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Maintaining balance for Christian Counsellors when
their work is a calling

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine the daily lives of Christian Counsellors with a calling, with a view to understanding how they manage their work-non work boundaries. Calling is defined as perceiving a summons from an external source to any work that provides meaning and purpose, and which contributes to the greater good (Duffy, Dik, Douglass, England, & Velez, 2018). For Christian Counsellors maintaining balance is important as mental health demands increase and telehealth and working from home options become more utilised. Having a calling offers satisfaction, meaning and purpose, however it can also lead to overwork. This study was based on the framework of the Job Demands-Resources and Boundary Management Theory. Using a qualitative approach with seven experienced counsellors in Auckland, New Zealand, results showed for Christian counsellors calling can be both a demand and a resource. Demands were identified as a responsibility and duty to represent God to clients and to use relational gifts in the service of others which could lead to over-giving. A further demand was a desire to reveal God to clients constrained by Counselling Codes of Ethics. Resources were identified as a feeling of privilege and identity that was enriched by the call. Resources of being gifted relationally, with faith as a supportive strategy were identified. Boundary Theory identified participants have flexible permeable boundary styles and highly matching role personas making the need for deliberate boundaries important. Conversations revealed maintaining balance is supported by being deliberate, giving oneself permission with strategies for maintaining balance being learned across time.

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“Your profession is not what brings home your weekly pay check, your profession is what you're put here on earth to do, with such passion and such intensity that it becomes spiritual in calling.” - attributed to Vincent van Gogh (as cited in Lysova, Dik, Duffy, Khapova & Arthur, 2019, p.1).

CHAPTER 1: WORK AS A CALLING

The place of work in daily life and the meaning made of it has long been a topic of interest. This is not surprising when we consider how much of our lives are spent at work. It has been noted that for some people work offers a sense of identity (Loscocco, 1989) . According to Identity Theory individuals hold different social roles with associated meanings each contributing to a sense of self- worth (Miscenko & Day, 2016) . Work is one such social role that allows individuals to exercise unique skills and abilities promoting a sense of self connected to the role and also provides an opportunity for relationship building connected to the work role (Miscenko & Day, 2016). Bellah (1985) suggested there are three distinct positions people can take toward their work: work as a job, as a career and as a calling. Jobs provide people with material benefits and a way to acquire resources to provide for life outside of the job. The job itself is of limited importance and reward is not sought beyond money from the job. In contrast, a career provides people with a way to achieve not only income but a way to experience advancement, recognition and an increased sense of power, self-mastery, and self-esteem. A calling, however, is not carried out for monetary gain or self-achievement but is driven by needs such as meaning and purpose.

The notion of a calling in work dates back to at least the 16th century during the Reformation, when members of the Protestant Church were encouraged by Martin Luther to begin looking at their earthly occupations as holding spiritual significance and as a way of serving God (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). A story is told of a shoemaker who asked Luther how he could serve the Lord. Luther asked him what he did for work, to which the cobbler replied, “I make shoes”. Luther replied “Make good shoes and sell them for a fair price” (Tchividjian,

2010). This way of thinking differed from the tradition of the time that saw religious men and women as the only ones whose work held religious or spiritual significance (Weber, 2001). Up until this time priests, nuns and monks were considered called to their vocations either by family heritage, social status or divine inspiration, with all other work undertaken by society's members endured for the purposes of sustaining life (Ponton et al., 2014).

In recent years, there has been considerable confusion about what constitutes a calling, with research focused on finding an agreed upon definition. A recent review noted that we need to be 'flexible in how we define Calling' (Lysova, et al, 2019 p.4). Three main areas of definition appear in the literature – the Classical, the Neo-classical and the Modern (Ponton et al., 2014).

The Classical definition, in line with Luther's encouragement to the early Protestant Church, has its foundations in the belief that work holds religious or spiritual meaning and the calling emanates from an external source, often ascribed to God or a higher power (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Added to this is the notion that God has designed particular jobs and instilled individuals with unique gifts and talents to carry them out. The Classical view of a calling is focused on contributing to others as a way of serving God (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019; Weiss, Skelley, Haughey, & Hall, 2004).

Similar to the classical definition, the Neo-classical definition considers that meaning is found in a contribution to others and the satisfaction that this brings. However in this definition an external source such as family, country or a cause might be what drives a person to take up a role rather than a higher power or religious figure (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019).

In the Modern definition, a calling is more secular, deriving from an inner drive toward work that provides fulfilment, self-actualisation and happiness (Ponton et al., 2014). This form of calling focuses more on personal values and is less about a contribution to others and more an individual interest (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019).

There is likely to be a continuum that exists between Classical and Modern definitions, that depends on the meaning and sense making of individuals and their personal values, spiritual beliefs, cultural and social experiences (Lysova, Dik, Duffy, Khapova, & Arthur, 2019). In order to provide some direction to the debate Duffy, Austin, England, Douglass & Gensmer, (2018)

developed the Work as Calling Theory in which calling is conceptualised as containing the three following elements:

Work must contain individual meaning and purpose for the person, it must help others or contribute to the common good and there must be felt sense of being compelled either internally or externally toward the work (Duffy, Douglass, Gensmer, England, & Kim, 2019, p. 328)

In the classical tradition, Christians may see their work as sanctified, or containing “divine significance” (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005, p.187). Pargament and Mahoney note it is not the role or the work they are doing that is sacred but the way the role is experienced and how it allows the worker to connect with their faith, i.e., the sense they make of their daily experiences within the faith construct. When work is seen as ‘sacred’ people are likely to invest greater amounts of time and energy in it, as work then provides a powerful source of emotional connection to God and inner strength. According to the perspective of Weiss et al. (2004) when a call comes from an external source such as the Christian God and is taken up, it involves the whole identity, it is not limited to expertise or skills alone but involves all of the person thus is holistic and is a calling of the self.

The goal of the present study is to build on previous qualitative research examining the effects of maintaining work life balance when work is perceived as a calling and to extend this by looking specifically at the sample group of Christian Counsellors. Posluns & Gall (2020) noted that the counsellor is a ‘powerful but vulnerable tool in the caring process’. For a counsellor, the empathic stance is not one that is taken on and off as each client enters the room, rather it is a way of being that is lived. The counsellor themselves is the ‘tool’. Clergy, who often engage in similar roles to Christian counsellors by offering counsel to distressed people, have been researched in relation to the effects of their calling on their work non-work lives (Adams & Hough, 2017; Case et al., 2020; Terry & Cunningham, 2019). A study has been undertaken with Counselling Psychologists exploring how they understand the meaning of their calling and how they discern their calling (Duffy et al., 2012) however no studies have been found with Christian counsellors. Like clergy, many Christian Counsellors profess a calling to their work, a sense that God is working through them and an associated sense of

gratitude to be called (Duffy et al., 2012). Psychologists, counsellors, and mental health professionals have been researched with a view to understanding self-care and well-being practices and attitudes (Adams & Hough, 2017; Dattilio, 2015; Hou & Skovholt, 2020; Posluns & Gall, 2020) however the construct of calling has not been included in these studies. No qualitative research as yet has been found examining how Christian counsellors maintain balance when they perceive their work as a calling. This study seeks to fill the gap in this area.

Strengths of Living a Calling

Qualitative research studies have explored the effects of living a calling on zookeepers (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), teachers (Rawat & Nadavulakere, 2015), physicians (Bott et al., 2017) and counselling psychologists (Duffy et al., 2012). Clergy, a group who undoubtedly perceive a call to their role (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997) have also been extensively studied as a group. People who perceive a calling to their work tend to have higher work and life satisfaction, likely because they find their work meaningful (Duffy, Dik, Douglass, England, & Velez, 2018) or because people living a calling experience a sense of significance and identity in their work which helps achieve personal fulfilment and happiness (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Research additionally shows when people perceive a calling to their work they are likely to experience higher levels of engagement in their roles (Duffy, Douglass, Autin, England, & Dik, 2016).

In a study looking at a sense of calling among zookeepers, the zookeepers reported they held a belief in having been born or endowed with the necessary gifts, abilities and talents that enabled them to carry out their roles which they saw as an innate part of their identities. This identity as a 'zookeeper' offered the zookeepers a recognised place among peers and within society, from which they derived meaning and which offered significance (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Similarly, a study with counselling psychologists noted the psychologists reported feeling blessed to be living their callings, they reported approaching their work with enthusiasm and felt fulfilled (Duffy et al., 2012). Clergy have also reported high levels of satisfaction in their roles derived from having an influence on people's lives and faith, and

feeling that their ministry gave meaning and purpose to their lives enabled them to feel like they were accomplishing worthwhile things (Francis, Laycock, & Brewster, 2017) . A further element that added satisfaction and meaning for clergy was the notion that they are partnering in God's work; they reported a sense of participating in something bigger than themselves which allowed them to focus on process rather than outcomes (Case et al., 2020).

People perceiving a calling are likely to be successful at work due to high engagement levels and enjoying their work which then in turn leads to an accomplishment of desired work goals (Duffy et al., 2018). Research shows they tend to be committed to their organisations and careers in general and consider leaving jobs less often than those without a sense of calling, possibly believing this is 'what I'm meant to be doing' (Chen, May, Schwoerer, & Augelli, 2018). Clergy who perceive their work as a calling perceive the work as sacred and therefore as holding meaning; they tend to be driven, are deeply invested, with work having great significance for them. They therefore have an increased likelihood of success (Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin, 2015).

Physicians have reported their calling was linked to positive relationships in the workplace which enabled them to feel support and appreciation for the skills they offered, they also reported being motivated in their work with a desire to inspire others (Bott et al., 2017). A study conducted with workers in an animal shelter looking at the ways in which workers managed challenges as they arose found workers with a calling were able to express frustration and make sense of the situation by identifying even small changes that would allow for a feeling of moving forward (Schabram & Maitlis, 2017).

A study conducted with fulltime employees in China showed calling has a significant and positive effect on career satisfaction and work engagement (Xie, Xia, Xin, & Zhou, 2016). Additional it showed the ability to be adaptable as defined as having an ability to adjust as required in work roles may be mediator between calling, work engagement and work satisfaction (Xie et al., 2016). This study also showed the effects of calling are not only a Western construct but have cross cultural applications.

People who perceive their work as a calling may experience it as a stress buffer when work becomes difficult. Being able to find meaning in a stressor by understanding it as part of work's purpose may assist with stress management (Allan, Douglass, Duffy, & McCarty,

2016). A study undertaken with nurses across six hospitals in Pakistan described nursing as a difficult and stressful profession. Despite systemic issues of nominal pay and lack of organisational structure, nurses who perceived that they had a calling in their roles displayed negative emotions less often and were better able to cope with stress and anxiety, with decreased job stress (Afsar, Shahjehan, Cheema, & Javed, 2018). Clergy reported being able to draw on spiritual resources such as their relationship with God during times of stress and reminding themselves their work was a calling was useful in reducing their intentions to leave the role (Bickerton et al., 2015).

Challenges of Living a Calling

Although it is clear from the research that working in the area of one's calling can offer meaning and purpose which is motivating, engaging and deeply satisfying, the research also suggests people perceiving a calling can over-invest in work life, take less time off work and have poor work-life balance (Duffy et al., 2016).

People who perceive their work as a calling are at risk of burnout (Vinje & Mittelmark, 2007). It may be that seeing the work as meaningful leads people to be more willing to sacrifice time and energy, over-invest in work and remain in difficult work settings (Vinje & Mittelmark, 2007). Research with teachers found that those with a calling did not view their work as a defined set of tasks, instead they viewed their roles as contributing to the greater good, and were more likely to take on additional tasks and extra roles than those who did not perceive a calling (Rawat & Nadavulakere, 2015). Similarly, zookeepers were willing to sacrifice pay, personal time and comfort in their roles (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009).

