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When we are young, we are often asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” This question is challenging for many to answer. When we are young, our idea of what we can be is often based on what we know given our short life experiences or occupations held by those close to us or where we grow up, such as a teacher, nurse, farmer, police officer, or firefighter. The idea of being a scientist or nuclear engineer is often not yet clear. The choices around us when we are young are not always clear, so the idea of going to college may not yet be in sight. Growing up is the process of making meaning in our lives. Purpose is one way one can create meaning within their pathway in life.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to develop an in-depth understanding of how the experiences of traditional, first-year, college-aged students contributed to their path to purpose. Through intentional activities and tools, students engaged in work that allowed them to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life based on their meaningful experiences. The study described those experiences, specifically Life Design experiences, that the students articulated as helping them to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life. Damon (2008) stated, “finding a clear purpose in life is essential for their achievement of happiness and satisfaction in life, and that doing so is a good deal harder than it should be in our present-day cultural environment” (p. 22). He went on to define purpose as:

... an ultimate concern. It is the final answer to the question, Why? Why are you doing this? Why does it matter to you? Why is it important? A purpose is a deeper reason for the immediate goals and motives that drive most daily behavior (Damon, 2008, p. 22).

As higher education professionals, how are we preparing students to explore their purpose and navigate change? How we work with students, particularly traditional, first-year, college students, can influence the rest of their college careers and even the rest of their lives. The researcher contends that college is more than getting a degree; it is about creating a meaningful life and finding a place in the larger world (Damon, 2008). It is about creating a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging in a world that has the potential to swallow us whole.

This study sought to answer the question: What are the transformative experiences of first-year students at a large, Southern, public university who have worked through an intentional, experiential Life Design course to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life? A phenomenological qualitative approach was used to answer the question. Although there is substantial research on finding one's purpose, the research specifically on how students cultivate and articulate their purpose in higher education is sparse. Participants were identified based on their participation in a Life Design course. In total, nine students participated in the interviews and document review. Face-to-face or virtual interviews focused on the experiences before, during, and after the Life Design course and relationships that helped participants cultivate and articulate their purpose in life.

The results were organized into themes: (a) the critical importance of the process in being able to cultivate and articulate purpose; (b) inclusiveness, where the participants through the course were provided space to conduct a deep dive into who they were and why that matters; and (c) the opportunity to reflect, connect, and grow with peers in an environment conducive to such. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, Baxter-Magolda's (2001) self-authorship, and Krumboltz's (2009) happenstance learning theory were used to connect purpose to life experiences. Findings suggested that while participants could cultivate and articulate their purpose, the process of doing

so is of utmost importance. Going through the SPARCK model—story, purpose, aspirations, reflection, connection, and kick-start—in an environment that created space for them to do so was what allowed for the ability to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life.

FINDING WHY: HELPING STUDENTS CULTIVATE
PURPOSE IN COLLEGE

by

Megan Christine Delph Cayton

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Approved by

Dr. Brad Johnson
Committee Co-Chair

Dr. Ye He
Committee Co-Chair

DEDICATION

To my dearest Grammie Jane and my dear friend Jood.

You are both missed immensely.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by Megan Christine Delph Cayton has been approved by the committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Co-Chair

Dr. Brad Johnson

Committee Co-Chair

Dr. Ye He

Committee Members

Dr. Sara Heredia Porter

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of life is to discover your gift. The work of life is to develop it. The meaning of life is to give your gift away. – David Viscott

Introduction

Change is all around us: the economy, the job market, and society. Many pathways that were once established and predominant are now disappearing (Busacca & Reh fuss, 2016). As there is much uncertainty and even fewer clear choices, the concentration of our work as higher education professionals should be on “meaning making through intentional processes in the ongoing construction of lives” (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 246). Purpose, a central construct in the current study, is one lens through which to consider meaning and direction in life. Purpose has many positive attributes associated with life (e.g., beliefs and values) that can guide what to do next and where to go (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Frankl, 1992). People are less likely to veer off the path when they know where they are going. They tend to be happier in their interactions, more positive about life, and often desire to share and help others. People who have meaning have purpose:

Man’s (sic) search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a secondary rationalization of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve significance, which will satisfy his own will to meaning. (Frankl, 1992, p. 105)

Background of the Problem

Understanding Purpose

There are many ways different authors across many disciplinary spectrums use terms to define purpose, including purpose, meaning, vocation, and calling (Chickering, 1969; Damon,

2008; Erikson, 1968; Frankl, 1992). All these terms describe an individual's path, which they choose as their direction in life. In this dissertation, purpose will be defined as becoming one's best self and serving profoundly. Damon (2008) stated, "finding a clear purpose in life is essential for their achievement of happiness and satisfaction in life, and that doing so is a good deal harder than it should be in our present-day cultural environment" (p. 22). He went on to define purpose as

... an ultimate concern. It is the final answer to the question, Why? Why are you doing this? Why does it matter to you? Why is it important? A purpose is a deeper reason for the immediate goals and motives that drive most daily behavior. (Damon, 2008, p. 22)

As higher education professionals, how are we preparing students to explore their purpose and navigate change? How we work with students, particularly traditional, first-year, college students, can influence the rest of their college careers and even the rest of their lives. The researcher contends that college is more than getting a degree: it is about creating a meaningful life and finding a place in the larger world (Damon, 2008). College is about creating a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging in a world that has the potential to swallow us whole.

Traditional Methods of Support

Students enter college through a series of checkboxes on an admissions application that categorizes them into further boxes (colleges, majors, programs) based on their responses. These boxes, at times, describe a pre-planned pathway that students can choose to partake in before, during, and even after their higher education journey, including an academic course of study, learning environment, support system, etc. Some of these boxes include programs around retention, at-risk, special populations, and student success. Nearly all these programs assist students in getting from one point to the other with the overarching goal of providing traditional

college support to graduation (e.g., metrics like retention semester to semester, 4-year or 6-year graduation rates, GPA, credits completed, etc.). None of these programs consider the construction of self to build a life (Savickas, 2012).

Helping students cultivate a purpose in life is a tangible way to reform higher education within the traditional support interventions a student might receive, such as academic advising, first-year experience, coursework, and co/extracurricular experiences. All these considerations (and more) are tied by funding formulas, ranking systems, enrollment, etc., to the failure or success of an institution (Fairris, 2012). Higher education scholars, such as Tinto (1993), Chickering and Reisser (1993), and Baxter Magolda (2001), have explored many factors that lead to students' ability to persist and stay in college. There have been many theories and models created around retention. Both Tinto (1993) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) included purpose in their models—Tinto with attrition and Chickering and Reisser with motivation (Sharma & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2018). Thus, our profession recognizes the meaningfulness of purpose at a conceptual level but perhaps not often at the practical level.

When a student decides to apply to an institution of higher education, they must fill out many applications that ask for information about them, which is then used to categorize them. These categories include gender, race, and ethnicity but also interest areas such as STEM, service learning, and global engagement. Following the application process, prospective students might receive information about all the opportunities offered by higher education, including learning communities, academic pathways, residential colleges, honors colleges, and academic advising. These opportunities offer each student a unique experience in higher education. Each opportunity can also be instrumental to their higher education experience by promoting early intervention for academic success. But what happens when the student questions their pathway?

What happens when the student fails a course? What happens when the student does not enjoy what they are learning?

In a traditional advising setting, an advisor may have a caseload of students in which they might have one or two 30-minute contacts with a student over a semester; in many cases, these meetings occur only during peak registration periods (Young-Jones et al., 2013). In many instances, students are required to bring their schedule and/or a 4-year plan of study. As a result, very little time (if any) is spent addressing values, purpose, meaningful work, and/or goals and dreams (Lowe & Toney, 2000). In extreme cases, advisors might not have any contact with a number of their students, either due to the amount of time available to schedule students, a lack of motivation on the student's part, or a combination of the two. With the increased sophistication of technology, registration and degree mapping will be completely online (Noaman & Ahmed, 2015), if it is not already, reducing and/or eliminating the logistical need for advisors/coaches but not the human/developmental need.

Cultivating purpose is an intentional act around clarifying goals and making plans that unite the goals and plan together (Chickering, 1969). In addition, long-term motivation and inspiration can come from knowing one's purpose in life (Bronk et al., 2010). So how do we help people discern their purpose in higher education? This qualitative dissertation explores the phenomenon of college students' experiences cultivating their purpose in life.

Transformative Approach to Support

Identity transformation is the process of changing who you are, how you think about yourself, how the world views you, and the characteristics that define you—for the better (Lawy, 2003). Identity transformation fills the gap between who you are now and who you want to be in the future. Through the experience of teaching Life Design classes, we (the instructors) believe

that most students want to learn how to change and grow to be their best selves. Students desire more confidence, to be more self-accepting, and to know that they belong and matter. Students want to transform their lives to become better versions of themselves. Our role as higher education administrators in this process is to assist students in their transformation journey, helping them to resolve their internal and external struggles, then inspire them with an aspirational identity that changes their lives. The student is the story's hero, and we are the guides to help them on their journey and witness and celebrate their successes.

Since 2014, the Life Design Catalyst Program (Course, 2021) has focused on addressing the gap. The gap is the obstacle and lack of clarity that keeps students from becoming more effective holistic life learners. By addressing the gap, they are more likely to achieve their potential with an emphasis on the exploration of purpose and meaning for students who are seeking to enter competitive health science programs and may not ultimately get in. The Life Design Catalyst (LDC) Program, of which I am a staff member and serve as a course instructor, has a primary goal to help students move from where they are right now (current state) to where they want to be (desired state). It is important to know that the gap is different for every student, so the process of addressing it should be unique to each student.

For many campuses, similar student populations exist and are often perceived as at-risk of not persisting through to graduation. However, in a study by Gallup and Bates College (Bates-Gallup, 2019), purpose and meaning were found to be essential in developing graduates engaged in successful, purposeful work. We assist student transformation through our two 1-credit, first-year Design Your Life courses: HHS125: What Could I Do with My Life and HHS135: Redesign a Life You'll Love. The HHS125 course, at its core, addresses three "Simple Rules for Success": (1) Know Yourself, (2) Serve Profoundly, and (3) Find Your Right Pond. We believe

the content in this course, through course evaluations and satisfaction data, provides the foundation to move toward success in both life and work. The HHS135 course addresses the habits of the mind, not only to be lifelong learners but to instill practices that ensure well-being—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

Due to its success with these goals and with this particular student population, the components of the Life Design Catalyst Program have been adopted by several units across the institutions. For example, the HHS125 course is recommended as part of the 4-Year Graduation Plans for students in Communication Sciences and Disorders, Kinesiology, Public Health Education, and for all students pursuing Pre-Health Sciences. We have also found that parts of the Life Design Catalyst curriculum are currently used in both the FYE101: Succeed at the G and BUS115: Blueprint for Personal Development courses at UNCG. The uptake of this program speaks to the effectiveness and meaningfulness of this transformative focus on purpose and the ways that some of the traditional approaches to advising and student success have not yet hit the mark.

Interventions such as academic advising, residential programs, and co-curricular and extracurricular programs are necessary but missing a piece. What does a student do when they do not know what to do? The Life Design Program can be an answer. In addition to the previously mentioned interventions, the Life Design program assists students in cultivating a purpose in life and then ties an academic major or pathway to that student's purpose (Courses, 2021). Instead of asking a student what they want to be when they grow up, Life Design approaches the student's life with how they want to serve. By taking students through a series of formal and informal assessments (see Appendices E-L) to help them discover who they are, what their belief system is, and how they want to serve, they can better identify an academic major or a pathway that truly

resonates with them. Once they can articulate how they want to serve and, thus, what their academic trajectory looks like for them, they are better able to persist in higher education.

Purpose Work Through Life Design

Many students who embark on the Life Design journey are often unsure of their path or are not in a declared major. Students who do not make prerequisite grades or classes, those who are disillusioned and need a new direction, those who need clarity before graduation, and many other students in between tend to be the students we see in a Life Design class. Reducing the gap is about transforming a person's way of thinking and looking at experiences as less transactional. It is about checking the box and being more intentional and aligned with a student's identity and meaning (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Our approach in Life Design is to focus on addressing questions such as:

- What experiences will be most effective in helping our students identify their purpose?
- How do the students see themselves?
- How do we help students develop a more realistic, compassionate self-concept?
- How can we best contribute to students' transformational journey?

Purpose Definitions

Higher education has the potential to play a critical role in students' ability to cultivate a sense of purpose through their existential concerns (Sharma & De Alba, 2018). There are many definitions of purpose based on the field and who is studied. In a more traditional higher education lens, Chickering (1969) believed that cultivating purpose is an intentional act around clarifying goals and making plans that bring those goals and the plan together in unification. From the youth development point of view, Bronk (2011) defined purpose around long-term

goals and commitment to others. Staples and Troutman (2010) defined purpose as aspirations for something bigger than oneself. Malin (2018), in her book, *Teaching for Purpose*, defined purpose as “a future directed goal that is personally meaningful and aimed at contributing to something larger than yourself” (p. 2). However, there is a consensus that a purpose in life can be defined as “a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and leads to productive engagement with some aspect of the world beyond the self” (Damon et al., 2003, p. 121). Baxter Magolda (2001) examined self-authorship as “the internal capacity to define one’s belief, identity, and social relations” (p. 269). From all these definitions, the overall cultivation of purpose appears to require intentional personal reflection, looking at something bigger than oneself, and the factors that play into life course decisions.

Bill Johnson, Dream Dean and Life Design Catalyst Creator (personal communication, November 3, 2015), defined purpose as becoming one’s best self and serving profoundly. This definition spans both academia and the language that students speak. It allows students to think about the questions “Who do I want to be?” and “How do I want to serve?” These questions use language that students and the general community can relate to and determine responses for without having to sort through the jargon. For this study, this is the definition that will be used. My own story also serves as an illustration of the power of this simple yet accessible definition.

My Path to Purpose

Growing up in the cornfields of rural Ohio, agriculture played a huge part in my life and the lives of those around me. All the children I surrounded myself with were part of traditional families with a mother and a father who were still married and lived in houses on many acres of land. These families had been present for many generations, and the teachers I experienced had taught the grandparents, parents, and now children of these families. Many families had family

structures where the father worked the fields or in general, and the mother was a caretaker of the children and the home. The father was the person who brought home the money, and the mother was the person who took care of things. From my perception, the community was homogeneous: everyone identified as White, straight, blue-collar, and Methodist. Many of the families were well known in the community: many of the families, except mine, that is. I am from a family that moved to the land and built a house just before beginning kindergarten. My family was of middle-class stature, and my mother and father worked outside the home. My mother had a non-traditional college education where she went to community college, worked for a few years, then returned as an older student to a four-year institution for her bachelor's degree; my father was high school educated. I grew up with one sibling five years younger than me. It was not until I went to college that my parents divorced after 26 years of marriage. These changes and shifts helped to shape who I became.

Going to college, leaving the area where I grew up, leaving the county and the state, to go off on my own was quite an experience. This experience was life-changing and eye-opening. I learned that there was so much more to the world. I learned about new cultures and identities and how each of us uniquely contributes to the world. I recognized how my identities as a college-educated, White, middle-class, cis-gender female played a role in how I engaged and related to those with whom I worked and interacted. Unfortunately, I could not articulate my purpose going through college; I was also unable to articulate my purpose in graduate school. It was not until my first professional position that I truly was able to cultivate my purpose and articulate it to others.

I desired to engage in dissertation research that explored the many different college students' experiences cultivating their purpose in life and how they would use that to serve the

world. While I can check many privilege boxes, many students I will work with may have a story vastly different from my own lived experiences. For example, many students I work with identify as first-generation, rural, racially-ethnically marginalized, etc. Understanding and comprehending their lived experience has allowed me to learn and grow. Each story is unique and possesses the opportunity to be showcased, to continue to learn, and to change the higher education landscape.

My experience going to college made a profound impact on my life. Going to college and in life, I lacked a sense of purpose. I nearly did not graduate in four years, as I was unsure what to major in and what I wanted to do after college. I changed my major five times and did not declare a major until the middle of my junior year of college. This lack of purpose extended into my graduate career. Had I been able to meet with a coach and figure out how I wanted to serve the world, I may not have changed my major five times or have two degrees in a field in which I do not work. Therefore, my life experiences have helped me identify building one's sense of purpose as an important element of education. This element can be better navigated in a supportive, structured, and personalized process.

Higher education has many processes (e.g., academic advising, mentoring programs, coaching programs, academic achievement centers, student success centers, and foundational courses) to assist a student in succeeding. Many of these interventions intend to move a student towards graduation, a goal shared by the institution, the people paying tuition, and sometimes the student. However, none of these interventions move a student toward their purpose, which is a goal that is not often articulated but important for the reasons stated earlier. I have seen this purpose work happen within the scope of my job, which is a new and innovative way to accomplish some of the goals that have previously been tied to academic advising, supportive

environments, and graduation and retention rates by offering tools that help students identify their purpose early in their collegiate career. The aim is that these tools and the process itself help students meet their goals in the most streamlined way possible for them to construct their purpose and contribute to something bigger than themselves.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to develop an in-depth understanding of *how* the experiences of traditional, first-year, college-aged students contribute to their path to purpose. The study will describe those experiences, specifically Life Design experiences, that the students articulated as helping them to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life. The contribution to academia will be to expand the current knowledge base about purpose in life as experienced through an exemplary group of university college students identified as having a strong articulation of purpose after experiencing at least one Life Design course. Therefore, this study adds to the literature by describing specific experiences of first-year students assessed as having an articulated purpose in life. In addition, this study expands on the empirical literature by using qualitative data to describe the students' experiences within a Life Design course on their journey to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life.

Statement of the Problem

Providing ways for students to cultivate their purpose in life is a practical way to assist in reforming higher education to better meet the higher education outcomes (Damon, 2008). The Life Design program works to assist students in thinking about jobs, careers, and callings as it relates to their cultivated and articulated purpose. Damon (2008) suggested, "When someone thinks of work as a calling rather than merely as a job, the experience of working is transformed" (p. 42). The journey to cultivate and ultimately define one's purpose is hard and seems to be

unique to each person or situation. In some disciplines, purpose depends on a higher being or figure typically placed within a spiritual or religious setting. The current study drew from youth development and higher education disciplines instead, as they are more relevant to the intervention that has been created. Frankl (1959), the father of meaning and purpose, believed that people had the ultimate freedom to choose their attitude and response to what was happening to them. In general, being able to define your purpose quickly is a very privileged ability that not all people can accomplish because of the competing factors they face in their lives, including but not limited to mental health, environment, and finances. Part of helping someone cultivate their purpose is also helping that person figure out how their purpose lies within the context of the real situations they manage in their daily lives.

Much of the research on purpose and the cultivation of purpose exists outside the world of student affairs and higher education. Damon (2008) focused on youth development before the age of 18. Frankl (1959) focused on adults and those in distress. The American Council on Education (1937, 1949) prescribed that institutions of higher education attend to the holistic development of college students, noting both vocational and personal interests “and the clarification of purpose” (p. 4). American College Personnel Association – College Student Educators International (1996) and *Learning Reconsidered* by Keeling (2004, 2006) both bring to light an opportunity to assess learning and developmental outcomes by linking learning and personal development. Keeling (2004) noted that “Developing purpose in life is seen as a component in one of seven broad learning outcomes derived from the overarching goals of higher education” (p. 22). Chickering and Reisser (1993) noted that reform involves “an increasing level of clarity about what one wants to do, or at least the next step in the process” (p.

216). A purpose in life helps to promote intentionality and direction, which are linked to academic engagement, retention, and success (DeWitz et al., 2009; Greenway, 2005).

Significance of the Study

College is a unique time for emerging adults to look at themselves for the first time and determine their own identities. When looking specifically at college students, multiple studies have shown that students who have a sense of purpose have a more positive outlook on life and other positive traits that help them to excel (Astin et al., 2011; Barrera et al., 1981; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; DeWitz et al., 2009) such as greater college persistence (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). The exploration of how students come to an articulated purpose in life is necessary since many theories do not consider purpose or exclude students' lived experiences. Therefore, it was important (for students themselves, the Life Design program's self-evaluation, and the institutional decision-makers) to discover what experiences impact a student most on their journey to articulating their purpose and how they want to serve the world.

A person's time in college can be viewed as an important period of personal and professional growth and identity, including determining their purpose (Lund et al., 2019). College is often the beginning of a time where students face enormous challenges and inequitable circumstances, such as the first time without an adult figure helping to guide or make decisions as well as the first time having to create a schedule, determine how to spend the day, manage money, and holistically care for oneself, including their belief and value system (Baxter Magolda, 2001). College is a growth process with many facets. It is important to support college students in their journey, especially their journey to purpose. Supporting students in understanding where they come from, their own lived experiences, and their ultimate desires can enable them to better cultivate their purpose. Crawford (2018) noted in an interview with Damon

that only about one in five people cultivate their purpose by age 22. Cultivating purpose takes challenge and support, trial and error, and failing and reflecting (Dweck, 2007). Students can set themselves on a path to lifelong happiness and success by cultivating a purpose. As higher education professionals, we can play a pivotal role in helping emerging adults cultivate their sense of purpose through mentorship, advising, coaching, and building relationships with them. We can be intentional throughout students' educational journey, from application to intake to graduation. We can plan a path that provides tools and an environment that allows students to cultivate their purpose during college.

Research Questions

This qualitative phenomenological study sought to answer the overarching question: What are the transformative experiences of first-year students at a large, Southern, public university who have worked through an intentional, experiential Life Design course to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life? The additional questions were:

- 1) *How do the experiences of traditional, first-year, college-aged students contribute to an articulated and cultivated path to purpose?*
 - a) To what extent, if at all, was the construction of purpose cultivated within the Life Design program?
- 2) *What factors are important in the articulation and cultivation of purpose?*
 - a) What was the most influential activity in the Life Design program that helped you to articulate and cultivate your purpose?
 - b) What changes, if any, have you encountered in your purpose since you participated in the Life Design program?

Definitions

As purpose is described in several ways, with some definitions closely related, the same cannot be said for experience. This study will examine the development that may also ensue. As such, the following definitions are provided for clarity.

Purpose—Becoming one’s best self and serving profoundly (Personal communication, B. Johnson, November 3, 2015).

Meaning—“The extent to which people comprehend, make sense of, or see the significance in their lives, accompanied by the degree to which they perceive themselves to have a purpose, mission, or overarching aim in life” (Steger, 2009, p. 682).

Experience—Practical contact or encounter of doing and seeing things (Merriam-Webster, 1828), including active engagement and collaboration with others (American College Personnel Association, 1996).

Student Experience—All aspects of student living, including but not limited to campus life, social interactions, and academic studies.

Development—Cumulative, mutually shaping processes that occur over an extended period in many different settings, including transactions between students and their environments broadly defined to include people, physical spaces, and cultural milieus (American College Personnel Association, 1996).

Organization of Chapters

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter I encompasses the introduction, which includes an understanding of purpose, traditional methods and approaches to supporting college students, an overview of transformative approaches, and a deep dive into purpose through the Life Design program. Chapter I also describes definitions for purpose, the

researcher's path to purpose, situating the study in theory, and the purpose and significance of the study, including the research questions for which the researcher works to answer. Chapter II reviews the literature in the field, establishes meaning as it relates to purpose, connects meaning to purpose, demonstrates the role of purpose in young adults, shows how purpose has been measured, demonstrates the role of purpose in college students, and engages the reader in the view of purpose from an institutional perspective. Chapter II also highlights the theories of Maslow (1943), Krumboltz (2009), and Baxter Magolda (2001). Chapter III outlines the methods used for the study to explore the experiences of the students enrolled in at least one of the Life Design program courses. Chapter IV presents the findings of the study. Finally, Chapter V discusses the findings of this study and the implications for practice and outlines further research opportunities.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Many observations have been made suggesting the importance of finding one's purpose (Frankl, 1959; Damon, 2008; Leider & Shapiro, 2001; Warren, 2002); however, little literature explains *how* one, specifically college students, can go about doing this. This literature review provides an in-depth overview of existing empirical and theoretical research that explores meaning and purpose conceptualizations. This review includes sections moving the reader from establishing meaning as it relates to purpose, identifying purpose in young adult and college student populations, the measurement of purpose through quantitative and qualitative measures, identifying the role of purpose from the institutional perspective, and a connection to theories (Maslow's [1943] Hierarchy of Needs, Krumboltz's [2009] Happenstance Learning Theory, and Baxter Magolda's [2001] Theory of Self-Authorship). Finally, the review ends with an overview of the Life Design Program (the data collection site for this study), which addresses *how* college students can cultivate and articulate their purpose.

The higher education student development literature (Astin et al., 2011; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Clydesdale, 2015; Nash & Murray, 2010; Parks, 2011) speaks well to the importance of purpose and its development in college students. Institutions of higher education generally offer a diverse environment where new ideas and experiences can be explored. College is a unique time for emerging adults to begin or continue their separation from early influences and determine their own identity (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Specifically, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) reported over three-fourths of college students say they are on a quest for meaning/purpose in their life (HERI, 2007).

The ultimate goal of an institution of higher education, to increase retention and graduation numbers, is to keep the students there (Tinto, 2004). The desire to create well-

rounded, holistic graduates who will go out and conquer the world, all while representing their alma-mater and, in time, giving back to the institution that once gave so much to them, is also at the core of these institutions. Once the students enroll in an institution, the goal is to keep them there, but how?

One way to encourage students to stay at an institution is by creating buy-in. If a student feels connected to the institution, to the mission, to the faculty, to the symbols, to organizations, and to the material they learn, they will stay (Tinto, 1987). If students have positive interactions during their advising sessions, campus tours, meal experiences, and residential experiences, just to name a few, students will stay. “Students who have a greater sense of belonging to the academic environment are comfortable with matriculating through the process and have a higher chance of completing their degree programs” (Talbert, 2012, p. 23). Typically, students want to be where they are because they have had positive interactions and feel a connection.

Within higher education, the overarching plan “starts with helping students cultivate a sense of commitment and determination to achieve their academic goals” (Tinto, 1987, p. 6). Within an academic setting, instructors and advisors can show how the content students learn can relate to and be useful for their dreams and desires, such as how knowledge correlates to purpose. Without these connections in the classroom and beyond, students may lack a sense of purpose and ambition. Faculty-student interactions coupled with an intentionally cultivated purpose in life significantly predict academic engagement for students (Greenway, 2005). One of the most important, though indirect, reasons that institutions of higher education should give attention to students cultivating their purpose in life is that it positively affects academic success (Greenway, 2005). Students want to be academically successful; they want to earn the degree for which they set out.

