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THE IMPACT OF SILENCE ON COLLEGE STUDENT SELF-AWARENESS

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A thesis

Presented to

The School of Social Sciences, Education & Business

Department of Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

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by

Chad Ibach

May 2017

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**Higher Education and Student Development  
Taylor University  
Upland, Indiana**

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Thesis of

Chad Alan Ibach

entitled

The Impact of Silence on College Student Self-Awareness

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the

Master of Arts degree  
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### Abstract

Silence and self-awareness are vital topics in this day and age. With a majority of college students rarely finding the space on a college campus to think and reflect, the need for silence is ever present. This study looked at the effect of a silent retreat on eight college students' self-awareness. Both silence and self-awareness were discussed separately from one another due to the depth of each term but were also explored together in the literature and the results of the present research. From the results of this study, themes arose surrounding the topics of silence, self-awareness, and the effects of silence on self-awareness. Through the research presented, one can see the positive effects silence has on the participants' view of self, others, and God. Each participant actively engaged with the experience and was pleased with taking the silent retreat. Many participants, throughout the interviews, encouraged the institution to continue to do silent retreats in the future. Silence is a discipline that many times goes unnoticed but is necessary, especially on college campuses.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The world is loud and chaotic. People are always on the go, constantly moving to the next activity and never taking time to think and reflect. The role of silence in life thus quickly fades, especially in the lives of college students. Wall (2014) stated, “College students, like other members of our society have become distracted, individually and collectively” (p. 134). Furthermore, Wall reported students feel pressured and overwhelmed by life because they feel they need a sense of purpose and calling. However, students can learn about themselves through taking times of silence. Learning to step away from the chaos and take a break from life to breathe and think is important. In silence, students can become more aware of themselves and the world around them. This study focused on silence and self-awareness among college students. However, times of silence and reflection seem all too rare in the world of a university. The ancient discipline of silence seems to be just that—ancient and thus irrelevant to modern life.

Although these perceptions for many seem true, Nouwen (1981) offered, “Silence remains as indispensable today as it was in the past” (p. 48). In the world of higher education, administrators, faculty, and students must begin to return to a mindset that allows for silence in daily life. If for no other reason, discipline allows us to dive into the depths of the soul and reflect about who we are and long to be. If college is a time to learn more about vocation and grow in self-awareness, the university must be a place that

fosters space for silence and reflection. In turn, students, administrators, and faculty members must recognize the importance of taking time for silence.

One student participant, for example, recognized the importance of taking time for silence. College life had become overwhelming and sometimes too much to bear. When taking time for silence on a noisy campus, he could see the inner parts of his soul, the way he viewed God, and the way he interacted with others. As a result, he came to a place of comfort in the midst of silence, recognizing the need to continue the discipline in his own life to become continually more self-aware.

### **Silence**

Higher education professionals must recognize the purpose of taking time for silence because of busyness and extensive commitments (Murray, 2010). Silence allows humanity to separate from the noise of this world and begin to slow down (Barton, 2010). Through silence, individuals can speak the truth of the gospel into others' lives. Nouwen (1981) contended, "Silence makes us pilgrims, guards the fire within, and teaches us to speak" (p. 48). Silence is a journey and thus not a phenomenon we can understand overnight. One must adopt the mentality of a pilgrim, as Nouwen offered, who travels down dark and lonely paths. Through times of silence on the journey, a desire to grow in self-awareness is released, and, from that desire, we can speak and live words of truth.

With times of silence on college campuses, one can become more aware of his or her identity in Christ. This awareness of true identity is a key piece in the Christian faith. If one does not become aware of this idea, he or she may continue to live out of fear rather than embrace the ideas of sanctification in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 reads, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away;

behold the new things have come.” Through times of silence and reflection, Christians become more aware of their true identity and strip away the obstructions of the old self.

The discipline of silence is implemented through reflection in the classroom, during services on campus, or throughout daily life in the residence halls. Lindholm, Millora, Schwartz, and Spinoso (2011) discussed the importance of this practice when looking at the campus climate for spiritual development. For example, higher education administrators must begin to “creat[e] and designating physical spaces for reflective practice” (p. 15). Further, student affairs professionals must “incorporate[e] reflective practices into the meetings or leadership trainings of student organizations” (p. 17). Higher education professionals must model taking times of silence in their own lives in order to instill the discipline in student’s lives, in turn encouraging more self-awareness.

### **Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness is a primary aspect of college development. By becoming self-aware, students can personally navigate various areas and stages of life. Personal navigation is “[t]he means by which self-awareness is translated into a plan of action for one’s life, in the context of the cultural milieu in which one lives as mediated by one’s knowledge of this context” (Ferrari & Sternberg, 1998, p. 222). Students have certain plans and goals set in place that allow them to navigate the different events and experiences integrated in life.

If students can become aware of the world around them, they will impact the world from a place found in Christ. Additionally, students will be able to explore and discover what they personally believe and develop a sense of identity (Baxter Magolda, 2008). Students will also have a sense of awareness within their relationships. Baxter

Magolda stated, “Self-authoring individuals do not separate from others but rather reconstruct their relationships to be more authentic” (p. 271). By becoming more self-aware, students will have a holistic view of life, seeing themselves, others, and God in a different light. When thinking about self-awareness, remembering that life is a journey is crucial; we will not arrive at a specific place, and it takes a lifetime to become more aware (Ferrari & Sternberg, 1998).

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the connection between silence and self-awareness. Through times of silence, students have the opportunity to recognize more about themselves, God, and others. Barton (2010) contended,

It is in silence that we habitually release our own agendas and our need to control and become more willing and able to give ourselves to God’s loving initiative. In silence we create space for God’s activity rather than filling every minute with our own. (p. 35)

Students become aware of areas in their lives in which they need to release control to God, whether personal ways, the way they view God, or the ways they view others. The importance of silence and self-awareness was seen throughout the review of literature and by the research results.

This phenomenological study examined how the experience of silence through a retreat—in particular, a silent retreat—affected a student’s self-awareness. By looking at the effects of silence on self-awareness, higher education professionals can better understand the need for silence in their classrooms and their own lives and can help to

instill a lifestyle of silence in the lives of their students. The aim of this study was to answer the following question: How does silence affect college student's self-awareness?