A calling may also have a negative impact on relationships due to the time spent at work (Duffy et al., 2018). A study with counselling psychologists found that there was at times a 'push and pull', that had them feeling centred and fulfilled as well as overloaded and stressed, however they were willing to sacrifice social time with family and friends due to the sense of fulfilment they received from the work (Duffy et al., 2012). Sacrifice and commitment may be especially strong when there is a sense of religious meaning to the

work. Studies with clergy have shown a perceived 'sacredness' to the work among both clergy and their parishioners (Adams & Hough, 2017). People are likely to invest more energy if they see their role as serving God or fulfilling a divine purpose (Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin, 2015).

The importance of mental health professionals' wellbeing and self-care has been well researched, with research highlighting the benefits of prevention of negative outcomes such as compassion fatigue, stress and burnout by being aware and mindful and engaging in regular self-care (Posluns & Gall, 2020). Mental health professionals may neglect their own wellbeing and mental health (Dattilio, 2015). With regard to psychologists it has been suggested this is possibly due to the mental health training received: as mental health professionals they may experience a sense of invulnerability and believe they have the necessary knowledge to cope with anything (Barnett & Cooper, 2009). Workers experiencing a Classical view of calling to their roles may feel additionally supported by the notion of being gifted and enabled for the role (Weiss et al., 2004) and at risk of underestimating their vulnerability when the work has become overbalanced. Given this, it seems that those who perceive a calling and experience joy and meaning from their work may need to be extra vigilant around maintaining their work non-work life balance for longevity in their roles.

CHAPTER 2: MAINTAINING BALANCE BETWEEN WORK AND NON-WORK LIFE

Early studies into work and family life treated these as separate domains. Research interest began in earnest following sociologist Rosabeth Kanter's book 'Men and Women of the Corporation' (Kanter, 1977) in which she shed light on the interaction between work and home life noting that individuals held separate loyalties to each of these domains. Coining the phrase 'the myth of two separate worlds', Kanter (1977) indicated there was a social discourse in which work is much more than the tasks that we undertake but is also an 'interpersonal game' in which social power dynamics are being played out and through which we explore and challenge our place in the social world.

Rapid demographic changes have brought an increased focus on the need to balance work and non-work commitments. Work life balance has at times been mistakenly thought to be only a women's issue. Women entering paid employment in increasing numbers after the Second World War was a turning point for work life balance recognition, as they attempted to both work outside the house while continuing to care for children and meet their homemaker responsibilities (Gatrell, Burnett, Cooper, & Sparrow, 2013). Continuing demographic changes in society have resulted in many families now being dual earners (Allen & Martin, 2017; Geurts, Rutte, & Peeters, 1999). Statistics New Zealand reported that in 2019, 48% of New Zealand women were working, chiefly in healthcare, education, and administrative roles. Women are having children later in life resulting in more mothers in the workforce (Allen & Martin, 2017), and single parent families face particular challenges for managing work and home demands (Capitano & Greenhaus, 2018). Whether in full time or part time positions, 1.26 million women compared to 1.40 million men were employed within New Zealand (Statistics NZ, 2018). With an aging population, many families are working as well as providing childcare and care for aging parents (Allen & Martin, 2017). Many grandparents continue to work beyond the traditional retirement age due to good health, increases in living costs, and an ongoing desire to make a contribution, which can mean reduced involvement by grandparents in caring for other family members (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014).

The globalisation of business has seen the emergence of the 24/7 work week with employees required to work late afternoon or night shifts, weekends and non-standard work schedules to support the constant availability of business (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). Non-standard work practices are increasing, with employees benefiting from the flexibility they offer (Pudaruth, Juwaheer Thanika, Nunkoo, & Vencatachellum, 2017). Increases in employee availability however can impact all members of employees' families and their wellbeing (Pudaruth et al., 2017). Technology can support business practices, enabling working from home and multiple platform connectivity such as by mobile phone, email and social media (Adkins & Premeaux, 2014).

These technological advances have been particularly relevant since the Covid-19 pandemic which has impacted the way people work, with compulsory lockdowns resulting in 29 percent of the New Zealand workforce having to work from home in early 2020 (Green, Tappin, & Bentley, 2020). Prior to Covid-19 this was not a regular occurrence, although one third of male and female New Zealand employees had engaged in some form of working from home previously (Green et al., 2020). Having increased connection to work due to technology and working from home has increased the risk of burnout due to a blurring of the boundaries between work and home (Gisler, 2018).

Flexible work arrangements have become more common with part-time, shared hours, working from home, telecommuting and remote working increasingly offered by companies as a way of supporting work-life balance (Allen & Martin, 2017; Sirgy & Lee, 2018; Smith, 2006). Studies have shown that working from home can lead to difficulties turning off from work, resulting in family conflict because work is always in the home space, easily accessible and becomes physically and psychologically a part of the home domain (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017). Workplaces are utilising technology to enable working from home or for work to move with employees from place to place; phones, email and social media make people ever more available (Adkins & Premeaux, 2014). Having a connection to the work role in non-work time presents a benefit in allowing the freedom to be flexible and available to meet work demands as required and the ability to be present for home demands. 'Telecommuting', also known as remote working, allows flexibility around work schedules and the freedom to decide where and when to work, increasing autonomy in the role and reducing conflict in the home (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Although technology has enabled benefits to workers it

has also brought risks to worker wellbeing. With access to work constantly available within the home space, managing the boundaries can lead to overwork (Kossek & Thompson, 2016; Van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020).

Work-family and family-work conflict: negative spill over

Initial work-family research focused on conflict, examining how work affected home and, later, on how home life and family affect work (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). The bi-directionality of work-home interference (WHI) and home-work interference (HWI) has been recognised: demands from work can interfere with the ability to meet requirements at home and demands at home can interfere with the ability to meet requirements at work (Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005). Underpinning much of the early research were the assumptions of the *Resource Drain Model*, which proposes that people have limited energy so that when the limit is reached, further effort in one area will reduce the effort that can be made in another (Frone, 2003; Smith, 2006). From this perspective, three main types of work-family conflict were identified: behaviour based, strain based and time-based conflict.

Behaviour based conflict arises when the behaviours required in one role are incompatible with those required in another role (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). An example may be a worker who is in an authoritarian position at work such as, perhaps, in the prison system, and then comes home and moves into the role of parent. When the behaviour needed for effective performance in one role is very different from the behaviour needed in other roles, this can create stress and a need to consciously transition from one domain to the other.

Strain based conflict occurs where the demands or pressures of one role make it difficult to meet the demands of the other role, for example stress or fatigue experienced at work may carry over to non-work time, or vice versa, and create anxiety or other stress symptoms that reduce effectiveness (Allen & Martin, 2017). High levels of work demands can require energy ordinarily reserved for home life and to recover from the job. If demands at home are also high, burnout can result (Peeters et al., 2005).

Time based conflict occurs where there is not enough time to meet the demands of both work and home (Geurts et al., 1999). Where too many tasks need to be done in too little time, this can lead to absenteeism, lateness, poor performance and fatigue (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000).

Role conflict or role facilitation?

Living a calling means getting meaning and purpose from work and deriving a great sense of satisfaction by doing so. While the impact of work on home life can be negative, resulting from an over-commitment to the role and creating a poor work non-work balance (Duffy et al., 2016), it can also be enriching. Research has increasingly begun to include work-home enrichment, in which work can be seen as both a source of conflict with home life and as a source of happiness and resources that support both work and home domains.

Work-home enrichment is defined as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; p. 73). It focuses on how work and non-work life roles can improve rather than deplete each other. Strain at work can be counteracted by support from home, and home demands might be buffered by skills, support or income derived from work. Overall, satisfaction is increased by the combined achievement and participation in all roles (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). For mental health professionals and counsellors in particular, skills gained from their work roles such as communication strategies, problem solving, and mediation can be useful when there is conflict or strain at home – an example of positive work-life spill over. When seeing clients, skills that have been gained outside work such as knowledge and abilities gained from interactions in the family and broader social environment can be brought into work and utilised in sessions with clients to inform questioning, an example of home spilling over into the work domain.

The different forms which work-life balance can take – bidirectional, positive, or negative, are captured by the spill over model, which proposes that positive or negative experiences from work or home will spill over and have an effect on the other role i.e., when things aren’t

going well at work it will spill over into the home, and vice versa. This can be positive – when things are feeling stressed at home, skills and resources experienced in the work role can be transferred to the home domain increasing satisfaction at home (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013).

Balancing work and home life: the effects of imbalance

People who view their role as a 'job', providing an income but little interest, are less likely to have challenges separating their work and home life. However for workers who are highly absorbed by their roles, where the role is a key part of the identity and where work is perceived to be a calling, work is much more likely to spill over into home life (Kanter, 1989).

The negative effects of work-life imbalance on individuals have been well established in terms of reduced satisfaction in both work and non-work life, stress, health issues and burnout (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). People who spend all their time in one area of life without engaging in other areas do not experience high levels of satisfaction (Sirgy, 2002). People who have poor work life balance also tend to have more physical health issues such as elevated blood pressure or heart disease, potentially due to bad diet, smoking or drinking (Allen et al., 2000). Poor work life balance is also linked to stress, difficulty sleeping, depression, anxiety, and burnout (Duxbury, Stevenson, & Higgins, 2018; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Zhang, Duffy, & De Castillero, 2017). Longer work hours, and their impact on non-work time, contribute to challenges spending time preparing meals and irregular meal times, reduced sleep time and quality (Virtanen & Kivimäki, 2012). Additionally an over commitment to work reduces time to restore resources such as social support from friends and family (Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011).

It is unclear whether gender impacts work-life imbalance. Women may be more likely to experience burnout due to home demands impacting them at work while men may be more likely to experience burnout due to demands from work impacting them at home (Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker, & Scaufeli, 2005; Shockley, Shen, DeNunzio, Arvan, & Knudsen, 2017). Shockley et.al (2017) offer two possible explanations. The 'rational view' offers that men typically spend more time at work, as women are more likely to work less hours and to hold

part time roles (Stats.govt.nz). The 'sensitisation perspective' however argues that gendered views of men and women's roles inform self-concepts, so intrusions from other domains that disrupt the role that primarily supports the person's identity are more likely to be noticed and reported.

Impacts on families have also been explored. Although high levels of engagement in work have been linked to increased levels of job satisfaction due to increasing achievement of goals and career advancement, being highly involved with work interferes with family time and creates conflict (Adams, King, & King, 1996). Stress at work can compromise the ability to be present and meet the demands of home life. Further, work stress comes home and is felt by partners and family members (Carlson, Thompson, & Kacmar, 2019). If the strain of work compromises the ability to participate effectively in the home, it can create a burden on the other family members who then begin to feel what is known as stress transmission (Carlson et al., 2019). This in turn is likely to create more strain for the family and can lead to arguments and tension (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989). When things are stressful either at work or home, people may reduce their involvement at home to cope, presumably because the home domain is where they have more control. This again, then leads to strain on relationships as other family members increase their involvement to compensate (Bolger et al., 1989).

