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Developing Purpose in College:

A Mixed Methods Study to Investigate how First-Year and Senior Students Developed Purpose at a Large Research Midwestern University

by

Laura J. Coombs

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Developing Purpose in College:

A Mixed Methods Study to Investigate how First-Year and Senior Students Developed Purpose at a Large Research Midwestern University

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University of Nebraska, 2013

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The purpose of this convergent mixed methods study was to investigate how students develop purpose at a large research Midwestern University. More specifically, this study assessed how students developed their sense of purpose in college, according to both first-year students and senior students.

The central research question for this study was: how do students develop purpose in college? More specifically, how do first-year students compare with senior college students when developing purpose in college? The Developing Purpose Inventory (DPI), created by William Barratt, was utilized to determine how students were developing purpose in college, according to Arthur Chickering's student development theory. Students self-selected to participate in a follow-up research interview, which examined in depth how students perceived their development or purpose evolved throughout their college education. The three sections of developing purpose studied were avocational recreational interests, vocational interests, and style of life.

One hundred and twenty seven students completed online surveys. The author also conducted semi-structured interviews with three first-year participants and four

senior participants who volunteered to complete a follow-up interview after the initial survey.

This study showed that students develop purpose between their first-year and senior year of college at a large research Midwestern University. Statistically significant evidence from the DPI suggested that students developed avocational recreational purpose and style of life purpose during college. The DPI also suggested that students develop vocational interests during their academic career. Six qualitative themes also emerged from the qualitative research: he/she believed in me, college as the next step, exploring possibilities, value of experiences and involvement, supporting and helping others, and preparation to do something greater.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

> Most students . . . experience great clarity about purposes, values, and ways of thinking. If they are lucky, they will discover interests and people they care deeply about and will make lasting commitments. And they will expand their awareness of who they are and how valuable they are. (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, pp. 37-39)

This study was designed to explore how students perceived their development of purpose during college. As students learn and grow during their collegiate experience, they are expected to develop holistically, including the development of purpose (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). To describe student development, Chickering (1969) developed seven vectors of student development, including developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interrelationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. Chickering and Reisser (1993) explained their model:

> We propose the seven vectors as maps to help us determine where students are and which way they are heading. Movement along any one can occur at different rates and can interact with movement along the others. Each step from 'lower' to 'higher' brings more awareness, skill, confidence, complexity, stability, and integration but does not rule out an accidental or intentional return to ground already transverse. We assume that 'higher' is better than 'lower,' because in adding the skills and strengths, encompassed by these vectors, individuals grown in versatility, strength, and ability to adapt when unexpected barriers or pitfalls appear. (pp. 34-35)

Chickering and Reisser's (1993) model is not linear, but it does propose "a sequence in order to suggest that certain building blocks make a good foundation. Some tasks are more likely to be encountered early in the journey" (p. 37). Table 1 outlines the sequence of building blocks Chickering and Reisser suggested.

Table 1

The Seven Vectors: General Developmental Directions

From	To
Developing Competence	
Low level of competence (intellectual, physical, interpersonal)	High level of competence in each area
Lack of confidence in one's abilities	Strong sense of competence
Managing Emotions	
Little control over disruptive emotions (fear and anxiety, anger leading to aggression, depression, guilt, and shame, and dysfunctional sexual or romantic attraction)	Flexible control and appropriate expression
Little awareness of feelings	Increasing awareness and acceptance of emotions
Inability to integrate feelings with actions	Ability to integrate feelings with responsible action
Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence	
Emotional dependence	Freedom from continual and pressing needs for reassurance
Poor self-direction or ability to solve problems; little freedom or confidence to be mobile	Instrumental interdependence (inner direction, persistence, and mobility)
Independence	Recognition and acceptance of the importance of interdependence
Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships	
Lack of awareness of differences; intolerance of differences	Tolerance and appreciation of differences
Nonexistent, short-term, or unhealthy intimate relationships	Capacity for intimacy which is enduring and nurturing
Establishing Identity	
Discomfort with body and appearance	Comfort with body and appearance

Table 1 continues

From	To
Establishing Identity (cont'd)	
Discomfort with gender and sexual orientation	Comfort with gender and sexual orientation
Lack of clarity about heritage and social/cultural roots of identity	Sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context
Confusion about "who I am" and experimentation with roles and lifestyles	Clarification of self-concept through roles and lifestyle
Lack of clarity about others' evaluation	Sense of self in response to feedback from valued others
Dissatisfaction with self	Self-acceptance and self-esteem
Unstable, fragmented personality	Personal stability and integration
Developing Purpose	
Unclear vocational goals	Clear vocational goals
Shallow, scattered personal interests	More sustained, focused, rewarding activities
Few meaningful interpersonal commitments	Strong interpersonal and family commitments
Developing Integrity	
Dualistic thinking and rigid beliefs	Humanizing values
Unclear or untested personal values and beliefs	Personalizing (clarifying and affirming) values while respecting others' beliefs
Self-interest	Social responsibility
Discrepancies between values and actions	Congruence and authenticity

Source: Chickering and Reisser (1993, p. 38-39)

The developing purpose vector "entails an increasing ability to be intentional, to assess interests and options, to clarify goals, to make plans, and to persist despite obstacles" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 50). How do students develop purpose during college?

Mixed methods research was used to examine how first-year college students and senior college students developed purpose during college. The study was created using an inventory created by Barratt (1978) that studied Chickering's vector of developing purpose. This research commenced with a quantitative study that explored students' vocational plans and aspirations, personal interests, and interpersonal and family commitments. Students who were interested in completing a follow-up interview self-selected and met with the researcher to further discuss purpose. Chickering's student development theory, especially the vector of developing purpose, was utilized as a framework for examining the mixed-methods data.

Developing Purposes Inventory

William Barratt, a scholar from the University of Iowa, created the Developing Purposes Inventory in 1978 to evaluate the developing purpose vector of Chickering's student development theory (Appendix A). The theory focused on the following questions, proposed by Chickering in 1969:

> The dilemma is not just, "Who am I?" but "Who am I going to be?" not just "Where am I?" but "Where am I going?" Development of purpose occurs as these questions are answered with increasing clarity and conviction in three domains; avocational and recreational interests, vocational plans and aspiration, and general lifestyle considerations. (pp. 15-16)

The Developing Purposes Inventory (DPI) asked students 45 questions on a 5-point scale based on the three components of Chickering's purpose vector: avocational recreational interests, vocational interests, and style of life (Barratt, 1978). On the DPI students were asked to answer the question "How true is this statement about me?" for the 45

statements. Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “always true” to “never true.”

Barratt (1978) suggested that “if commitment is made in the social areas, students must select those activities which are compatible with their social partners if these interactions are to continue” (para. 2). Furthermore, “students must determine their degree of commitment to recreational and avocational activities and place them in the context of their commitment to professional growth” (para. 2). The DPI can exemplify how students chose to devote their resources, especially time, into their balance of career, personal life, and style of life.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to assess the differences in development of purpose between first-year college students and senior college students enrolled at a large Midwestern University.

Research Questions

The main research question asked in this study was: How do students develop purpose during their college education? Specifically, this study investigated how students develop purpose in the following three areas:

- avocational recreational interests,
- vocational interests, and
- style of life.

The results of first-year students’ responses to the survey were compared with those of the senior students.

Research Design

This convergent mixed methods research study was conducted at a large research Midwestern University. From a sample of 900 students obtained from the University Registrar's office, 450 first-year students and 450 seniors, 127 completed the Developing Purposes Inventory, 58 students self-identified as first-year students, 6 students identified as sophomores or juniors, and 63 students identified as seniors. In addition to completing a 45 question survey, 3 first-year college students and 4 senior students participated in a 60-minute semi-structured interview to investigate how they developed purpose in college (Appendix B). Twenty-four students who completed the DPI volunteered to participate in a follow-up interview, but only 7 students responded to the researchers request to complete an interview, and all 7 students were interviewed. The interviews allowed the researcher to add thick, rich description to the findings of this study (Creswell, 2012). An explanatory mixed-methods approach was selected to allow the researcher to "conduct a quantitative survey to identify how two or more groups compare on a variable. Follow up with qualitative interviews to explore the reasons why these differences were found" (Creswell, 2012, p. 551).

Definition of Terms

Freshman—"a first-year undergraduate student" (University of Nebraska, 2012, p. 123).

General studies program—a collegiate program of study which does not have a specific major, but is designed for students who are exploring their potential career path (University of Nebraska, 2011, para. 1).

Purpose—"a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self" (Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003, p. 121).

Senior—a class standing indicating that a student has accumulated more than 89 credit hours (University of Nebraska, 2012, p. 121).

Vector—"has direction and magnitude. Although development is expressed more appropriately by a spiral or steps than by a straight line, we retain the term vectors in the intersects of economy and historical community" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. xv).

Significance

The purpose of this convergent mixed methods study was to assess the difference between how first-year college students developed purpose and how seniors developed purpose while enrolled at a large research Midwestern University. The researcher analyzed how students developed purpose through their collegiate experiences. This knowledge may allow educators to be more effective in their program planning and assisting students through Chickering's (1969) student development vector of developing purpose.

All students develop differently, and their personal choices factor into their development:

> The vectors describe major highways for journeying toward individuation – the discovery and refinement of one's unique ways of being – and also toward communion with other individuals and groups, including the larger national and global society. We propose that while each person will drive differently, with varying vehicles and self-chosen detours, eventually all will move down these major routes. They may have different ways of thinking, learning, and deciding, and those differences will affect the way the journey unfolds, but for all the different stories about turning points and valuable lessons, college students live

> out recurring themes: gaining competence and self-awareness, learning control and flexibility, balancing intimacy with freedom, finding one's voice or vocation, refining beliefs, and making commitments. (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 35)

By studying the development of purpose in first-year college students and senior students, educators can prepare better programs to assist students with development, especially in regard to personal and career growth.

Delimitations

When samples are selected, delimiting variables occur based on the selection made (McMillan, 2012, p. 96). In this study, two samples were selected which caused delimitations. One sample consisted of first-year students who enrolled full-time at this particular large research Midwestern University for the first time during the current academic year. The other sample was comprised of senior college students from the same university who had been enrolled in the general studies program at some point in their college education. This is a delimitation because the researcher examined two different classes of students and the classes may have had different collegiate experiences. Intuitional culture and/or campus policies could have varied during the three years between classes, causing this delimitation.

Another delimitation occurred because only 7 students from the sample of 127 were interviewed. Students who completed the Developing Purposes Inventory had the opportunity to volunteer themselves to participate in a qualitative follow-up interview. Therefore, the experiences of these specific students may not represent the experiences of all survey participants or students from the general student population.

Limitations

According to Creswell (2012), limitations are defined as:

> potential weaknesses or problems in quantitative research that are identified by the researcher. In quantitative research, these weaknesses are enumerated one by one, and they often relate to inadequate measures of variables, loss or lack or participants, small sample sizes, errors in measurement, and other factors typically related to data collection and analysis. (p. 623)

McMillan (2012) defined simple random sampling as a sample where "each member of the population has the same probability of being selected" (p. 96). The Office of Registration and Records compiled a simple random sample of 450 freshmen students and 450 senior students (900 students total) because this sample size provides a power of .8, the desired level of power for this study. Power is defined as "the probability of correctly rejecting a false null hypothesis" in quantitative testing (Creswell, 2012, p. 625). The researcher identified an "appropriate sample size for group comparisons by taking into consideration the amount of power desired in a study (.8), and the effect size" and examining the appropriate tables to calculate the sample size (p. 611). All participants in this study attended the same large research Midwestern University, and their responses may not reflect those of students attending other institutions.

The sample provided by the University Registrar's Office was comprised of 450 freshmen and 450 senior students. The survey was administered by a third party who was a university employee, but was not a researcher. All first-year students who had started their education in the general studies department had the same probability of being selected as part of the population that received the survey. Also, all seniors who had enrolled in the general studies program had the same probability of being selected as part

of the population that received the survey. Of the 127 students who voluntarily completed the survey, 58 self-identified as freshmen, 2 as sophomores, 4 as juniors, and 63 as seniors. Therefore, this sample cannot be construed as representative of the entire freshmen or senior population at this large research Midwestern University.

Of the 127 respondents, 62 identified as male and 65 as female. The majority (87%) of students identified as White, 2% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 1% identified as Black or African American, 2% identified as Native American or American Indian, and 1% identified as Asian or Pacific Islander. The remaining participants chose not to disclose their ethnic identity. Of the total population, 22% identified as first-generation college students. The majority of students, 62%, in the sample have declared a major.

Conclusion

Many students evolve and change during their college education, and purpose is developed. This study examined how students develop purpose in college, both quantitatively and qualitatively, through a convergent mixed-methods study. In Chapter 2, the researcher provides a literature review that examined the development of purpose, including avocational recreational interests, vocational interests, and style of life. Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of college student development serves as a basis for this study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Purpose Statement

This convergent mixed methods study was created to examine how students develop purpose in college. First-year students and senior college students who had been enrolled in a general studies program were surveyed and interviewed to assess how students develop purpose in college.

Introduction

In this literature review, the researcher examined readings on student development, especially in regard to the development of purpose during college. Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of identity development is discussed, as the developing purpose vector provides a theoretical framework for this study. William Barratt's (1978) research on the development of purpose was also examined, as were other studies about the development of purpose, especially among college students. Literature about the roles of student affairs practitioners and their role in the development of purpose among college students was also reviewed.

Peer-reviewed journals and books served as sources for the literature review, and the researcher focused on higher education research. Key terms searched for this study were "developing purpose in college." This literature review does not exhaust the literature on the aforementioned subjects, but it does provide a theoretical framework and background in inquiry.

Development of Purpose

Researchers Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) suggested that college attendance impacts college student development:

> Perhaps the clearest generalization to be made is that on nearly all of the dimensions on which we find freshman-to-senior change, a statistically significant part of change is attributable to college attendance, not to rival explanations. . . . These effects cannot be explained away by maturation or differences between those who attend and those who do not attend college in intelligence, academic ability, or other precollege characteristics. (p. 567)

Furthermore, Pascarella and Terenzini suggested that college has "a rather broad range of enduring or long-term impacts" (1991, p. 573). College can impact a student's occupational decision, and has "influence on cognitive, moral, and psychosocial characteristics, as well as on values and attitudes and various quality of life indexes (for example, family marriage, consumer behavior)" (p. 573). Researchers Chickering and Reisser (1993) argued that human development is "the unifying purpose for higher education" (p. xv).

Purpose Defined

Purpose can be defined as "a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self" (Damon et al., 2003, p. 121). This definition was selected because it highlights the following three points:

1. Purpose is a goal of sorts, but it is more stable and far-reaching than low-level goals such as "to get to the movie on time" or "to find a parking place in town today."
2. Purpose is part of one's personal search for meaning, but it also has an external component, the desire to make a difference in the world, to contribute to matters larger than the self.

3. Unlike meaning alone (which may or may not be oriented towards a defined end), purpose is always directed at an accomplishment towards which one can make progress. (p. 121)

Chickering and Reisser (1993) defined purpose as "a strong commitment to a value or a belief" (p. 234). Furthermore, purpose requires intentionality, goal setting and planning, and persistence beyond obstacles. Chickering and Reisser determined that the development of purpose is just one aspect of identity development among college students.

Erikson's Theory of Development

Erikson determined development functions by the *epigenetic principle*, which states "we develop through a predetermined unfolding of our personalities in eight small stages. Our progress through each stage is in part determined by our success, or lack of success, in all the previous stages" (Boeree, 2006, para. 24). "The principle implies not only sequential, age-related, biological and psychological development, but also the view that the individual's environment shapes the particular character and extent of the development in important ways" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 20). The following analogy was created to describe the *epigenetic principle*:

> A little like the unfolding of a rose bud, each petal opens up at a certain time, in a certain order, which nature, through its genetics, has determined. If we interfere in the natural order of development by pulling a petal forward prematurely or out of order, we ruin the development of the entire flower. (Boeree, 2006, para. 24)

In Erikson's theory, development occurs through crises, which he defined as "a time for decision requiring significant choice among alternative courses of action" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 20). "Each stage is distinguished by a psychosocial crisis, or 'turning point,' that must be resolved by balancing the internal self and the

external environment" (Erikson, as cited in Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, pp. 48-49). Boeree (2006) further defined, "Each stage involves certain developmental tasks that are psychological in nature. Although Erikson follows Freudian tradition by calling them crises, they are more drawn out and less specific than that term implies" (para. 25). There is an optimal time for each stage to occur:

> It is no use trying to rush children into adulthood as is so common among people who are obsessed with success. Neither is it possible to slow the pace or to try to protect our children from the demands of life. There is a time for each task.
>
> If a stage is managed well, we carry away a certain virtue or psychological strength which will help us through the rest of the stages of our lives. On the other hand, if we don't do so well, we may develop maladaptations and malignancies, as well as endanger all our future development. A malignancy is the worse of the two, and involves too little of the positive, and too much of the negative aspect of the tasks, such as a person who can't trust others. A maladaptation is not quite as bad and involves too much of the positive and too little of the negative, such as a person who trusts too much. (Boeree, 2006, para. 27-28)

Many theorists have used Erikson's theory of identity development as a base for their research, including Marcia, Josselson, and Chickering, Chickering built on Erikson's "ideas about identity development," to create a theory of college student development (Evans et al., 2010, p.12, 52-56).