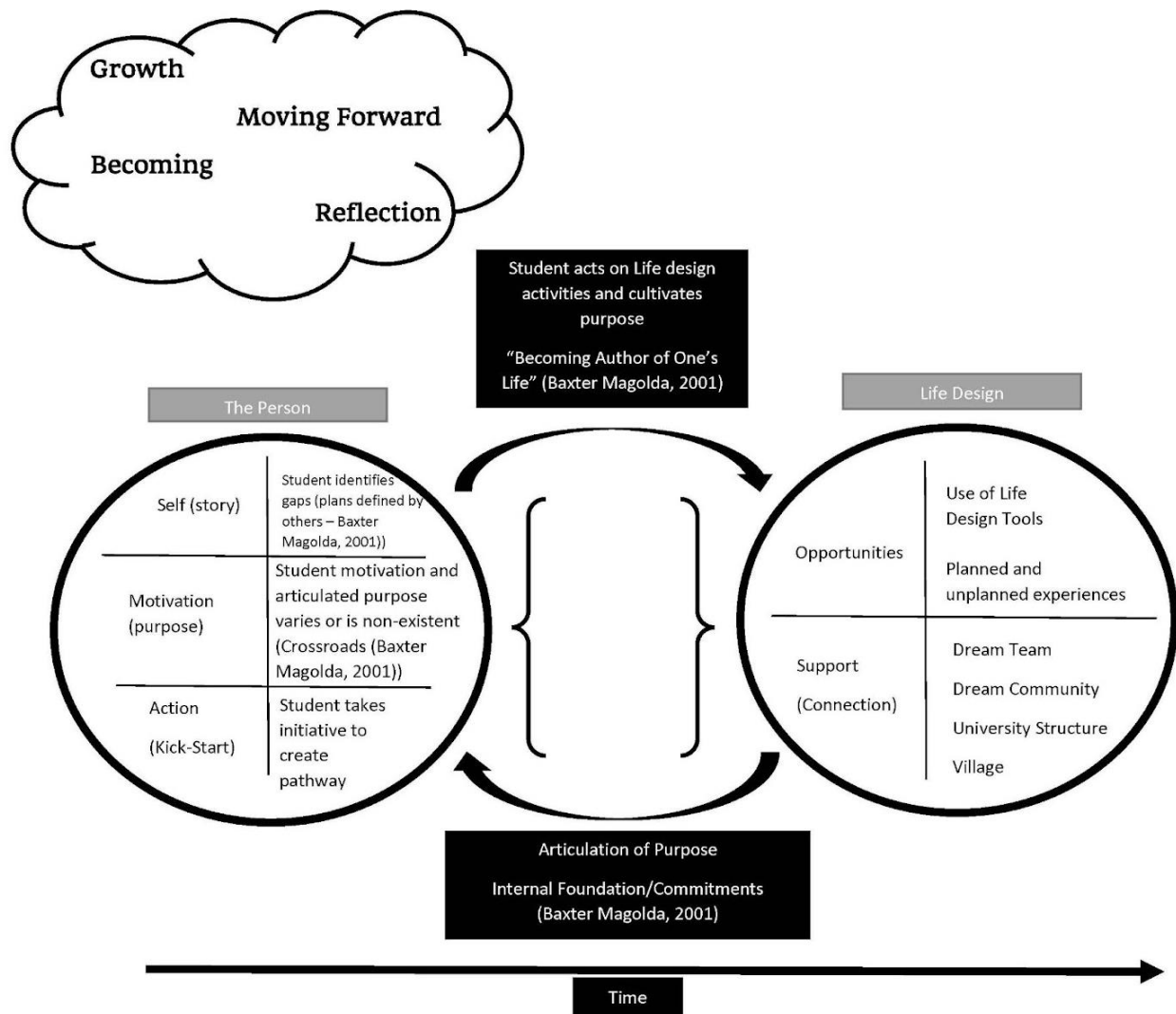
Conceptual Framework

The visual representation (see Figure 1) showcases the journey to purpose by using many concepts from the journey to self-authorship. In the cloud at the top left of the image are aspects of the students' experience the researcher posits are part of the journey—growth, moving forward, becoming, and reflection—that the Life Design course hopes to plant in students to help their movement towards purpose. The Life Design class intentionally encourages students to reflect in these ways, which are not often part of more traditional advising experiences. Each journey to purpose begins with the student, so the figure can be read from left to right, starting with the student. The student identifies gaps for themselves or has goals identified by others in the student's life (Baxter Magolda, 2001). For some students who are, for example, undecided or struggling to find direction, they may experience a lack of motivation, or motivation may be completely non-existent. In this realization that they are experiencing a gap (such as a lack of internal motivation, direction, forward movement toward purpose, etc.), the student decides they need support to create a pathway. First-year students have a choice as to the classes they take. Many pre-health studies students are automatically pre-enrolled in a Life Design course. However, many students, through word of mouth, hear about the Life Design course and choose to enroll in the course. The student then engages with course content (represented by the circle at the right of the figure) that empowers them to cultivate their purpose in life and become the author of their life (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Through the many tools (see Appendices E-L) in the Life Design course, coupled with planned and unplanned experiences (Krumboltz, 2009), opportunities are opened up to the student for their cultivation of purpose.

Additionally, the student can identify what support looks like and put some of those supports they desire in place (see Appendix I). Through the development of an internal

foundation, their beliefs and values, and their declaration of commitments (Baxter Magolda, 2001), students can better articulate their purpose in life and act on it. The space in the middle of the diagram is what this study intends to fill in—“What do students describe as the most meaningful experiences they have as they move through the cycle of cultivating purpose?” and “What is their ‘how’ as they cultivate and articulate their purpose journey?”

Figure 1. Visual Representation of the Framework for the Current Study



Note. Image adapted from Benson and Scales (2009).

Establishing Meaning as it Relates to Purpose

Because not all people are open to being spiritual or religious, this study did not align with a religious definition of purpose but considered purpose from a developmental underpinning within higher education. As described in Chapter I, Frankl (1959) is a key historical figure in terms of surfacing the importance of a sense of purpose and the search for meaning. His nearly three-year experience in the Theresienstadt Concentration Camp became instrumental in his practice as a psychiatrist. Throughout his life and experiences, Frankl (1959) became known for his belief that people have the ultimate freedom to choose their attitude and response to what is happening to them. As Frankl had lived experiences that were quite negative, he knew that he was responsible for cultivating a sense of purpose even in his darkest times. He believed each person had an “innate desire” (Molasso, 2006, p. 2) to create meaning and that there were multiple ways for one to create this meaning and ultimately find their purpose in life.

Frankl’s ultimate desire was to do more for others and share his knowledge and experiences. With that motivation, he developed the theory of logotherapy to help people figure out their purpose in life (Frankl, 1992). Within his development of this theory, he noted that there were three ways of cultivating purpose: vocation (giving to the world through work or creating a product), experience (receiving the world through relationships and experience), and overcoming (overcoming hardship or suffering) (Frankl, 1992). Because the current study is in higher education, the researcher will examine purpose through vocational (work that we do) and experiential (experiences that we have) lenses. Many colleges and universities have a stated goal to support students in these aspects (vocation and experiential) of their development, which is core to the mission of higher education, (Tinto, 2004). This study looked to a sample of college students in Life Design courses as the ultimate knowers through their experience with traditional

academic support pathways and those enrolled in an experiential purpose-developing sequence of activities. The researcher considered students' experiences as they navigated higher education to cultivate their purpose through profound care for self, connection to others, and service to the world.

Frankl (1959) asserted that purpose could be cultivated even in the worst times. Lacking a cultivated sense of purpose can be dangerous because it can send one down a negative path, including substance abuse and suicide (Frankl, 1959). Frankl referred to this as the existential vacuum (Molasso, 2006). A survey estimation of American college students suggested that 60% of students experience an existential vacuum (Molasso, 2006). The existential vacuum manifests itself through low motivation and engagement. Boredom, mischievous behavior, and distress can create an existential vacuum, especially as values and things of importance become less clear (Frankl, 1959). Boredom is the idea that people do not know what they want to do or conform to what others desire (Frankl, 1967, 1969). Frankl (1969) further asserted that in this extreme lack of direction, a person would lose their unique meaning in life, especially in difficult times (e.g., global pandemic, protests against systemic racism, climate crisis) where it can be hard for young people to ground themselves without an internal sense of meaning and purpose (Parks, 2000). Assisting students to use tools to cultivate and articulate their purpose is the aim of the Life Design program. Understanding how that cultivation and articulation occurs is the aim of this study.

From Meaning to Purpose

Steger (2009) defined meaning as “the extent to which people comprehend, make sense of, or see significance in their lives, accompanied by the degree to which they perceive themselves to have a purpose, mission, or overarching aim in life” (p. 682). Steger (2009)

suggested that there are two pillars that make up meaning in life: comprehension and purpose. Steger (2009) defined comprehension as “a person’s ability to find patterns, consistency, and significance in the many events and experiences in their lives, as well as, their ability to synthesize which aspects of their lives are the most important or motivating” (p. 679). Steger (2009) defined purpose as “the highly motivated goals people are passionate and committed to pursue” (p. 679). With this, Steger (2009) separates meaning from purpose.

The definition of meaning and purpose are often intertwined and confusing (Chickering, 1969; Frankl, 1959), as they are often interchangeable in text and speech. Only recently have scholars such as Damon et al. (2003) and Malin et al. (2014) begun to separate and truly define meaning and purpose as two separate entities. “Purpose is an outward-directed aspiration, as compared to the inward reflection of the search for meaning” (Malin et al., 2014, p. 188). In this study, college students understood meaning-making as it related to defining their purpose in life through a series of activities in the Life Design class aimed to assist them in defining who they are, how they want to serve, and where they want to go. Before we can assess college students, we must first understand youth development and the impact youth development has on purpose in the early ages.

Role of Purpose in Young Adults

Purpose has been found to support many types of positive outcomes for youth, including academic, socio-emotional, psychological, and markers of wellness (Bronk, 2014; Bronk et al., 2010; Burrow & Hill, 2011; Damon, 2008; Damon et al., 2003; Parks, 2000). Researchers have found benefits of purpose both in the short and long term and in studies with various methods and perspectives (Damon, 2008; Damon et al., 2003). The role of purpose in young adults contributes to how they see themselves in the future, in that it influences “future orientation,

academic achievement, and coping strategies” (Pizzolato et al., 2011, p. 78). Through their quantitative study on academic achievement, Pizzolato et al. (2011) attempted to understand if purpose development helped explain academic achievement in 209 high school students with low-socioeconomic backgrounds; they found that those taking part in the intervention showed significant positive differences in purpose and internal control than those who did not, which suggests that academic intervention programs aimed at purpose and internal control for K-12 students might offer an effective approach to at-risk youth.

Identity in Young Adults

Using the Identity Capital Model, Burrow and Hill (2011) looked at three qualitative studies that used purpose as the prominent factor in relationships between identity and well-being in youth and emerging adults. In these studies, purpose and cultivation may be an important mechanism by which identity positively contributes to well-being. For example, young adults show greater happiness and positive affect and hope when they have a well-developed sense of purpose and direction in their lives (Burrow & Hill, 2011). As a result, they can better make beneficial decisions that positively impact their future and life satisfaction.

Life Satisfaction

Positive school performance is known to increase when people have general life satisfaction (Bronk et al., 2009) and a sense of purpose (Bronk, 2014; Pizzolato et al., 2011). Through a quantitative study of 806 people comprised of 153 adolescents (with an average age of 14 years old), 237 emerging adults (with an average age of 21 years old), and 416 adults (with an average age of 35.5 years old), Bronk et al. (2009) determined that having a cultivated purpose in life was associated with greater satisfaction in life at these three stages of life. The study also revealed that the search for purpose was positively associated with the adolescent and

emerging adult life stages, not the adult life stage. Greater life satisfaction was associated at all three stages in life, with a note that cultivating a purpose in life and being able to articulate it as such is a lifelong process and not something completed by adulthood. Much like Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs journey to self-transcendence, the journey to self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001), and the journey to an intentionally cultivated purpose are all journeys that take time, patience, and hard work.

Holistically, young adults with a greater sense of purpose can consistently manage their thoughts and emotions with positive physical, mental, and emotional well-being (Chickering, 1969). Damon (2008) asserted a powerful link between the pursuit of a positive purpose and life satisfaction in young adults, which included cognitive growth and learning. Damon (2008) further asserted that purpose supports cognitive, psychological, and sociological development, much like Baxter Magolda's (2001) self-authorship. Differences between the constructs of purpose and self-authorship are explored in a later section, but for now, understanding the ways they are aligned in the development of young adults is important.

Personal Development in Young Adults

As the recognition of purpose and the role purpose can play in adolescent development has been slowly emerging in the research literature, Damon et al. (2003) sought to understand purpose in youth development. Purpose plays a major factor in positive youth development, including "prosocial behavior, moral commitment, achievement, and higher self-esteem" (Damon et al., 2003, p. 120). Furthermore, personal development plays a critical role in learning, as learning is not just the acquisition of knowledge but also the process of how one comes to build knowledge through self and social relations (Baxter Magolda, 2014). Piaget (1972) described three dimensions of human development central to meaning-making: cognitive—our

assumptions about knowledge and how we come to know; intrapersonal—our assumptions about our self and our identities; and interpersonal—our assumptions about social relations. These assumptions are constructed through our planned and unplanned experiences (Krumboltz, 2009). Mezirow (2000) refers to this process as ‘transformational learning’ or “how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others” (p. 8).

Purpose as a Motivator

Purpose seems to infuse young people with a sense that they matter and what they do is important for the world and their own thriving (Bundick et al., 2009). The idea here is that for young persons to thrive, they must have forward momentum toward success over time. Purpose is necessary for young adults’ positive growth and forward momentum into adulthood.

Long-term motivation can stem from a source of purpose and meaning in one’s life: “a purpose in life represents the intersection of intention, engagement, and contribution” (Bronk et al., 2010, p. 134). Through in-depth interviews, Bronk et al. (2010) revealed that purpose was present in high-achieving adolescents, both young and old; however, young adolescents were better able to articulate life purposes and thus embrace goals earlier in life than older adolescents. When youth can identify a purpose and connect it to their academic achievements and goals, their academic work takes on meaningfulness that otherwise is lacking. This seems to be true whether looking at cross-sectional data in a snapshot of development or longitudinal data over many years (Bronk et al., 2010).

Damon’s (2008) Youth Purpose Project study at the Stanford Center for Adolescence examined the role that purpose in life played among youth across the United States. Damon (2008) stated, “Passionately pursuing a purpose directly engages young people in life

experiences likely to enhance their optimism and self-confidence” (p. 83). The study was conducted through a series of surveys and in-depth interviews and specifically looked at what happens when youth can find their purpose and what happens when they cannot. From this study, Damon (2008) observed that only about one in five youth could articulate their purpose, noting that this is a rare occurrence rather than the norm as young adulthood is a transformational moment in life’s journey. Youth development and lifelong learning require making meaning of experiences by connecting those experiences to the developmental assumptions young adulthood presents (Damon 2008). While reality and the happenings in life are often out of our individual control, our reactions to life’s happenings are within our control and where our focus should be (Baxter Magolda, 2009).

Measuring Purpose

Purpose has been studied through a variety of quantitative and qualitative measures. The quantitative measures most often used in research have been the revised Youth Purpose Survey (YPS; Bundick et al., 2006), the revised Sense of Purpose Scale (SOPS-2; Bronk, 2013), and the Purpose in Life Test (PIL; Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964, 1969). The qualitative methods most often used were in-depth interviews, including the revised Youth Purpose Interview Protocol (Andrews et al., 2006).

The revised Youth Purpose Survey (Bundick et al., 2006), founded on Frankl’s (1959) theory of logotherapy, was created to assess the identification of purpose and the search for purpose as it relates to youth and young adults. The revised Youth Purpose Survey is a 10-item Likert scale composed of two sub-scales: Purpose Exploration and Purpose Commitment. In its original form, the survey borrowed from the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff &

Keyes, 1995) and the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006). It also was influenced by the Purpose in Life test (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1967).

The revised Sense of Purpose Scale (SOPS-2; Bronk, 2013) was created to measure the purpose of life in the emerging adult population (18 to 25 years of age). The SOPS-2 breaks down purpose into three subscales: awareness of purpose, awakening to purpose, and altruistic purpose, with an emphasis from Bronk (2013) on the presence of and search for purpose. Awareness of purpose is the extent to which people can articulate their awareness and move towards cultivating their purpose. The altruistic purpose is being able to articulate their desire to make a difference in the world or name how they desire to serve. Finally, awakening to purpose is the active piece in which people measure if they are engaged in obtaining their path to purpose or to what extent. In many circles, purpose is the top of the pyramid, and the sense of purpose is the path to obtain. The SOPS-2 measure was tested for its psychometric properties and was consistently found to have three subscales: awareness of purpose, awakening to purpose, and altruistic purpose (Sharma & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2019).

The Purpose in Life Test (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964, 1969) was designed to measure the degree to which a person can experience a sense of purpose in life. The survey is composed of 20 items in a seven-point Likert scale format. The test has been used widely in clinical settings, establishing a thread of relationships between the instrument and issues on college campuses, such as drug and alcohol abuse and levels of campus engagement (Molasso, 2006). Higher scores suggest a greater perceived sense of meaning and purpose, while lower scores suggest a lack of purpose and meaning.

The Purpose from the Institution's View

As the core mission of higher education is not to help students find their purpose, emphasis is often placed instead on assisting students in identifying a major or area of study (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). A student's journey to identifying a major begins with their application process. Typically, the application process asks students to check a box, not describe what they see as their purpose in life. Thus, since it is not the main mission of higher education, few resources are devoted to helping students define their purpose. Chickering and Reisser (1993) noted that "developing purpose requires formulating plans for action and setting priorities that integrate three major elements: vocational plans, aspiration and personal interests, and interpersonal and family commitment" (p. 212). Chickering and Reisser (1993) further noted students need "time to reflect, explore alternatives, and plan, [thus] their vocational aspirations will take shape quickly" (p. 232). When colleges and universities build in the opportunity to plan (through intentional course curriculum, structured mentorships programs, etc.) as well as create experiences (Krumboltz, 2009) for students to explore rather than have tight curricular pathways for which exploration is not an option, students may be able to articulate their purpose.

"A college student can feel a fit with the institution, a fit with peers, feel supported by faculty and by students, but without purpose or goals, the student may lack a clear sense of personal meaning" (DeWitz et al., 2009, p. 21). Creating rapport with students—learning about them—allows them to be more open in exploring their path to purpose (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). It allows students to feel comfortable and have a network of support to help them achieve their desired outcomes. Having a sense of purpose is the difference between engaged and motivated students and those still looking for their place and fulfillment (Damon, 2008).

People must first know who they are before they can define upon which they will stand. One of the ways people can define themselves is by knowing and articulating their needs. Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs allows individuals to begin with basic needs such as food, water, and shelter and move towards self-transcendence—knowing oneself and serving the world.

Situating Purpose in Theory

Purpose can be defined, framed, and studied in many ways, but the current study will pull from the perspectives of Maslow (1943), Krumboltz (2009), and Baxter Magolda (2001). Maslow (1943) posits in his Hierarchy of Needs that once we fulfill our basic needs, we can fulfill our more complex, higher-order needs. Krumboltz (2009) posits with his Happenstance Learning Theory that, at times, we can learn and grow through many planned and unplanned experiences and ultimately find ourselves. Finally, Baxter Magolda (2001) posits with her self-authorship theory that self-exploration and identification can occur through a definition of values and beliefs on one's own rather than through others. On the whole, I posit that a cultivated purpose in life is developed through an understanding of the self (Maslow, 1943), experiencing life through many planned and unplanned events (Krumboltz, 2009), and working through what it is that one stands for and believes in on their own (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

Higher Education and Student Development Theory

The researcher contends that students in higher education enter college with the assumption that they need to figure out what exactly they will do when they graduate (Damon, 2008)—and do just that. However, that thought is so incredibly overwhelming that students often fail and quit. Rather, if students—instead of feeling the pressure to exactly plan what they want to do—could learn about themselves and how they could best serve the world, they could see

their potential within the larger society. Then, with their potential at the forefront of their journey, they could use the tools in their toolbox to create a pathway to success. They could also use the dimensions of development concepts introduced by Baxter Magolda (2001) of cognitive, psychological, and sociological to pivot within their desired pathway as they deem necessary.

Student development theory suggests that how college students develop affects how they think about and experience the world (Tinto, 2004). Understanding student development theory can help higher education administrators to improve their ability to support students through their college journey. The idea of self-authorship is central to understanding how college students create and make meaning in the world in which they live (Patton et al., 2016). People “have the capacity to take responsibility for and ownership of their internal authority” (Kegan et al., 2001, p. 5) “and establish their own set of values and ideals” (Patton, 2016, p. 358; see also Kegan, 1994). Growth at this level includes the idea of transformation and the knowledge that some relationships formed may not be mutually beneficial and need to be terminated.

Transformation learning is

the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7–8)

With this, a person negotiates and acts on their own vision of purpose, defined values, determined feelings, and cultivation of meaning rather than those they have assimilated from others (Baxter Magolda, 2008).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

In 1943, Abraham Maslow wrote a paper that created the foundation for the theory known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. He created his hierarchy by observing and documenting the growth of the college students he worked with. His "theory of human motivation" is typically shown in a pyramid form showcasing basic needs at the bottom of the pyramid and escalating upward in growth towards self-actualization and a step further into self-transcendence (1968). The terms used to describe human growth and motivation stages include physiological, safety/security, love/belonging, self-esteem, self-actualization, and self-transcendence.

The first and most basic stage is physiological needs. These are the basic needs for survival, including food, water, and shelter. Maslow (1943) noted that to advance to higher level needs, one must first meet their physiological needs; if one is struggling to meet their most basic needs, such as food, water, shelter, clothing, and sleep, they will be averse to seeing other needs without assistance.

The second stage is that of safety (Maslow, 1943). Safety encompasses security, including but not limited to personal, emotional, and financial security. It also includes safety as it pertains to one's health. If one does not feel safe in their surroundings and with the people with whom they are surrounded, they will not persist to other stages.

The third stage is love and belonging (Maslow, 1943). Love and belonging are encompassed by social interactions and connections, including friendships, family, and intimacy. For many, most of these facets are connected. For example, if there is a friendship or a family relationship on your mind, the attention that can be given to other facets of life is less because there is thought and energy going into the relationship. In general, people want to be loved. They want to have a sense of belonging. This belonging may look like a successful transition to

college, positive adjustment to the new environment, and social and academic integration, to name a few. They want a place to call “home.”

Self-esteem is the fourth stage (Maslow, 1943). Our self-esteem rises when we have those positive connections in our life, much like Frankl’s (1959) sense of experience and a higher purpose. When we feel love and a sense of belonging, our self-esteem, confidence, and respect for self and others are greater.

Stage five in the hierarchy is that of self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). In the original model, this was the peak of the hierarchy. Maslow (1943) said,

It refers to the [person’s] desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him [sic] to become actualized in what he [sic] is potentially. The specific form that these needs will take will of course vary greatly from person to person. In one individual it may take the form of the desire to be an ideal mother, in another it may be expressed athletically, and in still another it may be expressed in painting pictures or in inventions. (p. 382)

Through much reflection, observation, and study, Maslow (1968) realized that self-actualization was not the top but that to showcase a person at their highest, most functioning self, there needed to be self-transcendence (Maslow, 1968):

The fully developed (and very fortunate) human being working under the best conditions tends to be motivated by values which transcend his [sic] *self*. They are not selfish anymore in the old sense of that term. Beauty is not within one’s skin nor is justice or order. One can hardly class these desires as selfish in the sense that my desire for food might be. My satisfaction with achieving or allowing justice is not within my own skin. ... It is equally outside and inside: therefore, it has transcended the geographical

limitations of the self. Thus, one begins to talk about transhumanistic psychology.

(Maslow, 1969, p. 4)

With this addition to the theory, people are seeking something beyond themselves. They come to identify with something greater than themselves, often as a service to others.

Maslow's (1943) work aligns with purpose in that a person desires to first and foremost meet their basic needs. Once people feel their basic needs are met, they may want to advance themselves into safer, more just environments, including a higher paying job, better physical environment, etc. People can often exist, but only for so long, before they need a community within which to identify. Much like purpose, to continue the journey forward, people need their "village," which can fulfill their sense of belonging, allowing them to move further in their journey and increase their esteem through activities such as furthering their education, climbing the career ladder, or achieving awards and recognition along their journey. Maslow's (1943) trajectory up the pyramid mirrors the purpose journey, where one can identify who they are, the impact of their experiences, and where they want to go. Reaching self-actualization (becoming one's best self) and self-transcendence (serving something bigger than yourself) is the quintessential definition of purpose as defined by Bill Johnson, Life Design Catalyst Creator (personal communication, November 3, 2015).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs identified the purpose of life as one of the worldviews—that is, a necessary mindset (Koltko-Rivera, 2004). Without the reimagined version of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the inclusion of self-transcendence, the purpose of life's worldview would be weak, as it would not provide context to reach something bigger than yourself as a way to give back. Others have also noted the importance of self-transcendent goals in forming a sense of the purpose of life (e.g., Emmons, 1996). Clarifying oneself is the first step in cultivating and

articulating one's purpose. Being able to define who you are, where you come from, and what needs you still have is a part of the process of cultivating and articulating a purpose in life. Self-transcendence affirms one's identity through higher-level experiences for which they can see how they can give to something bigger than themselves from a higher perspective. Those experiences can be both planned and unplanned. Life as we know it is often not a straight line from point to point but rather a series of experiences that land us where we are. Once people can articulate their needs and what is being met and what is not, they can then identify experiences they desire and capitalize on unplanned experiences.

Not only do people on their purpose journey need to pay attention to and be concerned with their needs being met, but they also need to pay attention to their mindset. Dweck (2007) notes that there are two mindsets to achieve success—fixed and growth. Those with a fixed mindset believe success is based solely on their gifts and talents. They believe that the gifts and talents they have or are born with are all they can do or contribute to society. Those with a growth mindset believe success is based on hard work, learning new things, and being open to opportunity and challenge. While there is no right or wrong answer to the mindset that one has, part of the purpose journey is that of being open to discovering new things about the self ... things can happen without rhyme or reason. This idea of being in the right place at the right time and/or embracing the events as they occur and being ready to react positively to them is known as happenstance. Happenstance is what makes up our skill, interest, and knowledge areas of life (Krumboltz, 2009).

Happenstance Learning Theory

The Happenstance Learning Theory

posits that human behavior is the product of countless numbers of learning experiences made available by both planned and unplanned situations in which individuals find themselves. The learning outcomes include skills, interests, knowledge, beliefs, preferences, sensitivities, emotions, and future actions. (Krumboltz, 2009, p. 135)

Learning happens all around us—through observations, judgments, and behaviors (Krumboltz, 2009). Learning can be in formal settings such as classrooms or online courses or informal settings such as conversations with others, reading an article from a coffee table magazine, or a video on social media. Social learning helps us to cultivate a more agentic mindset, such that we can continue to use our tools to create a pathway, take advantage of opportunities, and respond to adversity with greater flexibility and ease (Krumboltz, 2009). With each experience, learning occurs. Each environment presents an opportunity for positive or negative consequences that are or are not known. We can learn from others and their actions and learn from our own actions and reactions. With each interaction, there is an outcome. Each of these experiences fills our toolkit with which we embrace life. Each of these experiences, planned or not, can serve as a tool for a future experience that we might have, so much so that “the interaction of planned and unplanned actions in response to self-initiated and circumstantial situations is so complex that the consequences are virtually unpredictable and can best be labeled as happenstance” (Krumboltz, 2009, p. 136).

No longer is it the time when one graduates college and has one lifelong career. Rather, college graduates today will have up to 11 jobs, some of which do not currently exist, in their working careers:

If reliable career paths are no longer to be defined externally, the ability to sustain work over a lifetime will increasingly depend on individual agency. Thus, colleges and universities must help students develop not only the content knowledge and cognitive and interpersonal skills required for employment, but also a mindset of informed self-determination and adaptability. (Bates-Gallup, 2019, p. 1)

Understanding the factors that influence people to choose their career path is important. One way of understanding those factors is through Happenstance Learning Theory (HLT). Krumboltz (2009) indicated that none of the experiences could be planned without having to change, respond, shift, or adapt. Rather, individuals should engage in various adventures and activities that allow them to learn new skills and see opportunities they may not have seen otherwise, much like Frankl's (1959) experience on his pathway to purpose.

HLT "posits that human behavior is the product of countless numbers of learning experiences made available by both planned and unplanned situations in which individuals find themselves" (Krumboltz, 2009, p. 135). Thinking about one's future and creating dreams can provide a vision for the future. But, what happens when the dream fails or life throws a curveball? Through HLT, the goal is to plan but keep options open and explore—to gain skill, interest, knowledge, and beliefs, so one can respond when the opportunity presents itself. Every moment that one is awake is a moment to learn. Every interaction with a person provides an opportunity for learning, where observations, judgments, and generalizations are made. With each moment, taking the learning experience, such as the Life Design course, into account can help determine our future steps.

The goal is not to make a single decision at any given moment but rather to fill a box full of tools that can be used with each situation. Planning, in this case, is not a linear process; rather,

the goal is living, responding to new opportunities and situations, and using our core sense of purpose to navigate uncertainty without getting “stuck.” HLT “contributes to the learning process by helping students engage in an active lifestyle to generate unexpected events, to remain alert to new opportunities, and to capitalize on the opportunities they find” (Krumboltz, 2009, p. 52). Students (such as those in the Life Design program to be studied) make meaning from these experiences, and through these experiences, self-exploration can occur and identity can be formulated. Students can become their own authors of the lives they wish to live.