Looking at this specific question opens the opportunity for further research.

Silence and self-awareness are two topics that may never be fully understood regardless of the amount of research done, but the importance of these areas remains crucial in the lives of students. Because practicing silence is becoming increasingly difficult, and because self-awareness is lacking due to limited reflection, higher education professionals must engage with the issue and learn how to implement times of silence that will, in turn, lead students to become more self-aware.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

For many students, the busyness of college never seems to end. Some students constantly run from one place to the next and thus never take the time to think about what they learn. The literature shows a lack of connection between the practice of silence and its impact on self-awareness for college students. This section discusses the phenomenon of silence, followed by self-awareness and the connection between the two concepts.

#### **Silence**

Many people feel terrified of silence and choose not to practice this discipline. Foster (1998) said, “One reason we can hardly bear to remain silent is that it makes us feel so helpless. We are so accustomed to relying upon words to manage and control others” (p. 101). Although many people do not practice silence daily, silence is present throughout history, and people are willing to learn how to incorporate this discipline into life (Hammond, 2005). Through silence, we can get in touch with our desire for God and to be in God’s presence (Barton, 2006). The focus of what follows is the importance of silence’s connection to spirituality as practiced by the Desert Fathers along with the model they found in their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In conclusion is a brief section of silence in higher education.

**Importance.** Without silence, we have no words. According to Caranfa (2013), “Speech, thought, and silence mutually implicate one another; for thought is embodied by

meaningful words; words are meaningful because they arise from silence and return to silence” (p. 577). Words are birthed from silence, but all too often we miss the opportunities for silence to happen. In life, we give words to others or ourselves instead of listening or sitting in silence. Nouwen (1981) pondered the idea and, in turn, suggested that giving silence to one another is more effective than using our words. We must begin with silence if we are to understand the rest of our lives.

A reason, however, many people do not practice the discipline of silence is because it is challenging. Silence requires us to unplug from a world that leaves us with nothing but our own thoughts. Barton (2010) stated, “In silence we choose to unplug not only from the constant stimulation of life in the company of others but also from our own addiction to noise, words and activity” (p. 32). The reason we are addicted to the noise of the world is because then we do not have to listen. According to Palmer (1993), “The silence made me angry because it forced me to listen—and all I could hear was my own faith crashing down around me” (p. 119). Further, Foster (1998) said, “Though silence sometimes involves the absence of speech, it always involves the act of listening” (p. 98). Questions about life and God arise that one thought were never in the soul. All knowledge seems to fall away because, in silence, many things are unknown (Palmer, 1993). We recognize the ugliness of our own hearts through silence and begin to become aware of our “inner dynamics” due to the lack of noise and busyness to which we are addicted (Barton, 2010). The desire to change happens because we see the need for God in our lives and long to become all God has created us to be.

When practicing silence, we no longer are distracted by the busyness of the world and can see these inner dynamics and recognize the need for a Savior. Many times,



however, we take life into our own hands rather than allowing God to step forward in the silence. We distract ourselves from pain and suffering because it hurts too much to think about the longing for heaven we have in our souls. C. S. Lewis (2001) said, “If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world” (pp. 136–137). In silence, we begin to recognize the longing Lewis describes.

Silence is also connected to our spirituality in times of darkness and despair. Foster (1998) described this darkness and despair as “The Dark Night of the Soul.” Through the emptiness, if we can quiet our souls, God begins to do his work. Foster stated, “The dark night is one of the ways God brings us into a hush, a stillness so that he may work an inner transformation upon the soul” (p. 102). Our spirituality and spiritual growth matters deeply to God. He continually wants us to know him in a deeper, more intimate way, which can be seen all throughout scripture.

**Desert fathers and the discipline of silence.** Silence was a practice of the Desert Fathers and an important part of their daily lives (Palmer, 1993). They saw the discipline of silence as a starting point as they entered into the desert (Nouwen, 1981). According to MacCulloch (2014), “From the beginning, silence and contemplation were constructed in the midst of ordinary society as much as in solitude” (pp. 74–75). The Desert Fathers wanted to carry this ordinary life practice into their desert lives. Nouwen (1981) said, “The Desert Fathers praise silence as the safest way to God” (p. 43). Silence became an integral discipline in the Desert Fathers’ lives, and, through it, they met God.

The discipline of silence must be treated with care and not subjected to the strictures of legalism. Foster (1998) said, “The person who views the Disciplines as laws

will always turn silence into an absurdity” (p. 99). However, if done properly and well, the discipline proves rewarding. Silence opens us up to the mysterious and often inexplicable presence of God (Barton, 2010). Through silence, one can still the inner waters of the soul. Manning (2002) stated, “It takes time for the water to settle. Coming to interior stillness requires waiting. Any attempt to hasten the process only stirs up the water anew” (p. 57). Silence is the place for a person to reflect on his or her own life and allow for inner stillness. Moments of silence “are times for inner quiet, for reorienting our lives like a compass needle” (Foster, 1998, p. 106). The discipline of silence creates a space for reflection to facilitate growth in one’s own self-awareness.

**Jesus.** Jesus was a prime example of someone who practiced silence. Many times throughout Jesus’ life, he chose not to speak when, in fact, many people chose to speak. MacCulloch (2014) discussed how Jesus was silent during his trial from the authorities before going to the cross. Jesus was strategic in how he carried himself and often found his full identity in moments of silence. He was not quick with his words; rather, he waited. MacCulloch said, “Jesus used silence in a deliberate, self-conscious way to convey certain messages about himself” (p. 33). For example, consider the character of Jesus and note the way in which he conducted himself. At times, why Jesus was slow to speak and quick to remain silent proves difficult to understand. However, following those examples is critical in our own efforts to become ever more like him.

Reviewing the research and studying noteworthy historic figures, one can see the importance of the discipline of silence in daily life and its connection to spirituality. Palmer (1993) said, “I been have encouraged to pursue the inward search more deeply, to

journey on in the land of silence and absence” (p. 119). Through silence, individuals have the opportunity to dive into the inward journey of the soul.