Chickering and Reisser's Theory of Identity Development

Chickering "provided an overview of the developmental issues that college students face and examinee environmental conditions that influence development" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 65). Chickering created a theory of psychosocial development in regard to the issues college students face, and further developed his research with the help of Reisser (Evans et al., 2010). Together, Chickering and Reisser (1993) provided a foundation for their theory of college student development in the following passage:

> We want to emphasize that by proposing human development as a unifying purpose, we do not suggest that every student major in human development. Nor do we propose that the developmental needs of a particular student be the sole basis for laying out an educational program. Individual interests and needs must be addressed in light of requirements for knowledge, competence, and human capacities that have been determined by particular plans and aspirations, particular disciplines or professions, and particular social problems. (p. xvii)

In the 1969 edition of *Education and Identity*, Chickering identified seven vectors of student development. Chickering stated, "They are called vectors of development because each seems to have direction and magnitude – even though the direction may be expressed more appropriately by a spiral or by steps than by a straight line" (p. 8). With the help of Reisser, Chickering's theory was updated in 1993 to "present a comprehensive picture of psychosocial development during the college years" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 67). The seven vectors of Chickering & Reisser's theory are as follows:

- Developing competence—"Competence is a three-tined pitchfork. One tine is competence. . . . Another tine is physical and manual skills. . . . The third tine is social and interpersonal competence" (Chickering, 1969, pp. 8-9)
- Managing emotions—

  > The student's first task is to become aware of feelings and to trust them more, to recognize that the provide information relevant to contemplated behavior or to decisions about future plans. Before emotional control can become effective, emotions have to be experienced, to be felt and perceived for what they are. (Chickering, 1969, p. 10)

- Movement through autonomy toward interdependence—In this vector, students work to increase emotional independence, defined as "freedom from continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or approval from others" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 47).

- Developing mature relationships—"Maturing interpersonal relationships reflect an increasing awareness of and openness to differences in ideas, people, backgrounds, and values" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 22).
- Establishing identity—"Development of identity is the process of discovering with what kinds of experience, at what levels of intensity and frequency, we resonate in satisfying, in safe, or in self-destruction fashion" (Chickering, 1969, p. 13).
- Developing purpose—"Development of purpose, then, requires formulating plans and priorities that integrate avocational and recreational interests, vocational plans, and life-style considerations. With such integration, life flows with direction and meaning" (Chickering, 1969, p. 17).
- Developing integrity—

> the clarification of a personally valid set of beliefs that have some internal consistency and that provide at least a tentative guide for behavior. Such development involves three overlapping stages: the humanizing of values, the personalizing of values, and the development of congruence. (Chickering, 1969, p. 17)

Chickering's theory outlined the pieces of a campus environment that affect college student growth and development, termed key influences (Evans et al., 2010, pp. 65-67). According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005):

> These areas of influence are (1) clarity of institutional objectives and the internal consistency of policies, practices, and activities; (2) an institutional size that does not restrict opportunities for participation; (3) frequent student-faculty relationships in diverse settings; (4) curricula oriented to integration in both content and processes; (5) teaching that is flexible, varied in instructional styles and modes, and aimed at encouraging active student involvement in learning; (6) friendships and student communities that become meaningful subcultures marked by diversity in attitudes and backgrounds and by significant interpersonal

> exchanges; and (7) student development programs and services characterized by their educational content and purpose and offered collaboratively with faculty. (p. 23)

Chickering also identified six conditions of strong-performing institutions (2006):

1. a "living" mission and a lived educational philosophy,
2. an unshakable focus on student learning,
3. environments adapted for educational enrichment,
4. clearly marked pathways to student success,
5. an improvement-oriented ethos, and
6. shared responsibility for educational quality and student success. (p. 11)

Chickering's theory is useful in higher education today because the theory "provides a comprehensive picture of the developmental tasks student face" that is practical and easily applied in standard student affairs work (Evans et al., 2010, pp. 80-81).

Developing purpose vector. Chickering and Reisser did not number the vectors of development, but the authors identified that students develop purpose as they develop competence, learn to manage emotions, move through autonomy toward interdependence, develop mature interpersonal relationships, and establish identity (1993, p. 209). As students progress through the first five developmental vectors, they answer questions like the following:

- Who am I?
- What can I do well?
- What do I feel, and why?
- How do I manage and express my feelings?
- Who am I, apart from my role as son or daughter, parent or worker?
- Who am I, as a partner, friend, or lover?
- How to I respond to people who are different?
- How comfortable am I with myself – with my body, my gender, my heritage? (p. 209)

As students begin to define their answers, they can begin to answer questions like "Where am I going? What are my goals and ideals? What kind of life do I want to lead as I complete my college experience?" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 209). Chickering and Reisser suggested that "developing purpose entails an increasing ability to be intentional, to assess interests, and opinions, to clarify goals, to make plans and to persist despite obstacles" (p. 209). As an individual begins to develop purpose, they must have a desired outcome, or they simply cannot formulate a good plan (p. 210).

College provides students with an optimum time to develop purpose, as there is encouragement for students to explore their interests, and the campus environment intentionally provides experiences for students to explore their interests (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 211). Chickering and Reisser identified the elements of developing purpose:

> Developing purpose requires formulating plans for action and a set of priorities that integrate three major elements (1) vocational plans and aspirations, (2) personal interests, and (3) interpersonal and family commitments. It also involves increasing intentionality in exercising personal will on a daily basis. To be intentional is to be skilled in consciously choosing priorities, in aligning action with purpose, in motivating oneself consistently toward goals, and in persevering despite barriers or setbacks. (p. 212)

According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), "vocations can include paid work, unpaid work, or both" (p. 212). Career counselors, professors, and participation in experiential opportunities, like internships, help students determine their vocational interests during college (p. 216). Chickering and Reisser elaborated:

> Clarifying personal interests is a major step in this process. The freedom to take courses that inform and extend those interests is essential. College may be the one time in life when people can sample new fields of knowledge, pursue familiar topics in more depth, test hunches about career possibilities, discover new

> capacities through experiential learning, and leave comfort zones to do a novel class assignment or partake of cocurricular options. (p. 217).

Although some students may develop vocational purpose early, “identifying a life purpose or a sense of one’s personal mission may take years of experience and reflection” (p. 225).

Chickering and Reisser suggested that personal interests also play a major role in the development of purpose. Personal interests can easily be identified by examining how a student spends their time. “When choices have real meaning, increased time is spent on study and other exploratory or preparatory activities” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 225). Religion and spiritual beliefs may have a major impact on the development of purpose for some students (p. 228). “College may be an ideal time to experiment, but as homework assignments pile up and senior status signals an end to the scholar’s life, students must inevitably become prioritizers” (p. 229).

The third piece of developing purpose comes from interpersonal and family commitments. While students aim to develop purpose and select a career path, they also need to consider interpersonal and family considerations (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 229). One must consider a partner and family as they prepare to work toward long-term goals. Chickering and Reisser identified the challenges in this phase; they stated “It is difficult to construct a plan that balances life-style considerations, vocational aspirations, and avocational interests. Many compromises must be made” (p. 229). As students approach graduation, they may find themselves asking some important questions:

- What is my purpose?
- What is really important?
- What do I have to have, and what can I live without? (p. 231)

While students should focus on developing purposes and creating goals during college, Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggested that "purposes need not be highly specific, nor must commitment be absolute" (p. 233). The development of purpose is a complex, but important process for college students:

> A strong commitment to a value or belief can determine purpose. If one believes it is important to be authentic, to be patient, to be conscientious, then developing or embodying that quality can become one's purpose. Values constitute important frames of reference that add depth to purpose and context to action. Beliefs give us images of how the world is and should be. In clarifying purpose, we must therefore go beyond what is merely interesting and find an anchoring set of assumptions about what is true, principles that define what is good, and beliefs that provide meaning and give us a sense of our place in the larger whole. (p. 234)

Developing purposes inventory. In 1978, Barratt created an instrument to assess the development of purpose among college students, called the Developing Purposes Inventory (DPI). Using the DPI, researchers found that students who have an academic major are more likely to have defined their purpose (White & Hood, 1989). Furthermore, students who have selected a career are likely to score high in all three vectors of the DPI: Avocational Recreational Interests, Vocational Interests, and Style of Life. The results of the DPI suggest "that students' overall sense of purpose is related to commitment to an academic major and a particular career path" (White & Hood, 1989, p. 358).

The DPI is shown to have substantial reliability and "at least a small amount of evidence of validity" (Barratt & Hood, 1983, p. 4). The DPI was tested four times, and was found to have reasonably high internal consistency reliabilities (Table 2).

Table 2

Scale Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities of the DPI

	Avocational Recreational Interests	Vocational Interests	Style of Life
Summer 1977 (N = 167)			
Mean	51.3	56.6	53.0
Standard Deviation	5.1	6.0	7.6
Reliability	.84	.80	.87
Fall 1977 (N = 50)			
Mean	50.9	55.9	53.4
Standard Deviation	3.9	4.3	7.6
Reliability	.53	.73	.77
Spring 1978 (N = 34)			
Mean	49.2	54.2	53.0
Standard Deviation	6.1	6.9	7.8
Reliability	.70	.81	.82
Spring 1981 (N =75)			
Mean	51.7	56.1	55.1
Standard Deviation	4.2	5.7	6.7
Reliability	.39	.68	.69

Source: Barratt and Hood (1983).

Table 3

Inter-scale Correlations of the DPI

	Vocational	Style of Life
Summer 1977		
Avocational Recreational Interests	.50	.50
Vocational Interests	-	.64
Fall 1977		
Avocational Recreational Interests	.28	.41
Vocational Interests	-	.68
Spring 1978		
Avocational Recreational Interests	.58	.63
Vocational Interests	-	.59
Spring 1981		
Avocational Recreational Interests	.38	.42
Vocational Interests	-	.49

Source: Barratt and Hood (1983).

Acquisition of Purpose

"The educational process must contain certain elements and provide for certain experiences not because they are meant for the development of human purpose but because they are parts of what enters into its possession" (Green, 1981, p. 543). As purpose is developed, aimlessness is dispelled, and one develops hope and a motivation to continue moving forwards. Green (1981) suggested that educational institutions can "aid the acquisition of purpose" through five elements that can be grouped into three

categories: "(1) competence, (2) discipline and practice, and (3) service and the exercise of judgment" (p. 544).

Competence is what defines purpose for an individual, and competence is "essential to the possession of purpose" (Green, 1981, p. 544). Green expanded: "The absence of all competence is a mark of a faulty education. It is also the sign of a certain kind of *moral* fault, a defect of character" (p. 544). Exhibiting competence does not just mean one is good at something, "it helps to tell us what kinds of things we are good at, which is one way of determining the kinds of persons we are and, therefore, the kinds of purposes we may adopt" (p. 545). As an individual develops competence, they also need feedback, because if there is no public recognition of one's skills, then the individual is likely to abort the mission to develop purpose. Green concluded, "Having purpose in life requires having competence, but competence is not the *means* to the development of purpose. It is rather a part of having purpose at any stage of human development" (p. 546).

Discipline and practice require a person to utilize their skills and develop structure, so that all practice is meaningful and leading to a goal. Green (1981) expanded, "Discipline, then, is the rule, order, form, or structure by which any practice is conducted" (p. 546). Furthermore, "The whole point of practicing as preparation is to provide a context in which errors and mistakes may occur without serious consequences" (p. 549). Academic disciplines "specify a set of virtues required for excellence at a particular practice" and "knowledge is the result of that practice" (p. 548). College provides students with an optimum opportunity to develop structure and practice their

skills for a specific discipline. With the representation of both students and professors on a college campus, "it is a peculiarity of the academic institution that, although for many it is the setting for practice in the sense of preparation, it is for some the setting also for practice in the sense of performance" (p. 549).

According to Green (1981), the third component necessary for the acquisition of purpose is service and judgment. "Service is the fundamental purpose of the academy whether the purposes of students are aimed at the practices contained within the academy or aimed at those beyond it" (p. 550). Green elaborated:

> We cannot imagine anyone developing a realistic life plan without developing some competence, nor can we imagine that competence developing except within a public that takes notice and finds one's effort to be of service. Indeed, what else can we mean by a "life plan" except a plan for the exercise of one's competence? (p. 551)

When purpose is paired with service, then it becomes a potential career path, as it contributes to the public good. "Judgment, in short, is the capacity to make reliable estimates on the basis of some method but in the absence of decisive information" (Green, 1981, p. 553). In the following excerpt, Green described how competence, discipline, practice, service, and the exercise of judgment come together for the acquisition of purpose:

> Competence is an essential part of the development of purpose. It is one part of what is required if anyone is to have a life plan or a workable and good plan for a significant part of life. Competence – that is to say, being good at something – is essential partly because it helps to make the self specific. Knowing what we are good at, we know better who we are, what kinds of purposes or plans may be workable, what our limits are. But now we can see also that that kind of self-knowledge is a component in the development of human judgment. And the exercise of judgment in a large measure defines the "higher" disciplines of life – that is, those disciplines most clearly devoted to public service. They are the "higher" disciplines because they deal most explicitly with the fundamental

> requirements of life outside the academy. Competence, discipline, practice, service, and judgment – these are the parts of that whole we call "being possessed with purpose." (p. 555).

Student Affairs' Role in Development of Purpose

"Institutions that are really serious about freshmen success must know the characteristics and backgrounds of their students, and use these data in planning for freshmen success" (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). Once student affairs practitioners develop a rapport with students, they can work to determine those students' goals, and help the students plot a map to success in college. Chickering and Reisser (1993) proposed the aforementioned vectors as "maps" to help student affairs practitioners determine where students are headed developmentally (p. 34). Chickering and Reisser explained:

> Movement along any one can occur at different rates and can interact with movement along the others. Each step from 'lower' to 'higher' brings more awareness, skill, confidence, complexity, stability, and integration but does not rule out an accidental or intentional return to ground already transverse. We assume that 'higher' is better than 'lower,' because in adding the skills and strengths, encompassed by these vectors, individuals grown in versatility, strength, and ability to adapt when unexpected barriers or pitfalls appear" (pp. 34-35)

As students develop their identities, they also look to the future and create goals to help them reach their purposes. "The establishment of identity is believed to be the core developmental issue with which students grapple during the college years" (Moran, 2001, p. 269). Using data from the Purpose in Life (PIL) test, Moran comprised a list of four propositions useful for student affairs practitioners:

- Students' identification of a purpose in life shapes and is shaped by personal values and beliefs.
- Students' identification of a purpose in life affects and is affected by their desire to be actively involved in social situations and leadership roles.

- Students' identification of a purpose in life influences and is influenced by their physical health as well as their health-related behaviors and habits.
- Students' identification of a purpose in life impacts and is impacted by their physiological well-being and overall satisfaction of life. (pp. 272-273)

Using these constructs, Moran (2001) identified four implications for student affairs practitioners:

- Student affairs practitioners should spend time reflecting on their own values, beliefs, and purpose in life in order to be able to effectively lead students in doing the same.
- Student affairs practitioners should be willing to invest quality time with students and deem this the priority task within their job descriptions. Quality time with students will afford more opportunities for meaningful conversations to occur.
- Student affairs practitioners should practice the art of asking questions, listening, and reflecting in order to engage in meaningful, intentional conversations with students about existential issues.
- Student affairs practitioners, in all areas of administration, should incorporate issues of purpose in life into every aspect of their work. (pp. 274-276)

The implications outlined by Moran (2001) reflect the philosophy that one cannot help others until they help themselves. For example, if a student affairs practitioner wants to help a student define purpose, the practitioner should be prepared to identify his/her individual purpose, and help the student arrive at their logic. Student affairs practitioners have an ideal opportunity to work with students, and Moran reminded educators that students will learn best in an open-door environment, where students are comfortable.

Many student affairs practitioners develop and encourage interactive programming, and one important component of such programs is the ability to provide confirmation to a student's acquisition of purpose. Sanford's model of challenge and support "was one of the first developmental theories to pay attention to the idea of student development as a function of person-environment interaction. He proposed three

development conditions: readiness, challenge, and support" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 30). Sanford (1960) also pointed out that "growth in the person is a matter of challenge and response. People don't just naturally grow after they go to college. They have to be stimulated to grow" (p. 152). Furthermore, the amount of challenge a student can tolerate is a function of the amount of support available (Sanford, 1966). Therefore, a college environment that encourages student development should train all institutional personnel to challenge students appropriately and provide them with the necessary support system (Garfield & David, 1986, p. 528).

Change during College

There is evidence that college students grow and develop throughout a four-year education. Through Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) compendium of research on college student development, the researchers determined "Students not only made statistically significant gains in factual knowledge and in range of general cognitive and intellectual skills but also changed significantly on a broad spectrum of value, attitudinal, psychosocial, and moral dimensions" (p. 572). In particular, students "tended to gain in the clarity and sophistication of their identities and became more positive in academic and social self-concepts as well as in their self-esteem" (p. 574).

First-year success can be defined as making "progress toward fulfilling their educational and personal goals" (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989, p. 2). The educational and personal goals suggested by Upcraft and Gardner align with Chickering and Reisser's student development vectors. As first-year students begin to make decisions about their future and lifestyle goals, they must think about "how they fit into the larger order of the

universe" (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989, p. 3). Furthermore, for students to achieve their purpose, they must consistently behave in a way that helps them progress toward their goals. Upcraft and Gardner summarized: "freshman 'success' is more than earning a sufficient grade point average to graduate. It is making progress on educational and personal development. . . . It means taking advantage of the collegiate environment by growing and developing one's maximum potential" (pp. 3-4).

