Leveraging Internships:
A Comparison of Ministry Internship Programs as Realistic Job Previews to Prepare for Vocational Ministry

Dave Keehn, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Christian Ministries, Biola University
david.s.keehn@biola.edu

Abstract

This research compared the two primary youth ministry internship models, Concurrent and Immersive, to identify the model that produced higher rates of self-reported vocational preparedness in full-time vocational ministry leadership. The research demonstrated that Immersive field education graduates have statistically significant higher vocational preparedness than graduates from Concurrent field education models. Additionally, the research demonstrated the Immersive internship model provides a greater Realistic Job Preview.

One goal of internships is an increase in student ability to apply theory in real-world context, creating an understanding of realistic vocational demands through experiential pedagogy.[1] In a 2008 survey of Christian higher education institutions in North America, 74% of the participating schools reported using "several courses to develop ministry skills, with the internship as an opportunity to deepen the development of these skills."[2]

Richard Leyda provided a detailed discussion of the wide variety of field education models used in North American institutions of Christian higher education in a report for the *Christian Education Journal*.[3] Each internship model varies in the amount of time participating in field education and in the ministry competencies students are required to master, yet all seek to accomplish the same learning outcome: to equip a student to vocationally lead a ministry in a church or para-church context. Internships play a potentially significant role in preparing students to thrive in their future ministry roles as research has provided evidence that students who do not receive realistic job previews are more likely to experience job turnover—or worse, ministry burnout.[4] Leveraging Internships is about matching a student's field education experience (i.e. job preview) with the realities of the ministry context to best vocationally prepare students. This research study will compare the Immersive and Concurrent internship experiences to determine which model provided higher rates of self-reported preparedness for vocational ministry, and operated as a Realistic Job Preview (RJP) through higher rates of overlap between self-reported learning activities during the internship and vocational work activities.

While it was an original goal of this research to focus upon youth ministry internships, the sample groups were too limited to measure only youth ministry internships at the participating schools. Therefore, the findings' generalizability is limited to ministry field education models, which may include a variety of ministry areas. Further research should be done on specific ministry arenas, such as youth ministry, as well to compare if these results are similar for other academic disciplines, i.e. the business majors.

Previous research into Career Development has led to the identification of the important role Realistic Job Previews (RJPs) have in the shaping of vocational expectations in the career choice process. RJPs are part of both Super's crystallization stage and Tiedeman's period of anticipation. "RJPs are defined as programs, materials, and/or presentations that provide applicants with realistic and balanced (positive and negative) information about a job."[8] While most RJPs are directly connected to a work environment, provided to new hires, it has been theorized that a college internship is a type of RJP and provides benefits of quicker transitions from the classroom to the work-place environments. Various research studies have identified potential mediating factors of RJPs: met expectations, role clarity, employer perceived as honest, and the influence of vocational self-concept in perceived fit to occupation and employer.[9]

The new employment orientations that include Realistic Job Previews (RJP) have demonstrated two key benefits in career development. First, RJPs are positively correlated with reducing turnover of new hires.[10] RJPs provide role-clarity, i.e. correct expectations, leading to reduced role conflict, and greater "satisfaction, performance, and commitment."[11] Therefore, new hires are able to temper their expectations of the job to match realistic outcomes; this translated to perceived value of the training received.

The recognition of internships as a source of the crystallization of vocational self-concept is a significant finding to guide students for career counseling.[15] Both Donald Super and David Tiedeman identify the essential task of formulating ideas of suitable occupations in career development theory. This can be challenging to young adults with limited exposure to work environments. Neapolitan discovered intern students were found to be statistically significantly different from the control group in "overall certainty as to career choice" (2.90; $p <$ .05).[16] "The results show that career choice does not become more certain over [time] without the internship experience."[17] The process of crystallization through an internship can actually decrease the intent to enter a career of choice after the work expectations are realized.[18] The valuing of specific vocational traits related to specific occupations was found to be an aspect of the crystallization of self-concept. "With experience, post-internship students significantly evolved their view of importance for many traits, lessening some."[19] Internships help students in career crystallization by providing career information, reducing indecisiveness and anxiety over career, and increasing confidence in ability to choose a career.