Stress, poor health, family strain or general life dissatisfaction are bound to have an impact on functioning and enjoyment at work. A meta-analytic review of research conducted across a diverse range of occupations showed that in general when people feel things are going well between their work and non-work lives their satisfaction with their jobs increases, and when things start to feel difficult, their satisfaction decreases (Allen et al., 2000). Employee wellbeing and work life balance are related to the amount of sick days a worker takes, the productivity they are capable of, the way they interact and engage with other colleagues and whether they are likely to have workplace accidents (Wright & Huang, 2012). Employees with better work life balance have better performance on the job than employees who don't (Mohd, Shah, Anwar, & Mahzumi, 2016). If someone feels work is taking time away from other areas of their lives, they are at risk of becoming angry or resentful in the workplace leading to a reduction in productivity (Amstad et al., 2011). Individuals have limited resources available to them and when these resources begin to be depleted and they feel strained they

may attribute blame. A study with Belgian Public Servants across six months looked at the reciprocal effect of work family conflict and job strain and found that conflict between work and home arose when resources became depleted as workers were juggling both work and family roles and finding this increasingly difficult. Workers blamed this difficulty on job strain – too much to do and too little time - with the associated negative feelings affecting family life, personal abilities and performance (Babic, Hansez, Stinglhamber, & Bertrand, 2017). Having had time to rest and relax and feeling supported by the organisation to do so increased commitment to the organisation and reduced their intention to look for other jobs (Allen et al., 2000; Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

For a person experiencing their role as a calling, the impacts on home life can be both positive and negative. A calling means the worker finds their work meaningful, purpose filled and satisfying which offers additional support into the non-work domain (Hirschi, Keller, & Spurk, 2019). However when work is the result of passion and captures so much attention, it can spill over into leisure time (Bott et al., 2017) and result in work overload and stress at home (Duffy et al., 2012). Relationships developed at work can be very supportive with others who share the calling, however this can lead to neglecting relationships outside work as focus is placed on those who share the passion and work is where a sense of belonging is found (Bott et al., 2017; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Skills developed within the calling can be utilised within family life, providing an increased ability to cope with home demands along with positive feelings derived from the role flowing over into the home life (Hirschi et al., 2019). Studies based on role accumulation have shown that where multiple roles are held it offers opportunity for added happiness and satisfaction to be experienced (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Skills and resources developed within the calling can then be transferred to the home domain enabling enhanced performance in all areas (Babic et al., 2017). When a challenge is experienced in one domain, the other domain can offer a stress buffer as a resource to assist in getting through the difficulty. Additionally positive experiences had in one area can be transferred to the other area to enhance or increase enjoyment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Strategies for Managing Work life Balance

Work family balance has been a term used in the literature mostly associated with studies where there is low conflict. Recently balance has become a defined construct of its own with a recognition that a lack of conflict does not in and of itself mean balance. When using the term work life balance, Burke et al (2004) make the point that the term balance implies equal division of roles and this may not be what everybody wants. The way that each person holds their roles and transitions between them is an individual thing which may not necessarily be 'balanced'. A broader approach is to see work life balance as being able to do well in all areas of our lives (Kossek., 2014). Sirgy & Lee (2018) define work life balance as 'a high level of engagement in work life as well as non-work life with minimal conflict between social roles in work and non-work life' (pp.232). There is no one way to have work life balance, it looks different for everybody and at different times.

Organisations have developed a range of approaches to helping employees manage work-life balance, such as leave policies allowing for family care, child care, elder care and other forms of social support (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). On site health programs, the availability of healthy food options and Employee Assistance Programmes are associated with higher levels of employee engagement (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). Strategies such as reducing work intensification by setting realistic deadlines, having reasonable workloads, allowing employee autonomy and decreasing role ambiguity so that employees are clear about expectations are assisting with minimising work-life conflict (Kossek., 2014; Sirgy & Lee, 2018). Fostering a culture of support by encouraging and rewarding helping behaviour in employees, training leaders to care about their employees' lives in and out of work and modelling positive work life balance are further strategies that workplaces are using (Kossek., 2014).

Boundary Theory

In considering how individuals manage their multiple roles, the degree to which the work and non-work life domains are integrated or separated is affected by both the structural position of the role and the personal attributes of the worker. Roles that invite psychological, emotional or time investment in and outside working hours are considered to have a high degree of absorption. These roles Kanter noted were of 'central life interest' for workers (Kanter, 1989). Since Kanter's (1977) time there has been more examination of how work and family roles co-exist.

Boundary theory proposes that people create boundaries to help organise life into manageable areas that can then be navigated (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000).

Boundaries define places such as school, home and work, and roles such as teacher, parent, and counsellor. The degree to which work stays 'work' or becomes a part of non-work life and the way transitions between the two are managed is defined by an individual's role boundaries (Ashforth et al., 2000). Boundaries sit on a continuum from weak through to strong (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009). Weak boundaries are defined as permeable (permitting) and integrating (allowing a merging of roles to take place). People who maintain weak or permitting boundaries may take personal calls at work, answer work emails in personal time or use the same phone for work and personal life. At the other end of the continuum, boundaries can be strong, 'impermeable' (prohibiting) and segmented (keeping distinct separation between roles). Workers might use separate phones for work and personal life, and not answer work calls or emails outside work hours.

In a study looking at boundaries among laboratory workers, Nippert-Eng (2008) found workers at the permeable/ integrated end of the continuum were happy to do such things as use one diary for home and work, bring photos of family into their desks at work and socialise with work colleagues, while workers at the impermeable/segmented end of the continuum preferred to keep separate diaries and separate key rings for home and work and chose to keep family and friends separate from one another (Nippert-Eng, 2008). Another study

looked at clergy and the behaviours that differentiated those who burnt out from those who didn't (Case et al., 2020). Clergy who maintained healthy attitudes and did not burn out reported being proactive in their boundary setting between work and home life. They intentionally allowed themselves time to exercise, pursue hobbies, and spend time with friends and with family. They noted these boundaries were often negotiated verbally and they were very clear on expectations for personal time. They suggested communicating their schedules to those who needed to know and then turning their phones off and not checking emails in their 'down time'. Giving themselves permission to have downtime was noted to be key, along with arranging the schedule in a way that worked for them and enabled breaks (Adams & Hough, 2017).

Whether an individual creates integrated or segmented boundaries between work and non-work life will be influenced by personal preferences as well as how closely their work role persona matches or contrasts with their non-work life role persona (Ashforth et al., 2000; Kreiner et al., 2009). According to Boundary Theory, work roles can range from those which require a work persona that closely matches the workers' core identity features, to work roles which contrast with the core features of the worker's identity. For example, a counsellor has a role persona that is, among other things, empathic and able to demonstrate warmth and patience (Posluns & Gall, 2020). The counsellor may transition smoothly between the roles of counsellor, partner, and parent as there are small changes to how the counsellor behaves. In comparison, the changes required of a security guard between work and home may require more effort (Ashforth et al., 2000). People with identity matching, permeable roles tend to have more integrated boundaries, keeping work and home blended, leading to a blurring of boundaries; people with impermeable roles and higher contrast have more segmented approaches, keeping work and home separated (Ashforth et al., 2000). Where there is higher differentiation between the work and non-work persona, workers find it easier to transition between work and non-work life leaving work at work. People with similar identities in work and non-work roles may transition easily between roles but are at risk of boundary confusion and interruption from one role to the other (Ashforth et al., 2000). Boundary permeability can impede workers' ability to disconnect from work, preventing them from refreshing and replenishing resources for their return to work (Capitano & Greenhaus, 2018). Work home conflict can be decreased by permeable

boundaries and the ability to move between roles as needed, but permeable boundaries may also increase role conflict by creating role confusion (Ashforth et al., 2000). Ultimately each worker must find role boundaries that suit their style and enable a comfortable balance between work and home.

Job demands and job resources

A key issue underlying work-life balance is the need to balance the demands of work and other roles, and the resources available to deal with these demands.

The Job Demands-Resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) can be used across all occupation types and is relevant for every type of role. The model asserts that all working environments and job descriptions comprise both demands and resources. Demands are any aspects of the workplace - physical, psychological, social, and organisational - that create stress and include such things as deadlines, lack of office space and work overload. Demands may also include role ambiguity, lack of autonomy, not getting along with colleagues and managers or aspects of the physical work environment such as noise or not having air conditioning in the summer. Anything that impedes the ability to do the role or adds additional pressure can be considered a demand. A demand is subjective: what one worker considers a demand may conceivably be a resource for another worker. For example, shift work may enable one person to pick up children from school or meet family demands, while another may find it disrupts family time. For one it would be a resource, for the other it would be a demand. In the same way, resources are any physical, psychological, social, and organisational aspects that assist in achieving work goals, reducing stress, and stimulating growth. They may be such things as professional development, having autonomy in the role, flexitime or having the necessary equipment to complete a task. Having a laptop that enables work to be completed remotely may be a resource in that it enables a worker to leave work knowing they can complete a task later. Having good team spirit could be considered a resource in that team cohesion has been found to be a buffer for stress in the workplace (Li, Early, Mahrer, Klaristenfeld, & Gold, 2014). Again, what is a resource to one person may be considered a demand by another. For one person having their own office where they can

work in private may be a resource – to another, being away from others and having to work alone may be considered a demand.

Demands and resources are independent, with each predicting different outcomes in the workplace. Demands make the role harder, resources make the role easier. The presence of demands has been linked to the exhaustion component of burnout while the lack of resources has been linked to disengagement in the workplace (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). When both demands and resources are managed, they have a combined effect on wellbeing: people who have resources available cope better with the daily demands of their jobs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Job resources have been found to have a buffer effect on job demands (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005). Employees in one study who reported experiencing emotional demands, physical demands and work home interference did not go on to experience burnout if they were receiving resources such as social support or high quality relationships with their supervisors (Bakker et al., 2005).

A large Australian study undertaken in the mental health service included nursing, psychology and social work staff from 21 inpatient units, community team members and 10 service centre members totalling 1100 clinical staff (Scanlan & Still, 2019). The study examined the demands and resources of the mental health workers as they related to job satisfaction, exhaustion, and engagement levels. The workers described their demands as being emotional demands, time pressure and work interfering with home. No significant differences were found in the demands between groups. The demands had a significant influence on satisfaction levels and turnover intentions. Resources were reported as receiving satisfaction from the role, receiving feedback, recognition, reward, having job control and a sense of participation. These resources when present lowered exhaustion and increased satisfaction (Scanlan & Still, 2019).

With regard to counsellors, although not all studies were specifically using the Job Demand-Resources Model, several studies have sought to identify the demands and resources that contribute to the role. The emotional demands of consistently hearing distressing stories have been identified as emotionally exhausting (Dattilio, 2015; Posluns & Gall, 2020). Counselling can be a one-way caring relationship in which the counsellor holds all the responsibility (Guy, J. D. 2000). High caseloads, particularly in Agency settings, can be a demand along with non-clinical responsibilities such as administration, record keeping and

appointment booking (Sim, Zanardelli, Loughran, Mannarino, & Hill, 2016). Further demands experienced by counsellors are managing client contact outside of sessions, managing client risk, and adjusting sessions to suit changing technology.

For many counsellors the knowledge that they making a difference has been identified as a resource (Sim et al., 2016). Counsellors are inclined toward relationship and find being in emotionally connection with others very satisfying therefore to experience themselves in the in a space with others where this is happening and to receive feedback that this is helpful leads to a sense of compassion satisfaction (Posluns & Gall, 2020). An ongoing sense of learning has also been identified as a resource for counsellors as they continue to identify ways to support clients and engage in professional development (Sim et al., 2016).

The present study

Counsellors in New Zealand hold roles that range from sole practitioners in private practice to working as team members in schools, NGOs and private or public sector settings. One large NZ study undertaken with government funded counsellors looked at school counsellors' work life balance and found that counsellors were reporting more crisis related work and were needing to do longer hours in order to get their work done (Manthei, Tuck, Crocket, Gardiner, & Agee, 2020). Recommendations were made that schools and the New Zealand Association of Counsellors should recognise the risks of stress to counsellors in avoiding burnout, and that counsellors have a responsibility to themselves in ensuring work life balance was maintained for their own wellbeing. Following this, a further study found that counsellors in New Zealand were at risk of lacking work life balance as they do not pay sufficient attention to reducing job stress or acknowledging their own wellbeing (Evans & Payne, 2008). Another New Zealand study showed that having reasonable and realistic expectations about both the role and the personal abilities brought to the role are important in assisting with self-care and wellbeing (Lin & Wilson, 2019).