Conclusion

Chickering (2006) wrote:

> The critical point is that we need to be serious about helping our students move on to satisfying and productive lives as partners, parents, citizens, and workers. To do so, I believe we need to commit to the three R's. We need to recognize, respect, and respond to each person's emerging future plans and aspirations in the most helpful ways we can. (p. 15)

Student affairs practitioners have the opportunity to help students develop an identity, and more specifically, develop purpose during college. The campus culture creates an atmosphere where students can learn and grow, and determine their purpose through the combination of academic coursework, campus involvement, recreational activities, social gatherings, and additional experiences.

In this chapter, the researcher examined literature about how students develop purpose during college. The literature suggested that students will develop purpose during college in three areas: avocational recreational interests, vocational interests, and style of life. In Chapter 3, the researcher provides a detailed description of this study's mixed methods approach.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose Statement

This convergent mixed methods study was created to examine how students develop purpose in college. First-year students and senior college students who had been enrolled in a general studies program were surveyed and interviewed to assess how students develop purpose in college.

Research Questions

The following grand tour question was studied: How did freshman and senior undergraduate participants develop purpose during their college education? The following subquestions were also explored:

1. How did students develop in terms of their avocational recreational interests during college?
2. How did students develop their style of life during college?
3. How did students develop their vocational interests during college?

Research Population

The Office of Registration and Records created a sample for this study using a simple random sampling technique. The sample consisted of 450 freshmen students and 450 senior students (900 students total) because this sample size provides a power of .8, the desired level of power for this study. Power is defined as "the probability of correctly rejecting a false null hypothesis" in quantitative testing (Creswell, 2012, p. 625). The researcher identified an "appropriate sample size for group comparisons by taking into

consideration the amount of power desired in a study (.8), and the effect size" and examining the appropriate tables to calculate the sample size (p. 611).

The survey was administered by a third party who was a university employee, but was not a researcher. All students in each population had the same chance of being selected for the sample A total of 127 students voluntarily completed the Developing Purposes Inventory (DPI). Data were collected from two samples:

- First-year students who are currently in their first academic year at UNL and have not declared an academic major
- Seniors who first enrolled full-time in the fall of 2009 with an undeclared major

Although the Registrar's office provided a random sample of first-year and senior students enrolled in the university, some students self-identified as another college classification (freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior). A total of 58 students identified as freshmen, 2 as sophomores, 4 as juniors, and 63 as seniors.

Twenty-four students expressed an interest in completing a follow-up interview. Twenty-three participants were contacted via email to schedule a semi-structured interview (Appendix C), and seven students scheduled and completed an interview. Participants were asked to select a pseudonym before the interview commenced. Table 4 outlines the pseudonyms selected for interview purposes.

Table 4

Participant Descriptions

Interview	Pseudonym	Classification	Gender	Interview Location
1	Abraham	Senior	Male	On-Campus
2	Michael	Senior	Male	On-Campus
3	Brenna	First-Year	Female	On-Campus
4	James	Senior	Male	On-Campus
5	Erin	Senior	Female	On-Campus
6	Tiffany	First-Year	Female	Virtual
7	Melissa	First-Year	Female	On-Campus

Research Process

Initially, students from the population were sent an electronic survey, which asked some demographic questions and followed Barratt's Developing Purposes Inventory (DPI) (Appendix A). The DPI was comprised of 45 questions that were to be answered using a Likert scale. Students were asked to evaluate "How true is this statement about me?" for the 45 questions asked. The questions on the DPI represented three categories of developing purpose: avocational recreational interests, vocational interests, and style of life. The Likert scale consisted of five rankings: 1) Always true, 2) Often true, 3) Sometimes true, 4) Rarely true, and 5) Never true.

At the end of the survey, students had the opportunity to volunteer for a semi-structured qualitative interview with the researcher. Any student interested in participating in an interview was asked to provide his/her name, email address, and phone number, which the researcher used to schedule interviews with participants. Twenty-four

students expressed an interest in completing a follow-up interview, and the researcher was able to contact 23 of the participants using the email addresses and phone numbers provided. Seven students responded to the researcher's request, and completed an interview. Of the 7 participants, 3 identified as first-year students, and 4 were senior students. The interviews were scheduled for one hour, and were held on campus in quiet conference rooms in the College of Education. The researcher created a semi-structured interview protocol to guide interviews (Appendix B).

Research Design

A convergent mixed-methods approach was used for data collection. A convergent mixed-methods approach was selected because this allowed the researcher to simultaneously collect quantitative and qualitative data, merge the data, and use the results to understand a research problem (Creswell, 2012, p. 619). The study was conducted at one large research Midwestern University.

The survey collected demographic information from students and used the Developing Purposes Inventory, which was created by Barratt in 1978, and based on the theoretical work of Chickering (1969). The qualitative interviews followed a semi-structured protocol to capture the "words from a small number of individuals so that the participants' views are obtained" (Creswell, 2012, p. 36).

The Office of Registration and Records compiled a sample of students who met the criteria of the research. A third-party sent an email to the sample requesting their participation in the survey research (Appendix C). The initial email to students included

an informed consent document that was to be reviewed before participating in the research.

Students who completed the survey and volunteered themselves for a qualitative interview were contacted directly by the researcher. An email was sent to all participants who indicated they would be interested in completing an interview requesting to schedule an interview time (Appendix D). Students who did not respond to the email received a phone call to participate in the research.

Before commencing the interview, all participants signed an informed consent document (Appendix E). Participants then selected a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality.

Each student develops purpose differently, and the qualitative interviews allowed the researcher to delve into the topic of purpose development with each student individually. The one-on-one interviews provided students with an opportunity to reflect upon their college experience and provide the researcher with a deeper understanding of their development of purpose.

Institutional Review Board Approval

Prior to commencing any research, the Consortium for IRB Training Initiative in Human Subjects Protections (CITI), was completed by the researcher as a prerequisite to completing research on human subjects. Approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted on November 16, 2012, before the researcher started collecting data (Appendix F).

Research Site

This study was completed at a large research Midwestern University. The total enrollment of the institution for the fall of 2012 was 24,207 (University of Nebraska, 2012, p. 51). The entering class of 2009, who would be in their fourth full year of college, started with 3,965 students (p. 54). During the fall of 2012, there were 5,874 senior college students enrolled at the institution (p. 55). The current first-year class had a starting enrollment of 3,918 (p. 54). Fifty-four percent of the freshmen class was comprised of male students, which was comparable to the sample size, in which 50% of freshman participants were male (p. 66). Approximately 55% of the senior class was comprised of male students, which was comparable to the sample, in which approximately half of the participants were male (p. 66).

Six of the seven interviews were completed on campus, while one interview was completed using Google Hangout, a video chat internet program. The six on-campus interviews were held in quiet conference rooms on campus so that the interviews could be audio recorded without interruption.

Data Collection

Before the researcher collected any data, approval and permissions were obtained from IRB and the Office of Registration and Records (Appendix G). An initial email was sent to participants requesting participation in the electronic survey; the initial email included information on informed consent. The 45 questions included in the Developing Purposes Inventory (DPI) were to be answered using a Likert scale.

Before conducting the qualitative interviews, the researcher explained the informed consent document and had each participant sign the document before commencing the interview. Students were provided with a copy of the document for their personal records. The interviews were conducted in quiet conference rooms in the College of Education on the large research Midwestern University's campus. Interviews were scheduled for 60 minutes, and the interviews were all completed within the 60 minute time frame. The purpose of the follow-up interview was to capture participants' voices so the researcher could better understand how students developed purpose during college. The interview employed a semi-structured interview approach, which allowed for questions to be re-ordered or follow-up questions to be asked during the interview (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). Each interview closed with the interviewer asking the following questions:

- Are there any questions you expected me to ask that I didn't?
- Do you have any questions for me?

The interviewer used an audio recorder to capture each conversation, that were subsequently transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

Data Analysis Approach

Quantitative instrument. William Barratt, a scholar from the University of Iowa, created the Developing Purposes Inventory (DPI) in 1978 to evaluate the developing purpose vector of Chickering's student development theory (Appendix A). The DPI asked students 45 questions on a 5-point scale based off the three components of Chickering's purpose vector: avocational recreational interests, vocational interests, and

style of life (Barratt, 1978). With the DPI, students are asked to answer the question "How true is this statement about me?" for the 45 statements. Participants respond using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "always true" to "never true." The DPI can exemplify how students chose to devote their resources, especially time, into their balance of career, personal life, and style of life.

The researcher used Qualtrics to conduct statistical analyses of the data from the DPI inventory in regard to the three areas of purpose development: avocational recreational interests, style of life, and vocational interests. The data collected from the freshmen students were compared to the data collected from the senior students.

Reliability of the items was established with split half reliability, Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha was computed by dividing the test into 2 equal halves (e.g., for a 20 item questionnaire the first 10 items are the first half and items 11 to 20 are the second half) and correlating those 2 halves. A MANOVA was also calculated to determine the reliability of the data (Appendix H).

Qualitative interviews. The researcher transcribed each interview verbatim. The researcher utilized a member-checking technique, in which participants were asked to review the transcript and contact the researcher if anything was inaccurate (Appendix I). Before sending the transcript to participants, the researcher read through each transcript. After the transcripts were returned, or seven days passed from the time the member check was requested, the researcher read through the transcript a second time for overall content. At this time the researcher also made notes in the margin to identify what the participant was talking about during the interview. The researcher then read each

transcript a third time to enhance familiarity with the conversation and to begin the coding process through *in vivo* codes, which are the "participants actual words" (Creswell, 2012, p. 244). A lean coding method was employed, in which the researcher assigned only a few codes initially.

After the initial codes were identified, the researcher made a list of the codes and grouped the codes to minimize redundancy. At this point, the researcher returned to the transcripts, and selected quotes which depicted the codes. From this data, themes were created "by examining codes that the participants discuss most frequently" or codes that were "unique or surprising" (Creswell, 2012, p. 245). The six themes that emerged are presented in Chapter 4.

Researcher Reflexivity

The researcher conducted all seven qualitative interviews. During the interview, the researcher took notes, which were used in the evaluation of transcripts. The researcher had to be careful to rely on the transcripts for data analysis purposes, as the notes were not verbatim, and could not reflect the participants' emotions. During times, the researcher recognized that she had strayed from the role as researcher and needed a conscious reminder to stay on task, as she had become too engaged in conversation. As the researcher completed the interviews, the research process became clearer. Therefore, the researcher was still developing the study while interviews were being completed.

Verification Strategies

According to Creswell (2012), "you want to select an instrument that reports individual scores that are reliable and valid" (p. 159). "Reliability means that scores from

an instrument are stable and consistent" (Creswell, 2012, p. 159). The Developing Purposes Inventory was proven "to have substantial reliability and at least a small amount of evidence of validity" (Barratt & Hood, 1983, p. 4). For more information on the reliability and validity of the DPI, see pages 21 and 22 of Chapter 2.

Creswell (2012) also suggests that reliability can be enhanced with qualitative research if the researcher compiles field notes, alongside a quality audio recording, which accurately captures the words from the interview. The researcher recorded each interview with a high quality audio recorder, and the interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure reliability of the data.

For the qualitative research, multiple methods were used to ensure the data are valid. Validity is the degree to which all of the evidence points to the intended interpretation of test scores for the proposed purpose" (Creswell, 2012, p. 159). To achieve validity in the qualitative portion of this study, the researcher emailed the interview transcripts to participants for member checking, which ensured accuracy of the data. Of the seven participants interviewed for this study, three responded within the researcher's requested time frame of seven days. All participants who responded clarified acronyms they had used during the interview, and no other changes were requested.

By virtue of completing qualitative interviews, another validity strategy was employed, because students have the opportunity to share their perspective. According to Creswell (2007), "rich, thick description allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under study" (p. 209).

Finally, an external auditor was employed to ensure that the transcriptions were accurate from recordings, qualitative themes and codes accurately described the data, and the overall analysis and results were coherent from the qualitative methodology (Appendix J).

Conclusion

This chapter explained the methodology of this research study. IRB approval was granted before any data was collected. Electronic surveys were completed by participants before semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted. Multiple strategies for reliability and validity were utilized in this study, including the use of a quantitative survey, audio recordings, member checking, rich description to capture the voices of participants, and auditing of the themes and codes. The responses of students were collected using the DPI and data were statistically analyzed for correlations and significance. The data are discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Findings

Purpose Statement

This convergent mixed methods study was created to examine how students develop purpose in college. First-year students and senior college students who had been enrolled in a general studies program were surveyed and interviewed to assess how students develop purpose in college.

Description of Participants

A total of 127 students voluntarily completed the Developing Purposes Inventory (DPI). Although the Registrar's office provided a random sample of 450 first-year and 450 senior students enrolled in the university, some students self-identified as another college classification (freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior). A total of 58 students identified as freshmen, 2 as sophomores, 4 as juniors, and 63 as seniors. Of the 127 respondents, 62 (49%) identified as male and 65 (51%) as female. The majority of respondents (87%) identified as White, 2% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 1% identified as Black or African American, 2% identified as Native American or American Indian, and 1% identified as Asian or Pacific Islander. The remaining respondents chose not to disclose their ethnic identity. Of the total population, 22% identified as first-generation college students. The majority of respondents (62%) have declared a major.

Overall, the sample of 900 students provided by the Registrar was representative of the total freshmen and senior population, but because 127 students (58 freshmen and 63 seniors) from the sample voluntarily completed the survey, the data cannot be

construed as fully representative of the sample. At the large research Midwestern University where the research was completed, males comprised 54% of the undergraduate population and females 46% (University of Nebraska, 2012, p. 59). Eighty one percent of the undergraduate population was comprised of White/Non-Hispanic students. Table 5 outlines the college's enrollment by level and ethnicity for the fall of 2012 (University of Nebraska, 2012, p. 61).

More specifically, of the 58 freshmen who participated in this study, 13 were first-generation college students. Half of the first-year participants were male, and half of the first-year participants female. Of the 58 students, 56 had enrolled in full-time college courses for the first time in 2012, while 2 participants enrolled in 2011. The majority of students had not yet selected a major, with only 11 students having declared a major at the time of the survey.

Sixty-three senior students completed the survey, all of which had declared a major. Of the 63 senior students, 31 identified as male, and 32 as female. Fourteen of the students were first-generation college students. The majority of the students had enrolled in college full-time for the first time in 2009 (29 students), while 21 students had enrolled in 2008, 10 before 2008, 2 in 2010, and 1 in 2011.

Of the 127 students who completed the survey, 24 students indicated that they would be interested in completing a follow-up interview. The researcher requested interviews with 23 students who provided a phone number and/or email addresses, and 7 students responded to the interview request. All 7 students who scheduled an interview participated in a qualitative interview. All interview participants selected a pseudonym to

maintain confidentiality. Every participant was enrolled as a full-time student. Three males and four females participated in the qualitative part of this research study. All three males were senior students, one female was a senior student, and three female participants were first-year students (see Table 4).

Table 4

Participant Descriptions

Interview	Pseudonym	Classification	Gender	Interview Location
1	Abraham	Senior	Male	On-Campus
2	Michael	Senior	Male	On-Campus
3	Brenna	First-Year	Female	On-Campus
4	James	Senior	Male	On-Campus
5	Erin	Senior	Female	On-Campus
6	Tiffany	First-Year	Female	Virtual
7	Melissa	First-Year	Female	On-Campus

Table 5

Survey Respondent Ethnicity

	Respondent Data				Campus Data	
Respondent Ethnicity	First-Year Respondents	First-Year Percentage	Senior Respondents	Senior Percentage	Total Population	Total Percentage
White	48	83%	60	95%	15,522	85.66%
Hispanic or Latino	1	2%	2	3%	827	4.56%
Black or African American	1	2%	0	0%	426	2.35%
Native American or American Indian	3	5%	0	0%	57	0.03%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1	2%	0	0%	444	2.45%
Other	2	3%	0	0%	380	2.10%
Prefer not to disclose	2	3%	1	2%	465	2.57%
Total	58	100%	63	100%	18,121	100%

The following describes the participants in the qualitative section and vaguely describes the interview conversation.

Abraham. Abraham was a senior who was very interested in helping others, and made an attempt to generalize the knowledge he obtained in the classroom. For example, Abraham started in an accounting program, but felt that he could not generalize accounting knowledge to multiple facets of life, so he changed his major to psychology and business. He was working two part-time jobs at the time of the interview, which had led him to find his passion in helping others through organizational development. Abraham believed in supporting others and living life with an attitude that encouraged development. For Abraham, college was an opportunity to explore and prepare for a career, but not one in a specific field, as he was open to multiple areas of business and psychology. Abraham was mentored by many adults, including his high school coaches and teachers, and parents, which encouraged him to sign up to mentor through a local mentoring program. Abraham had many positive influences, and he paid the good deed forward through a local mentoring program. Abraham felt that this mentorship experience, combined with his part-time work in the group home were preparing him to become a parent later in life. He enjoyed working directly with people, and spent most of his free time working at his part-time jobs. Other free time was spent socializing with peers, and spending time with friends. Abraham explained that one major factor in his decision to stay in town for college was the network he had already developed, and his desire to maintain and grow his current network of friends.