Research Question

Ministry field education models utilized by institutions of Christian higher education vary greatly in the amount of time spent participating in field education and in the ministry competencies students are required to master. While previous research sought to quantify the beneficial impact of specific field education models, this study will build upon previous research to compare the levels of vocational preparation received from two primary internship models: Concurrent and Immersive. The concurrent internship model requires a minimal

amount of hours, 8 to 10 hours per week, to allow for the student to continue coursework; while the immersive internship model reduces classroom time to a minimum to allow students to fully engage in the work environment through "full time" placement. The self-reported levels of preparedness received through the internship experience will be related to expectations met in the vocational ministry position, thus demonstrating whether or not the internship operated as a Realistic Job Preview.

The main research question is: Which ministry internship model, concurrent or immersive, provides higher rates of self-reported preparedness for vocational ministry?

A follow-up research question is: Which ministry internship model demonstrates it is a Realistic Job Preview (RJP) through higher rates of overlap between self-reported learning activities during the internship and vocational work activities?

Research Design

The population of this study was recent graduates from Christian evangelical institutions of higher education who serve in vocational ministry positions. The rationale for the selection of graduates from these schools is that similar evangelical institutions will likely prepare graduates for similar positions of ministry. A comparison of academic programs from schools in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) identified similar training for ministry graduates.[35] The target population for this research is institutions of Christian higher education that utilize similar academic programs in the training of ministry leaders.

Department chairs at identified schools were emailed, and a contact person was appointed at each site; the contact person approved the sample selection for each institution. The contact person was either a faculty member or department secretary, with authority to contact alumni with the survey invitation. The sample for this study was required to have graduated within the past two years from their academic program, as this allows for greater awareness of the new hire experiences and clarity of vocational preparation from the internship. Initial groundwork for including schools in this study was laid at the 2011 AYME Conference, and study invitation letters were sent to targeted schools in the spring of 2014. Prospective schools indicated an average graduating class is approximately 25 students per year, roughly 160-200 potential participants from the three invited schools. Therefore, the sample goal for each school was 20 graduates (roughly 50%), producing a minimum of 40 alumni per sample model and a total sample of 100 participants. Analysis was conducted comparing the samples from schools with similar internship models; these tests revealed no statistical difference in regards to the vocational preparation scores. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to combine the participants from different schools but similar internship models for this research.

This survey consisted of 69 items, in 5 sections. Demographic information was collected regarding age, gender, denominational affiliation, ethnicity, and pursuit of vocational ministry positions and graduate school. Additional information was gathered through identification of the alumni's participation with a field education model and activities, and current ministry activities in terms of priority and frequency. Two research instruments were utilized in the development of this survey. Ministerial job satisfaction was measured using Turton and Francis' (2002) short-form of the Ministerial Job Satisfaction Scale (MJSS), which was adapted

from Glass' (1976) original instrument, refined in wording only to reflect evangelical ministry roles. Secondly, the Ruiz' Airline Internship Perception survey Part III (AIP) (2003) was also reworded to discuss vocational ministry internships. Lastly, four items examined the phases of Leader-Exchange theory and the participant's expectations for ministry trials.

Upon the formal agreement to participate in the study, I sent the participating institutions my approved Protection of Human Rights in Research Commitee form. I established a web-based survey account to administer the survey. The contact person within each institution's program provided the sample group of alumni of the previous two years from the designated school, and sent out an invitation email to potential participants. The contact person maintained confidentiality of the potential participants and did not provide me with direct access to alumni emails to insure anonymity of the respondents. Similarly, the contact person had no knowledge of responses, as the data was collected through the web-based survey.

Survey Data Results

The survey was administered in October 2014 to the four identified sample groups, each comprised of the two most recent years' ministry graduates. These respondents were then combined according to similar internship model to form two comparative sample groups.