**Silence in higher education.** For the purpose of this study, the discussion of silence in higher education is important. For many faith-based institutions, spirituality or spiritual growth is central to the purpose or mission, evident when examining the mission statement or faith statement of multiple faith-based colleges and universities. The clutter and busyness of college (Wall, 2014), however, does not allow the space for students to practice the discipline of silence and reflect. Because the discipline of silence is tied to our spirituality and spiritual growth, as seen in the previous literature, faith-based institutions should recognize the need to encourage this discipline for students.

Silence in the classroom also has benefits. Wesley (2013) stated, “Silence in teaching has multiple meanings. It is both an opportunity for thought and a force that can bring the classroom to a grinding halt. It is a complex and interesting phenomenon that, properly managed, can enrich our classrooms” (para. 2). Even if an institution is not faith-based, it should recognize the importance of silence in a classroom. Students have the chance to formulate thoughts, and “silence in classrooms offers the potential for more democratic forms of interaction” (Lees, 2013, para. 5). In higher education, silence needs more recognition for its benefits to both faith-based and non-faith based institutions.

### **Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness is often defined simply as an awareness of self. Ironically, the simplicity it yields is challenging in terms of identifying its presence in the literature. Defining self-awareness thus demands a combination of the elements of self-awareness, self, self-monitoring, self-authorship, and self-regulation. A definition of self-awareness

and an explanation of each of the previously mentioned elements thus follows below in more detail.

**Definition.** The definition of self-awareness is a reflective mindfulness about the world, both internally and externally, while being attentive to and discovering the reason for motives behind specific behaviors. Self-awareness creates a desire to change one's behavior to become stronger in relating to others, self, and God, lining up with one's belief system.

**Elements.** When examining self-awareness, different elements surface that merit exploration. However, for the sake of the present study, a broad overview of each of these terms is provided, specifically focusing on areas that help support the definition previously mentioned.

*Self-awareness.* Chen (1998) wrote, "Self-awareness was defined as: one is able to know, understand, self-examine, and think about one's own feeling, action, thought, I-thou relationship and personal characteristics in terms of the state, change, influence and cause" (p. 91). Self-awareness is defined as highly reflective in nature by being aware of one's behavior and why the particular behavior was chosen (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Ferrari and Sternberg (1998) suggested,

One must not only be aware firsthand of the particular piece of one's behavior or segment of one's stream of consciousness that would serve as evidence, but also one must be aware of that piece or segment as being one's own. (p. 27)

Self-aware individuals are conscious of their actions but also take ownership of their decisions while reflecting upon past experiences.

When reflecting, individuals become aware of different events that take place throughout life and how those experiences shape them. Some experiences line up with their established belief systems and help further growth in specific developmental areas. Other events may need to be processed at deeper levels because they do not line up with a specific belief system (Ferrari & Sternberg, 1998). It is important for individuals to continue to be reflective about life because doing so correlates with self-awareness (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007).

*Self.* When studying self-awareness, defining the term “self” is important. Baumeister and Vohs (2007) posited self as a person’s experience, which differs from others’ experiences. Self is more about what happens within one’s internal feelings and thoughts compared to actions one takes. In essence, self is what is experienced internally more than externally with regard to the different events that occur in a person’s lifespan.

*Self-authorship.* Baxter Magolda (2008) defined self-authorship as “the internal capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations, [and] has emerged in the past 15 years as a developmental capacity that helps meet the challenges of adult life” (p. 269). The self-authorship theory of development describes becoming confident in who one believes him or herself to be in every situation. Baxter Magolda believed three elements of building one’s self-authorship exist: trusting the internal voice, building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments. In each of these elements, an increasing awareness of self is discovered by following the internal voice and becoming more committed to a particular belief system. Baxter Magolda (2007) also offered, “Self-authorship of identity, relationships, and knowledge are necessary for mature adult decision making, interdependent relationships, and effective citizenship” (p. 72). Self-

authorship is thus an important theory grounded in the belief that individuals must continue to become firmer in their beliefs in order to interact well with self and others.

***Self-monitoring.*** Self-monitoring focuses on the behavior of individuals and how they carry out different steps of their social interactions (Snyder & Cantor, 1980).

Individuals fall along a spectrum of high and low monitoring. Further, according to Baumeister and Vohs (2007):

High self-monitors are motivated and skilled at altering their behavior to influence the impressions others have of them. In contrast, low self-monitors tend to focus on remaining true to their inner attitudes by presenting a relatively consistent image of themselves to others regardless of the situation. (p. 831)

With high self-monitoring, individuals more likely change with each situation and often have differing friend groups. Those with low self-monitoring are more dispositionally guided and have a consistent friend group (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Snyder & Cantor, 1980). While looking at the research, a “low self-monitoring” person aligns more with the definition of self-awareness previously provided. People exhibiting low self-monitoring are true to themselves and less concerned with what others think.

***Self-regulation.*** According to Baumeister and Vohs (2007), “Self-regulation refers to the self-exerting control over itself” (p. 841) and has four roots: animal learning, or rewards and punishment; delay of gratification; self-awareness; and personal problems. Within this theory, learning to control or regulate the self is critical.

Individuals must pay attention to the differences between internal values and potential external beliefs but also need to learn to modify and align the internal principles with their own beliefs to become more self-regulated (Ghorbani, Watson, Farhadi, & Chen,

2014). Within learning, students must be reflective and set goals to become more self-regulated (Ridley, 1990). With more reflection and set goals, individuals have greater control over themselves, or at least enough to align with their respective belief systems.

### **Connecting Concepts**

By looking at silence and self-awareness, one must recognize the importance and connection between the two concepts. Without silence, it seems difficult to become self-aware because silence yields necessary forms of reflection. To be a self-aware person, Powell (1969) claimed,

“Interiority” implies that a person has explored himself and has experienced himself. He is aware of the vitality of his senses, emotions, mind and will, and he is neither a stranger to, nor afraid of, the activities of his body and emotions. His senses bring him both beauty and pain, and he refuses neither. He is capable of the whole human gamut of emotions: from grief to tenderness. (p. 30)

Through the discipline of silence, individuals create the space to grow in the area of self-awareness by digging deep into the internal realm of the soul. Many times, the place is dark and lonely, but, somehow, through it all, God is present. God meets us in our silence. Determining what is true and what is false about daily life becomes clearer. In turn, we can become like God. Thus, the focus of this project was the exploration of how much the discipline of silence truly affects self-awareness.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This research project explored how silence affected the self-awareness of students using a qualitative phenomenological design. A phenomenological study provided participants with the opportunity to share their insights into the experience of partaking in silence. The researcher gathered data through focus groups comprised of participants in a silent retreat chosen through purposeful sampling.