Michael. Michael was a senior student who was enrolled in the Army. He went to basic training before enrolling in college. He was interested in studying criminal justice and had a desire to attend graduate school after completing his degree to obtain a master's degree in criminal justice. He was from a small town; he saw college as the next step in life. He was working security at a national retailer during nights and weekends. While he did not enjoy his work, he considered his job to be one of his main priorities, as he believed his work experience would help him reach his career aspirations of working for the federal government. Michael did not spend much time with family or friends, as he described himself as an introvert. He suggested that he would rather make money and do well in school than socialize. Michael mentioned that he would like to get married and start a family later in life.

Brenna. Brenna was an eager first-year student who came into the college without a major, but quickly found her passion in education and teaching. Brenna enrolled in college because it was the next step for her. During Brenna's first semester at college she volunteered at a local after-school program, and was taking a practicum class to prepare for education coursework. She was heavily involved on campus with a variety of organizations, ranging from a religious group, to a swing choir. Brenna explained how her campus involvement and experiences had led her to find her passion in education, and she hoped to have the opportunity to influence others to become better people. Brenna explained that she is always trying to help her younger siblings become better people, and she would like to do the same through teaching. Relationships are an important part of

Brenna's value system, and she enjoyed spending time with friends at college through her campus involvement.

James. James was a senior student who enrolled in college because his parents required him to attend some sort of post-secondary education. He found his passion in water studies, and is still determining the exact path of his future. He was preparing for graduation and was deciding between a practitioner career path and legal career path. While he wasn't sure which career path would be best, he was sure he wanted to work with water and the environment. As James was pondering which career would be better for him, he was also considering factors such as wealth and family. His involvement led him to become a Resident Assistant (RA) on campus. James believed networking was an important part of life, and found his social networks on campus and in the business world to be very valuable. James believes he was able to find his passion in college because he was exposed to new ideas and knowledge, and he has matured, which has allowed him to ultimately decide which career path is best for him.

Erin. Erin was a non-traditional senior who enrolled in the university immediately after high school, but dropped out to travel the country. She worked with the deaf community in a neighboring state, and relocated back to her hometown after a failed marriage. Erin returned to school to obtain a degree in education so she could continue working with the deaf community in a more administrative position. Erin had plans to earn her master's degree immediately after completing her bachelor's degree. She considered herself to be very independent and believed she found her purpose though her professional experiences. For Erin, college was just a checkbox she has to mark as

completed before moving forward with her goals. Erin thought she might also be interested in working as a professor on campus because she had a wealth of practical experience with the deaf community. Erin explained that no matter which field she selected, her degree would provide her with a better salary and means than she had previously. Erin spent much of her time off campus working as a bartender and socializing with friends in a bike group. She felt that her friends were her biggest support and they were her motivation for continuing with her education.

Tiffany. Tiffany was a first-year student who had plans to attend college out-of-state, until she received a major scholarship to attend the state university system. Tiffany started her education at the large research Midwestern University, but transferred colleges within the University at the beginning of the semester, where her degree program was offered. Tiffany has always been involved and she values education, which led her to the social work field. She aspired to become a social worker because she felt a calling to help others. Inspired by her mother, who never had the opportunity to attend college, Tiffany now sets high expectations for herself. Tiffany felt she has had many opportunities in life and considers herself on the path to success. Tiffany was very supported by her family, especially her mother. She had regular contact with her mother and made most decisions with parental guidance. For Tiffany, her parents provided her with a motivation to do better than they had in life, as neither of them had a college degree, and they were not always able to secure employment. While Tiffany was not concerned about obtaining a high paying job, she expressed the desire to have the education to back her future work in the social work field.

Melissa. Melissa was a first-year in-state student. She found herself interested in developmental medicine but was unsure of the best path to attend medical school. Her parents greatly impacted her decision to attend college, and she was very academically focused. Melissa recognized that her goals were not feasible without a college education, and her dad motivated her to attend college because he has been "stuck" in the same job without a college degree. While Melissa found opportunities to get involved on campus through a sorority and campus intramurals, she remained academically focused so she can achieve her professional goals of becoming a doctor. Melissa talked some about the desire to start a family, but she was more focused on her desire to help others through a medical career.

Research Questions

The following grand tour question was studied: How did freshman and senior undergraduate participants develop purpose during their college education? The following subquestions were also explored:

1. How did students develop in terms of their avocational recreational interests during college?
2. How did students develop their style of life during college?
3. How did students develop their vocational interests during college?

Overview of Themes

In this chapter, the researcher outlines the themes that had emerged from the qualitative interviews, which examined how students developed purpose in college. The five themes identified in this research are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Themes

Themes
Value of Experiences and Involvement
Exploring Possibilities
Supporting and Helping Others
Preparation to do Something Greater
College as the Next Step
He/ She Believed in Me

Throughout the researcher's discussions with participants, the students continued to tie their present college experiences into their future vocation. This connection is represented through the themes explained below.

Findings

Research Question #1: How did students develop in terms of their avocational recreational interests during college?

Quantitative analysis. According to the Developing Purposes Inventory (DPI), students develop avocational recreational purpose during their college experience (Appendix H). The downward slope of the graph demonstrates that students advanced their avocational recreational interests between their first year and senior year of college (Figure 1). The slope is downward because the DPI scale is as follows: 1) Always true, 2) Often true, 3) Sometimes true, 4) Rarely true, 5) Never true, meaning that a lower score indicated the development of purpose. The results of the DPI were a Cronbach's Alpha of

0.638. Cronbach's alpha is the mean of all possible split half reliabilities. A split half reliability is computed by dividing the test into two equal halves and correlating those two halves.

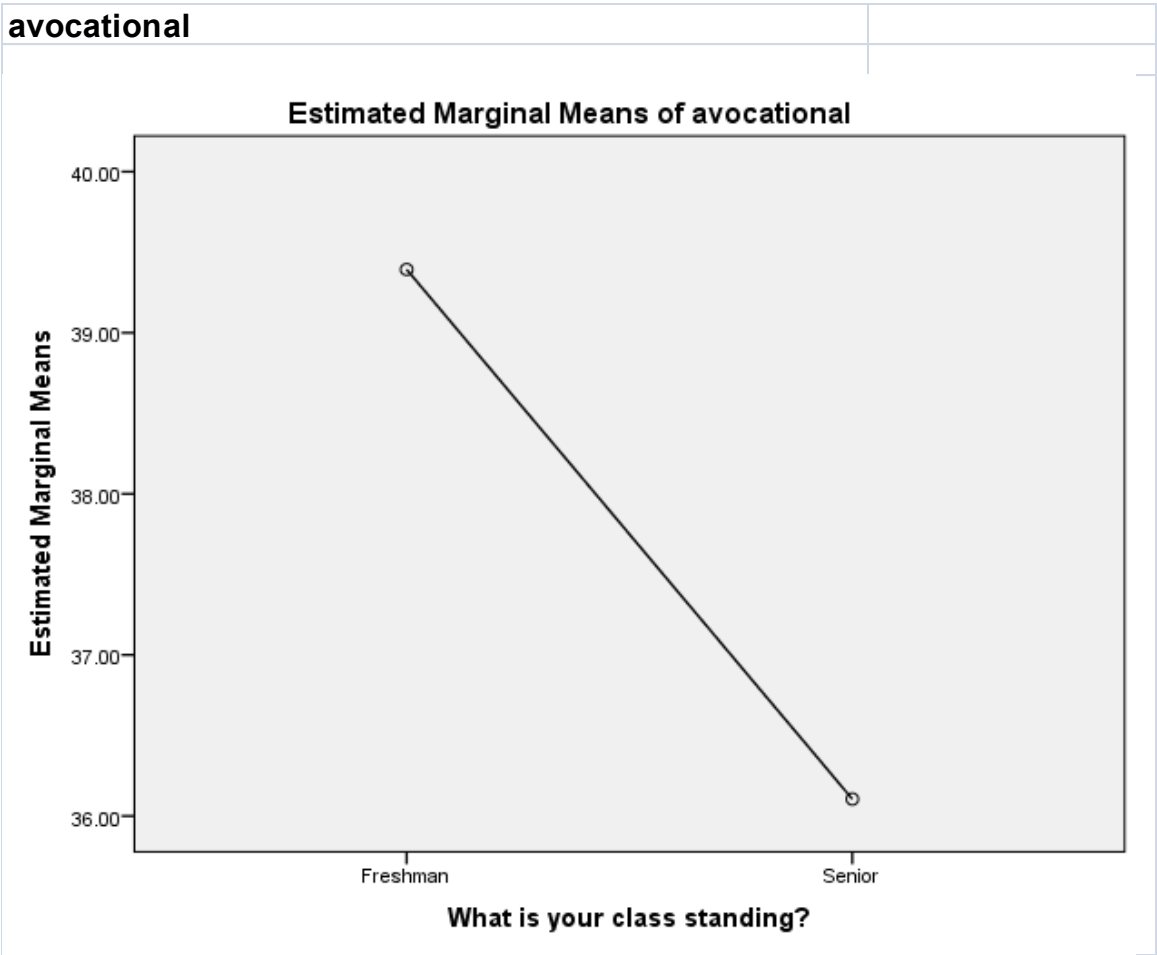

Figure 1. Avocational purpose development.

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances determined the significance of the avocational recreational portion of the DPI equaled 0.684, with an alpha of 0.05.

Theme: Value of experiences and involvement. As the students pondered their college education, they thought about the experiences and involvement that encouraged them to continue moving forward with their goals.

For Melissa, college provided an opportunity to get involved with a sorority, which was like a family for her. Melissa spent time studying at her house and would socialize only after she had completed her task list. She explained that the women in the sorority created a family and support system for her. This experience allowed her to find a support network, much like the one she had with her family. While Melissa chose not to get involved in a multitude of organizations as a first-year student, she found a sorority that helped her develop and grow as an individual.

During Brenna's first semester, she took advantage of an opportunity at an after-school program where she could volunteer and work directly with children. She was unsure where college would lead her but she put her whole heart into the volunteer opportunity and loved her experience working with children. This volunteering opportunity allowed Brenna to solidify her college goal of obtaining a teaching degree. Once Brenna solidified her academic major, she was able to seek out other experiences that would help her continue progressing toward her goals. She was taking a practicum course through the education department where she attended a school every other day and helped the teacher in the classroom. The school had a different student demographic than the after school program and Brenna was able to broaden her horizons and learn about students from "a different walk of life."

Brenna also got involved on campus right away with a multitude of clubs and organizations, including music and religious organizations. As a scholarship recipient, she was required to live in an academic learning community on campus. She also participated in show choir and attended a campus Bible study. These experiences provided her with a support network and her friends were able to support Brenna's goals and ambitions, no matter the path she chose for herself. Brenna explained that her involvement was "keeping her on the right track" and allowed her to find purpose.

For the first-year students, involvement opened doors and provided the students with a support network. For the senior students, their experiences and involvement had become a major piece of their avocational and recreational experiences.

Abraham, a senior, reminisced about the eye opening experiences he encountered his first year of college:

> You hear guest speakers talk from different realms you've never thought of before, and they're telling you unknown information. It allows you to explore and really find your passion, I guess. Not everyone always does by the end of it, and I was unsure if I would, or even if I had a passion. Then I just . . . what I decided to do is stop following like a track, a course, so to say, and just select classes that piqued my interest. If you're interested in it, and choose professors that have a good rapport . . . if you have good teachers and a passion for the subject, you'll succeed. That's what it comes down to, not taking classes that you hate, you suck at, and the teachers are bad. That's not the way to succeed. You'll just hate it.

As Abraham progressed through his four years of college, he discovered new avenues of involvement and uncovered new interests. For example, Abraham was mentoring an elementary student through a local organization during his free time. Abraham explained that this mentorship time was fun for him and something he enjoyed doing during his free time. He reported that this experience, combined with his part time jobs, were preparing

him to become a parent in the future. Abraham was intentional in selecting activities that would allow him to socialize, as he valued spending time with others. For example, Abraham spent a lot of time working during his senior year of college but he was interviewing people during one job, which Abraham enthusiastically described as an opportunity to meet others. As Abraham went through his college experience, his recreational time shifted from time with friends to time in the workplace.

James, another senior, also appreciated the social experiences campus provided and explained that campus involvement is what helped him get comfortable and find his place on campus. He reminisced about how living in the campus residence hall, which housed many international students, opened his eyes to the opportunities available to him on campus and in life. He explained how his experiences and involvement allowed him to mature:

> It has been valuable in terms of maturing. It's been very valuable in terms of getting exposure, as I said, to a whole manner of different activities, different cultures, and different disciplines in the academic community. And figuring out exactly if . . . if not exactly what I want to do, the general area to shoot for. And I don't think I would have developed as much as a person coming into college as I would have, had I skipped the college stage or done something else.

For James, much of college was spent in clubs or organizations, which he linked with his maturation.

Theme: Exploring possibilities. One theme discovered through the qualitative interview process was the impact that exploring possibilities had on a student's avocational recreational interests. Five students were able to develop their purpose in college because they were provided with an avenue to explore many areas and interests, even interests they were unaware of before enrolling in college. Some students found

themselves exploring academically, while others were more focused on the extracurricular activities. Regardless of the type of exploration, students took advantage of the campus offerings and were able to better develop their purpose because of this exploration.

Brenna, a first-year student, found opportunities to explore her avocational recreational interests immediately upon her arrival to campus. Brenna explained, “I’m in show choir, I’m a part of the Navigators – I do a Bible study with them. I also, I mean it’s not really an organization, but I volunteer at the Malone Community Center every week.” For Brenna, the opportunity to participate in a variety of organizations gave her an avenue to meet new people and understand different perspectives.

> Through all of my education classes, I have really learned to have an open mind about differences in people and like how people just learn differently. People interact differently, and so like with all that kind of stuff and with my sociology class, just learning about different ways to go about things. I think so often people think “my way is the way that everyone must do it, because that’s how I did it.” It’s like actually no, there’s a ton of other things to do . . . a ton ways to look at it. Through all those different perspectives I can come up with my own and use that in my own life and my teaching.

As a first-year student, Brenna took a concentrated approach to her exploration during college. She said:

> I have so much knowledge right now, but I’ve learned so much, too. So to be able to go specifically into your area of choice, is just . . . I think is more important than just being broadly great at everything. That’s awesome, but you’re not going to be able to become a doctor that way. Regardless of what you want to do, I think there’s always more to learn about it. Like with all the research that can go on in every profession . . . there’s always a little more to learn, and college is that opportunity to learn it.

Brenna also commented on the fact that her coursework has intertwined, which has helped her learn and find her purpose and passion in teaching. As she is able to apply

information from one course to another, she finds the value of exploring other branches of education and she believes she will be a better teacher because of her college education.

While Tiffany, who was also a first-year student, values education, she believes that “every day is a learning experience” and she works to find educational opportunities in all of her experiences. She has found that college provides a “time to learn about yourself and bettering yourself and seeing what works well for you. It’s about exploring possibilities.”

Tiffany also explained how the college experience had opened her eyes to new lifestyles through living with a roommate. She came from a small family and had never shared a room before. She was challenged to get to know her roommate and find commonalities. She explained that living with a roommate opened her eyes to new recreational activities, such as participating in service trips. For Tiffany, service trips were a great avenue to explore various parts of the country and learn about different demographics and social causes that had been unfamiliar to her prior to her arrival on campus.

While the first-year students relied on campus organizations to explore possibilities, the senior students connected their exploration to future careers and their avocational recreational interests were multifaceted.

James, a senior, came into college with plans of becoming an engineer but ultimately decided to enroll in the general studies program so he could explore multiple fields, which led him to find the water studies program. Looking back he can see the

signs that pointed him to this field, including the fact that his first job was a lifeguard and he spent much of his summer in and around the water. For James, his recreational interests, including swimming and spending time on the lake, led to a future career. His experiences shaped his maturity and academic interests and he had plans to continue his education after earning his bachelor's degree. James expanded:

> I feel a lot more confident in my capabilities and in my knowledge base. I think my college experience has set a very good foundation, and I've taken a lot of excellent courses. Teachers here have been, for the most part, very good. Even if it's not directly related to my major I feel there's been some value to it, whether it's been exposing me to various things in an English class, various literature, or if it's been various courses like geology. It's just expanding my appreciation for different disciplines and helping me to realize what I want to do even if it's through the process of elimination.

While James was able to combine his avocational recreational interests and his future career, he also developed his recreational hobbies while in college. James mentioned his interest in exploring nature and spending time outside, especially hiking. He talked about how walking around campus provided him with time to think about what he wants from life, and how he can achieve his goals. While reminiscing about his walks, he said:

> I think college is also a place where you can get exposed to a number of different cultures, a number of different activities, whether that is going to see an orchestra, or going to see a play from a culture that's not from around here. Just getting exposed, finding out what you want to do with your life. Figuring your life out.

Research Question #2: How did students develop their style of life during college?

