Southern Illinois University Carbondale
OpenSIUC

Dissertations | Theses and Dissertations

5-1-2012

Family Attitudes, Beliefs, And Practices Facilitating A Sense Of Purpose In Black American Children And Youth: A Grounded Theory

Mallory Lynn Gary
Southern Illinois University Carbondale, mgary@siu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/dissertations

Recommended Citation
Gary, Mallory Lynn, "Family Attitudes, Beliefs, And Practices Facilitating A Sense Of Purpose In Black American Children And Youth: A Grounded Theory" (2012). *Dissertations.* Paper 463.

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at OpenSIUC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of OpenSIUC. For more information, please contact jnabe@lib.siu.edu.

FAMILY ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, AND PRACTICES FACILITATING A SENSE OF PURPOSE IN BLACK AMERICAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH: A GROUNDED THEORY

by

Mallory Gary

B.S., Southern Illinois University, 1998

M.S., Southern Illinois University, 2003

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy in Education Degree with a Concentration in Health Education

Health Education

In the Graduate School

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

May 2012

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

FAMILY ATTITUDES, BELIEFS AND PRACTICES FACILITATING A SENSE OF PURPOSE IN BLACK AMERICAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH: A GROUNDED THEORY

By

Mallory L. Gary

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the field of Health Education

Approved by:

Joyce Fetro, Chair

Roberta Ogletree

Kathleen Welshimer

Crystal Caffey

Ronald Caffey

Graduate School

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

March 21, 2012

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

MALLORY L. GARY, for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in HEALTH EDUCATION, presented on MARCH 21, 2012, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: FAMILY ATTITUDES, BELIEFS AND PRACTICES FACILITATING A SENSE OF PURPOSE IN BLACK AMERICAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH: A GROUNDED THEORY

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Joyce Fetro

ABSTRACT

Sense of purpose is strongly associated with positive health behaviors and academic achievement (Turner-Musa & Lipscomb, 2007, Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics [FIFCFS], 2010). The purpose of this qualitative research study was to develop grounded theory by the exploration of sense of purpose by describing and interpreting attitudes, beliefs, and practices among Black American families participating in an outreach program in Southern, IL. Grounded theory was used to explain the phenomenon of sense of purpose, and the relationship among optimism, faith, hope, spirituality and sense of meaning. A non probability purposive sample was used for the study. The sample consisted of 10 families, which were comprised of 26 individual, seven Black American mothers, one Black American father, one Black American grandmother, one Caucasian guardian and 16 children. Data collection included audio-taping first order narratives derived through individual interviews, field notes and observations in the homes of the participating families.

Findings included identifying common and less common categories. The common categories were God, relationships, education, communication, financial security, autonomy and independence, leadership qualities, perseverance, self efficacy, life lessons, cooperation and opportunities. Less common categories, appearing in at least one family, were discipline and structure, and celebration of life. The central category linking all the categories and constructs

together was identified as communication. Some causal affects influenced the prevalence of certain categories and how they were connected to the five constructs. These causal affects were poverty, parental education levels, and illness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Coming to Southern Illinois University to receive my degree has been a great experience. I would not have made it if it wasn't for many people who helped me along the way. First, I must give thanks the My Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for guiding me into this field and providing me with the support and resources necessary to get through the program. I also want to thank my mother, who taught me perseverance and discipline. Without your training I would not be here, this would only be a dream. Thanks mom!

Next, I would like to thank the Gary clan. Michael, Myah, and Mykel, I love you. Your patience, support, and willingness to take on extra chores, was priceless. Thank you for being my backbone. I also would like to thank Joy Christian Fellowship, Latasha Parks and Brenda Corley, intercessors who prayed for me regularly, while I was in the school. Your prayers increased my energy, reduced my anxiety, and comforted me when I was frustrated. To my health education mentors, Dr. Fetro, Dr. Ogletree and Dr. Welshimer, the training, insight, and life lessons you have given me are invaluable. My desire is to impact others as you have impacted me.

There are two students who will forever have a special place in my heart, Alicia Wodika and Teresa Drake. Alicia your kind heart and willingness to help me prepare for prelims was invaluable. Teresa, thank you for being an ear when I needed to talk, when I wanted to laugh, and when I just needed girl time. You are awesome! Alicia and Teresa my prayer is that God blesses you as much as you have blessed me. Dr. Ronald Caffey and Dr. Crystal Caffey, thank you for your commitment to academic excellence and for your willingness to share your research expertise. I have learned a lot. I am truly grateful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

ABSTRACT i

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iii

LIST OF TABLES viii

LIST OF FIGURES ix

CHAPTERS

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION 1

Background 27

Need for the Study 31

Purpose of the Study 32

Research Questions 32

Significance to Health Education 33

Study Sample 34

Data Collection 34

Data Analysis 35

Assumptions 36

Limitations 36

Delimitations 36

Definitions 37

Summary 38

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW 39

Introduction 39

Black American Families 39

Resilience 49

Protective Factors....52
Sense of Purpose....55
Hope and Optimism....57
Spirituality....63
Faith....66
Sense of Meaning....68
Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey....69
Summary....71
CHAPTER 3 – METHODS....73
Purpose of the Study....73
Research Questions....73
Research Design....74
Study Sample....79
Recruitment Process....80
Data Collection Process....80
Interviews....80
Interview Guide....81
Observations....82
Data Analysis....83
In-depth Interview Questions....84
Summary....92
CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS....93
Introduction....93
Research Questions....93
Study Participants....94

Results 148
Common Categories 148
Less Common Categories 169
Axial Coding Categories 172
Concepts of Sense of Purpose 173
Selective Coding Categories 182
Summary 185
CHAPTER 5 – SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION & RECCOMENDATIONS ... 186
Introduction 186
Summary of the Study 186
Conclusions of the Study 188
Discussion 189
Recommendations 194
CHAPTER 6 – REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE 196
Completing Data Collection 196
Learned Lessons 197
My Mentors 198
REFERENCES 200
APPENDICES
Appendix A – Parent Child Dyad Recruitment Script 212
Appendix B – Participants Informed Consent 215
Appendix C – Child (Youth) Assent Form 218
Appendix D – Parent Interview Script 220
Appendix E – Children's Interview Script 222
Appendix F – Observation Script 224

Appendix G – Participant Demographic Information (Parent/Guardian) 226

Appendix H – Participant Demographic Information (Child) 227

VITA 228

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE PAGE

Table 3.1- In-depth Interview Questions for Parents.....84

Table 3.2- In-depth Interview Questions for Children.....85

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE PAGE

Figure 4.1-Faith Construct Category Relationships.....174

Figure 4.2-Hope Construct Category Relationships 174

Figure 4.3-Optimism Construct Category Relationships.....175

Figure 4.4-Sense of Meaning Construct Category Relationships.....175

Figure 4.5-Spirituality Construct Category Relationships.....176

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Personal Reflection

Who will cry for the little boy?
Lost and all alone.
Who will cry for the little boy?
Abandoned without his own?

Who will cry for the little boy?
He cried himself to sleep.
Who will cry for the little boy?
He never had for keeps.

Who will cry for the little boy?
He walked the burning sand
Who will cry for the little boy?
The boy inside the man.

Who will cry for the little boy?
Who knows well hurt and pain
Who will cry for the little boy?
He died again and again.

Who will cry for the little boy?
A good boy he tried to be
Who will cry for the little boy?
Who cries inside of me.

(Fisher, 2003)

In the spring of 1980, I received a gift I had been praying for since I was eight years old. I received two sisters; they were 11 and 12 years old. They were the first two of five sisters who were placed in our family to be adopted. They were the sisters I always wanted and dreamed of, but what I did not understand was the pain, rejection, and abuse they experienced prior to coming to our home and how these experiences would impact their lives. The day my sisters arrived, they were greeted by my family with gifts and food. My entire family came to meet them and

was excited to show them how much they would be a part of our family and how they belonged with us.

My family has a long history of adoption and foster care. This history extends back three generations and has impacted me in various ways. Most importantly, this history has continued to raise questions in my mind about the importance of spirituality along with faith, hope, optimism, and sense of meaning in reducing health risk behaviors. Several of my family members acknowledge spirituality as a component needed to cause positive behavior changes in their lives. Their stories also show demonstrations of faith, hope, optimism, and sense of meaning working together in many of their life choices.

In 1926, my maternal great grandmother, Nellie Yearby died while giving birth to a baby girl. My grandmother, Cora Yearby, the middle child of Nellie Yearby, had nine siblings, three brothers and six sisters. After Nellie's death, my grandmother and her siblings were left to care of themselves. Their oldest brother John, who was 17 years old at the time of his mother's death, was the only employed sibling. John vowed to take care of his brothers and sisters. All of the siblings except John, the new born baby, and one sister Versey, remained in school. Versey assumed the responsibility of homemaker.

The Yearby family lived together for three years without any detection from the outside world of their extremely impoverished living conditions. During their third year of living on their own one of their school teachers became aware of their living conditions. They had been seen gathering food from garbage bins. She reported their situation to the authorities and the Yearbys were separated and placed in various foster homes. Although they were sent to different foster homes, my grandmother, Cora, promised each of her siblings they would keep up with each other no matter where they lived. They kept this promise to each other until the time of their deaths.

Cora Yearby, my grandmother, was placed in a foster home with three of her brothers. In the first home they were placed, they were physically and verbally abused. My grandmother often talked of the having to watch her foster family eat meals while she and her brothers were told there was no food for them. Their daily meal was oatmeal, which was prepared on Monday and heated up every day of the week. She often described her experience as that of a slave. She and her brothers cooked and cleaned, but were not entitled to any of the benefits of living in family unit. She also was beaten on a regular basis by the father in the foster home. After several years of Cora being beaten, her brother told their foster father if he beat his sister again he was going to kill him. The father beat her again. Cora's brother took a gun from the home of his friend whose father was a police officer. He was planning to kill him.

On the day he planned to kill their foster father, Cora, during a school assignment, was asked to write about the chores she was responsible for at home. After submitting the assignment her teacher read the list and became concerned with the level of responsibilities she had at such a young age. She notified the authorities and social services and the police were sent with social services to investigate. After arriving at the foster home and becoming aware of the severity of their living arrangements, the children were removed from the home.

My grandmother and her three brothers were sent to live with another family who loved and cared for them as if they were their own. Unfortunately, this experience was short lived. The father of the home suddenly died and the mother was not able to care for the children on her own. My grandmother and her three brothers were split up and sent to different places. By this time, my grandmother decided she no longer wanted to be in foster care. She ran away from home, dropped out of school, and began living with friends. She went from house to house living with different people while the authorities were diligently looking for her. There were many

instances when the authorities would find out where she was living. Her friends would let her know the authorities were looking for her and she would leave and move to the house of another friend. She continued to live from house to house until she got a job. When Cora found a job, she began to make a life for herself.

In 1939, at the age of 20, my grandmother gave birth to her first child Joan Yearby, who is my mother. Cora had three more daughters and adopted her sister's daughter when the child's mother died during another pregnancy. After the birth of her second child, Cora married Harry Jenkins, and had two children with him. My grandfather, Harry Jenkins, left home at the age of 14. During the first 14 years of his life, he experienced severe beatings at the hands of his mother and decided he no longer wanted to endure the abuse. He moved out of the state. He never returned home, not even for the funeral of his mother. Although Harry was a good provider, he was an alcoholic who enjoyed the company of other women, and he was physically abusive to Cora.

Many years into Cora and Harry's marriage, Cora became "saved." This term is used in the Christian church to describe a discovery of a deeper spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ, in which the Bible is used as a blue print to give instructions that influenced how she would raise her children, interact with others, and live her life. She began implementing many changes in her home. Cora gave up smoking and using profanity. She and her family attended church, and stopped listening to secular music. My grandfather, Harry, would not adopt these practices for 15 years. During these 15 years, he continued to abuse alcohol, see other women, and beat my grandmother. Although my grandmother was only eight years old at the time of her mother's death, she talked about the spirituality of her mother. She remembered her mother praying over her and sharing Bible stories with her and her siblings. She especially remembered her mother

talking about the importance of family and looking after one another. These were the traits she passed down to her children and grandchildren. The lives of my grandmother, her siblings, and my grandfather mimicked the lives of children who might have lost hope or a sense of purpose. Instead, their lives were triumphant. Although neither of my grandparents completed high school, by the end of their lives, my grandmother and grandfather owned several businesses and property, and were leaders in their church. They believed their spiritual life was the key to their success.

My mother, Joan, was the oldest daughter of Cora. She always considered Harry her father and he considered her his daughter. She did not know her birth father. My mother was raised with her four sisters. They all chose different career paths and life styles. There was something similar about how they embraced family. In addition to the children my mother adopted, two of her sisters also adopted children. A third sister became the care giver for many families and their children. The fourth sister, who was adopted, chose to search out her biological family members on her father's side of the family.

My mother attended Southern Illinois University and earned two Bachelor degrees, History and English. She was the only person at that time to attend college in her family. Even though my grandmother, Cora, did not complete high school, academics, books, and school were very important in her household. Like Cora, my mother stressed the importance of academics, books, and school. In 1967, at the age of 28, my mother gave birth to me. I was born to a single mother. When I was three years old, my mother was "saved". My mother, similar to her mother, raised me in a strict Christian household. This experience consisted of attending church two to three days a week, daily prayer and Bible reading, and countless hours of community service. I

was trained that all of my life decisions should come from the instructions of the Bible. My daily routine consisted of a strict schedule of daily choirs, bed time, and meal times.

There was one thing my mother chose to do differently than her mother. She always felt that children should have a voice and be able to express their feelings. My grandmother was from the generation that said “do what I say and don’t question me.” If my mother questioned my grandmother or disagreed with what she said, my grandmother would say “so you’re saying I am lying.” If my mother would have said “yes” the repercussions would have been severe. Because of my mother’s experience, I was allowed to have a voice and input in most decisions affecting my life. I was allowed to try and explore many new things, make lots of mistakes, and still have the approval of my mother. Once my sisters came to live with us, these beliefs also were instilled in them.

Over the years, I watched my sisters thrive in after-school activities, develop relationships, sort through pain, and use personal strengths associated with resiliency-- social competence, problem solving, autonomy, and sense of purpose. Until I began preparing this research study, I never thought about the stories they brought with them when they entered our lives. My two sisters (Sisters A and B), who came to live with us during the spring of 1980, were biological sisters. They were two of eight siblings. At the ages of two and three, they were removed from their home by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) because of their mother’s addiction to heroin and cocaine, and because she was a prostitute.

Soon after they were placed with our family for adoption, their previous foster family told their caseworker, they only wanted Sisters A and B because of the money they could receive from the state. In this previous home, they were sexually, emotionally, and physically abused. They were not taught proper social skills. Simple tasks such as answering the phone and eating

ice cream were skills they had not learned. They were extremely malnourished and were forced to wear unsightly haircuts. Their clothes were at least 20 years out of date. My sisters wore the scars of abused children. Physical scars were on their bodies and emotional scars became more apparent to us as we began to interact with them. During our first meal together, Sister B spilled her milk. She responded by jumping up and hiding under the table; we asked her why she was under the table, she responded by telling us she was waiting for her beating. In their previous foster home, Sister A and B also were given nick names as a reminder of their jet black skin, Co-Co and Cookie (Oreo Cookie) were the names they answered to.

The abuse and rejection they experienced affected them differently. Sister A was withdrawn, did not know how to speak up for herself, and was used to being blamed for everything because Sister B was favored in their foster home. She also experienced abuse on a regular basis at the hands of Sister B. She believed she was ugly and not important enough to be heard or loved. She often seemed depressed. Sister B was outgoing and a fast learner. At the age of 13, one of her favorite things to do was to play with her baby dolls outside. While many other teen girls were discovering boys and hanging out with friends, she was discovering how to eat ice cream on a cone, and dialing long distance on the telephone, and learning that tantrums were not appropriate for a girl her age. She was not embarrassed about her immature behavior. She appeared to have a sense of pride and she was happy to have discovered so many new things.

Three years after Sisters A and B adjusted to life with us, we begged our mother to adopt a girl we saw during an adoption banquet. She (Sister C) was soon placed in our home to be adopted. She was 13 years old. Sister C had been in the DCFS system for a while. Prior to coming to us she was with a family where the foster father kept her in the garage in a cage with a dog collar and chain around her neck. She was fed and slept in the cage. When her living

arrangements were discovered, she was removed from the home. Sister C was originally taken from her birth family after her mother was diagnosed with various mental disorders and put in a mental facility. Prior to being taken from her mother, she was taught how to survive living on the streets. She learned how to steal, con, lie, cheat, and do whatever it took to survive. Sister C always appeared to be happy. She had a bubbly personality and she loved to laugh. She liked to play jokes on people and was often the life of the party. She was also a habitual liar and thief. She could tell a story that would make you cry only to find out the story wasn't true. She would often steal items of clothing from our closets and give or sell them to her friends at school. The experiences she brought to our home caused a lot of dissention. She was able to turn her feelings on and off. It appeared that she never truly bonded with our family or anyone else. She was emotionally detached.

Sister D transitioned into our home at the age of 12. She was happy, outgoing, and confident. She was the peace maker of the group who made friends easily. On the day her adoption was to become legal, she made a decision that would impact our family for a long time. We were all dressed to go to court. When we arrived at the court house, we were anticipating the celebration of her adoption, when she changed her mind. In front of the judge, she began screaming, I don't want to be adopted. We were all stunned. We had no previous indication that she did not want to be adopted. Sister D's story is complicated. Prior to being placed with DCFS, she was living with her birth mother. Her mother was not interested in the responsibilities associated with being a mother. She was an educated woman with multiple degrees who was only interested in climbing the corporate ladder. Sister D was one of two siblings. She had an older sister with whom she desperately wanted a close relationship. Sister D's oldest sister lived with relatives. However, these relatives would not take Sister D. Sister D was cared for by her

mother's boyfriend. When her mother broke up with her boyfriend, Sister D was placed with DCFS. The day her adoption was to be finalized, she was still holding on to the hope that she would be accepted and placed with her biological family. Her family never accepted her and her adoption status was changed to long term foster care. She was never legally adopted. She remained in our house and we became the only close family she would ever have.

Sister E was eleven when she was placed in our home as a foster child. She was one of eight siblings. Her siblings were all sent to different foster homes. She was a good student and very obedient; she loved having a family who loved and cared for her. We spoiled her because she was the baby. Sister E was removed from both her mother and father. Both of her parents were drug addicts who would leave her and her siblings home alone for weeks at a time. When Sister E was about 12 years old, she began to talk openly about her sexual desires to my mother. Because of some of the problems her other siblings were experiencing in their foster homes, DCFS decided to bring all of the siblings to the hospital to run a battery of psychological tests. During the psychological testing, they discovered that during the times when their parents left them unattended, the siblings were having sexual intercourse with each other. They believed this was normal behavior. All of the siblings were assigned a counselor who helped them work through their experiences.

Sister E wanted desperately to be adopted. She was never free to be adopted. During the late 1980's and the early 1990's, DCFS work effortlessly to keep families together. As long as her parents continued to fulfill the requirements made by the courts, their parental rights would not be taken away. They always completed all requirements, but they were never able to gain custody of their children again.

Although each of my sisters experienced a lot of hurt and pain prior to coming to live with us, they appeared to be well adjusted and headed for a prosperous life. It was during their late teenage years we began to see unhealthy behaviors developing in each of their lives. In spite of these unhealthy behaviors, they all completed high school.

At the age of 18, during her senior year of high school, Sister A started missing school. She missed many days of school and was not going to graduate. Because of her excellent school record, the school administration assisted her with making up assignments and completing exams, and she was allowed to graduate. She was two months pregnant when she graduated and decided to move out of our home. She moved one block away with her boyfriend. Unfortunately, her boyfriend had two other pregnant girlfriends who also lived with them. Each of the girlfriends took turns being the main girl friend when they received their government assistance check. Sister A became a victim of emotional and physical abuse.

This was also the time when Sister A began to experiment with drugs and alcohol. She became a drug addict. She shrank from 165 pounds at 5’7’’ to 90 pounds. Her desire for drugs caused her to participate in a plot involving two of her cousins stealing $100,000 from drug dealers. Although she never actually saw the money, she benefitted from the money. She went on a smoking binge and participated in a shopping spree. She returned home and as she was walking up the front stairs, she was approached by the drug dealers who owned the stolen money. They asked her where her cousins were and she replied she did not know. They kidnapped her and put her in the trunk. She did not go easily; she was fighting and screaming so hard that many of the neighbors saw the incident and called the police.

Sister A was taken to an abandoned building where drug addicts were being supplied with drugs and giving themselves injections. She was taunted and threatened and told that her

family was in danger if she did not give up her cousins. She was being truthful; she did not know where her cousins were. Her cousins told their parents what they had done and their parents sent them out of the state of Illinois. Meanwhile, the police were able to locate the vehicles involved in the kidnapping and my sister was found. She was taken to the police station where my mother and aunt were waiting.

She was taken into an interrogation room to give a statement. Prior to giving the statement, she asked if she could see my mother and aunt. She told them that the drug dealers told her if she revealed the identity of the men who kidnapped her they would kill her family. She, along with my mother and aunt, decided she would not disclose their identity. Sometime after this event, Sister A went into a Christian rehabilitation center to kick her drug habit. After returning home, she remained clean for about 4-6 months and then she resumed her old habits. She sold drugs and prostituted herself to maintain her habit. She also became involved in many violent relationships which have had a great impact on how her children view relationships. She has four children and she taught them how to steal, lie, and cheat to get whatever they wanted and needed. On occasions, she enrolled in college, but she never completed a semester. Unfortunately, three of her four children, who are girls, have begun to replicate many of her behaviors. When Sister A talks about her future, she says she is tired and wants to change. She believes one of the keys to her getting her life together is increasing her spirituality. However, she says she is not ready to take the steps to increase her spirituality.

Sister B actually began to change during her junior year in high school. She was becoming secretive. At the age of 16, she befriended an older gentleman and began performing sexual favors for money and other items. It was during this relationship that she began to experiment with drugs. After Sister B completed high school, she decided to go to cosmetology

school. It was in cosmetology school where she began dating a gentleman who would become her husband. Soon after they began a relationship, we noticed he had a drug problem. Soon after noticing his drug problem, we became aware my sister's drug habit was increasing. She eventually became pregnant and they married. They began a fast spiral downward. They completed cosmetology school, but never took their licensing exams. Sister B's marriage was filled with prostitution, drugs, alcohol, and physical abuse. She birthed three children. Her family moved every three to six months. Her children changed schools each time they moved. They lived in many shelters. Although Sister B is still married, she is no longer living with her husband. Her husband chose to leave her because during one of her drug binges, she hired two men to kill him and steal a large settlement he received from being injured at his place of employment.

Sister B has never owned up to what her husband said about the murder plot. After their split, Sister B applied for social security income based on her addiction problem. She also began to say something was wrong with her children so they could receive a social security income. She was successful with two of her three children. Her children have been greatly affected by the life she lived before them. Her oldest child is a senior in college and is thriving. She has chosen not to use drugs or alcohol and has found school to be an outlet. Her middle child graduated from high school. One week later, he was arrested for breaking and entering. He has been out of high school for two years and during that time period, he has been in and out of jail, fathered a child and he has become addicted to drugs. Her youngest child who is 19 years old just received a six year prison sentence for an attempted murder and armed robbery charge.

Sister B continues to use drugs, and engage in prostitution even though she is HIV positive. She recently entered a Christian rehabilitation center. She says she wants to change her

life. Although Sister B has drug addictions and multiple problems with stability, she always manages to pay her bills and periodically she works as a certified nursing assistant. She is very resourceful; if there is a free program, or a program that will help her pay bills she searches out the program and takes advantage of every benefit. Sister B believes the key to being clean and changing her life around is her spirituality. She has on many occasions asked me to pray for her so she will be successful in making changes.

At the age of 16, Sister C began to tell lies about our family. This behavior was usually in retaliation against the punishments or restrictions she had been given because of her behavior. She would tell lies to friends, family, and neighbors. She tried to make people think she was mistreated. There was one incident where she wanted my mother to buy her certain name brand clothing. Because my mother did not buy these items, she would cut and tear her clothing. During important events or church functions, she would wear raggedy clothing and refuse to comb her hair. She once convinced a family in the neighborhood that she was being mistreated. The mother of the family came to see my mother to talk about her concerns. My mother tried to tell the neighbor that my sister was lying. The lady offered to let my sister stay with her and my mother agreed. She told the neighbor, you will see how she really is. While my sister was living with the neighbor, my mother was financially responsible for her. Bi-monthly, she paid the neighbor for Sister C's expenses. Within two months, the neighbor brought Sister C home refusing to continue caring for her. She said Sister C was causing all kinds of problems and chaos in her home.

