authoritarianism," Christopher et al.,

2008, p. 473), social scientists may need to clarify the relationship between Christians who

believe they are called, the Protestant work ethic, and capitalism. Starting with my study, I would

suggest a macro theory where calling is seen as a positive economic trait associated more closely

with resilience, altruism, and freedom of choice than with the traditional negative traits of

Weber's (1958) theory.

Using affirmed career development theories to develop a macro economic theory, one

could design a macroeconomic theory of calling and national economic systems. This theory

could explain how transcendence, belief, spirit, eudemonia, meaning, career choice, career

construction, and wise vocational decision-making would affect schools, markets, households,

firms, regulation, and communities.

Self-Interest and Altruism

Since Adam Smith (1776/1976) published *The Wealth of Nations*, rational self-interest

has been a prime theory for explaining the motivation of workers in a free market economy.

According to this theory, workers voluntarily choose how and when to enter markets and

compete with other workers (or firms) based on rational self-interest. As workers compete, it is

in their self-interest to do what is best for themselves, so an individual worker will make rational

decisions in his or her self-interest based on a variety of factors (i.e., utility, trade-offs, opportunity costs, competition, wages, etc.).

The theory of rational self-interest has come under scrutiny from social scientists who interpret "self-interest" as "selfishness," and who argue that ego (not in the psychological sense, but in the conventional sense of self-importance) has largely contributed to the many social problems that plague modern capitalist societies (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013; Senge et al., 2011). These conclusions can find support in historic economic philosophy, such as when Ayn Rand (1964) argued that selfishness is a primary social value and that altruism is, in fact, evil.

In examining the relationship between my study and existing studies, I became interested in the proposed dichotomy between rational self-interest and altruism. The participants in my study did use rational self-interest to consider how and when they would voluntarily enter labor markets and compete with other workers for wages from firms. In part, self-interest did inform how and why they chose a major, gained vocational skills, participated in internships, built their network, etc. However, while they were rationally pursuing their own self-interests, they were simultaneously relying on belief to answer a call, which implies the presence of others-oriented values and a concern for the common good (Dik & Duffy, 2012).

Does a person have to pick between self-interest and altruism? Not everyone thinks so. In a recent article in a medical journal, Spaeth (2011) suggested that it was in the self-interest of physicians to consider the interests of their patients, as this "enlightened self-interest" would lead to personal prosperity: "Physicians will prosper when they best serve their patients and not when they are perceived as self-serving and self-protective" (p. 13). By discussing how self-interest and altruism are linked, Spaeth demonstrates that the prosperity of professionals is directly connected to the well-being of others. Spaeth also suggests a difference between self-interest

(choosing to be a physician and operating a practice) and being self-serving (not looking out for the needs of others).

Affirming Spaeth (2011), other scholars have argued against a self-interest versus altruism paradigm, stating that "many theories on work behavior assume humans to be either self-interested or to be social in nature with strong other-orientation but . . . this assumption is empirically invalid and may lead to overly narrow models of work behavior" (De Dreu & Nauta, 2009, p. 913). A more appropriate way to study self-interest and altruism may be to view "self-concern and other-orientation [as] independent" traits and then determine the degree to which each trait affects job performance, behavior, and personal choice (De Dreu & Nauta, 2009, p. 913).

Treating self-interest and altruism as independent traits which are not mutually exclusive may help to understand the behavior of emerging adults who believe they are called. On the one hand, participants in my study chose a major and career path based in part on a voluntary and rational decision of what was best for them. On the other hand, they also chose a major and career path based on how they would most like to help others.

The participants in my study made rational decisions based on both self-interest and altruism. These findings refute a narrow view on economic choice, one where social scientists "presuppose a view of morality that too sharply separates self-interest and altruism" and that tries "to separate the economic and morality into discrete spheres" (Walsh & Lynch, 2004, p. 80). From a phenomenological account of economic choice among undergraduates who believe they are called, a "compatibilist account" may be most useful, because it "shows the ways a concern for personal profit and a concern for others can come together" (Walsh & Lynch, 2004, p. 80).