Self-Authorship

Baxter-Magolda (2008) defined self-authorship as “the internal capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations” (p. 269). It is necessary for people to form their own opinions and perspectives and not rely on what others think or tell them to do. Baxter Magolda (2001) shared that the tasks at hand were: values exploration, making sense of information gained about the world, determining one’s path, and taking steps towards that path. In doing these tasks, there are three major questions: “How do I know?” (which focuses on cognitive development) is where a person reflects upon their assumptions and current body of knowledge; “Who am I?” (which focuses on psychological identity development) is where a person reflects on their current state of being and belief; and “How do I want to construct relationship with others?” focuses on social development (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 15). “Self-authoring individuals do not separate from others but rather reconstruct their relationships to be more authentic” (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 271). Students should be empowered to seek out and create meaningful experiences that help author their own story; “Higher education has a responsibility to help young adults make the transition from being shaped by society to shaping society in their role as leaders in society’s future” (Baxter Magolda, 1999, p. 630).

Self-authorship encompasses three dimensions of development including cognitive, psychological identity, and social. With cognitive development, one actively constructs, develops, and evaluates their belief system in an ongoing nature (Baxter Magolda, 2008). Similar characteristics and systems are used to create knowledge in the same way one establishes their identity; “Self-authored persons have the ability to explore, reflect on, and internally chose enduring values to form their identities rather than doing so by simply assimilating expectations of external others” (Kegan, 1994, as cited in Baxter Magolda & King, 2008, p. 492). It is important, though, that as higher education professionals, we respect one’s current meaning-making structures to promote growth and properly and adequately offer challenge and support (Baxter Magolda & King, 2008).

Phases of Self-Authorship

The path to self-authorship is defined by four phases that ultimately move one from external to internal identification and then to self-authorship: (a) following formulas, (b) crossroads, (c) becoming the author of one’s life, and (d) internal foundation (Baxter Magolda, 2001). The first phase, following formulas, begins with one following the path laid for them, which includes thinking and doing what others think one should do rather than formulating one’s own thoughts and plans. The second phase, crossroads, is the recognition that the plan, as defined by others, may not be working in the way one wishes for them to be working. This phase includes discovering one’s own sense of self, values, and belief system and where relationships become more authentic and career paths become clearer. As such, “a clearer sense of direction and more self-confidence marked the end of the crossroads” (Patton et al., 2016, p. 367). The third phase, becoming the author of one’s life, is where a strong sense of self-concept is developed due to the intense self-reflection that can occur during this phase. In this phase, one

can establish one's own beliefs and value system. They can determine what they stand for and how to fight for it. In the final phase, internal foundation, a "solidified and comprehensive system of belief" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 155) exists. This phase allows life decisions to have a solid basis for decision-making characterized by peace, contentment, and inner strength (Patton et al., 2016). Through the phases of self-authorship, one will note a keen resemblance to the definition of purpose used in this study with words such as awareness, belief, service to others, etc.

Elements of Self-Authorship

"Self-authorship evolves when the challenge to become self-authoring is present and is accompanied by sufficient support to help an individual make the shift to internal meaning making" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 271). The key elements of self-authorship include trusting the internal voice, building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments (Patton et al., 2016). Trusting the internal voice involves recognizing that one may not be able to control the things around them but recognizing the power they have to control their reaction to the things around them. Once confidence in the internal voice is present, building an internal foundation begins to take shape. Baxter Magolda (2008) defined this as "a personal philosophy or framework to guide one's actions" (p. 280). The third element of self-authorship to be achieved is that of securing internal commitments, which includes living authentically and truly being one's real self: "As people become more confident and clearer about who they are, they are able to relate to others in a more honest and open manner" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 369).

Self-authorship encourages the development of beliefs based on one's own thoughts and feelings (Baxter Magolda, 2001). These beliefs and values serve as the foundation for growth. Self-authorship is grounded in two assumptions. The first assumption is that knowledge is

created through the lens of a constructivist perspective by interpreting their experiences. Thus, meaning is made from the experience of that person/perspective as they interact with the persons and places in the context around them. The second assumption is that as one continues their journey, their self-authorship continues to develop and how one organizes and identifies with their experiences continues to change. The true outcomes of self-authorship are learning and growth along cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions.

Thus, self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001) is much like Life Design, where the true outcomes of a student's experience are learning and growth. Students who experience Life Design should have the cognitive, psychological, and sociological tools necessary as they grow and encounter change. They should be able to use the tools in their new experience and have a positive outcome that helps them serve the world positively. The ultimate goal of Life Design (Courses, 2021), much like self-authorship, is to assist students by providing tools that help them to think, feel, and interact with others who they see are in alignment with their own sense of purpose or self-definition, not how someone told them to do it. Helping students develop a foundation based on their own beliefs and values is of utmost importance. This foundation then allows students to make decisions they believe in and can follow wholeheartedly. It allows them to engage with others more authentically and have personal responsibility for their actions, thoughts, and feelings. It allows them to become the author of their life (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

The Life Design Program

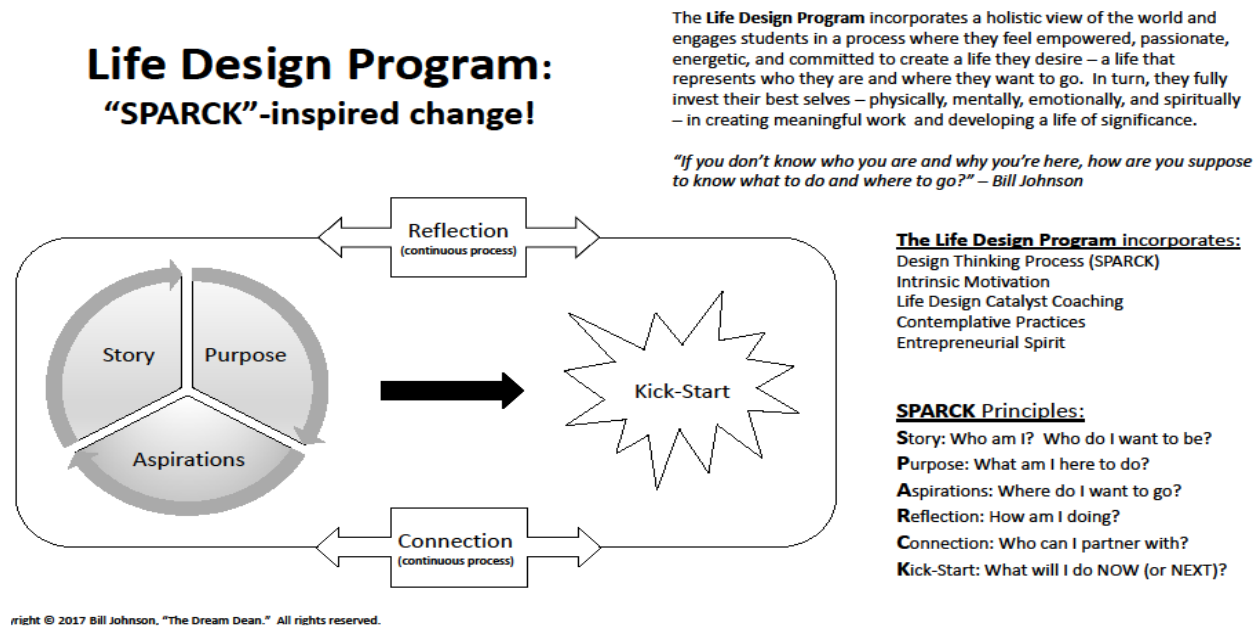
The Life Design program helps students to explore their purpose and determine how they would like to best serve the world, as well as fill their box full of tools that will allow them to pivot at any given time and come out successful on the other side (Courses, 2021). The Life Design program is aimed at first-time, first-year college students, specifically in the undecided,

undeclared, and major shifting populations (Courses, 2021). Students needing (and, for most, also desiring) direction can benefit from the activities, coaching, and mentorship this program provides. While there are other transformational support-type programs, such as learning communities, academic advising, and first-year experience, there are not any programs that the researcher identified as transformative through the work of cultivating and articulating purpose in college students.

The Life Design program assists students in knowing themselves, serving profoundly, and finding the right setting for their work and life through a series of activities, coaching, and mentorship. These activities, which are scaffolded and meant to build off each other, include assessments related to personality, values, and strengths to help identify students' meaningful work. Their meaningful work statement (Appendix E) proclaims who they are and how they want to serve the world positively.

The Life Design class for students is a 15-week course that engages students in activities and thoughts around the SPARCK model (see Figure 2). SPARCK stands for story, purpose, aspirations, reflection, connection, and kick-start. Students begin with their stories. One of the main activities around the story students are invited to complete is the My Life Story poster (see Appendix H). Students are invited to think about 10-15 major life events that have occurred and create a poster around those events. Next, students reflect on where they are and how those events are impactful and are a factor in where they are now. Following the story, students move towards purpose. Some of the activities that students are invited to engage in include personality assessments (see Appendix F), values assessments (see Appendix K), and strengths assessments (see Appendix L) that allow students to reflect if the various assessments fit with their lived experiences and how they view themselves.

Figure 2. SPARCK Coaching Model



Students are also encouraged to share and reflect with others, particularly those who might know them, to see if what they have discovered fits them from an outside perspective. Students are encouraged to look at the assessments as pieces of their whole puzzle and determine if the pieces fit or not. Following story and purpose, the end of purpose moving into aspiration is the activity of a meaningful work statement (see Appendix E). The meaningful work statement activity is an activity that students are invited to create to define the work they are here to do. Meaningful work combines the positive attributes each student exhibits and the service the world needs. The meaningful work statement activity also includes the integration of their talents, gifts, values, interests, whom they would like to serve, how they would like to serve, and the impact they would like to have. Students have the opportunity to write a powerful open-ended statement or complete a template statement. Students can then rate their meaningful work statement through a series of six questions to evaluate if their meaningful work is truly their meaningful work. As the statement is an iterative process, students are encouraged to evaluate their statement

continuously throughout the course. Upon completing their meaningful work statements, students are invited to complete the Major/Career/Calling Poster activity (see Appendix G), which encourages students to reflect on how they have identified they want to serve the world and ensure that their current pathway will allow them to do so.

Students are invited to regularly engage with others within the class, build their village from people within and around campus, reflect on the activities, and develop tools for their toolbox as they move through life (see Appendices E-L). Students are encouraged to use these tools to build flexibility and maintain purposeful direction when life asks them to pivot with their intended plans.

Summary

Current studies have used quantitative measures and explored the benefits of having a sense of purpose. However, there is still a gap in studies that take a qualitative perspective and describe *how* students move through the process of cultivating and articulating their purpose in life. The internal meaning-making process is part of the journey to purpose but is not the entire process. Reflecting on Figure 1 in Chapter I, the student brings aspects of self into the meaning-making process and interacts with the intentionally crafted experiences provided in the Life Design course, all the while reflecting on other experiences the student has encountered (Krumboltz, 2009). For each student, their ability to cultivate purpose is a personal journey that will unfold uniquely depending on their questions, goals, learning styles, and how they engage with society. Life Design activities draw from various theories (e.g., Maslow, 1943; Krumboltz, 2009; Baxter Magolda, 2001) but then include an active engagement to bridge theory to practice. The current study examined *how* college students constructed and cultivated purpose, building upon these three theories.

Understanding who we are as people and what our needs are to satisfy other needs is the idea of Maslow (1943). Cultivating and articulating a purpose in life can be done by first determining who we are as a person and what needs are met and unmet. Then, by satisfying those needs, we can determine which experiences we still need or want and capitalize on other experiences along the way, which can result in people becoming the best version of themselves and authoring their own stories. Krumboltz (2009) centered on the idea that people approach and interpret their planned and unplanned experiences. Baxter Magolda (2001) focused on making sense of these experiences based on previous experiences, crossroads, and self-authorship.

The following chapter describes the qualitative methodology the researcher utilized to explore the cultivation of purpose of students in a Life Design program.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain a deeper understanding of how a participant's experience in a Life Design course led to the cultivation and articulation of their purpose in life. This research study aimed to produce data on the importance of a cultivated purpose in first-year college students. The study further aimed to define and answer how the future of higher education could better support first-year college students' experience through intentional methods that first-year college students could pursue to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life. This chapter outlines the phenomenological method that was used to achieve this goal. This chapter also reviews the qualitative methodology, recruitment strategies and in-depth participant description, research design, data collection and analysis methods, ethical considerations, and how trustworthiness was captured when conducting this study.

Overview of Qualitative Methodology

Phenomenology is a form of qualitative research used to study individuals and their lived experiences. "The goal of phenomenology is to describe the meaning of this experience - both in terms of *what* was experienced and *how* it was experienced" (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 91). Understanding one's lived experience means new and different meanings can be formed to better understand the experiences. Therefore, the researcher took time to understand the assumptions of this type of study. For this study, thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to find repeating patterns of meaning in the data. When trying to understand the participants' lived experiences, awareness of how one is present in society and interacting with others is crucial.

This qualitative study sought to better understand the experiences of the participants' journey in *how* they cultivated their purpose within a specific college course in a university setting. The researcher sought to understand the participants' lived experiences as they embarked

on their college experience, specifically looking at the experiences of those first-year students enrolled in a Life Design course. The researcher also sought to understand the meaning participants assigned to both their planned and unplanned experiences (Krumboltz, 2009). This study was not as concerned with success as it related to participants' GPA or graduation rates, but rather the experiences participants encountered that they found most impactful as they cultivated their purpose in life.

The researcher's epistemological position was as follows: (a) data are contained within the perspectives and experiences of people who are involved with the Life Design program as a participant in one or more Life Design courses; and (b) because of this, the researcher engaged directly with the participants in collecting the data (Groenewald, 2004). According to Davidson (2000) and Jones (2001), phenomenologists believe that researchers cannot separate themselves from their research. As is true with this study, the researcher also served as one of the course instructors in the Life Design Program and developed a rapport with many study participants. This study intended to gather research focused on how college students' experiences shape their journey as they cultivate their purpose in life through enrollment in one Life Design course.

In this study, the researcher looked to the participants as the ultimate knowers of the material and experience to gain a deeper, more meaningful understanding of how they interpreted meaning and purpose and applied it to their future path. Overall, the unit of analysis in this study was the participants' perceptions and reflections on their lived experiences as students in a life design course at a public, four-year university on their journey to cultivating and articulating their purpose.

Phenomenological Approach

Creswell (2013) stated that “phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 76). Creswell (2013) also asserted that “phenomenology is not only a description, but it is also an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences” (p. 76). Phenomenological research allows the researcher to describe the lived experience of meaning-making and to cultivate purpose as described by those individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The research questions guiding this study are:

- 1) *How do experiences of traditional, first-year, college-aged students contribute to an articulated and cultivated path to purpose?*
 - a) To what extent, if at all, was the construction of purpose cultivated within the Life Design program?
- 2) *What factors are important in the articulation and cultivation of purpose?*
 - a) What was the most influential activity in the Life Design program that helped you articulate and cultivate your purpose?
 - b) What changes, if any, have you encountered in your purpose since you participated in the Life Design program?

Van Manen (2001) explained:

Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of meaning of our everyday experiences ... [it] does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain and/or control the world, but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world. (p. 9)

Rooted in philosophy and psychology, phenomenology's basic unit of analysis is the phenomena and not necessarily the people or objects involved. The goal of phenomenology is to understand what is being experienced by understanding how it is being experienced (Neubauer et al., 2019). For this study, the phenomena are the experiences around cultivating purpose that will be studied through interviews with college students enrolled in a Life Design course. Phenomenology is a way to gain insight into people's actions and motivations. There are several assumptions upon which this approach is based: (a) meaning and knowing are socially constructed and ever-evolving, developing, and incomplete; (b) the researcher is part of the experience and plays a valuable role; (c) as such, there are inherent biases which should be noted; (d) both the researcher and the participant are on the same team and share knowledge; (e) expression in all forms are important; and (f) meaning may not be shared by all (Boss et al., 1996). Phenomenology is an approach to trying to understand something more deeply from our lived experiences. It is taking something ordinary and making it extraordinary and new (Neubauer et al., 2019).

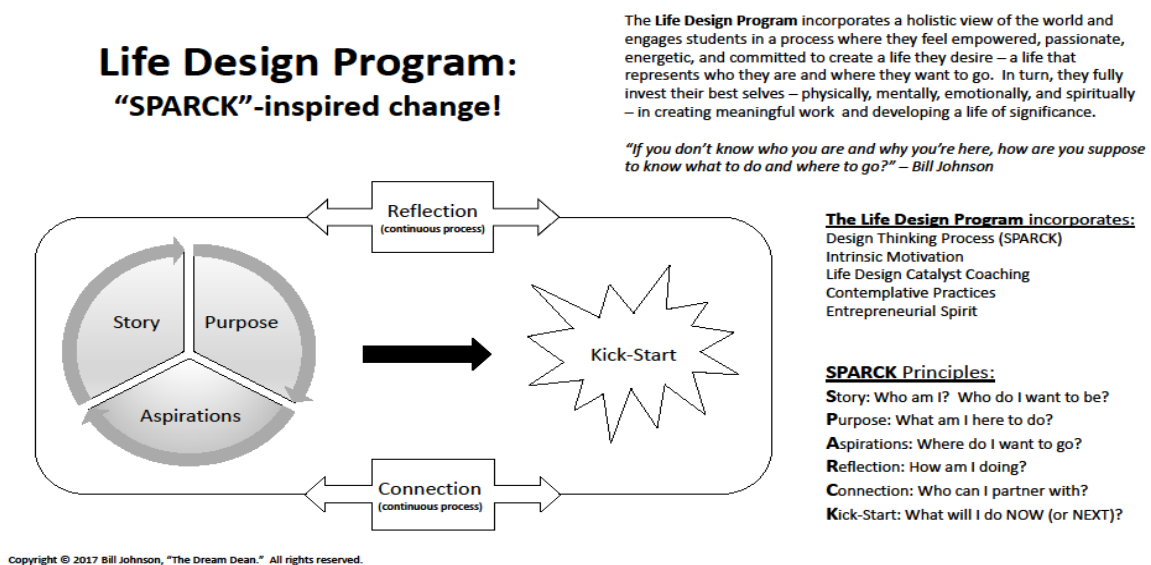
Program Context

From 2014 to 2019, 1,641 students were enrolled in at least one Life Design course. To provide context for the sample the researcher studied, the chart in Appendix N provides information regarding per semester enrollment, first- to second-year retention rate for all HHS125 students and racial/ethnic minority HHS125 students, and the five-year and six-year graduation rates. The data collection started in the 2008 Fall Semester, when the first HHS125 course, "Personal and Academic Success in HHP," was offered (the course name was changed in the Fall of 2015 to "Design Your Life I: What Could I Do with My Life?"). The data illustrate the effectiveness of the HHS125 course from a university assessment perspective, especially

when taken in the Fall Semester of the first semester; students were retained at a higher rate from the first to second year, AND they graduated from the institution at a higher rate in five years and six years compared to those students who did not take the HHS125 course in the Fall Semester.

The journey to purpose through the Life Design program relies on students reflecting on their past experiences and the role those experiences played in them getting to where they are at that moment (Course, 2021). The SPARCK (story, purpose, aspiration, reflection, connection, and kick-start) coaching model (Figure 3) is one way to visualize how these activities come together in the Life Design program. Students move from the past to the present in articulating their stories. Their purpose is cultivated through personality, strengths, and values assessments leading to articulating their meaningful work (see Appendix E). Upon articulating what they are here to do and why, students reflect on their aspirations and how they can change the world by identifying a major plan of study, intentional experiences, and a graduation plan. Reflection is constant in the journey to purpose, as is a connection to self and others.

Figure 3. SPARCK Coaching Model



Population

Participants in this study included students from a large, public, four-year institution of higher education in the southern United States. Participants came from various undergraduate programs, including kinesiology, nursing, speech pathology, nutrition, psychology, sociology, community and therapeutic recreation, peace and conflict studies, public health, human development and family studies, social work, and exploratory majors. Creswell (2013) recommends 10 participants for a phenomenological study; for this study, 12 to 15 participants were contacted with the goal of 10 participants being available throughout the study and completing the entire study. Upon opting into the study and providing informed consent, students became participants. Participants were emailed a doodle poll to derive a common time for the one-on-one interview between the participant and researcher. The individual interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Participants were also emailed a demographic survey link via Qualtrics, including personal characteristic information by which they identify, such as age, gender identity, race/ethnicity, and first-generation status.

Recruitment and Participant Selection

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants in this study included (a) enrolled in a Life Design class in Health and Human Sciences not currently being taught by the researcher; (b) traditional-aged college student (18-25); and (c) first-year student at the public university. Additionally, participants were recruited from current course instructors for having exemplary academic records and in-depth cultivation and articulation of their purpose through class assignments and participation. The researcher conversed with course instructors and explained the inclusion of the study. The researcher then emailed each course instructor reiterating the criteria and requested an email of names and participants who met the criteria. As a result, the

course instructors identified many students meeting the criteria. The researcher also identified students meeting the criteria in courses from the previous semester.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to identify the participants for this study (Patton, 2002). The researcher worked with two other instructors teaching the Life Design courses (excluding students in the researcher's current section of the course to avoid ethical dilemmas) to identify students with an articulated purpose. For this study, students were identified due to their high-quality work (receiving 90% to 100% in grades) and competence in completing the assignments and activities in the Life Design class (including writing a well thought out and articulated meaningful work statement). The researcher and colleagues identified 100 students who met the criteria and would initially be eligible for the study. One colleague sent contact information via course sections, one colleague sent contact information via a general list, and the researcher compiled names via a general list. The researcher randomly identified 11 students to contact first, trying to pick from all three pools. Identified students were emailed via their university email account with a detailed description of the study (Appendix A), the purpose of the study (Appendix A), procedures (Appendix B), risks (Appendix B), and benefits (Appendix B), and the voluntary nature of participation via an informed consent form (Appendix B). Interested students were asked to respond to the email with a signed informed consent form for further instruction and dates. A reminder email was sent to students with no response 2 weeks following the first email to invite participation in the study.

Participants

Participants for this study were purposefully selected by Life Design course instructors looking at those students who were achieving high academic marks in their Life Design class.

Purposive sampling was used to intentionally seek out participants willing to discuss their experiences in the Life Design course. All the participants for this study shared the following characteristics: (a) they were first-year students at the time of being enrolled in a Life Design course; (b) they were “traditional” aged (between the ages of 18 and 25 years of age); and (c) they had taken a Life Design course. Eleven initial potential participants were contacted via their university email addresses beginning in April. Five students responded within the first week of being contacted. Their demographic surveys were completed that same week, and interviews were scheduled for the following week. After a two-week waiting period, the researcher sent another email following up with those six participants who had not yet responded. After waiting a week without a response, the researcher contacted ten more potential participants via university email. After two weeks of no response, the researcher contacted those ten individuals again. The researcher then noted that students were entering their final exam period and decided to wait a week and a half for them to finish their final exams and transition to their summer plans before completing any more reach-outs. The researcher reached out via university email to ten different participants at the beginning of May, with a follow-up two weeks later. The researcher reached out in June and July to 20 more individuals in sets of ten with a two-week waiting period, all with no response. The researcher decided to wait until school began in August and then contacted ten new and potential participants via university email as soon as school began, with four students responding. Demographic surveys were completed that week and interviews were scheduled for the following week. The researcher ended up with nine participants in total for which to complete the interviews.

Demographically, the researcher asked for name, gender identity, race, and academic class standing. The researcher assumed many of the students would hold either Caucasian or

African American racial identities and that a good mix of gender identities would be present. Rather, all of the participants of the study identified as female from a variety of races.

Participant Overview

The participants in this study included nine female-identifying students for the semi-structured interviews. Despite attempts to create a diverse participant pool that accurately mirrored the population of Life Design partners, no male-identifying students consented to participate in this study. This led to the demographic survey operating as supporting research data. For this study, more than 35% of the student population identified as African American, and more than 13% identified as Hispanic or Latinx. The population for the study specifically included two students who identified as African American and two who identified as Hispanic or Latinx, or 44% of the study population.

Participants were enrolled in programs in the following Colleges and Schools across the University: The School of Nursing, the School of Health and Human Sciences, and the College of Arts and Sciences. Table 1 provides a brief introduction to each participant, who chose their own pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

Table 1. Participants

| Name | Sex | Race/ Ethnicity | First- Generation | Major | Involvement on Campus | Purpose |
|------|--------|--------------------------------|----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Jane | Female | Hispanic/ Latina/ Latino | X | School of Health and Human Sciences | | Motivate others in the areas of well-being and fitness |
| Kat | Female | Multiracial | | School of Health and Human Sciences/ Nursing | Intramurals and Club Sports | Desires to use their gifts to heal and care for children so they may reach their fullest potential and achieve their dreams. |

| Name | Sex | Race/ Ethnicity | First- Generation | Major | Involvement on Campus | Purpose |
|----------|--------|--------------------------------|----------------------|---|---|---|
| Rachel | Female | Caucasian | | College of Arts and Sciences | Academic Honors Organizations | Desires to empower students and young adults who lack purpose and direction to gain clarity, define a passion, and create a better life. |
| Lea | Female | African American | X | School of Health and Human Sciences | Religious Organizations | Desires to serve others to heal young children so they can physically reach their fullest potential. |
| Cathy | Female | Pakistani American | | School of Health and Human Sciences | Community Service Organizations | Make a difference in the medical field, particularly within the field of those that are premature at birth. |
| Liz | Female | Hispanic/ Latina/ Latino | X | School of Health and Human Sciences | LGBTQ+ Organizations | Desires to bring people out of their darkest times to become the best version of themselves |
| Sue | Female | Caucasian | | School of Health and Human Sciences | Recreational and Academic Honors Organizations | Interest in athletics and medical care lead her to believe she is good at motivating and helping others so they may have a fruitful and fulfilling athletic career. |
| Jac | Female | African American | X | School of Health and Human Sciences | | Will make a positive impact in the lives of others by helping them through challenging situations on their way to positive holistic health. |
| Stefanie | Female | Multiracial | | School of Nursing | Religious Organizations | Use their skills of helping others and serving for others to be in their best health so they can lead long lives. |

Data Collection Strategies

Two types of data collection were used to answer the research questions and strengthen the study through triangulation, including in-depth phenomenological interviews and secondary document analysis of meaningful work statements. For the document review, all students enrolled in a Life Design course who were not currently under the researcher's instruction submitted their meaningful work statements as part of the demographic survey they completed before the individual interviews. The meaningful work statements were analyzed after the individual interviews to better understand what the students were saying was their articulated purpose both within the interview and from their written statements during their Life Design class. Analyzation of the meaningful work statements included thematic coding using a reflexive approach as an evolutionary process. Codes were developed and adapted to reflect unexpected meanings discovered in the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). The themes were compared to those pulled from the individual interviews, and a comparison was completed. The codes were initially developed based on themes in which patterns were recognized within the data. Codes were adapted as further research continued and new patterns emerged.

Creswell (2007) indicated that phenomenological studies typically rely on interviews that are at least 90 minutes in length with open-ended type questions for data collection. This style allows for vivid descriptions from the participants about their lived experiences. Smith et al. (2009) noted that "a good interview is essential for phenomenological analysis ... in that it must engage deeply with participants and their concerns, with attentive listening into the lifeworld of the participant" (p. 58).

The individual interview questions (Appendix D) were aimed at the participants' experiences, reflections, and feelings about their experiences that contributed to cultivating and

articulating their purpose in life. As the researcher, a journal of notes on what was seen, heard, thought, and experienced when interacting with participants and partaking in the research process was kept. The notes were descriptive, reflective, specific, and dated to ensure accuracy. Notes were used following the interview process when the researcher coded and wrote up findings and conclusions. Notes were used to help place the researcher back into the interview space seamlessly. The journal also assisted the researcher in seeing how their thoughts changed throughout the process.