#### **Phenomenological Method**

According to Creswell (2013), “A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 76). Furthermore, Moustakas (1994) stated, “The aim is to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (p. 13). Participants had the opportunity to describe the experience of the particular phenomenon from a personal perspective, allowing “general or universal meanings [to be] derived” (p. 13). Creswell noted (2013), “The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (p. 76). A qualitative phenomenological design allowed participants to personally “experience” and describe the phenomenon of silence.

Due to personal experience with the phenomenon of silence, the researcher specifically used a hermeneutical phenomenological approach. Creswell (2013)



described this specific phenomenological approach as “writ[ing] a description of the phenomenon, maintaining a strong relation to the topic of inquiry and balancing the parts of the writing to the whole” (pp. 79–80). The researcher did not try to create a sense of separation from the phenomenon but, instead, gathered data by taking into consideration personal experience. The qualitative hermeneutical phenomenological method was chosen specifically because of the researcher’s personal experience with silence.

### **Participants**

The setting for this research was a small, faith based, liberal arts institution with approximately 1,900 students located in the Midwest. The particular pool of participants was the honors program at this particular institution. Through the honors program, students have the opportunity to participate in more challenging classes while receiving mentorship and having the chance to grow and learn together.

Each semester, 10 to 15 honors students can participate in a silent retreat with a facilitator at an off-campus site. During the retreats, students engage with the topic of vocation as more than just a “meaningful job”; they get away from the busyness of college life and reflect on God’s calling on their lives. Participants in this phenomenological study were chosen intentionally for their participation in the silent retreat or as a result of purposeful sampling. Creswell (2013) stated, “This means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 156).

### **Focus Groups**

The researcher had an outside individual connected to the honors program assign participants to two different focus groups of four students each, ranging from freshman to

senior. Focus group one had all female participants, while focus group two had two male participants and two female participants. A participant in focus group one was not an honors program student but attended the silent retreat. The researcher interviewed both focus groups. Creswell (2012) said, “A focus group interview is the process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people typically four to six” (p. 218). The benefit of focus groups was having students interact with one another rather than answering interview questions as individuals. Creswell also stated, “Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information and when interviewees are similar to and cooperative with each other” (p. 281). If participants knew one another in some capacity, it provided the greatest information possible. Creswell (2013) noted, “With this approach, however, care must be taken to encourage all participants to talk and to monitor individuals who may dominate the conversation” (p. 163). The interviewer ensures everyone speaks so as to achieve the best possible results. Through high participation throughout the interviews, the research gained greater insight that might not be achieved otherwise.

Through their interaction with one another, students developed a deeper understanding about silence, themselves, others, and God. One goal of this research was to see the impact of students’ self-awareness and how they interact with others. According to Kitzinger (1995), “Focus groups explicitly use group interaction as part of the method” (p. 299). In focus group interviews, the participants had more opportunities to see if silence truly changed their view of others. Kitzinger further stated, “Instead of the researcher asking each person to respond to a question in turn, people are encouraged to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each

other's experiences and points of view" (p. 299). Through these interactions, the students arguably gave deeper, clearer thoughts about silence and its influence on self-awareness.

### **Procedure**

After obtaining IRB approval, the researcher conducted a pilot interview with a student who had participated in a previous silent retreat; this pilot interview ensured the quality of the interview protocol. Following the pilot interview, an honors program representative made the participants in the spring 2016 silent retreat aware of the study and asked for their consent. Next, the representative, by the researcher's request, divided participants into two focus groups and interviewed them after the silent retreat for approximately 40 minutes per interview. When recording the focus group interviews, making sure each voice was recognizable was essential to avoid confusion during transcribing. In order to ensure accuracy when writing, the researcher used Participant A-H to distinguish each participant, also indicating if the participant was from focus group one (FG1) or focus group two (FG2).

During the focus group interviews, the researcher asked the participants 10 questions regarding silence and self-awareness (see Appendix A). When conducting the interview, the importance of asking open-ended questions was vital. Creswell (2012) stated, "You ask open-ended questions so that the participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings" (p. 281). The open-ended questions allowed the students to answer freely.

Once the researcher had conducted all of the interviews, transcriptions of the responses were made. Creswell (2013) offered,

Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion. (p. 180)

To start, the researcher explored the data in order to see general ideas and how the information could be organized. Next, the researcher coded and organized the data into smaller categories. From the coded data, the researcher formed themes, or “broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (p. 186). In order to ensure accuracy and validity within the findings, the researcher used triangulation, “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). The emergent themes focused on silence and its impact or lack of impact on self-awareness.

### **Benefits**

Through considering different options for the methodology of this research, using a qualitative phenomenological approach with focus group interviews emerged as the best choice. Silence is a difficult phenomenon to understand without having personal experience. The difficult nature in this case was why participants must engage in intentional times of silence to adequately see its effect, or lack of effect, on self-awareness. The focus groups allowed participants to answer questions but also gave them the chance to interact with one another’s thoughts. The depth and variety developed through qualitative phenomenological method assisted the researcher in generating ideas for further research.

The purpose of this study was to present the importance of silence in the lives of college students. This research provided strong enough data to see the effects of silence on self-awareness. Through seeing the importance of silence and self-awareness, college students can grow in their comfort with times of silence and in their self-knowledge. The following chapters present and discuss the research results.

## Chapter 4

### Results

This research looked at the impact silence has on self-awareness among college students. Silence is hard to practice on a college campus. Most students cannot find time to participate in this discipline, but the results of the present study prove the importance of silence and its impact on college student self-awareness. Participant A (FG1) summed up not only the inability to practice silence at college but also the importance of silence:

Yeah, can I just say that whoever is listening in the University, it is so important.