There has been at least one recent attempt at a grounded theory that combines self-interest and altruism in worker education. Flynn and Black (2011) described how "scholars have attempted to describe the inherent and dynamic tension between the promotion of needs and wants of self (self-interest) relative to the promotion of needs and wants of others (altruism)" (p. 459). Through their research, they suggest a grounded theory for "promotion, initiation, and maintenance of the relationship between altruism and self-interest" among their group (Flynn & Black, 2011, p. 466). Since college students who believe they are called do experience tension as they decide how a career can meet both their self-interest and altruistic requirements, perhaps there is an opportunity for Flynn and Black's grounded theory to be studied among spiritual emerging adults.

Implications for Future Research

After analyzing how the results of my study related to the literature and academic discussions surrounding emerging adults, calling, spirituality, guidance, and career development, I considered the implications for future research. Implications for future research could include longitudinal studies on emerging adults who chose a career using calling decision-making during the explorer career stage, the bias against spirituality and religion in higher education, the job readiness of emerging adults who use calling decision-making while in college, the negative influence of religious leaders on spiritual emerging adults who want to go to a public university, and sample groups who are different from my sample group (i.e., Caucasian Christians).

Longitudinal

There are few (if any) longitudinal studies that examine the long-term career impact of emerging adults who use their university experience to discern a calling, explore careers, and pursue a vocation. It could be beneficial to better understand the career development, career

patterns, and other issues that may arise throughout the lifespan of persons who use calling

decision-making during their exploratory phase to make career decisions.

Bias in Higher Education

It has been suggested that to best serve the spiritual student who feels called, career

services providers could "use a narrative lens to conceptualize clients' calling development, use

job crafting techniques to support calling maintenance, and prepare clients for postretirement

career calling development" (Bott et al., 2017, p. 113). It may be difficult to find adherers to this

suggestion in public universities because of the noted bias toward spirituality in public higher

education.

> In recent years, articles about spirituality in college students have appeared with greater
>
> frequency in student affairs literature. Love (2001), Parks (2000), Tisdell (2003), and
>
> other scholars have increasingly studied the role of spirituality and faith in adult and
>
> higher education. Although many draw a distinction between spirituality and religion,
>
> most of the articles discuss establishing some form of relationship with a celestial
>
> otherness. That may concern student affairs professionals uncomfortable with the idea of
>
> promoting religion or belief in a higher being. (Molasso, 2006, p. 1)

The sentiments of Molasso are echoed by Chickering:

> Persons anchored in various religious traditions and from faith-based institutions are
>
> typically accustomed to, and comfortable with, the language of spirituality. But for
>
> others, that language carries baggage from the worlds of established religions and
>
> churches with which they do not identify. They do not want be understood to endorse
>
> anything that hints at proselytizing or indoctrination. Atheists, agnostics, and persons
>
> with strong humanistic orientations find that words like *authenticity, purpose, meaning,*

integrity, wisdom, and *values* express their concerns. For these persons character

development and moral development are legitimate concerns for higher education, but

"spiritual growth" raises red flags. (Chickering, 2006, pp. 1–2)

In public higher education, there seem to be two main suggestions for how to respond to

the spiritual growth and religious beliefs of students: either embrace the experiences of spiritual

students (Chickering, 2006) or try to change the meaning of spirituality to something else (i.e.,

something that does not involve a Higher Power), and then use terminology that does not involve

religious terminology in order to makes the higher education professional feel more comfortable

(Molasso, 2006).

The suggestion by Chickering (2006) to allow students to be authentic is the appropriate

response to guiding spiritual students (from a phenomenological perspective), while Molasso's

(2006) suggestion to change terminology to allow the higher education professional to feel more

comfortable is dangerously close to a colonization of the lifeworld, which is discouraged by

phenomenologists (Harrington, 1994). In short, using imperialistic practices to impose an

institution's bias on a student in order to make the professional feel more comfortable is

unethical.

