What If We Are Graduating Utilitarians?

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ABSTRACT: Senior undergraduate business students at a Christian university surprise the author during presentations of personally-held values by failing to describe their top value of truthfulness in terms of Christian virtue. This leads to a 30-month grounded theory study. Observations of students' top value of truthfulness may indicate utilitarian precognitive tacit knowledge, suggesting bias engaged without deliberate thought. Implications are discussed at the end of the paper. Informed by literature on the social psychology of moral decision-making, the author suggests a transformational integration approach may be required for preparing students for the problems associated with Utilitarianism in the marketplace.

INTRODUCTION

"What if we are graduating utilitarians?" Three years ago, that question did not even occur to me. If posed then, my response would have been prompt and something like: "But we're not." It was unimaginable to me that my Christian business school might graduate utilitarians because Utilitarianism is a way of thinking that leads to ethical failures and moral breakdowns in business (Premeaux, 2009). Today, after listening carefully to undergraduate business students for 30 months, my response is to recognize many of my students graduate as utilitarians. That recognition leads me to reflect on what this means for my teaching and for the teaching of Christian business educators broadly. This paper reports on what prompted the question, what changed my thinking, and what the implications might be for teaching undergraduate business students at the Christian university of the 21st century.

Utilitarianism is an all-pervasive worldview in the contemporary world of business (Niebuhr, 1946; Bellah, 1976; Smith, 2005; Wilkens & Sanford, 2009; Smith, 2009; Setran & Kiesling, 2013:144; Eggleston & Miller, 2014; McMahone et. al., 2015; Wong, et. al., 2015). This pervasiveness makes preparing students to be both utilitarians and Christians in the marketplace (Smith, 2009; Wong, et al., 2015) among the biggest challenges facing Christian business faculty because there is a lack of compatibility between Biblical Christian faith and Utilitarianism (Niebuhr, 1946; Bellah, 1976; Smith & Smith, 2011) that is difficult to recognize (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009). Utilitarianism is a worldview in which one does the right thing if something of instrumental value is a consequence (Mill, 1901; Burns, 2005). On the other hand, the Christian does the right thing not by first considering consequences but by first following the Bible's instructions because they are ultimately from God and the act of following them is therefore intrinsically good (Niebuhr, 1946; Bellah, 1976; Moreland & Craig, 2003:446).

The lack of compatibility between Utilitarianism and Biblical Christian faith can be difficult to recognize for two reasons. First, following the Bible may bring good consequences leading to the false expectation that God always brings good and quick instrumental consequences in response to following Him (Niebuhr, 1946; Blackaby, 2004; Smith, 2005; Smith, 2009). Second, Utilitarianism is part of knowledge that people use in business practice that is extremely difficult for people to recognize and communicate—practice is made possible much more by precognitive tacit knowledge than by deliberately rational thought (Polanyi, 1962; Smith, 2009: 68; Kahneman, 2011). This is also true in practicing the Biblical Christian life. (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009). To address these challenges, in a recent widely cited and discussed book (Wong et. al., 2015), James Smith proposes our job as Christian faculty is to start by recognizing what is operating as precognitive tacit knowledge in our students (2009:90-94).

Utilitarian precognitive tacit knowledge became apparent to me in senior undergraduate students with a new assignment in the fall 2013. During presentations on personal values, students surprised me with the reason for their most widely-held value, especially in the context of a college of business at a Christian university. My expectation was for some students' rationales to be

consistent with my own Christian worldview, but none were. This led to a 30-month study during subsequent semesters to understand what students were saying in this assignment.

Grounded Theory Methodology

The study uses grounded theory methodology because this approach is often the best suited for arriving at an explanation when a researcher's observations prompt the question, "what is going on here?" (Morse & Richards, 2002:55; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 2002). Using Glaser's (2002) approach, the research questions and explanatory theoretical concepts are developed in the data analysis and findings section of this paper, not in the literature review. However, as is conventional, in this paper the literature review precedes the methodology and findings sections so as not to disorient the reader. The purpose of the literature review, though, is to provide definition for the concepts used in explaining the findings. Accordingly, the author adopts the following research questions early in the project but the process of their development is not reported in the paper until the data analysis and findings section:

1. What is the most widely-held value among traditional undergraduate seniors at a Christian university?
2. For the most widely-held value among traditional undergraduate seniors in a school of business at a Christian university, what is the students' motivation for holding that value?