Demographic Survey

Upon completing the informed consent, participants were sent a demographic survey (see Appendix C) created in Qualtrics. Qualtrics was selected as the instrument tool as the University approved method for data collection as well due to the anonymity and security of the collected data. The demographics survey was individually shared with each participant using their university email address. During the individual interview, participants were asked to share a pseudonym with the researcher, which was used during documentation, data analysis, and discussion of findings. The pseudonyms were used to protect the privacy and ensure the confidentiality of participants' identities. All information, including transcribed interviews, was kept in a protected Box folder. Data were uploaded, stored in a secure Box folder, and deleted from any personal computer. Box was selected as the storage location because it is the institution's preferred method of secure data collection.

Document Review

A secondary document analysis of the meaningful work statements (see Appendix E) by participants was conducted. Since the goal of phenomenological research is not necessarily to produce a theory or definition of the phenomenon, the secondary data sources served as a further

way to gain details to tell the story of the cultivation and articulation of the participants' purpose journey (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Participants submitted their meaningful work statements as part of the demographic survey, which they turned in for a class assignment before the study. This data provided an idea of how the participants viewed their purpose in life during their journey to cultivate and articulate their purpose. It was used to inform specific themes pulled from the individual interviews. Otherwise, the interviews were transcribed, and analysis was conducted on the transcriptions and the meaningful work statements. Analysis of each was compared for like themes of process, inclusion, and opportunity for reflection, connection, and growth. More into the themes is described in a later section.

Interviews

The interview questions were aimed at the participants' experiences, reflections, and feelings about their experiences that contributed to being able to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life. The interview protocol (see Appendix D) was created and established according to Creswell (2010) and Creswell and Creswell (2017). Creswell (2010) recommended 60- to 90-minute in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted face-to-face; however, those students who desired a virtual meeting due to COVID or other reasons, such as no longer being local to campus, were accommodated through the use of Zoom. Interviews were transcribed using the Otter.AI transcription application and through Zoom transcription for those interviews conducted virtually. Interviews were also audio recorded to aid in transcription and to ensure the accuracy of the participants' interviews. As the interview was semi-structured, there were only five to ten structured questions in total. The participants helped guide the conversation and additional questions were asked based on responses. The structured questions were memorized. The

protocol also included closing instructions for the participants for the researcher to share (see Appendix D).

Procedures and Methods of Analysis

Participants of this study were informed that the interviews would be transcribed and that their stories and experiences would be analyzed for themes and commonalities across all participants. However, these themes and patterns do not necessarily emerge on their own. Rather, they come to fruition based on the questions and interpretations made throughout the process. “The role of iteration in qualitative data analysis, not as a repetitive mechanical task but as a reflexive process, is key to sparking insight and developing meaning” (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 77). In this process, the researcher kept in mind three questions: “What is the data telling me?,” “What do I want to know?,” and “How does the data interact with what I want to know?” (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 80). These questions helped provide context for how the topic could be framed and related to the overall research questions.

Data from the one-on-one interviews were collected using a semi-structured strategy (Patton, 2002) with open-ended questions (Creswell, 2007) to guide the conversation. The researcher created less than ten initial questions and added more questions as necessary to better understand the experience based on the document review and the conversation. The conversation was informed by the literature review revolving around significant events and experiences around the cultivation of purpose from Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1943), Krumboltz Happenstance Learning Theory (2009), and Baxter-Magolda’s Theory of Self-Authorship (2001). The recordings of the interviews allowed the researcher to recall information as the data was analyzed. The researcher transcribed the interviews using Otter.Ai. Meaningful work statements were collected from participants before the interviews through the demographic survey after

agreeing to be part of the study. Data was collected from the analysis of the meaningful work statements following the submission of the statement, and coding was used to identify themes among the statements after the interviews were conducted. After all the data were collected, transcribed, and coded, the themes were submitted to the participants for error checking and clarification, thus increasing internal validity.

Analysis

The method of analysis for this study was that of thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). Thematic analysis is looking at data to identify patterns and/or similarities for which themes are drawn. The three major themes drawn from this study include: (a) the critical importance of the process in being able to cultivate and articulate purpose; (b) inclusiveness where the participants through the course were provided an environment and reflection space to conduct a deep dive into who they were and why that matters; and (c) the opportunity to reflect, connect, and grow with peers in an environment conducive to such.

Thematic analysis reports the participants' experiences, methods, and reality (Braun & Clark, 2006). These themes then assisted the researcher in making sense of the data and deriving meaning from it. Thematic analysis was used for both the document analysis and the transcription of the interviews. This study used the thematic analysis process developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which is a six-phase process that includes: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing them up. The first phase, familiarization, involves truly getting to know the data by reading and re-reading the data repeatedly. This allows the researcher to become intimately familiar with the data. While time-consuming, transcribing the data on your own is an excellent way to become intimate with the data at hand; "the time spent in transcription is not wasted, as it informs the early stages of

analysis, and you will develop a far more thorough understanding of your data through having transcribed it” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 16). The second phase is coding. Once the researcher has a grasp on the data, initial codes can begin to be generated through a list of ideas that come to mind when reading the data;

Codes identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst, and refer to the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon.

(Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63)

Coding for this study was completed by hand using sticky notes and color-coding data. Initial keywords that were developed began with names of specific tools as well as each part of the SPARCK model process. Other keywords that began to present themselves included mentorship, reflection, inclusion, and connection. Each keyword was written on a sticky note and placed on a wall under the SPARCK titles of story, purpose, aspirations, reflection, connection, and kickstart. Keywords of Maslow, Happenstance, and Self-Authorship were also used. After the first initial keyword review, the researcher was able to better categorize keywords in groups that fell into the SPARCK model, Happenstance, and Self-Authorship. It was then that the researcher realized the process and not the individual tools was one of the main themes from this study. The researcher was also able to identify the importance of the environment to study participants as well as the opportunity for reflection, connection, and growth. The third phase after coding is searching for themes across the data: “This phase, which re-focuses the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes, involves sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 19). The fourth phase is reviewing the established themes, allowing the researcher to see which themes

are of utmost importance and have data to support them and which themes are truly not part of the research questions. In doing so, “Patton’s (1990) dual criteria for judging categories—*internal homogeneity* and *external heterogeneity*—are worth considering here. Data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 20). Finally, the researcher must review themes at the code level to see if a pattern makes sense. If no pattern makes sense, the researcher considers if there is a different theme that needs to be created, whether it will fit into an already existing theme, or if it needs to be discarded altogether.

The second part of the review looks at the bigger picture of all of the data: “At this level, you consider the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set, but also whether your candidate thematic map ‘accurately’ reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 21). The fifth phase is defining and naming the themes. By this point, the researcher should have a good idea of the story the data tells. In this phase, it is important to identify the essence of each theme. For each theme, it is important to write an analysis of the theme and include what is interesting about the theme and why. The final phase of this process is producing the report or writing it up. The goal is to “tell the complicated story of your data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 23). The write-up should include explicit examples and be concise, coherent, logical, and have a good flow for the reader to make sense of the data and the story the researcher is sharing.

Trustworthiness

Ethical considerations and trustworthiness are imperative in a qualitative study where the researcher is included as an instrument (Patton, 2002). This study was conducted under the

guidance of a three-member committee, with at least one committee member intimately knowledgeable of qualitative methods. This study also met all criteria established by the Graduate School and the IRB process and protocols. The four criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) regarding trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is defined “as the extent to which observed results reflect the realities of the participants in such a way that the participants themselves would agree with the research report” (Privitera, 2017, p. 214). This study utilized member checks to ensure participants’ information was accurate. Transferability refers to how useful the study is or could be while understanding that the goal of qualitative research is not necessarily to be generalized. Dependability is defined as whether the study can be reproduced (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher worked to complete this by describing in detail the researcher design, process, recruitment and selection process, and data gathering and analysis processes. The final step in the process of trustworthiness is that of confirmability. Confirmability is defined to ensure that the study results are not a result of the researchers’ preferences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

For this study, the researcher had on-going and regular meetings with their dissertation chair about their proposed methods and interview guide to maintain structure and purpose with the data collected. The researcher also asked a fellow doctoral candidate in their department to read through and code one anonymous interview. The researcher and fellow student then compared codes and discussed differences. This process was done as a system of checks and balances to ensure accuracy in both coding and themes among the data. Finally, the researcher submitted their notes and descriptions to their dissertation advisor for review.

For this study, bracketing, as developed by Husserl (2012), is the idea that assumptions are put on hold to completely grasp the phenomena at hand. This was completed by asking the

participants to set their life experience aside and focus on their experiences in college, specifically within the Life Design course that led to them being able to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life. Next, the researcher continued the bracketing process by checking their biases and working to characterize the participants' lived experiences as best as possible. Two of the ways this was completed was by first having ongoing conversations with the researcher's chair about what was being experienced by the researcher. The second was completing an analysis and coding of one interview, having a fellow doctoral student complete analysis and coding, and then meeting to compare notes.

Before engaging in this research, the researcher acknowledged that their role in higher education as an administrator, academic advisor, course designer, and course instructor drove their interest in this research and that they held a space of power and privilege as the researcher. While there are potentially other ways to cultivate and articulate a path to purpose, the researcher had a vested interest in the Life Design course specifically. The researcher assumed that specific tools and activities would present themselves as being most impactful, however, the study showed that all of the tools played an important role in the process. During the data collection and analysis process, the researcher regularly performed check ins with trusted, outside subject matter experts to ensure assumptions were suitably managed. The researcher worked to ensure that biases were brought to the forefront and dealt with at each step of the process through journaling and conversations with their dissertation chair. The data was triangulated, member-checked, and debriefed to remove any bias.

Conclusion

This study intended to create awareness and increase our understanding of *how* college students can cultivate and articulate their purpose within higher education. The goal of this study

was to provide a deeper, more meaningful understanding of the lived experiences of first-year college students' pathways to cultivating and articulating their purpose through the phenomenological methodology. The following chapters will discuss the findings that arose from this study.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the experience of traditional first-year college students as they cultivate and articulate their purpose in life. The researcher used the concept of phenomenology to focus on the experiences of first-year college students within a Life Design class and how those experiences contributed to an articulated purpose in life. The Life Design Program is a series of courses allowing students to answer the question, “What should I do with my life?” Each of the courses provides an opportunity to engage and reflect on the content to answer the questions, “Who am I here to be?,” “What am I here to do?,” “Where do I want to go?,” “How will I get there?,” and “Why does this matter?” The findings of the study are presented by answering each research question directly. The research questions used for this study include the following:

- 1) *How do experiences of traditional, first-year, college-aged students contribute to an articulated and cultivated path to purpose?*
 - a) To what extent, if at all, was the construction of purpose cultivated within the Life Design program?
- 2) *What factors are important in the articulation and cultivation of purpose?*
 - a) What was the most influential activity in the Life Design program that helped you articulate and cultivate your purpose?
 - b) What changes, if any, have you encountered in your purpose since you participated in the Life Design program?

An analysis of participants’ experiences in cultivating and articulating their purpose in life showed three major themes: (a) the critical importance of the process in being able to

cultivate and articulate purpose; (b) inclusiveness where the participants through the course were provided an environment and reflection space to conduct a deep dive into who they were and why that matters; and (c) the opportunity to reflect, connect, and grow with peers in an environment conducive to such.

SPARCK Model

This course engages with the SPARCK model (see Figure 1 in Chapter I). Cultivating one's purpose is not a standalone process, as many factors contribute to each person's journey. These factors include relationships cultivated along the way, life experience, and individual culture. One of the major themes that arose from the data was how important each of these factors is in the ability to cultivate purpose. Because we live in such a fast-paced society, there is not often the ability or opportunity to take the time to think about our purpose in life in such an intentional way. Each participant said the Life Design course helped them the most in terms of setting time aside and being intentional in cultivating and articulating their purpose in life. While each participant could articulate that they had a purpose in life, each participant was also better able to articulate with specificity their cultivated and articulated purpose following their engagement and interaction with a Life Design course and the tools and concepts shared in those courses. The Life Design course also provided the space and additional tools for each participant to find their pathway to purpose. The structure of the class and the use of the SPARCK model allowed for safe, open thought for the participants to put all of their thoughts together in an order that made the most sense to them.

The SPARCK model and its process is an integral part of the framework of this study in that it has a focus on reflection and self-awareness in ways that allow for exploration and praxis more so than other models. The SPARCK model "incorporates a holistic view of the world and

engages students in a process where they feel empowered, passionate, energetic, and committed to create a life they desire – a life that represents who they are and where they want to go” (Johnson and Delph, 2017, p. 7). This includes examining both internal and external factors that can contribute to and influence the decision-making process (Harris et al., 2020).

SPARCK stands for story, purpose, aspirations, reflection, connection, and kick-start. This is a model that encourages individuals to discover their pathway for which to serve something bigger than themselves. To fully understand the importance of the SPARCK model in this study, each element of the model can be expanded upon and examined individually.

Story

Story begins with how the person defines themselves. With story, the goal is for people who engage in the model to be able to share their stories—where they are coming from, where they are going, how they got to where they are, etc. Sharing their stories includes sharing some of the most impactful moments of their entire lives to that point. One of the ways this sharing of story is performed is through the “My Life Story” activity, where people are invited to reflect upon the most impactful moments of their lives, whether good or bad, and how this moment shaped them to be who they are.

One participant had the opportunity to travel to the village for which her family is from in Pakistan. The village did not have electricity or running water and it is often quite hot. The participant shared that their grandfather was the first in the family to receive a full education due to the fact that the school was not in the village and students would need to walk to the school and stay for the week thus taking them away from duties and responsibilities at home. Being able to receive a full education in this village was such a privilege. This experience translated into education being a pillar for the family as a whole. The participant shared they took a particular

water bottle with them for their travels and they felt privileged because they did not stay in the village and their water bottle was “fancy” and kept water cold for 15 hours. The participant was able to help install a well for the village so everyone would have access to clean water.

Cathy: I mean I was privileged because I had like my fancy water bottle. I could keep water cold for like 15 hours or whatever. And you know, we didn't stay there overnight. We just went and like spent the day there. But there was these kids and they're like yeah, sometimes we don't have water for like three or four days because we don't have running water so like it's not clean for us to drink. And they don't have like sometimes they can find like materials take a fire and boil it but not always. One thing that we did is we were like really want to give them water so we helped them install well. So, they could have like the little kids were so happy because not only was it like for them to drink but no cook with and wash your face with it also like they just don't do that because it was so hot.

This travel experience helped the participant to be able to articulate their purpose of helping people live better lives especially those who do not have or come from a lot because they saw just how impoverished some people and places can be. The participant said they wanted to use their privilege to make the world a better place especially for those less fortunate than them.

Story is the idea of thinking about where the person comes from and what are the experiences that have helped to create who they are today. Story allows people to think about the impactful events of their lives and reflect on how those events have shaped their trajectory. Story is the foundation for moving forward in the SPARCK model.

Purpose

Purpose looks at the person's role within the world in which they live. Cultivating and articulating a purpose is a process that requires reflection, iteration, and patience. Using assessments where people are invited to learn about their personalities, strengths, and things they value can provide insight into who they are. Being able to articulate who they are, coupled with the reflection of where they come from, can help highlight where they want to go in the future. The purpose part of the model can be seen as the growth phase, as understanding, discovering, cultivating, and articulating purpose can be such a huge journey for some. Understanding how their belief system plays into how they desire to contribute to the world can assist in helping them to figure out how to best serve the world positively. Each of the participants knew they wanted to help and articulated that the Life Design course allowed them to think about their different lived experiences and articulate them in such a way that they could describe their purpose in life. For example, Stefanie spoke about her purpose being rooted in a talent of hers, while Rachel described being the helper of her friend group and knowing that it could extend into her role in society. Each participant knew their purpose before coming to college; however, they stated that while they knew they wanted to help people, they were unsure how to articulate their thoughts and feelings and make it happen—how to execute a plan. Some of the participants knew from an early age of their purpose, Sue explains that she was able to put a major to her purpose once she enrolled in college but that she has known her purpose her whole life:

Sue: I definitely want to help people. Obviously, if I'm looking at more than my major, I want to help people. If I'm going based off of like my major, basically, I want to help people be able to play their sport for their whole life. So, help them to prevent injury, or,

like rehabilitate injury, so that they can continue to play the sport that they love. And enjoy for as long as I possibly can.

Jac also knew their purpose from a young age and discovered their specific major which better allowed them to live in their purpose after a visit from a professor to their Life Design Class:

Jac: I knew I wanted to help people from a young age. I discovered occupational therapy in class when the CTR professor came in and spoke with us. I was really unsure if I could accomplish the degree but felt if I wrote my goals down, I would be able to do it.

Lea had an idea going into college where the Life Design class helped to create a more meaningful and articulate pathway for her journey:

Lea: I think just definitely helping people in some way whether it is in ministry or whether it is in physical therapy. I think that definitely has to do with my purpose. Like I don't think I'm really put here just for me. I think I'm put here for other people.

Cultivation of purpose is an element of the SPARCK model that, while it seems straightforward, is actually quite complex. Most people think they have an idea of their purpose and what direction they would like their lives to go. What most people have, however, is a rough generalization and not a fully realized and cultivated purpose. Many of the participants began college with just an idea and an interest. However, participants spent time trying to get all of their thoughts in a logical order. Rachel and Liz provided good examples of this process and the evolution of the cultivation of their articulated purpose:

Rachel: I think that after we did like all of the activities on like, strengths finding and everything, like it kept coming up over and over that, like, honesty, integrity and helping others and service was like, a big part of it. And then when we put it all together into a meaningful work statement, like this is a population that I want to work with. This is

what I want to do, and this is how I'm going to do it. It was like, Oh, crap, like, that's, I want to help students figure out their purpose in life kind of brought about my purpose.

Liz: I will definitely say when we had to make a poster in the class, I think it was my life story as well. It was combined with like all the stuff that we did at the end of the year, and it showed me how far I progressed as a freshman in college, like it's insane how much you change.

Purpose is often seen as the core element of the SPARCK model. Purpose is the part of the model where people are invited and encouraged to learn about themselves in ways that they may not have been invited or thought they had the capability to do prior. Purpose is where many tools are introduced that may or may not be necessary in the moment but allow for people to learn about the tools and decide if they are applicable now or if they should add them to their toolbox for later use. The tools can be advantageous if the pathway for which one desires turns out to not be the best pathway in the moment. The tools allow people to pivot seamlessly and in a safe and impactful way.

Tools

Each participant received instruction for the same tools in class. Each participant was invited to engage with each tool. However, each tool was used, and its' impact was different for each participant. Each participant was able to speak to different tools or activities from the course that were impactful for them, and specifically to the defining point within the Life Design course that was *most* impactful to them. One of the things that led the researcher to capitalize on the process of the course was the fact that many of the tools identified were not tools that could be completed without also doing something else. Many of the tools are designed in such a way that they scaffold or build from the previous tool. For example, two participants cited the

meaningful work activity (Appendix E), which included completing assessments around personality, strengths, and values. The meaningful work statement activity had students select their top three of each of the following: values, talents and gifts, interests, audience, action, and the impact they would like to make in society. Once they went through this process, they were given prompts to create a statement summarizing the work they would like to do, who they would like to serve, how they would like to serve, and the impact they would have in society. The meaningful work statement is a declaration that defines their contributions, positive impact on others, and how the work will make them a better person, as evidenced by the following examples:

Stefanie: I honestly think coming up with the meaningful work statement was a big part of developing my purpose because like, I know like those assignments are meant to be done like, pretty like quick and they're not supposed to be like super hard, but like, honestly, like it took me like I was literally sitting on my computer for a while, like thinking about like, what it was because I was so confused last semester. As to what I wanted to do, because I was just like, language was hard last semester. And so I think coming up with that, like in like me, it was like, identify my talents and like, why I wanted to do what I wanted. To do, like helped me kind of identify my purpose and what I wanted to do.

Stefanie described struggling to identify why she was in college and what she wanted to do. She spent time on the meaningful work statement, which gave her more clarification on her talents and how her purpose aligned with those talents.

Rachel: Um, probably the meaningful work statement. I think that after we did like all of the activities on like, strengths, finding and everything, like it kept coming up over and

over that, like, honesty, integrity and helping others and service was like, a big part of it. And then when we put it all together into the meaningful work statement, like this is a population that I want to work with. This is what I want to do, and this is how I'm going to do it. It was like, Oh, crap, like, that's, I want to help students figure out their purpose in life. Kind of brought about my purpose.

Rachel was able to see a larger picture after working through the tools she was introduced to. Rachel kept seeing the same concepts over and over again and this allowed her to better understand exactly how she wanted to serve.

Two other participants cited the posters that were completed throughout the class. For one participant seeing the big picture was their moment that they were able to articulate their intended pathway and journey to purpose.

Liz: I will definitely say when we had to make a poster in the class, I think it was my life story as well. It was combined with like all the stuff that we did at the end of the year, and it showed me like how far I progressed like as a freshman in college, like it's insane how much you change. Like coming into this I was going on like, wasn't sure what I wanted to do. And it kinesiology was like, Okay thing, but it definitely set in stone like, this is what I wanted to do. Like this was my purpose in life to help people. Yeah.

This poster is the first time students are invited to truly reflect on their lives and complete a deep, meaningful dive into their past and how that can affect where they are today and where they plan to go in the future. This critical reflection opportunity is the first of many within the class, but also often first time students are invited to complete such a deep reflection of their lives and its impactful moments. The posters are a way for students to see the big picture and what they could

do if their pathway did not go as planned. A few of the participants noted the importance of the posters and how they contributed to the articulation of their purpose:

Kat: I would probably say making those put like the poster projects, just like putting like, all the discussion posts and activities we put together into one thing. Really, just you know, put the bigger picture out there and it really helped. Yeah, yeah. Solidify that for me, just making those posters.

For Kat, the posters were a creative outlet for her to put all of the tools, activities, and discussions together to solidify her purpose journey as up until her final poster, she was still unsure of where her path could take her.

Sue: I would say the character resume. Seriously, I've used it since class to share with others and get a part-time job.

For Sue, the most impactful tool she was able to learn about and use was the final project which allowed her to put something tangible together that she has used outside of class to further her successes through scholarships and employment.

For many of the participants, they were able to identify tools that were impactful for their journey but may have used them in different ways. For some it was about being able to see the big picture. For others, it was about already knowing their purpose and being able to better articulate it in a format that was useful for them and their desire to move forward in purpose.

Aspirations

Aspirations refer to the dreams or goals for which the person has or creates. This occurs once the person has identified that they are not where they want to be and want to make improvements to further grow and live and walk in their purpose. Aspirations can take place through experiential education type experiences such as internships and externships or could

occur through experiences that arise due to happenstance—being in the right place at the right time, having connections that introduce possibilities, or something of the like. Many of the aspirations that are formed are based in previous reflections completed at the purpose stage of the process where people are able to access and identify things such as strengths, talents, gifts, and interest areas of which they might not have previously been aware.

Several participants expressed their desire to have hands-on experience in the field in which they defined their purpose. They wanted this experience to solidify that what they have said they wanted to do from a theoretical perspective is what they want to do from a practice perspective. One participant classified the work as service learning from the perspective of her getting out and doing things that related to her purpose and stopping putting it off:

Cathy: I think I think so. I work in the community a lot like the green for Youth Council. We have an event called sandals workshops, where we collect toys to give out to the families that can't afford that. So I think whenever I do that, and I see how happy it makes the parents because the way we do is we like set out all the toys and the parents come and like basically shop for like lack of a better term for like toys for their kids purposes. And we don't wrap them or anything because we want it to be like oh the parents use toys for their kids. And so some some parents are so appreciative that are appreciative of that because they're like, We could not have done it. Otherwise, it's like, I think that's something that I'm like, Oh my gosh, like we're actually like this is something a little I'm just volunteering at this event. But just me being there and me helping someone to pick out toys is also making a difference. Yeah, and it's also like helping someone so I think that's something that like every time that happens I'm like okay, this is what I want to do like the relief that this person had because they were able

to pick out toys from this like selection. Is this something that like, I think that every time I have that feeling like okay, this is I know I want to do this.

Other participants spoke about the experiences they were getting ready to have through summer internships and experiences in order to see that what they articulated they wanted to do was in fact what they wanted to do:

Kat: The one thing I can think of right now is this, this hospital job that I'm about to start because like, Well, I do enjoy because right now I'm in home health. So I'm working mainly with in the geriatric specialty, but I think that once I start this pediatric job, it's gonna help because that's like, that's the angle I want to work with kids.

Kat was really unsure of the environment for which she wanted to work. She knew she wanted to go into the medical field but was unsure about the environment as well as the population for which she wanted to work. She was able to secure summer employment that would give her experience in a hospital with children which she thought might be her area of expertise. This hands on experience was helpful to her after using the tools in class to articulate what she thought she wanted to do.

Lea: Yeah, I think definitely, probably, I guess because I've been kind of debating for a while, like if I should go the ministry route with my future career, or if I should go the PT route. So I think maybe a foreshadowing, I think would kind of clarify it for me. Or maybe even going into ministry and working with different types of people. Just really seeing okay, what really drives me? Yeah. And what do I feel like I'm best at so I think that can actually further like, I guess, just like, make my purpose a bit more specific. Because I think mine's kind of broad at the moment. But I mean, I guess it's better than

nothing, but it's like, I want to make it more specific. So that way I can actually start working towards it a bit more specifically.

Lea, even after going through the class and being introduced to the tools, was still torn as to which path she should go. She said she had a heart for ministry but also had a heart for rehabilitation through physical therapy. Lea had decided to gain experience in both areas to see which she enjoyed more so that she could better work towards her intended pathway to purpose.

Rachel: I think service learning has helped kind of a lot because it's forced me to start doing the work that I feel like I've been putting off for the past. Like year, like we've talked about getting involved and doing presentations and all that and I've been to the trainings and stuff, but I've never done one on my own. And so I think it was kind of a kick-start, for me to start doing the work. And I think that by doing that, I'll see if it's something that I'm capable of doing. Because I'm not really a good presenter type and that's a lot of what this work has to do. So I think that it's getting me ready to make that my career.

For Rachel, the act of doing was just what she needed in order to kick-start her into her pathway to purpose. She had taken the steps to learn the processes and the tools but had not yet implemented the work. The ability to go out on her own and just do the work was what she needed to complete the SPARCK process.

One student alluded to previous experiences in class that helped them to be able to clarify their purpose. This is the movement in the framework where the student has identified a gap in their experiences and thus recognize the need for something more. In this case, the student identified that they needed to further their education past high school. This student was able to take classes in high school which furthered her desire to go to college for physical therapy:

Cathy: I guess one thing that made me decide to go into physical therapy. In high school, I was in a Health Sciences class and we did many units where we would pretend to be different professions for like two weeks at a time. So we would all pick different things like and this was something we did the whole year. So like, the entire year I like pretended to be like a surgeon, the doctor, or veterinarian, like a whole bunch of different kinds of nurses, a PA all that kind of stuff and you would like really research about the profession. And one time I decided to take physical therapy and honestly, I just I thought I liked the most because there's so much you can do with it. And there's so many different ways like you're able to use it. So I think that's what made me choose physical therapy.

Another student took two Life Design courses and was much clearer in their focus the second time they were able to see some of the same or similar content. The ability to go through the course once and experience the tools was a nice introduction. Being able to go through the tools a second time allowed for Sue to be able to see a crystal-clear picture of her vision in order to cultivate and articulate her purpose. She knew exactly what she needed to do and how to do it after experiencing things the second time around.

Sue: So once I got a second semester [of HHS] and got in your class, I was like, Okay, this is what I'm gonna do.

Being able to dream is instrumental in being able to define a vision for one's future. Being able to take those dreams and turn them into functional goals that can be brought to life is part of our everyday reality. The link between being able to make a dream reality is being able to plan appropriately and pivot when necessary. Part of the dream is the reflection on how to achieve the dream and create the plan and who or what is necessary to achieve said plan.