The implications for further research include studies that shed light on why some

professionals in higher education consider spirituality and religion taboo, and/or why some find

it appropriate to use discriminatory practices when serving spiritual students. There is also a need

to further understand the policies, administration, and leadership of public universities in order to

better understand the culture and context of organizations and an institution that seems, at least in

part, to allow prejudicial and discriminatory practices to be used when serving spiritual students.

And, finally, the undergraduate and graduate programs that prepare professionals for careers in

higher education should be studied to determine how programs are preparing professionals to support spirituality, religion, and calling among students.

Job Readiness

My study dealt mostly with calling and career exploration as a lived experience, and it did not focus on specific aspects of job readiness. Future studies could more closely examine the types of services that spiritual students receive and need so that these students are in the best possible position as they enter the workforce upon graduation. For example, job search skills (creating a personal brand, networking, writing a resume and cover letter, applying for jobs, interviewing, on-boarding, workplace hard- and soft-skills, and professional development) among students who believe they are called may be an area that, if researched, could prove fruitful. Obviously, the entire gamut of career services that spiritual students receive and need should be studied further.

There may also be a need to better understand how calling, spirituality, and religion are viewed and treated in the marketplace. Career services providers could use research on calling, spirituality, and religion in the fields of organizational and industrial psychology, organizational behavior, workplace learning, human resource management, management, executive leadership, sustainability, wellness, corporate social responsibility, and diversity to create interventions and pathways. They could also build off-campus partnerships using a phenomenological framework that validates the lifeworld of spiritual students. This type of sensitivity and knowledge by career services providers could lead to positive outcomes for students who believe they are called as they prepare to enter the workforce.

Religious Leaders

In my study, as I tried to gain access to participants, it became evident that some religious leaders were uncomfortable with me and my study, and they wanted to act as an obstacle to my interviewing what they considered to be "their kids" or "their flock." Several church leaders communicated to me that "we don't teach our kids" about going to universities and building careers, one said "their kids" go only into the trades or private colleges, and several remarked that, since I was an outsider and because of "how things are these days," I couldn't be trusted. There seems to be a level of paranoia among religious leaders that may negatively impact spiritual emerging adults who want to go to a public university.

I had discussions with several pastors in which they were obviously upset about the idea of "their flock" talking to someone who was unknown, especially someone from a public university who was conducting a study. To them, I was a threat to their organization and members. As evidence, several leaders gave me false information about their programs and attendees in an effort to prevent me from gaining access to members. One such pastor tried to block immediate access to emerging adults by suggesting that, if I attended his church for several months and built relationships with other church members, that he might allow me to talk to the college-age members in his church. Several pastors told me that their particular sects teach that calling is only for ministers, not lay people, and so it wouldn't do me any good to talk to the college-age members within their organization, and one leader became verbally aggressive and tried to goad me into an altercation.

The interactions I had with some of the gatekeepers of religious organizations were a cause for concern. The accusatorial way in which some religious leaders responded to my request to interview students was surprising, as was the fact that some of these leaders told their

young members that only the leader had a call, which goes against the vocational psychology literature that suggests that anyone who wants to treat their job like call can do so (Dik & Duffy, 2012). After learning that some leaders of religious organizations were going to actively try to prevent young people from talking to me, and that most seemed very ignorant about the intentions of a researcher and the purpose of an academic study, I decided to focus my recruitment efforts on campus religious groups and an online professional social networking site.

From the experiences I had with some gatekeepers of religious organizations, I believe there is a need for further research on the ethical counseling of students who have been a part of particularly counter-culture religious organizations, and perhaps an in-depth study of the negative influence of religious leaders on calling, career development, emerging adulthood, and career pathway development, especially as a career pathway relates to public universities. The career development literature suggests that counter-culture groups do harm to those who want to participate as workers in society. "History shows even more clearly that the isolated attempts of idealists or dropouts to withdraw from the dominant culture and live their own atypical way of life are doomed to failure" (Super, 1976, p. 38).