Sister C stayed home long enough to graduate from high school. She was pregnant with her first child and had the baby two months later. Within a month after the birth of her son, Sister C moved in with her boyfriend because he did not want our family to touch his baby. She left our

home and began to experience violent physical abuse. She had three children with him. She would try to sneak to see my mother. She would tell my mother about the abuse, but she did not want to leave him. When he would find out she was at my mother's home, there were always repercussions. For example, he set our house on fire and has broken windows. One day, she decided she was tired of the abuse and she relocated to Carbondale, IL, where she stayed with me for a while. Within six months, she found housing and enrolled in J.A. Logan College. In college, she had an A average and was involved in student government. Periodically, I would go to her house to check on her and her children. We did not have the type of relationship where we did things together, but she would contact me if she needed something or was in trouble. I began to notice she was not caring for her children properly. She had begun using drugs and she soon became part of a car boosting ring, which consisted of renting cars and selling them but reporting them stolen. She received prison time and her three children were placed in foster care. We were notified by the authorities and they were placed with me short term and then sent to live with my mother. When Sister C was out of prison, she was able to get her children back. She stayed clean for a while, but soon began using drugs again.

Sister C lost custody of her children when she accidently ran over her fourth child, while she was high on drugs. She did not take him to the doctor; she took him to the babysitter's home and told the babysitter not to bother him, he was resting. Her son was only two at the time. Immediately, DCFS was called in to investigate. The children were removed and put into foster care. She was sent to prison and her children remained in foster care. I told my mother I suspected something was wrong because I had not heard from Sister C. Soon after the conversation, my mother was contacted by DCFS and told what happened. She also was told that Sister C did not want us to know where her children were and she wanted them to remain in the

system. The case worker for the children had been to court to try to get permission from the judge to contact us. Sister C lost custody of her children. The father of the oldest three children had an opportunity to take the children, but he told DCFS he did not want the children. The location of the father of the fourth child was not known at that time. My mother was able to adopt Sister C's four boys. Her fifth child and only girl was placed for adoption with a family in Murphysboro, Illinois, immediately after she was born.

During Sister C's prison time, she did not contact our family, but she stayed in contact with the father of her older three sons. He lived about four blocks from my mother. One day while he was walking down the street, he saw two of his children. When Sister C contacted him, he told her that the boys had been adopted by my mother. We had not heard from her in three years. We also believed she would not have contacted us if we had not adopted her boys. After she finished her prison term, she came to my mother's house to see her sons. She began spending a lot of time with her sons. My mother was told to carefully watch her and to be careful about how much contact she allowed Sister C to have with her boys. Although my mother followed the advice, Sister C still found ways to influence her sons. She taught them how to sneak out, and would take them to department stores to steal. They soon started stealing from my mother and burglarizing homes and cars. Although the oldest three sons are only 23, 22, 21 years of age, they have a combined prison record of more than 18 years. The 23-year-old son, who has a son of his own, has adopted his father physical abuse practices. He did not complete high school and he struggles to find adequate work. The 22-year-old son, who did not graduate from eighth grade, just received a 50-year prison sentence for arm robbery and attempted murder. The 21-year-old son, just completed a prison term and has rejoined his girl friend and their two year old son. He did not complete high school. He does not want a traditional job. Instead, he enjoys

making a life out of selling drugs, and stealing. At the beginning of August 2011, the fourth son went to live with his birth father. He had begun to sell drugs and joined a gang. During the spring of 2011, his father contacted him at my mother's home and began to develop a relationship with him. After several visits made by his father to see him at my mother's home, there was an agreement that the fourth son needed to relocate. He needed a new start. He has moved to a northern suburb of Chicago and is attending a new school along with his seven siblings belonging to his father and his wife. Sister C continues to live a life as a prostitute and a Heroin addict. We hear from her periodically and worry that one day we may get a phone call saying she is dead.

Sister D was not adopted but remained in our home for several years. By age 16, she had two abortions and was pregnant with her third child. After she had her daughter, she began to think she did not have to abide by the rules of the household. She was sent to an orphanage, but my mother continued to babysit her child. After being in the orphanage for one year, she asked my mother if she could come home and my mother agreed. Sister D lived at home for several years until she and a family friend rented an apartment. During the time she lived on her own, she was heavily into pornography. She enjoyed sexual relationships with many men. She always longed for a healthy relationship and a ready-made family. She constantly found herself in physically abusive relationships in which her partners would decide to leave. Desperate for a change, in 1996, Sister D decided to move to California. She was hoping to develop a relationship with her birth mother, who lived in California. She stayed with her mother for a while but soon after going to California, she knew she could no longer stay with her mother. She lived in shelters for a few years. She was finally able to gain employment. She went to cosmetology school, graduated, began working as a cosmetologist, and took a second job to

make ends meet. Things appeared to be going well. She was involved in church and singing in the choir. She began dating again; however, she had chosen to date same sex partners. She expressed the desire to be treated with love and compassion. She felt men had never treated her as if she mattered.

One Sunday morning while attending church, Sister D, in front of the entire congregation, was confronted by an angry ex-girlfriend. Sister D had not shared her sexual orientation with any church members. The type of church she went to would not allow or support same-sex relationships. Her ex-girlfriend knew the church's position, but she used this as a way of hurting Sister D. Once the pastor heard about Sister D's relationship, she was asked to step down from all auxiliaries in the church. After stepping down, she decided she no longer wanted to stay at the church. Sister D then began to explore her sexuality more. All of her relationships came to an abusive end.

In 2004, Sister D became pregnant with her second child. She decided to marry the father of her child. She also decided to return to the church she had left. Soon after she married, she became pregnant with her third child. During her third pregnancy, she filed for divorce. It was during this time that her oldest child, who was now a teenager, began exhibiting signs of being promiscuous. Sister D would soon find herself in the middle of another scandal at church. This time it was because of the sexual behavior of her teenage daughter. Her daughter had participated in sexual relations with most of the male youth who attended the youth services. She was told that she could no longer attend youth group, but was required to stay in the pastor's office during the youth services. Uncomfortable with this decision, Sister D decided to leave the church again.

After leaving the church a second time, she found herself pursuing same sex relationships. Although she felt her relationships were going okay, she said she felt the rest of her

life was not going well. She lost her job and had to move three different times in the same year. She believed the key to stability for her and her girls was to reconnect with her spirituality. She decided to try once again to go back to the church she left. She has enrolled in junior college to pursue her dream of becoming a mortician. She is working diligently to provide stability for her younger two children. Her oldest daughter, who did not finish high school, is a 19 year old mother and a divorcee who would rather party than care for her child and plan for her future.

Sister D continues to encourage her oldest daughter to make different decisions. She worries about her daughter's future, but is determined to make a better life for herself and her younger two girls. As for family, although sister D was not adopted she refers to our family as the only family she has ever had. She attends family functions regularly and makes phone calls for special occasions and holidays. She is greatly loved by all of us.

Sister E completed high school and soon after graduation became pregnant with her first child. The father of her child did not complete high school. She had three more children with her boyfriend; however, during the birth of the last two he was married to another woman. Sister E soon began to follow in the footsteps of her birth mother and father. She became addicted to drugs and lost her job. After a while, she was unable to take care of her children. One of her biological sisters with whom she has maintained a close relationship, and her birth mother, who moved into her apartment, watched her children during the times she would disappear for drug binges. One day without any explanation other than the love for her children, she stopped using drugs. She became employed and currently works as a manager at a restaurant. She also dissolved the relationship with her children's father. She said she got tired of the abuse, lies, and deception. She is doing well and recognizes she needs to continue to make changes in her life if

she wants to stay off drugs. I have not heard her talk much about her spirituality and I don't know how or to what she attributes her success with becoming drug free.

After 30 years of knowing, loving, interacting, and seeing the obstacles my sisters experienced with their families, it was hard for me to imagine how their lives mimicked poverty, crime, and family dysfunction. I believed they had been given skills that would ensure that they would have a successful life filled with purpose. Instead, they were women who had not found their purpose and had not experienced a life filled with purpose. I share their stories with their permission and with great compassion for their personal journeys. Their stories show children who have experienced adversity, then experienced a home of love, support, and training, only to choose roads that would become detrimental to their lives and the lives of their families.

I began to ask myself questions. Was there an area of personal strengths they lacked? Why did I turn out so different from my sisters? My life had not been without it hardships, being a rape victim as a youth and the product of a single mother who pulled herself up from poverty, I somehow managed to approach life with a sense of purpose. As a youth, I had plans to become an emergency room surgeon. I went to Lindblom Technical high school, a math and science school, and I excelled academically. In addition to my academics, I was a gymnast and a cheerleader. These activities, along with my church responsibilities did not leave much room for leisure. In 1985, at the age of 17, I enrolled in Southern Illinois University. I was happy to be on my own and able to make my own decisions.

During my first year of college, I was very focused on the academic goals I set for myself. I was on the Dean's List and completed my first year of college with a 3.5 grade point average. During the second semester of my freshman year, I decided to join a sorority. I also began to have unprotected sex, experiment with marijuana, and started skipping classes. As a

result of this behavior my grades plummeted. Within three years, I was suspended from the university. I made an appeal to the Dean of the Science Department and I was allowed to return the university. I was given another chance. It was during this time, I made a decision, I was not leaving Carbondale without a degree. I continued pursuing my degree. About one year later, I discovered I was pregnant. I was also out of financial aid money. With a baby on the way, I decided to get married.

My husband, who also attended Lindblom, was a senior when I was a freshman. We did not date in high school, but I knew who he was because he was an athlete and I was a cheerleader. During his senior year of high school he had to move from Chicago to California. He was in a gang and there was a hit out on his life. His family was told by the school administration that the gangs from the neighborhood were planning to kill him. He was sent to live with his uncle and aunt in California. It was in California that he began to think about going to college. During his senior year, he applied to Southern Illinois University and was accepted. He enrolled in the radio and television program and, for the next five years, he pursued his degree in that department.

During this time, he also developed an alcohol and drug habit. His drugs of choice included marijuana and cocaine. Within a short period of time his grades began to fall. After experiencing suspensions and re-admittance to the radio and television program on more than one occasion, he was kicked out. However, because of the good reputation he had with his supervisor that he worked under, she was able to pull some strings and he was allowed to enter the Administration of Justice Program. I remember his supervisor saying to him, “This is your last chance.” My husband completed his Bachelor degree in eight years. As for me, it took 13 years. Because I was without financial aid, I would work a semester to pay for school and then I

would go to school the next semester. My husband and I both worked minimum wage jobs, which at that time paid $3.85 per hour, while we were raising our daughter. Our daughter, who was born July of 1990, was one of the inspirations I needed to re-evaluate my life.

On New Year's Eve 1990, I attended a church chili dinner with my mother. I began to reminisce how my mother raised me and I felt something was missing in my life. I began thinking about my life. I begin thinking about what I wanted out of life and how tired I was of living in poverty. I looked at my daughter and I thought about the type of life I wanted her to have. I thought about what I wanted to teach her, what I wanted her to experience. I knew I needed to make some changes. I knew the most important change I wanted my daughter to see was me having a deep spiritual connection with God. On New Year's Eve, I got on my knees and I told God I needed to change. I told God, I wanted to recommit my life to him. I wanted to live a life that was centered on living by the Bible.

About one year later, my husband made the same commitment. Over the next several years, we began to see changes in our lives. We went from living in government-assisted housing and receiving food stamps to getting graduate degrees, getting better paying jobs, and purchasing a home. We attribute our spirituality to being the catalyst that provided constant reinforcement, hope, optimism, faith, and reminding us that we were put on earth for a purpose. My husband often talks about his drug addictions and knows he has been drug-free for 17 years because of his spirituality.

We also have seen the success of our children because of our commitment to our spirituality. Our daughter, who is an adult, and who embraces having a deep spiritual connection to God attributes her spirituality as the reason for her academic success, which includes high school National Honors Society, the completion of two four year degree programs in three years,

and being accepted into a graduate program. My son is a teenager, whose spirituality is guided by our example. We believe he will have to make his own decisions about his spirituality once he is an adult. He also has exhibited excellence both academically and athletically. He is an A student, and he plays three sports for which he has gone to state competition.

I thought about the four personal strengths critical to resiliency. The more I realized, as my sisters and I became young adults, I had a sense of purpose that they did not. I had spirituality, faith, optimism, hope, and a sense of meaning. I believe my sisters had hope, and optimism. I believe these characteristics could be seen in their attempts and successes of furthering their education and gaining employment. I also believe my sisters and I were given tools that are equated with resilience and having a successful life, social competence, problem solving skills, a sense of autonomy, and protective factors. However, having these tools and knowing how to apply these tools were not enough to keep us on the path to success. There were so many instances, where my sisters believed if they were able to reconnect to their spirituality, they would be able to make the changes necessary to change their life. My sisters and I recognize that, spirituality does not eliminate, pain, problems, or disappointments. But, it does provide an avenue to believe things will get better when you have nothing else to believe in, and strength to persevere when everyone has given up on you.

I began to wonder how these important traits of sense of purpose influenced my decisions and how potentially they could help Black American youth make healthy choices. I wondered if these personal strengths could be measured. I began to search for an instrument measuring the concepts associated with a sense of purpose, specifically those related to spirituality in youth and young adults. I was unable to find one and, in my search, I realized my need to explore how spirituality, faith, optimism, hope, and a sense of meaning were related to each other and

influenced sense of purpose in youth. Because my husband and I believe our spirituality changed the course of our lives, we began thinking of ways we could impact children who were at risk of not being successful, because of their exposure to poverty, drugs, gang violence, single parents, lack of education, or sexual and emotional abuse.

In 2007, my husband and I became co-founders of One Vision Outreach Training Center, a youth ministry that incorporates spirituality, faith, optimism, hope, and a sense of meaning. In the three years since its inception, the outreach ministry has served 27 families, which included 44 children participating in program activities. Initially, the participants were selected from the Single Parents and Children group (SPAC) which I started as a church cell group. The selection of participants continued to grow by word of mouth. When we moved to the Carol Mosley Braun Center, our participant population grew to include residents living in the Lake Heights public housing community. There were no stipulations or requirements required to participate in our program. The goal of the youth ministry is to teach personal and social skills, including decision making, communication, stress management, goal setting, and critical thinking skills. The personal and social skills are applied using the Eight Dimensions of Family Wholeness model (Gary & Gary, 2007) which includes house administration, finance, health, hospitality, social relationships, community, individual exploration, and learning exploration. Each application of personal and social skills training, as well as the Eight Dimensions of Family Wholeness, includes Biblical principles.

During a program session, youth participate in worship followed by round table discussion which addresses problems and concerns they face on a daily basis. Youth are taught to pray and have an opportunity to pray for each other during round table discussion. At each session, a Bible story is introduced and the character traits of the selected Biblical character

become the focus of the discussion. The character traits are further discussed by role playing, examples given from the children's daily life, journaling, dramas, work sheets, and interactive activities. Scripture memorization and skills are taught weekly. Every third meeting, the groups have a trip or a guest speaker to reinforce skills training. Participants also are required to participate in two to four scheduled community service projects per year. At the end of each spring, the youth are awarded medals, ribbons, and certificates to celebrate their accomplishments.

I thought conducting a research study about families incorporating these five concepts of sense of purpose, spirituality, faith, optimism, hope, and sense of meaning, would provide a starting point for addressing how these concepts influence health risk behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs of youth. I also felt I had established a level of trust with youth participating in our program that would improve my chances of getting an honest, in-depth profile of perspectives of these youth and their parents. This study also will serve as an initial assessment to get a sense of the views of parents and youth about sense of purpose.

Researcher's Reflexivity and Subjectivity

My reflexivity and subjectivity as the researcher for this study were a continuum that I examined throughout the entire study. Reflexivity was my self-reflection on the research process. Subjectivity was my internal understanding of sense of purpose (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Examining my reflexivity assisted me with a self reflection of the research process (Hays & Singh, 2012). Examining my subjectivity helped me understand my internal perceptions of the sense of purpose phenomenon. There were three core conditions about myself that I looked at as I examined my reflexivity. The core conditions were authenticity, unconditional positive regard, and empathy. There were thoughts I kept in mind as I explored my

subjectivity throughout the study. I thought about how I would embrace my subjectivity, represent the participants of the study, how I would align my role as a researcher with my position as a "naïve inquirer" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 147) of my study, and how the participants attitudes, beliefs and behaviors would influence my study.

The first core condition that I examined was authenticity. The authenticity of my self-reflection came from a very personal point of view. My research topic was important to me because I am a Christian. Spirituality and the dimensions associated with spirituality are very important to me, and I believe they can be a valuable avenue that could help people turn their lives around. Because I had prior knowledge of my study participants, I expected to find that most of them believed spirituality was important for their children, but not necessarily important for them as parents. I did not believe they had made a connection between spirituality, optimism, hope, faith, sense of meaning, and success. I believed the parents believed spirituality and the associated dimensions might help their children achieve success, but not them.

I also was born to a single mother. According to most statistics, I was considered an at-risk child. I am passionate about providing information, tools and, programs to those who have been branded statistically as having a small chance of becoming successful. I believe that a person who has discovered they were put on earth to accomplish something, and help others is more likely to see their life as valuable. When they see their life as valuable, they are more likely to go after their dreams.

The second core condition I examined was unconditional positive regard. I realized my critical need to collect data from the participants could not take precedence over their voices. Their voices had to be heard, regardless of my expectations about what I thought I might find out in the study. While evaluating my unconditional positive regard, I recognized the importance of

creating a space for my participants to feel acceptance about their true thoughts and feelings without judgment (Hays & Singh, 2012).

I had developed relationships with the participants. I had an opportunity to see them at very vulnerable times in their lives. I believed they trusted me, and knew they could share their intimate thoughts without judgment. I also recognized my own vulnerability, through sharing very intimate thoughts about my family as part of this study. This vulnerability had given me compassion for the stories of my participants. I reported what I found out during data collection. However, some of my expectations were different from the data I collected. I was surprised and was compelled to inquire about the differences.

I realized I had reactions about what my participants shared. When this occurred, I reflected on my job as a researcher, I listened with understanding, and focused on the goal of allowing their voices to be heard, during both data collection and analysis. I recognized I had some judgments as I began this research process. I recognized my belief that everyone experiences adversity and should be able to rebound, if they sought help, didn't give up, and had a desire to change. I also knew I believed people who have continual chaos in their life could change this behavior by implementing spirituality into their life.

Empathy was the third core condition I self-evaluated. This core condition required that I accurately identified thoughts and feelings of the participants (Hays & Singh, 2012). I recognized that there might be information that the participants shared that I did not identify with, and did not want to accept or acknowledge. Because of my passion for life and seeing people succeed, it was hard for me, when participants displayed or communicated their belief that they could not have a better life. I knew it also was possible for me to see the participants' data in ways that did or did not align with what the participants actually said in their own words.

I believed their mindsets were different than mine. From my interaction with many of them, I had seen a poverty mindset in which participants had an entitlement mentality, believed they should get something from nothing, had little respect for others or their property, and have very little empathy for others that were struggling. Because of this, I believed I thought differently from my participants and I knew I would need to ask for clarification of their meanings and thoughts throughout the data collection process. Ultimately, these were their stories. I want to know their stories so I could discover how to help them and others reach their full potential in life.

Background of the Problem

During the 1970's, the topic of resilience in children at risk (Masten, 2001) began to gain interest. Pioneers researching resiliency agreed that they needed to understand what made the difference in the lives of resilient children who were classified as at risk. They also thought this information could potentially guide and influence policy (Anthony, 1974; Garmez, 1971, 1974; Murphy, 1974; Murphy & Moriarty, 1976; Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1982). Anthony, Garmezy, Murphy, Rutter, and Werner were researchers interested in the significance of children developing well, despite the level of risk or adversity to which they were exposed. Their work would become known as resilience research (Masten, 2001). These researchers used the term resilience to describe three different phenomena: "good developmental outcomes despite high risk status, sustained competence under stress, and recovery from trauma" (Werner, 1995, p.81). Although these pioneers would present their research from different academic disciplines, (child development, psychology, psychiatry, and sociology), some of their academic research would focus on children and youth who overcame great odds (Werner, 1995).

Garmezy, the founder of Project Competence, a research institution developed to study competence in the context of adversity (Masten, Hubbard, Gest, Tellegan, Garmezy & Ramirez, 1999), based some of his research on understanding how adversity levels impact resilience and maladaption. Garmezy's (1991) research also supports the idea that efficacy was enhanced by the presence of protective factors; however, the presence of risk variables was directly related to psychological disorders (Rutter, 1987). When protective factors were in place among risk variables, protective processes begin to modify or reduce the risk variables (Garmezy, 1991).

Anthony's (1974) and Rutter's (2010) research focused on adversity and its psychological impact on individuals, specifically children. Rutter also studied the impact genetics and environment had on normal and abnormal psychological development (Rutter, 2010). Rutter believed there was a direct correlation between a child's psychological functioning, the genetics he/she inherits from biological parents, and the environment in which he/she was exposed (2010). His research found that young children who had been exposed to long-term environmental depravation, when placed in different environments, including extremely healthy and nurturing environments, they did not significantly benefit from the new environment in terms of psychological functioning. Because of these findings, Rutter believed protective environmental processes and positive coping responses were essential in combating long-term environmental depravities (2010).

In the 1950's, on the Island of Kauai in Hawaii, Werner and Smith (1992) began a longitudinal study that looked at the resilience of 700 children. The study followed the lives of these children from birth until adulthood. They discovered that most of the high risk children who developed coping problems during their adolescent years had overcome these problems by the time they were adults. They attributed this success to individual and social protective factors

(Werner and Smith, 1992). They also concluded that, regardless of these children's circumstances, caring, competence, and confidence were essential for their success as an adult. Murphy's (1946) research on the personality of a child expressed the idea that IQ exams, which have been used as a major guide to determine the educational capacity of a child, were not the best indicator of a child's academic abilities. Murphy argued that many children of adequate intelligence had personality problems influencing their learning difficulties rather than limited intelligence (Murphy).

Masten, a student of Garmezy, who participated in multiple studies at Project Competence, began to discuss the negative connotations associated with the deficit-focused models, which presented negative assumptions associated with children growing up with the threat of being disadvantaged or experiencing adversity (Masten, 2001). Instead of focusing on the adversity and threat of disadvantages of individuals, Masten discussed resilience, as a common phenomenon which resulted from the normal functioning of human adaptive systems. Masten believed that the development of individuals who had adaptive systems, which were protected and working well, would be robust even if these individuals faced severe adversity. If the adaptive systems were impaired, then there was a greater risk for developmental problems especially when individuals remained in unsafe environments for prolonged lengths of time (2001).

Benard (1991) synthesized the work of these pioneers and others to develop four categories of personal strengths found in resilient youth. These personal strengths were: social competence, autonomy, problem solving, and sense of purpose. The development of these four categories of personal strength and the individual, family, and community protective factors have been linked to the successful adaptation in high risk youth and children (Werner, 1995). In the

Kauai study, individuals who overcame many childhood adversities, selected and constructed environments by using the competencies they acquired through their development of protective factors and personal strengths. These environments reinforced and supported their approach to life.

The success of many of the Kauai children had been explained by their level of resilience (Werner, 1995). Masten (2001) referred to resilience as a phenomena characterized by positive outcomes that exist regardless of threats to development or adaption. Because resilience is contextual in its construction, two major judgments are assumed. The first judgment implies that, for a person to be considered resilient there must be a demonstrated risk (Masten). The second judgment implies that there is a criterion by which adaption and development are measured. These criteria are considered "good." There is much debate about the second judgment, although various criteria exist to measure resilience, deciding who should define resilience and by what standards remains a controversy (Masten).

Resiliency studies have used two types of designs to explain the variation in outcomes among high-risk children (Masten, 2001). These variations in outcomes have been explained through variable-focused approaches and person-focused approaches. The variable-focused approach uses multivariate statistics to test for the links between degrees of risk or adversity, outcomes, and qualities of individuals and/or environments that may function to compensate or protect children from adversity or risk. This type of design utilizes statistics and searches for specific and differential links between predictors and outcomes that would suggest an intervention is needed (Masten, 2001). This approach failed to capture patterns in the lives of individuals, however this loss minimized the big picture by overlooking specific regularities which could indicate who is at greater risk or in need of an intervention.

The person-focused approach compares people with different profiles, in a specific time span, using a specific set of criteria to differentiate resilient children from other children (Masten, 2001). This approach is designed to search for common and uncommon patterns in the lives of individuals. These patterns occur over time and are the result of multiple processes and constraints place on an individual's life (Bergman & Magnusson, 1997). This type of approach, however, may obscure specific linkages that may provide clues explaining certain processes (Masten et. al, 1999).

The accumulating data on resilience has explored competence levels (Gramezy, 1971, 1974, 1991; Masten, 2001; Masten et. al, 1999), academic achievement (Murphy, 1974), psychological factors (Anthony, 1974; Rutter, 2010), adaption and maladaption of behaviors resulting from adversity (Anthony, 1974; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992), the influence of protective factors (Benard, 1991; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992), and the development of models (Masten, 2001). With the classification of personal strengths, resilience research has explored the processes involved in achieving personal strengths (Benard, 1991). Resilience research has not explored the relationship between optimism, faith, hope, spirituality, and sense of meaning. Understanding these relationships would increase our understanding of how these constructs work together to promote a sense of purpose.