Counsellors' role boundaries are individually determined in terms of how flexible (permeable) the counsellor chooses to be. Individual counsellors will make decisions on whether to use a

personal and work phone separately or whether these are one and the same. The decision of whether to do administrative work at home for instance will be determined by individual and/or organisational factors, however the decision on whether to research interventions in personal time lies with the counsellor. The decision on whether calls from clients can be received on personal phones (or at all) outside working hours will be influenced by the permeability of individual and organisational boundaries and may also be influenced by a Codes of Ethics. Professional bodies' s Codes of Practice offer best practice guidelines in the management of risk and maintaining professional relationships with clients (NZAC, 2016; NZCCA, 2019). Counsellors therefore are likely to experience a range of boundary management strategies.

For people who perceive a calling from God, their role is likely to involve their whole identity, the whole self. Work is not what they do, it is who they are and is considered an outworking of their faith (Weiss et al., 2004). The sense of being called by God to the work offers a consistent persona across home and work with an identity supported by the belief that this is work they are called to do and that they are resourced by God to do it (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005).

When work is a calling, the feeling that the work has meaning, is of significance and provides self-esteem are resources that can buffer the effects of job demands (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). For those who feel called by God to their roles, a secure sense of attachment to God and the ability to call on God for support when needed has been found to foster engagement at work and reduce intentions to leave (Bickerton et al., 2015). Although the calling can offer a resource it can potentially also be a demand. People who are passionate and driven in their roles may be at risk of being taken advantage of, of being asked to do tasks that others wouldn't, of becoming overworked and working longer or harder than is healthy out of a sense of commitment to the call (Duffy & Dik, 2013). A calling may be both a demand and a resource that needs to be balanced and managed.

There is no current NZ research examining the demands and resources of Christian counsellors with a calling, or how they manage their work-non work boundaries. Having a calling can be a resource in that it offers satisfaction, meaning and purpose, and it can also be a demand in that it can lead to overwork. It is not clear is how the call from God influences

the role, whether being called by God becomes a demand or a resource or both. This is an issue this research hopes to be able to explore.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Method

Participants

There were seven participants (one male, six female) in this project. All were experienced counsellors with from ten to twenty years' experience in the field. Their counselling roles included full-time (n=1) and part-time social service agency roles (n=1), private practice roles (n=2), and a combination of both agency and private practice work (n=3) in a variety of settings. The counsellors' qualification levels ranged from Bachelors to Masters levels and with the exception of one counsellor all were trained in Christian training Institutions

Design

The process undertaken to recruit participants involved purposive and snowball sampling. After ethical approval was received via a Low-Risk Notification from Massey University's Human Ethics Committee in July 2020 (See Appendix 1), the researcher began by talking to the counsellors in the local counselling network who then either nominated themselves as participants or identified others who they saw as potentially being suitable to invite to take part. Interested participants were sent emails or texts asking if they would like to receive further information about the project after which they could decide if they would like to take part. The benefit of snowball sampling is that as one counsellor recommends and identifies another counsellor to take part in the project, there is a social chain linking potential participants that the researcher might not otherwise have access to or awareness of (Noy, 2008).

Participants who expressed interest were sent information sheets (See Appendix 2) which outlined the purpose of the research, what they could expect from taking part, the risks and benefits, the procedures used to protect confidentiality and that this was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time. After having time to read this, interviews were arranged. These were either face to face or over Zoom and were arranged to suit the interviewee's preferences for time and date. Three interviews took place face to face with the remaining four taking place over Zoom. Interviews took place during July and August 2020.

Interviews

Interviews ranged from 40 mins to 120 mins in length, and were audio or video recorded with participants' consent to being recorded gained at the beginning of each interview. A semi-structured interview format was followed (See Appendix 3). The basis of all interviews was the same, with a focus on 'what it's like' for counsellors as they attempt to maintain balance while living a calling. A natural conversational flow was encouraged, with each conversation containing the following four questions: *What does it mean to you to be called? How would you describe the degree of work, non-work life separation/integration you prefer? Does work ever creep into non-work life? and How do you maintain balance?* The focus was on seeking stories, anecdotes and gaining a sense of the lived experience of each participant. As a counsellor the researcher drew on her training to keep the 'interviews' feeling like 'conversations'. She used reflection and exploratory questioning as a way of assisting with the interview process, so that participants and researcher would experience these interviews as 'conversations with a purpose' (Smith, 2009).

Analysis

Interview recordings were transcribed within a day of the interview and coded as Participant 1, Participant 2 etc. Interviewees were all offered a copy of their transcripts; some wished to

review the transcripts, and some did not. All participants were offered a copy of the report upon completion and all participants requested a copy.

Analysis and coding of interviews was a process of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). According to Smith (2009) there is no set way to undertake IPA but rather a series of stages that are worked through. Stage one was the transcription of the interviews. This was done using Otter online transcription software. Confidentiality was maintained in this process by ascribing each of the participants a code, i.e., Participant 1, Participant 2, etc. Audio recordings and transcripts were stored on a password-protected personal computer accessed only by the researcher. Each audio recording was uploaded to the software following the interview and then transcribed.

Stage two was to edit the transcriptions whilst listening to the interviews. Transcription was not perfect and required detailed checking and at times considerable correction. It also required tagging an identification number to each set of text. This allowed familiarisation with the data in verbal and text forms, and initial identification of words and phrases of interest. One transcription was sent to the participant for checking following editing to check that the transcription was accurate due to the participant's accent. The participant made corrections and several additions to the transcript; these were given a different colour to allow identification at coding stage. All transcripts were then copied onto a table with columns either side as Smith (2009) suggests enabling descriptions and coding of themes to be added.

The coding and analysis process took place using the NVivo software package. Stage three was a coding process of reading and re-reading each interview, noting descriptions of the text, and seeking meaning from what was spoken and adding these into the right-hand column. Passages that held meaning were identified, and individual words within these were looked at in the context of the sentence and paragraph throughout each interview, in an attempt to interpret the experience of the participant. Codes were assigned to themes as they were identified in each text. These codes were recorded in the left-hand column of each text as well as in NVivo. Following Smith's (2009) advice themes were kept broad and in line with the research question to enable coding to stay manageable. Sub themes for individual transcripts were created to hold individual and unique items.

After coding was completed there were four main codes with multiple sub codes within each. After a session with an academic consultant on how to get the best out of NVivo, I was advised that the use of tables is not recommended, and I had complicated this for myself! At this stage I had the option of continuing or starting a new NVivo project which I chose to do. Stage four was a process of re-coding the texts without tables. A codebook was created with sub-codes re-categorised into overarching themes. All texts were transferred from one NVivo project to a new NVivo project with all new coding done according to the codebook. This revisiting of the texts allowed themes to become more evident as coding continued while new memos were written for each participant. Overarching themes identified throughout this process were then captured as 'themes' in a master memo for further analysis once all seven texts had been through the second coding process. In this process the four main themes were reduced to three by blending two together. Text searches, word trees and word frequency searches became important to verify whether identified themes were valid. As a way of testing validity of the themes, I used a white board to write up all themes and sub themes then went through each transcript ticking each theme/subtheme to ensure the text contained the content I remembered and that I was staying true to the interview. This gave me courage that the interpretation I was making, the 'fusion of horizon' (Kakkori, 2009) was indeed founded in the texts and I had not wandered off into a world of my own making. After review by my supervisor a final revisiting of themes took place in NVivo in which some sub themes were refined and added.

Reflexive Statement

This project is of personal interest to me, having experienced what I would describe as my own 'call' to this work 18 years ago. Until then I had always had an interest in hearing other people's stories and was very comfortable being with others in distress. In 2000 while away at a Church retreat, a visiting speaker from Australia called me forward from the back of the crowd and said, 'you have an ability to counsel', and I realised what I had been readying my whole life for. It felt 'right' and gave me such a sense of meaning and pleasure. A key word I

have used to describe the work I do is 'privilege', it is an immense privilege to join in the journey of clients as they make sense of the experiences they are going through and to be invited to partner with them. I have gained a sense of achievement and accomplishment from this which has driven me at times to over-commit by seeing more clients than I ought or working longer hours. There has been a strong sense for me of 'knowing this is what I was made for' and as such feeling such pleasure in the workspace that it overrides the desire for balance. This work has been both 'work' and a hobby, and it is who I am not what I do. The stance of being deeply empathic is not something I put on and take off. I also experience a sense of responsibility that if God gave me gifts in this area, I am responsible to use them. I additionally feel a responsibility to hone the craft hence the ongoing study. Learning the balance of work-need alongside self-need is ongoing. It is this that has led me to be interested in knowing how calling is experienced by others and especially how finding balance is experienced. I have wondered whether this is just what it's like when you have a calling or whether it is different for others. Are others more able to utilise skills of self-care, boundaries, and discipline that I have struggled with?

As a counsellor it has been my personal philosophy to hold a stance of curiosity when meeting with clients in an attempt to understand their lived experience and to be interested in their knowledge of the world they inhabit daily. Given the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach to this research, this is a natural fit for me informed by notions from phenomenology and the work of Husserl and hermeneutics and the work of Heidegger and Smith (2009).

Phenomenology

Phenomenology invites us to explore a 'phenomenon'; anything within the lived experience of the participant's daily life, with no theory offered, no assumptions made. It simply asks the questions 'what is this or that experience like' (Van Manen, 1990). It is discovery oriented; it is not seeking to answer a question or solve a problem, it simply seeks to know more about a phenomenon and how it is experienced. From the phenomenological perspective knowing is

doing and being, it is not enough to simply theorise, it must be lived and experienced to be known.

Phenomenology founder Edmund Husserl [1859/1938] proposed that if we want to truly know some- 'thing' we are best to examine it through our experience of it (Smith, 2009). Initially a mathematician, Husserl moved from studying objects externally and came to believe that an individual's conscious perception of an object would enable description of how the phenomenon was being experienced (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019). Husserl proposed when we experience a phenomenon, by which he means through our conscious awareness of it, and then we reflect on the experience, we are able to see the 'essence' of the phenomenon. The essence of the experience means what it truly is at its core, the 'thing' itself, without any assumptions or categorisations added. Husserl suggested we must hold aside what we already know in order to be ready to see the 'thing' as it is without preconceptions.

Hermeneutics

Martin Heidegger [1889/1976] was a student of Husserl until his own work moved into the field of hermeneutics. Heidegger's major contribution to hermeneutics began with 'Being and Time' in which he discussed the notion of Dasein, *literally 'there-being'* (Smith, 2009). Heidegger's position with 'Dasein' is that humans are never context free, our being in the world is always in connection to the world around us, continually making meaning and interpreting the world. Differing from Husserl's position of phenomenology as a stance of describing the world being experienced, Heidegger held the view that experiences were interpreted and context laden.

Hermeneutic Phenomenological Research seeks to explore daily lived experience, our daily actions and behaviours and then highlight, make explicit, and reveal the hidden and previously unknown universal meanings that underlie the things we do and say in everyday life. Hermeneutics does this by essentially treating action as though it were text that could be 'read' and therefore interpreted (Packer, 1985). By taking time to reflect on the meanings

behind the taken for granted life we live, we can explore the meanings held in our language and actions and enrich the understanding of what we are doing and why we are doing it. Doing so allows space for deeper meaning making, conscious choice and action taking.