The findings indicate that young adults in this study prioritize truthfulness above all other values. Their motivation to act truthfully appears to be as a critical component of their social exchange dynamics. Even in a Christian context, truthfulness as a virtue is never mentioned as a motivation. Instead, students use the language and vocabulary of utilitarian social exchange and reciprocity to communicate their motivation for truthfulness. The rationale to follow the Bible as a standard for truthfulness comes up only once among the 173 observations in the thirty months of this study. This finding is consistent with an emerging, diverse literature indicating pervasiveness of utilitarian thinking among young adults (e.g., Smith, 2005; Smith, 2009; Arieli et. al., 2016). In addition, the author observes students' utilitarian reciprocity operating without apparent deliberate thought, as taken-for-granted tacit knowledge (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2001:813). All this suggests further research is needed at Christian university schools of business as to what the values of students are and why they hold them.

Implications

As the reader might infer, there are significant implications to the possibility that utilitarian thinking is pervasive and taken for granted among students studying business at Christian institutions of higher learning. Drawing on research findings about process disassociation in ethical decision making (Conway & Gawronski, 2013), the paper's concluding "IMPLICATIONS" section asks if Biblical and utilitarian thinking might be taught most effectively by engaging them as separate views. Process dissociation theory suggests the possibility these ways of thinking are neither compatible nor competing. The author offers three metaphors from various types of photography to illustrate process dissociation, followed by examples of what it might mean for students to learn process dissociation. The paper ends with the author's prayer that the findings, metaphors, and examples might help the reader prepare students to move beyond their possible utilitarian "learned but unconscious default position" (Crouch, 2008:90) for their future choices in the complexities of tomorrow's marketplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism as a distinct philosophy is commonly traced to the 1651 publication of *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes (Albee, 1901; Bellah, 1976). Hobbes proposed that humans are driven by the expected instrumental consequences of their individual decisions: to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. The term Utilitarianism was connected to these ideas two centuries later with the 1863 publication of *Utilitarianism* by John Stuart Mill (Capaldi, 2004). Mill credited Jeremy Bentham with introducing the term utility a century earlier in reference to the concept of pleasure maximization and pain minimization (Mill, 1901; Burns, 2005). Like Bentham, though, Mill recast as happiness the

combined ideas of pleasure maximization and pain minimization. Both Bentham and Mill were concerned that public policy should follow the political philosophy of making decisions to cause the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. Thus Utilitarianism is usually referenced as a political philosophy geared toward the greatest happiness for the greatest number. It all rests, however, on an often unstated assumption that humans are individually motivated to maximize their instrumental pleasure and minimize their instrumental pain (Crimmins, 2014).

Utilitarianism and Reciprocity

Reciprocity refers to a utilitarian tendency to respond to perceived kindness with kindness and perceived meanness with meanness, and to expect this behavior from others (Sobel, 2005; Moum et. al., 2007). Adam Smith famously noted in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) that humans differ from animals in their tendency to exchange: to reciprocate with something of instrumental value when given something of instrumental value. Reciprocity also has symbolic value in maintaining social relations (Moum, et. al., 2007). Social exchange theorists hold that an individual is likely to break off relationship if truthful information is provided but the recipient does not reciprocate with truthful information (Cropanzo & Mitchell, 2005). Behavioral economists have published a steady stream of research revealing a consistent tendency for people to reciprocate with others and punish those who violate the expectation of reciprocity regarding the exchange of information (Gintis et. al., 2003). Consistent with researchers in these diverse fields, McMahone, et. al. note that if one asserts something to be true for a Christian millennial and the millennial later discovers it is not, the relationship with that young adult is likely broken (2015:113).

Utilitarianism and Young Adults

As noted in this paper's introduction and above, Utilitarianism is a worldview philosophy in which an individual does the right thing if something of instrumental value is a consequence. In a landmark and highly cited study of American Christian teenagers, who now in 2017 are in their mid-20s, Christian Smith notes that the vast majority embrace this type of instrumental view of religion, in which religion is useful for helping the individual get what he or she wants; religion is not something that makes compelling claims on their lives, to change or grow in ways the individual may not immediately want (2005:148).

There are at least four major problems with this type of consequentialist view of religion; the first two noted here are summarized in this paper's introduction. First, God is not a consequentialist (Niebuhr, 1946; Chappell, 1993). Trust in Him can sometimes result in positive instrumental consequences, but He is more interested in relationship with us and our character development than in our immediate instrumental success (Blackaby, 2004). Second, it is extremely difficult to recognize one is using this view, because it becomes tacit knowledge used at a precognitive level (Wilkens & Sanford, 2009; Smith, 2009). Third, and related to the second, human thinking is biased. We tend to be overconfident in our own thinking and have limited ability to deliberately choose courses of action that do not fit our biases (Kahneman, 2011). Fourth, it is difficult to know the consequences of our actions in advance of those actions. Although much of the typical business school curriculum assumes the consequentialist thinking inherent in the use of forecasts for economies, markets, organizational revenues and costs, etc., these approaches are only reliable when stable conditions exist for a sustained period of time (Kahneman, 2011).