Need for the Study

Black Americans attribute spirituality, hope, faith, optimism, and sense of meaning as concepts which helped them think positively and continue striving when experiencing hard times (Washington & Moxley, 2001). These dimensions have been associated with resilience (Benard, 2004). Individual resiliency skills have been linked to levels of health disparities (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics [FIFCFS]; 2010Turner-Musa & Lipscomb,

2007). The more resilient a person is, the more likely he/she is to have a sense of meaning and purpose in life, thus reducing risky behaviors (Benard, 2004). In spite of the literature supporting spirituality, hope, faith, optimism, and sense of meaning within the Black American community, statistics reveal that health risk behaviors are disproportionately higher among Black American youth in comparison to the national average and other ethnic groups (CDC, 2009). Review of research literature indicated adolescents engaging in more health-risk behaviors are more likely to experience higher levels of poverty, lower academic achievement, and increased health problems as adults (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics [FIFCFS], 2010; Turner-Musa & Lipscomb, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe and interpret attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to a sense of purpose among Black American families participating in an outreach program in Southern, IL. Data obtained through individual interviews was analyzed to develop grounded theory. The grounded theory being developed was about a new understanding of the role of sense of purpose in the lives of selected Black American youth.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. How, if at all, is a sense of purpose demonstrated, taught and encouraged in the homes of selected Black American families?

2. How, if at all, are faith, optimism, hope, sense of meaning and spirituality expressed in the homes of these families?

3. How do youth perceive that their parents and/ or guardians demonstrate, teach and encourage a sense of purpose in their family?

4. How, if at all, does faith, optimism, hope, sense of meaning and spirituality impact the goals of these youth?

Significance of the Study

Through qualitative grounded theory the researcher attempted to explore sense of purpose by describing and interpreting attitudes, beliefs, and practices among Black American families participating in an outreach program in Southern, Illinois. Data collected from the study was critical to understand how attitudes, beliefs, and practices of parents and their children about sense of purpose were linked to their future goals. Sense of purpose is strongly associated with positive health behaviors and academic achievement (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics [FIFCFS], 2010; Turner-Musa & Lipscomb, 2007). Understanding parents' and children's attitudes, practices, and beliefs about having a sense of purpose is critical for the development of health education initiatives and effective trainings and programs. These initiatives would be designed to increase knowledge, encouragement, and facilitation about sense of purpose for adolescents and their parents. Trainings and programs may influence how parents encourage and facilitate a sense of purpose in their children. Trainings and community programs also may increase parental knowledge and awareness about the link between having a sense of purpose and success in life.

Understanding parents' and children's attitudes, practices, and beliefs about having a sense of purpose would be a valuable tool for other professionals, such as counselors, mentors, pastors, and psychologists. The findings may help other professionals develop professional preparation trainings that include strategies to increase sense of purpose in parents and youth. Findings from this research also could be used to develop a valid and reliable instrument to measure a sense of purpose. This research also could be used as a model to develop research and instruments for the other three personal strengths identified by Benard (2004): social competence, problem solving, and autonomy.

Sample

A non-probability purposive sample will be used for this study. The sample consisted of ten selected parent-child dyads. Criteria for selection included: youth (aged 6-17) who participated in at least one outreach program provided at One Vision Outreach Training Center. Parent participants had at least one child who had participated in an outreach program of One Vision Outreach Training Center.

Data Collection

This research study incorporated observations and narratives derived through individual interviews. Grounded theory was used to explain the phenomenon of sense of purpose, and the relationship among optimism, faith, hope, spirituality and sense of meaning. During theory development, the constructivist approach was used to emphasize the views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies of participants (Charmaz, 2006). Although the constructivist approach embraces flexible research guidelines and theory development, based on my views as a researcher, I also incorporated the systematic approach used in the development of grounded theory. Incorporating this systematic approach, I developed a theory explaining the process, action, and interaction on sense of purpose (Creswell, 2007).

During data collection, I asked questions that helped me understand how the participants interpreted the sense of purpose phenomenon. I also asked questions that included influences, causes, and strategies connected to sense of purpose (Creswell, 2007). Because this study used grounded theory, my approach to data collection included setting aside my preconceived notions that might have influenced a theory about the sense of purpose phenomenon (Hays & Singh, 2012). Throughout data collection, I incorporated a constant comparison technique, which included moving back and forth from each set of interviews and observations to uncover core

categories (Hays & Singh, 2012). I gathered enough information to reach saturation, which means I continued interviewing until I no longer heard new themes that helped me develop a theory. Data collected used audio-taping combined with field notes and current observations. Data was transcribed prior to data analysis and sorted into categories.

Data Analysis

Because this study resulted in grounded theory, data were collected and simultaneously analyzed (Hays & Singh, 2012). During data collection, I looked for emerging themes and discovered social processes within the data. I read through the text and created notes that helped me develop codes. Three phases of coding were used. The constant comparative method was used during the open coding phase. I performed open coding by examining the text and my field notes to identify categories. I identified common and less common categories. I also identified the central category, communication. Communication was linked to all categories and the constructs. Axial coding allowed me to build a story connecting the categories. During axial coding I created a model. The model helped me identify the relationship of common and less common categories to each other. I also identified how the categories were linked to the five constructs, spirituality, sense of meaning, optimism, hope, and faith (Creswell, 2007). Rich, thick descriptions were written about these categories. These descriptions included participants' thoughts, beliefs, and experiences related to having a sense of purpose.

During selective coding I looked at the model developed during axial coding. The model helped me develop theoretical propositions that were interrelated to identified categories (Creswell, 2007). I also included specified causes, conditions, and consequences that resulted because of the participants' social construction of sense of purpose (Hays & Singh, 2012). The

theoretical propositions and the specified causes, conditions, and consequences were used to develop grounded theory.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. Participants responded to individual interview questions honestly.

2. The research protocol for the study was appropriate to protect the confidentiality of participants.

3. The research protocol and interview questions were appropriate to gather data that can be used to develop themes, patterns, and meaning related to the research questions.

4. The interview questions and methodology were appropriate for answering the research questions.

5. Participants understood interview questions and were able to articulate informative responses.

Limitations

The limitations of the study included factors beyond my control that were considered when I was interpreting the results of the study they include:

1. The sample was one of convenience. Participants were volunteers and were not representatives of all African American youth, parents or all members attending youth programs.

2. The researcher had an established relationship and prior knowledge of the parent-child dyads. Their responses may have reflected social desirability. This may have increased a tendency to answer in socially desirable ways.

Delimitations

The following delimitations were considered when interpreting the results of the study:

1. The study sample consisted of selected parent-child dyads of a selected youth program.

2. Each participant had an opportunity to contribute to the interview only within the limits of the time set by the study.

3. Data was collected only through interviews and observations using field notes.
4. The researcher was the only person collecting the data from the interviews.

Definitions

Key terms used in the study are being defined as follows:

Adolescents: For this study and according to *Healthy People 2020* (DHHS, 2010), adolescents will be defined as youth, ages 10 through 19.

Faith: Strong unshakeable belief in something without proof, convictions of truth based on doctrine, complete confidence or trust in a person, or any set of firmly held principles or beliefs are all united by one commonality (Newton, 2010).

Hope: A sense of successful goal directed determinations and plans of ways to meet goals (Snyder et al., 1991).

Middle childhood: For this study and according to *Healthy People 2020* (DHHS, 2010) adolescents will be defined as youth ages six through twelve.

Optimism: Assuming good things will happen (Roesch, duangado, Vaughn, Aldridge, & Villodas, 2010).

Resiliency: The ability to bounce back successfully despite exposure to severe risk (Benard, 1993).

Sense of Meaning: Rewarding authentic life which includes having purpose, value, and a feeling of self efficacy and self worth (Baumeister, 1991).

Spirituality: "Experiences and expressions of one's spirit in a unique and dynamic process reflecting faith in God or a supreme being; connected with oneself, others, nature, or God ; and an integration of the dimensions of mind, body, and spirit" (Meravigilia,1999).

Summary

Since the 1970's, studies have identified characteristics of personal strengths and protective factors reducing risky health behaviors and increasing resiliency in youth (Bernard, 2004; Ey et al., 2005; Grotberg, 1995; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Rosenblum et al., 2005; Werner & Smith, 1992). Research pertaining to the four personal strengths, social competence, problem solving, autonomy, and sense of purpose is evident in the literature. However, research exploring how the five dimensions of sense of purpose, spirituality, faith, hope, optimism, and sense of meaning, collectively impact having a sense of purpose in youth has not been identified. Although these dimensions are a common thread for African Americans, collectively the dimensions should promote success in life (Benard, 2004; Brooks & Goldstein, 2001; Curwin, 2010; Roesch, Duangado, Vaughn, Aldridge & Villodas, 2010; Selivanova, 2003). Instead, many African Americans have chosen health behaviors which have put them at high risk for health disparities. These health disparities have been associated with decreasing life span, increasing poverty levels, and lower academic achievement levels thus, reducing their chances of achieving a productive and satisfying life.

To describe, understand, and interpret the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with parent and child relationships with regard to optimism, sense of meaning, faith, hope, and spirituality, a qualitative study was conducted. The study will use parent child dyads who participate in youth programs at One Vision Outreach Training Center. Chapter 2 will consist of a review of related literature.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe, examine, and interpret the attitudes, beliefs, and practices, associated with parent and child relationships with regard to optimism, sense of meaning, faith, hope, and spirituality. The literature review consisted of five sections. The first section focused on Black American families. The second section discussed results of Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS). The third section discussed resilience and related research. The fourth section discussed protective factors for children and youth. Section five discussed literature about sense of purpose, hope and optimism, spirituality, faith, and sense of meaning.

Black American Families

Black Americans identify their family units in various ways (Henderson, 2010). The Black American family unit may present itself in the form of single parent homes, two parent homes of the same or different gender, adopted, divorced, or separated homes. The children in Black American homes are not necessarily being raised by their biological parents (Henderson, 2010). The caregiver may be a grandparent, other relative, a family friend, or mentor. Regardless of the design of the family, various factors influence the degree of resiliency in Black Americans homes. Poverty, single parent homes, educational levels, violence, substance abuse, illness, and health disparities are factors influencing the resiliency levels of Black American families (Shore & Shore, 2009).

The presence of poverty in Black American families impacts the well being, health, and development of children. In 2007, 24.5% of all Black Americans lived in poverty; in addition,

34.3% of Black American children less than 18 years old lived in poverty. In 2008, 35% of Black children lived in poverty as compared with 31% of Hispanics and 11% of White children (FIFCFS, 2010). The median income for Black American families in 2009 was $38,409 and $67,341 for Whites (U.S. Census, 2012). The median income gap between Whites and Black American families increased more than $500 per year between 2007 and 2009 (U.S. Census, 2012).

Disproportionate levels of poverty among Black Americans in the United States have had various affects on their resiliency skills (Garmezy, 1991). According to the Transgenerational Model of Poverty (Birch & Gussow, 1970), the existence of poverty initially affects mothers who are pregnant by increasing their risk of having poor maternal health, poor maternal growth, poor maternal nutrition, inadequate family planning, and poor obstetrical supervision. Once children are born into a family there are elevated risks of infant mortality, infant morbidity, and family size. The entire family becomes susceptible to increased risk of malnutrition, illness, absence of medical care, social deprivation and environmental inadequacy (Birch & Gussow, 1970).

These perceived risks begin to affect competence, efficacy, and the way individuals relate to themselves and others. These perceptions begin to affect emotional and behavioral engagement within family units and with individuals outside of the family units (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994). These actions can lead to increased risk of failing at school or dropping out of school entirely. Eventually, these behaviors lead to unemployment or underemployment (Birch & Gussow, 1970).

The existence of single parent homes has increased (Shore & Shore, 2009). Between the years of 1985 and 2005, the percent of children born into single parent homes increased from 22% to 37%. The increase in single parent homes increased the likelihood of impoverished

families. According to Shore and Shore (2009), children who do not reside with both parents are more likely to live in poverty than children who live in two parent homes. One factor that increases the risk of poverty is that Black American single parents are often left with the sole responsibility of training and parenting their children (Shore and Shore). This challenge along with the daily responsibilities of caring for a family can challenge a single parent's ability to provide skills that are essential in developing resiliency in their children (Brooks & Goldstein, 2001). The resiliency of the single Black American parents and their ability to teach resiliency skills to their children significantly reduced the chances of these children having poor academic performance and experiencing abuse (Gray, 2009).

Woody and Woody (2003) conducted a study about Black American single parents. This study included a sample of 135 single, low-income mothers from the state of Texas. The mothers were scored in six areas, communication, use of time, teaching, level of frustration, satisfaction of parenting, and things they needed to know about a child (Woody & Woody, 2003). This study concluded that Black American mothers, regardless of age, level of education, social economic status, number of children, age of the children, and regardless of whether they worked outside of the home, had a high level of satisfaction related to their parenting and were able to perform fundamental parenting skills. The study also concluded that low income and single parents were not synonymous with poor parenting. Study findings indicated that single parents had high level of parental satisfaction and parenting skills, which included skills of advising and learning from their children, making decisions about how to use their time, understanding their responsibility to provide parental guidance, having knowledge about what parents need to know about their children, and having awareness of things that frustrate parents and things that provide a level of

satisfaction to parenting (Woody & Woody, 2003). In fact, according to this study, Black American single parents were resilient.

Hess, Papas and Black (2002) conducted a longitudinal randomized controlled study with 181 low income Black American adolescents who were first time single mothers under the age of 18. Participants of the study lived with their mothers (participant's mother). The study provided home interventions designed to promote parenting and adolescent development (Hess et al. 2002). In addition to the interventions, the study looked at the relationship of the adolescent mother and her mother (participant's mother). The study results indicated that parenting outcomes were influenced by the adolescent mothers' level of education and the relationships they had with their mothers. Adolescent mothers with higher levels of education were more nurturing and had more parent satisfaction (Hess et al., 2002). Adolescents who were able to deal with conflict non-defensively and whose interactions were positive experienced an intergenerational transmission of parenting skills from their mothers. Adolescent mother's personal characteristics and positive supportive relationships with their mothers were resiliency factors that enhanced their ability to be nurturing and experience high levels of satisfaction associated with being mothers (Hess et al., 2002).

Educational disparities of children impact their personal growth and chances of succeeding in life and affect the economic and social progression of our nation (DHHS, 2010). In 2005, 48% of 4th grade Black students attended high-poverty schools, as compared with 5% White students in the same grade (FIFCFS, 2010). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) identified trends in high school completion rates. Between 2007 and 2008, 6.4% of Black Americans and 5.3% of Hispanics in private and public high schools dropped out, while only 2.3% of Whites dropped out (United States Department of Education [USDE], 2010). In

2008, the dropout rate of students living as low-income (less than $22, 000 per year for a family of four) was 8.7% as compared to 2.0% of high income families. In 2009, 9% of all youth, ages 16-19, were neither enrolled in school nor working. Twelve percent of Black Americans and 13% of Hispanics were more likely to be neither enrolled nor working compared to 7% of Whites, ages 16-19 (USDE, 2010). Educational experiences early in life encourage the development of essential skills and preparation for success in the future (FIFCFS, 2010). Academic achievements during adolescent and young adult years, such as graduating from high school, increase opportunities for employment and additional education.

Violence rates among Black American youth, such as assault and battery, drug distribution, and armed violence, continue to increase their health disparities. Quite often Black American youth are inundated with factors inside their homes that impact their resiliency. Violence in youth has been associated with various family risk and protective factors. According to the Department of Human Health and Services (DHHS, 2001), family risk factors associated with violence are poor family functioning, poor monitoring and supervision of children, low parental involvement, low parental education and income, low emotional attachment to parents or caregivers, parental substance abuse or criminality, harsh, lax, or inconsistent disciplinary practices, and authoritarian childrearing attitudes (DHHS, 2001). Factors contributing to children becoming more susceptible to developing violent behaviors included supporting the use of violence, social and cognitive problems, use of alcohol or drugs, and various family, community, and school concerns (Dahlberg, 1998).

In 2005, the homicide rate of Black males, age 35-44 years, was more than three times greater than Hispanic males and more than eight times greater than White males in the same age group (CDC, 2009). In 2009, among all teenagers, ages 12-19 years, the death rate of Black

American youth from violent acts was 65 per 100,000. The death rate for Hispanic and White youth was 47 per 100,000 (National Center for Health Statistics [NCHS], 2010). The death rate of Black American teen males also was highest among all teens at 94.1 per 100,000 with homicide being the leading cause of death (NCHS, 2010). Juvenile delinquency in Black American youth is higher than other youth groups. In 2008, approximately 11,100 Black American teens ages 10-17, were arrested per 100,000 (United States Department of Justice [USDJ], 2009). In comparison, the rates for Whites, American Indian, and Asian youth were 5,550 per 100,000, 5,550 per 100,000, and 1,850 per 100,000 respectively. According to national statistics, in 2008**,** Black American teens had the highest number of drug offenses as compared to Whites and Hispanics (USDJ, 2009).

A study conducted in a high crime, high poverty area in Houston Texas, measured exposure to violence among 71 Black American children, ages 9 to 11 years (Jones, 2007). The study measured violence in four ways. Interviews were conducted to look at the exposure to media violence, reported violence, witnessed violence, and victims of violence (Jones, 2007). The resulted concluded 19% of the 71 children witnessed shootings or stabbings, 10% witnessed murders, 40% were chased or threatened, 27% were beaten, 1% were shot or stabbed and 13% saw strangers to their community shot, stabbed, or murdered. The study indicated that these children used three coping methods for their exposure to violence, spirituality, formal kin, and informal kin (Jones, 2007).

Spirituality used by parents of children exposed to violence helped the parents make sense of violent experiences for their children (Jones, 2007). Having a religious framework in place made it easier for the children exposed to violence to cope. The informal and formal kin, which were blood and non related relatives, were viewed the same among the children in the

study. The children had close relationships with both formal and informal kin and often considered informal kin as family. The relationships of the children and their relatives provided an interconnectedness that served as a buffer for children dealing with violence (Jones, 2007).

Interconnectedness, which is associated with protective factors, often is used when explaining adaptive outcomes (Howard, 1996). Protective factors, such as formal kin, include families with warm and caring parenting styles providing guidance and encouraging self esteem, and reflecting competence. Protective factors, such as informal kin, include external support from teachers, neighbors, or institutional structures. These protective factors increased positive development which led to successful outcomes (Benard, 2004), such as an increase in the relationship bonds between informal kin and formal kin and the children in the study (Jones).

The social environment of youth may impact their ability to feel safe (Benard, 2004). When Black American youths' need for safety is not met, their level of hope for the future and their ability to think optimistically about their current circumstances dwindles (Peckham, 2009). For some Black American youth, exposure to chronic violence is a part of their daily life (Jones, 2007). This exposure to violence can hinder a child's ability to develop having a sense of safety and security. Chronic violence has the potential to affect the emotional and cognitive development of youth.

Substance abuse, use, and illness also have influenced the resiliency of Black American families. For Black American youth, the experience of having a parent or guardian who has an illness or substance abuse problem can be very stressful (Rosenblum et al., 2005). Youth who have parents who are sick or who are substance abusers or users become vulnerable to all risks within their environment as well as any added risk associated with their family situation Protective, risk, individual, and interpersonal factors all influence the outcome of children who

are products of an ill parent or a parent who is a substance user or abuser (Rosenblum et al., 2005). Each of these factors continues to plague the life of children who are at the mercy of their parents and guardians. Quite often youth choose health behaviors, such as drug abuse or alcohol use as a coping mechanism to deal with the illnesses and substance abuse. These factors often are repeated over and over again impacting the personal strengths of children who are a part of these families (Rosenblum et al., 2005).

Rosenblum et al. (2005) conducted a study with a sample of 77 adolescents, ages 11-15, from the catchment area of South Bronx, New York, to examine the association of risk and protective factors with substance use among adolescents. Each of the adolescents had at least one parent who was HIV positive. Seventy-one percent of the children were aware that their parent was HIV positive. Of the adolescents in the study, 40% reported having a history of substance use (25% cigarettes, 29% alcohol, 12% psychoactive drugs). Seventy-nine percent of the parents of the children participating in the study had a history of drug or alcohol use. The study found that having friends who were substance users and the level of family attachment was directly related to the substance use of the adolescents; they were predictors of substance use initiation. Results of the study also indicated that parents who had older adolescent children were more likely to disclose their HIV status to them. These adolescents were more likely to be affiliated with less resilient friends who had higher community risk factors. They also were more likely to be substance users. There was no direct association between resiliency and the level of substance use and community factors. Social factors were the most predictable factors influencing the initiation of substance use. As a result of the study researchers recommended interventions addressing family and peer risk and protective factors may reduce if not eliminate the onset of substance use of adolescents (Rosenblum et al., 2005).

A study which looked at how maternal psychopathology affected children and adolescents was conducted from four sites, Connecticut, Georgia, New York, and Puerto Rico, with 1285 dyads selected to participate in the study (Tiet et al., 2001). Maternal psychopathology consisted of conditions which included: depression/dysthymia, mania/hypomania, panic attack, psychosis, obsessive compulsive disorder, generalized anxious disorder, agoraphobia, social phobia, alcohol abuse/dependence, substance abuse/dependence, suicide attempt, and antisocial behavior/conduct disorder. Findings of the study indicated that children of mothers experiencing maternal psychopathology had a greater degree of resilience if they were female. Being a female was considered a protective factor against maternal psychopathology (Tiet et al., 2001). Youth were resilient if there was close parental monitoring of their behavior and if the family had healthy relationships. Adolescents with high IQ's were more capable of coping with their mother's psychopathology. Having higher educational aspirations was a predictor of better adjustment in the sample; in high risk youth (Tiet et al., 2001). However, having higher educational aspirations was not a predictor of resilience.

Health disparities, which have been defined as preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health, experienced by socially disadvantaged populations, have disproportionately affected Black Americans in the United States (CDC, 2009). Health disparities have been linked to four factors; poverty, educational inequalities, environmental threats, and access to health care (DHHS, 2010). Access to health care has become a major factor in reducing health disparities in youth. Children with health insurance are more likely than children without insurance to have regular and accessible source of health care. In 2006, 8% of Black children under the age of 18 were uninsured for health care as compared with 6% of White children of the same age (FIFCFS, 2010). In 2006, 10% of

Blacks lacked health insurance for more than a year as compared to 7% of Whites (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2009). In 2008, 22.6% of Black Americans, ages 18-34, were uninsured (DHHS, 2010). From 2007-2008, 80.9% of Black Americans had health insurance as compared to 90% of Whites (U.S. Census, 2012).

Black American youth experience many health disparities. Within the last decade, Black American children have experienced dental care and vaccine rates of 10% to 20% lower than Caucasians (CDC, 2009). Black American children have experienced higher rates of obesity than other races. During 2003-2004, 24% of Black females, ages 2-19, were overweight as compared 12% of White children of the same age. During the same year, 18% of Black children, ages 0-17 years, had asthma, as compared with 12% of Whites and 11% of Hispanics (CDC, 2009). During 2002-2004, the infant mortality rate for Blacks was 13.7 per 1000 live births as compared to 5.7 for Whites. In 2008, Black American females, ages 15-17 years, were giving birth at a rate of 34.9 per 1000, as compared to the national average, which were 21.7 per 1000.

Rates of sexual behaviors and related consequences among Black American youth also are higher in comparison to other children. In 2006, Black females, ages 10-14 years, were 18 times more likely than White females of the same age to have gonorrhea (CDC, 2009). In 2006, the HIV rate among Blacks was seven times greater than that of Whites and three times greater than Hispanics. In 2006, Blacks were eight times more likely to have Chlamydia than Whites. In 2006, Black males, ages 20-24, were more than 10 times more likely to have syphilis than White males in the same age group (CDC, 2009).

Rates of chronic illnesses, such as heart disease and diabetes, are higher among Black Americans than other races. During 2001-2004, 40% of Black women had hypertension as compared with 24% of White women (CDC, 2009). In 2005, Black men, ages 45-54 years, were

three times more likely than Hispanic men of the same age to die from heart disease. Thirteen percent of Blacks, age 20 years or older, had diabetes as compared with 9% of Whites of the same age. In 2005, the diagnosis of tuberculosis in Blacks was more than eight times greater than Whites. Similar rates of health disparities among Black American youth and adults indicate that a pattern of health behaviors adopted early in life affected health status of adults (DHHS, 2010). Reducing and eliminating health disparities will increase opportunities for Black American children to experience success in other areas of their life (DHHS, 2010).