When studying topics of natural science, researcher Max Van Manen (1990) noted that observation, experiment, and quantitative analysis are well suited, however in topics of human science he notes that self-reflective, descriptive qualitative methods are called for. He notes there is no specific technique or method that can be applied, rather the methodology underpins the perspective taken. The researcher must become a 'sensitive observer of the subtleties of everyday life' (Van Manen, 1990 p. 29). Van Manen (1990) points out that in some ways phenomenology is an attempt to do the impossible in that it attempts to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the life world and yet remains aware that the life lived is always more complex than any explanation of meaning can reveal.

The Hermeneutic Circle

When undertaking research with people who are reflecting and communicating their lived experiences it is important to have a way to interpret the reflections being made. Both the person telling the story and the listener are using words that contain meaning within context, the words contain individual meaning that only become clear when understood within the larger picture of the context of the whole statement (Rennie, 2012). The hermeneutic circle involves an interplay of interpreting what is being conveyed between the speaker and the interpreter in which meanings can be uncovered and brought forth (Gadamer, 2004). As the speaker and the interpreter move through a process of interpretation, a 'fusion of horizons' occurs in which a deeper understanding is reached beyond what has been said (Gadamer, 2008). Words are understood both for their individual meaning as well as the meaning they possess within the context of the sentence and the paragraph within which they sit. The process of interpretation requires a movement of reading and re-reading to ensure that

words are both individually understood within the context of the speaker as well as within the wider context of the whole text.

Bracketing

Because the experience of living a calling and managing commitment is known to me personally, Husserl (as cited in (Reiners, 2012) notes a 'bracketing' of what is already known must be done. Common sense, already held knowledge must be suspended, bracketed and held aside in order to leave space for the experience of the other to be received and interpreted as new unfiltered knowledge. Husserl suggested that this process of 'bracketing' was required in order to turn 'to the things themselves'; in order to reduce the phenomenon to its essential qualities a suspending of our presuppositions and pre-existing categorisations and to allow a description of the essence of the phenomenon as it is (Kakkori, 2009). Husserl notes this bracketing requires the need to apply a 'phenomenological attitude' as opposed to a 'natural attitude' in which we intentionally turn our attention inward and consciously reflect on our perception of the things we are experiencing. In order to bracket my knowledge of the calling to counselling experience, this required writing my reflexive statement before the interviews began. Once I had written my own experience, I could limit making assumptions to help me instead be curious about the participants' experience. Initially I had decided not to begin any analysis until all interviews were completed. Taking my lead from Heidegger and his caution about the need to bracket presupposition and categorisations, I was concerned I may lead in my questioning if I began to notice themes at this early stage (Kakkori, 2009). As interviews continued, I found I was becoming aware of commonalities of experience and was beginning meaning making as a natural way of being and thus bracketing was something I needed to do as a more formal process by journaling my thoughts, becoming consciously aware of them, and placing them aside. Again, I think the skills as a counsellor were useful here, where acknowledging my own thoughts and responses and holding them aside for the client is an ever-present need. This enabled me to be informed by the themes I noticed emerging enough to follow particular lines of conversation if they emerged but not to be leading if they didn't. At times I found the tension of being a

counsellor attempting to be a researcher very real – my natural tendency to want to validate, offer empathy and feedback was ever present and I found myself searching for what Smith (2009) terms my 'research persona' (pg.67) where I could be comfortable with questioning without offering feedback while still remaining fully engaged in the conversation.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In interpreting the interview data three main themes emerged, each with sub-themes (Table 1).

| Raw Themes | Sub Themes | Main Themes |
|--|---|--|
| Asked by God Working on Behalf of God A Job to Do A Sense of Responsibility The Job Needs to be Done Well Fears of Disappointing God Uncertainties About Saying No | Responsibility and duty Privilege The tension between duty and privilege | 1. Being a representative of God |
| Sacred Space Being Enabled for The Role Having Passion for the Work The Pressure to Achieve Strong Client Connections Matching Persona The Desire to Witness | Partnering with God Being relationally Made Unspoken Evangelism | 2. Calling as identity |
| Need to be intentional Need to give permission Learned over time Methods | Challenges of representing God and Identity for maintaining Balance Strategies for maintaining Balance | 3. Complexities of Maintaining Balance |

Themes and Sub themes of data collected

Theme 1: Being a representative of God

The interviews revealed that a call to counselling is accompanied by a sense of responsibility to represent God to clients. Sub-themes emerged in which this responsibility to represent God was experienced at times as a responsibility and duty, and at other times as a privilege. There also emerged a tension between the sense of privilege and the sense of duty.

Responsibility and Duty

In the interviews, participants spoke of being representatives of God to the clients they met with for counselling. Underpinned by Christian faith beliefs, all participants viewed this as a commission of sorts, given by God and one for which they had been enabled. They described working on behalf of God because He had asked them to. As one participant described it:

I think as Christians, well for myself as a Christian, being called means just that, it means being sent out, similar to the disciples, who were sent out by Jesus, I feel that I've been sent out, that I'm an ambassador (Participant 1)

Participants described an awareness that the call came with a sense of responsibility. As the following participant discusses there was a tension between the honour or privilege of being asked and the sense of duty that would accompany the call:

I thought it would be too hard. And I thought it would be taxing of course it was because I like being in my art studio, working alone, that kind of thing. And so in a sense, I wanted to do it, but I didn't want to do it (Participant 6)

Participants viewed their calling in different ways. Some described their calling as a 'ministry', others as a 'job', however all viewed it as a part of Christian service underpinned by their faith. The interviews suggested that regardless of whether participants were in private practice or organisational roles they perceived their work to be ultimately in the service of God and it was Him they were answerable to:

I have responsibility to do it well. And I'm responsible to someone else, like not only - not only myself, and not my managers or anything, it's different to even them. I have a responsibility as a job. Yes, but my responsibility to God is different (Participant 4)

Participants suggested God was involved in their day to day practice determining the specific form of engagement desired with clients. Representing God was understood to take place via relationship and demonstration of His qualities to the clients being met with. They reported feeling a responsibility or duty to create a place where the client was able to experience God's presence through conditions created by the counsellor. Participants suggested they were also responsible to model the love and acceptance they experienced in their faith relationship with God to their clients. Within relationships where these qualities were modelled and the presence of God could be experienced, participants felt that conditions for change were supported for clients. The responsibility therefore was to ensure that relational qualities were modelled effectively. Drawing from the qualities experienced within their personal faith relationship with God and applying them to the relationships they developed with clients was perceived as a direct way to enact the calling. For participants, the idea that relationships can be healing is at the core of their calling underpinned by the Christian faith:

Early on there was a sense of responsibility of representing God well and, so them (clients) staying with me is about seeing or believing that this relationship is important to, I guess, helping someone make better choices (Participant 3)

An additional sense of responsibility was a duty to be effective in the work they undertook within this relational space. As participants were representing God and working on His behalf there was a pressure to achieve outcomes:

I think the hardest one is where you've come to the end of the three or four sessions, and you can't get any more extensions. That's when it is difficult...that sense of responsibility. Knowing where your work ends and God's continues (participant 7)

Participants further suggested they felt responsible to use gifts and skills perceived to be God given in the service of God with others. These gifts and skills were perceived to have been given especially for the purpose of connecting relationally, enabling God to be represented to

others enabling healing, and came with responsibility to be used and to be used well. The data revealed a sense of duty in utilising these gifts with efficacy.

Privilege

The interviews reveal a sense of immense privilege in feeling called to the role of counselling. Participants spoke of feeling as though the call was an invitation from God to work on His behalf. The invitation was perceived as personal and suggested a sense of being known by God. For some the call came in the form of a dream. For some this dream was clear with meaning quickly apparent, for others it took several years for the meaning to be revealed. For others there was a slower more tentative journey led by an inner prompting that they sensed as the call:

So the calling was a voice over a long time, and just following a sense of, well, I'll take the next step, and then the next step, so I guess I had believed calling was like, you know, a moment that was quite specific. But mine was kind of more of a bit of a walk into things (Participant 3)

Being called provided meaning and purpose along with a sense of being chosen. For many participants, the call to counselling came after their own painful journeys and/or experiences of counselling, with the opportunity to give back what they had been given. For participants to know that they were considered worthy and were able to be useful and in service to others was deeply valued.

The notion of calling provided a connection with God and was considered a personal endorsement by God to the role. The interviews suggested that this added strength to participants' faith relationship, offering a personal sense of being identified with skills and a role to play in God's plan for humanity:

I'm working with the God of the universe. And that He trusts me to do it, that He's with me doing it... it's quite awe inspiring really, to think what the God of the universe said, you can do this, and I'd like you to do it. I think that's why I want to

do it. ... I'm glad I'm a part of it and the people's lives who I'm in. It's a privilege to be able to do that (Participant 4)

Participants described being able to draw strength from the belief that they were supported by God in their roles. Undergirded by Christian discourses of God enabling workers for the role as required, the data suggest that counsellors draw strength and energy for their work from the belief that this was God inspired work:

I know that I know that God is in this for me. And when you have something so clear as that, that really gives you a sense of courage and conviction that this is indeed not just your good idea of helping people, that it's actually God's heart and his plan for your life (Participant 2)

The Tension between Duty and Privilege

Another sub theme emerged, that of a tension between participants feeling privileged at having been called to the work of counselling along with a responsibility and duty to represent God. Participants suggested an ambivalence and uncertainty as to whether they were free to say no to particular types of work they felt God was asking them move into.

The majority of counsellors suggested that the type of counselling or client group they were engaged with was by divine appointment rather than personal choice suggesting a duty to work with clients where directed.

Some participants suggested they would not have chosen the area of work they were in initially had they not felt this was what God was calling them to do, with some suggesting they would otherwise have actively chosen against this area:

There is no way that I ever wanted to work in sexual abuse, ever. My first client had experienced sexual abuse and all my clients since have been sexually abused. So it's almost like I didn't have a choice. I think God's got a weird sense of humour to be honest. Seriously, I thought are really, really, really? Is this really what you want me to do? It's right. It's the right thing. Yeah. It's the right thing. Yeah (Participant 5)

Although there was a sense of privilege that God had personally invited the counsellor to this work there was an accompanying sense of not really having had a choice. A tension was suggested between the duty and responsibility of a call to work in a particular area and the personal desire to decline a particular area of work.

An additional issue was whether the counsellors were able to say 'no', once working and engaged with clients, to maintain their own personal wellbeing. At times participants reported that their own needs could be overlooked or minimised in order to ensure clients were supported. The notion of not using one's skills or pulling back from service created concerns that they could be disappointing God:

I feel that God has given me skills as a counsellor. If I don't use those skills I'm not going to get zapped by God but... I always feel God would be disappointed in me, and I know that's not right but that's just where I think I would come from
(Participant 1)

Christian discourses of service and self-sacrifice were evident in the interviews when participants spoke about the ability to say no or set limits. The interviews suggested several participants experienced expectations of continual service stemming from Christian Church teachings:

I just thought in my calling I had to keep giving, I thought if you had something from God, you should never pull back from it. You should be giving it all the time
(Participant 4)

The data also reveal faith discourses about participants' capacity when God has enabled them for the call. Participants reported that they recognised and even taught self-care strategies to their clients but acknowledged they often struggled with engaging in these strategies themselves. They reported a sense that God would enable them to keep on keeping on because it is His work they were doing.