Many of the religious leaders I talked to seemed to suggest that the lives of their young members should be contained within the organization (which was very different from the descriptions given to me by the participants in my study, who were so eager to go to a university, choose a major, and participate in work-based learning activities as they tried to discover how to find a fit for their calling). The implications are that there may be a need to study religious leaders and their influence on emerging adults and university attendance and/or career development.

University career services providers have an opportunity to help students work through stages of faith-development as emerging adults explore careers, are engaged by ethical career counseling, and grow into civic-minded citizens within a free and inclusive society. In these instances of guidance, there may be times when career services providers will need to help students overcome the negative aspects sometimes associated with religion, such as cults, mind control, fantasy, delusion, superstition, paranoia, misinformation, tradition, and misogyny, which have been discussed by at length by opponents of religious extremism (Dawkins, 2008; Harris, 2005; Hassan, 2015; Hitchens, 2009; Nye, 2014).

Different Groups

During the recruitment process of my study, I reached out to several faith-based student organizations that represented religions other than Christianity, and I reached out to faith-based student organizations that represented specific ethnic and racial groups. However, all respondents to my study were Caucasian Christians from the Midwest (economic status was not a demographic I measured). While this gave me a rich sense of the essence of calling among this group, there is a need for further studies of calling among different types of groups.

A recent contribution to calling among different faiths is *Calling Today's World*, which was edited by Cahalan and Schuurman (2016). This book features chapters written by authors representing eight different views on vocation, including Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian and Daoist, and Secular perspectives. Having a global perspective that also preserves differences, I believe, is important for a diverse approach to studying calling and vocation. There needs to be further research on how different faiths (including ones not mentioned in Cahalan and Schuurman's book) approach spiritual and religious topics, especially as spirituality and religion relate to work and career.

Dik and Duffy (2012) discuss the need to explore calling among different racial and socioeconomic groups, as well as in nations that are not post-industrial and that lack government regulation. Issues of "oppression, inequality, narrow range of work roles, generational and extreme poverty, a lack of employment opportunities, poor working conditions, wage and advancement disparities, prejudicial hiring practices, exploitive work practices, and distressed living conditions" that affect various groups need to be further researched, especially (as it relates to my study) among marginalized groups and international students who are attending a public university, who have discerned a calling from a Higher Power, and who want a vocation (Dik & Duffy, 2012) pp. 206–209).

Other Implications

From a workforce education perspective, one wants to understand the factors that contribute to successful participation in the workforce while analyzing populations and environments. As a workforce educator, I chose to examine how participants use calling to prepare for the workforce while in a public university, but I could have examined this phenomenon in a number of different environments (such as incarcerated emerging adults who believe they are called).

I chose public higher education because the environment gives emerging adults the freedom to spend several years exploring the self and the world. Through my study I gained a better appreciation of the experiences of emerging adults who believe they are called within a public university environment and was able to hear them describe how things like exploring majors and participating in internships helped them figure out how to live their call in a career. As I consider the results of my study, I can't help but wonder what environmental factors may be influencing spiritual emerging adults who do not have access to public higher education.

Discerning a calling and exploring vocations while in public higher education seem like a natural fit, in part, because of the phase of emerging adulthood and the relative conducive atmosphere of being in a liberal arts university. Learning that many of the participants in my study seemed to navigate calling decision-making without much interference from the university did make me question what would happen if a young person were to be removed from a liberal arts environment, placed in a context that did not facilitate exploration and actualization, and was required to navigate a top-down bureaucracy that negated the lifeworld—would they still discern a call?

Studying spirituality and career development among disadvantaged populations is not common (Hong, Hodge, & Choi, 2013). One recent study did demonstrate, however, that workers who were not pursuing a university education and, instead, were trying to procure career services from a state-funded workforce development agency still demonstrated agency and hope through spirituality (Hong et al., 2013). As with the participants in my study, whether or not the environment contributed to their spiritual development, spiritual people still demonstrated agency and hope. The transcendent nature of spirituality may compel people to worship a Higher Power and search for a vocation, even in low socioeconomic conditions and/or when the theory of a hierarchy of needs suggests that disadvantaged participants may not invest in self-actualization.