Resilience

Resiliency, the ability to bounce back successfully despite exposure to severe risk, has been researched extensively over the last 40 years (Benard, 1993). The term resilience also can be characterized as a set of principles that give direction to structure, practices, and decision making (Fox, 1994). Resiliency, when practiced, has the potential to influence the development of youth by producing emotionally healthy adults capable of managing stress effectively, making healthy choices, and avoiding behaviors considered self destructive (Fox, 1994). Resiliency is developed from every day experiences in the mind, in the brain, in bodies of individuals, in their families and relationships, and in their communities (Masten, 2001). Defining youth resiliency is very complex and can be further understood by identifying other factors involved in the resiliency process (Benard, 2004).

Specific characteristics of families, schools, communities, four categories of personal strength (social competence, problem solving, autonomy, and sense of purpose) and the intricate process of expanding the life prospective of youth are concepts that help define resiliency (Benard, 1993). The characteristics of family, school and community are protective systems needed to develop human adaptive systems (Masten, 2001) and to provide buffers for life's

stresses (Benard, 1993). Adaptive systems should be nurtured by relationships that encourage trust, autonomy, and initiative (Werner, 1995). Adaptive systems that have been nurtured promote competency and resilience (Masten, 2001).

The process of how a child develops human adaptive systems depends on the nature of his/her individuality (Murphy & Murphy, 1974). Humans' body size and shape, mental development, and growth patterns are factors that impact their individuality. Their individuality impacts their ability to handle challenges of their specific age group, their intelligence level, and their cognitive styles which affect their ability to survive and cope with life's demands, to get along with others, and to find enough satisfaction to make life worthwhile (Murphy & Murphy, 1974). There also are developmental imbalances and irregularities that affect individuality. Slow maturation or rapid growth in a child can contribute to coping difficulties and confusion. These differences shape individual responses children make about social pressures, health behaviors, and future goals (Murphy & Murphy, 1974).

According to *Healthy People 2020*, middle childhood (ages 6-12) is the stage of development where children develop skills and roles that will impact their social relationships for a lifetime (DHHS, 2010). A child's development during the middle childhood stage impacts cognitive, social, emotional, and physical stages. During this stage of development, skills and roles learned greatly impact health literacy, self discipline, ability to make good decisions when faced with risky situations, eating habits, and conflict negotiations. These skills affect the resiliency of youth and impact their ability to navigate through life successfully (DHHS, 2010). Adolescents are constantly developing and transitioning making them susceptible to environmental factors, such as family, peers, school, neighborhood, and societal cues (DHHS, 2010). Behavior patterns of adolescents (ages 10-19) help to determine their current health status

and risk for developing chronic disease in adulthood. It also is the age when public health and social problems become more visible. The varying developmental stages and behaviors of children and youth and their need for guidance through these stages, reinforces the importance of implementing skills that help facilitate the development of the four categories of personal strengths (Benard, 1993, Murphy, 1974; & Werner, 1995).

The four categories of personal strength often overlap and represent what resiliency should look like when youth have experienced healthy human development. The personal strengths do not cause resiliency, but they produce positive developmental outcomes. These developmental outcomes confirm the resiliency process is engaged. Personal strengths influence individual health behaviors and success in life (Benard, 2004).

Social competence, the first personal strength, was identified by Goleman (1995) as one of five constructs which make up emotional intelligence. Responsiveness, communication, empathy, caring, compassion, altruism, and forgiveness are concepts that make-up the social competence category (Goleman). *Problem-solving*, the second personal strength is the ability to figure out actions to take when confronted with problems (Benard, 2004). Planning, flexibility, resourcefulness, critical thinking, and insight are concepts that make-up problem solving. *Autonomy*, the third personal strength, describes the development of an individual's sense of self, identity, and power. A person possessing autonomy has the ability to act independently and to feel a sense of control over his or her environment (Benard, 2004). Positive identity, internal locus of control, initiative, self efficacy, mastery, adaptive distancing, resistance, self awareness, mindfulness, and humor are concepts that make-up the autonomy category. *Sense of purpose* is the fourth personal strength in a resilient youth. Sense of purpose is defined as "a deep belief that one's life has meaning and that one has a place in the universe" (Bernard, 2004, p. 28). Goal

direction, achievement motivation, educational aspirations, special interest, creativity, imagination, optimism, hope, faith, spirituality, and sense of meaning are concepts associated with sense of purpose (Bernard, 2004).

Resilient children have certain attributes. Resilient children feel hopeful and have a high sense of self worth (Brooks & Goldstein, 2001). They feel special and appreciated and they learn to set realistic goals and expectations for themselves. They also develop the ability to make decisions and solve problems and they are more likely to view mistakes, hardships, and obstacles, as challenges which should be confronted and not avoided. They utilize coping strategies that foster growth because their self concept is filled with images of strength and competence (Brooks & Goldstein, 2001). They are aware of their weaknesses and they recognize their strengths and talents. Resilient children have effective interpersonal skills with both their peers and older adults. They are able to seek out assistance and nurturance in an appropriate manner (Brooks & Goldstein, 2001). They can define aspects of their life that they control and focus their energy on these aspects. They are emotionally healthy and equipped to successfully confront challenges and bounce back from setbacks. They are more likely to practice healthy behaviors and have high academic achievements (Benard, 2004).

Protective Factors

Adolescents need protective factors to meet their developmental needs. These protective processes act to decrease the likelihood of negative outcomes (Cowan, Cowan, & Schulz, 1996) and are identified as characteristics of the family, school, and the community (Benard, 2004). Protective factors include three components, caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities to participate and contribute (Benard, 2004). *Caring relationships* are characterized as showing unconditional love, compassion, trust, and the ability to be available or consistently

present in the life of another. These types of relationships are developed within a family structure, through a mentorship relationship, or with an authority figure, such as a coach or a teacher (Benard, 2004).

High expectations are defined as:

> clear, positive, and youth-centered expectations. Clear expectations refer to the guidance and regulatory function that caregivers must provide young people. This means creating a sense of structure and safety through rules and disciplinary approaches that are not only perceived as fair by young people but include youth in their creation (Benard, 2004, p. 45).

The third component, *opportunities for participation and contributions* includes providing youth the chance to participate in engaging, challenging, and interesting activities or experiences. When youth are enlisted in helping others and engaging in responsible behaviors, they begin to perceive that they can be trusted and they have the ability to handle the task (Brooks & Goldstein, 2001). This perceived message aides in the development of youth having a resilient mindset. Youth developing a resilient mindset begin to exhibit; empathy, understanding of others needs, demonstration of compassion, seeing themselves as contributors of their family and society, capable of solving problems, ownership of their behaviors, satisfaction in exhibiting positive behaviors, and a more confident outlook as they display competence in various activities (Brooks & Goldstein, 2001). As a youth develops a resilient mind set and responsibility, a commitment to be accountable for their life begins to emerge. According to Grotberg (1995), a child's genetic make-up and temperament were characteristics influencing whether or not the child would be resilient. Grotberg further explained, that a "child's vulnerability to anxiety, challenges, stress, or unfamiliarity determines his or her self perception, how he or she interacts

with others, and how he or she addresses adversities" (p. 3). However, Brown concluded resiliency in Black Americans is influenced by protective factors that develop in a social support system (Brown, 2008).

It is important to utilize protective factors to help promote resiliency in youth. The utilization of protective factors will provide youth with skills to overcome the effects of poverty, abuse, crimes and other threats (Fox, 1994). One example of a restructuring movement took place in the California school system during the 1990's. Several California schools decided to incorporate changes that would strengthen relationships between parents, children, and educators. They incorporated three protective factors, caring and support, high expectations, and meaningful participation in class rooms (Benard, 2004) and other school activities (Fox, 1994).

The *caring and support* consisted of providing an environment where there was a genuine feeling of caring for the students (Fox, 1994). The environment was composed of positive role models, support networks, and social support which encouraged close relationships among students. Having support networks was a key factor in promoting resiliency. When students experienced genuine caring and support, close relationships were developed (Fox, 1994). These relationships led to a feeling of belonging. Students were also given an opportunity to identify role models among their teachers, increasing the bond between students and their teachers (Fox, 1994). The increase bond between students and their teachers, made it easier for parent of the students, to identify these relationships as part of their child's team or an expanded circle of support. The outcome of incorporating caring and support included personal growth such as self esteem, goal setting, creativity, cultural diversity, interpersonal skills, teamwork, emotional health and life skills (Fox, 1994). The longer the students were grouped together with

expanded circles of support, shared responsibilities, and common task, their relationships became stronger with their team members.

The high expectations protective factor promoted resiliency by expecting high levels of academic achievement for every student regardless of their academic record or personal history (Fox, 1994). The curriculum became meaning centered, meaning the curriculum emphasized higher order thinking skills and understanding application rather than memorization of information. The curriculum also became student centered, meaning students were exposed to cooperative learning and constructivist teaching (Fox, 1994).

Opportunities for student participation were demonstrated through students' exposure to cooperative learning and constructivist teaching (Fox, 1994). Cooperative learning encouraged students to be responsible for planning, assessment, and execution of their group work. The constructivist teaching made work more meaningful and required decision-making by increasing student participation, by promoting engagement, by stimulating responses and increasing interaction among other students in class. Performance based assessments which required students to determine the most effective way to demonstrate learning were used (Fox, 1994). This method of assessment made students responsible for goal setting, problem solving and decision-making activities. The interaction, experienced within the schools, incorporated high expectations and created a sense of belonging. For the students, this sense of belonging created sense of control over their learning (Fox, 1994).

Sense of Purpose

Sense of purpose is one of four personal strengths for youth (Benard, 2004). This attribute consists of interrelated concepts, optimism, hope, faith, spirituality, and sense of meaning, which are the gateway to producing a bright future. Youth who utilize the concepts of

the sense of purpose, according to Werner and Smith (1992), have the most important assets necessary to make healthy choices, even when they face adversity. Youth having a sense of purpose typically have two common characteristics. They have a strong focus on their future, which is identified with academic success (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). They also have a positive self-identity, which has been linked to fewer health risk behaviors.

A study that examined Africentric cultural values and their relationship to promoting positive mental health, researchers chose 147 Black American adolescent girls, from a large urban culturally diverse high school, in the northeastern region of the United States to participate in the study (Constantine, Alleyne, Wallace, & Franklin-Jackson, 2006). The girls completed a questionnaire packet which included a demographic questionnaire, the Africultural Value Scale for Children, the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, the Social Support Questionnaire, and the Satisfaction With Life Scale. The study concluded that adopting Africentric values was a predictor of higher self esteem, Africentric attitudes, and behaviors. Having the Africentric values appeared to be related to the participants feeling a sense of mastery, value, and self acceptance (Constantine, et al., 2006). Adopting Africentric values also were associated with greater social support satisfaction. However, having a perceived lack of social support was associated with having behavior problems. There also was a significant positive relationship between the perceived social support from peers and social self esteem among the participants. Greater adherence to Africentric cultural values had a significant and positive effect on the participant's life satisfaction (Constantine, et al., 2006). The participants found a sense of purpose in having a value system that positively reflected their cultural group. This connectiveness played a vital role in the participants self esteem, perceived social support satisfaction, and life satisfaction.

Hope and optimism. Hope and optimism are terms often used interchangeably. Hope is a sustained activity towards achieving a specific goal (Roesch, Duangado, Vaughn, Aldridge, & Villodas, 2010). Hope also has been associated with positive emotions and feelings (Benard, 2004) and is defined as a sense of successful goal-directed determinations with plans of steps to meet goals (Snyder, et al., 1991). Optimism has been linked to positive beliefs and cognition (Bernard, 2004) and is defined as assuming good things will happen (Roesch, et al., 2010). According to the Snyder's Hope Theory, people utilize hope two different ways when thinking about how to accomplish goals. The first way, pathway thinking, involves one's thoughts of his or her ability to pursue different means to achieve a goal (Snyder, et al., 1991). The second way, agentic thinking, includes thoughts of determination and resolve to achieve goals (Snyder, et al., 1991). The agentic method of thinking also increases motivation to pursue goals (Roesch et al., 2010).

Adolescents experience many different changes in their developmental process. They often are identified as having dysfunctional coping styles related to their ability to handle stress (Roesch et al., 2010). Many adolescents, however, exhibit positive characteristics, such as hope, optimism, and resiliency. In some cases, adolescents are said to experience growth after successfully coping with a stressful event. Kabir and Rickards (2006) stated hopeful youth expect good outcomes and have more positive and long term goals. According to Snyder (1994), hope was especially important to those who lived in unpredictable and uncontrollable circumstances. Many minority adolescents living in urban environments become victims of unpredictable and uncontrollable circumstances. Often these individuals are faced with language difficulties, stereotyping, and financial hardships which impede their ability to have higher levels

of hope (Roesch et al., 2010). Based on Synder's theory minority adolescents had less hope than Caucasians because they often faced more obstacles while attempting to achieve goals (1994).

However, results from a recent study using the Hope Theory suggested minority and Caucasian adolescents have similar levels of hope (Chang & Banks, 2007). Chang and Banks conducted a study with 385 students who were Caucasian, Black American, Latino, Asian American, and Native American to measure racial and ethnic variations in levels of hope. Their findings indicated the level of hope among the different racial and ethnic groups was similar. However, there were differences indicated in the type of thinking utilized (Chang & Banks, 2007). Black Americans reported greater pathway thinking than Caucasians, meaning Black Americans thought about different ways they could achieve goals. Latinos reported greater agentic and pathway thinking than Caucasians, meaning Latinos utilized different ways of achieving goals and thoughts of determination and resolve to achieve goals (Chang & Banks, 2007). These results indicated that Black Americans and Latinos more than Caucasians had to exercise more strategies to achieve things for which they were hoping. These results are different from the initial findings by Synder (1994). Explaining this paradox would involve thinking about hope differently.

In a study involving first and sixth grade students, Black American children, when compared to Caucasian children, were less likely to choose high status jobs, such as physicians, scientist, or business executives (Bigler, Averhart, & Liben, 2003). The students also reported that they were more likely to choose medium status jobs, such as bus drivers, beauticians, bank tellers, and police officers. They also were more likely to perform lower status jobs, such as car washers, cashiers, and fast food workers. This study's findings suggested young minority children were able to anticipate future obstacles as a result of their minority status (Bigler, et al.,

2003). By anticipating obstacles, such as racial discrimination, lack of acceptance, and understanding how to navigate through the bureaucracies in place, some minority groups may attempt to control their future situations by trying to manage or circumvent experiencing goal-limiting barriers in their future (Bigler, et al., 2003). Minorities who anticipated being victims of racial discrimination may choose to develop a greater cohesion, collaboration, and sense of community with other minorities and marginalized groups. In this study, students believed that selecting medium status jobs would minimize their racial discrimination and would allow them to minimize goal-limiting barriers. This attempt to minimize racial discrimination may, in fact, impact their approach to healthy behaviors and the pursuit of academic excellence (Bigler, et al., 2003).

During a discussion in an urban middle school in San Jose, California, Curwin (2010) asked a group of students what they wanted to do when they completed high school. Many of the students responded, “Go to prison.” When the researcher asked why, the answers ranged from, “It’s cool,” “You get respect in this neighborhood,” “So I can see my Dad” (p. 36). This example of hopelessness was perceived as admirable by the students. This example serves as a reminder of the daily struggle faced by youth and the powerful effect having a sense of comradery can have on the decisions they make (Bigler, et al., 2003).

Research literature indicated that individuals with high levels of hope generated multiple routes for attaining goals (Roesch et al., 2010). Hope also has been associated with having higher competency in different areas of life, such as the use of adaptive coping methods, more flexibility and positive thoughts, and increased positive appraisal of stressful events (Roesch et al., 2010). A study researching hope and job satisfaction of 77 health care workers found hope influenced how they felt about their jobs (Duggleby, Cooper, & Penz, 2009). Health care

workers felt hope gave them strength and power, work engagement, and satisfaction with their work even though they identified their work as stressful and tedious. Themes were identified in the study that increased and hindered hope. Praying, practicing faith, and receiving positive reinforcement from family and friends, adequate resources, optimism by positive thinking, caring and sharing with others, and positive feedback were instrumental in increasing hope. Lack of support and help, anger and bitterness, worry and discouragement were themes hindering hope (Duggleby et al., 2009).

Parallel to the health care workers, a study in which researchers investigated the effects of hope, social support, and stress on behavioral problems in 65 children of incarcerated mothers found a strong relationship between the children's sense of hope and the social support they received from a support group of which they were a part because of their incarcerated mothers (Amlund-Hagen, Myers, & Mackintosh, 2005). Hope for the future as well as good mental health was developed from retaining traditional cultural elements, such as sharing ideas and practices about their culture, and learning new elements of the society in which they were living, which included exposure to museums, other cultures, and new activities. The strategy used to develop hope in youth greatly influenced how youth approached their outlook on life (Kabir and Richards, 2006). Curwin (2010) listed two beliefs required to instill hope in youth: the mentor or educator must believe life can improve, and that school and success in school can lead to an improved life. Curwin also listed four key elements to building hope in students: the mentor or educator must believe in the student, provide genuine care for the student, refuse to give up on the student, and have a desire to make a difference in the lives of their students.

Findings from a study evaluating a nonprofit agency that trained school administrators and personnel, by proposing a paradigm that says all children are capable of success and there

are no exceptions, found that optimism levels of students in the program were significantly related to their race (Bernat, 2009). Seventy-nine percent of Whites, 63% of Blacks, 60% of Hispanics, and 73% of mixed race students believed they were optimistic. Sixty percent of Whites and mixed-race students said their school was a place of hope. Sixty percent of the Black students and more than 50% of the Hispanic students did not believe their school was a place of hope (Bernat, 2009). Black youth felt strongly about their ability to succeed, but they also felt disconnected at school and did not believe school was a place that could instill hope and optimism for their future. The study showed a strong correlation between youth identifying themselves and their school as optimistic depended on various factors, including: children's ability to get along with teachers and each other and the care and praise teachers extended to students. When these factors existed, students felt hope, optimism, and success existed in themselves and their schools (Bernat, 2009).

Unfortunately, sometimes the very persons who have the power to instill hope are not hopeful themselves. Curwin (2010) described teachers who were cynical and believed things were bad and would not improve. Removing these teachers from schools has been suggested as the first step to re-establishing hope in the schools. One example of a teacher who did not exhibit hope involved a seventh-grade student who came to school dirty and wearing the same clothes over several days (Curwin, 2010). After many complaints from his classmates about his smell, his teacher's recommendation was to suspend the student until he practiced good hygiene. Upon making a home visit, the teacher discovered there was no food, water, or clean clothes. His mother was an alcoholic and would lock the young boy and his sister in the yard when she went on her drinking binges (Curwin, 2010). The children were told not to tell anyone or they would pay the price. They were left to sleep in the dirt. The teacher had not embraced the principle of

being willing to intervene in the lives of other people's children. When individuals embrace this principle statistically their communities have lower levels of violence (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earl, 1997). Embracing children and being an avenue of support would have helped reestablish hope in the children.

Findings from a study focusing on the hopes and aspirations of 21 at-risk youth during a six- month period of time concluded that youth were able to remain optimistic about their future when they continued to have a connection to music from their culture and strong social network support, which included teachers, mentors, and close family and friends (Kabir & Rickards, 2006). During the six-month study, one youth was placed in a rehabilitation center and another youth dropped out of school. The remaining 19 youths reported being optimistic about their future. Although some of the youths reported not having a strong social network, they felt they were able to stay optimistic because of their connection to their cultural practices and their connection to music (Kabir & Rickards, 2006). Youth need to feel a sense of belonging to a group (Werner & Smith, 1992). This sense of belonging in a community allows youth to be linked to a positive support system which includes positive peers and adult role models. Communities embracing youth give them opportunities to participate and contribute and set high expectations for youth to be successful (Benard, 2004).

Levels of optimism and hope are important protective factors that exist in the lives of youth regardless of the type of challenges they face (Ey et al., 2005). Youth associating more of their challenges with a pessimistic view suffer with lower self esteem, greater risk of depression and suicide, and peer problems over time. Optimism and pessimism influence how youth and adults see the world and how well they live in it. Promoting optimism and hope serves as an important source of resiliency for youth (Ey et al., 2005).

Spirituality. Spirituality, faith, and sense of meaning are personal strengths synonymous with creating a meaning for life (Benard, 2004). The concept of spirituality has permeated nearly every aspect of the African American experience. Historically, spiritual traditions of Black Americans emerged from forced migration and enslavement to discrimination and victimization (Lewis, 2007). In spite of these setbacks, Black Americans have embraced spirituality as a source of liberation, hope, meaning, and forgiveness (Newlin, Knafl, Melkus, 2002). Spirituality has been identified as strength for Black Americans and has helped to shaped individuals, families, and community relationships while promoting unity, concern, and welfare for others. Deep within the roots of Black Americans, spirituality has influenced their creative expression through music, art and literature (Newlin et. al., 2002).

The term spirituality often has been used interchangeably with religion. In Black American communities, individual spirituality is recognized whether it is within or outside of formalized religious institutions (Dunn & Dawes, 1999). Although many Blacks were raised in the church, in their adult years, many do not attend church. However, they continue to believe in God and continue to practice an internalized sense of spirituality. Although the practice of spirituality is found outside of the church, the greatest influence and deepest expression in the Black family can be found in church activity (Dunn & Dawes, 1999).

In much of science and health research, spirituality and religion have not been consistently, clearly, or conceptually defined (Lewis, 2007). In nursing, psychology, and health literature, the definition of spirituality is usually defined by the researcher. Lewis suggested religion is viewed as community-focused, formal, observable, and objective. While Meravigilia (1999) defined religion as a relationship with a supreme being that is expressed by a system of beliefs and practices. Lewis (2007) suggested spirituality is generally viewed as individualistic,

less visible, more subjective, less formal, and emotionally oriented. Meravigilia (1999) also refers to spirituality as unique experiences reflecting faith in God or a supreme being. These experiences are an integration of mind, body, and spirit and are connected to oneself, others, and nature.

Although no specific wording has been used to define spirituality in the literature, there are global concepts common among most definitions of spirituality. Some of these global terms were identified in a concept analysis study examining African American spirituality through quantitative and qualitative studies (Newlin, et al., 2002). The study's researchers identified antecedents, attributes, and benefits of practicing spirituality. The sample consisted of qualitative and quantitative studies that examined African American spirituality from fields including nursing, psychology, and sociology. The study's researchers four types of categorical antecedents that influenced Black Americans decisions to embrace spirituality: (a) cultural influences which included Black ethnicity, church and family, (b) life adversities which were identified as illness, bereavement, poverty, and drug addiction, (c) faith in God, which included belief, trust, and reliance on God, and (d) belief in divine intervention, which was expressed as supernatural strength, coping, guidance, physical healing, peace of mind, and the removal of fear and worry related to all illnesses (Newlin, et. al., 2002).

As a result of this study, researchers also identified five categories of attributes of African American spirituality. The initial category was the recognition of a higher power. Higher power was articulated as a causal force beyond the material or rational, that operates in all aspects of existence. The second category was the internal dimension, which described a personal, egalitarian, caring, intimate relationship or connectedness with God or a higher power (Newlin, et al., 2002). The third category was the external dimension. The focus of this dimension was the

development of interpersonal, intimate, supportive, altruistic relationships or connectedness with others or organizations. The fourth category was the consoling dimension, which was expressed as a liberating source of peace, compassion, love, protection, warmth, and comfort. The last category of attributes was referred to as the transformative dimension. The dimension included a source of healing, personal growth, liberation, strength, guidance, meaning, purpose, coping, hope, renewal, and interpretation of experience (Newlin, et. al., 2002).

The benefits of practicing spirituality were categorized as divine reciprocity, heightened interpersonal connectedness, emotional equilibrium, and empowering change. Divine reciprocity included strengthened faith, enhanced devotional practices, increased love and gratitude for God. The heightened interpersonal connectedness category included interpersonal learning, enhanced relationships, and increased caring and love for others (Newlin et al., 2002). Emotional equilibrium included support, divine protection, reduction of stress, and peace of mind. The empowering change category included active coping, personal growth, positive interpretation of life events, and improved physical health.

Results of this study help to clarify terms associated with Black American spirituality and show how spirituality plays a role in strengthening personal assets identified by Benard (2004). Turner-Musa and Lipscomb (2007) conducted a study among college students to see if spirituality and perceived social support helped to prevent health compromising behaviors among Black American college students. The study included 211 Black American students from a historically black university. The Spiritual Well-Being scale was used to assess their spirituality. The researchers examined the extent spirituality and social support predicted tobacco use, alcohol use, drug use, and risky sexual behaviors (Turner-Musa & Lipscomb, 2007). The findings included: lower spirituality and parental support predicted greater alcohol use. The

results also indicated that students with low spirituality, limited support from parents, and negative peer influence were at greater risk of engaging in alcohol-related risk behaviors. There were no statistically significant findings for drug use risk or risky sexual behaviors (Turner-Musa & Lipscomb). However, trends in the data suggested lower friend support reduced the likelihood of using drugs. Lower parent support increased the likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviors.