Some participants reported experiencing a feeling of failure if they declined clients or took time out for themselves. Participants who felt that they had been enabled by God could feel that to require time out for self-care was failing in some way:

Oh, what is the matter with me? Why can't I sustain this, what's going on? But you feel like a bit of a failure. Failing yourself a little bit or failing, you're failing your clients (Participant 5)

Theme 2: Calling as Identity

The second main theme was Identity. Participants reported that their calling and service to God were key parts of their personal as well as their professional identities. Within this main theme three sub-themes emerged: participants expressed a sense of 'Partnering with God' in the work they were doing in that this work enabled a connection to God and an expression of Christian service; and they described feeling as though they had been 'Relationally Made' with relational strengths being considered gifts for the role. A desire to reveal God to clients as an expression of their faith was also identified.

Partnering with God

Participants revealed a sense that they were partnering with God in the work they were undertaking. The perception of having been called to the role of counselling provided a way to connect to God and offered personal meaning and purpose to the work the participants were taking part in. There was a sense of being created for this purpose:

When I'm in the counselling scenario, when I'm sitting with another person, it feels like sacred space. And it's that depth that I love, that depth that I can go to with another person. And I've just a sense it's such a sacred place to be. And that is how I want to live my life with depth and meaning and that sense of God's presence, which I always feel when I'm sitting with someone. When I'm sitting with broken people, I just think this is what I'm created to do. This is just it's so I just feel so right' (Participant 6)

The notion of partnering with God was also apparent when God was experienced as being present in the counselling room. Although the term partnership is used, one participant suggested that God is the leader in the partnership with a sense of the counsellor being there as junior partner:

So it's almost as if I'm partnering with God. I was gonna say he's co-partner. No, no, it's the other way around. You know? I'm partnering with God (Participant 7)

A range of descriptions was used in the interviews to describe this sense of when God's presence was experienced in the room. Participant 6 used the term 'Sacred Space', this was reported to be a place in she felt enabled to offer a non-judgemental acceptance to others and in which she could call on God for guidance as required. For Participant 3, a 'Potpourri of Goodness' was the metaphor for a session which had been especially enjoyable, with a warm connection with the client and a sense of satisfaction within the work. The experience of partnering with God was reported to offer access to supernatural wisdom and a sense that something bigger than themselves was taking place within the room. Participants reported having a greater sense of their own adequacy within the therapeutic space and feeling less challenged in their role during these moments. They described a greater sense of connection between themselves and their clients, with all participants in various ways suggesting that competence, relationship, and God's presence came together in the room. Participants spoke of therapeutic work feeling particularly effective, enjoying the sessions more and the process itself feeling more satisfying:

Sometimes counselling seems effortless, like there's this kind of cosmic force at work or something, and it just flows. The client knows I'm with them, the client feels I'm with them, I know what they need. I know what tone of voice to go to. I'm right there, if that makes sense (Participant 2)

Participants suggested that the sense of additional presence could mean an increased sense of confidence and pleasure when they left these sessions:

I smile as I drive home. I sometimes have no idea how that happened, what's happening, but, I'm confident in the presence of myself, and I'm not clambering to find answers for people. So, at the end of the day I drive home I smile, I think, yeah, I can do this tomorrow (Participant 3)

Participants suggested gifts enabling effective counselling were given by God for the purpose of the calling which validated their identities as 'called', adding strength to both the personal sense of calling and the relationship with God as the caller. Some participants suggested being called was understood as a way of God using past painful experiences and reframing them as gifts to be used in service of others. This enabled a way of reshaping pain and provided meaning and esteem as the following participant describes:

I remember standing in the doorway which was now my workplace and... and saying wow this little nobody of a girl you know, has really come a long way. And just, to see God's hand and all that, you know (Participant 7)

Being Relationally Made

Participants spoke of being curious about others, empathic, compassionate, being sought out for support and having been given specific gifts and talents for their roles as counsellors. These gifts were seen as relational capacities that enabled participants to meet with others on behalf of God and model His qualities of care for the client. This formed a key aspect of participants' identities. The ability to connect with others, enable others to feel safe, to comfort others who were in pain and the natural interest in others' stories were all considered gifts given to carry out the calling. These skills were understood to be God given and provided a sense of validation of the identity as a counsellor:

So... I do feel I've been gifted, like talents and gifts from Him, like He talks about in the Scriptures (participant 4)

The relational gifts that accompany the call to counselling were useful in creating strong therapeutic connections with clients. However, at times these strong connections meant participants were impacted by the stories they were hearing. The empathic stance allowed counsellors to engage with clients, to care deeply about their individual stories and to be available when their clients needed them however the level of connection led participants to remain emotionally or cognitively connected to clients in non-work time in such ways as

thinking about clients, praying for clients and at times maintaining contact with clients. The following participant described how this was for them:

When you're working with people so deeply, to a certain extent you do carry them in your heart like... you know, a client's face will come to my mind or think about them or something like that, and I wonder how they doing? I sometimes pray for them. So, in that way, it's integrated into my, my personal life. I think it gives me quite a bit of identity as to who I am, you know that I am a compassionate caring person integrates well with my personality' (Participant 2)

Participants' relational empathy was consistent across work and non-work life. At times participants were sought out by friends and family for their counselling skills and support.

I think part of the identity thing has to do with because I am quite an empathic person and I'm gentle and I think I'm quite kind and I'm a natural. I like to listen and curious about people's story. So I have all of that naturally. But what I find as soon as someone from church comes up to me and I get a hint that they wanting me to listen to them I'm just like that's just something inside of me goes on to nip that in the bud because... I don't want that to be used' (Participant 2)

Participants' relational ways of being in the world had clear implications for how they engaged in well-being and how they maintained balance. This will be discussed in the balance section.

Unspoken Evangelism

The participants' personal faith formed the basis of understanding that God is the ultimate source of healing to their clients. They therefore reported a desire to reveal God as part of the counselling process, creating an ethical dilemma as the Counselling Code of Ethics cautions counsellors to respect religious diversity and refrain from sharing personal beliefs.

This presented a challenge, as the following participants describe:

For someone who hadn't known God in their lives, to this day, I'm still trying to find a language that doesn't use Christianese when talking about spirituality"
(Participant 3)

Can I, you know, never talk about God? You know, you wouldn't catch me talking about like, have you thought about turning to God? You know, do you think he will come to you answer because you know, your life's pretty sucky right there. You can just turn to God, you know, and then he'll answer he'll save you, you know all of those questions. And so it was a real kind of responsibility to you know, get them to the line. Get you know, someone who hadn't known God in their lives and you know, to this day, I'm still trying to find a language that doesn't sound Christianese about talking about spirituality' (Participant 3)

Participants tried to find ways to reveal God to clients through the relationship and conditions of therapy as an environment in which God could be experienced rather than spoken about.

I guess the responsibility that I feel today is to be able to create an environment where, you know, they can experience a sense of love if I can say love. Yeah, that isn't necessarily saying I love you, but it's kind of like well you know, God is present. We don't have to talk about God or use God. I guess some of the learning has been when someone has had a loved experience and they can connect with that love the experience. I believe it's just a representation of God's love (Participant 3)

The participants' reported they hoped to model God's qualities to clients rather than speak about them in order to remain ethical suggested challenges for maintaining work non-work life balance. This will be discussed in the next section.

Theme 3: Maintaining Balance

Having a calling could create challenges for participants' ability to maintain balance between work and non-work. All participants reported engaging in work activities such as researching interventions, upskilling or having client contact in non-work time. They also identified that although the challenges exist they have discovered useful strategies across time to assist with maintaining balance.

Challenges of Representing God and Identity for Balance

Having a calling, representing God and modelling His relational qualities to clients meant some participants remained available to clients after hours, especially when the client was in distress. A tension was apparent between the desire and duty to model relational qualities with clients while maintaining boundaries between work and non-work time when a client was in pain:

I've had clients who've been suicidal and have called me at night and that's never bothered me, it's always been about the clients, so that's, never bothered me. I guess it's all part of this calling, larger calling, bigger picture, maybe I've just got a bigger picture of what Gods calling is for me (Participant 1)

The experience of representing God brought a perceived pressure to achieve outcomes with clients. Following sessions where they felt clients had not made change or where they felt appropriate therapeutic interventions had not been offered, participants were likely to research interventions or answers in non-work time:

I just feel incompetent and I'm not getting through and... I think when I feel like I'm not getting through that I'm not making the change... I start getting busy looking at different ways I can, what can I do? What intervention can I start to do? You know, what am I doing wrong and start reading and fossicking around for professional development stuff that that you know (Participant 2)

Some participants revealed they also received pleasure from researching interventions in non-work time however this could interfere with hobbies and other activities. A need to be deliberate was suggested about balance with regards to this, even though it was positive and offered a sense of satisfaction and achievement. While it was potentially adding to the Participant's energy levels and sense of personal satisfaction in one area it had the potential to interfere with family or social time or to limit other hobbies and thus have a negative impact in these areas. Where they themselves may have been happy doing more work in

non-work time, the following Participant describes how when she spent time searching for interventions online, this at times impacted family:

Well, my husband ... he's a very tolerant man. But there's also times that he says, okay, we need to go for a weekend away or we need to go on a holiday or in the beginning, he was a bit frustrated with me being on the computer so much
(Participant 7)

Participants' relational identities meant they formed connections with clients that impacted them in their non-work time with some revealing they 'carry clients in their hearts' (*Participant 2*) or clients 'stay with them' (*Participant 3*) cognitively and emotionally. This was particularly so when therapy had felt ineffective or when client stories were especially painful. This empathic stance was not something that could be taken on and off at the end of the work day but was an integral part of the identity of the counsellor:

There are times that I am sad. Other times curious about what's happened. And the times I have lots of work with children and violence. I had a client who had to go back to a father when she didn't want to. And so I think of her, there wasn't just a cut off. There is not a cut off between this work (Participant 4)

The sense of being called had participants connect deeply with their clients in the belief that each client had been brought by divine appointment. As such their clients' stories had an impact on them which continued into non-work time:

I see everyone that I work with as the imago dei, as the image of God. So, I wonder about people's stories, they stay with me about how they got to where they got to, how they arrived in our sessions, how they arrived at this point in time in thinking about my part, you know, and then this part of their lives...
(Participant 3)

The Participants reported that being as relational as they were they were likely to engage easily in supportive conversations in non-work time with people outside of their work context making maintaining balance a challenge. They were recognised as good listeners and caring people and were often being sought out for support by others in their non-work time:

Often friends will call up and say 'oh, look, I've got a friend who's got this, what do you think' and, you know, it's part of helping people, it's part of who I am anyway, but sometimes it's tiring. Yeah, it's tiring. It's tiring helping people all the time
(Participant 5)

Strategies for Maintaining Balance

Participants described that a challenge with maintaining balance was not always knowing what wellbeing practices or self-care strategies to engage in. The notion of balance was understood, however the interviews suggest that implementing strategies in practice was an obstacle to engaging in self-care. They reported a tension between believing self-care was important and struggling to enact it usefully themselves:

I think I'm still working, particularly on balance, of focusing on myself. You know, I preach to my clients all the time, about self-care, the PLEASE skills and all of that. And I'm now saying to myself, am I doing that myself? Yeah, I think I'm still getting that balance. I think that'll be there for a long time' (Participant 1)

PLEASE skills are a Dialectical Behaviour Therapy set of skills in which the emphasis is place on caring for any **P**hysical **i**llnesses, **E**ating, **A**voiding Mood Altering Substances, **S**leep and **E**xercise as a way of attending to self-care, (Linehan, 2014).

Prayer and Seeking God's Support

Participants identified several strategies they had discovered were useful for maintaining balance, recognising that without balance, their own wellbeing and ability to perform in accordance with the calling would be at risk.

Participants reported that their relationship with God formed the basis of their calling and was a source of support and replenishment which underpinned their understandings of all their other relationships.