Reflection

Reflection is the foundation for how the person measures their progress. As society is often so fast paced, we do not always create the time to slow down and reflect on our experiences, who we are, or how we got to where we are. We do not always take the time to reflect on where we want to go and what the next best step would be. Reflection is critical to being able to move forward in a positive manner to achieve our intended purpose. It allows for us to reflect on how our previous experiences have impacted us. It allows for us to realize our aspirations and to put the steps in place to then achieve. Sue was able to speak to their process of reflection within the class and how it led to their cultivation and articulation of their purpose. Sue talked about their reflection with experiences prior to coming to college and the interaction of people from their hometown. Sue explained how this led her to wanted to make a difference because of the harm she was continuing to see through dance and dancers.

Sue: Um, probably like junior or senior year of high school. So, I did dance my whole life. And my mom was the front desk person at the dance studio. So I spent a lot of time there as a kid like I hung out with her all the time. I hung out with all the people there. So like, dancers are extremely hard headed people I've learned. They push themselves to the absolute max. And it's very frustrating. So like, realizing that they've hurt themselves. They're like, Oh, I'm fine. I'm just gonna keep going. Then they hurt themselves more, and then they're out for a year. Like their whole senior year's gone, right? Because they've pushed themselves all through high school and then, like, in the middle of junior year, they fall off and they can't anymore.

Sue realized that she could help this population of people and other athletes to optimize their potential and abilities rather than hurt themselves and have to quit for life.

Had Sue not had the time to reflect on her experiences prior to college, Sue may not have realized just how she could serve the world and how important her contributions to the world of sports could truly be. Students must make room for reflection in their cultivation and articulation of purpose for it allows each person to see how things are and how they could be better with the talents and gifts for which they can share. Reflection is a critical piece of the SPARCK model that helps to put things into perspective and see how one can meet articulated plans.

Connection

Connection refers to the systems of support for which the person cultivates. As for a particular experience or relationship that was most helpful to the participants, the participants spoke to the reflection as a meaningful experience within the classroom which allowed for meaningful relationships to be cultivated among classmates and course instructors. Several participants spoke to relationships before college that helped them to have a role model or to see themselves fulfilling their purpose in life because someone before them also did it.

Lea's connection to her faith was something that came to light through her process. In all of the different tools and experiences, Lea kept coming back to how self-centered things were turning out for her. This led her to see how important faith was in her journey to purpose and self-authorship where it allowed for the journey to not be holistically about her:

Lea: I think definitely like in my faith, that kind of solidified it for me, because it's like, I think it's actually just like the more of like deep regret which my faith and just realizing how other centered it really is. Because it really does take the focus off of me. And it just kind of puts it on to other people all the time. And I just feel like that's kind of how it's supposed to be.

Stefanie's journey was personal in that for years she wanted her grandma work in a tireless profession and help others in ways that she could never be repaid. All of the countless hours and unsaid thank-yous helped Stefanie to realize that was exactly what she wanted to do. She wanted to follow in her grandma's footsteps to give back to a profession that had given so much to her family:

Stefanie: My grandma was a nurse and she like, just the way she talked about her work and how she impacted people and how she was able to help so many people, like inspired me. And I think that was a main reason why I wanted to become a nurse because I'm gonna be honest, like, I'm ashamed. But I kind of looked down on nurses before because I was like, Oh, they're not like, they don't do that much when they do so much like and people aren't like a lot of people realize that.

Cathy spoke to the connections that she made within the classroom from the course instructor to her peers, each connection helped her to further solidify her path to purpose:

Cathy: I know like the conversations we had in the class helped a lot. So like Jennifer [course instructor] would ask us like guiding questions about like, you know what we want to do.

For Jane, it was about a connection from her past – an example of happenstance. Jane was able to connect with a previous high school teacher that was then able to provide an experience that aligned with Jane's articulated purpose. Through the experience Jane learned the environment for which she would be most successful in. Jane was able to use present and past connections to cultivate and articulate her purpose.

Jane: But I, I have like, shadowed, or I have gone out and had the courage to ask a lot of questions about different career paths. So mostly athletic training. So I remember one of

our projects was to go and interview someone. And I interviewed Aaron Terranova. And he's an athletic trainer here. And he told me about the process that it is, what you do, and how it is throughout your whole life. And then I started doing a little bit more research on physical therapy, which is what I'm studying right now. And I realized that it's more of a broader audience than just college students. So and then I ended up shadowing my teacher, Miss Higgins. She is she's also an athletic trainer here and seeing it, like right in front of me. And it was great, because we ended up having to call the paramedics to come. So we got to see a lot. And it was like, I did get a rush of like, wanting to help someone. But I wish I had more experience of like, I can actually do hands on stuff. Yeah. So I can actually help so I am interested in that. But I think physical therapy is a more calm setting for me.

While Kat has had many experiences and connections with a lot of different people throughout her life, Kat's mother has been her driving force in being able to adequately cultivate and articulate her purpose. Her mother has not only been her greatest connection but also her biggest support when Kat thought her purpose was not going to work out. Kat's reflection into the support of her mother also shows Kat's ability to write her own story (self-authorship) given this lifelong influence:

Kat: I know it sounds kind of basic, but I think my mother has been like the major person who's helped me like she has supported me through all my little you know 180's and I've given her so much whiplash with what I want to do as a career and what I want to do with my life and she's been with me every step of the way and has kind of been like you know that person to fall on when you know stuff hits the fan, and I feel like I can't do this, so I

feel like she has really helped me not necessarily find my purpose but to reassure me that this is what I want to do with my life.

Upon completing each activity, one of the ways students were invited to create connection in the classroom was that students were invited to partake in a pair-and-share where they matched up with someone they did not know and shared their experiences through the activity they had just completed. With this, they were asked to be vulnerable because they shared intimate details about their story, and they received feedback and other opportunities to reflect through connections they may not have had otherwise. In Cathy's case specifically, it led to meeting someone who visually looks like her and also happened to have similar academic interests which was something Cathy had not yet encountered in her life:

Cathy: I know like the conversations we had in the class helped a lot. So like the instructor would ask us like guiding questions about like, you know what we want to do, like whenever we have the different assignments to make or like, different I think that's called the work statement. We did a couple of projects for, like we want to share with the class what we wanted to do, and I actually met someone in that class who was like, one of my best friends right now. She wants to do something similar to I want to do but she wants to she wants to go to like her. She has like her own story about how she got into all that. But there was like a common interest and she's also her she's also from Pakistan. So there's just like a common interest of like both of us having a similar like cultural and like family background and religious background and just wanting to kind of do the same thing, which was super cool, because I've never found anyone who wants to do something similar to me for the same reasons, right because there is this like pressure from home to like, oh, become like a doctor engineer. That's like the two professions like

our parents always pick. Yeah, because it's like, there's like promise in that. But like, I chose to do, like, go into physical therapy on my own. And she also like chose her thing on her own. So that was cool, because we both learned like why we wanted to do it and it wasn't just like, oh, because my parents are telling me.

Cathy's experience meeting someone that looked like her and had similar interests was an experience of happenstance. Cathy did not know who else would be enrolled in the course when she signed up for the course. Cathy did not know she was going to meet someone who would help her clarify her path to purpose.

Mentorship

Expanding on the idea of connection and relationships, a few participants spoke to the idea of mentorship. Some of the participants relied on relationships to further their discovery of their purpose. These relationships blossomed into mentorship opportunities where the participants felt their relationships with specific individuals moved into mentorship roles. These mentor relationships allowed the participants to learn something new that helped cultivate their purpose, such as Jane working with her former high school teacher, who then had to demonstrate life skills during an incident for which the paramedics were called.

Two final participants spoke to influential activities, including interviewing someone in the field for which they might wish to enter and visionary life work (Appendix M) where students had to write a story of how they saw themselves in five to ten years. For both of these participants, the act of going through these activities was impactful, as Jane would never have known that the athletic training environment was not the best fit for her:

Jane: It was our interviewing project. Because if I wasn't, if I didn't get that project, then I would have never spoken to a professor in the field and then he would never have told

me his path of how he got into athletic training. And, I wouldn't have what I have now, like a clear vision of what I want to do. Yeah.

Jac would never have known how important it is for her to write things down because when she writes things down, they become real to her:

Jac: And that's right about what we invented for our last five years a year now ... visionary life work. I have to write things down now.

Through the process of connection, students have been able to use past connections to learn more about their journey as well as create new connections. These connections have allowed for students to better be the author of the story for which they are trying to tell. Some of these connections are attributed to happenstance – being in the right place at the right time and for others they are cultivated through time and experience. Regardless of how the connection occurs, the importance of connecting with others to enrich our journey is evident.

Kick-Start

Kick-start is the action plan projecting movement in the process. Kick-start is the “now what” part of the process. For many, kick-start is the process of identifying more opportunities for meaningful work and focuses on instilling effective change and positive behaviors in the continued cultivation and articulate of one's purpose. It allows for more personal responsibility for actions and decisions in moving forward with the purpose journey.

For example, Sue, concluded that they had an idea about what their purpose was, but after taking two Life Design courses, their pathway was much more solidified and clear than it started out:

Sue: Um, I wouldn't say I have a set-in-stone purpose right now because I personally feel like it's kind of early in my life to have that. But I have an idea ... I think it was [good to

take Life Design twice]. So, first semester I had KIN 250 and HHS 125. And like, then I was like, going back and forth through all these things. It was like maybe I'll do this or maybe I'll do this, but maybe I'll do this. So, once I got a second semester and got in your class (HHS 150), I was like, okay, this is what I'm gonna do, for sure.

Being able to go through the material more than once in a safe and inclusive environment allowed for Sue to make some solidified plans as it related to her purpose journey that she was not able to make going through her first time. Sue showed an increase self-confidence. Sue was much better able to make decisions as it related to her cultivation and articulation of purpose.

Jac, concluded that they had a better grasp on their purpose and could articulate it better when they wrote it down:

Jac: I think I said that I didn't take time to like, you know ... Take time. Like maybe I should write these [things] down. But what are my goals? I don't know if I can accomplish this. And writing things down helped me. It helped to make it real.

For Jac, connecting with others and talking about her ideas put it out there. The kick-start for Jac came when she took the ideas she had discussed with others and put them on paper. Jac shared that when the ideas were on paper, they were more than an idea. For her, they were a plan...a way of achieving her dream.

For many students, they have an idea of what they want to achieve from grades to a specific career. However, many students lack the plan to achieve their ideal grades or career. The process of kick-start is moving from ideal to action and is the final step in the SPARCK model. Students do the work they learn who they are, how they got to where they are, and they dream about where they want to go. The final step for them is putting their plans and ideas into action.

Happenstance and Reflection

Many students who enroll in Life Design courses are not necessarily there by choice. Each first-year student at this institution who fall into certain degree programs are automatically enrolled in a Life Design course in their first semester of university. Some of the students are enrolled in the courses due to data suggesting they are at-risk students or in areas of study that are explorative and require them to make decisions in future semesters regarding their pathways. The idea of happenstance—that things can happen that are not a part of our plan—held an important role in at least two of the participants' experiences. As not all students choose to take a Life Design course, the idea of happenstance (they were put into the course, and it ended up being a positive thing) is a piece of the puzzle that contributes to their cultivation and articulation of purpose.

For Rachel, being put into the Life Design class allowed her to better understand opportunities for a career that she did not know of otherwise. For Rachel, a whole new world opened up and Rachel changed her major with plans of becoming a life coach for which she was able to begin training for while an undergraduate student:

Rachel: As a first-year student, I got randomly put into Bill's class (HHS 125), and that kind of just like, kick-started the whole thing. And here we are now I'm at a meeting with Bill today. I've done three trainings I'm planning on doing another one I'm like making this my career path.

Stefanie's journey takes her to her faith. Stefanie believes that God always puts her in situations and presents opportunities that allow her to live in her purpose. While some of the experiences may be hard and she may not understand it at the time, Stefanie keeps her faith and knows that her purpose is greater than she is:

Stefanie: I go to a nondenominational Christian church or whatever. But I feel like God has put me where I'm supposed to be. So that I am able to, like, hopefully help people in the future. And I feel like all my past life experiences and hardships have led me to like wanting to become a nurse and help people because like, I have so much of a lot of different like health issues. And I really feel like I can, like, use those experiences like I did with my roommate to be able to like help people and relate to people on another level. And so, I feel like going through all those things, is what God intended so that I could be able to help you in the future, like, the idea of Right place, right time kind of thing.

As the participants began looking at their journey (through the study interviews), the idea of happenstance became clearer to some of them. Several participants could articulate experiences that were not part of their goals or their map per se but ended up being immensely important moments in their journey thus far. These experiences and their significance in their lives have opened their minds up for further experiences that might just happen to come along.

Reflecting on what experiences the students had to clarify purpose was eye-opening for participants. For example, Liz felt as if she needed to figure out her purpose or her friend group was going to leave her behind:

It definitely made me sit down and think about what I want to do with my life. Because my roommate and like my other friends, like they know what they want. So I was kind of like one of those oddballs out like trying to figure out what I wanted to do, wasn't sure. And then by the end of first semester, freshman year, that's when like they actually helped me like understand like, this is my life like, this is what I want to do.

Connecting with her friends allowed her to have a sounding board. It also gave Liz the motivation to intentionally cultivate and eventually be able to articulate her purpose journey.

Another participant, Kat, spoke about how different experiences in her life helped her to rebuild and focus on the things that were truly important to her:

I didn't necessarily, you know, like find out, but it did help me kind of sort of rebuild and focus on those things that I didn't like so I could turn them around.

Going into this study, the researcher was certain that the outcomes would show just how important the Life Design tools were to cultivate and articulate one's purpose. However, this study showed that while the tools are important, the process through which the participants have gone has been most impactful and important in cultivating and articulating their purpose in life. Through this research, it became clear to the researcher that purpose, reflection, and connection were paramount to the participants in their journey to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life. When provided the space and opportunity, participants described in depth their purpose and how they got there as well as articulate previous life experiences that have allowed them to continue to write their own story as they left one experience (home) to embark on another experience (college). Their previous connections were stepping stones to the new connections they would make in the University setting. The opportunity to reflect on their journey was the space needed to be able to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life.

Maslow's (1943) theory of hierarchy of needs, Baxter-Magolda's (2001) self-authorship, and Krumboltz's (2009) happenstance learning theory were used to connect purpose to life experiences. Findings suggest that while participants were able to cultivate and articulate their purpose, the process of doing so is of utmost importance. Going through the SPARCK model—story, purpose, aspirations, reflection, connection, and kick-start—in an environment that created space for them to do so was what allowed for the ability to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

If we possess our why in life we can put up with almost any how. – *Nietzsche*

Introduction

This chapter reviews the purpose of this study and the research methods used and summarizes the findings. The researcher then discusses the findings through their own interpretation, including any implications for future research. To end, the researcher speaks of the study's limitations and offers recommendations for future research.

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to develop an in-depth understanding of how the experiences of traditional, first-year, college-aged students contribute to their path to purpose in life. This study looked at experiences, specifically experiences of first-year college students in the Life Design course, that the students articulated as assisting them in cultivating and articulating their purpose in life. This chapter includes a discussion of major findings as related to the literature on purpose in college-aged students. To achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher posed two specific research questions:

1. How do the experiences of traditional, first-year, college-aged students contribute to a cultivated and articulated path to purpose?
2. What factors are important in the cultivation and articulation of purpose?

Meeting Needs

Maslow (1969) states that to function as a human being in life, certain needs must be met; the most basic of those needs is food, water, and shelter. The most basic physiological needs must be met to cultivate and articulate purpose. One could argue that the safety needs must also be met to create the head space required to allow for the cultivation of a purpose journey (Molasso, 2006). An essential element of cultivating purpose includes meeting basic needs.

One's story reveals their purpose and shows that purpose is cultivated in connection, not isolation. The reflection involved in telling one's story helps the student identify gaps in their lives by identifying strengths and limitations, personality, learning characteristics, personal beliefs, and values (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Self-reflection is an essential component of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001). When students can use their planned and unplanned experiences (Krumboltz, 2009) and tools, they can cultivate and articulate their purpose in life and become the author of their own stories (Baxter Magolda, 2001). They can then move from their own needs being met to being able to meet the needs of others to serve something bigger than themselves (Maslow, 1968).

Students' Experiences Cultivating and Articulating Purpose

While accounting for several limitations, this study added depth to the current literature. It defined itself as unique in that many studies around purpose look at students in the K-12 sector, while this study looked at students in higher education (postsecondary sector). It specifically focused on students in higher education in a Life Design course and highlighted their experiences in cultivating and articulating their purpose. In returning to the problem statement, overall, the literature was unclear if a path was defined for first-year college students to cultivate and articulate their purpose. This study showed that Life Design is one intentional process that students can use to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life. Specifically, this study showed myriad tools that can be used, but more specifically, this study showed the importance of creating an environment conducive to deep reflection and where participants feel safe to complete such a deep dive, as well as creating an intentional process for participants to embark. While each participant of this study could articulate specific tools within the Life Design course

that they found helpful, the bigger picture for participants was the process of cultivating and articulating their purpose, which often began before their enrollment in higher education.

Tools

Some of the tools participants noted were of particular importance in their journey included the strengths assessment (Appendix L), values card sort (Appendix K), meaningful work statement (Appendix E), and visionary life work (Appendix M). Each of these tools provided insight into different areas of their lives. For example, the strengths assessment allowed students to reflect and evaluate their strengths related to their character and how they most effectively engaged with society. The values card sort allowed students to reflect upon their personal core values (what they believe in their heart) and desired work values (ideal work environment). Personal core values are defined exactly as they are named, while desired work values describe their ideal work environment, which allows them to fulfill their desire to serve the world in their own way. The meaningful work statement provided an activity where students could clarify their purpose by reflecting upon and understanding their values, strengths, weaknesses, talents, and gifts and how they can all work together to define their purpose in service to something bigger than themselves.

Environment

The Life Design course specifically provided an environment that allowed students to reflect about their experiences for which they may have brushed aside. The environment was one of safety and comfort. It allowed for the physical and mental capacity to take over and for students to reflect intentionally and iteratively about who they were and how they wanted to serve the world, including a deep dive into who they were and what they truly stood for. The environment was created without distraction for each of the journeys the participants would take.

Each of the tools that students were invited to complete built upon a previous tool, thus encouraging the students to complete the first and second tool (and so forth and so on) and reflect upon how the results of each tool build upon each other. For example, students were encouraged to think about how their personality assessment results played into their personal core values and if they noticed any trends or themes as they completed each tool. Additionally, students were encouraged to ask probing questions of themselves and others around them so that they were truly prepared and able to understand their experiences. Students completed this peer reflection in small groups after each tool completion. This environment also encouraged students to do things they would not have done—to stretch out of their comfort zone and embrace the uncharted pathway, which is essential in encouraging growth and expansion. This course allowed students to look at things from multiple angles and then put their thoughts together in culminating posters, which allowed them to look at their whole self and their journey to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life. Students were encouraged to look at each tool as a piece of the puzzle and also to understand that none of the tools are meant to put them in a box but rather to pick the pieces that resonated with them the most and put those pieces together to complete their puzzle—with the resulting puzzle being their articulated purpose in life.

Difference

Students were also encouraged not just to look for similarities but also to embrace differences in ways of thinking, seeing, and comprehending. While many of the students spoke to their journeys and were able to relate to others through their experiences, it was, in fact, their experiences that made them unique in this study. They were encouraged in their journeys to think about: What are the things that made them different? What are the things that made them stand apart from others? What are the things that made them uniquely them?

For example, one of the students spoke about the fact that she had a roommate, and they got along well together. The roommate was certain in their path to purpose, but the student was not. The student had thought about nursing but was struggling with some of the pre-requisite courses required to be considered for the program. The roommate got sick one night and had asked the student for help. The roommate was unsure what to do as far as treatment. Unofficially, the student used some of her certified nursing assistant training to “run a few tests” and to pinpoint the pain. After doing this, the student suggested her thoughts and a course of action. The roommate took the student’s opinions to heart and followed their suggestions. The student’s suggestions ended up being the correct official diagnosis and course of treatment for the roommate. It was after this interaction that the student decided that nursing was, in fact, the pathway to their purpose. This example served as an experiential lesson for the student involved.

While all the students in the study declared they wanted to help people as their pathway to purpose, how helping shows up is different for all of them. The students come from very different backgrounds and had very different experiential opportunities to explore purpose. Several of the students spoke about privilege that allowed them to lead the life they live and wanted to use their privilege as one of the tools that allowed them to live their lives of purpose. One student had the opportunity to travel abroad to their home country and explore what it means to live below poverty. One student lived a life of continuously being told they are different and will never amount to much, which has led their journey to prove otherwise. One student decided they can be purposeful from anywhere in the world and desired to live out their purpose journey in a van traveling around.

Process

Participants identified the process upon which they embarked as the most important part of their journey to cultivate and articulate their purpose. The process often accounted for experiences and life before entering higher education. However, the Life Design course provided resources for students to take their experiences and put them together in a concerted effort that made the most sense to them; as a result, they could articulate their purpose in life.

The cultivation of purpose process used in the Life Design course is the SPARCK (Story, Purpose, Aspiration, Reflection, Connection, Kickstart) model, with each tool corresponding to a different aspect of the model. The story portion allowed the student to identify gaps and to articulate their self—who they are and how they got here. The purpose portion helped students define their motivation and ambitions to serve something bigger than themselves. Aspirations are the dreams and desires that one has to complete their service. This includes opportunities and experiences that encompass their lives. Reflection is an essential part of the process, both internally reflecting and with peers and their personal community. Connection is the process by which they are connected with their network of individuals that can assist and support them in reaching their articulated purpose. It is also the portion where they are becoming who they want to be and moving forward in articulating their purpose in life, which moves them to kick-start. Kick-start is the ability for the student to take the initiative to create their pathway in purpose now that they have tools and resources and an articulated purpose. While each of the tools presented to the students during the process had its own sense of meaning in the greater whole, putting these tools together collectively and embracing this toolbox in combination with the spontaneous experiences is what ultimately cultivated a sense of purpose in the participants and gave them what they needed to articulate that purpose.

To begin, students are introduced to low-risk activities that allow them to learn that the environment they are part of is safe and conducive to completing the work, it allowed students to “let loose” and relax as well as build rapport with others in the same space and create their comfort zone for optimal production. One of the first activities students are invited to complete are questions that allow students to think about how they make decisions and consider what is best for them. An example of a question is, “If you were to walk into a bookstore, which section would you gravitate toward?” Asking questions to get the students to think in ways they may not otherwise allowed them to use different parts of their brain and explore areas for which they may not have done so recently. It also helped them to craft their story and to be able to articulate their story to others. Each of their journeys begins and ends with their story.

The next piece of the journey is purpose. To articulate purpose, one has to understand of what their purpose is comprised. Many of the tools used in purpose center around different assessments to showcase the different pieces of their puzzle and how they can put it together. This includes personality, strengths, and values, among others. An example of some of these low-risk purpose activities would include personality assessments. The personality assessments are administered on their own time through technology in about 10 minutes. Once the assessment is complete, students are shown how to review and assess their results. Once they have had the opportunity to complete a reflection with themselves, they are invited to reflect with a small group of individuals within their classroom environment. A lot of time is spent in the purpose area for being able to discern who they are is critical to cultivating and articulating their purpose in life.

Once they can articulate who they are, students are encouraged to dream—dream big about how they want to serve the world, understanding that how they want to serve might

include creating what they want to do. In addition to the connections and rapport they build in the classroom as part of their journey, students are also invited to think about their village and what support looks like for them outside of the classroom, outside of college, and throughout their life. Who do they need to support them as they fulfill their life of purpose? And not only who but what, or what organization. An example is the activity of the dream team/dream community, where they are invited to think about who they need to surround themselves with to succeed.

All of this leads to them kick-starting their journey into their articulated and cultivated vision for a purposeful life. Each student has had the opportunity to be part of a safe and welcoming environment that allows for critical reflection and connection among others. Their journey has taken them from who they are and the pieces of themselves that they find most impactful, and how they use those moments to propel themselves forward into a meaningful and purposeful life. This process could certainly be refined for other populations of students in a K12 setting, post-high school setting, experiential education setting, or something outside of education completely. The keys to success are being able to scaffold the work and allow for iteration, providing an environment conducive to safety and critical reflection, and ultimately the opportunity to explore the self.

Forward Progress

This Life Design course and its associated tools gave participants a sense of security. The security stemmed from participants learning to embrace the unknown, creating the time and space to reflect, and pivoting when the unexpected arose. Each participant developed a toolbox from which they could pull when life became challenging for them. As a result, they had the confidence to pause, reflect, and make necessary changes to continue to reach their stated

purpose. The purpose journey identifies how one can contribute to something bigger than themselves. Contribution through service, whatever form that service may take, defines meaning in one's life.

Opportunities for Exploration of Future Studies

Phenomenological studies are very important when little information about a particular subject area is known. While there is a good deal of research (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Damon, 2008; Frankl, 1959) surrounding purpose, specifically purpose with a religious context (Frankl, 1959; Hindman, 2002), there is not a wealth of information regarding the journey to cultivating and articulating purpose within higher education.

The structure and schedule of an academic year in higher education posed several challenges. The researcher began conducting interviews at the beginning of April. The end of April was met with final exams and students embarking on their summer plans, which meant many were mentally distancing themselves from academia for the summer and not responding to their university emails. Before final exams and summer break, the researcher was able to conduct five interviews successfully. Through the end of April and summer, the researcher could not engage with any qualified students for this study. Upon the start of the fall semester, the researcher was able to complete four more interviews during the first and second weeks. The researcher is confident that the final number of respondents may have been higher if summer break had not brought about competing priorities.

The researcher is also a course instructor, thus removing an entire population of students from the study due to the proximity of the researcher to the participant and the potential for bias in the research. Course instructors selected this study's population based on their coursework

completion. It is likely that far more students were interested in speaking about their experiences cultivating and articulating their purpose in life but were not identified as such.

Further limitations to this study were that the selected students were limited to only those previously enrolled in a Life Design course recommended by course instructors based on a clear and concise articulation of purpose. They independently agreed to participate in the study when contacted by the researcher. Therefore, the results may not reflect all students with a clear, cultivated, and articulated purpose within a higher education setting. Additionally, all of the participants of this study identified as female, as no individuals of other genders were represented. Before selecting participants, the decision was made not to include specific questions about how culture and identity played into their ability to cultivate and articulate their purpose (which can also serve as a future research study). Rather, the questions were formed to focus on the students' experiences, the tools they obtained, and the relationships they created to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life.

This study was also limited because it was conducted at a large public minority-serving institution with 20,000 or more students in the Southeast United States. The institution's size, mission, and location all played an important part in the culture and values instilled in the students it served (Kuh, 1993). The defining purpose might hold a different value for a different population of students. In the same way, the institution's size, where more resources are available to each student, may hold different values. While the aim of qualitative research is not to generalize (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), the results of this study may not be as transferrable to other institutions or regions. Nevertheless, for first-year college students, this adaptable methodology can expand knowledge about the influence of purpose and the networks for which students can cultivate and articulate their purpose in life.

Future Research

Many definitions are described within the literature on defining purpose (Bronk, 2014; Chickering, 1969; Damon et al., 2003; Malin, 2018; Sharma & De Alba, 2018; Staples & Troutman, 2010). However, there is little to no literature on *how* students within higher education can cultivate and articulate their purpose. This study showed how students could cultivate and articulate their purpose through intentional and unplanned experiences, appropriate mental and physical environment, self-reflection, and Life Design tools. Researchers should continue to seek other ways to cultivate and articulate purpose among multiple populations by creating processes that are intentional in their development of the student through the development and use of new tools that build upon each other and use iteration as a growth process, and the creation of intentional environments for self-reflection and peer reflection.

While Chickering and Reisser (1993) speak to purpose in their student development theory, Vector 6, there is limited research into how identity affects or plays a role in the journey to cultivating and articulating purpose. Further inquiry into identity and how purpose influences the journey is necessary. This study looked at first-year, traditional-aged college students at a public institution. Non-traditional, older, part-time, transfer, and/or rural students may provide a different context for the journey to cultivate and articulate purpose. Additionally, cultural context and racial and ethnic identity may play a role in the journey to purpose that this study did not explore.