There are people in the dorms who don't get time alone. They go to class, then after class they have activities and then after activities they come home. I am speaking about myself. And they come back to the dorm and their roommate is there and they literally have gone the entire day and there is no space for them to be by themselves. So, help them. Whatever you can, because they need it.

Higher education professionals must recognize the importance of silence in college students' growth and development of self-awareness. Hopefully, these voices will help educators not only understand the value students place on silence but also when and where it might be offered.

When examining the results of the research, it is crucial to recognize the importance of the role of focus groups. In particular, focus groups provided a space for participants to discuss similar thoughts about silence and self-awareness. While each

participant experienced the same phenomenon separately during a silent retreat, collectively they could consider the effects of the experience. This interview format allowed the group to debrief, letting the participants hear from one another about not only each one's experiences engaging with silence but also how it affected his or her view of self-awareness. During the interviews, the participants felt the freedom to dive into further depth about certain topics. For example, many participants agreed with one another and went into greater detail about certain areas throughout the discussion. The interaction among participants led to greater depth of thought in looking at specific themes. Without the use of focus groups and only using individual interviews, the research might not have proven as rich or deep.

Different topics arose throughout the conversations of each focus group, but, overall, three themes emerged: silence, self-awareness, and the effects of silence on self-awareness. Different themes emerged in each topic. The themes included in the topic of silence were a definition of silence, time practicing silence, and the importance of silence. Within the topic of self-awareness, participants described different definitions of self-awareness, areas in which to be self-aware, and emotions in self-awareness. The final topic is the effects silence has on self-awareness with major themes being the thought of time in relation to silence and the need for both silence and engaging in community. When looking at all three topics, it is important to understand the significance of silence and self-awareness separately in order to fully understand their effects on one another.

### **Silence**

When discussing the topic of silence, many different themes arose throughout the interviews. The first theme was the participants' differing definitions of silence. When

asked to define silence, participants described silence as the absence of sound or physical silence. However, as participants continued to share and discuss in a group, they noted silence was more than just the absence of sound or a physical silence. Participant B (FG1) stated, “. . . the literal definition being no sound but what it means is a space for processing.” More participants discussed silence as “rest” or a “lack of distraction[s]”.

A second theme was the lack of time available for participants to practice silence. Many participants described feeling anxious, stressed, or apprehensive about taking times of silence, while others also felt excitement or anticipation. Negative feelings seemed to arise from the lack of time and space in participants’ schedules. Participants from each group agreed on the difficulty of finding time to practice silence in the busyness of college life but understood the value. Participant A (FG1) stated, “An initial stress of: ‘Do I have time for this?’” Further, when asked why they chose to participate in the silent retreat, many stated needing the space and time in silence. Participant B (FG1) said, “I knew I needed space. Being in a time of transition, just wanting to carve out distinct space and time to think about what’s coming up and where I want to be going.”

Although anxiety, stress, or apprehension occurred when contemplating taking times of silence, a final theme from many participants arose surrounding the importance of engaging in silence. The participants appeared to recognize this value even more so because of the group interaction they had with one another. When asked if it was important to take times of silence every day, Participant E (FG2) said, “Sometimes it’s not possible . . . but I think it’s important that you make an effort. . . . If not silence, then at least the pursuit of God. But that can often come through silence.” Most agreed with Participant E and believed taking time every day was important or beneficial. Participant



D (FG1) said, “I think you can get by without doing it but I think it will . . . increase your ability to be aware of your emotional state, be aware of what’s kind of going on in your life.” Both focus group interviews evidenced the richness of the importance of silence, and the participants saw the value of practicing the discipline of silence even when the difficulty of taking time for silence arose due to various reasons previously mentioned.

As seen by the results presented thus far, the silent retreat had a positive effect on the participants’ views of silence. Through the focus group interview format, the participants could engage more fully with the topic of silence and the difficulty of actually taking time out from each of their lives to practice the discipline.

### **Self-Awareness**

As noted in the literature review, self-awareness is a term described in many ways. While the topic of self-awareness is difficult to describe or understand, a theme of differing definitions surfaced. Nonetheless, the participants found ways during the interviews to describe their thoughts about self-awareness. Due to the nature of the focus group format, participants could respond more fully and in more depth to the questions. As the interview progressed, the answers to deep philosophical questions became clearer. For example, when asked about self-awareness, Participant D (FG1) offered,

I think of understanding more of yourself. I think of someone who is more grounded in the sense that they kind of understand what they bring to the table in interactions with other people and kind of knowing their own shortfalls and shortcomings and insecurities and things so that they can kind of understand how that factors into the way they live their life. . . . I think of kind of more self-aware that you are the more potentially the more grounded and relationally healthy.

Others described self-awareness as an “understanding [of their] own needs,” “reflection,” or “thoughtfulness.” Still, others discussed the importance of also recognizing one’s inability to problem-solve and one’s weaknesses.

Further, a second theme of self-awareness was its importance in specific areas of life. Some of these areas included how needs are met, strengths, weaknesses, understanding motivations, emotions, and relationship with God. Participant C (FG1), for example, stated,

I think it's emotionally important to be self-aware. Specifically, in patterns. Like I need to recognize, “Oh, this situation tends to make me feel happy.” This is why I am feeling this right now or this is why I am feeling horrible right now. This has happened to me before. It's not a big deal right now because I can recognize that it's a pattern.

Participant B, FG1 described a similar idea of “patterns” when talking about “coping mechanisms.” In particular, this participant discussed the importance of recognizing both the positive and negative coping mechanisms one has when interacting with others.

Participant B (FG1) believed that, by being self-aware, one can recognize these mechanisms and decide which mechanisms to continue to use and the ones to work through in order to stop using them. Participant D (FG1) expounded on that idea by describing how to relate with roommates:

. . . to find some understanding of how I operate in relationships . . . like how do we meet in the middle? . . . since we both have some self-understanding of how we work, then we know how best to help and serve the other person while still understanding ourselves in that, too.

Although most agreed there were not many areas in life in which one should be “unaware,” the participants recognized the significance of being a self-aware person.