Quantitative analysis. According to the Developing Purposes Inventory (DPI), students develop their style of life and expectations of style of life during their college experience (Appendix H). The downward slope of the graph demonstrates that students

developed purpose in their style of life between their first year and senior year of college (Figure 2). A quantitative analysis of the DPI results yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.855. Cronbach's alpha is the mean of all possible split half reliabilities. A split half reliability is computed by dividing the test into two equal and correlating those two halves.

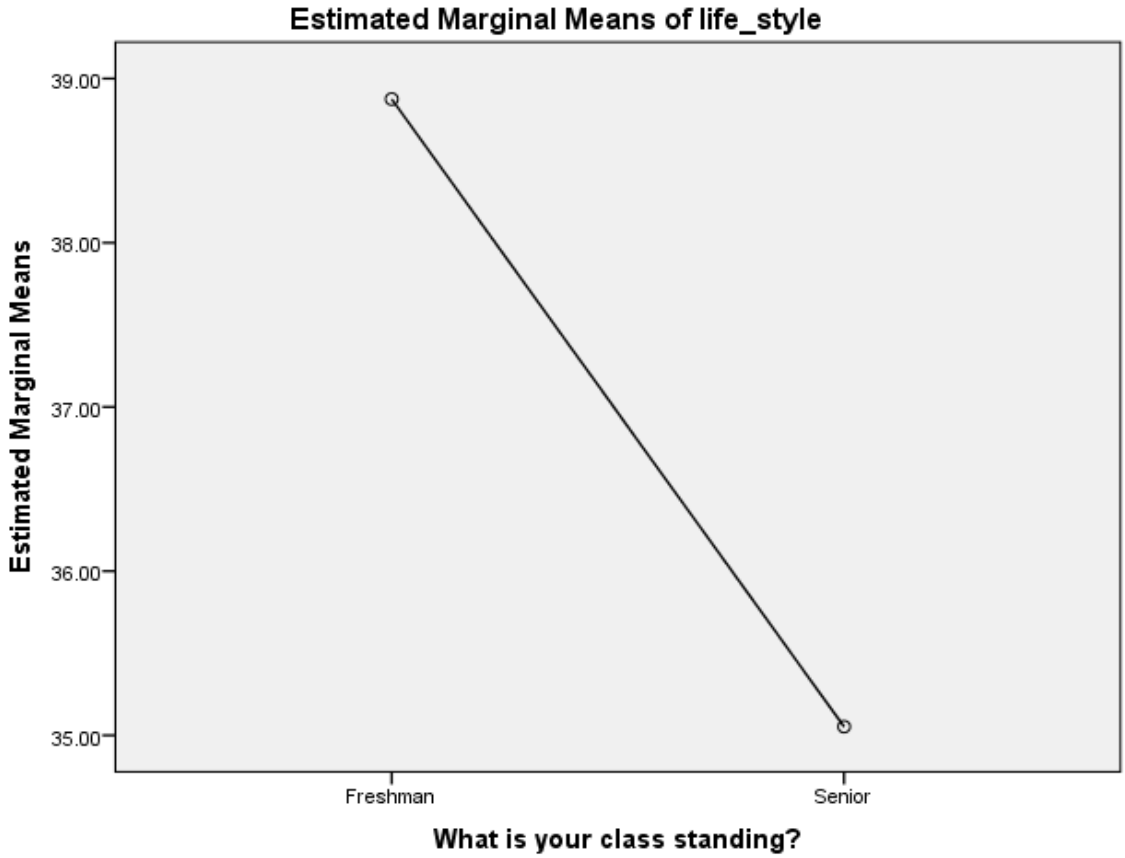

Figure 2. Style of life purpose development.

The results of the style of life questions were statistically significant, with a significance of 0.468, with an alpha of 0.05.

Theme: Supporting and helping others. While students discussed their future families and their interest in finding a partner and raising children in the future, most participants focused on the desire to support and help others. Many students identified their desire to help others as their key purpose in life. While some students had found populations of interest, other students were interested in helping make change behind the scenes.

For Tiffany, a first-year student, she always tried to role model good behaviors and encourage others to do the same. She explained how she tried to be a "good kid" and she tried to role model good behaviors for those around her. Tiffany discussed many service experiences she had been involved with that helped her determine the style of life she sought. Tiffany wanted the knowledge, skills, and abilities to help others effectively. She explained:

> I do want to go into the Peace Corps. I know you don't have to be a college education to go to the Peace Corps, but it does look good on applications. I could do social work in my community without getting a social work degree. To help people to the extent that I want to help people, I need to have the tools and the background, and the foundation to do that. I could go and volunteer or start my own homeless shelter or something, but I want to do so much more than that. I want to educate people and I want to really know what I'm doing.

Tiffany found herself in a position to help others. Tiffany aspired to become a social worker and described her purpose in helping others as follows:

> I definitely feel that my purpose is to help. I feel like I am such a giver. I help whenever I can. And I know that being a social worker . . . I know that I'm going to be a social worker, but I don't really know what I'm going to do. Am I going to do child development, like domestic violence? Like I don't know what area I'm going to get into. I'm confident that whatever I do decide to get into; I'm going to feel like I'm making a difference. That's the biggest thing for me. As long as I feel like I'm helping someone, and making a difference, I'm okay. That's why it was so important for me to pick a career that I knew that I could do that in.

As an aspiring doctor, Melissa, a first-year student, spoke about her desire to impact others and clarified that her purpose is to "have some impact" on "at least one other person" in her lifetime. Whether that is through medicine or the service trips she has completed, she just wanted to help others. She explained that the person doesn't have to remember her but she wants to change lives for the better in everything she does.

As a student pursuing the education field, Brenna, a freshman, talked about her desire to influence others. Brenna explained, "I can't wait to be that, to be the person they look up to." She tries to be a good role model for her siblings at home but she also tries to expand her reach. As a teacher, she doesn't just want to influence her classroom; she also wants to positively impact the parents and other teachers. She explained:

> wanting to become a teacher and stuff, it's like influencing people to, you know, want to be better. To want to be better, to be the best that you can be. Look how great you are, and just think how if you work a little bit harder, and do this a little bit differently, how much greater that could be! I guess I feel like my purpose is to be that person . . . that little bit of encouragement, to whoever! To my own family members, to my spouse someday, to a teacher, to other students, like I hope to just be that tiny bit of encouragement, that's like "you know what, you can do this!" And once again to lead with my actions and my words and be cautious of all that kind of stuff, too. Be a positive influence, you know?

Michael, a senior, discussed his desire to help others before himself. He talked about this in regard to his family, his future family, and his future career. He thought this could have played into his decision to join the military, as he has "always catered to other people's needs" before his own. He identified this as selflessness and he said:

> I would like to think my purpose in life is to better like society. I don't necessarily care about my well-being as much as I do others. So, as long as others are happy I'm happy. I would say that's probably my purpose in life.

James, a senior, also explained how he tried to be successful in everything he did, and he wanted to influence others through his leadership roles, such as the RA position. James explained how he found his purpose through his campus job:

> I have worked for the past, well two and a half years now in a freshman dorm, and I see them mature, well mostly mature anyway, and develop as people, and it kind of gives me that realization that I went through that. It's definitely been a very good experience, and a very fulfilling experience. I feel, you know, if I touch one of those guys and made an influence on them, then, I feel I was pretty successful.

James also discussed how he would help others through his selected career area, in water studies. While people may not recognize the importance of the water, it is a vital resource and James's desire to work in water conservation will help others to live a better life.

Abraham, a senior, took a job at a group home to help pay for his college expenses. In his job he worked directly with disabled individuals, including physical and intellectual disabilities. Abraham took the job for the pay but found himself loving his work and the influence he had on others. He said:

> I don't have as much experience as some of them (other employees), but some people just lack care or motivation, and I think if you're a person that has the ability and the will to work in a certain area where it's needed, you should probably try and do that.

Abraham enjoyed helping others, partially because he was good at his job. While he may not continue working directly with a special needs population for the entirety of his career, he believes he has a calling in this field.

> Long term . . . I don't have anything specific in mind, because I just . . . like I said, if you can and are willing to do something that will improve people, I think you should. That's just kind of my passion . . . improvement of myself and others and society, just everything. Any individual improvement, that's contagious. It just spreads. My goal is to affect somebody positively every day, every week, every year. Just spread that and create more improvement! I think youth is extremely important, because that's where everything stems from.

While Abraham enjoyed the work, he also appreciated the opportunity to grow in this experience: “I mean, I see that as way better than a lot of different jobs, and it is like mutually beneficial. I get something out of it; they get something out of it.”

Abraham also talked about the influence he had on his younger brother and how that impact can be positive or negative but there’s no point in being a negative influence.

> I’m a middle child of three, but yeah . . . I mean . . . my older brother . . . both of my brothers are probably like more intellectual than I am, and my little brother is such a stud at academics. It’s like academic and quiz bowl and all this stuff that I never did . . . math club, and whatever. Singing and dancing performances, and viola. He’s just killing it right now! I’m like . . . man, and I thought I was doing like a really good job. He’s just destroying it! I guess, we used to, my older brother and I are only two years apart, and my little brother is four or five years younger. We used to pick on him obviously as older brothers, and we weren’t into the same things. I was into sports and he was into music. Then I got to the point . . . at some point, I was like, he’s my younger brother, why don’t I just be like a positive role model and encourage him to do what he wants to do, and after that he just like took off! He didn’t have many friends until he got to high school, and he’s just a super popular person now. I saw once you encourage someone to do what they want, they’ll just flourish. They’ll thrive!

Research Question #3: How did students develop their vocational interests during college?

Quantitative analysis. According to the Developing Purposes Inventory (DPI), students develop their vocational purpose during their college experience (Appendix H). The downward slope of the graph demonstrates that students advanced their vocational interests between their first year and senior year of college (Figure 3). A quantitative analysis of the DPI results yielded a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.721. Cronbach's alpha is the mean of all possible split half reliabilities. A split half reliability is computed by dividing the test into two equal halves (e.g., for a 20 item test or questionnaire the first 10 items are the first half, and items 11 to 20 are the second half) and correlating those two halves.

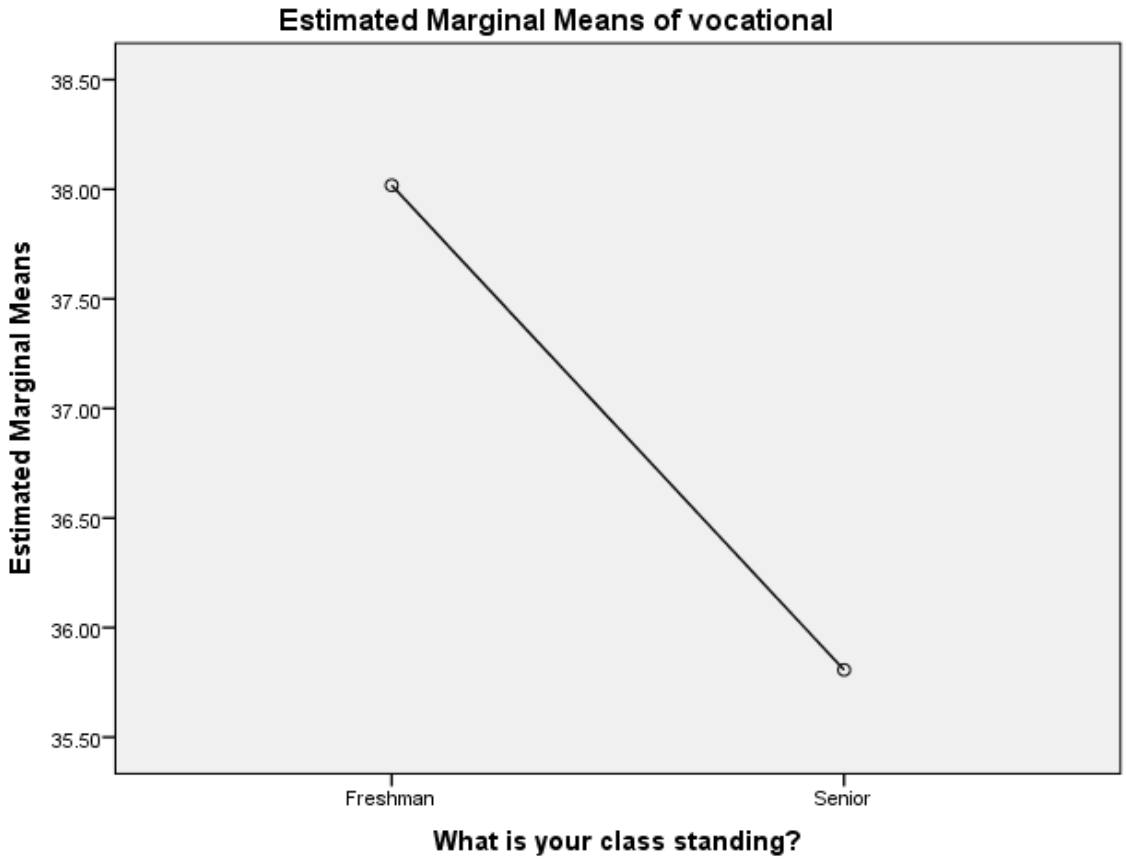

Figure 3. Vocational interest development.

The results of the style of life questions were statistically significant, with a significance of 0.95, with an alpha of 0.05.

Theme: Preparation to do something greater. As the students discussed how they developed their purpose, many of them touched on the fact that they want to continually grow and develop. For these students, their development of purpose is continually evolving and they were striving to continue moving forward each day. Brenna, a first-year student, described that her purpose was to always do more, and to continually

improve. She said “I think a lot of times people say college is your prime years, and all that kind of stuff, but for me it is preparation. Like it’s to do something greater.”

Tiffany talked about how her parents did not have a college education and that made her realize the importance of going to college so she could find a path in life, and make something of herself. Tiffany expressed, “I want so much more for myself and my family than my parents were able to give me, and I know that kind of sounds cliché, but it’s really true.” She described her parents’ background and explained how her parents did not have the opportunity or funds to receive a college education, and that has been a driving force in Tiffany wanting to do better for herself. As Tiffany prepared for a career in social work, she believed “to help people to the extent that I want to help people, I need to have the tools and background, and the foundation to do that.” She reiterated, “Even if you don’t want to do something, make the most of it. I feel that will get you really, really far.” Tiffany talked about how she is always preparing herself to do more and she knows that hard work is an important element of achieving her goals in life.

All of the students in this study had selected a career area of interest but some students were still exploring the career options in that field. The first-year students were focused on finding opportunities to practice their vocation, while the seniors were tying everything together in preparation for graduation.

During our conversation, James spent time reflecting on his path to college and who he was now. He said

> I would say I’m not the same person coming out of college that I was coming into college. I’ve become much more of a leader, but much better at organizing myself, time management. I know much more what I want to do with my life.

James went on to talk about how he always wanted to do better and do more. His purpose was to "contribute as much as I can." He said "I have a drive to accomplish something with my life; I don't want to waste it."

Abraham, also a senior, shared how he planned to study accounting in college because he had taken some classes in high school and had succeeded. He knew accounting could lead to a good career and he started a business degree once he arrived on campus. However, he quickly realized that "it's (accounting) very specific, you can't really generalize it to anything else," which was a turn off for Abraham. He spent some time working with a career services counselor and then switched his major to general studies, where he worked closely with an academic advisor to "get on the right track." Abraham explained:

> We went over all of my interests and they were very broad, and I was interested in everything pretty much. I couldn't focus on anything, so she made some suggestions. I took some classes that I thought looked awesome for about a year, and I kind of found out what I liked and what there a future is in, and what I could utilize in the real world and the work world.

Eventually, Abraham realized he was interested in human behavior, partially because "you're also able to incorporate that into any other field." For Abraham, his college education provided a springboard that provided him with professional skills and an "understanding of the world and how it works." He elaborated, "College just gives you the knowledge, like the big picture. That really helps me to understand the smaller things and why they're in place and how they affect the bigger picture." Abraham believed he had the opportunity to broaden his horizons, especially during his first year of college and claimed the college experience changed his way of thinking.

As Abraham explained:

> You're not going to be top dog when you're 21, just accept that. You're going to have to make some sacrifices, work long hours, work times you don't want to, do things you don't want to. In the end, you're going to . . . hard work is rewarded.

As Abraham spoke about how he wanted to progress forward in life, he talked about his desire to "be excellent to each other" so that there is mutual improvement in all he did. He explained, "I think that is just the epitome of the way people should live life. Be excellent to each other, and people will be excellent to you back. The world will be excellent." If people are willing to help others make forward progress, they will reap the benefits, too. Abraham also explained that people shouldn't just reach a goal and stop there. He focused on hard work and continual betterment. As Abraham developed his purpose, and evolved into an adult, he spent time reflecting on his successes and failures, pondering what relationships are helping him move forward in life and what's holding him back. He explained how he set stretch goals:

> I guess you have to have a certain idea of what you want to be, which is obviously difficult for everyone throughout their entire life, but if you have a certain idea of what you want to be or what you want to strive to be in your life. Then you can look back, as objectively as possible. You can tell yourself as objectively as possible what you need to do to get closer to what you're striving for. That's just improvement. That's stretch goals, just not little baby steps. Really just try to go after it . . . you know? Don't be afraid to fall down.