The Concurrent internship model was comprised of School A's former field education model, which had 47 total graduates, but only 44 valid emails (94%); of these 27 graduates responded, providing 26 valid surveys. This resulted in a 59% response rate for this sample group. School C also contributed to the Concurrent sample group, with 44 total graduates, 37

valid emails (84%); however from this sample group only 14 graduates responded, resulting in 12 valid surveys—a 38% response rate for this sample group.

The Immersive internship model was comprised of School A's new field education model, which had 54 total graduates, providing 48 valid emails (89%); of these 34 graduates responded, providing 29 valid surveys. This is a 60% response rate for this sample group. Lastly, School B contributed to the Immersive sample group with 40 total graduates, but only 30 valid emails (75%); of these 25 graduates responded, providing 21 valid surveys. This represents a 70% response rate for this sample group. Overall, the sample population was 185 total graduates, of whom 159 had valid emails (86%); of these, there were 100 respondents, providing 88 valid surveys. The total response rate for the survey was 55%.

Findings & Conclusions

The following section will provide a summary of the findings of this new research into internship models and the resulting levels of vocational ministry preparedness. The conclusions will be categorized according to the commonalities and the differences in the internship models' impact upon student career development.

What the Internship Models Have in Common

The research demonstrated that the two internship models have much in common, which speaks to the strength of the effectiveness of field education as an instructional pedagogy. First, the data revealed there was no statistical difference between students' self-reported vocational preparedness from coursework from either internship model. Students

reported on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) they believed they were adequately prepared by the academic coursework (classroom instruction and assignments, not including the internship) for the demands of their current vocational ministry position. The difference of the means was extremely small, when the Concurrent model (m = 3.95) was compared to the Immersive (m = 4.18) field education model.

This was an important finding to isolate the effects of the internship experience apart from the overall academic program for ministry training. As hypothesized, students from both field education models agree that the coursework, apart from the internship, prepared them for vocational ministry. This finding speaks to the strong instructional qualities from all the institutions involved in the study, but further emphasizes that the field education model utilized may be a significant factor in the vocational preparedness of ministry students.

The survey also sought to identify the role of prior ministry experience, apart from the internship, in vocational preparation. Participants from both internship models participated in additional ministry experiences, besides the internship requirements. The Concurrent sample (n = 38) had an average of 2.37 ministry experiences, which similarly compared to an average of 2.7 ministry experiences for the Immersive sample (n = 50). For further analysis, the participants were placed into two groups based on the number of yearlong ministry experiences they reported: 0 - 2 ministry experiences (n = 37, m = 3.77) and 3 - 5+ ministry experiences (n = 48, m = 3.94). There was no statistical difference between the groups in the means of students' self-reported vocational preparedness in regards to the number of ministry experiences they participated with in addition to the internship. Even when using a Mann-Whitney U test to compare the vocational preparedness between the groups with the lowest mean score (0

ministry experiences, *n* = 7, m = 3.4) and the highest mean score (3 ministry experiences, *n* = 30, m = 4.0) there was no statistical difference.

This finding speaks to the integrity of all the institutions surveyed to encourage ministry service in addition to the required internships. Interestingly, the eight respondents who had four ministry experiences reported the second lowest vocational preparedness score (m = 3.7), which may indicate it is the amount of time invested in a specific ministry, rather than varied but shorter ministry commitments, that may yield higher feelings of vocational preparedness. However, this rationale needs further study since the amount of time invested in these additional ministry experiences, apart from the internship, was not part of a survey.

The internship models produced similar results in students who pursued vocational ministry after graduation. While 70% of Immersive interns (*n* = 35) compared to 50% of Concurrent interns (*n* = 19) pursued a vocational ministry position, a Chi-square analysis found no statistically significant difference between the two internship models' graduates and this decision to pursue a vocational ministry position. Interestingly, there was no statistical difference in the mean vocational preparedness scores between the groups of interns who pursued vocational ministry after graduation (*n* = 52, m = 3.94) and those who did not pursue vocational ministry positions (*n* = 33, 3.75). The qualitative responses provided a varied number of reasons for not pursuing vocational ministry. Some of the repeated responses could be classified in the following themes: calling outside of vocational ministry (*n* = 10), problems (i.e. lack of funds for desired position, burnout) (*n* = 7), marriage (*n* = 5), unsure of calling to ministry (*n* = 5), overseas missions (*n* = 4), and needing more graduate studies for vocational ministry (*n* = 3). The scope of this research did not seek to understand all the issues that