Two participants of this study took the time to explain that the questions in this study did not ask about or consider the things they brought to the table when coming to college and taking the Life Design course, such as family experiences, how they were raised, values instilled in them, high school classes or experiences, or previous service opportunities. Further research

could include a deeper understanding of previous life experiences and the role that they play in being able to cultivate and articulate their purpose in life.

Finally, several of the participants in this study mentioned that once they were able to cultivate and articulate their purpose, they wanted practical experience in their articulated purpose to ensure that how they articulated they wanted to serve the world was, in fact, consistent with their vision. They wanted practical, hands-on experience in their fields of study to ensure their path to purpose would be successful for them. This study did not address practical experience following the cultivation and articulation of purpose, meaning the application of their pathway to the purpose (fieldwork), which certainly could be the subject of further research in this field. Once a student said how they wanted to serve the world through their articulated purpose, opportunities were given for students to explore what that meant but were never allowed (as part of the course) to complete the work/experience.

Conclusion

When a student applies to an institution of higher education, they are asked to complete demographic information and “check a box” to select their major. Checking this box does not typically factor in their life experiences, things they are good at, well suited to, or things they love. The implication in selecting your major as you enter university is that you are setting yourself on a path where you will study, graduate, and eventually go into a career field associated with your major. Most college freshmen do not have a fully developed sense of self on a personal level, let alone a professional one. Yet these students are asked to check a box that dictates so many future elements of their lives. What if all students came to the university as explorers who embarked on a journey to define their purpose? Then they could be asked who

they are, what they want to do, and what their values are before committing to their path. This could create a workforce of people walking in their purpose and working in fields they enjoy.

This study showed that engaging in purpose work could be integral to the student experience. Students who have never had the opportunity to perform deep dives and reflect on who they are and what they want to contribute to the world lack the holistic level of development displayed by those who have had this opportunity. From a young age, society conditioned us to define ourselves by our occupations (Damon, 2008). This study showed that students with that reasoning interrupted by this course could better understand who they were and what/how they wanted to contribute to society. Those who understood their wants and their “why” could better adapt and overcome the challenges that inevitably arose in their personal and professional lives. Capturing and articulating a purpose ensures that students are well-equipped to manage the “hows” in their lives because they are confident in their “why.”

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INVITATION

Dear [Name of Student],

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study exploring the experiences you have had in your Life Design Class(es) that have assisted you in being able to cultivate and articulate your life's purpose. You have been selected because you have taken at least one Life Design class.

I am passionate about this subject because I have experienced what it is like to be a first-year college student and not necessarily know my purpose in life. I believe that your perspectives will prove valuable to the advancement of higher education and the Life Design program.

Specifically, I am asking for: an emailed copy of your meaningful work statement, a completed demographic survey, and a single interview lasting 60-90 minutes. In this interview, I will be asking you questions about your educational background, experiences through college, and your understanding of your cultivated and articulated purpose in life.

Though it is my hope to keep this to a single interview session, if a follow-up interview becomes necessary, this will be scheduled at the end of the first interview session.

The results of this data collection will be used to help researchers, faculty, and administrators better understand the role that purpose plays in college students' lives. Do know that you will not be identified by name or by a description that would allow someone to determine who it is that you are. Your participation is anonymous and confidential, though very much appreciated.

This study has been approved by the University of North Carolina Greensboro's Institutional Review Board. Should you agree to participate, you will receive a demographic survey to complete as well as a request to submit your meaningful work statement. I will also send you a doodle poll via your university email address to set up and schedule an interview. Once we have a scheduled interview, we will meet at a location on campus. We can also set up an interview via Zoom or by phone if you would prefer.

Thank you for considering this request. I know there is a lot on your plate and life is busy. I do, however, believe that your insights will benefit others, and the interview conversation may be of benefit to you as well.

I look forward to hearing from you about your availability. I will reach out again in two weeks if I have not yet heard from you. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me or my supervisor, Dr. Laura Gonzalez. Our contact information is listed below.

Respectfully,

Megan Cayton
Doctoral Candidate, UNCG
mcdelph@uncg.edu

Laura Gonzalez, Ph.D.
Dissertation Chair, UNCG
lmgonza2@uncg.edu

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: Finding Why: Helping students cultivate their purpose in college

Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor (if applicable):

Megan Cayton, Doctoral Candidate, mcdelph@uncg.edu

Laura Gonzalez, Ph.D., Dissertation Committee Chair, lmgonza2@uncg.edu

Participant's Name: _____

The purpose of this research study is to learn more about the experiences students have in college and specifically in a Life Design course that allows them to arrive at their cultivated and articulated purpose. You are being asked to participate in this study because you meet three criteria – 1) you are a college student, 2) you are or have been enrolled in a Life Design course, and 3) you have an articulated purpose statement.

Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a demographic survey, submit your meaningful work statement, and participate in one individual interview that should last between 60 and 90 minutes.

Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential. To protect your identity as a research subject, you will be given a pseudonym, and no identifying information will be released. Interviews will be audio recorded. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed, although the researcher will try to limit access to the recording. Interviews will be transcribed with the opportunity to review your statement following the transcription. Transcriptions will be kept on a computer and password protected. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. There are no direct benefits to participating in the study. There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

If you have any concerns about your rights or general concerns, please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG at 1(855)251-2351. If you would like to discuss this research, please email Megan Cayton at mcdelph@uncg.edu.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing to consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate in this study described to you by Megan Cayton.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

I am requesting the following information from study participants to further enhance the data I will collect for this study. Regarding the collection of this information from the participants in my study:

- Each question enables me to analyze and understand the unique feedback and ideas of my participants.
- Individual identities will not be shared without the indicated consent from the participant.
- Each question's response options have been listed to reflect the values of this study on the inclusion of member identities and to minimize unintended microaggressions.
- Given the scope and complexities of social identities that exist worldwide and acknowledging the limitations of existing data-gathering capabilities, response options listed in the following questions are rooted in U.S. historical and cultural contexts.

Therefore, please fill out the demographic information below. Please note that your names, as well as your institutional affiliation, will be changed to pseudonyms in the final write-up of the study.

Personal Demographic Information

The following questions concern your personal demographic information. Please note that you will be given a pseudonym in the final write-up of this study.

First Name:

Last Name:

How would you describe your gender identity?

- Man or Male or Masculine
- Transgender Man or Male or Masculine
- Transgender Woman or Female or Feminine
- Woman or Female or Feminine
- Gender Non-Conforming or Gender Queer
- Intersex or Other Related Terms
- No Response
- Prefer Not to Answer
- Other (please describe):

How would you describe your racial and/or ethnic identity? (select all that apply)

- African American or Black
- American Indian, Alaska Native, Indigenous, or First Nations
- Arab or Middle Eastern
- Asian or Asian American
- Hispanic or Latina or Latino

- Multiracial or Biracial
- Individuals who list two or more races
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White or Caucasian or European American
- No response
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please describe):

How would you describe your sexual identity?

- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Fluid
- Gay
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Questioning
- No response
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please describe):

What is your academic class standing?

- First Year
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate or Professional

What is your age (in years)?

Do you identify as a transfer student?

- Yes
- No

What best describes your current living situation?

- Residence Hall
- Off-Campus Housing (within 5 miles of campus)
- Off-Campus Housing (farther than 5 miles from campus)
- Living at home with family
- No stable residence

In which academic college/school is your major at UNCG? (select all that apply)

- School of Health and Human Sciences
- College of Arts and Sciences
- College of Visual and Performing Arts
- Joseph M. Bryan School of Business and Economics
- School of Education
- School of Nursing
- Joint School of Nanosciences and Nanoengineering
- Lloyd International Honors College
- Graduate School

Has either of your parent(s) or guardians earned a bachelor's degree or higher?

- Yes
- No

Since you have been a student at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, have you been a member of or participated in any of the following? (select all that apply)

- Academic honors or organization (e.g., 1st G, Alpha Lambda Delta)
- Campus NCAA athletics
- Community Service (e.g., OLCE, Advocates Taking Action, ACE)
- Fraternity or Sorority
- Health and Wellness (e.g., Active Minds, Campus Recreation, Fencing, Quidditch)
- Identity-based student organization (e.g., BBSA, LGBTQ+ organization)
- Media (e.g., Carolinian, Coraddi)
- Performing group (e.g., school music organization, dance team)
- Political (e.g., Young Republicans, College Democrats)
- Student Government (e.g., Residence Hall Association, Hall Council, SGA)
- Recreational (e.g., Intramurals, Club Sports)
- Religious (e.g., CRU, Campus Outreach, Catholic Campus Ministry)
- Other campus-based clubs or organizations

Thank you for your time in filling out this survey. If you have any questions, concerns or other comments regarding the questions asked or response options available in this survey, please contact Megan Cayton, Doctoral Candidate, University of North Carolina Greensboro, or Dr. Laura Gonzalez, University of North Carolina Greensboro.

Please note that these designations were borrowed from the Carnegie classification website. This can be accessed at: http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/classification_descriptions/basic.php

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction

1. Welcome
2. Introduction of self
3. Introduction of study
4. Informed consent
5. Review of any materials still needed

Initial Rapport Building

1. Sharing a bit about me and my path to purpose
2. Tell me about yourself
3. What is your current academic area of study?

Describe the Life Design concept and definition of purpose in life. Explain what I am studying (the how).

Support in College

1. What resources are offered to you as a student in college?
2. What services/support systems have you used on or around campus?
3. What has your academic advising experience been like?

Purpose in Life

1. Do you have/What is your purpose in life?
2. When did you feel you had a clear understanding of your purpose in life? How did you know?
3. Has your purpose in life changed since taking a Life Design class/declaring your purpose in life?
4. How does knowing your purpose in life manifest itself in your daily life?

Developing Purpose in Life/Experiences

1. What do you identify as your values?
2. What do you identify as your talents and gifts?
3. Thinking back on your Life Design experience(s), can you identify one powerful experience that helped you to develop your purpose in life? Tell me about how you moved through that experience.
4. What other specific experiences helped you to clarify your sense of purpose in life?
5. What was it about those experiences that helped you to clarify your sense of purpose?

Closing

1. How do you want to serve the world?
2. What could help you continue to clarify your purpose in life?

3. What did I not ask about your experiences developing purpose in life that is important for me to know?

APPENDIX E: MEANINGFUL WORK STATEMENT

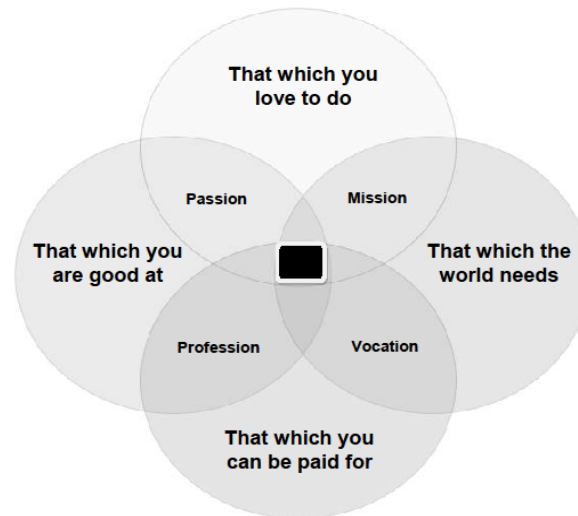
Meaningful Work


This part—Meaningful Work—will have you create a statement that defines the work that you’re here to do. If you remember, your meaningful work is work that combines the positive attributes you know about yourself and serving the needs of the world. Defining your meaningful work could be so profound that it could help you decide your major, identify your career paths/options, create the business you want to start—and so much more. Once you create your meaningful work statement, you will take a short quiz to determine if your statement is truly your meaningful work. The goal is to create a statement that truly defines the work you are here to do!

Meaningful Work Statement

What if you could be clear about the work that you’re here to do? What if that work was connected to your values, your talents and gifts, and your interests? The Meaningful Work activity which follows provides an opportunity to recognize the work you are here to do, at least at this point in your life. You will use the lists on the next few pages to help you develop a statement that identifies how you want to serve the world in a meaningful way. Use this activity any time you are at a crossroads in your life and want to explore the “work” you’d like to do. Note: If something is not listed in any of the lists below, feel free to add your word to your list!

Meaningful Work Model Life Design Program



 = Meaningful Work

Engaging in Meaningful Work consists of three parts:

- Recognize that the work must be personally and profoundly meaningful to you.
- Understand that the work has importance and significance to others.
- Share your greatest gifts in greater service to the world.

Values – Choose up to 3

Your Values are the things that are the most important things in your life right now. Choose your top three Values and write them on your Life Design You Worksheet.

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Accomplishment/Achievement | Harmony |
| Accountability/Responsibility | Honesty/Trust |
| Advancement/Promotion | Integrity |
| Authority/Power/Control | Knowledge/Learning/Education |
| Autonomy/Independence | Leadership |
| Balance/Stability | Leisure |
| Challenge/Risk | Loyalty |
| Competence | Nature/Environment |
| Competition | Personal Development/Growth |
| Creativity/Self-Expression | Recognition/Fame/Prestige |
| Enjoyment/Happiness | Religion |
| Entrepreneurship/Innovation | Respect |
| Excellence | Safety/Security |
| Expertise | Service/Helping Others |
| Fairness/Equality/Diversity | Spirituality |
| Family | Travel/Adventure |
| Fitness/Health | Wealth |
| Friendship | Wisdom |

Talents and Gifts – Choose up to 3

Your Talents and Gifts are the things that you are both good at, AND you enjoy doing. Choose your top three Talents and Gifts and write them on your Life Design You Worksheet.

| | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Adapting | Gathering information | Playing games |
| Analyzing data | Giving advice | Playing sports |
| Appreciating things | Giving people hope | Programming |
| Arranging | Giving presentations | Public speaking |
| Asking good questions | Having conversations | Reading |
| Being adventurous | Having fun | Recruiting others |
| Being fair | Healing | Reflecting |
| Being funny | Helping/serving others | Remembering things |
| Being optimistic | Implementing | Repairing things |
| Bringing out the best in others | Including others | Reporting |
| Building things | Inspiring others | Researching |
| Buying | Learning from mistakes | Resolving problems |
| Caring for others | Learning new things | Saving lives |
| Cleaning | Leading others | Selling/Marketing |
| Collecting | Listening | Showing compassion |
| Coming up with new ideas | Living in the moment | Singing |
| | Making arts and crafts | Speaking languages |

Compiling statistics
 Connecting people
 Cooking
 Coordinating activities
 Counseling
 Creating new things
 Dealing with pressure
 Dealing with relationships
 Debating
 Decorating
 Demonstrating
 Designing
 Developing
 Driving
 Eating healthy
 Encouraging people
 Enhancing beauty
 Entertaining others
 Exercising
 Fixing things
 Future-thinking

Making decisions
 Making foods/drinks
 Making music
 Making people happy
 Making people laugh
 Managing money
 Managing people
 Managing time
 Meeting people
 Memorizing
 Motivating others
 Moving
 Networking
 Note-taking
 Organizing
 Painting/Drawing
 Parenting
 Performing
 Planning events
 Playing instruments

Spending wisely
 Starting new things
 Storytelling
 Taking care of people
 Taking pictures
 Taking risks
 Talking
 Teaching/Training
 Thinking
 Traveling
 Understanding law/legal issues
 Using computers
 Using electronics
 Using technology
 Working on cars
 Working outdoors
 Working with numbers
 Working with tools
 Working with your hands
 Writing

Interests – Choose up to 3

Your Interests are the things that you're interested in, areas you're curious about, things that you're passionate about, problems you'd like to solve, and things that make you angry or drive you crazy. You may also use this as an opportunity to think about areas you'd like to learn more about. Choose your top three Talents and Gifts and write them on your Life Design You Worksheet.

Government/Politics
 Farming/Agriculture
 Toys/Games
 Beauty
 Cars/Driving
 Electronics
 Diversity
 Sports/Athletics
 Dance
 Energy (Resource vs. Spiritual)
 Law/Justice
 Animals/Pets
 Design
 Disabilities
 Environment/Nature

Business
 History
 Clothing/Fashion
 Languages
 Safety/Security
 Education
 Transportation
 Children Issues
 Nutrition/Food
 Music/Radio
 Military
 Families/Relationships
 Exercise/Fitness
 Aviation/Flying
 Marketing/Sales

Entrepreneurship
 Medicine/Medical Care
 Writing/Publishing
 Hotels/Event Planning
 Entertainment
 Computers/Technology
 Mental/Emotional Health
 Home Improvement
 Religion/Spiritual
 Housing/Real Estate
 Math/Statistics
 Landscape
 Theater/Acting
 Plants/Flowers
 Self-Help/Personal Growth

Humor
Money/Finance
Philanthropy
Boating/Water
Travel/Tourism
Arts/Crafts

Furniture/Antiques
Books/Libraries
Recreation/Outdoors
Health/Wellness
Television/Movies/Film
Weather

Social Media
Cooking
Forensics/Death/Mortician
Sexuality
Photography
Sciences

Audience – Choose up to 3

Your Audiences are the people/groups you'd like to help, those you could see yourself working with, and/or those individuals/groups that could benefit from what you could share. Choose your top three Audiences and write them on your Life Design You Worksheet.

Business Owners
Young Children
Special Needs – Mentally
High School Students
Creative People
K-12 Education (Teachers, Staff)
Specific Medical Issues
Poverty/Rural Areas
Mothers and/or Fathers
Delinquents
Females/Males
Homeless People
Children in Foster Care
Unhealthy People
Artists/Performers
Veterans/Military
Adults

Entrepreneurs
Communities/Neighborhoods
Special Needs - Physically
Infants/Babies
Blind/Visually Impaired
Families (includes your own)
Specific Ethnic/Racial Groups
“Do-It-Yourself” (DIY) People
People from Other Countries
People in Emotional Crisis
At-Risk Groups
Farmers
Animals
Orphans/Runaways
Prisoners
Marriages
LGBTQA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Asexual)

Athletes
Deaf/Hearing Impaired
Disaster Victims
College Students
High-Level Executives
Higher Education (Faculty, Staff)
Substance Abusers
Religious Organizations
Single Parents
Elderly/Seniors
Gangs/Gang Members
Entertainers/Celebrities
Pregnant Teens/Adults
Physically Abused
Immigrants
Single People

Action – Choose up to 3

Action words describe what you will do to help others, the process of how you will provide your help, or how you interact with others. Your action words may also describe the action that your audience will take when working with you. Action words describe the action to DO SOMETHING! As you choose your action words, think about the connection between your action words and your values, talents and gifts, interests, and audience. For this part of the exercise, choose up to five action words. Note: If there are action words that are not listed that you'd like to include, add them to your list. Write your top five list on the Meaningful Work Statement Worksheet.

| | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|-----------|-------------|------------|------------|
| Advise | Advocate | Assist | Build | Change | Coach |
| Collaborate | Connect | Construct | Contribute | Coordinate | Counsel |
| Create | Cultivate | Deliver | Demonstrate | Design | Develop |
| Direct | Discover | Dream | Educate | Eliminate | Employ |
| Empower | Enable | Encourage | Engage | Enlist | Entertain |
| Evaluate | Examine | Explain | Explore | Express | Facilitate |
| Feed | Foster | Free | Freedom | Gather | Guide |
| Heal | Help | Imagine | Improve | Influence | Inform |
| Inspire | Instruct | Invite | Lead | Lift | Listen |
| Live | Love | Make | Mentor | Motivate | Nurture |
| Optimize | Prepare | Promise | Promote | Provide | Pursue |
| Reclaim | Rejuvenate | Restore | Savor | Share | Show |
| Study | Support | Surrender | Teach | Train | Transform |
| Unlock | Uplift | Worship | | | |

Impact/Change—One or two phrases

And for this last part, take a few minutes to write one or two phrases in the space below that briefly describes the impact you believe you will make, the changes that will occur for the people/groups you serve, the benefit others will have from your work, and/or how the lives of your audience will improve as a result of your help. Use the space below to jot a few ideas for your phrase(s); write your final phrase (or two) on the Meaningful Work Statement Worksheet.

You will use your results from the Values, Talents and Gifts, Interests, Audiences, and Action categories, as well as your Impact/Change phrase, to develop your Meaningful Work Statement.

After you've come up with your list of "words" from the various activities, it's time to come up with ONE sentence that sums up your Meaningful Work – the work you'd like to do, who you'd like to help, how you'd help them, and the impact you will have and/or the change that will occur. Your meaningful work statement is a declaration that defines your contribution, your positive impact on others, and how your work will make you a better person. You may also decide to create multiple statements, especially if you have multiple interests and/or multiple audiences. Multiple statements may provide you an opportunity to select one statement to start with right away or find ways to combine/connect multiple statements into one. Remember to limit your statement to just ONE sentence to make this process easy for you. Below are several templates that may help you construct your statement; feel free to modify as you see fit – or combine statements that suit your needs. The best way to start this activity is to take your first choice of words in each category (talents, and gifts, interests, audience, and action) and see if you can come up with statement to start with, then modify accordingly. As you construct your meaningful work statement, keep these three questions in mind:

- What do I do?
- Who do I help?
- Why does it matter?

Meaningful Work Statement Sample Templates - fill in the template(s) blanks with at least one choice from each of the areas listed above. Feel free to choose one or both templates below):

- Because I value _____ (value) and have an interest in _____ (interest), I will use my _____ (talents and gifts) to _____ (action) _____ (audience) so that _____ (impact/change).
- My meaningful work is to use my skills in _____ (talents and gifts) to _____ (action) _____ (audience) so that _____ (impact/change), because I value _____ (value) and have an interest in _____ (interests).

Meaningful Work Statement Sample Open-ended Sentence Starters (Note: If you use one of the open-ended starters, you'll need to make sure to incorporate at least one item from each of the six items from the worksheet above):

- I am here to...
- I will serve others (or serve the world) by...

Use the space below (or a separate sheet of paper) to come up with your final statement. **Feel free to construct multiple statements if you have multiple interests, multiple audiences you wish to serve, etc.** We will test you on your Meaningful Work Statement.

Potential Meaningful Work Statement Checkup

As you try to decide on the ONE Meaningful Work Statements, here's a way to test whether this statement is aligned with your values, talents and gifts, interests, audience, and impact/change. Use the questions and the scale below to determine the right meaningful work statement for you:

3 = a lot 2 = some 1 = a little 0 = none

1. How much is this meaningful work tied to my personal core values and/or desired work values? _____
2. How much would I be able to include my talents and gifts in doing this meaningful work? _____
3. How much is my interest(s) tied to this meaningful work? _____
4. How much empathy do I have for this particular audience if involved in this meaningful work? _____
5. How much of an impact/change will I really be able to make doing this meaningful work? _____

The highest score you could obtain is 15 (higher is better); you would want to at least score a "10" to consider this your meaningful work. If your score is not a "10" or more, what change in your statement (a change that resonates with you) would you have to make to get your score to a "10?" Does your statement need to be more aligned with your values? Do you need to take more advantage of your talents and gifts? Do you need to work with an audience where you can have a greater impact?

Meaningful Work Statement Quiz

The last part of this activity will have you take the Meaningful Work Statement Quiz, a Quiz that challenges how much your statement resonates with your life. Is your meaningful work truly the work that you're here to do in this world? The six questions in this Quiz will provide you with one more test to see if this is your meaningful work. It's a very simple Quiz – you must answer either “YES” or “NO” to each of the questions; MAYBE is not allowed.

Statement #1 – 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____

Statement #2 (if necessary) – 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____

APPENDIX F: PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT

Introduction to Personality Type

This activity will have you examine your personality type. The Personality Assessment that you'll be doing is based on the most popular personality assessment - the Myers-Briggs Personality Assessment. This assessment is just one of many explanations of how you are wired; it provides another method to learn more about yourself. Personality Type assessments have been used to identify strengths and weaknesses, discover potential major and career choices, recognize how you work and play with others, how you learn, and even help you choose potential life partners! One thing to remember about taking this and other on-line assessments - take the results with a grain of salt. This assessment will help you learn more about yourself and what makes you tick.

Personality Type Assessments results are four letters, based on the following pairs:

- Extraversion (E) vs. Introversion (I) - Where Do You Get Your Energy? Do you get your energy from those around you (externally) or from inside yourself (internally)?
- Sensing (S) vs. Intuition (N) – How Do You Acquire or Gather Information? Do you prefer to focus on the facts and specific details, or do you prefer to focus on ideas and imagination?
- Thinking (T) vs. Feeling (F) – How Do You Make Decisions, Arrive At Conclusions, or Make Judgments? When making decisions, do you prefer to focus on logic or your “gut instincts”?
- Judging (J) vs. Perceiving (P) – How Do You Live Your Life? How Do You Relate to the Outer World? In dealing with the outside world, do you prefer to get things decided or do you prefer to stay open to new information and options?

For this activity, you will take a quick personality assessment that will help you identify your four-letter code (E vs. I, N vs. S, T vs. F, J vs. P). There are no wrong or right answers...it's just who you are. When completed, you will receive your four-letter personality code; make sure to make note of your four-letter code. These four letters define your personality type and will be useful to complete the rest of this activity.

Once you have your four-letter code, construct a “report” that identifies specific characteristics of your four-letter personality code, providing answers to the bullet points listed below:

- Provide a brief description of at least three personal characteristics/strengths that you feel best describe your personality type.
- Provide a brief description of at least three personal challenges/weaknesses you see in yourself based on your personality type.
- Describe two things you find most interesting about your personality type.
- Identify three majors and/or careers options that seem to be the best match to your personality type.
- Describe at least three characteristics, based on your personality type, that best describe what you'd be like in school and/or in work situations.
- Now that you know your personality type, how do you think it might impact your future?
- Briefly share your thoughts about the value (useful or not useful) of this activity.

Use the links below to help you answer the questions above and to get more information regarding your type, including career and major choice. Remember, this is just a resource to learn more about yourself, so take the results in stride, along with many of the other assessments we'll do in this class. Look at this as one piece of many pieces that is the puzzle of YOU!

- Free Personality Test – <https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>
- Profiles of the Sixteen Personality Types – <http://www.truity.com/view/types>
- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator – <http://www.davidson.edu/offices/career-development/students/career-and-major-exploration/career-assessment/mbti>
- Choosing a College Major – <http://cgs.sdce.edu/sites/default/files/choosing%20a%20college%20major%20with%20your%20Personality%20Type.pdf>
- Myers/Briggs Type Indicator and Careers – <http://www.cazenovia.edu/academics/career-and-extended-learning/career-services/majors-and-careers/career-assessment-tools/myersbriggs-type-indicator>
- Personal Growth – <http://www.personalitypage.com/html/personal.html>

Quick Personality Type Assessment

Place a check next to one of the two paired choices on each row that describes you best. When complete, add up your score for each column (should total of 15 points for each of the four sections).

The column with the higher number of checks is the code letter for that particular category.

Extraversion (E) vs. Introversion (I) - Where Do You Get Your Energy?

Do you get your energy from those around you (externally) or from inside yourself (internally)?

| | Extroversion (E) | | Introversion (I) |
|--|--|--|---|
| | I prefer spending my time with other people. | | I prefer spending my time alone. |
| | I would describe myself as talkative, enthusiastic, and animated. | | I would describe myself as reserved, quiet, and less talkative. |
| | I am easily distracted. | | I am able to focus for long periods. |
| | I learn and work best through talking. | | I learn and work best through thinking. |
| | I often seek center stage. | | I avoid the limelight. |
| | I talk more than listen. | | I listen more than talk. |
| | I respond to things quickly, with fast pace. | | I respond to things slowly, after lots of thinking. |
| | It's easy to know more about me. | | It's hard to know more about me. |
| | I prefer to know lots of people and have lots of friends and associates. | | I prefer to know few people and have few friends and acquaintances. |
| | I learn best when I'm in action. | | I learn best when I have time to think. |
| | I value action and engagement. | | I value calm and tranquility. |
| | I feel like I need to learn how to think more before I speak. | | I feel like I need to learn how to be more engaging. |
| | I prefer to have background sounds to help me get work done. | | I prefer to have quiet to help me get work done. |
| | I prefer classes and activities that encourage discussion. | | I prefer classes and activities that are lectured-based. |
| | I prefer to work with others. | | I prefer to work alone. |

Score for E _____ Which score (total of 15) was higher (circle one): E or I

Score for I _____

Sensing (S) vs. Intuition (N) – How Do You Acquire or Gather Information?