Research has shown that, while spiritual people who are struggling economically may demonstrate hope and agency, they do not demonstrate strong pathways thinking (Hong et al., 2013). It has been suggested that a lack of strong pathways thinking is tied to factors present in low socioeconomic conditions, such as a lack of economic opportunities or poor education (Hong et al., 2013). Hong et al. (2013) suggest that spiritual people from low socioeconomic

backgrounds need career services providers to provide assistance with pathways thinking—but what if the pathways assistance being offered does not line up with the participants' calling decision-making lifeworld?

My study shows that most of the spiritual students I interviewed did not intentionally gain pathways thinking assistance from the university other than choosing a major, but pathways thinking among the participants in my study may be due to a particular set of socioeconomic factors, such as home life, professional life and income of parents, and a high school education that prepared them to have career pathways thinking. This makes me wonder if emerging adults who have not gained from certain socioeconomic factors may look to a state-run or nonprofit workforce program for help, and then be given inadequate career pathway assistance.

Universities have a unique standing in the workforce development landscape in that they give students time and opportunity to gradually create a vocational identity that is based, in large part, on freedom of choice. This may not be the case in other environments. While a case can be made that career services providers at public universities are not regulative in their career pathway assistance (to the degree that there is no top-down mandate to compel students to pursue certain majors), it may be tougher to make that same case in more highly regulated environments. "Elected officials, planners, and policymakers in U.S. cities are continually faced with the twin challenges of promoting economic growth and vitality on the one hand while ensuring broad-based access to well-paying jobs and career opportunities on the other" (Schrock, 2013, p. 163).

The goal of economic development is to promote business attraction, retention, and expansion while increasing the availability of jobs in a region. Not taking into account public universities, many workforce development initiatives try to achieve the goal of economic

development by pointing disadvantaged groups toward expedient school-to-work paths, without

giving them the time or opportunity for self-exploration or the construction of meaning, and

under the direction of elected officials, planners, and policymakers (but not the "I"). In addition

to local and regional actors, the federal government also plays a role in shaping workforce

development strategies and targeting disadvantaged populations.

> Beginning with the War on Poverty in the 1960s, federal employment and training
>
> policies narrowly targeted disadvantaged populations rather than aiming for universal
>
> eligibility. This policy path had several key consequences. First, the link between poverty
>
> and job training policies further deepened the gulf between active labor market policy
>
> and the health of the economy as a whole. Job training policies were seen as "remedial,"
>
> and labor market policy was viewed as "social policy" rather than a corrective to broader
>
> deficiencies in the private labor market or a part of a national economic productivity
>
> strategy. (Jacobs, 2013)

Despite the advertised goal of wanting to help low-income workers get jobs in well-

paying careers within growth industries, the actions of those in charge of identifying career

pathways are inherently biased since to "the needs of employers can be at odds with efforts to

meet the needs of disadvantaged populations" (Schrock, 2013, p. 163). In other words, the needs

of the employers and the workers are not necessarily complementary, and (usually) workforce

development programs consider the needs of employers before the workers (this is the market-

driven approach to workforce education). The thinking is that increases in business activities and

the number of people employed equals economic growth. The result? Workers are provided

pathways to low-paying jobs that provide near-poverty-level wages (Fitzgerald, 2004, p. 357).

The needs of the employer include the efficient use of labor in the production of goods or the provision of services. The needs of workers, as discussed throughout this study, are to flourish and find meaning in life through various adult roles. Connecting workers to low-skill, low-wage jobs may seem like a quick fix to those in command, but "long-term economic independence will not be achieved by simply moving people off [welfare] and into dead-end jobs" (Fitzgerald, 2004, p. 358). While there are reasons for providing assistance to disadvantaged groups, communities may discover more sustainable workforce development strategies by prioritizing the lifeworld of the worker over the needs of an employer.