Precognitive Tacit Knowledge

Polanyi is widely credited with introducing the concept of precognitive tacit knowledge (Wagner & Sternberg, 1985; Smith, 2009). Polanyi notes that people possessing tacit knowledge cannot explain the rules informing whatever it is they are an expert at practicing (1962:49). Precognitive tacit knowledge is learned by experience. It is frequently called intuitive thinking and practitioners often describe it as operating automatically (Stanovich and West, 2000; Evans and Frankish, 2009; Kahneman, 2011). It is how we detect hostility in a voice or the relative distance between one object and another. It is how we recognize patterns in the world around us and almost instantaneously know what these patterns mean (Kahneman, 2011: 240). It is expertise that is learned from prolonged practice but it is only reliable in a stable environment (Kahneman, 2011:240). By the time a student graduates from a four-year bachelor's degree program in business, she likely has

substantial precognitive tacit knowledge in some basic areas of accounting, teamwork, rational arguments, and so on. Precognitive tacit knowledge is often contrasted with effortful rational thinking (2011:21).

Values

Values are a set of enduring principles that guide a person's actions without regard to the conditions or situation around him or her at any given time (Collins & Porras, 1994:75). Truthfulness is widely considered to be an important value (Malloch, 2008).

Truthfulness

Henry Cloud observes that truthfulness is a word often used interchangeably with the terms honesty and integrity (2006). Here, following Cloud, the concept of truthfulness is defined as giving a representation of reality to others as best the individual understands it (2006:104). Reality is defined here as that which can be experienced first-hand by the individual's senses, or can survive the individual's own introspective and logical examination of the mind, or emotions, or both (Moreland & Craig, 2003:140).

Challenges to the Concept of Truthfulness

The concept of truthfulness encounters challenges, though, due to human imperfections. Moreland and Craig note that postmodernists tend to reject the possibility of objective truthfulness because everyone is biased in one way or another (2003). These authors also assert that contemporary Christians tend to agree about the imperfection of bias, but propose that the Christian project is to become more Christ-like, including developing as a truthful person. Such personal and spiritual growth requires becoming aware of one's own biases and imperfections and, with God's help, making adjustments (Cloud, 2006:116-138). Accordingly, in the definition advanced above for truthfulness, the representation of one's best understanding requires introspection and one's best effort to adjust for bias.

Truthfulness and Millennials

Millennials are people born roughly between 1980 and 2005 (Alsop, 2008). Truthfulness among millennials has received very limited scholarly attention (Ito, 2011; Fischer & Friedman, 2014; Black, et. al., 2014). Research on trust among millennials is similarly limited, but a finding from analyzing data back to 1976 is that millennials' trust propensity is lower than for previous generations (Trzesmiewski & Donnelan, 2010).

Truthfulness and Intrinsic Value

As noted in this paper's introduction, the Bible's approach on how to live is that its instructions are ultimately from God and the act of following them is therefore intrinsically good (Niebuhr, 1946; Moreland & Craig, 2003: 446). Following its instructions may bring good consequences, but one's motivation is not to obtain immediate good consequences with obvious usefulness. In philosophy, this is called deontological or rule-based ethics (Moreland & Craig, 2003:44). For example, one is truthful because it is a good thing to act truthfully according to the Bible, whether or not truthfulness brings the individual immediate good instrumental consequences. These rules are helpful, in that they enable the individual to know how to act while developing as a person of character (Moreland & Craig, 2003:458). The usefulness of rules is limited, though, unless the individual can grow from a focus on rule-following to a focus on character development. This relationship between rules and becoming more Christ-like is captured well by the Apostle Paul:

> So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.
> Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.
> (Galatians 3: 24-25 NIV)

Truthfulness and Virtue

In virtue ethics, an individual does the right thing if it enables him or her to develop as a person of good character. Character is the sum total of an individual's habits, and a habit is a disposition to think, feel, desire and act in a certain way without having to will consciously to do so (Moreland & Craig, 2003:456). In many ways, this makes being virtuous more difficult than doing the right thing by following rules. Truthfulness is no exception to this challenge, as noted above in the section on challenges to the concept of truthfulness. To remind the reader, truthfulness is defined here as giving a representation of reality to others as best he or she understands it (Cloud, 2006:104). This sometimes

requires the person developing in truthfulness to become aware of, and self-adjust for, one's own biases and imperfections (Cloud 2006:116-138). For Christians, following the Bible is an important element in learning how to do this.