Spirituality often is misunderstood or not used as a resource during therapy when addressing mental or physical health issues (Lewis, 2007). Turner-Musa and Lipscomb's (2007) study suggested spirituality may be a motivating force guiding individuals to pay close attention to their mind, body, and spirit. This type of self-observation does not have to be tied to a particular religious doctrine. Understanding how Black Americans have depended on spirituality to cope with adversity, oppression, and maintaining a sense of meaning in their lives may enhance cultural competency and positively influence the interactions between Black Americans and those who work with them in various capacities (Lewis, 2007).

Faith. Faith has been described as free, rational, and sentimental (Sarto, 2010). Faith is born from a confidence that surpasses the limits of reason and includes the intervention of human intelligence and personal experience. Fowler (1981) defined faith as the makeup of an individual's main motivation for life. He emphasized both a relational and imaginative development of faith. He suggested faith development is a universal human activity in which individuals find meaning (Fowler). This quest for meaning is a progression in which there is no regression in the process. Fowler argued the progression of faith included cognitive, affective, and relational aspects that increase in complexity and comprehensiveness, and represent more than spiritual maturity.

Faith also has been associated with many social, mental, and physical aspects of the human experience. The practice of faith has been shown to impact physical and mental health (Belanger, Copeland, & Cheung, 2008). In a study about faith and adoption, 95% of the couples who participated in the study said their faith was essential in making a decision to adopt. In this study, 113 families adopted 226 children, 48% of the children were Black American. Parents of the adopted children believed their faith contributed to less stress in the adoptive parenting process.

Faith has been utilized in human service programs. Faith-based organizations, such as Catholic Social Services and Lutheran Social Services, often partner with local public agencies, private nonprofits, and for-profit organizations to provide services (Hugen & Venema, 2009). This approach to human service encourages communities to take an increased responsibility for the social, economic, and personal needs of citizens. One program has shown favorable outcomes concerning the avoidance of future criminal behavior (CEI, 2010). Virginia Department of Corrections partnered with Prison Fellowship in 2008 to create a faith-based reentry program for male offenders (CEI, 2010). Inmates selected for the program participated in a pre-release and post-release program which included classes, counseling, life skills instruction and mentors. The program had been considered successful because less than 50% of those who finished the program have re-offended. Several assumptions have been made as to why faith-based programs were successful. One idea was religious service providers go beyond the call with clients to inspire a large degree of trust among the clients (Hugen & Venema, 2009). A second idea suggested faith-based agencies are willing to demonstrate persistence and willingness to remain committed to people over a long period of time.

Faith has been instrumental in the process of healing for persons facing illness, participating in health programs, and facing extreme adversity. In a study about homeless Black American women, faith was used as a resource of coping with the demands of homelessness, including recovery from trauma sustained because of homelessness and the challenges of transitioning (Washington, Moxley, Garriott, Weinberger, 2008). Women in this study reported high levels of self-efficacy, strong motivation, and compassion for others. They maintained optimism and hope by using their faith to cope with the adversity they were facing.

The varying definitions of faith, strong unshakeable belief in something without proof, convictions of truth based on doctrine, complete confidence or trust in a person, or any set of firmly held principles or beliefs are all united by one commonality (Newton, 2010). The commonality is that faith is a human enterprise. Faith is something humans seek to exercise towards a person or object. Faith in relation to the sense of purpose is necessary in the caring relationships adolescents experience at home, in their communities, or at school (Benard, 2004). The existence of dependable, faithful mentors in relationship with adolescents is essential both in preventing health risk behaviors and in increasing the motivation to learn.

Sense of meaning. Sense of meaning in one's life includes living a rewarding (Benard, 2004) and authentic life (Kenyon, 2000). How a person achieves a sense of meaning varies because there is no universal definition. Baumeister (1991) identified human needs related to sense of meaning: having purpose, value and feeling, a sense of efficacy and self worth. These human needs create questions often asked when a person is developing a sense of meaning in their life: "Who am I? What do I love? How shall I live? How can I make a difference?" (Benard, 2004, p.35). Frankl (1963) stated that humans have an innate drive to find significance and meaning in their life. When this meaning is not achieved, the result is psychological distress.

Klaw (2008) conducted a study about adolescent mothers' plans for their future. In the study, Black American youth consistently expressed high hopes for educational and occupational attainment and high expectations for achieving their goals. The study sample consisted of 30 adolescents attending schools for pregnant and parenting adolescents. During an autobiographical project in which participants created a collage telling where they were from, what was important in their life, and what they saw themselves doing in the future, participants created similar representations of where they saw their future. Participants envisioned themselves as married women, financially successful, and having professional careers (Klaw). The collages showcased traditional avenues of occupation, education, and family. These representations were not parallel to the lives they were currently living, but they were based on the hope they had for themselves. Baumeister's (1991) four human needs related to sense of meaning are seen in the depiction displayed by adolescents when describing their plans for the future. These adolescents expressed a desire to have purpose, value and a sense of efficacy, and self worth. Results revealed all Black American youth do not lower their expectations for attaining their future goals or for utilizing traditional avenues to achieve occupational success (Klaw). However, the way a youth perceives his or herself was indeed constructed by a developmental process that occurs through the engagement in activities and relationships. Their perception of self impacted how they chose to accomplish their goals and rather they chose traditional avenues to achieve occupational success.

Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS) is a national school based survey conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (DHHS, 2010). The survey monitors health risk behaviors and the prevalence of obesity and asthma among youth and

young adults. The YRBSS data is used to measure progress toward achieving the national health objectives for *Healthy People 2020*, assess health risk behavior trends among high school students, and evaluate school and community interventions at the national, state, and local level.

The 2009 YRBSS (DHHS, 2010) collected 16,460 completed questionnaires from 158 schools of 9-12 graders. The survey identified health behaviors of Black American adolescents and other youth. The YRBS reported 14.5% of Black American youth, 11.5% of Hispanics and 8.0% of Whites were involved in a physical fight, were hit, slapped, or hurt by their boyfriend or girlfriend. The percentage of Black American youth who had four or more sexual partners during their lifetime was 28.6% as compared with 14.2% of Hispanics, and 10.5% of Whites. In regards to habits associated with school success, Black Americans were more likely to get less than eight hours of sleep on school nights and use computers for three or more hours daily for activities not related to school. Dietary patterns of Black Americans included drinking soda at least once per day. They were less likely to participate in 60 minutes of physical activity daily (DHHS, 2010). Data presented in the 2009 National YRBS showed a negative association between the presence of various health risk behaviors and academic achievement (DHHS, 2010). Students with higher grades engaged in fewer alcohol and other drug use behaviors. They also had lower participation in health risk behaviors, unintentional injuries, violence-related behaviors, tobacco use, sexual behaviors, and unhealthy dietary behaviors than classmates with lower grades (DHHS, 2010).

The percentage of youth who currently used alcohol and who had grades of A’s was 32%, grades of B’s was 43%, grades of C’s was 51% and grades of D’s and F’s was 62%. Youth who used marijuana one or more times in their lifetime, and whose grades were A’s, B’s, C’s, D’s and F’s percentage of use was 21%, 37%, 50%, and 66% respectively (DHHS, 2010). The percentage of youth who had at least one sexual intercourse experience and who had grades of A’s was 32%,

youth with grades of B's was 46%, youth with grades of C's was 59%, and those with D's and F's was 69%. The percentage of students who carried a weapon and whose grades were A's, B's, C's, D's and F's was 12%, 16%, 21%, and 37% respectively. The percentage of students watching television 3 or more hours per day and whose grades were A's, B's, C's, D's, and F's was 24%, 32%, 39%, and 49% (DHHS, 2010). Incorporating resiliency skills and increasing protective factors necessary to promote resiliency is essential to reducing high risk behaviors, increase positive social interaction, and competency (Masten et al., 1995).

Summary

According to Kids Count, over the last decade, increased awareness and programs developed used to identify and reduce risk factors associated with low levels of resiliency have only been minimally successful (Shore & Shore, 2009). Although small improvements within various racial ethnicities have been noted, minorities have been identified as experiencing even less reduction to risk factors or benefits from the development of resiliency programs. Black Americans have been identified as more likely than their White peers to being exposed to risk factors, such as poverty, violent neighborhoods, higher mortality rates and limited financial resources associated with low resiliency (Brown, 2008). Even with these risk factors, many Black Americans are able to escape the consequences and lifestyles commonly associated with the risk factors. When protective factors addressing the basic needs of youth are in place in families, schools, and communities become resilient. However, when these protective factors are not in place, youth are more likely to engage in risky health behaviors. They also are more likely to have lower academic achievements, higher levels of violence, and higher levels of poverty in adulthood. These practices, attitudes, and beliefs tend to be duplicated among their children

(Herrenkohl, Hill, Chung, Abbott, & Hawkins, 2003). A resilient youth will have improved social, health, academic behaviors, and reduced health risk behaviors (Benard, 2004).

Research has supported the belief that youth with a sense of purpose tend to have lower levels of risky behaviors and higher academic achievements (Benard, 2004). During the adolescent years, youth are forming their own ideas, deciding their career paths, and discovering their meaning of life (Curwin, 2010). Researching sense of purpose concepts associated with spirituality will increase understanding of adolescents and young adults and potentially increase how parents and professionals interact and guide them through life's processes. Chapters 3 will include research methods as well as description, analysis, and interpretation of the data.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe and interpret attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to a sense of purpose among Black American families participating in an outreach program in Southern, IL. Data obtained through individual interviews was analyzed to develop grounded theory. The grounded theory being developed was about an enhanced understanding of the role of sense of purpose in the lives of selected Black American youth. Chapter 3 describes the steps that were followed in the data collection process, which included: research questions, research design, study samples, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques.

Research Questions

The following questions will be addressed in the study:

1. How, if at all, is a sense of purpose demonstrated, taught and encouraged in the homes of these families?

2. How, if at all, are faith, optimism, hope, sense of meaning and spirituality expressed in the homes of these families?

3. How do these adolescents perceive that their parents and/ or guardians demonstrate, teach and encourage a sense of purpose in their family?

4. How, if at all, does faith, optimism, hope, sense of meaning and spirituality impact the goals of these adolescents?

Research Design

I used a qualitative research design that incorporated grounded theory. Creswell (2007) suggested that grounded theory was an appropriate design choice when a theory was not available to explain a process. Theories that were in literature did not address potential valuable variables of interest to this study. Grounded theory developed through this research provided a general framework of how people were experiencing sense of purpose.

Utilizing a qualitative research approach, I interacted with participants in their natural setting. Natural settings for this study were the homes of selected families. I summarized how parents and children interpreted the phenomenon of sense of purpose. This interpretation was according to the way the selected parents and children saw or understood the meaning of sense of purpose. As a qualitative researcher, my goal was to seek understanding through personal descriptions, discover new ways of examining the world through the eyes of the participants (Hays & Singh, 2012), and generate and hypotheses using the inductive process (Merriam, 2009).

Descriptions of family dynamics, interactions, and practices generated hypotheses about sense of purpose. As part of the inductive process for this study, information was gathered from in-depth interviews and observations, and analyzed early in the data collection process using the constant comparative method to uncover and further investigate core categories. These categories were organized from the most general to the most specific themes. These themes were written as rich descriptions that conveyed what I had learned about sense of purpose and its constructs. Descriptions included participant's thoughts, beliefs, and experiences related to having a sense of purpose. I also included specified causes, conditions, and consequences that had resulted because of the participants' social construction of sense of purpose (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Descriptions about context, body language (noticeable movement when certain topic are discussed), and voice tone (elevation or emotion displayed), combined with participants descriptions of their behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes related to a sense of purpose were collected using audiotapes, field notes, and observations. Hays and Singh (2012) suggested that observations and interactions with study participants prior to data collection should not be used for the development of grounded theory. Using information obtained only through data collection would have allowed me to set aside all preconceived notions to formulate theories about sense of purpose. Although information from past experiences is generally not used in the development of grounded theory, the history and experiences I had with these families prior to data collection, helped to create a vivid picture of their practices of sense of purpose, which increased my ability to create an accurate portrait of their personal realities.

This research study also incorporated competencies suggested by Merriam (2009), including:

1. having a questioning stance, which answers the question why are things the way they are. My questioning stance was: do parents understand the connection between developing a sense of purpose in their children and success?

2. accepting ambiguity, which included the ability to be flexible and to trust the flow of the process;

3. being a systematic and careful observer;

4. asking well-chosen open-ended questions, which could be followed-up with probes and requests for more detail;

5. thinking inductively, which included viewing raw data and incorporating it into abstract categories, concepts, and constructs; and analyzing and summarizing; and

6. understanding the commitment associated with a qualitative study, which could be longer in length than a quantitative study (Merriam, 2009). Because my study used grounded theory, large amounts of data were required to develop a theory. Data collection continued until saturation had occurred and the minimal number of participants were interviewed and observed.

For this qualitative study, I was the only person collecting the data, which had both benefits and liabilities. Benefits of collecting my own data included: being able to be both adaptive and immediately responsive and also being able to expand my understanding from both verbal and non-verbal communication (Merriam, 2009). I was able to process, clarify, and summarize material and data immediately following the interviews as well as check with participants for accuracy of interpretation. On the other hand, there were potential liabilities. Having worked with the families included in this study, I had biases and subjectivities that could impact results throughout the data collection and data analysis process. To minimize this limitation, I, along with my research supervisor, monitored data collection and data analysis to identify and document any influences on collection and interpretation of the data. This process incorporated Guba's Model of Trustworthiness (Guba, 1981). We evaluated credibility applicability, consistency, and neutrality.

Credibility of the study was determined by deciding if the study was believable. I had to determine if the conclusions made sense for the study. This aspect of trustworthiness was determined by discussing core categories and their relationships with each other and the five constructs, hypotheses, and causal and environment influences with my research supervisor. From these discussions, we formulated conclusions for this study.

Applicability of the study was established by providing a detailed description of the research process. This description included research methods, participants, setting and the time frame of the study. Providing a detailed description of the research process allowed the readers to make decisions about the findings of the study. The readers, graduate students and committee members determined these findings were applicable to other individuals and in other settings.

Consistency of the results of the study was conducted to determine if similar findings were found across researchers involved in the study. A research assistant who was familiar with sense of purpose was asked to code transcripts and field notes to compare with the data I had coded. We discussed differences in coding and determined ways to code that would be consistent between me and my research assistant. Neutrality was established by my awareness that using the constructivist approach was vital for this study. I felt it was my responsibility to minimize interfering with the natural process of data collection. I tried not to show bias during data collection. I listened and observed and reported the information as clearly as possible.

I recognized the biases and subjectivity within my study. I worked directly with the parents and youth who were participating in the study. The ability to obtain data from these familiar participants was easier because of the comfort and trust level I had established with them. However, I also realized that the knowledge I had about daily interactions the participating parents had with their children may have affected how I reported my interpretations of their interviews, especially if I didn't think participants answered questions honestly. I observed their body language, eye contact, tone of speech, and their timing (i.e., how long it took them to respond to questions asked) when they gave their responses to questions. I recognized that social desirability may have been a limitation to the participants responding honestly. They may have responded in a way they believed was culturally acceptable or in a way they believed I expected them to respond. I also recognized that my understanding of sense of purpose would impact how I determined qualities of sense of purpose in each family. Although having subjectivities was an asset in qualitative research, that is, it gave me the opportunity to tell participants' stories through my lens, I wanted to make sure their voices were heard. I focused on the constructivist approach.

Qualitative research draws from the philosophical roots of phenomenology, symbolic interactionism (i.e. how symbols and interpretive processes affect interactions) and constructivism. This study incorporated social constructivism, a term which has been used interchangeably with interpretivism (Merriam, 2009). The social constructivism philosophy supports the assumption that reality is socially constructed and that there is no single, observable reality. This philosophy supports beliefs in the presence of multiple realities or interpretations, which are context-bound. How parents in my sample encouraged or interpreted concepts of sense of purpose may have been different for parents of a different sample or in a different location. To explain constructivism (i.e. describing and interpreting multiple realities within the context of the study) (Merriam, 2009), I explored spirituality, optimism, hope, faith, and sense of purpose with each family in the study, through questions, prompts, and observations aimed at answering the following: Who were the people who supported or facilitated success? What family practices led to or supported success? What were the relatable qualities between spirituality, optimism, hope, faith, and sense of meaning and success? How did the parents define success?

This qualitative study incorporated grounded theory, as defined by sociologist Glaser and Strauss (1967). I strived to derive meaning from the data resulting in a theory about sense of purpose and other concepts emerging from or being grounded in the data (Glaser & Strauss) Grounded theory usually is developed from everyday situations and is useful in addressing questions about how things change over time. Merriam (2009) suggested three steps to include within a grounded theory study:

1. Theoretical sampling includes collecting, coding, and analyzing data to decide what data to collect next and, where to find the data, and reviewing the appropriate literature to develop the theory.

2. Data should be analyzed using the constant comparative method. This process includes comparing data to determine similarities and differences. Data is grouped

according to similarities and given a name that becomes a category. The categories identified during data collection are arranged in relation to each other in the building of grounded theory.

3. Identification of one core category, which is the process that includes how all of the categories and properties of the study are connected. A core category is the main conceptual element through which all other categories and properties are connected. According to Strauss (1987), the core category must be related to as many other categories and their properties as possible. The core category must appear frequently in the data and must impact the development of the theory. The detailed explanation of how these steps were included in the study is addressed in the data collection section of this chapter.

Study sample. I used a non-probability purposive sample of Black American parents and their children participating in an outreach program located in Southern Illinois. I wanted to discover, understand, and gain insights about having a sense of purpose from a specific group of individuals (Merriam, 2009). Based on my desire to explore family attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and daily routines as they relate to having a sense of purpose, I selected families from which the most could be learned and understood. The sample of convenience consisted of parent-youth dyads. This sample was selected based on location and availability of participants. The criteria for selection included: youth (aged 6-17) who participated in at least one outreach program provided at One Vision Outreach Training Center. Parent participants must have had at least one child (aged 6-17) involved in at least one program of One Vision Outreach Training Center.

When a parent had more than one child participating in the study, the parent and each child who participated in the study were considered a separate dyad. Limits were not placed on the number of dyads used in each family. The views of siblings participating in the study were assumed to be different. I used all possible participants to achieve extensive data needed to fully develop a theory and reach saturation (Creswell, 2007). The sample was comprised of 10 families, which included 10 parents and 16 children who participated in the study.

Data Collection

Recruitment process. After receiving Human Subjects approval and prior to conducting interviews and observations, I recruited families using a script (See Appendix B, pg. 214). The families were selected from a contact list provided by One Vision Outreach Training Center. Because of my involvement with One Vision Outreach Training Center, I had access to the contact information of program participants. I contacted potential participants by phone. Participants were chosen by alphabetical order of last name. The process continued until, 10 different parents and all of their participating children were selected and agreed to participate.

Data collection process. To describe and understand the phenomenon of sense of purpose and its dimensions, I used individual interviews and observations to collect qualitative data. On the evening prior to each session, selected participants received telephone calls reminding them of the dates and times for their interview and observation. Data were collected in the following sequential order: Parent and child interviews and observations were scheduled for the same day. The observation began as soon as I arrived at their home. The observation was conducted before during and after the interviews.

Interviews. There were several advantages to using individual interviews and collecting qualitative data, including reaching an audience difficult to locate, discussing sensitive and emotional material, including individuals with limited reading and writing skills, and being able to test more complex and broader issues. Disadvantages to conducting individual interviews included longer length of time required to collect and analyze data, cost, and results that may not provide any additional conclusive information (McDermott & Sarvela, 1999). The purpose of the interview questions was to probe for individual responses and beliefs, and to discuss a range of issues related to sense of purpose (McDermott and Sarvela, 1999). Interviews were conducted in

an environment conducive to conversation, in the homes of each participant located in a community in Southern, Illinois. Interviews with the children were conducted at the homes of the children. The parent interview was first and then the child interviews. After the last interview was conducted, as part of the interview procedure, follow-up questions were asked to clarify prior statements, and to fill in gaps from information obtained during the interview process. I also called participants on the phone if I had additional questions about their interview. After I finished asking questions, I remained in the family's home until my 60 minutes of observation time was complete.

Interview guide. At all interview sessions, I used an interview guide for the purpose of facilitating discussion topics and keeping consistency across interviews. Interviews were audio-taped. Participants also were told that some questions asked might be of a sensitive nature and I would stop taping any time they felt uncomfortable.

Interview questions were designed to elicit information related to sense of purpose and how the selected Black American family's attitudes, beliefs, and practices of sense of purpose were, if at all, related to the five dimensions of sense of purpose: optimism, faith, hope, spirituality, and sense of meaning. Different sets of interview questions for parents and their children (See Tables 1 & 2, pgs. 84-85) were used for the interviews. The interview questions allowed parent participants an opportunity to share and express their thoughts about of how they demonstrated, taught, and encouraged sense of purpose in the lives of their children. Youth participants had an opportunity to share how sense of purpose was demonstrated, taught, and encouraged in their lives by recounting their family experiences and those with other adults.

The interview style was semi-structured. The semi-structured form of interviewing included a mix of both structured and less structured interview questions (Merriam, 2009). The

interviews were guided by using a list of questions and prompts. Administration of the selected questions and prompts was intended to obtain specific data from the participants that related to the five dimensions of sense of purpose, optimism, hope, faith, spirituality, and sense of meaning.

Observations. In addition to participating in-depth interviews, parents and their children were asked to participate in a 60 minute observation. The observations were held on the same day as the parent interview. The observation began as soon as I arrived at the home of the participants and was conducted before, during, and after the interview. The length of the observation time was selected by the parents. However, the time of the observation had to be a time when the entire family was home. The site selected for the observations was the family home. Permission for the observations to be in the home was obtained by a signed consent before data collection began. I also informed participants that information collected through observations would be kept confidential, and only for the purpose of the study. Field notes were going to be destroyed after the study was completed.

I observed the home environment, activities of the family, language usage and interaction among children and their parent and siblings (Creswell, 2007). The 60-minute observation time constraint was established by the parents. The parents were not willing to extend the observation times. During the first 30 minutes of the observation, I sat quietly and observed. During the next 30 minutes, I engaged in conversation and interaction with the family members when appropriate (Creswell, 2007). This method was used to address the potential deception of the participants, impression management, and to think about my subjectivities and how they influenced my lens as a researcher.

I developed an observation protocol as a method for recording notes. I recorded both descriptive and reflective notes (Creswell, 2007). These notes included what I experienced, what I learned, what I was thinking, and how I reacted during the observations. After observation was completed, I asked the family members if they had any questions and I thanked them for their participation. I also informed them of the use of the data and their accessibility to the study.

Data Analysis

The individual interview transcripts and observation notes served as sources of data that were analyzed through the constant comparative method. The transcription process was completed by a research assistant. I completed all of the coding for the transcripts. Transcripts served as a source for potential quotations that were integrated within the findings.

The constant comparative method was used to identify themes consistent with sense of purpose as well as any additional emerging themes within transcripts of the individual interview audiotapes and the observations. When I used the constant comparative method I looked for clues, trends or patterns that reappeared among various interviews and observations (Krueger, 1988).

I identified and compared common and less common categories for each family. The comparisons were written up and reported to my research supervisor. These results were not included in the findings because they did not enhance the narratives about the families, however, the comparison of the common and less common categories was included in chapter 5 discussion. These trends and patterns were further examined using open, axial, and selective coding. I prepared a description statement about what was found. I sought to identify statements, themes, and practices that repeated and were common within each dyad.

Table 3.1

In-depth Interview Questions for Parents

Questions	Prompts
1. Describe how you feel about your life now and in the future?	Describe your life now and the life you hope to have in the future.
2. Describe for me a typical week day in your home from morning until bedtime.	In what way does your activity during the week differ from your weekend activities?
3. Describe the most important life lessons you want your child to remember? How will you help them remember these lessons? Why is this important?	What were some of the memorable life experiences you have shared with your child?
4. How do you prepare your children for their future?	
5. How would you like to be able to describe your children in 10 years?	What would you like for your children to have experienced in 10 years?
6. What do you think it takes for a child to be successful?	
7. In your opinion what does a person need to be successful?	Are there certain characteristics that would help a person become successful?

Table 3.2

In-depth Interview Questions for Children

Questions	Prompts
1. What do you want to be when you grow up?	What do you need to do to become a_____? What does your mom/guardian say to you about becoming a _____?
2. Can you think of something you learned from your mom or dad that was very important to you?	What do your parents teach you? What kinds of things does your mom or dad say to you?
3. Can you think of something you learned from someone else that was important to you?	Other than school, do you go other places to learn? Where do you go? What do you learn?
4. What lessons have you learned from your mom or dad?	What has your mom or dad taught you?
5. What types of things do you do on school days?	Do you do anything differently on the weekends?
6. What do you think about life?	Is there anything about your life that makes you happy or sad? Why?
7. Who do you want to be like when you grow up?	What do you like about them?