The relationship with God provided a focus in which participants could direct energies to assist with maintaining balance. Church attendance, reading scripture and personal prayer were highlighted in the interviews as useful for maintaining the personal faith relationship that sustained the calling. As described by the following participant, the relationship with God was viewed as a source of refuelling, energy, and resourcing such that what they were offering to clients could be sourced directly from God:

I'm able to give it (acceptance) only because I haven't got that on my own. Only because I get that from Him. I live this from Him all the time, every minute of my life, every second. I don't wake up every new day and I have it - I have it and because I have it I can then share that with someone (Participant 4)

Participants reported their relationship with God offered support to their work, and praying about their work was useful in maintaining balance. Being able to hand the client over, to leave a client in God's hands enabled a letting go in non-work time. These prayers were suggested to be a way of engaging in self-care or self-soothing when sessions had been impacting on them and offered a way of processing the session:

I learned to put my hand on my heart and pray, this is too heavy for me God, can you carry it? And I don't know if it's for me because it's a tangible action. But actually, that works for me. And then for some reason, I can let it go, not let it go but I've made peace with it. I'm not going around and around in my head about it (Participant 4)

Family, Friends and Supervision

Participants reported their social relationships were resources for balance, providing support, accountability, an ability to be nurtured and cared for and mutuality. Participants suggested that due to their empathic and caring natures they tended to give a lot in relationships and therefore they especially valued spending time in relationships where they were not required to care for the other. The opportunity to be in relationship without having to give care or support was seen as a form of self-care:

One of the ways I'm caring for myself now I think is spending more time with friends. Yesterday we went out to Devonport we had a lovely time. So it's actually part of care for myself, is separating myself from reaching out to others (Participant 1)

Family and friendship relationships were reported to be important for providing support, social connections, fun and opportunities for non-work activities. Friendship was said to also offer an opportunity for emotional support when it was the counsellor's turn to need someone to talk to:

I maintain balance by protecting 'me' time, family times, I have a dear friend in Holland, we have been friends for over 50 years, and we have become a sort of confessors to each other. Not having to hold back and say how it really is. She is God's gift to me (Participant 7)

Relationships that provided space for fun and laughter were valued for offering positive emotions and balance. They provided a place to laugh and play whereas client relationships were seldom light and playful. As the following Participant describes, the calling to counselling is accompanied by hearing challenging stories and experiencing painful emotions for both client and counsellor so at times, fun experiences enabled a balance to this:

Because it's quite serious and tense work... I've discovered what I really need is I need a lot of fun, and you said you can't necessarily organise that. Yeah, it's often quite spontaneous (Participant 2)

Participants reported utilising supervision, spiritual direction, and collegial peer relationships as relationships in which they were able to receive accountability for maintaining balance in their lives and for exploring their personal wellbeing. As described by the following participant, conversations with supervisors and colleagues performed a type of balancing by offering normalising and shame reduction to the challenges experienced in attempts to find balance when living a calling:

I know I talked with colleagues about how long can someone sustain being a counsellor and how do they keep restoring themselves... there's just a thought

comes in, so that self-care, I think is a wonderful notion. It's a wonderful, goal, I don't know that I've met too many that are doing exceedingly well (Participant 3)

Participants reported that relationships with supervisors and colleagues allowed a place to talk through and challenge their ideas about the need for self-care, the practicalities of the role and the faith beliefs and Christian discourses that underpinned the work they felt they called to:

I find it very helpful for me to process things with somebody else who's in the profession... I kind of like the processing, the kind of the questioning ... I really appreciate these times because I'm not having to explain what counselling is (Participant 3)

Participants suggested peer and colleague, supervisors, friend, and family conversations were very helpful in offering feedback and accountability when work when balance was needed. All were useful for offering strategies for how to organise and create balance, with friends and family particularly able to provide challenge and feedback on the impact when balance was not being maintained well.

Gaining Self-Care Skills

Participants revealed that the need for balance and how to create that balance in a way that worked personally was something that they discovered over time. Balance looked different for each participant. Personal balance needed to be learned on the job and for some came through a near burnout experience. Several participants had experienced burnout or near burnout and described this as a catalyst for changing how they functioned, e.g., by seeing fewer clients in a week, reducing client contact outside work, or doing fewer work related tasks outside work time. This experience was described as an eye-opener of sorts to the vulnerability of the counsellor and their own need for self-care. Although the need for self-care was discussed in training for many of the participants, it was through on the job learning that participants experienced the reality of the need to be intentional about how they maintained balance for themselves:

When I first started counselling, I felt that I had to say yes to everybody. And actually, we were laughing about it the other day, you know, we'd turn ourselves inside out to try and fit our clients in and would work at all different hours and, and I just realised that that actually wasn't working for me. I just wasn't I couldn't sustain it anymore (Participant 5)

Balance was not something that was learnt quickly but took time to discover. There were differing messages that needed to be sifted through – Christian messages, training institution messages, messages from supervisors and the organisation, and personal preferences. It was suggested balance would be personal and would take some working out:

And so it's been taking time to really learn, what do I want and what matters to me and what do I really need at this point in time and not to listen to the voices that would say, you know, oh, you should do it this way or that or you know (Participant 2)

Participants suggested the balance they had come to was something that had developed over time with constant adjustment and was still an ongoing everyday work in progress. Participants describe a process of continuing to explore what balance looked like for them and considered this an ongoing process of their development.

Boundaries

Participants reported that having balance required giving themselves intentional permission to take time to engage in self-care. For some it meant exploring Christian discourses of service and their own capability and capacity. They reported that an intentional awareness was required to maintain balance within the counsellor-client relationships. Whether it was passion and enjoyment or care and concern, being deliberately mindful of personal limits was needed to ensure a break from work. This permission to take a break and focus on their own needs was learnt over time with boundaries being an outworking of the learning:

I need some time for me. So, I've kind of learned that over time and to give myself permission. Whereas once I would not have, once, I would have thought that it was, keep giving - all the time (Participant 4)

Participants reported using boundaries to assist with maintaining balance in both client and personal relationships. For some, boundaries restricting work in non-work time were firm with defined limits, although clients experiencing a crisis presented an exception for all counsellors with ethical guidelines offering ways to manage these client contacts:

I won't answer any queries after six o'clock at night. So, if they text me after six and before, say 8.30 in the morning, I'm a no-go zone. And weekends, I won't reply to anything either. And this lets, you know, unless it's a crisis situation, but I'm a no-go zone. I've set very strong boundaries about that (Participant 5)

Counsellors with more flexible integration styles were more likely to engage with clients in non-work time:

If I'm not careful, I can just spend my whole life trying to reach out to people and not thinking - caring about myself (Participant 1)

For the following participant boundaries were more flexible and included email contact:

And I tell them that you know, if you have any questions or if anything turns up before the next session, I'm quite happy for them to, to email me and I tell them and I will reply (Participant 7)

Depending on personal energy levels and how much capacity they felt they had at any given time, counsellors' spoke of placing limits on how much of themselves they gave to others in social settings or in conversations. When they felt energised and able, they chose to initiate and engage more deeply in non-work conversations, but when they felt depleted, they chose to be more withdrawn and not engage beyond simple courtesy:

I'm talking to a lady at the picture theatre the other night. And we went into a conversation. There could be a time if I had gone in and I had been tired- I might not have carried on in the conversation. I may have turned back around whereas that day I wasn't, I was excited about going to the movies. I loved her story, I loved it! But if I was feeling the need for a little self-care I may have, depending

on the story, if it felt a little like, fractious or a little heavy, or it could have gotten a little sad. I give myself permission to tag out (Participant 4)

Participants reported using boundaries to limit client contact either by reducing client numbers or, for those in private practice, by having boundaries around how many weeks a year they were available to their clients. Several counsellors described taking time off every eight to twelve weeks for a personal break.

Physical Practices

Participants identified that caring for their physical selves was an important focus. Due to the emotional nature of the counselling role a physical outlet was useful. The counsellors described the personal benefits of walking, attending gym classes, doing yoga or engaging in trauma release exercises as a way of experiencing their bodies, offering a change of focus, and a way to release the emotions held from sessions:

I'm using my emotions and my intuition and my thinking a lot. So actually, I need to then get into different parts of my being, so my body, exercising and walking and trauma release exercises. I found all body components very good and that was all very new for me because I've not been a sporty person in the past so it was new for me to access the body as a way of refreshing myself (Participant 2)

Participants spoke of the emotional impact the stories they heard from clients had on them and the need to care for themselves as a result. At times this entailed allowing themselves to express their feelings either in supervision or in prayer. At other times the need to release their own emotional responses was discussed:

I drove to the beach where I always go. And I walked and walked and talked to God and lamented to God. And by the time I came back an hour later, had lifted somewhat (Participant 6)

I find that on the day I have a good cry, I counsel my clients better the next day, it releases something in me and recalibrates my ability to have compassion, again, and I think probably part of it has to do with having compassion for myself in it.

Being aware, this is how I feel, acknowledging it and allowing it to be there is part of that process, and that has been that's been closure. That's only been a journey I've done in the last year. It takes a while to really learn this stuff (Participant 2)

Participants noted that the nature of the counselling role with its need for concentration and cognitive engagement along with the emotional impact meant that physical relaxation was important. Interviews suggested this was achieved in a variety of ways, for instance socialising with friends or reading for pleasure.

And so I remember someone saying, when you're tired out emotionally, then you need to use another part of your body. So when you're exhausted physically, then you need to go and read a book or something. So you use your mind or your imagination. So you use another component of yourself and I remember thinking, its real wisdom (Participant 2)

All participants reported enjoying engaging in the arts as a way of finding balance from their work. Descriptions of time spent listening to music, painting or reading literature were offered as ways to focus on something other than work activities and to find pleasure in solitary activities at times when relational output was exhausted and time alone was necessary for recharging.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The goal of the present study was to build on previous qualitative research examining the effects of maintaining work life balance when work is perceived as a calling and to extend this by looking specifically at a sample of Christian counsellors. While the interviews are representative of seven unique lived experiences of participants who especially feel a call from the Christian God and as such are individual to the speaker, it is hoped that readers with callings in other areas where relationship is important may identify with the experiences that are shared and the meaning making that is offered.

The Job Demands-Resources Model

With regard to the Job Demand-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) the research showed that for Christian counsellors, having a calling is both a demand and a resource at times. It was both a challenge and a joy to live out in daily life. For the participants, being called to represent God and work on His behalf with clients was experienced as a responsibility. The God they are representing and working on behalf of is powerful and to represent Him was both a job and a part of their Christian Service supported by their faith. Underpinned by Christian discourse, participants reported the understanding that God is working in them and through them, enabling them to undertake the role to which they have been called.

Christian discourses of continual giving and self-sacrifice when one is partnering with God can be challenging, especially when God is enabling the participants for the task at hand. The overwhelming demand on Mental Health Services in New Zealand currently means long waiting lists and increasingly distressed clients by the time they get to be seen. Additionally, with Covid-19, friends, family, and congregation members have challenges that have needed support. The counsellors' desire to be present and offer comfort to others made it difficult as the waitlists grew and the community became increasingly impacted by the disruptions of Covid. Participants identified underlying concerns of knowing whether it was acceptable to refuse work and where personal limits could be set. This made maintaining balance and taking care of their own wellbeing a challenge at times. Knowing they had been given gifts by God that enabled them for the work and yet feeling the limits of their capacity raised questions of whether they could stop or whether they were to keep going. They identified that using supervision, peer supervision and social relationships to explore Christian discourse, what the calling means, and issues of responsibility were very helpful. Additionally, exploring their own capability and capacity regularly as a way of monitoring and maintaining well-being and work life balance was important.