Through this story, Abraham exemplified his goals and that for him success was "working towards what I've tried for, and if I'm making progress, then that is success to me." Also, Abraham tried to tie everything together and generalized what he learned inside and out of the classroom. For Abraham, his purpose was to continue accomplishing something each and every day:

> I just have to . . . if I don't accomplish like one little thing every day I don't see my day as being productive or a success at all. I just . . . it's just my mindset at this point that if I'm not getting better, I'm losing ground on other people, and I keep using lines from certain things, but there's this lyric in We are the Champions, "I consider it a challenge before the whole human race and I ain't gonna lose." I just try to take that approach. It's not just the people I'm around, but the people in this city, this state, this country, this world. There are so many human beings, and I just want to be close to the top, close to the best, close to the most fulfilled that I possibly can, to get the most out of this one life that I can. This is what I've got, this is what I was dealt, I was very fortunate with what I was dealt, so I'm going to make the most out of it that I can.

For some students, they have developed purpose because they have seen others struggle. For example, Michael was motivated to attend college and obtain a degree because neither of his parents were college educated. "I knew I wanted to go to college because neither of my parents did, and I just wanted to better myself." Michael knew that college would open new doors for him and he wanted to push himself to be better. As a college student, Michael sought to better himself by working hard, and he believed his farm background helped him develop such a strong work ethic. He had been promoted in his workplace three times during the past year and he believed his work ethic allowed him to continue doing more and doing better.

Unexpected themes. Through the research process, two unexpected themes were identified. While many themes from this study related to the three areas of purpose on the DPI (avocational recreational, style of life, or vocational), two themes identified how students got to college and what was pushing them through college. These themes were college as the next step and he/ she believed in me.

Theme: College as the next step. Five students identified "college as the next step" in reaching their purpose and connected their purpose to their career ambitions.

These students pointed out that they would not be able to secure their desired jobs without a college education.

Similarly to other traditional students, Tiffany, a freshman, explained that it was never really an option not to attend college. Tiffany expanded:

> Throughout my whole life it was really never an option for me, it was always kind of like my mom being like "do this and this and this so you can do this so you can end up going to college" . . . like it was always the final result. To me it was never "Are you going to college?" It was more of "How are you going to pay for college?"

While Tiffany recognized her desire to help others at a young age, she knew that college would make her life better, as she had witnessed her parents struggle in the workforce without a college education. Tiffany said:

> I could do social work in my community without getting a social work degree. To help people to the extent that I want to help people, I need to have the tools and the background, and the foundation to do that. I could go and volunteer or start my own homeless shelter or something, but I want to do so much more than that. I want to educate people and I want to really know what I'm doing.

Similar to Tiffany, Melissa's father did not attend college, and she had seen him apply for promotions but be denied over and over because he did not have a bachelor's degree. Melissa said, "I guess it never really was an option not to enroll." She explained how she knew she had to move forward with an education to become a doctor because she would not be able to get into the medicine field without a formal college education.

Brenna did not have much of a decision to attend college, as her parents had always told her that higher education would be the next step after high school. Brenna explained:

> Why I chose to go to college . . . it was never a thing where I . . . it's not like I had a choice not to go. I was never forced to, but I was really encouraged. So, it

> wasn't ever a thing in my mind where I thought I wouldn't. It was like, okay high school, next step to college.

James, a senior, felt very similar to Brenna but his parents directly said "you're going to have postsecondary education of some type." His parents encouraged him to look into college or trade school and James said:

> For me I always kind of had the ambition for going to college, getting a better education, so I guess there wasn't too much of an issue there. The expectation is definitely been throughout my life. You know, even as young as seven/eight, setting up that college fund, and going to college. You know . . . what are you going to do with your money on your birthday?" Oh, I'll save it up for college.

As a non-traditional student who had spent time working before returning to college, Erin had different sentiments on why she chose to return to college. She knew that she could not move forward in her career goals if she did not get "the piece of paper," and she chose to return so that she could climb the career ladder and be more impactful in her work. Erin referred to a college education as a "golden ticket," and said she felt compelled to return to college "to get a ticket, a golden ticket, a union ticket."

A college education was the means to an end for Michael and he did not believe that a bachelor's degree would be sufficient in achieving his purpose. Michael took the next step in obtaining a college education because he believed education gave you "a better chance" at finding employment opportunities in the future. When Michael was determining the path of his life, he realized "you must go to college after high school."

Theme: He/She believed in me. The students in this study suggested that their development of purpose was enhanced because of someone who mentored or guided them. Each student talked about someone who had influenced them to do better and

continue moving forward toward their purpose, whether that person was a teacher, a parent, a coach, or another mentor in their life.

As a first-year student, Brenna identified many mentors who led her to college and explained how her parents continued to influence her development of purpose. Brenna had a grandparent who was a well-known educator and his influence had been impactful on her decision to enter the education realm. As a future educator, Brenna understood the importance of caring for each student she encountered and she believed her family instilled this value in her.

> My family has taught me how to love so well, that I just think it is really important to do that, and you have to love and care about somebody before you can even try to help them. You can't just be like, "I don't really like you but I'll help you." Just loving people and trying to love everyone, even though that's pretty impossible some days.

Brenna also talked about the motivation her parents gave her to continue moving forward. By letting her know they were proud, she feels she is succeeding in achieving her goals. Brenna said, "I think them being proud just says that they think I'm successful." As an aspiring educator, Brenna's teachers had a great impact on her development of purpose and decision to pursue the education field. Brenna talked about teachers who had impacted her and were positive role models. Some of Brenna's teachers had stayed in touch, and were role modeling the behaviors Brenna hoped to achieve.

Tiffany, a first-year student, explained that she hoped to enter the field of social work so she could help others. Tiffany explained how her mother had been a positive influence since Tiffany found the social work field and her mother's approval had been very meaningful in the development of purpose. Tiffany not only had an impactful

mother, but was also greatly influenced by a teacher who recognized Tiffany's passion. Tiffany said "she really, really believed in me" and said that her teacher had always pushed her in the "right direction" and that they had maintained contact even after high school graduation. Tiffany explained that her mother had always been an influence and her mother had supported Tiffany's goals by hanging her papers on the fridge and around the home, supporting Tiffany's ambitious goals. Tiffany said that her mom's high expectations led to her development of purpose:

> My mom, even still now actually, she has extremely high expectations for me. When I was younger I always felt disappointed in myself if I didn't meet her expectations. Now as I get older, it's me setting these high exceptions for myself. I've gotten so accustomed to hers that I tend to set really high expectations for myself now.

One freshman participant's passion evolved because of her brother's diagnosis of ADHD and autism. Melissa found herself volunteering at a camp for autistic children. In fact, she volunteered at the same camp her brother attended. Through this experience, she found her purpose in developmental medicine, and built a bridge with one high school teacher who also had a child with special needs. Melissa's father did not attend college and this kept him from progressing up the career ladder. Melissa explained the disappointment she had seen her dad face, and she felt that her father was even more motivated to see his children through college because of his struggles:

> I know my dad's talked to me before, because he never went to college. He said that alone in itself is something he always wished for his kids, and so he . . . like him and my mom always tell me how proud they are, and, like basically, if I have dreams for anything, go after them because there's no point in holding back.

Her father's wisdom had encouraged Melissa to set only goals that would truly be challenging and Melissa defined her parents' high expectations as a strong force in her development of purpose.

Most of the participants discussed the role their parents played in their development of purpose. For some students, parents were still playing an important role, but other students had moved forward and were making their life decisions without parental support.

Abraham, a senior, talked about the influence his high school coaches had on his development of purpose, which college instructors helped him link his passion with a future career, and the role his parents played in his development. He explained the importance of learning from everyone you encounter:

> Everyone you talk to knows something you don't, so don't talk to them like they're ignorant or oblivious. Just try to learn something from an experience they've had that you haven't. It could just be something that they've done that you haven't, not intellectual or anything, but you can learn from them.

For example, Abraham explained how his parents would always share anecdotal lessons and as Abraham continued to make more and more of his own decisions, he heard their advice cycling through his head.

Abraham also discussed the impact his teachers had on his development of purpose, and how they have mentored him to continue working toward his goals in a helping profession. Abraham said:

> My teachers . . . most teachers are just selfless, you know? They're willing to do almost anything to better you. There's so many of them, you encounter so many of them through your education, obviously. You can just remember ones that had a specific impact on you. I guess, just knowing that other people care about you . . . showed me that people do this for all their life and they don't stop. They just

> get better at it and go stronger, so I decided why not start now and affect the most people I can.

When James, who was also a senior, talked about how he discovered his academic major, he identified a host of people who had helped him reach this conclusion. For James, he was influenced by his father, his thesis advisor, his program director, his academic advisor, and his campus supervisors. James explained how everyone played a role in his decision to go to college, find an area of study, and seek out future career paths that would allow him to work toward his life goals.

Erin, a non-traditional college senior, described her introduction to the deaf community during her childhood. She was enrolled in an elementary school with students who were deaf, although she was not. During classes and recess, she found herself watching the interpreters and later asked to learn from them. As Erin returned to her elementary school as a student teacher, she had the opportunity to thank one of the interpreters who was still working at the school.

Not all participants were positively influenced or motivated by their parents. Michael suggested that his purpose in life was going to vary from that of his parents:

> I'm definitely different than my parents. I think college has kind of shaped that into me, especially in like my political beliefs and everything like that. They're strong Republicans and closed-minded, and I think college has really opened my mind to a lot more things, and I'm way more accepting than they are. I just kind of roll with the punches, and am pretty mellow.

Each participant identified a mentor, maybe a teacher, or perhaps a parent, who guided them to find their purpose. The students identified mentors as a guiding force in the development of purpose.

Summary of Findings

Theme: Value of experiences and involvement. For some students, the college experience provided the opportunity to figure out their avocational recreational interest. For other students, college provided networks that helped students mature and define their goals through recreational activities. The students who were not involved on campus explained that they most enjoyed leisure time alone and did not wish to partake in on-campus activities.

Theme: Exploring possibilities. College provided students with an excellent avenue to explore their interests. Some students found new areas of interest that they were unaware of before arriving on campus. Other students attempted to combine their recreational interests with their academic preparation. Despite the form of the exploration, all of the students in this study expressed that their college exploration had led them to develop and solidify their purpose.

Theme: Supporting and helping others. While the students in this study had different career goals and ambitions, most of them expressed the desire to help others through their work. All students in this study indicated the importance of supporting and helping others, even if it meant sacrificing personal resources (time or money).While some students discovered a population of interest, such as elementary children, others were unsure who they would help but they knew it was important to see their work helping others. Students also explained how their current family and their future families played an important role in their style of life expectations.

Theme: Preparation to do something greater. As current college students, many of the participants focused on the present tense and how their college education was impacting their future. The students explained how their hard work in college will lead to greatness in the future, and they wanted to continue evolving into better people. Many of the students expressed how their betterment of self would contribute to the betterment of others, as they valued helping others as part of their purpose in life. This theme was the overarching theme of the study.

Theme: College as the next step. Many students made the decision to attend college because it was "the next step," and they were encouraged by their mentors and parents. Some students chose to attend because the education would provide the means to a future career and some students chose to attend because they didn't know what else to do after high school. The choice to attend college impacted every student's development of purpose.

Theme: He/She believed in me. Every participant identified someone who had impacted their development of purpose. For some students, teachers or professors had influenced them to develop purpose, especially in an academic field. For other students they were influenced by their parents and the expectations set by their parents.

In Chapter 5, the researcher explains the results of this mixed-methods research study, provides implications from the results, and identifies areas for future research in how students develop purpose during college.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Purpose Statement

This convergent mixed methods study was created to examine how students develop purpose in college. First-year students and senior college students who had been enrolled in a general studies program were surveyed and interviewed to assess how students develop purpose in college.

Research Questions

The following grand tour question was studied: How did freshman and senior undergraduate participants develop purpose during their college education? The following subquestions were also explored:

1. How did students develop in terms of their avocational recreational interests during college?
2. How did students develop their style of life during college?
3. How did students develop their vocational interests during college?

Summary of Findings

The quantitative and qualitative findings of this study indicated that students develop purpose in three areas (avocational recreational interests, style of life, and vocational interests) between their first year of college and their senior year. Statistically significant evidence from the DPI suggested that students developed avocational recreational purpose and style of life purpose during college. The DPI also suggested that students develop vocational interests during their academic career. Six qualitative themes

were identified: (a) value of experiences and involvement, (b) exploring possibilities, (c) supporting and helping others, (d) preparation to do something greater, (e) college as the next step, and (f) he/she believed in me.

- Participants linked their college experiences and involvement as well as their exploration with their avocational recreational interests.
- The participants in this study explained how their desire to help others impacted their style of life. Many students were willing to make sacrifices in order to help others.
- The overarching theme in this study was that students have developed their vocational interests during their college experiences. As one participant said, college was "preparation to do something greater."
- Two unexpected themes were identified: college as the next step and he/she believed in me. For students, their path to college greatly impacted their success and their support network that was allowing them to earn a college education.

Discussion

This study added to previous research on identity development of college students. In particular, Chickering and Reisser's theory of identity development was used to relate the findings of this study to how the participants developed purpose during college in regard to avocational recreational interests, style of life, and vocational interests.

Research Question #1: How did students develop in terms of their avocational recreational interests during college? Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggested that students will develop their purpose "when colleges provide flexibility and encouragement for students to pursue their own interests" (p. 212). Furthermore:

> College may be the one time in life when people can sample new fields of knowledge, pursue familiar topics in more depth, test haunches about career possibilities, discover new capabilities through experiential learning, and leave comfort zones to do a novel class assignment or partake of cocurricular options. (p. 217)

One of the themes that emerged from this research was value of experiences and involvement; students found new opportunities available to them on the college campus and they explained how these experiences impacted their avocational recreational interests. Five of the seven participants discussed how their experiences and campus involvement led them to define and/or develop their avocational recreational interests during college. For example, senior student Abraham reminisced about his first-year experience: "I noticed that freshman year all these things are possible that I was unaware of a year ago. It just kind of changed my way of thinking." He expanded:

> Even that first year, just opens your eyes to so many perspectives that you never even had in your head before. You hear guest speakers talk from different realms you've never thought of before and they're telling you unknown information, and yeah. . . . It allows you to explore and really find your passion, I guess. Not everyone always does by the end of it, and I was unsure if I would, or even if I had a passion. Then I just . . . what I decided to do is stop following like a track, a course, so to say, and just select classes that piqued my interest. If you're interested in it, and choose professors that have a good rapport . . . if you have good teachers and a passion for the subject, you'll succeed. That's what it comes down to, not taking classes that you hate, you suck at, and the teachers are bad. That's not the way to succeed. You'll just hate it.

"All avocational and recreational interests provide satisfaction and stimulation" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 225). Another senior student, Michael, considered himself to be an introvert, and he said that he did not feel compelled to join any campus groups. However, he spent a good amount of time writing at home at night. He explained that he wrote a memoir about his youth and a friend that died young. In addition, he took English coursework to supplement his major in criminal justice strictly because he enjoyed the subject. He explained that he would like to continue taking coursework beyond his degree as a leisurely activity.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggested that "some students find a guiding purpose for the personal lives through religious or spiritual development" (p. 228). For Brenna, a first-year student, religion and her involvement in a religious student organization had a great impact on her development. Brenna explained how this group, Navigators, encouraged her involvement on campus and her personal success. She said, "Navigators obviously helps me in a lot of different other ways than just . . . you know, having friends. Just as encouragement and keeping me on the right track." She summarized, "without Navigators, I wouldn't be in a Bible study, I wouldn't have close intimate relationships with girls I didn't even know before college."

As evidenced in this research, "college may be an ideal place to experiment, but as homework assignments pile up and senior status signals an end to the scholar's life, students must inevitably become prioritizers" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, pp. 228-229). For James, a senior, he felt pressure to spend less time on recreational activities and more time on his academics. He had plans to continue his education through a graduate

program and he discussed how grades would be more important than his avocational recreational interests.

Although some students are able to balance avocational recreational interests during college, other students struggle to do the same. Some students struggle to find their interest groups on campus, while other students spend all of their time on recreational interests. Erin, a non-traditional student explained that she spent the majority of her first year of college on only recreational activities, which led her to leave the university after two semesters. Erin later returned as a non-traditional student and she found time for avocational interests away from campus, as she felt she didn't belong in the student organizations.

Research Question #2: How did students develop their style of life during college? Chickering and Reisser (1993) indicated that "it is difficult to construct a plan that balances life-style considerations, vocational aspirations, and avocational interests. Many compromises must be made" (p. 229). Four students verbalized their concerns and were unsure of how family and their personal life would fit into their future aspirations. For first-year student Brenna she had plans to start a family in the future, but was unsure of the shape of those plans. Brenna was more concentrated on how her family life played into her style of life now, as she still looked to her parents frequently for guidance. Melissa and Tiffany were also very connected to their parents as first-year college students. Tiffany relied on her parents for support as she made decisions regarding her future and would usually consult with her mother before making major decisions.

The seniors had more solidified ideas of what their family would look like but were not ready to cross that bridge yet. One participant, James, explained that he was not ready to cross that bridge until he earned his college degree. He mentioned that many of his friends were getting engaged, and he said "I told myself I'd get through college before I really work through any of that, so . . . "

Michael explained his desire to balance his personal life and his work life in the future:

> I just hope to be able to provide, support, if I do end up getting married and having children, being able to support them. In the future if my parents need medical help, and stuff like that, just to be able to do that. I mean they did a lot for me as a youth, and they still do now.