A final theme of emotions in self-awareness emerged as participants described the importance for self-awareness in relation to their emotions. Participant F (FG2) said,

I think you need to be aware of your emotions. I have talked to a surprising number of people that they don't really let themselves feel things or their just kind of like I don't really let myself feel angry or feel upset. I just kind of shove it down or I just ignore it or I forget about it. And I'm like that's not healthy.

That's not the way to live . . . you have to deal with your emotions. You have to understand what you are feeling.

This description shows how little students share emotions with one another. Many, like Participant F stated, said they did not let themselves feel different emotions and often ignore or repress various emotions. As discussed in Chapter 2, students must learn to deal with emotions and understand what they feel in order to become more self-aware.

Again, self-awareness is challenging to understand. Through the interaction with one another, however, participants were able to share deeply about their thoughts of self-awareness and areas in which self-awareness is important. The participants may not have had an exact definition on which they all agreed, but an overall understanding was gained through interactions with one another. This form of understanding allowed the participants to describe the effects silence has on self-awareness.

### **Effects of Silence on Self-Awareness**

By dialoging about both silence and self-awareness, participants saw the impact the two concepts have on one another. Participant A (FG1) described that effect well:

I think that it is very important and that [silence and self-awareness] are positively correlated. So, the more silence and the more self-aware you are, I would imagine, that certainly [has] been true for me. Yeah, I mean how can you really get a handle of yourself until you have been by yourself, you know? . . . So, when I practice silence I realize, I notice patterns in my thinking that I probably wouldn't have. So, what keeps reoccurring when I try to be silent and won't go away probably needs to be addressed in the silence. So that space allows me to be more self-aware.

From this statement and statements from other participants, two major effects arose, and all participants agreed silence affects self-awareness. The first effect was the idea of time and how time taken for silence allowed certain ideas or emotions to emerge. When asked about the effects and benefits of silence, Participant E (FG2) stated,

I think time is a valuable thing. Things come up and you're like, 'Wait a second,' but then you're in a rush and you have to go on to the next thing. And you won't come back to that because you don't give yourself enough time. . . . Self-awareness comes from putting time aside because then you can be aware of yourself. I mean, and that takes time.

Participant E (FG2) also shared how many times experiences take longer to process, but he recognized the need to work through those experiences that continue to resurface but have yet to offer a sense of meaning. Participant F (FG2) agreed with this statement.

Similar to the comment by Participant E, Participant G (FG2) discussed the importance of how silence forces these facets in life to surface because one's schedule may not otherwise allow interaction with them. In particular, he noted,

I think that when I am silent it kind of [forces] things to the top that [I] may even [be] suppressing with schedule. And when I was just kind of being silent and something would come to my mind or it would keep coming to my mind, I would be like, “Okay I need to think . . . why is this so important to me? Why am I concerned about it or worried about it.” . . . So, you know, just kind of showed me what I am spending my mental energy on. Because there wasn't anything else to push it down. I was able to examine why I'm thinking about certain things or whatever or where my priorities are, which is good.

The silent retreat gave the participant the opportunity to think clearly about dimensions in his life he may have been pushing aside due to the lack of time in his daily life. Other participants described that, when they do not take times of silence, thoughts build up and become overwhelming.

Another effect was the importance of both silence and engaging community. A few participants recognized how silence and community go hand-in-hand. Participant D (FG1), for example, stated,

I feel like you can come to greater self-awareness both by being in community and in silence, and I think it would probably would be strongest when there is some of both. At least in my own life. Because then . . . you can reflect on your experiences with people in silence and then sometimes I reflect on my experiences in silence with people.

The reflection aspect of silence is important. However, engaging in community also proves crucial because one can become self-aware both through times of silence and by

engaging in community. Further, when talking about needing a balance of community and silence, Participant B (FG1) stated,

So I think both are crucial. But being intentional to engage in both is important even if you're not a super verbal processor. I think it's still important to engage in community and talk with people because we aren't really designed to be hermits. We were designed for community. So even if it's not your natural inclination to still be willing to engage in that and learn about yourself in that process.

Both community and silence are vital for self-awareness. The participants realized the human need for silence and community in order to function as God created us to function.

### **Essence**

*"I don't think I ever really had any sort of period of sustained alone time until I came to college." (Participant A, FG1)*

Many college students did not have time growing up for silence, and, when they arrive at college, time for practicing silence often still proves an issue. Busyness takes over in all stages of life, and time is not taken to reflect in silence. When done, however, silence has a significant effect on self-awareness. One can see the world through different lenses, begin to understand how he or she operates as an individual, and can better process when times of silence are taken.

The essence of this research is that silence has a significant impact on student's self-awareness. The interview participants recognized the effect of silence on self-awareness and believed it is important for other students to take times of silence as well. Participant F (FG2) said,

I love silent retreats. The first one got me hooked so, just a plug I hope they continue doing them because I will definitely go every time because I know that it is so worth it. If you don't think it's worth it, I thought . . . "I'm gonna be so swamped when I come back, like what am I doing?" I wanted to go but your like, "Homework, like ball and chain, your dragging around." But it's worth it. So, I love it.

Multiple students expressed wanting the university to continue to provide the opportunity for silent retreats and to open it up to the entire university, not just the honors program.

Silence is a discipline not often practiced in our culture, as proven through the interviews. However, silence is a crucial part of growth in self-awareness. Through the essence of this research, one may wonder if anyone can truly be self-aware without having some time of silence in life. Otherwise, the clutter and chaos of life may overtake one's inner world.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

According to Barton (2010), silence is a way to unplug from the world and the obsessions we have with being connected. Through the silent retreat, the participants in the present study could unplug from the world and begin to see areas in their lives in which they became more self-aware. According to the definition in the literature review, self-awareness is being aware of the world around and of certain motives, while creating a desire for change (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Chen, 1998; Ferrari & Sternberg, 1998). This chapter presents and discusses a review of the findings and connects the findings with the literature review. Following the findings discussion, this chapter describes the study's limitations as well as implications for future research and practice.