Do you prefer to focus on the facts and specific details or do you prefer to focus on ideas and imagination?

| Sensing (S) | Intuition (N) |
|---|---|
| I focus on facts and details. | I focus on concepts and the big picture. |
| I tend to speak in specifics and can give detailed descriptions. | I tend to speak in figurative language, using analogies and metaphors. |
| I value common sense and practicality. | I value ideas, imagination, and innovation. |
| I am oriented to the present. | I am oriented to the future. |
| I tend to be direct, blunt, and to the point. | I tend to be abstract, non-confrontational, and vague. |
| I am more aware of the physical nature of my environment. | I am more aware of the abstract nature of my environment. |
| I prefer to master established skills. | I prefer to learn new things. |
| I prefer courses in the natural sciences. | I prefer courses in the social sciences. |
| I work at a consistent, steady pace. | I work with bursts of energy. |
| I seek specific, detailed information. | I seek quick, less-detailed insights. |
| I tend to memorize facts. | I tend to use my imagination. |
| I will most likely follow instructions. | I will most likely create my own directions. |
| I prefer hands-on experience. | I prefer abstract thoughts that give perspective. |
| I prefer to receive clear assignments and projects. | I prefer to receive assignments and projects that encourage independent thinking. |
| I prefer classes that have step-by-step solutions and concrete answers. | I prefer classes that focus on class discussions and multiple answers. |

Score for S _____ Which score (total of 15) was higher (circle one): S or N Score for N _____

Thinking (T) vs. Feeling (F) – How Do You Make Decisions, Arrive At Conclusions, or Make Judgments?

When making decisions, do you prefer to focus on logic or your “gut instincts”?

| Thinking (T) | Feeling (F) |
|---|--|
| I prefer to focus on logic and analysis. | I prefer to focus on how people feel. |
| I am good with cause and effect thinking. | I enjoy pleasing people. |
| I can be blunt and direct. | I avoid conflict and confrontation. |
| I enjoy debate. | I am diplomatic. |
| I can often be found in strategic jobs. | I can often be found in helping professions. |
| I believe that truth more important than tact. | I believe that tact is more important than truth. |
| I can naturally see flaws and can be critical. | I see positives in people and like to give praise. |
| I am usually more assertive. | I am usually less assertive. |
| In conversations, I tend to get right to the point. | In conversations, I start with small talk first before I address an issue. |
| I am less sensitive to criticism. | I am more sensitive to criticism. |
| My decisions are guided by logic. | My decisions are guided by personal values and feelings. |
| I prefer to critique new ideas. | I prefer to please people. |
| I can easily find flaws in an argument. | I can easily find something to appreciate. |
| I learn by challenge and debate. | I learn by being supportive and appreciative. |
| I prefer logical presentations. | I prefer personal rapport. |

Score for T _____ Which score (total of 15) was higher (circle one): T or F
 Score for F _____

Judging (J) vs. Perceiving (P) – How Do You Live Your Life? How Do You Relate to the Outer World?

In dealing with the outside world, do you prefer to get things decided or do you prefer to stay open to new information and options?

| | Judging (J) | | Perceiving (P) |
|--|--|--|--|
| | I like to have decisions made immediately. | | I like to have my options open. |
| | I prefer to have a plan and be organized. | | I prefer life to be unplanned and act spontaneously. |
| | I am driven to complete projects in a timely manner. | | I have a tendency to start projects but wait until the last minute to complete them. |
| | I like structure and organized systems. | | I feel limited by structure and organized systems. |
| | I live by the philosophy of “work now, play later.” | | I love by the philosophy of “play now, work later.” |
| | I need to have a neat and tidy space at work and at home. | | I don’t worry about having a messy and cluttered space at work and at home. |
| | I like jobs that offer control. | | I like jobs that are that offer flexibility. |
| | I am typically uncomfortable with change. | | I typically enjoy change. |
| | I take time and deadlines very seriously. | | Time and deadlines are not important to me. |
| | I prefer formal, detailed instructions for solving problems. | | I prefer informal/less formal instructions for solving problems. |
| | I value dependability and reliability. | | I value change and uncertainty. |
| | I plan work well in advance. | | I like to work spontaneously. |
| | I prefer to be in charge of events. | | I prefer to participate in events. |
| | I prefer presentations that are informative and organized. | | I prefer presentations that are entertaining and inspiring. |
| | I tend to make decisions that are well thought-out. | | I tend to make decisions impulsively. |

Score for J _____

Which score (total of 15) was higher (circle one): J or P

Score for P _____

When you’ve completed all four sections, write in your four-letter code (those letters you circled) in the space below:

E or I S or N T or F J or P

16 Personality Types: One-Word Characteristics

ISTJs are responsible, loyal, stable, practical, down-to-earth, hardworking, steady, productive, direct, predictable, dependable, thorough, conservative, methodical, efficient, conventional, pragmatic, task-oriented, and reliable.

ISTPs are independent, practical, easygoing, problem solvers, realistic, resourceful, logical, practical, adaptable, reserved, aloof, helpful, calm, handy, self-directed, tolerant, and risk-takers.

ISFJs are quiet, friendly, responsible, hardworking, productive, devoted, accurate, thorough, practical, volunteers, conventional, grounded, contentious, methodical, responsible, helpful, traditional, reliable, connected, and careful.

ISFPs are quiet, reserved, trusting, loyal, committed, sensitive, kind, creative, caretakers, flexible, considerate, kind, active, outdoors-y, modest, observant, understanding, caring, supportive, listeners, harmonious, and artistic.

INFJs are idealistic, complex, compassionate, authentic, creative, visionary, nurturers, intuitive, introspective, reserved, devoted, aloof, loyal, imaginative, and purposeful.

INFPs are loyal, devoted, sensitive, creative, inspirational, flexible, easygoing, complex, caring, individualistic, non-judgmental, compassionate, gentle, imaginative, unconventional, introspective, and authentic.

INTJs are reserved, detached, analytical, logical, rational, original, independent, creative, ingenious, innovative, problem-solvers, critical, reserved, competent, ambitious, intellectual, private, stable, and resourceful.

INTPs are logical, analytical, independent, original, creative, innovative, analytical, non-traditional, reserved, philosophical, unconventional, intense, direct, contemplative, reflective, and insightful.

ESTP's are action-oriented, fun, flexible, adaptable, thrill-seekers, energetic, active, playful, adventurous, sociable, tuned-in, novelty-seeking, fun-seeking, flirtatious, humorous, and resourceful.

ESTJs are loyal, hardworking, dependable, thorough, practical, realistic, orderly, rule-abiding, conscientious, organized, predictable, conventional, factual, logical, efficient, traditional, stable, active, planners, and energetic.

ESFPs are practical, realistic, independent, fun-loving, social, spontaneous, talkative, enthusiastic, cooperative, playful, entertainers, friendly, generous, supportive, positive, light-hearted, conflict avoiders, and flexible.

ESFJs are friendly, organized, hardworking, productive, conscientious, loyal, dependable, traditional, responsible, sociable, outspoken, helpful, punctual, sympathetic, caregivers, and practical.

ENFPs are friendly, creative, energetic, enthusiastic, innovative, adventurous, outgoing, curious, original, warm, passionate, self-expressive, social, encouraging, artistic, talkative, intuitive, and fun.

ENFJs are friendly, sociable, empathetic, loyal, creative, imaginative, considerate, supportive, optimistic, forward-thinking, ambitious, altruistic, expressive, idealistic, charismatic, inspiring, and responsible.

ENTPs are creative, ingenious, flexible, diverse, energetic, fun, motivating, logical, innovators, curious, clever, open-minded, unconventional, visionary, resourceful, analytical, witty, explorers, and outspoken.

ENTJs are independent, original, visionary, logical, organized, ambitious, competitive, hardworking, analytical, objective, decisive, energetic, methodical, outgoing, goal-oriented, and direct.

APPENDIX G: CAREER CALLING POSTER

Major/Career/Calling Exploration Poster (for freshmen and sophomore students)

Do you have interest in one particular area? In multiple areas? Can't decide on any one particular major/area to focus on? What are your options - as far as majors, minors, and concentrations? What should you really pursue while in college? This week, you will put together a "poster" (must be a minimum of 18" X 24") about your major/career/calling options, to include the following:

1. List your meaningful work statement somewhere on your poster.
2. List at least two (2) potential majors/concentrations aligned with your meaningful work statement. You should have ONE major listed as your primary/main interest (Plan A) and one as your second interest (Plan B). You are welcome to add additional majors if you desire, but you will need to start with at least two different choices. You may want to make your decision based on your meaningful work statement – or feel free to use the results of previous activities, such as your personality type, your values, your strengths, your talents and gifts, your interests, your audience – or a combination of all of the above. Even if you know EXACTLY what you want to do and don't have any interests in any other options, you still must choose a second major. This second major could be potentially another area of interest you'd like to pursue. Your list of potential majors can be found at: <https://catalog.uncg.edu/programs/> to see the many options for majors/concentrations at UNCG. If you can't narrow down your options because you don't know or have too many, choose two that sound most interesting - it's always better to have more options than less, especially if you're pursuing a "competitive" major. You will need to list at least your TWO major(s)/concentration(s) options on your poster.
3. For at least your primary major (and for both majors if you're interested in two different areas), make sure to list the specific entrance requirements to get into the major, such as GPA requirements, prerequisite courses, application forms and deadlines, and any other specific entrance requirements. Make sure to list these entrance requirements on your poster.
4. If you have or have an interest in one or more minors, make sure to list them on your poster. Make sure to put the number of credits required for each of the minors in parentheses. You can find a list of here: <https://catalog.uncg.edu/programs/>
5. If you have interests in courses not related to major requirements but will enhance your college experience (such as courses in speaking, photography, media studies, art, music, theater, business, etc.), include those options on your poster as well. These could also be courses that you'd like to take for FUN! You can review UNCG's Undergraduate Bulletin (<https://catalog.uncg.edu/courses/>) to see the list of courses (and their descriptions) offered at UNCG. Note: You may also want to review the list of courses for your major just so you know what's required for you to take for that particular major.
6. For this next part, you will need to visit the two links below:
 - What Can I Do With a Major In - <https://www.umflint.edu/advising/careers-by-major/>

- Majors That Pay You Back (PayScale.com) - <http://www.payscale.com/college-salary-report/majors-that-pay-you-back>
 - Use the links above to write down the following information on your poster:
 - Specific areas and employers related to your major choices and/or meaningful work.
 - Information, strategies, requirements, and/or experiences you need to obtain to pursue this work further or enhance your chances of finding/creating a position (graduate school, certificates, observation hours, etc.).
 - Average starting salary for your major - include both bachelors and, if necessary, associate degrees and/or graduate/professional degrees - in your major/meaningful work/area of interest (<https://www.payscale.com/index/US/Degree>).
7. On your poster, write down your list of courses you plan to take for the 2019 Spring Semester. If you're not sure what to take, visit department web sites to see if they have suggested four-year course sequences for their majors. You will also need to include a four-year plan of study of what you should take for the rest of your college career to finish out your degree. If you have an interest in only one major, do a four-year plan for that major. If you have multiple options, feel free to include one for each option. These can be found on most School/College/Department websites.
- Programs of Study in the School of Health and Human Sciences: <http://www.uncg.edu/hhs/advising-center/admission-major.html>
 - This may also be a great time to set up an appointment to meet with your advisor and/or the HHS Advising Center (228 Stone Building) to go over your schedule for the following semester.
8. If you have an interest in graduate school, list the program you might be interested in pursuing and at least three graduate schools that you would be interested in attending for that program. On your poster, write down your graduate school program interest(s) and a list of at least three graduate schools that have your program of interest. This would also be a good time to make sure you know/understand the admission requirements for that program (application requirements, GPA requirements, observation hours, GRE/MCAT/GMAT test scores, pre-requisite courses, etc.). For example, if you want to get a list of graduate-level Physical Therapy programs in the state of North Carolina, use the link below and type in physical therapy and North Carolina for a list of graduate program/schools.
- Petersons Graduate School Research - <https://www.petersons.com/graduate-schools.aspx>
9. You will also be required to list at least one student organizations and one professional organization related to your interests/meaningful work/major. You can get a list of UNCG student organization through Campus Activities and Programs: <http://cap.uncg.edu/>. Professional organizations and associations related to your major can be found here: <https://www.umflint.edu/advising/careers-by-major/>
10. If you have an interest in Study Abroad, list one or two places outside the U.S. that you have an interest in visiting for a semester/year. Click on the following link for more information: https://international.uncg.edu/sae/study_abroad_exchanges.html

11. Since “experience matters,” you’ll need to at least explore one potential internships/apprenticeships in your area of interest. In some of the majors in the School of Health and Human Sciences, internships are required as part of the program; in others, it’s strongly recommended. Even if your program doesn’t require an outside experience, you’ll still need to gain experience while in college to be competitive in jobs once you graduate. Here’s a list of sites that could help you identify potential internship/apprenticeship opportunities:
- UNCG’s Career Services Center - <https://csc.uncg.edu/students/findinternship/>
 - Internship.com - <https://www.internships.com/>
 - Youtern - <https://www.youtern.com/>
 - InternQueen - <https://www.internqueen.com/>
 - Absolute Internships - <https://absoluteinternship.com/>
 - Global Experiences - <https://www.globalexperiences.com/>
 - Cool Works - <https://www.coolworks.com/>
 - Apprenticeships: US Department of Labor - <https://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship/>
 - Apprenticeships.gov - <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/>
 - Apprenticeship NC - <https://www.apprenticeshipnc.com/>
 - The Apprenticeship Guide - <http://www.apprenticeshipguide.co.uk/>
12. Include at least one entrepreneurial business/side hustle you could explore/create while in college. You could get involved as a direct seller, create a side hustle, or come up with your own idea. Make sure to list at least one idea of something that you could create by the time you graduate. Visit any of the following links for ideas to start something:
- List of Direct Selling Members - <https://www.dsa.org/forms/CompanyFormPublicMembers/>
 - List of Direct Selling Suppliers - <https://www.dsa.org/forms/CompanyFormPublicSuppliers/>
 - 99 Side Hustle Business Ideas You Can Start Today - <https://www.sidehustlenation.com/ideas/>
 - 250+ Proven Ways to Make Extra Money in 2018: The Ultimate Guide - <https://www.sidehustlenation.com/make-extra-money/>
13. Feel free to include anything other information regarding your interest(s) in majors, careers, calling, and meaningful work that’s pertinent to this assignment.

This is no particular design that’s required for these posters. If you are sure what to do, click on this link - <https://thedreamdean.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/posters-major-career-exploration-spring-2016.doc> to see examples of posters from previous classes.

The purpose of this homework assignment is to get you to explore and understand your options for majors, minors, graduate school, student group/professional organization involvement, and internships/apprenticeships. We want you to be aware of ALL of the resources available to you to not only make informed decisions about your future, but to empower you to create your future. Remember, this is to be completed as a poster, not as a written report.

APPENDIX H: MY LIFE STORY POSTER

My Life Story Project #1: Poster and Presentation Instructions

Poster Instructions

The My Life Story Poster is a chance for you to reflect on your life. You will take the information from the “I Am Statement” Activity, the “Storytelling” Activity, and the “My Life Story” Worksheet to create a poster that tells your story. Create a poster that best explains your life up to now, a timeline to highlight some of your most important events or create one that tells a story about your journey.

You get to decide how you want to tell your story; feel free to take pictures of the examples in class or click on the file below for additional examples. Use any combination of drawings, pictures and/or words to create your poster; we only require that your poster includes at least 25 total items to illustrate the most important parts of your life. Make sure to include your ONE final, overarching I Am Statement in your poster.

The poster must be a minimum of 18” by 24”; we will provide you with poster paper if you cannot have access to paper. To make sure it stands out best, use color markers or pencils to draw your poster - the more color the better. When you complete your poster, make sure to put your name on the back of the poster

Examples of the My Life Story Posters can be found at:

<https://thedreamdean.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/posters-my-life-story-spring-2016.doc>. Here, you will find several examples of My Life Story posters completed in previous classes.

As part of your poster, you will also be required to include a six-word memoir - six words that is a summation of your life so far. Think of it as a description of your life - in six words. Check out the six-word memoir videos below for suggestions, tips and examples:

- Six Tips for Writing Six-Word Memoirs - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCJyUMHaL_g
- Tips for writing a 6-word memoir - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSlen-udJ5A>
- Six-Word Memoirs, the book - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBnP0DoGjRI>
- Six-Word Memoirs: The Video Story - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZOxhHXZW6o>
- Our six-word stories - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1uD-dEl3Hs>
- Six Word Stories Mitchell Community College - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYA7S_xHs_M
- 6-word memoir 2015 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8aRpwRUGQY>
- Six-Word Memoirs (2010) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tp6jaUHEfII>

Presentation Instructions

The presentation will start with a “Gallery Walk,” where each participant will post their poster on the walls around the room for your fellow participants to view. This SILENT Gallery Walk will take about 5 minutes; no need to make comments, just take it all in and relish this experience.

Once the Gallery Walk is complete, each of you will stand by your poster and answer the questions below. Your presentation should be approximately 1 to 1½ minute long. **DO NOT** share every experience on your poster; just make sure your presentation covers the following points:

- As you look at the whole picture of your life, what have you learned most about your life so far? How would you summarize your life in one or two sentences?
- Briefly describe one of the most impactful events from your past and why it had such an impact on you.
- Share your final I Am Statement and your Six-Word Memoir.
- Share your thoughts and/or feelings on what it was like to spend the first few weeks reflecting on and developing/writing your story? How do you think your story will impact you and/or move you forward in the future?

Your My Life Story Poster is worth 8 points and the presentation is worth 3 points. You are expected to complete the poster and presentation for this specific class period; if you miss this class, you can still receive credit for your poster, but will not receive credit for the presentation.

Grading for the Posters and Presentations

Poster:

- 7-8 points – Outstanding work, great design – imaginative and creative, great use of color (markers/colored pencils), includes all categories
- 5-6 points – Good work, good design, good use of colors (markers/colored pencils), include all categories.
- 3-4 points – Decent work, fair design, drawn in ink pen or #2 pencil, one category missing
- 1-2 points – Crappy work, poor design, drawn in pen or #2 pencil, two or more categories missing
- 0 points – did not turn in poster

Presentation:

- 3 points: Presentation incorporates ideas addressing the questions above (each question’s answer is not just ‘read off’ or made up as you speak); clear evidence of preparation ahead of class meeting.
- 2 points: Presentation was good, but not inspiring. Answered all five questions but did not delve into much detail.

- 1 point: Not prepared to answer presentation questions. Responses were not prepared in advance.
- 0 point: no presentation.

If you have any questions about the poster or presentations, please contact me at whjohnso@uncg.edu. Make sure to give me enough notice to respond to your e-mail; if you contact me the day before your presentation, I probably will not be able to get back to you in a timely manner.

The Digital ACT Studio (<https://digitalactstudio.uncg.edu/>) is located in the lower level (basement) of the Jackson Library; the hours of operation are:

- Monday – 10am-8pm
- Tuesday – 10am-8pm
- Wednesday – 10am-8pm
- Thursday – 10am-8pm
- Friday – 10am-2pm
- Saturday and Sunday – Closed

The Digital ACT Studio will also be available to assist you with the design and construction of your posters; they also have markers, paper, and additional resources to help you with your poster. The consultants have extensive design experience, so will be able to help you with the design of your poster. Although walk-ins are welcomed, it's best to make an appointment; click on this link – <https://digitalactstudio.uncg.edu/our-services/make-an-appointment/>.

We have made sure to provide you with an array of outside resources to assist you with the construction of your posters, as well as with the design of your life. Take this as an opportunity to tell your story in a more effective, meaningful way! But most of all, HAVE FUN!

APPENDIX I: DREAM TEAM/DREAM COMMUNITY

Personal Board of Advisors

(Adapted from Personal Board of Directors, Mad Office Hero:
<http://www.madofficehero.com/product/personal-board-of-directors-worksheet/> and from Paced Education: Stanford 2025 - <http://www.stanford2025.com/paced-education>)

One of the most important areas that most people don't explore is nurturing relationships that help them grow – both professionally and personally. The following worksheet will provide you with a few ideas to help you identify potential people to help you on your journey. Use this as your opportunity to start connecting with people who will help you move forward in achieving your vision for the future. As you put your list together, you **MUST** have different people to support the different areas/needs in your life; you may only use one person twice on your list – everyone else must be someone different. As you list your advisors, also, indicate (briefly) why you chose each particular person for that particular category.

Knowledge/Expertise: Who can help you continue to build your knowledge and expertise? Who's an expert in the areas you want to develop? Who shares best practices or innovations? Who broadens your perspective?

Name:

Influence: Who, at an executive/high level, supports you? Who's influential? Who offers guidance and mentoring? Who connects you to resources?

Name:

Purpose and Motivation: Who inspires you with fresh ideas? Who motivates you to make a difference? Who validates your work? Who's a role model that takes action?

Name:

Personal Development: Who makes you a better you? Who challenges you? Who gives you honest feedback? Who tells you the things you don't want to hear but need to hear? Who pushes you to be better?

Name:

Personal Support/Closet Confidante: Who encourages you? Who listens while you vent or gripe and reflect back to you? Who gets you back on track when needed? Who can you be yourself with?

Name: _____

Balanced Life: Who encourages your health and mental well-being? Who helps you learn and grow as a person?

Name: _____

Academic Inspirer: Who can help you learn more about a discipline that has piqued your interest?

Name: _____

Industry Professional: Who can help you create connections between your educational and experiential pursuits?

Name: _____

Student Mentor: Who is further along in his/her journey, capable of sharing his/her experience with you?

Name: _____

Wild Card: Who can you include on your board that will help you become the best version of yourself?

Name: _____

Networking/Relationship Building Opportunities

The first activity had you focus your efforts on specific people to include as part of your Personal Board of Advisors. This activity will have you identify particular businesses, organizations, associations, and social groups that could be potential opportunities to help you connect with and/or build your tribe. Use the chart below to identify those specific entities that could provide you the opportunities to connect. You will need to identify at least FIFTEEN (15) different groups/organizations from at least FIVE (5) different categories that could potentially help you build your tribe. What's the important feature/attribute of each of the groups you have listed below?

| Type | Name of Entity/Organization |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Business Organizations (i.e., Chamber of Commerce) | |
| Professional Organizations | |
| Non-Profit Organizations | |
| Political Organizations | |
| Religious Organizations | |
| Athletic Organizations | |
| Social Organizations | |
| Honor/Academic Societies | |
| Online Groups/Organizations | |
| Other Individuals, Groups, and /or Organizations that don't fit in categories listed above | |

APPENDIX J: SEVEN WORD LIFE MOTTO

Seven Word Life Motto

Your Seven Word Life Motto defines how you'd like to live your life every day, in seven words—no more, no less. Your Life Motto should be the words that you see to get you out of bed in the morning.

Why a Life Motto? (from dictionary.com)

- A motto is: (1) a maxim adopted as an expression of the guiding principles of a person, and (2) a sentence or phrase expressing the spirit or purpose of a person.

Why seven words?

- In numerology circles, the number “7” is seen as being spiritual, reflective, introspective, and possessing wisdom and completeness.

To create your Seven Word Life Motto, use the words from previous activities today; you may also decide to choose a word or two (or seven) from the “Inspiration” list below to help you construct your Seven Word Life Motto. Just make sure that the words you use to construct your Life Motto are words that inspire you, words that excite you, and words that will encourage you to be your best every day!

Inspiration – Choose up to 7

Inspiration words are words that motivate you, words that excite you, words that may be used to describe you, words that make you feel great. Highlight, place a check next to or circle all of the words that resonate with you the most. Your goal is to come up with a select few words that will inspire you on a daily basis. Note: If there are words that are not listed that fit you better, add them to your list.

| | | | |
|-------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| Abundant | Bliss | Discover | Faith |
| Achieve | Bold | Dream | Fabulous |
| Accomplish | Bright | Dynamic | Fair |
| Active | Brilliant | Elegant | Fascinating |
| Action | Centered | Embrace | Flourish |
| Admire | Cheerful | Empower | Freedom |
| Adventurous | Cherish | Encourage | Friendly |
| Aligned | Clear | Energetic | Fulfilled |
| Alive | Compassion | Enhance | Fun |
| Amazing | Complete | Engage | Generous |
| Appreciate | Confident | Enjoy | Genuine |
| Artistic | Connected | Enough | Gifted |
| Astonish | Courage | Enthusiastic | Glorious |
| Astounding | Create | Exceptional | Glowing |
| Authentic | Creative | Exciting | Gorgeous |
| Believe | Delightful | Experienced | Graceful |
| Beautiful | Delicious | Explore | Gracious |
| Best | Desirable | Exquisite | Grand |
| Blessed | Determined | | Great |

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| Grow | Magnificent | Radiant | Talented |
| Handsome | Marvelous | Reflective | Tenacious |
| Happy | Masterful | Refreshing | Terrific |
| Hardy | Meaningful | Relaxing | Thankful |
| Harmonious | Miracle | Reliable | Thrilling |
| Healthy | Motivated | Remarkable | Thriving |
| Helpful | Natural | Renew | Timeless |
| Heavenly | Nice | Resourceful | Transform |
| Holistic | Nurturing | Respected | Treasure |
| Honest | Noble | Rewarding | Trusting |
| Hope | Optimistic | Satisfied | Truthful |
| Humorous | Outrageous | Secure | Unique |
| Imaginative | Outstanding | Seductive | Valuable |
| Innovative | Paradise | Seeking | Versatile |
| Inspired | Passionate | Sensational | Vibrant |
| Interested | Patient | Serene | Vision |
| Intuitive | Peaceful | Service | Vivacious |
| Inventive | Persistent | Skillful | Vivid |
| Invincible | Play | Smart | Warm |
| Irresistible | Playful | Smashing | Wealthy |
| Joy | Pleasure | Smile | Well |
| Kind | Possible | Smooth | Whole |
| Laugh | Positive | Sparkling | Wisdom |
| Lead | Powerful | Special | Wise |
| Limitless | Precious | Spiritual | Wish |
| Live | Prepared | Striving | Wonder |
| Lively | Productive | Strong | Wonderful |
| Love | Purposeful | Stunning | Worthy |
| Luminous | Profound | Successful | Young |
| Magical | Prosperous | Superb | Zest |
| | Proud | | |

Constructing Your Life Motto

Your Life Motto is the story of your present and future. It must be **EXACTLY seven (7) words**—no more, no less. Remember that your life motto describes how you want to live your life every day, starting today.

Your Seven-Word Life Motto can be:

- One statement;
- A series of small statements;
- Seven individual words;
- Or any combination of statements and/or words that work best for you.

If you aren't sure what to write, ask for help in constructing your motto.

Bill's Seven Word Life Mottos

- How I live my life every day:
 - (In my work) Dream Big. Live with Purpose. Inspire Others.
 - (In my life) Striving to be 1% better every day.
- How I serve others:

- Becoming a self-expert leads to life transformation.
- Achieving more than one ever thought possible!
- Magic is something I create every day!

Life Motto Examples (from previous classes/workshops)

- Weaknesses are just your few strengths unconquered.
- Lead others, serve others, and maintain integrity.
- Be lovely, be loyal, and live enchantingly.
- God has your back, just keep faith.
- Today makes you who you are tomorrow.
- Appreciate Life. Maintain health. Remember to play.
- Be happy. Be strong. Be free. Always.
- Live intentionally. Be for others. Cultivate peace.
- Make each moment inspiring with life's beauty.
- Ambition should be stronger than any fear.
- Live through captured moments from the past.
- Ambition is key. The gate is excellence.
- Dream spontaneously. Love patiently. Live open-mindedly.
- Have faith. Love one another. Anything's possible.
- Never be afraid to make an impact.
- Discover daily. Lead with integrity, optimism, love.
- Live every day like it's my last.
- Persevere through challenges. Achieve success. Gain wisdom.
- Clearly conscious, serving God and people faithfully.
- Connecting people to their God-given destiny.
- Play every day. Live for each moment.