Five other students felt that the skills they learned in college would prepare them for their future roles as parents and spouses. As a senior who was preparing to graduate, Abraham mentioned his desire to parent children and raise a family. He explained how his jobs and mentorship experiences would help him become a parent and that he had the opportunity to develop his style of life through some college experiences:

> I mean, I want to have kids of my own, but I also want to affect kids that are less fortunate, who don't have the kind of parents that I had. I'm just eternally grateful for the way my parents treat me and raised me. I know not everyone has that same opportunity, so I just want to create that for other people. So they can develop into someone who wants to improve other people, perhaps instead of waging war, or committing crime, or things of this nature.

Another student, Erin, confirmed Chickering and Reisser's (1993) suggestion that "many returning adults are ready to make commitments in order to move into more desirable social or economic environments. Their firsthand knowledge of low-paying, rootless life-styles is highly motivating" (p. 231).

Research Question #3: How did students develop their vocational interests during college? Participants continued to relate their experiences in college to their vocational preparation. Perhaps this is because the American culture focuses on a college education as career education or perhaps these students were career-oriented. The connection between students and their vocational passions was evident throughout this research. Chickering and Reisser (1993) stated: "We discover our vocations by discovering what we love to do, what energizes and fulfills us, what uses our talents and challenges us to develop new ones, and what actualizes our potentials for excellence" (p. 212).

Although Tiffany did not declare a major immediately during her college studies, she had career ambitions coming into college. These ambitions impacted the clubs and organizations she joined and impacted her decision to transfer institutions. Tiffany had clear vocational goals, but she was determining which college path would be the best for her.

Melissa was in a similar situation to Tiffany. Life's circumstances led Melissa to find her vocational interest of becoming a developmental pediatrician. Melissa explained that she would need to attend medical school but there were multiple routes she could take to get to medical school. As an academically-driven student, many of Melissa's daily decisions centered on her goal of becoming a medical doctor.

Brenna found her vocation because of her avocational recreational interests. She knew that the teaching field would allow her to support students and help them grow as people. As a first-year student, Brenna was able to tie the three dimensions of purpose

together in the education field: avocational recreational interests, style of life, and vocational purpose.

Other students, like Abraham and James, worked with career counselors to determine their career path. “Students who work with career counselors, take career exploration courses and workshops, arrange internships, and discuss future plans with their instructors are much more likely to identify future directions” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 216).

For one student in particular, life’s experiences led her to her vocation. Erin recognized the need to return to college to earn a degree so she could continue teaching sign language and working with deaf children in a more administrative capacity. Chickering and Reisser (1993) determined, “developing purpose entails an increasing ability to be intentional, to assess interests and options, to clarify goals, to make plans, and to persist despite obstacles” (p. 209).

“A hallmark of development is increasing engagement with coursework and cocurricular activities, which are valued as relevant to career goals or at least valued as stepping-stones to higher-level professional training” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 224). All of the students in this research identified cocurricular activities that helped them determine their vocational purpose. Although some students were very active, other students, including Michael and Erin, chose not to spend much time participating in cocurricular activities.

“Vocational plans and aspirations become increasingly clear for most students as they move through college. Purposes important to the student become stronger”

(Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 233). All of the students in this research had been enrolled in a general studies program at some point in their academic career; every student had determined a career area of interest. The senior students were preparing to graduate and had completed many of the requirements to enter that vocation and the first-year students were seeking out opportunities to develop in that profession before they entered the workforce.

Implications

The findings of this study indicated that students develop purpose between their first-year and senior year of college at a large research Midwestern University. The results add to the growing body of literature on applications of Chickering's theory of student development in the college environment.

There was evidence to suggest that students develop purpose between their first-year of college and their senior year in three areas: avocational recreational interests, style of life, and vocational interests.

The quantitative data from this research exhibited growth in avocational recreation interests between the beginning and end of their college experience. However, the students did not discuss their recreational interests at length nor did they expand much on the relation between these interests and their future career.

While the students continued to relate their college experiences to their future vocation, there wasn't strong statistical evidence to support the growth of vocational interests between the freshman year and senior year of college.

Future Research

The findings of this study added to previous quantitative and qualitative research on development of purpose in college. This mixed-methods study added depth to the literature. However, more work should be done with the Developing Purposes Inventory (DPI) to fine tune the quantitative analysis of the development of purpose among college students. Both the original study, completed by William Barratt, and the research presented in this study, exhibited reliability but had room for improvement in regard to validity, especially in terms of vocational interests.

This study incorporated the experiences of 127 students, and took an in-depth look at the development of purpose of 7 college students. In the future, this study should be recreated to have a broader reach and more qualitative interviews should be completed. Ideally, this research would begin with an incoming class of students and would conclude with the same participants the year after they complete college.

The future research should focus on expanding participant backgrounds. All of the students in this research study were undergraduate students. This research should be extended to graduate students, as Chickering and Reisser's study focused on students from ages 17 to 25, which could easily incorporate graduate students (White & Hood, 1989, p. 4). The majority of participants in this study identified as White; this research should be expanded to include students of diverse attributes.

In the future, researchers should focus on the differences between purpose development of freshmen and senior students more concretely. While this study did

examine these differences, researchers should look for material differences between the development of purpose between freshmen and senior students.

Additionally, future researchers should spend more time examining how the three aspects of purpose intertwine: avocational recreational interests, style of life, and vocational interests. Researchers should investigate how students believe these three elements will play into each other after graduation and upon entrance to the full-time workforce.

Conclusion

Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggested that "purposes need not be highly specific, nor must commitment be absolute" (p. 233). Using the DPI, the quantitative results of this study indicated that students develop purpose between their first year of college and their senior year in regard to avocational recreational interests, style of life, and vocational interests at a large research Midwestern University. The qualitative results of this study indicated that students did not have concrete life plans but they appeared to have solidified their purpose between their first year of college and their senior year at the large research Midwestern University.

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Appendix A

Developing Purposes Inventory

Developing Purposes Inventory

For each of the statements on the following pages you are to ask yourself: "How true is this statement of me?" Then indicate your response using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Always true	Often true	Sometimes true	Rarely true	Never true

There are no right or wrong answers to any of the statements on this inventory. What we are trying to learn from this is information about the differences among college students. It is important that you answer each item as you really feel so that the results will be accurate.

Developing Purposes Inventory

How true is this statement about me?

1	2	3	4	5
Always true	Often true	Sometimes true	Rarely true	Never true

ARI 1. I attend special lectures and programs that are about my recreational interests.

VI 2. I think about the occupation which I want to enter.

SL 3. I think about what getting married (or divorced) would mean for my career plans.

ARI - 4. I find time in my academic schedule, even when I am busy, to do social types of things whenever I am asked.

VI 5. I do the best that I can when completing a project for a class.

SL - 6. I am not positive that I will achieve my educational goals.

ARI 7. I find that I perceive people of the opposite sex as `people' more often than as social partners.

VI - 8. I don't put a lot of effort into assigned schoolwork.

SL 9. I feel confident that I know where I am going in my life.

ARI	10.	I think about how marriage (or divorce) might change my life style.
VI	11.	I read all of the assigned material for class.
SL	12.	I have fantasies about how I will be living in five years.
ARI	13.	I think about what it would be like to be married to some of the people I see socially.
VI	14.	I take courses, or plan to, because they are necessary for my career plans.
SL	15.	I feel that the career for which I am preparing will allow me to live the way that I want to.
ARI -	16.	I do not try new things when given the opportunity.
VI	17.	I go to someone more experienced for general help and advice about what I should study and how I might plan my career.
SL	18.	I am aware of the extent to which material things contribute to my happiness (car, house, clothes, etc.).
ARI -	19.	I do not go to cultural events (art shows, concerts, speakers, etc.) that seem of interest to me.
VI	20.	I do not feel confident of my own abilities to make decisions and to have opinions in my major field.
SL	21.	I think about how my personal values relate to my career plans.
ARI	22.	I try to regularly engage in a recreational activity which I like (swimming, chess, Ping-Pong, tennis, etc.).
VI	23.	I think of ways to gain practical experience in my major field while still in school.
SL	24.	When I think about myself in a work or job situation, I think about the morality of the work.
ARI	25.	I feel that there is too little time to participate in all of the activities in which I might be interested.
VI -	26.	In class work my own point of view and opinions seem unimportant to me.

SL -	27.	I am not aware of what types of work activities and situations give me satisfaction.
ARI	28.	I take courses because the description sounded good to me.
VI -	29.	I expect my teachers to provide the correct answers and to say which theory is correct.
SL	30.	I try to do things that will help my community (college, town or organization) to be a better place.
ARI	31.	My social life is oriented around other people with the same recreational interests as myself.
VI -	32.	I do not take the coursework in my major, or area of interest, very seriously.
SL	33.	I have a clear plan for getting the type of job that I want after I finish college.
ARI	34.	I attend special lectures and programs in areas of my academic interest.
VI	35.	I read the materials that have been suggested or recommended by an instructor for a class but are not required.
SL	36.	I imagine myself in the life style that I would like to lead in the future.
ARI	37.	I imagine myself in a full time work or career setting that I would like.
VI -	38.	I do not get very involved in the topic when I write a paper for a class.
SL	39.	I have a good idea of what I will be doing the year after I finish college.
ARI	40.	Because I like to, I read articles and books that deal with some aspect of my academic interest.
VI -	41.	My primary desire for doing assigned work is to just complete it.
SL	42.	I know specifically where I want to be with my career in ten years.
ARI	43.	I spend a lot of time with people who have the same academic interests as myself.

VI 44. Before making choices and decisions about how I will get to where I want to be in my life, I refer to my general plan of how I want my life to go.

SL - 45. I do not consider myself as a member of the field in my major (or in what I intend to study).

ARI = Avocational Recreational Interests
VI = Vocational Interests
SL = Style of Life
- = Reverse Scored

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Developing Purpose in College

Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Pseudonym:
Date:
Start Time:
End Time:
Location:

Thank you for taking my online survey and meeting with me today! I'm looking forward to learning more about you, and your purpose. I intend for this interview to be a conversation, and I want you to be comfortable throughout our meeting. I appreciate your assistance with my thesis research!

Purpose of this study: **The purpose of this study is to assess the difference in reasons why first-year students enroll in college compared to the reasons why seniors enrolled in college.**

Review Informed Consent.

Please select a pseudonym that I can use for the purposes of this study:

Do you have any questions before we move forward with our conversation?

Turn on the tape recorder.

1. Please start by telling me about yourself and why you chose to enroll in college.
2. How did you decide to attend college at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln?
3. What do you believe the purpose of attending college is?
4. What are you studying?
    a. Have you declared any other majors previously?
    b. What brought you to study <current major>?
        i. Were you influenced by anyone, such as parents, peers, or someone on campus?
5. Can you explain how you spend your week?

   a. How many credits are you taking?
   b. How many hours do you work each week?
   c. What clubs and/or activities do you participate in?
   d. Do you believe these experiences have contributed to your college education? If so, how?
6. What are your career aspirations?
7. What is your purpose in life?
   a. How have you come to this conclusion?
   b. What are your key values and how do these values influence your purpose?
8. How do your career aspirations relate to your purpose in life?
   a. How do you believe a college education will benefit you?
9. What is the most important lesson you have learned during college?
10. What have you learned about yourself in college?
11. Do you believe a college education is valuable? Why or why not?
12. At this point in time, do you consider yourself successful? Why or why not?
   a. Do you think your peers consider you to be successful? Why or why not?
   b. Do you think your family considers you to be successful? Why or why not?
13. Who has motivated you to find your purpose?
   a. How have they done that?
   b. Who sets expectations for you (family, peers, you)?

14. Do you take time for personal reflection?
    a. What methods of reflection help you most?
15. Have you ever completed a personal inventory like Strengthsfinder or Myers-Briggs?
    a. What did you learn from that assessment?
    b. In what ways did this knowledge help you find your purpose?
16. When disappointment strikes in life, how do you cope?
    a. Can you give me a time when you expected to do well and failed?
17. What do you do to continue moving forward in life? (physical health, mental clarify, etc.)
18. Are there any questions you expected me to ask that I didn't?
19. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time! I will transcribe our conversation within 7 days of this interview and email you a copy to review. At that time you will be able to correct errors or clarify your comments. If I do not hear from you within a week, I will move forward with the data analysis process.

Appendix C

Request for Participation Email

Dear student,

You are invited to participate in an online survey regarding your purpose in attending college. The purpose of this study is to assess the reasons why first-year students enrolled in college compared to the reasons why seniors enrolled in college. The data collected from this survey will be used by Laura Coombs, a graduate student in Educational Administration for thesis research.

This survey will take approximately five minutes of your time to complete, and will not require any identifying information. Furthermore, all responses will be kept anonymous. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. You may take the survey online at your earliest convenience:
https://unleducation.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_24sOVo4CTNTSppP

You may ask any questions concerning this research by contacting Laura Coombs at laura.coombs@unl.edu or (402) 472.1157, or the thesis advisor, Dr. Richard Hoover, at rhoover2@unl.edu or (402) 472.3058. If you would like to speak to someone else, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researcher or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. By completing this survey, you have given your consent to participate in this research. You should save a copy of this page for your records.

Thank you for your time,

Appendix D

Interview Participation Request Email

Dear <student>.

Thank you for completing the survey sent to you on January 9 by Bill Watts According to my records, you expressed interest in participating in a qualitative interview regarding your purpose for attending college. Please go to http://doodle.com/bffuvqabbb88mkug to sign up for an interview time. The interviews are scheduled for 60 minutes. I will confirm your interview time and location via email.

All responses will be kept anonymous, and there are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

You may ask any questions concerning this research by contacting me at laura.coombs@unl.edu or (402) 472.1157, or my thesis advisor, Dr. Richard Hoover, at rhoover2@unl.edu or (402) 472.3058. If you would like to speak to someone else, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researcher or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. You should save a copy of this page for your records.

If you are interesting in participating in an interview, please contact Laura Coombs at laura.coombs@unl.edu or call (515) 472.1157.

Thank you for your time,

Laura J. Coombs
laura.coombs@unl.edu
(402) 472.1157

Appendix E

Informed Consent Form for Interviews

Participant Informed Consent Form

IRB# 12981

Title: Developing Purpose in College

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to assess the difference in reasons why first-year students enroll in college compared to the reasons why seniors enrolled in college. First-year general studies students and seniors who started their education with an undeclared major (general studies) have been selected randomly for this study. A waiver of parental consent has been requested to include students under the age of 19 in this research.

Procedures:
You will be asked to complete a 60 minute semi-structured interview and review the transcript of your interview to ensure your voice was captured throughout the research process. In total, this process should take no longer than two hours for the participant. The interview will take place in a quiet conference room on campus.

Benefits:
Through information acquired in this research, educators will gain a better understanding of the purpose of college attendance, enabling educators to enhance the collegiate experience.

Risks and/or Discomforts:
There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Confidentiality:
Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be protected and viewed only by the primary and secondary researchers. The data will be stored in a password encrypted folder on the investigator's computer and will only be seen by the investigator during the study and for 6 months after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as aggregated data.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:
You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may contact the investigator(s) at the phone numbers below. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 to voice concerns about the research or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

Freedom to Withdraw:
Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:
You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

I, _____(participant name), agree to being audio recorded for this interview. I understand that this recording will be used only for research purposes.

Signature of Participant:

_____ _____

Signature of Research Participant Date

Name and Phone number of investigator(s)

Laura Coombs, Principal Investigator Office (402) 472.1157
Richard Hoover, Ph.D., Secondary Investigator Office (402) 472.3058

Appendix F

IRB Approval Letter

November 16, 2012

Laura Coombs
Department of Educational Administration
2224 U. St. Lincoln, NE 68503

Richard Hoover
Department of Educational Administration
119 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20121112981EP
Project ID: 12981
Project Title: Developing Purpose in College

Dear Laura:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46). Your project has been approved as an Expedited protocol, category 6 & 7.

Date of EP Review: 11/10/2012

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 11/16/2012. This approval is Valid Until: 11/15/2013.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;

* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;

* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;

* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or

* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

For projects which continue beyond one year from the starting date, the IRB will request continuing review and update of the research project. Your study will be due for continuing review as indicated above. The investigator must also advise the Board when this study is finished or discontinued by completing the enclosed Protocol Final Report form and returning it to the Institutional Review Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Julia Torquati, Ph.D.
Chair for the IRB

Appendix G

Institutional Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF Nebraska Lincoln

STUDENT AFFAIRS
Registration and Records

October 22, 2012

Internal Review Board

ALEX West
312 N 14th
Lincoln, NE 68588 - 0415

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing in regards to the project submitted by Laura Coombs regarding research for her thesis - Project # 12981 entitled "Developing Purpose in College". As part of this project the principle investigator has requested a file of randomly selected e-mail addresses of current students that will be invited to participate in an on-line survey. No other information other than the e-mail address will be furnished and the actual invitation to participate will come from a university staff member who has authorized access to student email addresses.

Our office will assist in this project by providing the information requested based on the provisions noted above.