METHODOLOGY

Grounded Theory

The study uses a grounded theory approach because this method is particularly beneficial when the phenomenon under study is not well understood (Robson, 2002). Grounded theory methods are "systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves" (Charmaz, 2006:2). The data form the basis for emerging theory and the researcher's analysis forms the concepts (Glaser, 2002). This reverses the standard empirical process, in which the researcher first develops hypotheses from literature and then tests the hypotheses against observations. Developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory has the following characteristics: simultaneous data collection and analysis; constructing analytic categories from data, not from logically deduced hypotheses; advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis; sampling for theory construction, not population representativeness; memo writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, and define relationships between categories; reviewing literature after analyzing data. Since the origination of grounded theory in 1967, researchers have created several competing ways the method can be performed (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss, 1973; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Glaser, 2002). Glaser's original approach is chosen for this study because it grounds concepts in data, in which "a concept is the naming of an emergent social pattern grounded in research data" (2002:24), and views conceptualization as different from and transcending description.

Research Design and Sample

The study's research questions result from observations made in fall of 2013 of student presentations in the senior undergraduate capstone course in a school of business at a Christian university. To address the questions, the researcher makes subsequent observations in exactly the same course from spring, 2014, through spring, 2016, in order to follow grounded theory's approach of gathering data specifically to confirm or understand, at a deeper level, the concepts that emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The study concludes in spring, 2016, when the concepts that emerge over several semesters remain consistent, a condition identified by grounded theory researchers as concepts saturated by the data (Strauss, 1973: 52; Hunter, et. al., 2005: 59-60). This results in observations of 173 students from spring, 2014, through spring, 2016.

Data Collection

The observations are of students' in-class responses to an open-ended question: What are your values? Each student prepares a PowerPoint slide listing his or her top values, and elaborates verbally for at least one minute in front of the class. For each student, this is part of a five-minute presentation addressing:

1. Would you please tell us a little about yourself?
2. What are your values?
3. What are your strengths?
4. What are the opportunities (or potential opportunities) for you at or after graduation?
5. What is your strategy for pursuing opportunities that align with your values and strengths?

While at the rear of the room, the researcher makes field notes on each presentation. After fall, 2013, the focus of the field notes is on student responses to the question: What are your values?

Data Analysis and Literature Review

Using the notes made during presentations, analysis begins as soon as the first data are obtained. Codes are used to identify key points in the data, similar codes become concepts, groups of concepts become categories, and categories form the basis for a theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006). Once concepts, categories and potential theory are identified, literature is reviewed to explore possible definition for the concepts, categories and theory.

Validity and Reliability

In grounded theory research, the concerns of validity and reliability differ from those in standard empirical research, in which observations must be made that as validly and reliably as possible represent a theory. Instead, as best of the researcher can, theory is identified that fits—as reliably and validly as possible—the data made from observations. Glaser argues that his original 1967 approach is the most effective variant of grounded theory at achieving this type of validity and reliability (2002: 2), and is a primary reason his method is used in the present study.

Limitations

This study has limitations due to potential personal bias. Students' presentations are based on their own subjective impressions of their values, which may be biased by the influence of being in a business course with an audience of business students and a business professor. This is called anchoring bias (Kahneman, 2011:128), in which the environment of the moment primes behavior. Also, personal bias may affect the way the researcher interprets and codes the observations as data. The decision is made, though, not to include a second coder because the researcher assured participants that their in-class statements about themselves would remain confidential and unrevealed to anyone beyond their classmates and professor. This is to provide an environment of psychological safety for the participants. The potential presence of bias may limit the generalizability of the study's findings. Due to potential student anchoring bias, the findings may not apply to non-business students, or even business students in a non-business course with a non-business professor. Further, due to possible researcher bias—and potential other uncontrolled variation due to the sampling method—it is possible the findings may not apply to senior undergraduate business students at other Christian universities. The study at hand is exploratory, with the primary goal of increasing knowledge of values among undergraduates about to graduate from a school of business at a Christian university.