Now, use the space below to write out your Seven Word Life Motto. Use any words you desire to construct your Life Motto – remember, it’s YOUR Life Motto! Come up with the seven words that describe how you want to live your life on a daily basis, words that will inspire you when you get out of bed in the morning. When you’re feeling down, these will be the words that will inspire you to move forward! Don’t forget - it must be **EXACTLY SEVEN WORDS!** If you feel ambitious, create two or three Seven Word Life Mottos – and turn it into your Personal Manifesto! And if you really want to OWN your Life Motto, share it with at least three people that you know you well and see how they feel about your life motto.

APPENDIX K: VALUES

Value Tags (Assessment) Activity Instructions

The Value Tags Exercise will have you identify the things that are most important in your life RIGHT NOW! They could be things that are important that you “live” on a daily basis – or they may be things that are important, but you don’t actually follow (but would truly like to).

Instructions are listed below:

1. Make sure that you have 36 tags.
2. Make two piles of values:
 - a. Pile 1: Those values that are important in your life right now.
 - b. Pile 2: Those values that are not important in your life right now.
3. Put aside your pile of values not important (Pile 2).
4. Count the number of values chosen as important in Pile 1.
5. Now, working with the pile of values deemed important (Pile 1), narrow down this pile to your top 10 – your 10 MOST important values. These are the 10 values you deem most important in your life right now. These do not need to be ranked.
6. Once you are done and have identified your 10 most important, you will then narrow down your list to the top FIVE (5) values. You will definitely need to **rank order** these 5, making sure that the #1 value is the MOST IMPORTANT value – the one that you can’t live without, the one that you will not compromise under any circumstance. Continue this same process with values 2 through 5, making sure to rank order them from #1 through #5.
7. Once you have your five, write down your name, the today’s date, and your list of your ranked top 5 values, from #1 to #5.
8. For each of your top five values, you will write a sentence or two for each one that guides how you make decisions and take action. This definition will provide you the framework and the definition of how you will live according to these values in your life.
9. Once you have your information written, write down/answer the 4 questions below:
 - a. As you review your list of 5 values, briefly explain why you chose at least your top 5 values and how they are connected.
 - b. What do you find most interesting about your list of values? Any connections – with your personal life and/or your professional life? Any surprises?
 - c. Describe how at least two of your values come into play on a daily basis – either in a positive or a negative way?
 - d. What are at least one or two challenges to living your life according to your highest values? What’s most difficult about living your values?
 - e. Describe at least two instances where see your values influencing what you decide to do in the future, in your personal and/or professional life?
10. You will be sharing your list/definitions of your 5 values and the answers to the questions in #9 with your fellow classmates.

Accomplishment/Achievement

To be involved in and succeed in undertakings that are personally significant, whether or not they bring recognition from others. To complete something successfully, especially by special effort, superior ability, perseverance, or great courage. To participate in activities that bring fulfillment.

Accountability/Responsibility

To take responsibility for my actions and the outcomes of those actions. To hold myself responsible for my actions, conduct, and decisions. To be answerable for something within my power, control, or management. To be seen as dependable, reliable, and conscientious.

Advancement/Promotion

To consistently move ahead to new and progressive opportunities. To aspire to higher levels of excellence in one's professional life. To continue to move forward and improve current rank and/or standing. To have visible success and status in the workplace.

Autonomy/Independence

To have freedom of will, thought, and/or action. To be self-reliant and have freedom from the influence, guidance, or control of others. To be self-directed and self-sufficient. To be free from the control, influence, support, and aid of others. To choose own projects, set own pace, schedule, and work with minimal supervision.

Balance/Stability

To have continuance in life with minimal change. To maintain a life based on reliable, dependable, and predictable situations. To live in a steady, secure, unchanging environment. To have mental steadiness, emotional stability, calm behavior, and use sound judgment.

Challenge/Risk

To be involved in stimulating and demanding tasks and projects. To be engaged in difficult or complex activities. To face unknown or dangerous experiences. Participating in situations where there is a possibility of damage or loss.

Service/Helping Others

To contribute to the well-being and satisfaction of others. To help people who need help and improve society. To give assistance, support, and aid to others. To contribute to the betterment of the world. To have a devotion to the welfare of others. To desire to make a difference. To provide direct services to people with problems.

Nature/Environment

To care for and appreciate the environment. To respect and value the outdoors. To respect the social and cultural values that shape the life of a person. To have concerns for the earth and its climate. To be involved in activities or work that's outdoors – or for the betterment of the outdoors.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Competition</p> <p>To engage in activities where results are measured frequently and compared with others. A test of skill or ability, usually in comparison with one's self or others. A contest for some prize, honor, or advantage. To have a strong desire to win and be successful.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Creativity/Self-Expression</p> <p>To develop new and innovative ideas. To generate new and better ways of doing tasks. To make, invent, or produce imaginative or original thoughts or things. To use your imagination to find new ways to do or say something. To be able to personalize ideas, emotions, or feelings. To convey or represent one's own personality, feelings, or ideas.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Fairness/Equality/Diversity</p> <p>To have the same capability, quantity, effect, value, or status as others. To honor and respect a variety of cultures and lifestyles. To appreciate those things that are different. To welcome others as being the same. To have an equal chance in all things.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Enjoyment/Happiness</p> <p>To take pleasure in life – both work and personal. To live life to the fullest. To have fun. To experience pleasure, amusement, joy, or cheerfulness in every aspect of life. To incorporate things that brings one pleasure in life.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Entrepreneurship/Innovation</p> <p>To organize, manage, or start a business or enterprise, usually with considerable initiative and risk. To create or establish an object, item, or idea. To start or introduce something new and different.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Religion</p> <p>To have a specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices from a particular organization. To believe in and follow something devotedly. To practice ritual observances of faith.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Expertise</p> <p>To become a known and respected authority in a particular field. Attain mastery/expertise something specific. To have a high degree of knowledge/skill in a certain subject. To be recognized as an expert in something.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Family</p> <p>To live with and commit to at least one significant other. To focus on the relationships, time spent with, and attention given to children, spouse, significant other, parents, siblings, and/or relatives.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Friendship</p> <p>To have close, positive, personal relationships with others. To have frequent and caring relationships with non-related people close to you. To develop camaraderie and good-will with others. The cooperative and supportive relationship with two or more people.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Harmony</p> <p>To have a feeling of inner calm, peace, and tranquility. To feel or show happiness, contentment, or well-being. To live a life that's consistent, pleasing, and tranquil. To desire to be at peace with oneself.</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Knowledge/Learning/Education</p> <p>To engage in the pursuit of acquiring information. To be involved in activities that requires thought and reasoning. To study or investigate facts, truths, or principles. To gain familiarity, awareness, or understanding through experience or study.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Honesty/Trust</p> <p>To have faith, belief, and reliance in the character, integrity, and sincerity in another person. To be a person of honor, truthfulness, and fairness. To rely on a person or thing in confidence.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Integrity</p> <p>To live and work in agreement with personal moral and ethical standards. To be straightforward and direct with others. To live by and stand up for personal beliefs. To do what you say you're going to do. To be a person of honor and sincerity. To consistently live by and demonstrate your values.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Leadership</p> <p>To motivate and energize other people. To feel responsible for identifying and accomplishing needed group tasks. To guide and direct others. To manage, direct, or supervise the activities of others. To influence the opinions or decisions of others. To personally convince others to take certain actions.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Spirituality</p> <p>To believe that there is a higher power, but not necessarily based on religious beliefs. To view life from one's soul or spirit. To live a life based on one's own values and ideals and understand who we are and why we are here.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Personal Development/Growth</p> <p>To do challenging work that will help one grow and allow the utilization of one's best talents and skills. To develop capabilities and one's potential to make one more aware of his or her inner feelings or thoughts. To continually search for opportunities to learn about self and about life.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Fitness/Health</p> <p>To be involved in activities that relies on my physical and mental conditioning. To be physically and mentally fit. To be of sound mind, body, and spirit. To be in good health and physical conditioning due to exercise and proper nutrition. To be involved in work that requires substantial physical activity.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Wisdom</p> <p>To be aware of one's self, personal calling, and life purpose. To have knowledge and insight of one's values in order to make good judgments. To have the intuition to use common sense and good judgment in decisions and actions. To understand the importance of making wise choices. To have a desire to understand life.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Recognition/Fame/Prestige</p> <p>To be seen by others as extremely successful. To be given special notice or attention. To be acknowledged for achievement and service. To obtain recognition and status in one's chosen field. To have great visibility, a great reputation, and to be recognized and renowned. To seek applause from others.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Safety/Security</p> <p>To be free of worry, fear and anxiety. To have minimal concerns about danger or risk. To have predictability in one's life. To have income and benefits that are predictable and satisfactory. To have the assurance of the fulfillment of an obligation. To have freedom from financial worry.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Wealth</p> <p>To own a significant amount of money, property, or other riches. To be considered rich, prosperous, or affluent by others. To have a valuable amount of possessions and resources. To be in a position to have a lot of money.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Respect</p> <p>To be treated with admiration, thoughtfulness, and fairness. To be valued with esteem or honor. To be a person viewed as having certain rights, privileges, proper acceptance, or courtesy. To be a person to show consideration and appreciation for others. To have pride in self and feel worthy.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Competence</p> <p>To possess the skills, knowledge, and aptitude to effectively perform a task. To execute work with accuracy to achieve results. To demonstrate proficiency and above average effectiveness. To be seen as well qualified and having superior ability.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Loyalty</p> <p>To be committed to the goals of people who share my beliefs, values and ethical principles. To be faithful and committed to a person. To be trusted to follow an ideal, a custom, a cause, or a duty. Being reliable to commitments and obligations. To follow a leader or a cause with strong devotion.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Leisure</p> <p>To pursue non-work-related activities. To participate in hobbies, crafts, or recreational activities. To have time and freedom to do things that brings pleasure. To live a life of unhurried ease.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Travel/Adventure</p> <p>To take a trip or journey to a desirable location. To be engaged in new, exciting or unusual experience. To participate in activities that might be considered risky or dangerous. To be in a position where you get to take frequent trips.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Authority/Power/Control</p> <p>To have the power to approve or disapprove proposed courses of action. To make assignments and control allocation of people and resources. To have great influence or control over others. To be given the authorization to enforce, command, determine, or judge. To be in charge.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Excellence</p> <p>To achieve the highest attainable standard in all aspects of my life. To seek the highest level of quality in all tasks and projects. To possess outstanding quality or superiority merit.</p> |

APPENDIX L: STRENGTHS

Knowing Your Strengths

What are strengths?

A strength is the ability to consistently produce a positive outcome through near-perfect performance in a specific task or given activity. Character strengths focuses on your ethics, morals, behaviors, and values; answers the question, “What is best about who you are?” Engagement strengths consists of your skills, knowledge, and talents; answers the question, “What’s best about what you do at work?” Both are important to understand how you interact with the world on a daily basis.

Strengths focus on the things you do right, not on the things that you do wrong. Research has found that people and organizations grow more when they focus on what they do best rather than trying to fix their weaknesses. Identifying your strengths will also provide you an additional tool to seek opportunities that allow you to use your strengths on a regular basis.

Knowing and focusing on your strengths:

- can assist in the process of identifying and living your purpose and fulfilling you mission.
- are usually attached to excellence – the more you use your strengths, the better you become in using your strengths.
- can be used to help you decide your classes, your major, your extracurricular activities, even your internship and job possibilities.
- will provide you direction as to how you should use your time and where you should put your energy.
- will build your confidence and self-esteem; you will feel better about yourself when you have greater success in the strengths you use well.
- will have you more likely engaged in your job/education and more likely to having an excellent quality of life!
- would give you the best opportunity to be great!

The goal is to use your strengths as much as possible. Using your strengths on a regular basis:

- Provides you motivation.
- Gives you energy.
- Creates positive emotions.
- Increases personal and work satisfaction.
- Increases levels of productivity and performance.
- Increases levels of engagement.

Students who've known their strengths have been found to:

- Be more satisfied with college experience.
- Be more satisfied with advising experience.
- Have greater satisfaction in courses.
- Feel better about help from faculty/staff with life plans.
- Have higher cumulative GPA's.
- Be more likely to stay in school.

The activities this week will have you evaluate both your character strengths and your engagement strengths.

Strengths Video

Understanding Your Strengths (Marcus Buckingham) -


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWZTds02Njs> (Links to an external site.)

Unlock Your Potential - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsCaTapfhk> (Links to an external site.)

Your Greatest Talents - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQHPSRLt32k> (Links to an external site.)

Part I: Character Strengths

VIA Character Strengths - <https://www.viacharacter.org/www/> (Links to an external site.)

Go to the web site and click on the button "Take the Free VIA SURVEY." You will be asked to register your information to take the survey, as well as to create an account (so you can access your information at any time). Once completed, click on "Register." You will answer the questions that best fit you; once done, you will receive a report that gives you a rank-order (from best - #1 to least - #24) of the 24 strengths and a brief description of each. You can also identify your character strengths by reviewing the more detailed description of your five character strengths; click on this file: [character strengths, long description, 9-21-15.pdf](#)  to see the list. If you decide to review the list of detailed descriptions, choose the FIVE (5) that fit/describe you best - and rank order them 1 to 5 (1 = best strength, 5 = 5th best strength). You can do more if you desire, but for the purpose of this activity, just choose your top 5 character strengths strengths.

24 Character Strengths (VIA Institute on Character/Authentic Happiness)

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| • Creativity | • Bravery |
| • Curiosity | • Perseverance |
| • Judgment | • Honesty |
| • Love of Learning | • Zest |
| • Perspective | • Love |

- Kindness
- Social Intelligence
- Teamwork
- Fairness
- Leadership
- Forgiveness
- Humility
- Prudence
- Self-Regulation
- Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence
- Gratitude
- Hope
- Humor
- Spirituality

Part II: Engagement Strengths

* StrengthsQuest -

<http://www.strengthsquest.com/content/cms.aspx?space=SQ&ci=143780&title=Students> (Links to an external site.)

To begin this part of the activity, you will need to open this file: [engagement strengths, long description, 9-21-15.pdf](#) - to get a detailed description of strengths. After you review of the detailed descriptions, choose the FIVE (5) that fit/describe you best - and, if possible, rank order them 1 to 5 (1 = best strength, 5 = 5th best strength). You can do more if you desire, but for the purpose of this exercise, just choose your top 5 engagement strengths. (Note: You can also access the full description of the 34 themes here: http://www.eastbaycollegefund.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CSF-All_34_Themes_Full_Description.pdf (Links to an external site.).)

34 Engagement Strengths (StrengthsQuest/StrengthsFinder)

- Achiever
- Activator
- Adaptability
- Analytical
- Arranger
- Belief
- Command
- Communication
- Competition
- Connectedness
- Consistency
- Context
- Deliberative
- Developer
- Discipline
- Empathy
- Focus
- Futuristic
- Harmony
- Ideation
- Includer
- Individualization
- Input
- Intellection
- Learner
- Maximizer
- Positivity
- Relator
- Responsibility
- Restorative
- Self-Assurance
- Significance
- Strategic
- Woo

Here are a couple of web sites that you might find useful:

- 34 Strengths Defined - <https://www.isa.org/templates/two-column.aspx?pageid=134103&append=35734> (Links to an external site.)
- Free Strengths Test - <http://freestrengthstest.workuno.com/free-strengths-test.html> (Links to an external site.)
- VIA Survey or StrengthsFinder? Comparing the two most dominant strengths tests in the world - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/what-matters-most/201312/survey-or-strengthsfinder> (Links to an external site.)

Megan's Character and Engagement Strengths

Character Strengths

1. Kindness – Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.
2. Honesty – Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions.
3. Fairness – Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.
4. Gratitude – Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.
5. Love of learning – Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on ones own or formally; related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows.

Engagement Strengths

1. Relator—This person enjoys developing genuine bonds with colleagues. These relationships take time, so you must invest in them on a regular basis. Trust this person with confidential information. She is loyal, places a high value on trust, and will not betray yours.
2. Achiever—An achiever has a constant need for achievement—every day starts at zero—every single day. Achievers always need to do more, whether logical or focused—the need to achieve is always there.
3. Belief—A person who has belief at the core means they have a certain set of core values that are enduring. Belief-oriented people tend to be family-oriented, altruistic, and even spiritual, and value responsibility and high ethics.
4. Input—People with input are inquisitive people. They tend to collect things of interest – information or things—tangible or not they enjoy adding information to their archives.
5. Learner—People with learner love to learn. More than learning about a particular subject, it's more about the process of acquiring information that is exciting and enticing.

Homework Assignment

(1) Write down your top five character strengths (from the survey results or the handout) and your top five engagement strengths (from the handouts).

(2) As you review and read the descriptions for your five character strengths and five engagement strengths, answer the following questions:

- What did you learn about yourself as you did the two strengths exercises? What was one thing most interesting about your strengths?
- Give an example of how you use at least one of your character strengths as part of your daily life AND how you use at least one of your engagement strengths as part of your work/school life.
- Describe how your character and engagement strengths connect with what you've learned about yourself so far in this class. Do they seem to connect your results from other exercises completed in class, such as My Life Story, your values, and/or your personality type?
- Describe how knowing your strengths can impact your life in the future (positively and/or negatively). How can knowing your strengths could help you be successful? To answer this question, look at how your strengths might impact your personal and/or professional life.

Again, it's another exercise that provides additional insight into your life!

APPENDIX M: VISION FOR WORK STATEMENT

For this activity, you will create a statement that describes what you'd like to be doing as your "work" in five or ten years. Write your Vision for Work Statement in the present tense, as if you've completed all of the required degrees and certifications to do this work. Don't dream small - create a vision that inspires you to get up out of bed in the morning and look forward to the work you love. Your work doesn't necessarily have to be a "job"; your Vision for Work can be as a volunteer, a parent/guardian, or any of the means you really want to make a difference in the lives of others. As you write this sentence, what would you be doing? How will you serve? What would be your role? Where would you like to perform this work? Where would you thrive? And what would you specifically want to help them do? Think five or ten years down the road, imagining what you'll be doing. What would it look like? The key is to create a statement that provides you with direction and empowers you to move forward.

A few things to keep in mind as you create your Vision for Work Statement:

- Your statement needs to inspire you (and potentially others).
- Your statement needs to challenge you to do better and be better.
- Your statement needs to be SPECIFIC, CONCISE, and CLEAR.
- Your statement needs to be relevant to your life.

If your Vision for Work Statement doesn't inspire you, why would it inspire anyone else—especially the people that want to help you? Write a statement that excites you and those that know you and support you.

Use the following template as a guide to writing your Vision for Work:

- In five or ten years (choose one), I will be working as a _____ (your specific role) in/at/through _____ (a specific place), helping/serving/providing _____ (specific group you'll be helping) with _____ (what you'll be doing) so that _____ (what you will help with).

Bill's example

- In five years, I will be working as a facilitator/trainer through the Life Design Institute training faculty and staff at 1,000 high schools, colleges, and universities in the U.S. to use the Life Design Catalyst curriculum to empower their students and members of their communities to become the best version of themselves in service to something bigger than themselves with hopes for a better future and to make the world a better place.

Student examples

- In ten years, I will be working as a labor and delivery nurse in the maternity ward at a hospital, helping expecting mothers feel comfortable so that they can safely deliver babies.

- In five years, I will be working as a funeral director/mortician at Smith Funeral Home, helping families coordinate/perform funerals and services for their family members so that they feel more at peace during a grieving time in their lives.
- In ten years, I will be working as a physical therapist at Grayson's Therapy Clinic, helping musical artists rehabilitate injuries quickly so that they can perform again.
- In five years, I will be working as a recreation director with the youth in my local community, providing recreational activities so they can have equal opportunities to play.
- In ten years, I will be serving as a stay-at-home mom with my children, providing support and encouragement so they can be happy, healthy, and well-adjusted.
- In ten years, I will be working as a disability therapist through a clinic, serving children with developmental disabilities with therapy and emotional support so they can feel comfortable in their potential to have a peaceful and happy life.

Now, it's your turn. Once you complete your statement, review it every day. Write your statement on an index card, and keep it in a prominent place you can see it often. If you work in an office, it could be on your desk. Alternatively, you may choose to display the card somewhere at home, so you see it when you get up in the morning or do work tasks from home. Better yet, create a wallpaper background on your phone with your vision statement, so you see it every time you look at your phone.

APPENDIX N: RETENTION RATES

Breakdown of Retention Rates for Students in Enrolled HHS125 course (since 2014)

For the 2014 Fall Semester, we restructured the HHS125 class by modifying and incorporating three Poster Presentations Projects: (1) My Life Story, (2) Major/Career/Calling Exploration, and (3) Personal Charter. Our goal was to empower students to create a plan that defines their educational experiences, both within and outside the classroom. Once we incorporated these Projects into the curriculum, we noticed a significant increase in retention rates, especially with racial/ethnic minority students as a whole:

Fall to Fall Retention Rate for First-Year Minority Students

(Minority students include American Indian or Alaskan Native, Black or African American, Asian, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander.)

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Fall 2014 to Fall 2015 | 91.0% (61/67) |
| Fall 2015 to Fall 2016 | 82.0% (73/89) |
| Fall 2016 to Fall 2017 | 83.6% (122/146) |
| Fall 2017 to Fall 2018* | 79.2% (156/197) |
| Total | 82.6% (412/499) |

*Indicates the LDC Program taking on the challenge of enrolling Pre-Health, Nursing Interest students, a population with one of the highest attrition rates due to the difficulty of getting into the Nursing Program (for this particular group of students, they have a 4-5% chance of gaining admittance into Nursing).

The chart below provides a more specific breakdown of retention rates for the specific minority groups over 4 years:

| Year | White | Black/ African American | Hispanic/ Latino | Asian | Native American | Pacific Islander | Total |
|--------------|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Fall 2014 | 52 (40) 76.9% | 49 (46) 93.9% | 11 (10) 90.9% | 5 (4) 80.0% | 2 (1) 50.0% | n/a (n/a) | 119 (101) 84.9% |
| Fall 2015 | 68 (57) 83.8% | 72 (62) 86.1% | 11 (7) 63.6% | 4 (3) 75.0% | 2 (1) 50.0% | n/a (n/a) | 157 (130) 82.8% |
| Fall 2016 | 122 (99) 81.1% | 105 (90) 85.7% | 23 (20) 87.0% | 13 (11) 84.6% | 5 (1) 20.0% | n/a (n/a) | 268 (221) 82.5% |
| Fall 2017 | 110 (82) 74.5% | 146 (117) 80.1% | 23 (20) 87.0% | 20 (13) 65.0% | 6 (5) 83.3% | 2 (1) 50.0% | 307 (238) 77.5% |
| Total | 352 (278) 79.0% | 372 (315) 84.7% | 68 (57) 83.8% | 42 (31) 73.8% | 15 (8) 53.3% | 2 (1) 50.0% | 851 (690) 81.1% |

Note. The first number pertains to the total number of students for that particular group of students; the second number (in parentheses) indicates the number of students retained for that particular group. The percentage below each pair represents the retention rate for that particular population.

APPENDIX O: GENERAL DATA ON ENROLLMENT, RETENTION, AND GRADUATION

RATES

Life Design Catalyst Program

| Fall to Fall Retention Rate | HHS125 | UNCG | Total Enrollment in HHS125 (Fall Semester) |
|--|---------------|--------------|---|
| Fall 2008 to Fall 2009 | 78.9% (30) | 77.0% | Fall 2008: 2 sections, 40 students (38 1 st year) |
| Fall 2009 to Fall 2010 | 75.6% (31) | 77.0% | Fall 2009: 3 sections, 56 students (41 1 st year) |
| Fall 2010 to Fall 2011 | 76.9% (30) | 75.6% | Fall 2010: 3 sections, 65 students (39 1 st year) |
| Fall 2011 to Fall 2012 | 81.1% (30) | 75.8% | Fall 2011: 3 sections, 66 students (37 1 st year) |
| Fall 2012 to Fall 2013 | 65.3% (32) | 73.5% | Fall 2012: 3 sections, 73 students (49 1 st year) |
| Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 ¹ | 75.0% (66) | 78.1% | Fall 2013: 8 sections, 111 students (88 1 st year) |
| Fall 2014 to Fall 2015 ² | 84.9% (101) | 76.9% | Fall 2014: 10 sections, 170 students (119 1 st year) |
| Fall 2015 to Fall 2016 | 82.8% (130) | 75.8% | Fall 2015: 10 sections, 193 students (157 1 st year) |
| Fall 2016 to Fall 2017 ³ | 82.4% (221) | 77.3% | Fall 2016: 17 sections, 320 students (268 1 st year) |
| Fall 2017 to Fall 2018 ⁴ | 77.4% (237) | 76.6% | Fall 2017: 20 sections, 374 students (307 1 st year) |
| Total (889/1,118) | 79.5% | 76.3% | Fall 2018: 25 sections, 448 students (364 1 st year) |
| Note: Numbers in parentheses in the HHS125 column are the actual number of first-year students retained. | | | Total Students Served (Fall Semester 2008 to Fall Semester 2018): 1,916 (1,507 1st year students) |
| Graduation Rates (5-year) | | | Fall 2019: 27 sections (includes 2 online sections), approx. 600 students |
| Fall 2008 class (25/38) | 65.8% | 50.1% | Total Enrollment for HHS125 (Spring Semester) |
| Fall 2009 class (23/41) | 56.1% | 51.5% | Spring 2009: 2 sections, 26 students |
| Fall 2010 class (19/39) | 48.7% | 49.7% | Spring 2010: 2 sections, 38 students |
| Fall 2011 class (21/37) | 56.8% | 49.2% | Spring 2011: 3 sections, 32 students |
| Fall 2012 class (19/49) | 38.8% | 49.6% | Spring 2012: 3 sections, 61 students |
| Fall 2013 class (49/88) | 55.7% | 54.5% | Spring 2013: 3 sections, 50 students |
| Fall 2014 class (76/119) | 63.8% | - | Spring 2014: 3 sections, 54 students |
| Total (232/411) | 56.4% | 50.0% | Spring 2015: 3 sections, 51 students |
| Graduation Rates (6-year) | | | Spring 2016: 3 sections, 50 students |
| Fall 2008 class (28/38) | 73.7% | 55.0% | Spring 2017: 4 sections, 68 students |
| Fall 2009 class (25/41) | 61.0% | 56.0% | Spring 2018: 4 sections, 69 students |
| Fall 2010 class (22/39) | 56.4% | 54.0% | Spring 2019: 6 sections, 119 students (includes 2 online sections) |
| Fall 2011 class (22/37) | 59.5% | 53.1% | Total Students Served in Spring Semester: 618 |
| Fall 2012 class (21/49) | 42.9% | 53.1% | |
| Fall 2013 class (50/88) | 56.8% | - | |
| Total (168/292) | 57.5% | 54.7% | |
| ¹ Fall 2013 was the introduction to the Life Design Catalyst Coaching process and curriculum to HHS125 students. | | | |
| ² Fall 2014 was the introduction of Life Design Poster Projects and Presentations in the HHS125 courses. | | | |
| ³ Fall 2016 was the first time all HHS125 instructors followed a common Life Design Catalyst curriculum (posted online through Canvas) for the HHS125 course. | | | |

⁴ In Fall 2017, the School of HHS pre-enrolled approximately 125 students with Pre-Health/Nursing Interest designation (vs. Pre-Nursing designation) in the HHS125 course. This population has one of the highest attrition rates due to the difficulty of admission into the Nursing Program. Previous data showed that students with a Pre-Health/Nursing Interest designation had a 4-5% chance of getting into the UNCG Nursing Program (from a population typically between 150 and 200 students admitted with this designation each year). We also found that approximately two thirds of these Pre-Health/Nursing Interest students are minorities.

Note: UNCG Retention and Graduation Rate Data obtained from UNC-GA Data Dashboard and/or UNCG Office of Institutional Research Common Data Set website.