> The demand that economic activity should be reflected upon in terms of its quality as the "creation of value for human ends" is nowadays by no means self-evident. . . . The decisive criterion of all economic activity should not be the creation of market value but—in spite of all the practical constraints involved—the service of life. This lifeworld perspective brings up two elementary questions: which values should be created for whom? (Ulrich, 2008, p. 186)

When elected officials, planners, policymakers, and employers decide that market value is what matters to an economy, they are deciding what values should be created and imposed upon disadvantaged groups. This "top-down" approach to calling decision-making is out of place in an ethical society because it intentionally obscures the lifeworld with positivistic objectivism. In the spirit of phenomenology, it may be beneficial to analyze the lifeworld of workers, and design workforce development programs around the worker's consciousness and intentions in order to facilitate long-term, sustainable strategies for economic growth that have the main of goal of increasing a person's quality of life.

Economic activity means the creation of value. As is the case with all the technical terms

of modern economics, the customary understanding of this widely used concept in

business administration and (political) economics is now restricted to systemic functional

relationships. Accordingly we are dealing with a purely quantitative factor, namely a

monetarily evaluated net economic performance, i.e., value added, achieved in the market

by means of work or service offered in return for payment, which effectively remains to a

corporation, a branch or an entire national economy (in exchange with other national

economies) after the deduction of costs which are also determined by the market. But the

calculatory concept betrays its original ethical-qualitative meaning in the human life

context: the question of the value of economic activity in regard to the quality of life.

(Ulrich, 2008, p. 185)

In much the same way that the natural sciences eclipsed the self-evident lived

experiences of people and dehumanized the very world they attempted to enlighten, economic

philosophies that do not consider the lifeworld of the worker do a similar disservice to society. In

the words of the American professor and philosopher Sam Keen, "A society in which vocation

and job are separated for most people gradually creates an economy that is often devoid of spirit,

one that frequently fills our pocketbooks at the cost of emptying our souls."

Researchers who study calling have an exciting opportunity to explore calling decision-

making among disadvantaged groups in order to acknowledge the search for vocation among the

less powerful and to help introduce a holistic philosophy into the (strived for) objective science

of workforce development by revealing the lifeworld of participants. My study—through

interviews and a literature review—demonstrated that emerging adults who felt called were not

sure if their university would encourage them to live authentically, and this was in a liberal arts

institution designed to promote freedom of choice through knowledge and experience. There may be a need to study calling among low-income workers who do not have access to public higher education and are participating in nonprofit and government workforce programs. Studying this population using a phenomenology may reveal the lifeworld of emerging adults whose career pathways may be highly influenced by top-down mandates that potentially dominate the "I."

Concluding Thoughts

An interest in how spirituality and religion affect work has been studied to one degree or another, but it wasn't until the last decade when calling itself became a serious research topic (Duffy & Dik, 2013). The surge in calling's popularity can be directly traced to the early-2000s work of the Lily Endowment, a private foundation that awarded over $200 million in grants to colleges and universities in the United States to "establish programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation" (VanZanten Gallagher, 2007).

The year 2007 is seen as the "tipping point" for calling research, and from that time until 2013 over 40 papers were published on calling (Duffy & Dik, 2013). Calling has now become a prominent research topic in the fields of management, organizational behavior, psychology, and education due to its prevalence in society (by people who are either pursuing or living a calling), as well as the desirable work traits associated with it, such as career maturity, career self-efficacy, and well-being (Duffy & Dik, 2013).

As calling has gained prominence among serious academic researchers, spirituality has simultaneously been experiencing its own renaissance in the academy (Astin et al., 2011; Tisdell, 2001). Spirituality highlights the neo-classical view of calling, which suggests that a calling originates from a Higher Power (Dik & Duffy, 2012). Even when the spiritual literature does not

expressly discuss calling, the themes of spirituality and calling are the same: "the further development of self-awareness, a sense of interconnectedness, and a relationship to a Higher Power" (Tisdell, 2001, p. 2).

Calling is a relatively new topic to the academy, even though people have been searching for these things for thousands of years in philosophy and theology (Rehm, 1990). Research on spirituality in student affairs has grown since 2000, but it has mostly focused on either trying to define concepts of spirituality or the spirituality of faculty (Astin et al., 2011). It was only as recent as 2010 that the American College Personnel Association (a leading student affairs association) launched a commission for spirituality, faith, religion, and meaning among college students.