Researcher Background

The author's experience in returning to the undergraduate capstone course after a twelve-year absence from that particular teaching assignment is a causal factor in motivating this research. He adapts the idea of the "Personal Strategic Plan" from Mays & Daake (2012: 7), making it verbal rather than written to help students prepare for job interviews. Once immersed in the experience with students, the researcher's personal doctoral work in sociology informed the grounded theory approach to learning about students from their own perspective.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Development of Research Questions

As discussed in this paper's introduction and section on methodology, this study's research questions emerge out of data made from observing student presentations in fall, 2013. This section describes how the following questions develop:

1. What is the value most widely held by traditional undergraduate seniors in a school of business at a Christian university?
2. For the most widely held value, what is the motivation to hold this value among undergraduate seniors in a school of business at a Christian university?

There are fifteen students in fall, 2013, each presenting between two and five values using PowerPoint slides. The author makes routine notes on each entire presentation, including the portion on values. By presenter, the author records all values identified on the slides but makes a special note in each instance in which the student makes a verbal comment. Twelve students make verbal comments on 9 values and three students make no comment other than "these are my values." "Truthfulness" and "integrity" are the only values commented on by more than one student: The former by seven and the latter by two. The author records "truthfulness" in his notes only if the student uses some form of the words "truth" or "truthful." The frequency with which truthfulness is reported raises the question: Is this the most widely held value beyond this particular class of fifteen students? Also, because no student mentioned a Christian or biblical reason for holding the value of truthfulness, a second question

is raised by these findings: Why is truthfulness such a widespread value?

Data Collection

In spring, 2014, the grounded theory study begins. The researcher starts treating as field notes his written observations made during student presentations. Data collection comes from researcher field notes made during student presentations from spring, 2014, through spring, 2016. Observations of 42 students in spring, 2014, result in ten grounded theory codes as follows:

1. Truthfulness - 40 observations: shown as "honesty" on the PowerPoint and explained as truthfulness in 17 instances, as "integrity" on the PowerPoint and explained as truthfulness in 13 instances, as "truthfulness" and explained as truthfulness in 10 instances. Student number 32 is an example of integrity as truthfulness, having integrity as third in a list of five but commenting only on integrity as follows: "I'm not a Christian, but integrity is important to me. I work hard to be a person of integrity and those of you who know me find that I can be relied on to tell the truth."
2. Integrity – 6 observations: shown as "integrity" on the PowerPoint, and verbalized by students using the word "integrity" while going down the list of values but offering no additional information on what is meant by the word.
3. Honesty – 3 observations: shown as "honesty" on the PowerPoint and using some variation on the word "honest" in an explanation. For example, student number 31 states simply: "honesty is important to me."
4. Courage – 3 observations: all with various illustration of what is meant by the word.
5. Provider – 3 observations: all cited parents as examples of good providers for their family and a desire to do the same for their own families.
6. Love - 3 observations: all mentioned love for family members.
7. To grow in faith – 1 observation: Student number 3 states: "My parents are both people of faith, who raised me to be a person of faith, and I want to grow as a person of faith."
8. Grace – 1 observation.
9. Servant leader – 1 observation.
10. Hedonistic lifestyle – 1 observation: Student number 27 spoke of becoming a Christian at age 13 and currently living an off-campus lifestyle of taking drugs and drinking heavily on weekends.

Concepts, Theory and Literature Review

After observing 42 students in spring, 2014, as with the initial observations in fall, 2013, the new data cluster around conceptual categories of "truthfulness" as an answer to question number 1: What is the value most widely held by traditional undergraduate seniors in a school of business at a Christian university? The working answer is that truthfulness is the most widely held value. A literature review provides Cloud's definition for truthfulness: giving a representation of reality to others as best one understands it (2006:104).

So far, though, there is less clarity about an answer to question number two: For the most widely held value, what is the motivation to hold this as a value among undergraduate seniors in a school of business at a Christian university? Because an internal university study reveals 72% of undergraduates profess Christian faith (Willow Creek Association, 2013), inferential thinking suggests some students would offer a Christian rationale. Also, about half of the students making remarks about truthfulness suggest they are Christians with comments during their presentation's introduction. Yet no student offers a Christian rationale for truthfulness as a virtue, as might be supported by verses such as Ephesians 4:25: "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor" (NIV).

For six of the "truthfulness" instances, though, the researcher attaches a special sub-code as "utilitarian." In all six instances, the student articulates a motivation for truthfulness of being truthful because he or she expects truthfulness from others. For example, student number 21 states:

> I'm truthful with others because I expect people to be truthful with me. If I learn someone is not truthful with me, I will cut off all relationship.