contribute to a ministry student's decision to actually pursue a vocational ministry position after graduation. Ministry graduates choose not to pursue vocational ministry positions for a variety of reasons, but the field education model does not appear to be one of the primary reasons, as of the 10 participants who pursued a career other than vocational ministry, an equal number (n = 5) came from each internship model.

From the researcher-designed questions related to spiritual integration of the internship, the data revealed there was no statistical difference in scores related to spiritual training, spiritual authority, or hardship expectations between the groups of respondents from the two field education models. This is important to note that both of the primary internship models utilized by schools of Christian higher education can incorporate spiritual conversations and dynamics for vocational ministry training.

Lastly, the comments from students of each model are similar in the internship's perceived benefit of exposing the student to the realistic demands of vocational ministry. After analyzing the statements given in the survey, it was determined 55% of the respondents from Concurrent models and 62% of respondents from Immersive models made comments relating to the benefit of "hands on learning" or specifically to aspects of the internship operating as a Realistic Job Preview (RJP). Samples of comments from Concurrent model institutions are,

> *Most beneficial aspects were getting a holistic understanding of what ministry looks like.*
>
> *Getting the opportunity to see the day in and day out task a youth pastor is faced with.*
>
> *Learning what all is expected if I do decide to go into ministry full time.*
>
> *The most beneficial aspect of my experience was finding a church to allow me into all aspects of staff life, experiencing the day to day of the job. I was given my own set of keys, church email and phone and the right to buy supplies.*

These comments are similar to those made from Immersive model institutions:

> *Getting the opportunity to be intimately involved with a ministry and understanding what is required of a servant in vocational ministry.*
>
> *Being able to have the majority of my focus be on the ministry during my internship semester was great. It really allowed me to see what a job in ministry would really look like.*
>
> *Now that I am in my own vocational ministry, doing a lot of similar things to the ministry I did during my internship, that is what I find as key because it has benefited me to have the hands on knowledge and not just backseat knowledge of my current job.*
>
> *Being immersed into full time ministry was beneficial because I was able to see both positive and negative aspects and learn from experienced individuals before becoming a full time worker.*

All of these comments reflected what previous research has indicated: internships of both models allow for opportunities to try on a vocational career and apply knowledge learned in the classroom. However, while both internship models provide some exposure to an RJP, this study sought to understand if there were significant differences in levels of vocational preparation between the Concurrent and Immersive internship models.

Where the Internship Models are Different

The significant differences between the internship models were that the Immersive field education does stimulate a Realistic Job Preview through higher matching levels of vocational activities, per lower difference scores, and has higher scores of self-reported vocational preparation. A *t*-test comparing the overall self-reported vocational preparedness scores was conducted on respondents from Concurrent field education models (n = 36) and Immersive field education models (n = 49). On a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), the Immersive model reported higher scores of self-reported preparedness for vocational ministry

(m = 4.0, *sd* = .61) than the Concurrent model (m = 3.68, *sd* = .66). The difference between these means is statistically significant at the .05 level ($t_{(83)}$ = -2.3, p = .024, Cohen's d = .40). The effect size of this difference is medium. See Table 1.

Table 1: Independent samples for *t*-test Internship model and self-reported vocational preparedness

	Concurrent Internship *n* = 36		Immersive Internship *n* = 49						
Measure	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	df	t	*p*	Cohen's *d*	Effect Size
Vocational Preparedness Score	3.68	.66	4.0	.61	83	-2.3	.024	0.4	medium

Note: $p < .05$

This demonstrates Immersive field education graduates had statistically significant higher vocational preparedness scores than graduates from Concurrent field education models.