The range and diversity of experiences and perceptions were viewed to identify opinions, ideas, or feelings even though they were expressed in different words and styles. In addition to completing parent interviews in their homes, I also included observations of their home environment. I also analyzed across dyads to see if there were emerging themes and common thoughts or perceptions among parents and siblings.

To ensure accurate data was collected for the data analysis, I used audio taping combined with field notes taken from the observations. Upon transcribing the first interview and reviewing the field notes from the first observation, I wrote reflections, identified themes, describe thought patterns, ideas, and conditions observed and heard at the initial interview and observation. After the second interview was transcribed, and observation reviewed, I began comparing reflections, themes, thought patterns and ideas of both interviews. This process continued with each interview and observation. I clustered appropriate comments and quotations through an open coding method. This method allowed me to make notes in the margins of each transcript. These notes were codes assigned to pieces of data assisting me with the construction of categories. I also followed criteria suggested by Merriam (2009) in developing categories:

1. Categories should be responsive, meaning categories helped to answer my research questions,
2. Categories should be exhaustive, meaning all relevant and important data was put into a categories or subcategories;
3. Categories should be mutually exclusive; meaning units of data went into one category. When data applied to more than one category, I refined the selected categories,
4. Categories should be sensitizing, meaning data was categorized in such a way that anyone could read categories and get a sense of the topic or the nature of the study; and
5. Categories should be conceptually congruent, meaning the categories made sense together. In addition to themes, I looked for patterns within the categories that

answered the research questions (Merriam, 2009).

The development of categories was the beginning of developing a grounded theory (Merriam, 2009). In addition to categories, grounded theory also included properties, core categories, and hypotheses. Properties describe categories. Core categories define how other categories are related or interconnected (Merriam, 2009). Hypotheses were the proposed links I was testing as I developed the grounded theory between properties and categories. Following the open coding used to categorize themes, I began the process of axial coding. This type of coding grouped related categories and properties together and refined the process (Merriam, 2009). After the relationship between the categories was examined, I looked at the five constructs, spirituality, faith, hope, optimism, and sense of meaning to see the relationship between the common and less common categories and these constructs. These constructs were not analyzed as categories or themes because predetermined categories should not be part of the grounded theory development. Following the axial coding, I began the process of selective coding. During this method of coding, development of core categories and hypotheses occurred. From the themed categories, statements frequently made were used in deciding conclusions and recommendations from the sample study.

Credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and ethics. Trustworthiness was established by using data in an ethical manner. Trustworthy research is important to professionals in applied fields (Merriam, 2009). Many professionals are practitioners who apply research during their interactions with clients and the general public. I established trustworthiness by using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability for the study. I carefully observed and conceptualized participants' behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes. I provided written detail of the data that was thorough enough for my conclusions to have

meaning. These differences were discussed from a constructivist point of view. To increase the trustworthiness of the study, I established guidelines for the credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and ethics.

Credibility. Credibility is establishing the true value or the believability of a qualitative study by addressesing the reality of the study (Merriam, 2009). The reality is based both on the person who is interpreting the findings and study participants. In a qualitative study, the realities of the study can be multifaceted. Assessing reality based on the interpreter and the participant would be an inappropriate determinant of the study's true value (Merriam, 2009). Maxwell (2005) does not believe it is possible to capture reality. Maxwell would describe credibility as a "goal rather than a product: It is never something that can be proven or taken for granted. Credibility is also relative: it has to be assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than being a context independent property of methods or conclusions" (p.105). Because I may not have been able to capture objective truth or reality, establishing credibility of the study became the objective. There are several strategies that are used in a qualitative study to promote credibility. These strategies are:

1. Triangulation includes using a variety of investigators, data collection methods, and sources of data to confirm emerging themes and findings. I established triangulation by using audio-taped interviews, field notes, and observation to collect the data. Data also was collected from parents-children, dyads. This data was compared and cross checked from the different samples at different times and places.

2. Member checks involves the researcher asking for feedback from participants on the emerging findings, to avoid misinterpretation. I accomplished this strategy by asking the individuals being interviewed to clarify anything that was unclear during the interview. Once data analysis began, I also asked participants to clarify statements made during the interview.

3. Adequate engagement in data collection should continue until the data becomes saturated. I continued to interview additional participants until themes identified were the same and there was no new information being obtained from the

interviews.

4. Self-reflection would include my assumptions, worldview, biases, theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study and how these factors could affect the study's findings, I note my biases and subjectivities throughout the study.

5. Peer review examination includes the study's process, congruency of emerging findings, and interpretations (Merriam, 2009). My study results were reviewed by my dissertation chair, my committee, and students attending the prospectus and defense. For this study, I use all five strategies in establishing credibility and validity of my study.

Transferability. Transferability, a process where readers of the study decide if the study's findings are applicable to individuals and settings, was used to help establish trustworthiness. Sandelowski (1986) suggests that transferability may not be applicable if the findings are descriptive in nature and represent the participant's life perspective. Although some findings are descriptive in nature, I also made generalizations about the participants in the study, therefore establishing transferability was important. Transferability can be established by the comparison of the sample to demographic data, time samples, dense descriptions, and member checking (Guba, 1981). In this study, I examined the data rather than the participants. I determine whether the content of the interviews, behaviors, and observed events were typical or atypical in the lives of the participants (Guba, 1981). According to Lincoln, and Guba (1989), my job as a researcher was not to present transferability, but to allow the readers to make judgments about transferability. To accomplish this, I conducted member checking and I provided dense background descriptions about the participants, the context of the research, and the setting in which data was collected.

Dependability. Dependability refers to obtaining the same results if a study is repeated (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research, which involves human behavior and many interpretations, will not yield a replication of the same results. The study being consistent with data collection is

more important. Ensuring the consistency of the study can be assessed by using various strategies. These strategies are: triangulation, peer review examination, self- reflection, and audit trail which is a detailed account of procedures, methods, and decisions made while carrying out the study (Merriam, 2009). In addition to each strategy, I also used coding and interrater reliability for this study. After data was transcribed, I selected one person who was familiar with sense of purpose and the selected concepts to review one transcript and, using the table with the predetermined themes, code the transcript. Following their coding, I compared similarities and differences in coding of the themes and discussed and resolved any significant differences with the person who I selected to code.

Confirmabilty. Confirmability establishes neutrality of the study (Guba, 1981). Confirmability audit, triangulation, and reflexivity are methods of establishing confirmability. During the confirmability audit, I used the six steps suggested by Guba and Lincoln, (1989). The steps include: (a) initial data (field notes and audio recordings), (b) data reduction and beginning of analysis (condensed notes and working hypotheses), (c) data reconstruction and synthesis (thematic categories and interpretations), (d) process notes (procedures, design strategies, and trustworthiness notes), (e) materials related to the studies intentions, (f) theory development information. Triangulation also was used by collected data through field notes, interviews, and observations. Reflexivity also was used to establish confirmability. Reflexivity helped me self reflect as a researcher. During my self-reflection, I examined my authenticity, unconditional positive regard, and empathy I had towards the research study (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Ethics. Ethics involves treating all aspects of the research study as a moral and ethical undertaking (Angen, 2000). As a guideline for establishing ethics, I conducted research that provided practical and meaning insight and was relevant to current and future health education

practice. I was also mindful of my responsibility to be sensitive to the nature of cultural, and social contexts in conducting and presenting my research (Horsburgh, 2003). Quite often the ethics of the investigator impact the credibility, transferability, and the dependability of the study (Merriam, 2009).

Components which ensure credibility of the study have been identified by Patton (2002). Credibility depends on the researcher's training, experience, track record, status, presentation of self, intellectual rigor, professional integrity, and methodological competence. In addition to policies and guidelines that have been established through various hierarchical systems, much of ethical practice is determined by the researcher's values and ethics (Merriam, 2009). Ethical concerns may develop during the process of collecting data and disseminating of findings. For example, if a participant is abusing his or her children or if their living conditions are not acceptable, I would have been legally responsible to report what I saw.

During the interviews, participants may have felt embarrassed and/or an invasion of privacy because of certain questions asked. For this study, I decided if participants became extremely uncomfortable and were unable to continue, I would discontinue the interview. If an interview had been discontinued, another interview would have been scheduled at a later time and date. If the participants chose not to participate in a rescheduled interview, another family would be selected. All participants completed the interviews.

During the data collection, I thought I might face ethical issues. One concern for this study was my possible observations while conducting the study. Possible observations might have included inappropriate discipline, unsanitary living conditions, and unsafe health behaviors. If I was faced with any of those ethical conditions, I would have sought the advice of my dissertation supervisor. During the reading and signing of consent forms, my participants were

informed that I was a mandated reporter. They were told if I saw inappropriate discipline, unsanitary living conditions, and unsafe health behaviors during the interview or observation, I would have to make a report to the child abuse hotline. Patton (2002, pp. 409-410) suggests an ethical checklist to follow when conducting a qualitative study.

1. "Study should include the purpose and methods to be used.
2. Study should state promises and reciprocity.
3. Study should include risk assessments.
4. Study should provide confidentiality.
5. Study should provide informed consent.
6. Study should state data access and ownership.
7. Study should include an interviewer with good mental health."

The interviewer should know who they will seek advice from if necessary. I selected my dissertation supervisor as the person who would have counseled me if I had been faced with an ethical concern. I stated the data collection boundaries and "state ethical verses legal conduct" to the participants. No ethical concerns were identified in the study.

Summary

The design of the study was qualitative. In the study, qualitative research descriptions were used to gather data regarding factors influencing the modeling, encouragement and instruction of sense of purpose among African American youth. To collect qualitative data an individual interview guide was developed by the researcher conducting the study. Observations were also conducted. Common themes that emerged were examined. The participants of the study consisted of parent and child dyads ages 6-17. The study findings will be presented in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to describe and interpret attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to a sense of purpose among Black American families participating in an Outreach program in Southern Illinois. This chapter presents a profile of 10 families and findings. The 10 families, which were comprised of 26 individuals, were selected to participate in individual interviews and observations. The sample consisted of seven Black American mothers, one Black American father, one Black American grandmother, one Caucasian guardian and 16 children.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. How, if at all, is a sense of purpose demonstrated, taught and encouraged in the homes of selected Black American families?

2. How, if at all, are faith, optimism, hope, sense of meaning and spirituality expressed in the homes of these families?

3. How do youth perceive that their parents and/ or guardians demonstrate, teach and encourage a sense of purpose in their family?

4. How, if at all, does faith, optimism, hope, sense of meaning and spirituality impact the goals of these youth?

Study Participants

My observation of each family began as soon as I stepped onto their driveway. I looked at their surroundings, cleanliness, family and friend interactions and anything else that could help me develop a snapshot of their lives. The family narratives were developed by observing before, during, and after the interviews. The observations included times when I sat quietly and times when I interacted with the family, asking questions. The questions I asked, the observations made, and the interviews helped create a context of their life, which included creating a picture of who they were, some of their past struggles and present concerns, and pieces of their life journey. Although information from past experiences is generally not used in the development of grounded theory, the history and experiences I had with these families prior to data collection helped to create a vivid picture of their practices of sense of purpose, which increased my ability to create an accurate portrait of their personal realities. My personal experiences with the families prior to data collection were discussed following their narratives. All of the names assigned to each family member were pseudonyms.

The Greer Family

Talonda is a 35-year-old Black American female and mother of four boys. Jarvis is 15 years old and a sophomore in high school and a C student. During the time his interview was conducted, he was living with his mother. Jarvis is now living in Kentucky with his grandmother. Kevel is 14 years old and in eighth grade. He is a C student. Damarcus is 11 years old and in fifth grade. He is in the AT (Academically Talented) program. He is an A student. Omar is 9 years old and in third grade. He is a B student.

Talonda completed 14 years of school. She is currently employed as a cosmetologist. She has an income level of $20, 0000-$30, 000 per year. She also is receiving government assistance

in the form of Medicaid and housing. Talonda is also engaged. Her fiancé's name is Anthony. Anthony also has two children from previous relationships. Omar Greer, Talonda's youngest son was not interviewed for the study because he was not a participant of programs at One Vision Outreach Training Center. As a family, the Greers attend church every week.

Talonda moved to Southern Illinois at the age of 17 years old. She moved from Chicago to attend college. She was the first person in her family to attend college. During her first year in college, she became homesick and stopped going to class. At the completion of her first year in college, she received failing grades and was placed on suspension. She returned to Chicago, took a job in a factory and began thinking about what she wanted to do with her life.

During the time Talonda was employed at the factory she began having children. Within six years, she had given birth to four children. During the time she began having children, Talonda's relationship with her mother became strained. Talonda told me that, after she gave birth to her second child, she no longer told her mother when she got pregnant because her mother would give her the silent treatment.

Talonda decided to go to cosmetology school. She enrolled and completed school, earning her cosmetology license. While working as a cosmetologist, Talonda began thinking about completing her college degree. After some time and with some convincing from a friend, Talonda decided it was time to return to Southern Illinois. Without telling her mother, Talonda packed up her children, moved into family housing, and registered for classes. She also began working full time as a cosmetologist. I asked Talonda why she did not tell her mother. She said, "I did not want my mother to talk me out of going." Initially, she was enjoying school, but she began to feel the stress of her children being at different schools, having different schedules, and her own school and job responsibilities. She also had a hard time finding dependable and

affordable daycare. Her children became latch key children. She made frequent calls home during her breaks at work to check on them. She also found neighbors who would check in on them to make sure they were okay. Eventually, Talonda decided she needed to take a break from school and concentrate on work and family. She withdrew from school and began focusing on her career as a cosmetologist. Talonda moved out of family housing, rented a three bedroom house, began dating and, within a few years, became engaged. As she began preparing for her marriage, she began to have problems with Jarvis and Kevel. The idea of a man coming into their home was really hard for them.

Jarvis began stealing from her. Jarvis and Kevel also ran away and, in several instances, at least one of them got into a physical altercation with Anthony, Talonda's fiancé. There was one situation when Talonda called the police because Jarvis was acting irrationally. Talonda was arrested because Jarvis accused her of choking him. She was handcuffed, taken to jail, and a court date was set. She was not allowed to see her children or return to her home. She was forced to live in a hotel. Jarvis was placed in temporary custody with one of her friends. Kevel, Damarcus, and Omar stayed with Anthony's grandmother.

Talonda became really sad when she talked about that time in her life. She had never been in any legal trouble and she was angry because her son lied about her. The allegations were later dropped and her children were able to come home. Jarvis remained with her friend for several weeks, until the school year ended. Talonda made a decision to send her children to her mother for the summer so she could have time to think things through. Since that time, she has reunited with her boys and they have continued to work on communication as a family. Talonda and Anthony are working hard to blend their family unit. They have regular family meetings;

they take family trips and outings together; and they share in household chores, mealtime, homework review, and discipline.

Upon arriving at Talonda's home, I smelled the scent of laundry drying in the dryer. Talonda's home was clean. Lines in carpet from the wheels of a vacuum cleaner gave me the impression that the floor had been recently vacuumed. Pillows were neatly stacked on the couches. Collections of DVD were visible. Talonda's home was quiet. The only noticeable sound was the rhythm of the rotating washing machine and dryer. Talonda's home was very comfortable and family-centered. Pictures of her children, herself, and Anthony were on every wall in her front room. Her bathroom was neatly arranged with baskets of fresh towels, a standing toilet roll spindle, a collection of soaps and lotions, and neatly arranged towels on bathroom hooks.

Talonda was dressed in a pair of jeans with a tank top. Her hair was pushed back off of her face and held in place with a rubber band. Talonda came to the front room with a basket of clean laundry. She asked if it would be okay if she folded laundry while I interviewed her. During our interview, Anthony came in, went to the kitchen, and put a load of clothes in the dryer and quickly left.

Approximately 30 minutes after completing Talonda's interview, Omar came home. As soon as he walked in she asked him how his day was. He replied, "Fine." She asked, "Do you have any home work?" "No, but I do have some papers for you to sign." He brought a white envelope to Talonda. She opened the envelope and they proceeded to discuss the contents which described a fundraiser idea he received from his school. Talonda told Omar she did not like the type of fundraiser his school was advertising and she needed to think about whether he would

participate. For the next 10 minutes, he continued to ask her about the fundraiser by saying, “Please Momma please.” He followed her into the kitchen where she began to prepare dinner.

Within 10 minutes, I could smell the aroma of ground beef. Every now and then I would hear the sound of the dryer opening and closing while she was in the kitchen. Periodically, she came into the front room and instructed Omar to complete chores, such as getting hangers from his closet, taking his clothes to his room, and putting them away. After a while, Omar asked if he could call his father. She told him to make sure his chores were completed before calling his father. He did not wait, but proceeded to call him. She let out a sigh of frustration at his disobedience and stared at him. Shortly after the staring exchange, Kevel came home. Jarvis and Damarcus came home soon after I began interviewing Kevel. Kevel and Damarcus were both anxious to touch bases with their mother. Both boys went into the kitchen and asked their mother what was for dinner. She answered tacos and proceeded to ask them, “Do you have any home work?” They replied, “No, we did it at school.” She made a point to come out of the kitchen to express to me her concern about the limited homework they were receiving. Her following statement to her boys was, “Get your chores done.”

Kevel and Damarcus wanted to know what I was doing at their home. I told them I was doing a study and I would be interviewing them. Jarvis did not go into the kitchen to speak to his mother. He sat in a chair in the front room and started dialing numbers on his cell phone, while he turned around in a chair. He quickly became bored with dialing numbers on his phone. He proceeded to reach over and turn on the computer to download music onto his phone. When I told him I was ready to interview him, he sat down next to me. I asked him if he had spoken to his mother. He replied, “No.” I told him to go speak to his mother. He proceeded to go into the kitchen and speak to her and then he returned for his interview. In my past experiences with

Jarvis, he often excluded himself from group activities and interactions because he did not feel included. I asked him to go speak to his mother to help him feel included.

During my interview of Damarcus, Anthony came into the house. He came in with his son from a previous relationship. He looked into Omar's bedroom and asked him why his bed was not made up. He asked his son if he would assist him in making his bed. Meanwhile, Talonda asked her fiancé if he would go to the store to purchase taco shells. Before he left, Omar asked him if he would take them to the park. He responded by saying, "Is your room clean?" Omar responded, "Yes." Anthony entered Omar's room to examine his work, and said, "You have not finished cleaning the room." He began to point out things that had been put in the wrong place. Anthony went to the kitchen and told Talonda that Omar had not completed his chores and was putting things in places other than where they belonged. Talonda came out of the kitchen and instructed all of the boys to complete their chores. Soon after the Talonda's instructions, Damarcus gathered trash and emptied the garbage; Kevel retreated to his room with Anthony's son; Jarvis continued to download music from the Internet; and Omar grabbed his coloring book and crayons, sat on the front room floor, and began singing loudly to himself. Once Anthony returned from the store, he had a dialog with Kevel. He asked him if he found his hair pick. Kevel responded, "No." The fiancé then said, "You need to do something with your hair or you need a haircut." Talonda's fiancé's tone of voice was very calm and each time he instructed the children, he used please and thank you. He also showed signs of affection, such as hugs, and pats on the head. Once Talonda completed dinner, she came into the front room to watch *Gray's Anatomy* on the computer with Jarvis. Talonda and Jarvis began to have a dialog about the last episode they watched together.

My experiences with the Greer family. When I first met Talonda four years ago, my impression of her was quite different than the impression I have of her now. I have always known Talonda to be a hard worker at home and at her place of employment. She has always had a clean house, and she was good at delegating household chores to her children. She believed in providing clothes, food, and shelter for her children. She did not however, provide discipline, structure, communication, and family time needed to help her children become successful.

Prior to Talonda's regular involvement in church, I would have described her as a party animal. Whenever she was not at work, she was attending parties and events with her boyfriend or her friends. Her children spent a lot of time at home alone. She also did not let her children participate in any sports or after school activities, because she did not want the responsibility of transporting her boys. She also did not correspond with her children's teachers when they requested to speak with her concerning her children. We had several conversations about attending parent teacher conferences. She chose not to attend the conferences because she did not believe attending the conferences would change the behavior or grades of her children. Talonda has made many changes in her household. Talonda and Anthony, her fiancé', have recently begun attending counseling with her pastor to strengthen their relationship. They also are working together to strengthen their blended family. I am really proud of the changes Talonda has made. I told her I was proud of her and she seemed pleased that I approved of the changes she had made with her family.

The Simmons Family

Ann is a 32-year-old single, Black American mother with two children. Lisa is 9 years old and in fourth grade. Lisa is a very good student. She has an A average. She participates in weekly gymnastic classes. James is 7 years old and in second grade. James receives grades of A

in every subject, except handwriting. James had an anger problem and had been suspended from school on several occasions, for lashing out at other students. He also received private counseling to work on his anger. James participates in weekly karate classes. Lisa and James used to attend the Boys and Girls Club. They no longer attend because James had several altercations with other children. His altercations resulted in him receiving several suspensions from the program. As a result, Ann decided to pull both of her children out of the Boys and Girls Club.

Ann completed 15 years of school. She is currently employed as a cafeteria worker. She has an income level of $10, 000-$20, 000 per year. She also is receiving government assistance in the form of Link, Medicaid and housing.

Ann is originally from Mounds, Illinois. She relocated to Southern Illinois to attend college at the age of 18. She admitted to enjoying college, spending time with friends, and partying. While attending college, she did not receive satisfactory grades. She was suspended from school and had to resume her studies at a local junior college. She completed courses at the junior college and re-entered the university. She was once again asked to leave the university because of her grades. When I asked her how she felt about the cycle she experienced while trying to obtain her college degree, she said she could have done well, but she did not really want to do all of the work required of her. After realizing college was not for her, she decided to take a break from school. She continued to party with her friends; she started selling drugs and she became pregnant. A year and a half after giving birth to Lisa, she became pregnant with James. Both of her pregnancies were by a man who fathered six other children and who refused to take care of any of his children. Each of his children's mothers had taken him to court for child support. Ann and several of the mothers knew their children had the same father. Anger over having the same father often caused the children to get into fist fights over the father. Although

Ann's children's father refused to take care of his children, Ann continued to have a regular sexual relationship with him.

When I asked her why she would let her children's father treat her this way she said, "This is what I deserve. When I lose weight, then I'll deserve a better man." Ann's thoughts about herself may have come from the abuse she saw her mother experience at the hands of her father. He was very abusive and her mother was often badly beaten. One day, after being beaten, Ann's mother packed Ann and her brothers up and moved home to live with her mother. I asked Ann how she felt about this. She replied, "I really wanted to live with my father. I know he was abusive to my mother, but he never hit us."

Until recently, Ann did not have a good relationship with her mother. She said their troublesome relationship was because of the way her mother treated her when she was young. She said there was constant abuse. She recalled getting hit for everything. She said she never knew when she was going to get hit. Ann also talked about the physically abusive relationship she had with her brothers. Her brothers constantly beat her, and would often lock her in the room. She also said she hit and threw things at them. She said they were very violent with each other. She also felt that her mother favored them over her.

Several years after Ann began having children, her relationship with her mother began to change. Her mother would drive one hour each way, on multiple days of the week, to baby sit for her. She gave Ann a newly-used car to make sure she and her children had good transportation. She also became a strong financial support for Ann while she was looking for permanent employment. After numerous attempts to get a college degree, Ann decided to go to school at an online university. She shared that she became bored with the online classes and she didn't finish them. She continued working odd jobs, and she often completed online surveys for cash. Finally,

she was offered a position working at the university where she had attended school. After several years of working, she registered for classes again. This time, when she knew she was not going to receive favorable grades, she withdrew from the courses. During the last six months, Ann has begun to examine herself and her goals. She also changed her crowd of friends. Most of her new friends have college degrees and have been encouraging her to go back to school.

During my observation, she informed me that she had been trying to get a different job. She found out she did not get the job for which she applied because there were others who were more qualified. After having this experience, she went to talk with a college advisor on the campus where she is employed. She found out she only needed seven classes to get a University Studies Degree. Spring 2012, she registered for two classes and decided she would try to complete her degree.

When I arrived at Ann's home I noticed she had company. Her friend who she babysits for was visiting. Ann was in the kitchen cooking dinner and washing dishes. Her front room floor was covered with dirty laundry. Although her home was not tidy, there was a sense of comfort in Ann's home. Her home environment felt laid back. There was a big screen television, big comfortable couch and chair, a lap top out on the table with video games displayed on a television stand. Ann had recently hung new curtains at her windows. Her children sat among the laundry while playing video games on the television. Ann's friend sat in the kitchen while Ann finished cooking and washing dishes. Her bedroom had the appearance of a catch-all room (a room where everything you do not want to put away rests). Her kitchen shelves had an assortment of spices and kitchen utensils needed to prepare daily meals. They were neatly stacked in small storage bins. Her bathroom resembled a kid's room with a cartoon character shower curtain, soap, and tooth brush holder.