Yet, this same student gives indications elsewhere in her presentation that her values are rooted somehow due to a Christian environment, introducing her presentation with family photographs, stating: "I'm grateful I grew up in a Christian home." Student number 12 is more succinct: "I tell the truth because truthfulness works best." In no instance of truthfulness as a value is there any reference to scripture or Christian faith as a motivation or rationale. Data about the two Spring, 2014, courses are displayed below in Table 1.

Table 1

Semester	Section	Number of Students	Number Truthfulness As Value	Number with Utilitarian Explanation	Other Explanation
Spring 2014	A	22	20	2	0
Spring 2014	B	20	20	4	0

Utilitarianism

A literature review suggests that a utilitarian rationale for behavior may be common among emerging adults in their late teens and early twenties. Most notably, in 2007 and 2008 Christian Smith surveyed 2,458 between the ages of 18 and 23 and finds even Christians to be ethical consequentialists (2009:47). These are the same people Smith studied as teenagers and reported on in 2005 in *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. In 2009, Smith notes that they appealed neither to the bible nor utilitarian principles but to the pain minimization motive that underpins Utilitarianism. Smith's findings about Utilitarianism suggest for the study at hand that the concept of Utilitarianism may provide the answer to question number two: For the most widely held value, what is the motivation for this value among undergraduate seniors in a school of business at a Christian university?

Two More Years of Observations

131 additional observations are made in the following four semesters, summarized below in Tables 2-5. The most widely held value continues to be truthfulness. In the final semester of the study—Spring, 2016—one student articulates an Old Testament rule-based rationale for his truthfulness.

Table 2

Semester	Section	Number of Students	Number Truthfulness As Value	Number with Utilitarian Explanation	Other Explanation
Fall 2014	A	12	5	5*	0
* All expressed a rationale of reciprocity					

Table 3

Semester	Section	Number of Students	Number Truthfulness As Value	Number with Utilitarian Explanation	Other Explanation
Spring 2015	A	30	27	3*	0
Spring 2015	B	19	15	4*	0
* All expressed a rationale of reciprocity					

Table 4

Semester	Section	Number of Students	Number Truthfulness As Value	Number with Utilitarian Explanation	Other Explanation
Fall 2015	A	18	13	6*	0
* All expressed a rationale of reciprocity					

Table 5

Semester	Section	Number of Students	Number Truthfulness As Value	Number with Utilitarian Explanation	Other Explanation
Spring 2016	A	26	14	2*	0
Spring 2016	B	26	14	4**	1***
* All expressed a rationale of reciprocity					
** All but one expressed a rationale of reciprocity					
*** One student expressed a rule-based rationale for truthfulness					

Utilitarian Reciprocity

The observations during Fall, 2014 and Spring, 2015 reveal additional information in the language of students. All students articulating a rationale for truthfulness express an expectation of reciprocity. It is possible this rationale for truthfulness was articulated in Fall, 2013 and Spring, 2014, with the author simply failing to recognize it in addition to the utilitarian rationale, and thus not coding it separately in Spring, 2014. While no student uses the word reciprocity, all use phraseology that goes something like this statement from student number 62:

> "I want people to be truthful with me, so I'm truthful with others. If someone is not truthful with me, any relationship we have will be over."

The motivation articulated for truthfulness is not merely utilitarian, it is an expectation of reciprocal truthfulness, and if there is no reciprocity, there would be no more relationship. Students are communicating that truthfulness is a part of social exchange for them. As discussed in the literature review, social exchange theorists (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), behavioral economists (Gintis, et. al., 2003), and observers of Christian millennial behavior (Smith, 2005) all hold that an individual is likely to break off relationship if truthful information is offered and the other person does not reciprocate with truthful information. In

addition, the finding about utilitarian reciprocity raises a question beyond the scope of the present study. Does the tendency of millennials to have lower trust propensity than past generations, as reported in the literature review (Trzesniewski & Donnelan, 2010), contribute to the use of truthfulness in maintaining social relations that is found in the study at hand?

Conclusion

This study is undertaken because senior undergraduate business students fail to describe their top value of truthfulness in terms of Christian virtue. A Christian rationale is expected from some students at a university with 72% of students professing Christian faith (Willow Creek, 2013). The study uses grounded theory, as this is often the best methodology when a researcher finds himself or herself asking the question: "what is going on here?" (Morse & Richards, 2002:55; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The findings indicate that students' rationale for truthfulness is utilitarian reciprocity. This result is consistent with literature revealing pervasiveness of utilitarian thinking among young adults (Smith, 2005; Smith, 2009; Arieli et. al., 2016). In addition, students' utilitarian reciprocity is observed as tacit knowledge: know-how that is taken for granted and operating "automatically," without apparent deliberate thought by the individual (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2001: 813). The "IMPLICATIONS" section that follows discusses what these findings might infer for Christian business faculty.