Although calling as a characteristic and concept has been studied among college students, there have been "relatively few qualitative studies" on this population, and it is unknown if there are any studies that have specifically examined the career decision-making process of emerging adults who believe they are called (Hunter et al., 2010, p. 179). Exploring the lived experiences of spiritual emerging adults in order to better understand how they make vocational decisions could help career services providers to better support college students who are trying to answer a call.

Since the foundation of career guidance is Parsons' (1909) theory of wise vocational decision-making, which suggests that young people should gain knowledge of the self and knowledge of work and then make decisions based on these two groups of facts, I decided to use Parsons' theory as a framework to explore the experiences of spiritual college students who were making vocational decisions. Primarily using open-ended questions during face-to-face interviews, I interviewed 12 participants and asked them to describe how they experienced a

calling from a Higher Power, what career exploration experiences they had had, and how they thought their calling fit with a career.

Using a phenomenological approach, I analyzed data that were gathered during interviews to better understand the lifeworld of the participants in my study (Husserl & Carr, 2006). The lifeworld represents true knowledge, which is the knowledge of meaning given to the world by individuals before it is rationalized (Husserl, 2013). I then compared the experiences of the participants in my study in order to identify the essence of calling. After identifying the essence of calling through an empirical analysis of the data, I developed themes of calling that were designed to capture the *intentions* or focus of participants: (a) worship God, (b) view work as a vocation, (c) flourish as adults, (d) be awake, and (e) become career ready. I also designed a calling decision-making model based on the data and my literature review.

The results of my study confirmed what other studies have revealed about the spiritual lifeworld of college students who believe they are called. For college students, calling and spirituality seem to have some overlap, with themes of identity creation (Guiding Force and Spiritual Quest), construction of meaning (Ecumenical Worldview, Personal Fit/Eudemonic Wellbeing), and connectedness (Altruism and Ethic of Caring) (Astin et al., 2011; Hunter et al., 2010). The career development of the participants also closely aligned with most accepted career development theories (Parsons, 1909; Savickas, 2005; Super, 1957, 1976). What my study added to the qualitative literature was a better understanding of the intentions of emerging adults who believe they are called during a career decision-making process.

At the beginning of my study, I was concerned that the participants would lack career maturity and an accurate knowledge of work, and that they may not have used clear reasoning to make conclusions of fit between groups of facts. I was also concerned that their spirituality

would be nothing more than a recitation of the religious doctrines passed down by parents and religious leaders. Surprisingly, most of the participants in my study relied heavily on information about the world of work while making decisions. They were very focused on choosing a major that they believed would lead to a fulfilling career, and they engaged in career readiness activities (such as internships and informational interviews). They also seemed more focused on their personal relationship with a Higher Power and in taking personal ownership of their faith than they were in sharing religious teachings.

The implications of my study are that career services providers have an opportunity to use a narrative lens to guide students in their calling decision-making process (Langdridge, 2008). Using a narrative lens with spiritual students provides an opportunity for career services providers to encourage emerging adults to be authentic (Chickering, 2006). In regard to authenticity, career services providers need to understand the lifeworld of spiritual students and support their subjective meaning-making, without trying to rationalize or reframe beliefs (Prosser et al., 2013, p. 321).

It is clear that most of the participants in my study were not sure if the university would encourage them to be authentic. As such, there may be a need for career services providers in higher education to more openly support the lifeworld of spiritual students, since the "lifeworld has a systematic and historic priority over any scientific theory or worldview" (Mircica, 2011, p. 185).