### **Findings**

**Silence.** On many levels, the phenomenon of silence is difficult to describe and often equally as challenging to experience. From the literature, Palmer (1998) described this nature of difficulty in regards to silence when he discussed how practicing silence made him feel but also how the phenomenon of silence remains mysterious and made him have many questions about his own life. Many participants from the present study could relate to Palmer in how practicing silence made them feel anxious or stressed. The participants also explained how, through silence, different aspects of life rose to the surface, which then enabled them to process their own thoughts. Although participants



described the literal definition of silence as “the lack of sound,” they still had a difficult time fully understanding the phenomenon of silence but could talk with such depth because of the focus groups. Throughout the literature, both in the past in relation to the Desert Fathers (Nouwen, 1981) and the present in practicing silence daily (Foster, 1998), silence is vital in our lives.

**Self-awareness.** As seen through the literature review, self-awareness is easily defined, yet, for the purpose of this research, a deeper understanding was sought. The terms “self-awareness,” “self,” “self-monitoring,” “self-authorship,” and “self-regulation” were defined in the literature review for a fuller understanding of self-awareness (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Baxter Magolda, 2007, 2008; Chen, 1998; Ghorbani et al., 2014; Ferrari & Sternberg, 1998; Ridley, 1990; Snyder & Cantor, 1980). Through the focus group interviews, pieces of each term reiterated the provided definition of self-awareness. Participants described self-awareness as reflection, understanding self, understanding needs, and other areas as well, as seen in Chen’s (1998) definition of self-awareness and the thoughts of Baumeister and Vohs (2007) on reflection. Participants also discussed the importance of recognizing patterns and coping mechanisms in certain situations, as reflected in Snyder and Cantor’s (1980) view on self-regulation. Although self-awareness is challenging to define, through the present research, a definition of self-awareness was discussed, which reflected the literature previously noted.

**Effects of silence on self-awareness.** Through the silent retreat, participants could clearly see the positive correlation between silence and self-awareness. In the literature, not much information pertains to the effect silence has on self-awareness. However, the focus group interviews demonstrate the connection of how silence

impacted college student self-awareness. Powell (1969) explained that, to be self-aware, one must understand all areas of the body and soul. Participants could experience this type of self-awareness by taking times of silence. Through the phenomenon, participants recognized certain areas in life they needed to process and work through in order to move forward in life. The need for times of silence was apparent through the discussion in the focus group interviews. Despite a lack of literature on any direct effect, through the present study, one can connect the phenomenon of silence and the idea of self-awareness to see the great impact on each other.

### **Implications for Research**

The nature and breadth of research possibilities created a wide array of options for further research in the area of silence and self-awareness. In particular, at least three specific areas of research arose. The first was the thought that emerged in this particular research: the impact of a silent retreat on freshmen compared to seniors. While this particular study focused on the impact of silence on self-awareness among college students, the nature of the experiences between seniors and freshmen may differ. Also, many seniors may have taken silent retreats before. Therefore, another area of research could be the effect of a continuous practice of silence on self-awareness.

Another area of research is the impact that practicing silence has on specific elements of life other than self-awareness. Many participants in this particular study discussed other areas of life they focused on while practicing times of silence. This research took a broader scope of focusing on the impact on self-awareness, but a future study could consider how silence affects specific areas of participants' lives.

Another possible topic is the idea of silence in relation to different age groups, specifically comparing how practicing silence affects young children compared to adults. The question arose in one interview of how silence would affect younger children as well as how would it affect individuals who may be older. The importance of silence may be seen throughout all ages of life, not just in college students.

A final area of further research is the practice of silence on non-faith based institutions. For this particular study, a faith-based institution was studied, and the importance of spirituality and spiritual growth is present. The impact of silence on participants who do not have Christian faith would yield different results, potentially proving the importance of silence and reflection for all students.

### **Implications for Practice**

Silence does impact self-awareness and is an important practice to implement in our lives today. Through the research presented, a few different implications arose and are presented below. The implications for practice, in particular, include silent retreats at a university, practicing silence daily, and the need for self-awareness.

The first implication for practice is the actual silent retreat itself. The participants want the university to continue to provide opportunities for all students, not just honors students, to go on silent retreats. Participants believe the discipline of silence is a necessary practice and that all students should have the chance to participate in similar retreats. Taking time away from campus in order for students to practice silence and think about different areas of life that must be processed was vital to the participants. The participants could get away from the busyness of college life because the honors program at this particular university set up a time for some of their students to get away

and practice the discipline of silence. Getting off campus for the participants was a crucial part of their experience, whether near campus or further away. They were specifically asked to engage with the discipline while on the retreat and not to focus on everything going on back on campus. A silent retreat is a good option to use in the future by other universities who want to encourage a group of students to practice silence.

The second implication for practice is the encouragement to practice silence often, if not daily. Even amid the busyness of college life, many participants still believed in the importance of practicing silence in their lives in order to process different things in life they were going through at the time. Foster (1998) and Palmer (1993) noted the need for the discipline in life, and the participants reflected this need throughout the interview process. Higher education professionals must encourage this discipline in their own lives in order to be able to ask students to participate. After learning to practice silence in daily life, practitioners can learn to bring the discipline to the university. If higher education professionals will not engage with silence, neither will the student population.

Finally, participants also revealed a need for self-awareness. In particular, they seemed unaware of the different aspects of life that would surface while on the silent retreat but believed these aspects were important to process in order to become more self-aware. Baumeister and Vohs (2007) discussed the reflective nature of self-awareness, and the silent retreat created ample opportunity for participants to be reflective and become more self-aware. Some participants also discussed the need to engage with emotions and how many students disengage from their emotions, causing them to be less self-aware. The unwillingness to reflect upon what students feel hinders their self-awareness. Self-awareness is an aspect of life that the current research proves as

necessary. Higher education professionals must learn how to implement the need for self-awareness on college campuses. This implementation may look different, whether through mental health promotion or in the residence halls. However, higher education professionals must recognize the need to promote self-awareness among college students.

### **Limitations**

Four limitations are discussed throughout this section: (a) the limited number of participants involved; (b) participant pool (small, faith-based institution); (c) researcher bias; and (d) focus group interviews.