The objective of this study is exploratory: to observe students over thirty months. Truthfulness is the most widely-held value among the 173 students observed. 97% of students offering comments on their truthfulness as a value describe their rationale in terms of utilitarian reciprocity. The author repeats here, though, the caution noted in the methodology section of this paper that the study has limitations due to potential researcher and participant biases. These limitations are inherent in any grounded theory study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At the same time, though, as with most grounded theory studies, the findings here point to the need for further research. The results are not intended for generalization to all business programs at Christian universities. The current study is foundational for hypothesis testing research on the subjects of students' values and the reasons they hold them. In addition, future research may be needed to understand possible links between trust propensity and utilitarian reciprocity in maintaining social relations. It is the author's hope that this study might point the way for others to use grounded theory methodology to achieve greater clarity about the challenges we face in teaching business at Christian institutions of higher learning.

IMPLICATIONS

In this final section, the paper considers implications of the study's finding that 97% of students offering comments on their truthfulness as a value describe their rationale in terms of utilitarian reciprocity. The section starts by recognizing that the institutionalization of utilitarianism in our world may tend to infuse it as an assumption into a Christian business school, and that utilitarianism is not intrinsically bad. Then this section goes on to suggest a transformationist faith integration strategy (Hasker, 1992), for addressing precognitive and tacit utilitarianism without rejecting it as a philosophy. The section concludes with the observation faculty may require a book or other resource to help inform a transformationist strategy.

What If We Are Graduating Utilitarians?

This study suggests that many of the students observed are graduating as utilitarians. On the surface, their truthfulness might appear to be an obviously Biblical value, yet students repeatedly offered a utilitarian rationale. This apparently taken-for-granted status of Utilitarianism is a surprise to the author, even though powerful institutionalizing (Zucker, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) forces may have led to this situation. Where I serve, we tend to teach courses built around secular textbooks to facilitate accreditation concerns and articulation agreements with other colleges. We give a lot of attention to ensuring learning outcomes are no less than those of secular institutions, so that graduates can compete in the job market. We hire faculty with doctoral training at secular universities whose programs may assume utilitarianism as an underpinning. To counter these secularizing forces, we devote a lot of deliberate attention to including faith integration in our courses, and require new faculty to participate in a two-year seminar devoted to the integration of faith in their discipline.

Even if the reader is unpersuaded that his or her students are like those in this research study, other research demonstrates utilitarian thinking is pervasive among young adults (e. g., Smith 2009) suggesting it is widespread. How confident are Christian faculty that their students are substantially different? Certainly, as noted above, more research is needed. At the same time, though, if utilitarianism is institutionalized on a widespread basis at schools of business similar to the one in this study, what are the implications for Christian business faculty?

Before addressing implications, however, it should be made clear it is not the author's purpose to reject Utilitarianism. A strength of Utilitarianism is that, if considered deliberately and thoughtfully, it causes the decision-maker to question the consequences of decisions (Logue, 1999). The concern is that if we are graduating students with a "learned but unconscious default position" of utilitarianism, to borrow a phrase from Andy Crouch (2008:90), then what have we done to their ability to fully recognize the weaknesses of utilitarianism? These weaknesses, as noted in this paper's literature review, are that it tends to limit one's ability to see God at work (Niebuhr, 1946), and it tends to cause people not to recognize human limitations in evaluating data and forecasting the future (Kahneman, 2011). If students assume Christianity and consequentialism lead to the same choices, will a utilitarian bias limit their ability to recognize that God often works in the middle of difficult circumstances? Regarding the limits to human cognition, recent research demonstrates that ethical decision-making is not cognitive (Trevino, et. al., 2006), and that utilitarian decision-making leads to ethical breakdowns in business, such as those resulting in the Enron scandal (Premeaux, 2009).