Another demand identified was the desire to reveal God to clients as the ultimate source of healing while being constrained by Codes of Ethics and best practice in doing this. The call to counselling was intrinsically tied to the faith beliefs of the counsellors, with the notion that this is what God wants them to do - to assist in the healing of the client's pain by being His representative to them. They noted that this tension arose especially in the early stages of their training, as they wrestled with what being a Christian Counsellor meant in practice and how they would reveal God to the clients without words. At times this remained a tension as ethical frameworks required refraining from revealing personal religious beliefs to clients, however they reported that there were times when this would have been helpful or something they would have liked to do. Participants reported they became comfortable with

the idea of modelling the qualities of God rather than speaking about God. By modelling acceptance, genuine relationship, and a form of love in the therapeutic relationship the counsellors were able to model qualities of the faith relationship they experienced and which they believed could be transformative. This aligned well with both their counselling training and their faith beliefs.

Representing God to clients through modelling His relational qualities within the therapeutic relationship was both a demand and a resource. Participants identified that they had been gifted with the ability to help others feel emotionally safe, to easily connect with others and to feel a natural empathy for others' pain. They felt enabled to help those experiencing mental and emotional distress and so experienced satisfaction, meaning and purpose. Further, for these counsellors, being able to connect with others reinforced their sense of identity and connected them to their faith and to their sense of doing what they are made to do, making maintaining balance a challenge.

Their ability to support others was not only recognised by themselves but was also recognised by others around them. They were seen as people with the skill and ability to offer emotional safety and support when others were in need and were often called on to do so. This could be experienced as validating but also as difficult to refuse. Participants knew themselves to be able to offer support, which provided a sense of belonging in the community and meant people recognised them as someone to seek support from. This was deeply satisfying and rewarding yet could have participants overlooking their own need for self-care.

These relational skills could also be experienced as a demand in that participants reported feeling the need to use these gifts effectively and in service to others. Participants reported that their roles and gifts could not be left at the office: as core identity features, they remained active, drawing the counsellor towards relationships at all times. With regard to clients, relationships were modelled on behalf of a God who does not become unavailable out of hours. Participants viewed their roles as more than 'jobs' or 'careers' (Bellah, 1985), but as an avenue through which they could represent God with clients and live out their Christian service. Maintaining balance became a challenge when clients made contact in non-work time, and a tension arose in how to represent God as loving and accepting but not available at all hours. For counsellors who were empathic and caring at their core, figuring out how to support a distressed client after hours created a tension between wanting to maintain a boundary while feeling at times like this violated a personal value of maintaining genuine relationships. As counsellors called by God there could be a sense of somehow failing or falling short, by saying no to a person in need. However, if the demand for their skills became overwhelming, either from clients or from other social relationships, they risked

exhaustion and feelings of guilt and inadequacy at not being able to meet all needs. These were key risk factors for burnout.

Self-care

Although counsellor self-care and well-being are discussed during training and counsellors often aim to educate their clients about the need for balance (Dattilio, 2015), participants seemed to struggle with using these approaches themselves. Underpinned by notions of Christian service and possible personal invincibility, participants spoke about how they had begun their practice by taking as many clients as they could and only realising later, at the point of burnout or near burnout, which would not lead to professional longevity. This is in line with the finding by Lin (2019), that counsellors' self-care practices often develop over time as they learn from their mistakes and make conscious decisions about what they need based on developing understandings of their personal needs.

Participants identified a need to recognise their own needs and, importantly, to take action to meet those needs. Those actions might include stricter boundary management. Participants reported a range of boundary management approaches from permeable boundaries to stricter boundary management; both approaches however brought some level of dissatisfaction. Permeable boundaries could mean overload and exhaustion; strict boundaries could bring a feeling of not meeting God's standards. In discussing boundaries regarding client contact, participants ranged from those who allowed client contact outside of sessions by phone or email through to others who permitted no contact. Some counsellors set specific times in which they could be contacted while others were completely unavailable after hours except in circumstances of risk.

Although counsellors differed in their boundaries a clear theme of discussing boundaries with clients and detailing expectations was clear. Counsellors could also be flexible in their boundaries at times, perhaps due to being unsure as to whether these boundaries were acceptable within their Christian service. Participants could manage boundaries by limiting the number of clients they saw if possible and taking regular breaks to allow time for themselves away from work. A further boundary management strategy was noted in how participants reported interacting with others during their non-work time. When participants were feeling energised, they reported fully engaging in conversations with others in social settings, but when they were feeling depleted or unwilling to engage in a 'work' style conversation in a social setting they were prepared to engage less deeply.

All participants reported that the interpersonal behaviours they exhibited in the work role matched closely to the behaviours they exhibited in non-work roles. Ashforth (2000) noted

that people who have a strong sense of role identification may seek opportunities to express their roles outside of work time. Counsellors with a calling may be enacting this when they engage in client contact outside of work time, engage in researching therapeutic interventions outside of work or when they talk about their work outside of work time. This is something to be mindful of. Participants noted the need to be very mindful and aware about boundaries and to give very clear limits to clients about what is and what is not acceptable and to allow themselves to withdraw from a social interaction if they felt it was becoming a 'work' type conversation. Ashforth (2000) also notes the importance of using 'micro role transitions' between work and home as a way of psychologically moving from one role to another, especially when work and non-work roles match closely, and this may be important for counsellors to consider. Micro transitions such as turning off the work phone or stopping notifications, writing to do lists for the next day or journaling thoughts might assist with transitioning from work to the home and create a psychological boundary.

Participants reported that they needed to give themselves permission to take time away from the role for self-care activities. It is important to note that while the counsellor themselves may not be experiencing concern about working in non-work time, it may be impacting family members and friends and reducing opportunities for growth in other areas such as hobbies. In a study with clergy, the need for intentionality was identified as important, to enable a deliberate separateness from the work role to protect family time and enable the development of support relationships with others (Meek et al., 2003). The participants found being in relationships where they were able to be equal, nurtured and cared for very valuable. Counsellors spent a lot of time caring for and privileging space for others. To be in a relationship where they were asked how they are, and had others care for and about them was a way to maintain wellbeing and balance. Participants identified these relationships with supervisors, peers and family and friends. Participants especially valued having someone they could confide in or having a turn 'in the chair' where it was their turn to be the sharer. Participants also identified that inviting supervisors, peers and family/friends to offer feedback and accountability was very helpful in keeping them aware and deliberate about their self-care practices and helped with maintaining well-being.

When things got difficult, participants reported a sense that God was able to support them. Spiritual resources were described as prayer, use of scripture, calling on God for wisdom during sessions, and lamenting to God after difficult sessions. The calling offered a sense of satisfaction, a knowing that this was where God had ordained them to be and doing what He wanted them to be doing connected them to the sacred through daily work. It was also useful to consider what their role was, what being called actually meant to them in terms of what they were responsible for. The ability to rely on God to help, to leave at least some of a client's care in God's hands was also a valued self-care strategy.

Participants noted that the need to play and have fun was vital for balance. This was achieved in social relationships, with pets and through hobbies such as painting, music, and exercise. Exercise also had key role in providing balance by caring for the physical wellbeing of the body when the role was emotionally heavy and cognitively demanding. Different forms of exercise, mindfulness and healthy eating were all identified as allowing a focus away from counselling and a focus on the self where one's own needs were cared for.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This was a small-scale qualitative study with seven self-selected participants. Although the findings are suggestive about ways in which counsellors with a calling maintain balance, they cannot be broadly generalised. They do, however, provide the basis for further qualitative and quantitative research with larger sample sizes. In addition, all participants were from European origins including New Zealand, Dutch and English, but no Māori, Pasifika or Asian voices were represented. The majority of participants had trained at Laidlaw College which may have influenced ideas of how counselling was to be conducted. A wider sample would be useful to better understand work/non-work balance among counsellors with a calling, and this better understanding could support expanded training and support provision.

Conclusion

The Job Demand-Resources Model and boundary management theory have been useful ways of understanding how Christian counsellors with a calling manage work-non-work balance. Counsellors' work meets similar demands to other roles in mental health care, along with providing unique demands and resources that arise from the calling itself. Counsellors reported a range of effective strategies for managing work-non work balance, including self-care, boundary management and managing their social worlds for increased support and fewer demands outside working hours. Further research would be useful for understanding how having a calling impacts mental health workers' ability to maintain balance and how it relates to views of their capacity and capability.

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Appendix 1 Ethics approval

From: humanethics@massey.ac.nz <humanethics@massey.ac.nz>
Sent: Monday, 6 July 2020 4:17 pm
To: Leanne.Frost.1@uni.massey.ac.nz; Gardner, Dianne <D.H.Gardner@massey.ac.nz>
Cc: Human Ethics <gmhumeth@massey.ac.nz>
Subject: Human Ethics Notification - 4000022942

HoU Review Group

Ethics Notification Number: 4000022942
Title: Understanding how Christian Counsellors maintain work non-work life balance when they perceive their work as a calling

Thank you for your notification which you have assessed as Low Risk.

Your project has been recorded in our system which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz. "

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish require evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to complete the application form again answering yes to the publication question to provide more information to go before one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

You are reminded that staff researchers and supervisors are fully responsible for ensuring that the information in the low risk notification has met the requirements and guidelines for submission of a low risk notification.

If you wish to print an official copy of this letter, please login to the RIMS system, and under the Reporting section, View Reports you will find a link to run the LR Report.

Yours sincerely
Professor Craig Johnson
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Appendix 2 Information sheet



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Understanding how Christian Counsellors maintain work non-work life balance when they perceive their work as a Calling

INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Leanne Frost and I'm currently completing my Master of Arts in Psychology at Massey University. For my research thesis I'm interested in how Christian Counsellors who feel called to the role of counselling manage the balance between their work and non-work lives. Research suggests that when we view our work as a calling we find it deeply meaningful and satisfying however we can also over-commit ourselves to the work. As a Christian Counsellor myself (or a counsellor is a Christian), I am interested in how, as a profession, we understand and maintain a work/non-work balance.

What is a Calling?

'Calling can be defined as a career that arises from an external source (e.g., God, societal need, family legacy) that contributes to a sense of meaning/purpose and that is used to serve others in some capacity. Importantly, research has found that regardless of how one identifies the source of their calling (external summons, sense of destiny, or perfect fit), the link between calling and life satisfaction is almost identical' (Duffy, Allan, Bott, & Dik, 2012).

My interest specifically is in counsellors who feel that God has, in some way, called them to this work.

I currently work in a counselling role at VisionWest Community Trust.

If you would like to participate in my study, it will involve an interview (face to face or online) of about 40-60 minutes. The interview questions will cover your experiences of managing the balance between work and non-work while working as a counsellor.

The interviews will be recorded and then transcribed. I'll send you a transcript to read to confirm that it accurately reflects the interview.

All information about participants will be kept confidential and only summary data will be released. Recordings will be erased once they've been transcribed, and transcripts won't be identified only by codes not names. The research will be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. Participation is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to. You can withdraw from the study at any point until the transcript has been reviewed and agreed.

If you'd like more information, please contact me on Leannefrost1970@gmail.com.
My supervisor is Dianne Gardner: d.h.gardner@massey.ac.nz.

Best regards, Leanne.

Ethical Statement:

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Prof Craig Johnson, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 85271, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix 3 Interview schedule

- On a day to day basis what might your role entail?

Name.....

Work Setting.....

Years working.....

Gender.....

- What does it mean to you to be called to the role of counselling?
- Some people like to separate their home and work lives and some like to integrate them – how would you describe yourself in this?
- How would you describe the balance in your work non-work life
- How did you work out that balance for yourself
- Do you ever find work creeping into your non-work life? What's that like?
- Are there certain things you do to help maintain the balance