The matching levels of field education activities' priority and frequency to vocational activities' priority and frequency was measured in the difference of reported scores; this provided analysis of the internship's functioning as a Realistic Job Preview (RJP). The lower the score of difference indicated a greater match of an RJP. There was no statistical difference overall between the two field education models and levels of activity matching scores; however, when measuring the upper and lower quartiles there were some statistical differences between the internship models. While the Concurrent Internship model represented 43% (*n* = 38) of the total respondents compared to 57% of Immersive Internship model respondents (*n* = 50), the Concurrent Internship only had 14% (*n* = 2) of respondents in the upper quartile in Activity Frequency scores (*n* = 14). A Chi-square test for Independence revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the patterns of activity frequency of Concurrent and

Immersive field education at the .01 level ($X^2_{(1)} = 7.33$, $p = .007$, Cramer's Phi = 0.36), with a medium effect size. See Table 2.

Table 2: Cross tabulations for upper & lower quartile of ministry activity frequency

Internship Model	Upper Quartile $n = 14$	Lower Quartile $n = 14$	Total
Concurrent	2 (14%)	9 (64%)	11
Immersive	12 (86%)	5 (36%)	17
Total	14 (100%)	14 (100%)	28

Note: Chi-Square 7.33*; *$p < .01$

Interestingly, there was no statistical difference between upper and lower quartiles of Activity Priority scores. Therefore, the Immersive field education does stimulate a Realistic Job Preview through higher matching levels of vocational activities, per lower difference scores, but not in vocational priorities. This may be due to the amount of time a student is in an Immersive field education experience, therefore being able to provide more opportunities to practice the vocational activities expected. Yet both internship models expose students to the priority ministry activities. In other words, students in both internship models see what would be expected of them in vocational ministry, but students may be able to more frequently practice the ministry activity in an Immersive internship experience.

A second potential reason for Immersive field education graduates to have statistically significant higher perceptions of vocational preparedness relates to mentoring opportunities. Previous research has established that mentors play a significant role in the internship process.[37] There was a statistically significant difference in the field education models with regard to the amount of time in intentional mentoring an intern received. The Immersive model reported greater amount of time of weekly intentional mentoring (m = 3.0, *sd* = .97) than the Concurrent model (m = 2.61, *sd* = .82). The difference between these means is statistically significant at the

.05 level ($t_{(86)}$ = -2.2, p = .029, Cohen's d = .48). The effect size of this difference is medium. See Table 3.

Table 3: Independent samples for t-test Internship model and amounts of hours intentional mentoring

	Concurrent Internship n = 38		Immersive Internship n = 50						
Measure	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Cohen's d	Effect Size
Amount of hours mentoring	2.61	.82	3.0	.97	86	-2.2	.029	0.48	medium

Note: $p < .05$

Through the analysis of sub-groups of the number of hours intentional of mentoring received (none – less than 1 hour (n = 27, m = 3.44) and 1 – 5+ hours (n = 58, m = 4.06)), there was a statistically significant difference found in the level of vocational preparedness between the groups of mentoring received ($t_{(83)}$ = -4.5, p = .000, Cohen's d = 1.08). The effect size is large. See Table 4. The mentoring an intern receives during the field education experience makes a significant impact upon vocational preparedness. The Immersive field education model allowed for more time in mentoring than the Concurrent due to the amount of time available to the participants, which contributes to Immersive field education having higher self-reported vocational preparedness.

Table 4: Independent samples for t-test groups of intentional mentoring and vocational preparedness

	< 1 hr/week n = 27		1-5+ hrs/week n = 58						
Measure	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Cohen's d	Effect Size
Vocational Preparedness Score	3.44	.545	4.06	.606	83	-4.51	.000	1.08	large