In the case of supporting calling in the context of wise vocational decision-making (Parsons, 1909), it may be beneficial for career services providers to reference a calling decision-making model and be familiar with the intentions of spiritual students. By referencing a calling decision-making model and understanding student intentions, career services providers can take

a holistic approach to guidance as they help emerging adults fully integrate their calling into an authentic vocational identity.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

Western Michigan University
Educational Leadership, Research and Technology

Principal Investigator: Sue Poppink, PhD
Student Investigator: Justin Arnold
Title of Study: The lived experiences of emerging adults who feel called: Finding a good fit

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "*The lived experiences of emerging adults who feel called: Finding a good fit.*" This project will serve as Justin Arnold's doctoral dissertation for the requirements of the Doctorate of Philosophy in Educational Leadership. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
We are trying to understand the experiences of emerging adults at ███████████████ ███████ who, while being called by a Higher Power, have explored careers and chosen a career. We are conducting this study to hear from young people about their experiences with calling, career exploration, and career choice.

Who can participate in this study?
You can participate in this study if you are a current university student at ███████ between the ages of 18-25 who feels called by a Higher Power, has explored careers, has chosen a career, and who has not yet taken on adult roles (i.e. marriage, parenting, financial independence, or home ownership). Exceptions for "current university students" will be made if you graduated within the past year before July 31, 2017. You will be excluded from this study if you are not between the ages of 18-25, do not attend or have not attended ███████, are married or a parent, are financially independent, own a home, your calling is not spiritual in nature (your calling does not come from a Higher Power), you have not explored careers, and/or you have not chosen a career.

Where will this study take place?
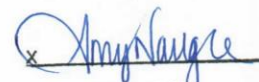At ██████████████████████████ campus) in a private room.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
The time commitment for this study includes one interview that will last between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours (depending on the length of the answers you give). You will need to travel to ██████████████ for the interview.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
You will be asked to schedule a day and time to be interviewed. You will be asked to be punctual and to set aside enough time to be interviewed (up to 1.5 hours). You will be asked to be ready, willing, and able to share your experiences of feeling called by a Higher Power, exploring careers, and choosing a career during a candid interview. Before being interviewed, you will be asked to present a signed Informed Consent Form. You will be asked to allow the interview to be recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for a doctoral dissertation.

What information is being measured during the study?
The information being measured during the study will be your answers to three pre-determined interview questions.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
The risks for you include the potential for confidential information being made public. To protect your identity, I will use pseudonyms to identify you (instead of your name). The pseudonyms I will use will be "subject 1, subject 2, etc." until all subjects have had their identity protected by a code. To protect the collected data, I will store data on digital files on a secure computer, until data is transcribed. When the data is given to a transcriber, I will have the transcriber to sign a nondisclosure agreement so the information is kept private and not shared. Once the data is transcribed, I will remove digital data from a secure computer and store it on a flash drive in a locked location.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
The study will give you a voice by allowing you to express why following a Higher Power is important to you and explain what you want to accomplish in your career as a spiritual person. In general, many students are interested in spirituality, and they want their university experience to help them figure out how to find a good fit between who they are and the life they will live after graduation (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 2011). The opportunity for career educators working with emerging adults is clear: career educators can tap into the natural sense of spirituality or desire to pursue a calling among emerging adults in order to help them identify a career pathway that is fueled by personal meaning. This study may provide a glimpse into how students give their career choice meaning.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
The costs of the study include travel costs associated with getting to the site of the study, and any work opportunities that are given up in order to be interviewed.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
People who will have access to the information collected during the study include the researcher, a three-person doctoral dissertation committee, and the interview transcriber. Once the study is complete, the data will be published in a doctoral dissertation (which will be made available by Western Michigan University on the internet).

What if you want to stop participating in this study?

You can choose to stop participating in the study at anytime for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study.

The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the primary investigator, Sue Poppink, PhD, at (269) 387-3569 or sue.poppink@wmich.edu. You may also contact the student investigator, Justin Arnold, at (616) 414-7164 or justin.m.arnold@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

_____

Please Print Your Name

_____   _____

Participant's signature   Date

Appendix B

**Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Letter of Approval**

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: April 26, 2017

To: Sue Poppink, Principal Investigator
        Justin Arnold, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 17-04-18

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "The Lived Experiences of Emerging Adults Who Feel Called: Finding a Good Fit" has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may **only** be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., *you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under "Number of subjects you want to complete the study"*)." Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: **April 25, 2018**