If you should have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Earl W. Hawkey, Ph.D.
University Registrar

Appendix H

Quantitative Results

Scale: Avocational

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.638	.630	15

Scale: Style of Life

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.855	.853	15

Scale: Vocational

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.721	.738	15

Multivariate Tests[a]

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[c]
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.981	1864.472[b]	3.000	109.000	.000	.981	5593.416	1.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.019	1864.472[b]	3.000	109.000	.000	.981	5593.416	1.000
	Hotelling's Trace	51.316	1864.472[b]	3.000	109.000	.000	.981	5593.416	1.000
	Roy's Largest Root	51.316	1864.472[b]	3.000	109.000	.000	.981	5593.416	1.000
Q1	Pillai's Trace	.076	2.985[b]	3.000	109.000	.034	.076	8.954	.691
	Wilks' Lambda	.924	2.985[b]	3.000	109.000	.034	.076	8.954	.691
	Hotelling's Trace	.082	2.985[b]	3.000	109.000	.034	.076	8.954	.691
	Roy's Largest Root	.082	2.985[b]	3.000	109.000	.034	.076	8.954	.691

a. Design: Intercept + Q1

b. Exact statistic

c. Computed using alpha = .05

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
avocational	.156	1	111	.693
life_style	.530	1	111	.468
vocational	2.842	1	111	.095

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + Q1

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[d]
Corrected Model	avocational	305.310[a]	1	305.310	9.094	.003	.076	9.094	.848
	life_style	412.714[b]	1	412.714	4.476	.037	.039	4.476	.555
	vocational	138.070[c]	1	138.070	3.185	.077	.028	3.185	.424
Intercept	avocational	161011.434	1	161011.434	4795.703	.000	.977	4795.703	1.000
	life_style	154382.484	1	154382.484	1674.305	.000	.938	1674.305	1.000
	vocational	153953.610	1	153953.610	3551.403	.000	.970	3551.403	1.000
Q1	avocational	305.310	1	305.310	9.094	.003	.076	9.094	.848
	life_style	412.714	1	412.714	4.476	.037	.039	4.476	.555
	vocational	138.070	1	138.070	3.185	.077	.028	3.185	.424
Error	avocational	3726.726	111	33.574					
	life_style	10234.967	111	92.207					
	vocational	4811.859	111	43.350					
Total	avocational	164932.000	113						
	life_style	164901.000	113						
	vocational	158834.000	113						
Corrected Total	avocational	4032.035	112						
	life_style	10647.681	112						
	vocational	4949.929	112						

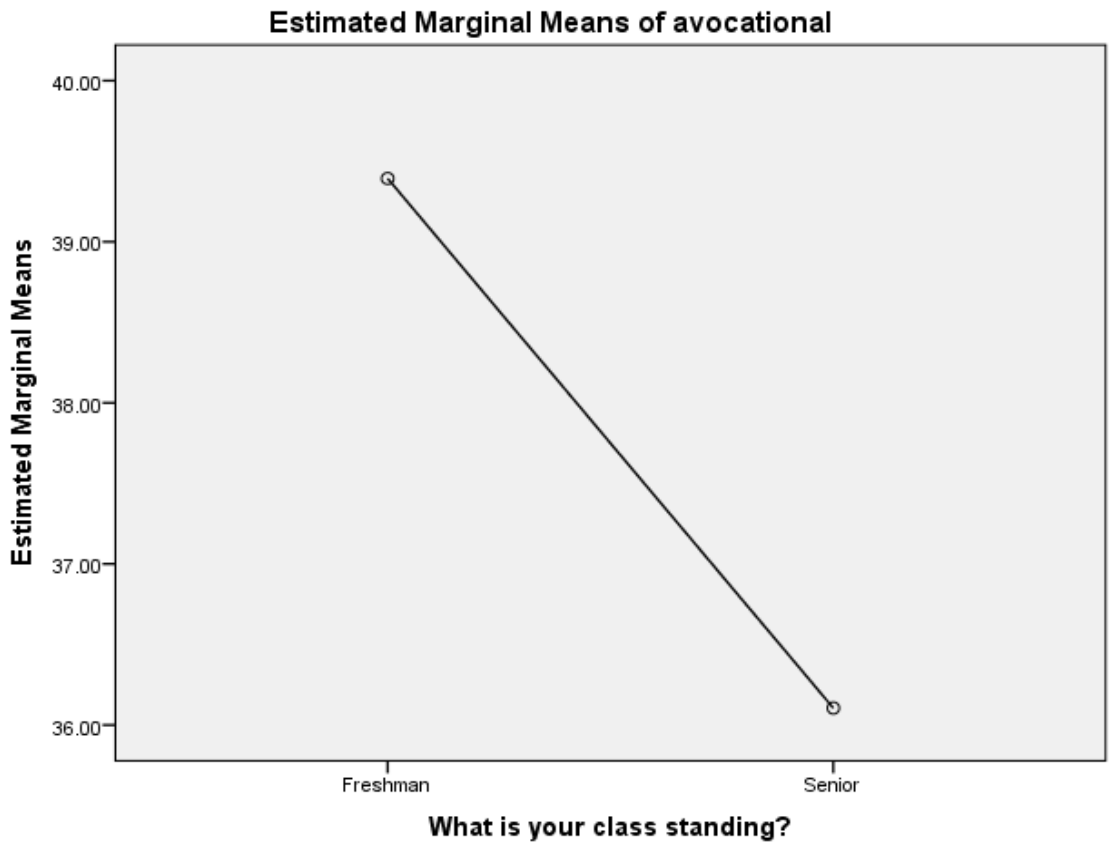
a. R Squared = .076 (Adjusted R Squared = .067)

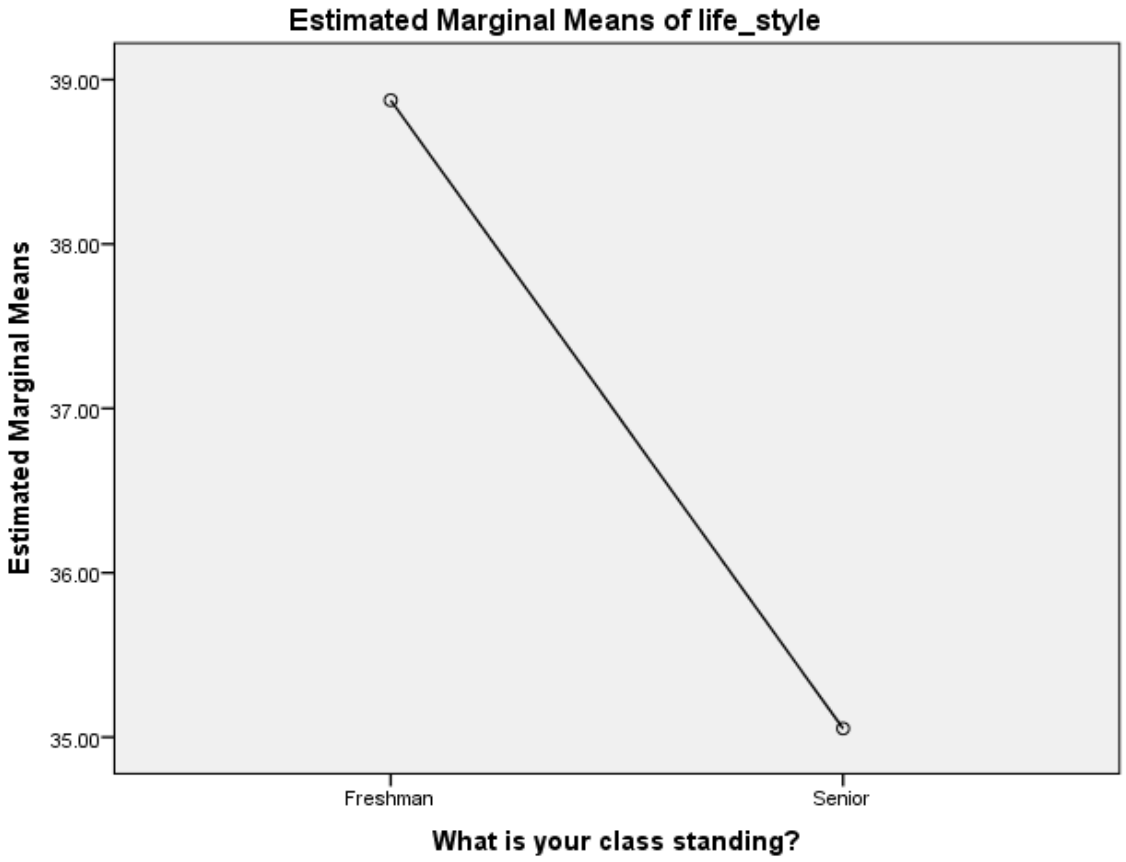
b. R Squared = .039 (Adjusted R Squared = .030)

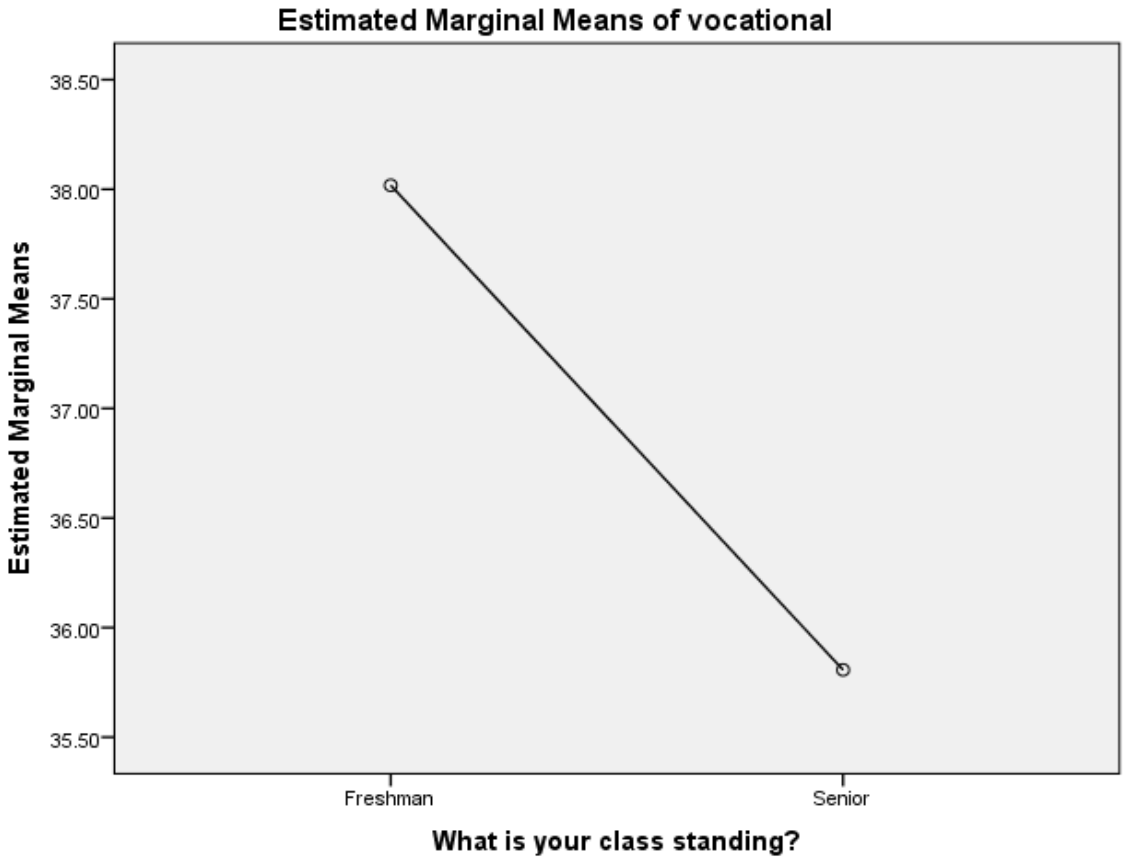
c. R Squared = .028 (Adjusted R Squared = .019)

d. Computed using alpha = .05

avocational




Estimated Marginal Means of life_style
Estimated Marginal Means
39.00
38.00
37.00
36.00
35.00
Freshman
Senior
What is your class standing?


Estimated Marginal Means of vocational
Estimated Marginal Means
38.50
38.00
37.50
37.00
36.50
36.00
35.50
Freshman
Senior
What is your class standing?

Appendix I

Transcript Review Email

Hello <student>,

Thank you for taking part in my study! I am attaching the interview transcript from <interview date> to this email. Please let me know if you find any errors in the transcript by <7 days from today>. If I do not hear from you within a week, I will move forward with the data analysis process.

Thank you for your time,

Laura J. Coombs

University of Nebraska—Lincoln
Husker Hall Residence Manager
Graduate Student, Educational Administration
(402) 472.1157

Appendix J

External Audit

External Audit Attestation
Wayne A. Babchuk, Ph.D.

Audit Attestation

Laura J. Coombs requested that I complete a methodological audit for the qualitative portion of her mixed methods study titled: "Developing Purpose in College: A Mixed Methods Study to Investigate how First-Year and Senior Students Developed Purpose at a Large Midwestern University." The audit was conducted from February 13-April 2013. The audit was part of the validation strategies used in establishing the validity and accuracy of the research. In addition to the external audit, the researcher also employed member checking strategies and peer review to help ensure the integrity of the analysis. As the external auditor, I provided input primarily on the qualitative aspects of the study and to lesser extent the overall design and implementation of the quantitative and mixed methods aspects of the research.

I was initially given several documents (February 2013) including the Interview Protocol, List of Codes, IRB Approval Forms, and Chapter 3 (Methodology) of the thesis. Later (March 2013) I was provided the rest of the thesis including Chapter 1 (Introduction), Chapter 2 (Literature Review), Chapter 3 (Methodology—Revised), Chapter 4 (Findings), Chapter 5 (Discussion), and the Tables and the Appendices. These were provided to me in an electronic format. I spent most of my time reviewing the initial and revised versions of the methodology chapter (Chapter 3) particularly in relation to the aspects of her qualitative design. I provided feedback on these documents on several occasions.

Audit Procedure
The audit procedure consisted of the following steps:

1. Initial meeting to invite me to serve as an auditor for her (qualitative) thesis research and discuss my role and our mutual responsibilities in this process
2. Ongoing discussions of the research design, purpose statement and research questions
3. Review of emerging codes and themes and subthemes
4. Ongoing discussions of findings, analysis, and the writing of the manuscript
5. Read initial and subsequent drafts of thesis chapters and provided input as the project progressed with a particular focus on consistency in purpose and fit between purpose statement, research questions, sample selection, and data collection and analysis of the qualitative portion of this research
6. Read final draft of the completed thesis
7. Submitted audit attestation draft for Laura Coombs' review and input
8. Signed and submitted audit attestation to Laura Coombs

Initial Meeting
Laura approached me in February 2013 to ask if I would perform an external audit on the qualitative portion of her M.A. thesis. I was performing thesis audits for several of her peers who were also graduate students in Educational Administration who had taken a qualitative research course (EDPS 900K) from me. I agreed to take a look at her thesis with a focus on her qualitative research design and implementation and she began providing information to me (electronically) for my feedback. She emphasized that she wanted me to focus primarily on her qualitative decision-making and analysis.

Research Design and Formulation of the Research Questions
Laura was fairly far along before I had the opportunity to provide feedback on her research design and she had already met repeatedly with her committee to plan her research. I am not part of her thesis committee and had little input into the overall design of the mixed methods or quantitative aspects and limited input in the qualitative portion. Laura and I did, however, discuss her research goals, purpose statement, central or grand tour question, sampling techniques, strategies of data collection and analysis, validation strategies, and the writing of the manuscript.

Data Collection and Analysis
As mentioned above, Laura provided me with components of her thesis research including the interview protocol, emerging codes and themes, chapters, and tables and appendices. I read and provided feedback on her purpose statement, research questions, definitions of terms, emerging codes and themes, and findings.

Thesis Manuscript
I reviewed the first and subsequent versions of the manuscript to check for consistency between versions, adherence to suggested changes (by me), and between the purpose, research questions, and data collection and analysis. I also checked that her work and her conclusions were supported by participant statements and employed sound logic given the overall design of the study and the literature on this topic.

Conclusion

Having reviewed the material outlined in this audit, I submit the following conclusions:

The qualitative aspect of this study appeared consistent with the overall goals of the study and the use of mixed methods to address the research question(s). Laura was transparent in describing the various phases/components of her research design and provided support and justification for the methodological decisions and course of action she undertook. Her sampling strategies, emergent themes, and analysis of the qualitative data of this thesis are consistent with the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm and mesh well with her research goals. She employed member checking, research positioning, peer review, and an external auditor to further ensure and validate the accuracy of her research.

As I was not a member of her thesis committee and did not play an integral part in her research and design outside of my role as an external auditor, I did not press her to implement all of the suggestions I made on earlier documents which were mostly directed at clarifying aspects of her thesis both for me and for other readers. I did not discuss various mixed methods strategies or quantitative design issues in detail but repeatedly reviewed her qualitative methods and approach. For this aspect of the study, her data collection and analysis strategies and conclusions seem solid and consistent with her research goals and the thesis appeared well constructed and organized from start to finish.

Therefore, upon review of the final draft of this manuscript, I conclude that the goals of the researcher were met, the (qualitative) research design and its implementation was consistent and effective in addressing the purpose statement and research questions. There appeared to be support from the participant data for the emerging themes and her conclusions are consistent with them and appear to augment the literature in this area.

Attested to by Wayne A. Babchuk this 7nd day of April, 2013.

Wayne A. Babchuk, Ph.D.
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Nebraska-Lincoln