Note: $p < .05$

Additionally, the impact of a mentor was analyzed through the variables of same-gender mentoring and the amount of time invested by the mentor related to vocational preparedness scores. The data revealed that 62% (n = 53) of the intern students had the same gender as their supervisor compared with 38% (n = 32) who had a supervisor of a different gender. Of this 38% of respondents who had intern supervisors of different genders, most were cases of males supervising females (85%, n = 28); rarely did a female supervise a male student (15%, n = 5). The t-tests measuring the impact of same-gender mentoring upon self-reported vocational preparedness scores show no statistical difference compared to different gender mentoring (same gender m = 3.84, different gender m = 3.94). This may be primarily due to the essentially same amount of time spent in intentional mentoring regardless of the gender differences between the supervisor and the intern (same gender, m = 2.86 hrs. per week; different gender, m = 2.85 hrs. per week). As there was no difference of self-reported vocational preparedness in students who had supervisors of the opposite gender, mentoring therefore, should not be limited to same gender classification, as supervisors are able to give equal investment of time in the vocational preparedness of interns of either gender. Further research should be conducted into qualities that an effective internship supervisor should possess to enhance the mentor process.

Another difference between the internship models was, on a scale of 1 (low) and 5 (high), the Immersive internship model, simulating a Realistic Job Preview, had higher levels of perceived preparedness toward the achievement of vocational goals (m = 4.18, sd = .71) than the Concurrent internship model (m = 3.86, sd = .76). The difference between the two models is statistically significant at the .05 level ($t_{(82)}$ = -2.0, p = .05, Cohen's d = .44). The effect size of this

difference is medium. See Table 5. The readiness for vocational goals is another sign Immersive field education is a Realistic Job Preview.

Table 5: Independent samples for *t*-test Internship model and Vocational Goals

	Concurrent Internship *n* = 36		Immersive Internship *n* = 48						
Measure	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Df	t	*p*	Cohen's *d*	Effect Size
Vocational Goals score	3.86	.76	4.18	.71	82	-2.0	.05	0.44	medium

Note: $p < .05$

Implications of Additional Findings Related to Hypotheses

Providing an internship experience that produces higher levels of vocational preparedness is important, as a correlation analysis revealed there was a statistically significant, moderate, direct relationship between perceived vocational preparation from an internship experience and job satisfaction in a current vocational ministry position (Pearson $r_{(82)} = .40$, $p = .01$, $r^2 = .16$). The shared variance is 16%. See Table 6.

Table 6: Pearson product-moment correlation for Job Satisfaction and Vocational Preparation

Variables	*n*	m	sd	*r*	*p*	r^2
Job Satisfaction Scale	73	3.98	.512			
Vocational Preparedness Scale	84	3.76	.712	.40**	.01	.16

Note: ** = $p < .01$

One of the benefits of perceived vocational preparation from an internship seems to be an employee's satisfaction with the job requirements and benefits of the current job. In other words, job satisfaction may result as the job and benefits met the expectations of the newly hired based on vocational training experiences. However, many factors contribute to job satisfaction; as it was not this study's purpose to understand these factors, this study cannot

declare job satisfaction is solely the result of field education experience. This survey did confirm those who have higher levels of self-reported vocational preparedness reported higher levels job satisfaction—so a conclusion can be made that better vocational preparedness is one of the contributing factors to job satisfaction. Therefore, institutions of higher education must seek all means possible to insure vocational preparation is one of the Program Learning Outcomes.

Secondly, the results of a One-Way ANOVA test showed that there was a statistically significant difference at the .05 level in the mean scores for self-reported vocational preparedness of the different status groups of ministry involvement (not currently involved, volunteer, part-time, full-time) ($F_{(2, 72)} = 5.17$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = .127$). See Table 7.

Table 7: One-Way ANOVA for vocational ministry status and vocational preparedness

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean sum of squares	*F*
Between groups	4.2	2	2.1	5.17
Within groups	28.8	71	.41	
Total	33.0	73		

Note: $p < .05$

A Dunnett C post hoc test revealed that the differences were between those who only were volunteers in a ministry position ($n = 26$, m = 3.62, $sd = .68$) and those who are in full time vocational ministry ($n = 23$, m = 4.20, $sd = .54$). The effect size of this difference is medium. While the part-time vocational ministry positions had higher levels of vocational preparedness than volunteers, it was not statistically different. There was also no statistical difference between part-time and full-time vocational ministry positions in regards to self-reported vocational preparedness from the field education experience. While many factors contribute to

continued vocational ministry involvement, it is possible to hypothesize that those who are currently in full-time vocational ministry positions felt ready to handle the expectations and stress of ministry jobs due to the fact they had higher feelings of vocational preparedness.