During her interview, Ann's friend sat in the front room with her children. Ann was a very hard interviewee. Her answers were short and without elaboration. Many times throughout the interview, she was asked to elaborate or give a little more information about the question proposed. She usually responded in one of three ways, by repeating the answer she had already given, by saying she did not know another way to explain herself, or by justifying her response with, "I know what I should be doing, I just need to do it."

While Ann's children were being interviewed, Ann entertained her friend in the front room. Periodically, you could hear her encourage her children to go play the game. By the time I was about to interview her youngest son, she had begun to make dinner plates for herself and her daughter. She prepared a container for her friend. When her son, James, walked to the kitchen, he was pouting because he wanted to eat. She comforted James by saying, "As soon as your interview is over, I will make your plate." During the observation, Ann's children showed me certificates they received for accomplishments at school. I praised their efforts by saying, "Good job." They smiled and walked away. Ann also smiled.

Ann also talked about her limited income. Several times throughout her interview, she complained about expenses related to rearing children. She also said her children were keeping her from being able to do more things. She talked about calling her cousin to ask her to loan her money to pay her daughter's gymnastics bill for the semester. She stressed how important it was for her to pay for the entire semester because it would be significantly cheaper if she paid it all at once. She talked about her son's sports ending and her need to find another sport for him to play. She was trying to find a time that his sports would work with her schedule. She also talked about her son getting into trouble at school. She did not go into details about why he was in trouble. She only said that she did not agree with the administration and she expressed her frustration

with some of his teachers. I gathered my bags, and before I could leave, both of her children gave me a big bear hug.

My experiences with the Simmons family. I first met Ann when I was working for a researcher. Ann enrolled her children in a study we were conducting and I was one of the researchers assigned to run diagnostic test on Ann and her children. During one of our scheduled meetings, I invited Ann to a picnic I was having for the SPAC (Single Parents and Children) group. She attended the picnic and she became involved in the group. I became her mentor. Making home visits was really hard for me. Ann's home was filthy. Dishes had not been washed in weeks. There was urine and feces on her couch from pampers that had not been placed in a garbage can. Whenever I asked her why she allowed her house to look this way she would say, I don't want to clean up. She did not spend much time at home. She spent most of her time over friend's houses. She constantly talked about her children being a burden. She believed they were keeping her from having fun. She often expressed anger because she was responsible for the welfare of her two children. Ann and I had several conversations about things she would say in front of her children such as, "I don't want them," and "They get on my nerves." Our discussions would sometimes become really heated because she did not think there was anything wrong with what she was saying. She justified her statements by saying this was how her mother spoke to her when she was growing up. I often talked to her about how her mother's words had affected her self esteem and her social skills. She usually argued that she didn't agree. Ann also did not prepare home-cooked meals. She used her Link (food stamps) to purchase things that she could microwave and prepare without cooking.

Ann has made many changes over the years. Although her home is often junky, it is no longer filthy. Ann has begun to cook regularly for her family. She also recently told me of her

plan to keep her home clean. She has begun to enjoy spending time with her children. She is planning their first vacation together. During the last week of March, 2012, I asked her about the college courses she was taking. She told me she had changed her mind and was not going to take any classes after this semester. I asked her why and she said, “I just don’t want to do it.” Quite honestly, I don’t believe her. Ann has a pattern of saying she does not want to do something if it is difficult, requires more work than she is willing to commit, or requires a long length of time to accomplish.

The Johnson Family

Sharita is a 29-year-old mother of four. Zelda is10 years old and is in fifth grade. She is a B student. Zeraya is 6 years old and in first grade. She is a B student. Samaya is 5 years old and in kindergarten. She has not received any grades, but she is adjusting well. Reginald is 8 years old and in third grade. He has been diagnosed with a learning disability. He is a C student. Sharita’s children do not participate in any extracurricular activities. However, they attend a church program for youth every Sunday. Sharita completed nine years of school. She has not received her high school diploma. She is not employed. She makes money by collecting scrap metal. She has an income level of less than $4,999 per year. She is also receiving government assistance in the form of Link, Medicaid, and housing. In June of 2011, Sharita began dating a man from New Jersey named Melvin. They are now living together.

During our interview and observation time, she mentioned several times how important it was to her that her children accomplish more than she had. Sharita was a very private person. Getting her to discuss details of her life was difficult. However, there were a few things I learned about her during our interview and the observation. Sharita talked about not feeling attractive as a child and being very insecure. She talked about her fear of being around large crowds. She is

anxious around large groups of people she does not know. She described herself as someone who gives up easy and needs to be pushed. She gave credit to Melvin for encouraging her not to give up on things she would like to accomplish. Sharita is also very protective of her children. She is not very trusting and does not let them visit friends who don't live close to home. Most of her children's interactions are with Sharita's immediate family. Sharita has a bathroom rule for her children. Girls and boys are not allowed to be in the bathroom at the same time, not even to wash hands or brush teeth. Sharita has a large family. Although she is close with her family, she is concerned that their influence on her is negative. Several members of her family, to whom she is close, do not have high school diplomas. She also spends a lot of time partying, drinking, and smoking marijuana, with her family.

Upon arriving at Sharita's home, I was greeted by an adult male holding a baby. I was informed that Sharita remembered I was coming, but she had to run out for a minute. The male, which I later found out, was Sharita's live-in boyfriend, Melvin, told me I could have a seat on the couch. He sat on a different couch and watched television, a reality show. He laughed as the woman on the television show described how she destroyed her husband's clothes because he made her angry. The television was dated and it appeared that the picture tube in the television was about to go out. The picture was fuzzy and was half the size of the television screen.

As I waited for Sharita, I began to observe her home. Sharita's home was clean and sparsely decorated with a few card board images hanging on her walls. Her walls were dingy and there was a large hole covered in card board where an air conditioner used to be positioned. Her couches and chairs were stained, but covered with white sheets and floral towels. Her floors were swept, but they were covered in stains.

Once Sharita returned home, with two grocery bags in her arms, she asked me to come into the kitchen where we would conduct the interview. She seemed to be in a hurry. Before we began the interview, she informed me that she was on a limited schedule because she needed to get to another appointment very soon. As I begin to set up the tape recorder and paper work, she needed to fill out, she told me on which chair to sit in because the others were not sturdy. I sat down and began to observe the kitchen. The kitchen was clean, but the walls and floor were covered in spots. I wasn't sure if they were the result of a lack of mopping and wiping down of the walls or the result of old tile and walls that needed a new paint job. Sharita's kitchen appliances were very dated and rust was found on every appliance. As we sat at the kitchen table, there were several times when roaches fell from the ceiling vent. I would flick them onto the floor and we continued the interview. Sharita apologized for the roaches and had a look of frustration. She expressed her concerns, she said, "I have been complaining to the management for more than eight months about the conditions of my apartment. Each time I complain, they tell me they will get to it, but things are getting worse and worse."

She also informed me that she had received housing papers for a different government run housing project and she was planning to move to Indianapolis, Indiana. She was making plans to leave in two weeks. She smiled and seemed very excited about moving. I asked her if she had any family in Indianapolis, she replied, "No. That's why it's a good thing. I need to be away from my family. I tend to do better when I am not around my family."

As Sharita's children came home from school, she helped them get situated and informed them that I would be conducting an interview with them. Sharita helped her children get their assent forms signed and she requested that her son be interviewed first because she needed to get him to an appointment. At the conclusion of my interview with Sharita's son, she

quickly grabbed him, said good bye, and ran to the appointment. Her children were very happy to see me and greeted me with hugs. One by one, they had their interviews.

During the interview with the children, I noticed what appeared to be a hierarchy among them. From the oldest to the youngest, instructions were given and followed. Some examples were, "Go take your coat upstairs to your room. Do you have any homework? You need to sit down and wait. It is not your turn yet." The younger children respected the instructions given to them by those who were older. They completed whatever was asked of them by their older siblings. There was a lot of laughter from the children and the boyfriend. The atmosphere felt calm and the children gathered in the front room and were leaning over the couch watching television together and engaged in conversation. Their interactions with each other were very supportive and they spoke to each other with respect.

My experiences with the Johnson family. Sharita was the first parent to let her children participate in OVOTC programs in the Lake Heights community. She also was instrumental in getting other parents to let their children participate. Sharita was very insecure and did not like to interact with people she did not know. She was a very strict mother and very protective of her children. Her home was clean but appeared to need various repairs. Sharita also prepared all meals at home and she always had company in her home. Her family often had parties and social gatherings. Alcohol and marijuana often were present at these events. Sometimes when I went to pick up her children, I could smell marijuana in her home. Her children often were told to stay upstairs in their rooms so they would not see what the adults were drinking and smoking.

Sharita was a woman who felt she could not make it without a man. During the two years that I knew her, she had two different boyfriends. When her first boyfriend went to jail, within two months she had another boyfriend who she moved into her home. Her children referred to

each of the boyfriends as daddy. I thought it was interesting that Sharita acted as if she was really in love with her boyfriend, but when she realized he would be in prison for a long time, she quickly found someone to take his place. Whenever I asked her how her boyfriend who was incarcerated was doing she would act disinterested in the conversation. It was a while before I realized she had another boyfriend. Sharita was very private and I did not know many details of her life; however, it seemed that she had given up on herself and she just wanted her children to make it out of a life of poverty.

The Dudley Family

Monica is a 31-year-old mother with four children. Micah is 9 years old and in second grade. Micah has a C average. Micah has always had problems with reading and handwriting. She over-compensates by being a good listener and memorizing. When she reads, she tends to reread lines repeatedly, she gets off focus, and sometimes she even skips paragraphs. She has not been diagnosed with a learning disability. Monica has not agreed to have her tested. Micah has been receiving special help from her teacher at school. Her family also has begun to help with her reading. Mia is 10 years old and in third grade. She is a B student. Kevin is 11 years old and in sixth grade. He did not participate in the study, because his mother requested that he not be included. His grades were not discussed. I believe Monica made this request because she had not received permission from her mother, Jerri Williams. Jerri Williams was Kevin's legal guardian, but recently he had come to live with Monica. She did not discuss the reason for his return. Charles is 12 years old and in seventh grade. He will be discussed, in conjunction with his grandmother Jerri Williams, since she is his legal guardian. Micah and Mia attended the Boys and Girls Club regularly. Kevin plays baseball. All of the children attend church with their grandmother on Sundays. Until recently, both of Monica's boys were living with her mother.

During the time of our interview and observation, Kevin had rejoined the family and was living with Monica. Although all four of Monica's children were in One Vision programs, Micah and Mia were the only two interviewed at Monica's house.

Monica completed ten years of school. She has not received her high school diploma. She is not currently employed. She makes money doing odd jobs, such as cleaning apartments. She has an income level of $5,000-$9,999 per year. She also is receiving government assistance in the form of Link and Medicaid. In April of 2011, Monica's boyfriend, Mark, of nine years came home from prison after being incarcerated for more than five years. They are living as a family.

Monica was raised by her grandmother; but she spent a lot of time with her father. As a child, she did not live with her mother. Monica said she and her mother never got along. During her junior year in high school, her father died. This event was the beginning of what Monica described as her world falling apart. She dropped out of school, moved to Michigan with her cousin, and soon became pregnant with her first child. Although each of her children had different fathers, Monica does not talk about them. She refers to Mark as her children's father. Monica was raised in a strict, sheltered environment. She was not exposed to much and was very active in sports at school. She received good grades and looked forward to attending cosmetology school once she finished high school.

When I arrived at Monica's home for the interview, I was greeted by Mark and a friend of his. Mark informed me that Monica had just received a phone call from her mother and she left in a hurry. He told me to take a seat and wait. During the time that I was waiting, Mark and his friend were watching television, *College Football Live*. Mark began to talk about his experiences in prison. While in prison, he earned his GED (General Education Diploma) and three other certificates. In spite of these accomplishments, since his release, he was having a hard

time getting hired. I encouraged him to stick with it and not to give up. During my wait, I shared with him similar experiences my nephews had while they were incarcerated and after they got out of prison. Mark's friend talked about his family members and his brother, who he doesn't know because he has been in and out of prisons all of his life. During my moments of complaining about my family, he encouraged me not to give up on my family members; he said they needed family support. What a statement for me to meditate on. I felt as though he was saying they needed to know someone still cared about them. They needed a sense of hope.

I waited approximately 20 minutes before Mark decided to contact Monica by cell phone. Once she was contacted, she asked to speak to me on the phone. She told me her mother called her because her grandmother slipped and fell. Her mother needed her help to get her grandmother to the emergency room. She wanted to be at the emergency room with her grandmother. So, we rescheduled our appointment. The second appointment was scheduled nine days later. When I arrived at the second scheduled appointment, Monica greeted me at the door to inform me that her daughters whom I had planned to interview were not home. Even though Monica had prior knowledge of the appointment, they were at a party and were given the option not to come home from the party. I decided to complete Monica's interview and reschedule the interview of her daughters.

Monica's two boys, Charles and Kevin, were included in the home observation. They were both at home during Monica's interview and home observation. Monica explained to me that her boys lived with her mother because she was unable to handle them. She and Charles have a very difficult relationship. She said he could be violent; he was on medication and he had been diagnosed with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder). Kevin admires Charles and wants to be

with him at all times. Unfortunately, his desire to follow in his brother's footsteps had caused him to get in serious legal trouble.

Monica's home was clean. Every room had adequate furniture. There were bunk beds in each of the children's rooms and family photos on every table in the front room. Monica had moved more than three times in six months. Initially, when I met her, she was living in a government run housing project. She was asked to move because she refused to continue paying rent. She made repeated complaints about the condition of her apartment and the management had not completed any repairs. After she moved from the housing projects, she moved in with her sister. While she was living with her sister, she saved enough money to rent a house in the country. She described her place as living in the middle of nowhere. She said, she really liked living in the country but her children did not. She said, "When we were living in the country, we did not have cable, so television was limited. But we had each other. My children had to talk to me because there was nothing else to do. I loved the peace and quiet." Monica made a decision to move back into town when Mark was being released from prison. The home in the country was outside of the city limits. She needed to move into the city limits, so that Mark would be able to move in with her after he was released from prison. She was able to rent a home inside the city limits. This location is where our interview was held. At first appearance, the home appeared to be in good shape. She said there were a lot of code violations on the house and the landlord had been cited twice. The roof leaked; there were problems with the electricity; screen doors had been put on backwards; there were no screen windows; and she had a pest problem. In spite of these concerns, Monica had taken time to make her house a home.

The walls were covered with wicker fans and decorative pictures. The front room table had a formal place setting, which included long stem candles, cloth napkins, plates, bowls, and

cups. Candles also were placed in different locations throughout the home. Monica had two small dogs. One was curled up in the corner. The other was comfortably resting on one of the couches in the front room. Monica's sons were playing a basketball video game on the front room television.

As soon as we began the interview, Monica began to cry. Interview questions which caused her talk about her family were very difficult for her. I asked her why these questions were making her so emotional. She shared, "Family is everything and I don't have much family." Once we completed the interview, I asked her again why certain questions during the interview caused her to cry. She began to talk. She told me she was the middle child in her family and she did not have a relationship with her sister or her brother. I asked her why she did not have a relationship with her siblings. She replied, "My brother has been in and out of prison all of my life and my sister is caught up in making money, so she is never around."

She also talked about her children and all the questions they were asking. She said, "I do not know how to answer their questions; I have never experienced all the things they have been exposed to." Several years ago, when her boys were only 8 and 10 years old, they held up a convenience store with a gun they found. They were arrested and had to spend time in a juvenile detention center. After their release, Monica decided to let them stay with her mother. She explained that her mother was very strict and that her boys would not be able to get away with anything. Monica also said, "When I was young I was into sports. My grandmother was very strict." Monica felt this experience kept her from getting into trouble.

I asked her how she went from playing sports in high school to dropping out of high school. She said, "When I was 16 years old, my father got sick. After he died, I left home and moved to Michigan to stay with my cousins. After I became pregnant with my first child, I

moved in with my grandmother. My mother and I had a terrible relationship and I did not want to live with her. My father's family never really claimed me. In fact, my father never really owned up to the fact that I was his child. When he died, I felt like the child nobody wanted. He had 15 children; I was the only one that he did not claim."

I asked her how she was making it financially. She said, 'It is hard. I clean apartments whenever I am called. But I cannot work a regular job because the doctor will not release me to work. He says I am too weak. I am on a lot of medicines. I'm not gaining weight or able to keep any food down. I need to take it easy." I asked Monica what the doctors were planning to do in regards to her prognosis. She said, "I don't want them to cut me because when they cut my mother her cancer spread." It wasn't until she made the statement about her mother that I knew she had cancer. I asked her if she was going to receive chemotherapy and she said, not at this time. She told me, "When the doctor went in to perform a colonoscopy, there were so many malignant polyps that the doctor was not able to get inside her colon to remove any." She said, "At this time, I just want to wait and see how my body will respond to the medicines I am on." I asked Monica what her mother and Mark thought about the decisions she made regarding her health. She said, "They know very little about what is going on with me." I said, "If you are not talking to them about your health, who are you leaning on?" She responded, "My counselor, once I received my diagnosis, my doctor felt I needed to see a counselor. I see her once a week."

I also asked Monica if she had considered going back to school. She said, "In the past, working during the day and taking care of the kids at night have made it impossible for me to go to school. There was a program I could attend at night, but the classes only met two nights a week for three hours. That is not enough time for me to learn anything. I would not be able to retain information in only six hours." I told her I did not understand why she thought she would

not retain the information with six hours of school every week. She responded, “I have always been in special education classes all of my life. I think I need more help than what they can give me in six hours.” She also told me that she had taken the high school equivalency exam (GED) before, but did not pass all of the sections. I explained to her the exam had been changed and was now set up in a way that might help her. I said, “If you take the exam again, you will not have to take the sections of the exam you passed. You will be able to spend more time on the subjects where you need additional help.” She smiled and said, “I think I will check into it.”

As I gathered my bags and headed for the door, I asked Monica how Mark’s job search was going. She said, “In spite of all of the school and certificates he received while he was incarcerated and all of the interviews he has gone to, no one wants to hire him. Because he has not found a job, he has decided to go to college. He has enrolled in junior college and is waiting to take the entrance exam.” As I left, I told Monica, I would be in touch the following week to interview her children.

The following week, I was able to interview her daughters, Micah and Mia. When I got to Monica’s home, she was driving up at the same time I was. Both Micah and Mia jumped out of the car and ran to greet me. As we walked up the stairs to Monica’s house, I could smell the scent of marijuana. There were five men in her home, visiting Mark. There also was a child who was the son of one of the men. I spoke to the men and was greeted by Mark, Monica’s boy friend who reminisced about my last visit. He said “I was surprised that you took the time to talk to me and my friends. We did not know what to think.” Monica replied, “Most people are afraid when there is a large group of men. You came in and talked to them like you were one of the boys.” That statement resonated with me. I immediately began to wonder how often they had been victims of stereotypes from persons of different social classes. How did it make them feel? Did

they feel inferior or just different? As I set up for the interviews with Micah and Mia, the men began to leave the house and Monica began spraying scented air freshener to reduce the marijuana scent. She was embarrassed. I began to watch an interaction that was taking place between Mark and Monica's daughters. Micah and Mia came up to Mark to greet him. He knelt down and began to ask them how their day was. He told them he really missed them and he began to affirm them by saying, "You are my little stars, don't you let nobody tell you anything different." When he was finished, he left out of the house.

Micah and Mia were very distracted during their interview. Their mom had picked them up early from an after-school program for them to complete their interviews. During their entire interview, they were watching television, swaying from side to side, somewhat fidgety. I got the impression they were not into the interview; they wanted to finish quickly. I think they were the most attentive when I asked them what was important to them. Although their interviews were separate, each of the girls had the same response. They both smiled as they said, "friends and family." As I finished the interview, the girls asked when we were going to have a girl's night out. I assured them in a couple of weeks, we would do something together.

My experiences with the Dudley family. Monica was a very private woman. After my husband and I began programming in Lake Heights, for approximately a year, I pursued her family. I repeatedly asked if her children could participate in OVOTC programs. One day she brought her mother over to see what type of programs we were facilitating. Her mother talked with me and she told Monica she thought the programs would be good for her children. After her mother's approval, Monica began to let her children come. Monica's home was extremely clean. Her children were always dressed nice with clean clothes and combed hair. Monica was very private and, until I conducted the interview, I did not know many details of her life. I believe

there were two reasons why she shared so much about herself during the interview. During the time when Monica's children were participating in OVOTC programs, Monica lost her job. My husband knew a company that was hiring and he had a relationship with the store manager. We recommended Monica for a position and she was hired. The manager told her my husband had put in a good word for her. The next time she saw us she continued to thank us. The second event that impacted Monica's life happened when she was told she had to move from the housing complex where she was a resident. It also was during the time she was unemployed. My husband and I really felt we should help her out financially. We gave her a financial gift and she was very grateful. Monica was a very proud and private woman who would never ask for help from anyone. I believe our acts of kindness created a sense of trust. I think she began to see that there are some people who will help you without expecting something in return.

The Pope Family

Natalie is a 35-year-old mother with one child. Shawn is 13 years old and in sixth grade. He is a B student. Shawn used to have a discipline problem in school. When Natalie moved to a different school district, Shawn became more involved in sports, football and basketball. His discipline problems stopped.

Natalie completed 18 years of school. She has a bachelor degree in Information Systems Technology and a master's degree in Work Force Education and Development. She is currently employed part-time as an office manager for a local nonprofit. She has an income level of $5,000-$9,999 per year. She also is receiving government assistance in the form of Link, Medicaid, and housing.

Natalie suffered physical abuse at the hands of her mother and sexual abuse at the hands of her grandmother. She talked about some of her experiences as a child, which included

cleaning the kitchen floor with a toothbrush and being beat if her mother found one speck of dirt. All of her life, Natalie wanted the approval of her mother. Even in her adulthood, she tried on several occasions to move in with her mother to strengthen their relationship. Each time, the results were disastrous. Once while Natalie's mother was visiting her, they got into a fight and Natalie's mother pulled a knife out on her. It was during this time that Natalie began to realize she had a very dysfunctional relationship with her mother and they may never have a healthy relationship.

At the age of 15, Natalie moved out of her mother's home and into a friend's home. She finished her high school years living with her friend. Her friend's mother acted like a surrogate mother. After graduating from high school, she began working and was able to rent an apartment. At the age of 22, she became pregnant. Natalie tried to keep her family unit together. She tried to make her relationship work with Shawn's father. Having no financial support from Shawn's father and wanting to increase her career opportunities, she decided to leave Chicago and move to Southern Illinois to attend college. She enrolled, moved in to family housing, and found a student job on campus.

Natalie was a very good student. She stayed on the Dean's list the entire time she was in school and, within four years, she received a Bachelor Degree in Information Systems Technology. She then decided she wanted to get her master's degree in Work Force Education and Development. She enrolled and continued working as a student while obtaining her masters. By this time, she was receiving assistance for housing, food, and medical coverage. She was able to purchase a car and move into a new apartment. She was very happy and she felt her life was going well. She completed her master's degree and, without a plan, she decided to move back to

Chicago. She had many hopes and dreams and she felt that Chicago was where she could fulfill them.

She decided to move in with her mother, but within three weeks, she had to move out because her relationship with her mother was becoming violent. She had been in touch with a childhood friend who told her she could stay with her if she was willing to babysit for her. She and her son decided to move in with her friend. After a while, she began looking for work. She talked about how difficult it was for her to find a good paying job. Over the course of three months, she had been hired at several jobs, but she quit each job. When asked why she quit her jobs, her response was, "It wasn't what I wanted to do." She also began to have problems with her friend with whom she was living. Her friend was a very religious woman who was starting a ministry and felt Natalie should be a part of her ministry and work with her as an assistant. When Natalie told her friend she did not think she was supposed to be her assistant, she was asked to move out. Natalie moved into her aunt's home. During Natalie's time of living with her aunt, she decided she was not going to look for a job. She said she wanted to just rest. She kept up the cooking and cleaning at her aunt's house, but she was unable to contribute financially. Her aunt eventually approached her about not contributing to the household. She told her she needed to get money from somewhere to help pay for things. Her aunt was also a religious woman. She accused Natalie of "having spirits on her." Natalie was already struggling from the comments her friend with whom she lived had said. She began to believe there were bad spirits in her and her son. She began to believe she was evil and she was being punished because she did not become her friend's assistant.

Natalie decided it was time for her to leave her aunt's home. She moved into another friend's home. This friend was the daughter of Natalie's surrogate mom. Her friend was also

married with two children. Natalie settled into their home. She decided not to look for a job, but she took on the role of cooking and cleaning. She thought her living arrangement was working well. During her time in her friend's home, she would often say something was wrong with her mind. Sometimes she would have conversations where she would say, "I know my purpose. I was sent to earth to be a sacrifice. There is a government conspiracy and I am part of the plan." When she had these episodes, her friend would try to talk her through it.