**Limited number of participants.** Due to the focus of this study, only a limited number of focus groups were formed, potentially lessening the richness of the research. With only two focus groups, the researcher was able to gain adequate knowledge of the subject. However, involving more participants in the research is always a benefit to validate the findings further. One limitation within the low number of participants was due to the nature of the silent retreat itself. Only a certain number of students could attend the trip, therefore creating a particular population for the researcher to interview.

**Participant pool.** All participants attended the same small, faith-based university, which creates a lack of diversity among interview responses. All but one participant was in the honors program at the institution, also causing a lack of diversity among the student body population. The students, however, did range from the freshman class to the senior class, creating different levels of understanding of silence, self-awareness, and effects due to each participating in a different number of silent retreats.

**Researcher bias.** With qualitative research, researcher bias does not allow the experiences of the participants to be measured objectively. Although a hermeneutical

phenomenological approach was taken for this study, the influence of the researcher was in effect. The possibility of disconnecting in an appropriate manner while having much experience with the phenomenon was difficult despite the researcher's awareness of possible researcher bias.

**Focus group interviews.** Regardless of the benefits of focus groups, some may say focus groups were not as beneficial. The possibility of miss-hearing or confusing participants within the interview is high because more participants are present in each focus group. The clarity of ideas may also be an issue due to the fact many different ideas surfaced in the focus group interviews. An individual approach may have resulted in more clear answers or themes rather than having the different thoughts and views presented in the focus group interviews. However, focus group interviews were the best method for this research because of the depth of thought possible as a result of the interaction students shared with one another.

## **Conclusion**

Silence is a gift that, many times in life, is taken for granted, especially in college. Students go from one activity to another often without taking time to think and process the different facets of life that are truly important. Through the silent retreat, students were able to get away from campus, away from the busyness and spend time in reflection and thought. They were able to become more aware about themselves, their relationships, and their faith. In essence, the students were changed by silence—changed for the betterment of themselves and for the world around them. With the ability to sit in silence and reflect, self-awareness takes form, and students are able to relate to self, others, and God in ways they never previously thought possible.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Questions

#### *Silence*

1. What do you think silence is? meditation, closing eyes, reading, prayer, reading scripture, etc.
2. What emotion/emotions, if any, surface when you are thinking about taking times of silence in your life? Why?
3. Why do you think individuals choose to take times of silence? Or choose to forego silence?
4. Do you think taking times of silence is important to do everyday? Why or why not?
5. Have you experienced times of silence/this retreat before? What has been your experience been like?

#### *Self-Awareness*

1. What words or phrases comes to mind when you hear the word self-awareness? Why?
2. In what areas of life do you believe it is important to be self-aware? Why?

#### *Times of Silence (Silent Retreat)*

1. What is your prior experience, if any, of taking times of silence/this retreat?
2. Why are you/did you choose to participate in the silent retreat?

3. How, if at all, does practicing times of silence affect your view of others, self, and God?
4. How, if at all, does silence affect self-awareness?
5. How, if at all, does self-awareness create changes in one's behavior?
6. Do you think silence benefits self-awareness? If so, provide an example from your own life/the silent retreat.

## **Appendix B**

### **Informed Consent**

#### **The Impact of Silence on College Student Self-Awareness**

You are invited to participate in a research study of silence's affect on self-awareness. You were selected as a possible subject because you are participating in this year's spring honors program silent retreat. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The study is being conducted by Chad Ibach as a part of completing his Master's in Higher Education. It is funded by Taylor University MAHE program.

#### **STUDY PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study is to understand how silence affects students' awareness of self, others and God.

#### **NUMBER OF PEOPLE TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:**

If you agree to participate, you will be one of ten student subjects who will be participating in this research. Participants must be at least 18 years of age.

#### **PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:**

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

Subjects will participate in the honors program silent retreat. After the retreat, participants will be broken up into two focus groups, containing 4-5 students in each group. Each focus group will then be interviewed by the researcher ranging from 60-90 minutes. Your answers are extremely valuable. After each group has been interviewed, the researcher will look for themes and characteristics stated throughout both of the focus group interviews.

#### **RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:**

While on the study, the risks or discomforts include:

Discomfort sharing with an unfamiliar researcher.

Fear of loss of confidentiality.

NOTE: If at any point for any reason, one wishes to discontinue the interview, you may tell the researcher you are uncomfortable or do not want to answer a particular question.

#### **BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:**

The benefits to participation that are reasonable to expect are knowledge of how the silent retreat has impacted your own life and the way you view the world around. The interview may allow time of reflection of the importance for times of silence in our daily lives. Gaining these insights will also allow higher education professionals to see the importance of taking time for silence on busy college campuses. Students interviewed provide a unique perspective having participated in time specifically set aside for silence.

#### ALTERNATIVES TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:

Instead of being in the study, you have the option of disregarding this consent form. Though your participation would be highly beneficial, your participation is completely voluntary.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published. The interview will only be heard by the researcher and transcriber. The recordings will be destroyed when the study is complete.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Taylor University Institutional Review Board or its designees, the study sponsor, Todd Ream, and (as allowed by law) state or federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) etc., who may need to access your research records.

#### COSTS

There are no known costs for your participation in this particular research. If you do need to discuss concerns raised during the interview, contact the University Counseling Center.

#### PAYMENT

You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

#### COMPENSATION FOR INJURY

There will be no payment of treatment costs for potential injury.

In the event of physical injury resulting from your participation in this research, necessary medical treatment will be provided to you and billed as part of your medical expenses. Costs not covered by your health care insurer will be your responsibility.

Also, it is your responsibility to determine the extent of your health care coverage. There is no program in place for other monetary compensation for such injuries.

#### CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

For questions about the study or a research-related injury, contact the researcher Chad Ibach at 734.260.0584, or Todd Ream at 765.998.4399.

If you have inquires regarding the nature of the research, your rights as a subject, or any other aspect of the research as it relates to your participation as a subject can be directed to Taylor University's Institutional Review Board at [IRB@taylor.edu](mailto:IRB@taylor.edu) or the Chair of the IRB, Susan Gavin at 765.998.5188 or [ssgavin@taylor.edu](mailto:ssgavin@taylor.edu).

#### VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Taylor University.

#### SUBJECT'S CONSENT

In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this research study.

I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to take part in this study.

**Subject's Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Subject's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