Lastly, a correlation analysis revealed there was a statistically significant weak inverse relationship between perceived vocational preparation from an internship experience and length of time to find a current vocational ministry position (Pearson $r_{(54)} = -.32$, $p = .05$, $r^2 = .10$). See Table 8. This survey was given to alumni from the past two graduating classes from each participating institution; therefore, the possible length of time in searching for ministry employment ranged from zero months (hired upon graduation) to two years.

Table 8: Pearson product-moment correlation for Job Search Length of Time and Vocational Preparation

Variables	*n*	m	sd	*r*	*p*	r^2
Job Search in months	54	5.04	7.95			
Vocational Preparedness	84	3.76	.712	-.32*	.05	.1

Note: * = $p < .05$

This study showed students with lower levels of vocational preparedness had a longer length of time to find a vocational ministry position. However, there were not enough Concurrent model respondents ($n = 19$, m = 7.0, sd = 9.39) to run a *t*-test comparison of length of job search with the Immersive model respondents ($n = 35$, m = 3.97, sd = 6.98) to see if the average additional three months for Concurrent graduates to find a job was statistically significant. Of the 54 respondents who pursued vocational ministry positions after completing their undergraduate studies, 27 had vocational ministry jobs at the time of graduation (Immersive = 19, Concurrent = 8); and 77% of Immersive respondents had vocational ministry positions within three months, compared to 58% of Concurrent students. This survey did not reveal if the respondents were

hired at the site of their internship. Students who perceived in themselves lower levels of vocational preparedness for ministry career tasks will have a relatively longer job search length of time to first vocational ministry employment. However, many factors contribute to finding a job, so a conclusion cannot be drawn between internship model and the job search length of time.

Findings Not Related to Hypotheses

Beyond the hypotheses of this research study, additional tests were conducted to analyze new concepts related to vocational preparation. First, a comparison was conducted to measure the Realistic Job Preview of those who are currently serving in a different ministry area than their internship area of ministry. There was no statistical difference between the mean differences of the ministry activity frequency for interns who had a different area of ministry internship than their current areas of ministry service (n = 32, m = 9.66), than for interns who are serving in the same area of ministry as during the internship (n = 24, m = 8.5). This finding was deemed important, as the ministry skills developed during an internship seem to be transferable to various areas of ministry service. This transferability may be in part due to the fact that the activities of youth ministry are in many ways the same as those in other areas of ministry in the church (e.g. teaching, developing volunteers, attending staff meetings, etc.).

Second, the relationship between vocational preparedness and the pursuit of further academic training was assessed. There was also no statistical difference in the mean vocational preparedness scores between respondents who pursued graduate studies (n = 24, m = 3.89) and those who did not pursue more education (n = 61, m = 3.87). Of those respondents who did seek

further education (n = 24), only eight did not pursue vocational ministry; a Chi-square test revealed this was not statistically significant. The qualitative responses indicated the primary reasons for pursuing graduate studies were: desire for more training (n = 8), required of the vocational ministry position per denomination standards (n = 4), and vocational goals required further education, e.g. counseling, teaching, senior pastor (n = 5). The self-reported feeling of vocational preparedness did not affect the decision to pursue graduate school. The need for further education to gain a vocational ministry position was only mentioned three times out of 30 responses (10%) and given by participants exclusively from Concurrent field education models; however this was determined not to be a primary reason for not pursuing vocational ministry at this time. Therefore, while students may choose not to pursue vocational ministry for a variety of reasons, the feeling of being un-prepared does not seem to be a primary reason most ministry graduates do not pursue vocational ministry.