A Transformationist Strategy

The findings in this study suggest a transformationist strategy towards faith integration may be required regarding utilitarianism. Hasker explains:

> …the scholar's task is first to identify the foundational belief, then subject it to scrutiny and determine its relationship to the Christian world-view. If it turns out that a particular assumption is both fundamental to the discipline and inimical to Christian belief, the scholar may find himself impelled in the direction of disciplinary transformation. (Hasker, 1992:245)

Hasker defines the transformationist strategy as supplementing the discipline when one finds lack in its vision of truth (1992:241). If this strategy is warranted, how do we teach students the strengths of utilitarianism while recognizing its weaknesses? Recent research findings on the social psychology of ethical decision-making indicate that treating deontological and utilitarian thinking as separate processes leads to choices that are more virtuous but no less utilitarian than if trying to consider the processes as either compatible or competing (Conway & Gawronski, 2013). Might this finding of process dissociation suggest engaging biblical, or deontological, and utilitarian views separately? Not as alternatives, but as two processes to be engaged one at a time for business questions?

Preparing Students to Engage Two Cognitive Processes with Three Views

To clarify the process of engaging different cognitive processes one at a time, the author uses three metaphors from photography, along with implementation illustrations. The first metaphor represents habitual Utilitarianism. The second and third represent a deontological—virtue-oriented—Christian process of centering on two primary relationships as articulated by Jesus in the great commandment: with God and neighbor (Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-32; Luke 10:25-37). The reader should note, though, that the metaphors are not intended to illustrate the processes themselves. The metaphors are intended as light-hearted illustrations of differences: how each gives the viewer a picture that provides something the other two can't. Importantly, one does not replace another; each has value in its own right.

1. Selfie

The selfie has become an "automatic" way for people - or at least young adults - to photograph everyday life. It is used here as a metaphor for an automatic utilitarian process.

2. X-Ray

The X-ray might have the same subject as a selfie but portrays information and a reality about

the situation completely differently from the selfie. As a metaphor, it serves to draw attention to what it means to love God. For the Christian, this includes becoming aware of one's imperfections and, with God's help, making adjustments (Cloud, 2006: 116-138), as noted in this paper's literature review. For this to occur, the Bible indicates the believer may go through trials. For example, in James 1:4, we become "mature and complete, not lacking anything" (NIV) as a result of trials. An automatic utilitarian view of pain minimization might not embrace trials. This suggests students may require us to model the virtue of trials as part of loving God in the victorious Christian life. In an effort to move in this direction, administrative leadership of the school of business where the author serves now asks visiting notable speakers to include discussion of the trials they have faced. In a similar direction, the author now asks students to write about the lessons they have learned from trials. Importantly, students reflect on how positive instrumental outcomes are not necessarily apparent at the time of the hard situation. The author acknowledges, though, that these are small steps; there is a long way to go to develop a systematic way for students to learn how to engage faith without a consequentialist logic.

3. Drone

The use of drones is not yet such an everyday practice as the selfie or even the x-ray. Drone photography captures a much broader picture portraying information and a reality about the situation completely different from the selfie or x-ray. As a metaphor, it serves to draw attention away from self or small group to the focus in the question posed by Michael Cafferky in his essay on efficiency: "Have we fulfilled our obligations to the community at work as to abundant living while we have pushed for excellence in productivity?" (2013:56). Beyond obligation, it also addresses the question posed by Laszlo and Brown: "What if, rather than only reducing their negative impacts, they started to think in terms of having…. a positive contribution in the world?" (2014:1). It is possible, though, that this view cannot be learned using traditional classroom methods (Smith, 2009; Wong et. al., 2015). Tacit, precognitive biases are difficult to recognize in oneself (Kahneman, 2011: 4). Recent research reported by Tibbetts, et. al. (2016) suggests that holistic and sustainability views of commercial activity may only be truly learnable in an immersive experience such as an overseas service project.

A Concluding Prayer

When listening to students in fall, 2013, my prayer was: "Lord, help me understand so that I might serve better." My new awareness of utilitarian assumptions causes me to recognize this form of precognitive tacit knowledge may impede students' Christian character formation (Smith, 2009; Wong, et. al., 2015). As noted above, process dissociation theory implies that transformationist faith integration may be the right strategy. At this point, how to move forward with this is less clear. My metaphors and illustrations fall far short of a strategy. The reader is likely to ask how much Christian formation can be introduced without compromising the discipline. Resources for this seem to be scarce. The steep learning curve fresh graduates face in a utilitarian world of work is not the main focus of wonderful books such as *Business Through the Eyes of Faith* (Chewning et. al, 1990). This suggests a book or other resource may be needed to help faculty who may be unaccustomed to challenging the assumptions of their discipline on the basis of Christian formation for their students. Admittedly, though, it would not be easy to produce a resource addressing a transformational integration approach to Utilitarianism. With or without such a resource, my ongoing prayer is that this paper will help raise awareness among Christian colleagues everywhere preparing students for the complexities of the marketplace.

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