Limitations of the Study

The key finding of this research is Immersive Field Education simulates a greater Realistic Job Preview and produces graduates with higher self-reported scores of vocational preparation. However, this study is limited in its breadth of institutional analysis. Further research should include more institutions to provide a larger and more diverse sample for study. It has already been noted the low response rate from School C limited the ability to run data analysis in certain situations to understand the impact on job search length of time. Additionally, this research only had one school from the Western region of the United States. Including another school from the same region would provide useful analysis to determine if

the region produced limitations to the internship model or in the job search length of time. The inclusion of schools from other regions, i.e. the South Eastern region, would also allow for greater generalizability of the findings.

Recommendations for Leveraging Internships

Despite the limitations of the study, based on the initial findings of this research, the following are suggestions to be implemented by institutions of Christian higher education seeking to vocationally train students for ministry.

First, the field education experience should seek to give the intern multiple opportunities to try the vocational ministry activities while under the supervision of a mentor to simulate a Realistic Job Preview. This process can be aided by school faculty helping the intern to select the ministry site that will allow him or her to practice the activities of the desired vocational ministry area. This may look like a process of discovery through the sampling of various ministries; however it is important to remember the amount of additional ministry experiences is not the key element, but rather sufficient time experiencing the ministry is.

This research demonstrated the ministry activities (i.e. skills) listed in this survey are transferable amongst vocational ministry positions; however, a limitation of this survey is the demonstration of the primary activities of youth ministry are applicable to other fields of age-based ministry leadership. The unique nature of some ministries may emphasize different competencies or activities, therefore greater assessment should be given to understand the required skills of the call to ministry for each student. To provide a true Realistic Job Preview of vocational ministry, students can be provided strength/skill assessment tests in order to engage

in conversations with faculty mentors. In addition, the faculty can help students choose a ministry setting for their internship, assisting the placement of the student to match his or her vocational goals with the ministry site. Therefore, the academic advising of the student is key to develop an understanding of the student's passions and needs for the internship experience.

While it was not within the scope of this research to analyze the various components of the internship experience, but rather assess each model holistically, previous research has supported the need for students to reflect, integrate, and network with other students, even if no "classroom" time is provided.[38] The utilization of cohorts that connect through video conference calls can help provide support for students who are separated due to internship locations. Assignments should assist students in the reflection upon the ministry context as well as mastery of ministry competencies. Lastly the processing of expectations for vocational preparation can be fulfilled through a follow-up course, just as pre-internship classes and an orientation can prepare students for the field education experience.

Academic institutions should also invest in the development of quality mentors, as the impact of supervisors was again supported through this study. However, this research demonstrated the gender of supervisors is not the crucial issue in vocationally preparing an intern for ministry. This may be due to the character qualities of supervisors who mentor interns regardless of gender, resulting in equal investment in the vocational preparedness of students of both genders. Further research should be conducted to understand the full complement of skills and qualities that are essential in quality ministry mentoring. The partnership between the student, practitioner/supervisor, and faculty coordinator cannot be underestimated; therefore a clear explanation of the expectations is necessary. This can be

accomplished through face-to-face interactions prior the internship being initiated, orientations, and even the provision of a manual. The on-going relationship with the site supervisor is enhanced through communication, utilizing: emails, site visits, and on-campus invitations.

Conclusion

Previous research has shown experiential learning models (internships, service learning, etc.) increase vocational skills. The value of internships is also seen in the shaping of students' career crystallization. Internships provide information regarding vocational expectations; these have been shown to reduce indecisiveness and anxiety over career choice and increased confidence in ability to choose a career.[39] While most Realistic Job Previews (RJP) are directly connected to a work environment, provided to new hires, it has been theorized that a college internship is a type of RJP and provides benefits of quicker transitions from the classroom to the work-place environments.[40] The key finding of this research is Immersive Field Education simulates a greater Realistic Job Preview and yields graduates with higher self-reported scores of vocational preparation.

These findings relate to the vocational self-concept that is able to crystalize during internships through frequent practice of activities during the field education experience, preparing the college student for what will be required of them in the vocational role and helping them to see what are the expected benefits of such a position.[41] While many factors contribute to an institution's selection of a specific field education model and its programmatic requirements, efforts should be made to provide ministry students with as much time as possible to be mentored while engaging in a realistic job preview of vocational ministry.

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