After several months, Natalie was once again confronted by her friend. She was told she needed to get a job. Her friend also told her that she and her son had become a financial strain on her family. She told Natalie that she might be able to help her get a job. Her place of employment was hiring. Natalie secured an interview and was hired at the Museum of Science and Industry. She was hired as a cashier. This job was not her dream job, but it was a full time job with medical benefits. Natalie was excited about her new job.

After Natalie received her second paycheck, she secured an apartment and moved out of her friend's house. She began to fix her apartment up and she was happy with her progress. Within two months of moving, she quit her job at the Museum of Science and Industry. She said she left her job because some of her co-workers were talking about her and she did not feel that she needed to put up with their behavior. Natalie did not have any savings, she knew she would have to find a new job. After a while, she secured a job at Target. She worked on and off for about three months. She was absent a lot. She complained about being sick. During this time, she was still living in her apartment, but unable to pay rent. She met a guy in her apartment complex and she began to talk to him as a friend. He often talked to her about healthy eating. He gave her some pills that were supposed to be an herbal supplement. She said, from the day she took the pills, she began feeling as if her jaws, tongue, teeth, and stomach were shrinking. She also gave

the herbal supplement to her son. She believed he was experiencing the same thing, although he did not have any complaints or symptoms. She began saying, she could hear people talking to her through the computer and the radio. She started having episodes where she would wander off for days at a time. Family friends would find her in strange places and she was always incoherent. She began talking to herself regularly and would not sleep for days at a time. Finally, her friends checked her into a mental hospital where she stayed for about two weeks. She was given a diagnosis, put on medication, and sent to outpatient counseling.

She did not stay on the medication and she attended three counseling sessions. She justified her lack of compliance by saying, "I am not crazy. I do not need counseling. People think I'm crazy, but I need help with my mouth, my tongue, and my stomach." Eventually, her friends and family decided they could not help her because she did not want help. They just chose to support her by helping out with her son and checking in on her.

Natalie was eventually confronted by her landlord. Natalie had not paid rent since she quit her job at Target. She was given 30 days to vacant her apartment for nonpayment of rent. With nowhere else to go, she decided to move back in with her mother. She put her son in a school close to her mother's house and she tried to resume a peaceful, quiet, living arrangement. This arrangement was hard for Natalie because her mother, who was a drug addict, would steal Natalie's Link card, which was how she purchased food for the month. There was one situation where her mother took her car and had an accident. She also had friends over who would join her to indulge in drug use. Natalie continued to believe she was going through this adversity because she was being punished by God, because she did not become her friend's assistant.

Eventually, Natalie decided she was leaving Chicago and returning to Southern Illinois. She moved herself and her son to Southern Illinois and stayed with a friend. After several

months, she decided it was time to move out of her friend's house. She applied for family housing through the school she was planning to attend. Her application was accepted and she had approximately three weeks before she needed to register for fall classes. She did not register for classes. Since she was staying in an apartment that was designated for student families, she was asked to move out. She was also sent a bill of several thousand dollars in fees and fines because she had not paid rent since she moved in. Natalie knew she was going to be evicted; she applied for government housing. She was accepted into government housing because she was considered homeless. She was able to get an apartment immediately.

At this time, Natalie was receiving a child support which totaled approximately $340 per month, government assistance for food and medical for herself and her son, and was working a part-time job for a nonprofit. Her rent was $100 per month. Within eight months, Natalie was taken to court for nonpayment of rent. She was evicted. After being evicted, she stayed with friends and in different shelters. She was homeless for about two years. During one of her residential stays at a shelter, the apartment she now occupies became available and she was able to move in. The apartments are specifically for people who are homeless, to help them get on their feet. She will be able to stay in the apartment for three years.

Natalie's new home was about a 20 mile drive from the town she used to live in. As I entered the parking lot of her building, I saw parents playing with their children outside. The environment was very family-friendly. As I entered Natalie's home, I noticed the temperature in her home decreased drastically. It was cold in her house. Her home was clean. She was washing dishes and preparing to cook chicken breast, which was sitting on the counter in a bowl.

There were pictures of her family on her television stand and on her tables. Her television was on, but turned down low. In her bookcase, there were leadership, self help, and spiritual

books. There were notes and calendars of upcoming events posted on a wall. There were cards and child drawings on a rusty refrigerator. Her appliances were outdated and her cabinets were old and stained. The paint on the walls and the doors was peeling. There was a feeling of sadness and a sense of loss; her home felt sterile.

Prior to Natalie's interview, she called for her son three times. She said she wanted him to say hello. He never responded to her calls so she went to his room and brought him into the kitchen. He was polite; he said hello and returned to his room. Finally, we sat at her kitchen table and I conducted the interview. At the completion of her interview she informed me that she was not leaving the room while her son was being interviewed. She wanted to hear everything he had to say. I told Natalie, it would be best if I was able to interview him alone; however, she refused.

During her son's interview, Natalie stayed in the kitchen and continued to wash dishes and cook. After every question I asked her son, she stopped what she was doing and looked at her son. At the completion of Shawn's interview, he was given an option to select a gift from some items in a bag. He reached for a basketball jersey and a tee-shirt. She asked him why he picked the tee-shirt and jersey. She told him to get the game instead. He put his choices down and selected what she wanted instead. As a little bonus, I decided to leave him a tee-shirt and jersey. After I completed her son's interview, I informed her I would start the observation process. Her response was, "I don't know what you are going to observe, he is going back to his room." I informed her that it was okay if that was all I saw during the observation. During the observation, Natalie's son was in his room watching television and she was quiet. At the completion of my observation period, I gathered my bags and, as I headed for the door, I went to say good bye to Natalie's son. She walked quickly behind me to see what I was doing. I told

Natalie, I was saying good bye to her son. Her response was, “Oh, okay.” I got the impression that she may have been trying to hide something or that she was suspicious of me.

My experiences with the Pope family. I have a long history with the Pope family. I met Natalie when I was working on my Masters degree. We were both attending the same university. She always had a clean home and she worked hard to provide a good life for her son. During the time when I met Natalie, I would have described her as a sweet, caring person willing to help others. If you were an outsider looking into her life, you would have believed she had everything together. Although Natalie appeared confident, there were several things I noticed that I thought were odd. She referred to everyone she met as her good friend and she would spend three to six hours every day trying to maintain all of these relationships by making phone calls and by visiting. She also had many unresolved problems with her mother and her grandmother. Sometimes she seemed angry when she talked about them. Other times, it would be easy to assume they had a great relationship.

There were times when I tried to encourage Natalie to get counseling. She would agree to check into it and when I would follow-up with her about counseling, she would assure me that she had worked everything out and she no longer needed counseling. She acted as if she could solve all of her own problems. I believed her past was so painful that she did not want to deal with it.

After she began exhibiting mental problems, several things about Natalie changed. She no longer kept a steady job. She often looked as if she was bewildered. Sometimes her hair would be all over her head. She was no longer dressing neatly and she acted suspicious of every one. Sometimes, during our conversations she would appear to be in a trance. She would stare or she would begin talking about things that did not make sense. Her behavior became

unpredictable and, after a while, I was not comfortable being alone with her. We no longer have a relationship, but periodically, she calls me to see how I am doing.

The Dell Family

Michelle is a 46-year-old Caucasian female and mother of three girls ages 29, 25, and 22. Michelle is also the guardian of Keesha Carter. Keesha is 16 years old and a sophomore in high school. Keesha Carter is participating in the study because she participated in programs at One Vision Outreach Training Center. She is a B student and she participates in three sports, track and field, volleyball, and basketball.

Michelle's ex-husband is the father of one of Keesha's brothers. During the time of her marriage, she became the guardian to several of Keesha's siblings. Michelle has had 16 years of school. She has a Bachelors degree. She is currently employed in the financial industry. Her yearly income is more than $30, 000. She does not receive any government assistance.

As I entered Michelle's newly purchased and nicely renovated home, I could smell the fresh scent of Pine Sol coming from the bathroom. Her story starts many years ago, when she dated and married a Black American man, who also was the father of her three children. She married him after the birth of her second child. By the time she was 21, she had three children. Her husband also had a child from a previous relationship.

The family into which she married was very impoverished and had a history of drug addictions. Throughout her marriage, Michelle would take in her husband's son and several of his siblings. Although Michelle's husband was not the father of his son's siblings, the children referred to him as their stepfather. Because of the family's dysfunction, the siblings were sent to live in several different places. Some siblings went into the foster care system; four stayed with their grandmother; and one was adopted. Over the years, Michelle struggled to raise her

daughters and her husband's extended family. As some of the siblings became adults, they moved out and began to raise their younger siblings. Michelle's marriage eventually ended because of her husband's drug addiction.

Michelle talked a lot about having to heal not only from the marriage, but also from the mistreatment of the children she took in and raised as her own. She resented how much she had invested in them. She felt they did not remember her on special occasions, such as birthdays, Christmas, and Mother's Day. Michelle became angry when she began to express how much respect they give their mother, who wasn't with them or taking care of them. During most of the siblings' childhood, their mother was living in Chicago in a residential facility for the blind. She became blind after an incident when her boyfriend beat her. The younger set of children who were placed with the grandmother eventually went to stay with a male sibling who was an adult. Their grandmother died and he became their guardian. In 2011, Keesha, one of the younger siblings, was told by her brother, her guardian, that her family was being put out of a government- run housing project because her brother, who was unemployed, had failed to complete community service required to keep their apartment. As part of his state mandated responsibilities, as a guardian to his siblings, he had to have a home that would accommodate all of his siblings. He was unable to secure a place so, he decided to move in with his girlfriend. The four younger siblings did not have a place to move. There was one sibling who had become an adult. She decided to move in with her boyfriend. Keesha and two other siblings were going to be placed in a foster home. Michelle decided to take Keesha into her home. One of Keesha's other siblings moved to Las Vegas with a sister and the other sibling moved in with the brother and his girlfriend. Within two months of moving to Las Vegas, Keesha's brother was tragically killed in a car accident along with an uncle and a cousin. Her sister and another family member

who were also in the car were badly injured. The other family member eventually died. This experience was difficult for Michelle and Keesha. Even though Michelle was no longer married to Keesha's stepfather, she was expected to contribute financially to bury the family members who died. This expense was a heavy burden for her to bear. Keesha is continuing to adjust to her new home and to new boundaries and rules of Michelle's household.

During the observation, one of Michelle's daughters who just graduated from college joined us at the kitchen table. I asked her what her plans were now that she had graduated. She said she was in the process of applying to graduate programs to continue her education. She wanted to get her Master's of Public Health and then enter a physician assistant program. Michelle also talked about continuing her education. She recently applied to law school and was accepted. She made a decision not to attend because she had some other financial goals. She talked about retiring early to pursue other academic goals she had for herself. She said she may attend law school once she retires. Prior to Michelle's daughter joining us at the table, I observed interactions between her and Keesha. I noticed they shared the responsibility of cleaning the bathroom. After cleaning the bathroom, Keesha gathered her things for basketball practice. She was driven to practice by Michelle's daughter. I later found out that Michelle purchased a car for her daughter, so she could help drive Keesha to practice and her games. Keesha is treated as a little sister by Michelle's daughters. She is adjusting well.

My experiences with the Dell family. Prior to this study, I only had two interactions with Michelle. The first interaction I had with her was to discuss some personal problems Keesha Carter was having. The second time I interacted with Michelle was to discuss the OVOTC program in which Keesha was a participant. I hoped Michelle would continue to allow Keesha to come to the program. Michelle was nice, but very direct. She appeared to immediately take an

interest in the activities in which Keesha was involved. She provided transportation for Keesha to get to OVOTC events and made sure Keesha was an active participant in the program. Michelle provided me with a lot of information during her interview. She did not talk much about her childhood. It would have been nice to know what her childhood was like and how, if at all, her childhood impacted her views on poverty and being self sufficient.

The Jones Family

Kendra is a 35-year-old Black American female and mother of two children. Tevin is 15 years old and a sophomore in high school. During the time he was in a gang and during the time he was in Chicago, his grades were D-C average. After moving back to Southern Illinois he has been averaging B's. Tevin participates in track and field at his school. Tyneel is 13 years old and in eighth grade. Tyneel's grades have gotten worse since they moved back to Southern Illinois. Her grades have gone from A's to C's. Tyneel did not participate in any One Vision Programs and was not included in the study interviews. However, Tyneel was included in the family's observation. Kendra completed 14 years of school. She attended junior college and she has acquired several certificates. Kendra is currently unemployed because she recently relocated from Chicago, Illinois. Her yearly income is $10,000-$19,999. She receives government assistance in the form of Link and Medicaid. In 2011, one year after the death of her first husband, Kendra married for the second time. Her husband's name is John. He was Kendra's high school sweet heart.

Kendra recently relocated to Southern Illinois for the second time. Eight years ago, she moved to Southern Illinois with her husband. Kendra and her first husband were familiar with Southern Illinois because Kendra's mother lived in Southern Illinois. They also knew Southern Illinois had a much slower pace than Chicago, their home town. Kendra moved to Southern

Illinois hoping to help her husband get a new start. Kendra's husband had an addiction problem. Although he worked a full time job at a factory, he often became involved in criminal activity that he used to financially support his drug habit.

Two years ago, after her husband was murdered in the spring of 2009, Kendra made the decision to relocate back to Chicago. He was murdered when he broke into a drug dealer's house to commit a robbery. Unfortunately, while trying to escape he was shot by one of the drug dealers. He was able to escape through a window but later died on the front lawn of the house. Kendra's husband was the father of her second child, Tyneel. He also had been in Tevin's life since he was a toddler. He was the only father Tevin knew. His death occurred four weeks before Tevin graduated from eighth grade.

Needing the support of her family and being unemployed, Kendra left Southern Illinois and moved back to Chicago with her sister. Her husband's death was especially hard on her children and she decided to put her children in counseling. Tevin did not respond to counseling, he withdrew and refused to discuss his feelings with the counselor. As Kendra's family settled into their new life, Tevin began to get in trouble in school. He was suspended several times for fighting and mob action. Also, during this time, Tyneel began to exhibit anger problems. Kendra sent her to a Christian summer camp and she saw a significant difference in her behavior when she returned. However, Kendra felt that, over time, her daughter's anger returned.

Kendra found employment at a school and soon she moved her family out of her sister's house and into an apartment. While living in Chicago, she became involved in church, leaning strongly on the support of her pastors and church family. She also rekindled a relationship with her high school sweetheart. Within one year of moving to Chicago, they were married.

Kendra's journey of hardship would continue. Kendra's second husband spent time in prison for five felonies, all drug-related. Although he was released in 2007 and served one year on parole through 2008, he had a hard time finding employment. When he was reintroduced to Kendra, he was not employed and only owned the clothes on his back. While Kendra was adjusting to her new marriage, Tevin continued to get in trouble in school and her daughter continued to grieve the lost of her father. She was not ready to accept another man in their home. Kendra thought a change of pace would be a good idea for her family.

In December of 2011, she relocated back to Southern Illinois. Upon arriving in Southern Illinois, she and her husband began looking for employment. Although Kendra is an Obstetric technician and a CAN (Certified Nursing Assistant), she has been unable to find employment. Her husband also has been unsuccessful. She and her family have been living off social security and life insurance from her first husband.

Kendra expressed a desire to go back to school to further her career in the medical profession. She is considering nursing school but fears that she may not be able to handle the course load because of her age and lack of experience in college. Other than certificate programs that only required her to go to school for days or week, she has not completed any extensive training. She talked about a time when she was enrolled in a junior college in the area. She did not have a successful semester because she was always worried about what was going on at home. During that time, her mother who was living in the area and who had been clean from drugs for six months relapsed. Soon after her relapse, she was diagnosed with a brain tumor and died. Kendra says she also was preoccupied with trying to keep her husband out of trouble.

Kendra's parenting approach involves having regular communication with her children. She allows them to have a lot of freedom, including unsupervised company and overnight visits

with friends without following up with their parents. She feels that her children are at an age where she should not check up on them. Her children have the freedom to come and go as they please, as long as they complete chores and do what she and her husband ask of them. She operates completely by trusting her children until they have done something to break that trust.

Kendra and her first husband overindulged in providing material possessions for their children. At a young age, her children wore designer clothes and shoes, had unlimited access to money, and had the latest electronic gadgets. This lifestyle continued into the children's teen years. After the death of Kendra's husband, her children had a hard time accepting that they would not have the same income level and would not be able to afford the material things they had grown accustomed to having.

Prior to the death of Kendra's husband, her son Tevin was in a gang. After the death of his father and because of their family's relocation, he stopped participating in the gang. Tyneel has begun to get in trouble at school, which has resulted in several parent teacher conferences.

Kendra's social support circle is very small. She says she is very lonely. Her first husband's family has stopped communicating with her and the children because they felt she should give them some of the money her husband left her in a life insurance policy. She used to have several friends in Southern Illinois before her husband died. When her husband died, some of the friends shared personal information with other people about the details of her husband's death. Kendra described the experience as being very painful. She decided not to continue relationships with them.

She also expressed that her family was not happy with her second marriage to her high school sweetheart. They often make hurtful comments causing her to keep her distance. Her mother–in-law has been very supportive and periodically sends care packages and money to help

them with their expenses. Her new husband does not like it when she leaves him or makes any attempt to socialize. His reasoning is he doesn't want to be alone because he doesn't know anyone. Kendra expressed her feelings of being overwhelmed.

Upon arriving at Kendra's home, I was greeted by her husband. Her husband was very personable and he immediately told me to come in and have a seat. Kendra and her family lived in a newly-constructed town house. They were the first tenants to occupy the space. Everything was brand new, clean, and orderly. The front room consisted of leather furniture and a movie screen size flat screen television. There were family photos and pictures throughout the front room.

I was invited to join them for dinner, but I declined. Kendra fixed her plate and joined me and her husband in the front room. Dinner was meatloaf, mashed potatoes, gravy, and corn. Kendra and I decided to move to the kitchen because it would be easier to conduct the interview at a table. Her kitchen and dining room displayed wedding photos as well as decorative paintings on the walls. Behind one of the chairs in the kitchen was a box of new pots and pans.

Soon after we entered the kitchen, we were joined by Tyneel, who is in eighth grade. She fixed her plate and sat at the kitchen table to join us in conversation. I asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up, she replied, "A pediatrician." I asked her why. She replied, "I have always loved babies. When I grow up I want 10 babies." Kendra started laughing and said, "That's what you think. Wait until you have your first baby. Once you experience that pain you will change your mind." Kendra and I began to exchange pregnancy stories. We discussed natural child birth, epidurals, and delivery times. Her daughter sat and listened intensely. Soon after the pregnancy conversation ended, Tevin came downstairs and fixed his plate.

He also joined us at the kitchen table. As soon as he sat down, I asked him how things were going. He replied, “Good now.” Then his mother said, “He is on punishment right now.” I asked him what he had done, he replied, “I got caught stealing in Macy’s at the mall.” I asked him what happened, he said, “I told my mom I was going over my friend’s house after school, but I knew I was going with some friends to the mall. I was the only one of group in the store.” I asked him why he would steal when he has so much. He said, “I wanted the stuff and I thought I could get away with it.” I asked what Macy’s decided to do. Kendra replied, “He stole so much stuff that his crime was a felony. He is facing five years probation or one year in juvenile detention. We will attend our 2nd court appearance in a month.” I asked Tevin, “How do you think this makes your mother feel?” He hung his head and said, “ Bad.”

During the interview Kendra showed emotion whenever she thought about her children’s future. She expressed her desire for them to be successful and not to struggle the way she has struggled. Tevin showed a lot of emotion when he talked about his father. His voice would go down almost to a whisper when he made comments about him being gone. It was almost as though he was still in a state of disbelief. At the completion of the interviews, I thanked Kendra and Tevin for their participation and they walked me to the door.

My experiences with the Jones family. Although I have known the Jones family for six years, my experiences with them were limited. I met the Jones family six years ago when my son attended Tevin’s tenth birthday party. My son and Tevin became good friends and because of their friendship, Tevin began attending programs of OVOTC. Tevin’s mother and father were very polite, but I did not know them. My husband had various interactions with Tevin’s father who is now deceased, but other than casual conversation, we did not know anything about them. After the death of Kendra’s husband, she opened up and shared the details surrounding his death.

After interviewing Kendra, I understood why she was so distant. She needed to protect her family. She was experiencing a lot of trials. Since Kendra has remarried, my husband and I have had several interactions with their family. We are looking forward to getting to know them better.

The Jackson Family

Brandon is a 39-year-old, single, Black American male and father of three children. Brandon Jr., who goes by the name of Jr., is 16 years old and a sophomore in high school. He is a C student. He wrestles and plays football. Brittney is 18 years old and a freshman in college. Bree is 13 years old and a freshman in high school. Brandon, whose children are all by the same mother, has been raising his son for the last six years. Three years ago, Brittney came to live with him. Bree came to live with him this summer. Bree and Brittney were not participants in One Vision Outreach Training Center programs. They were not included in the interviews or observation. As a family, the Jacksons attend church several times a month.

Brandon, who recently resigned from a good paying job as a manager, has returned to what he describes as his first love, being a barber. He has an income level of less than $4,999 per year. He completed 15 years of school. He earned an Associate of Arts in science. After completing his associate degree, he began working on his bachelor degree. He left school as his parenting responsibilities began to increase. He has not completed his degree. He also is receiving government assistance in the form of Link and Medicaid.

Brandon purchased his first home May 7, 2011. As I walked up to door, I could see the freshly manicured yard and I experienced the quietness of the neighborhood. I was greeted by Jr. who had just come home from wrestling practice. As I began to set things up, I could hear him call for his father. He went to the kitchen and microwaved a piece of pizza. I sat at the table and

he sat on the couch eating pizza and watching television. Brandon's home was very clean, decorated in a contemporary style with ethnic art work and new furniture. His kitchen had stainless steel appliances and everything was new. As I sat quietly, I began to wonder if Brandon had forgotten about our appointment. It took him quite a while to come into the front room. When he entered the front room, I realized what had taken him so long. He was cutting hair. Brandon is a barber. He recently returned to this profession after being a manager for three years at a franchise company is Southern Illinois. I asked him why he decided to leave his job. He said, although he had great success with the company by aiding the store to become number one in the district, it was never enough. The pressure, stress, long hours, and the interaction with some of his supervisors made his job a place where he no longer wanted to work. After a lot of soul searching, he decided to return to what he loved. Recently, he returned to cutting hair at a barber shop in Southern Illinois.

I proposed a question to Brandon. How did you end up in Southern Illinois? Brandon began to share his journey. Brandon became a father at the age of 21. He fathered three children with his girlfriend at the time. During that time in his life, Brandon was working seasonal jobs. One day while he was working as a janitor at a high school, the principal of the high school came up to him and said, "Man, what are you doing?" He asked the principal, "What do you mean?" The principal said, "What are you doing with your life?" Brandon replied, "Just working." The principal told him to meet him the next afternoon in his office. The next afternoon, the principal took him to apply for junior college and helped him get his financial aid packet completed. He was accepted into junior college and he began attending classes.

Several weeks into the semester, his instructors told him that they did not have his name on the roster. He later found out, there was a problem with his registration. He had been

attending classes, but he was not officially registered. He did not continue classes. During a visit to Southern Illinois, he met a Black American woman who was an administrator at a local university. She asked him if he was a student and if he was thinking about attending college. Brandon told her he was thinking about pursuing a degree in teaching. She introduced him to a Black American advisor in the education department. The advisor talked to him and volunteered to assist him with the process of applying for college and registering for school.

After talking with the administrator and the advisor and receiving a scripture from his pastor, Brandon said, “I knew it was time for me to step out in faith and pursue my degree. Brandon was excited about his decision. In 1990, he dropped out of high school. He received his GED in 1997 and began taking his first college classes in 2005 at the age 33. He moved to Southern Illinois and began taking courses at a local junior college. In 2008, he received an Associate of Arts and Science. After receiving his associate degree, he continued his education at a local university.

While attending the local university, he began to develop a deep personal relationship with God. When I asked him to describe his life before attending college, he replied, “Searching.” He also said he did not know his purpose until he began to develop his personal relationship with God. As his relationship with God became stronger, he realized a need to have his children with him. He felt that God had given him a responsibility to raise Godly children.

When Brandon’s son was 11 years old, he moved him from Chicago to Southern Illinois. Several years later, Brandon’s daughter Brittney moved to Southern Illinois, where she completed high school and is now attending college. Bree, his middle child moved to Southern Illinois in 2011. With added responsibilities Brandon concentrated on raising his children,

including withdrawing from school, securing steady employment, becoming involved in his children's activities, and developing relationships with them.

When I asked Brandon if he was planning on finishing his Bachelor degree he said, "I'm not sure. I have been asking myself why I should do this. I have become so frustrated with the direction our public school system is headed." We talked about the advantages of having a degree verses not having one. Brandon was in his junior year of college when the responsibilities of raising a family begin to take precedence over his responsibilities as a student. After he listened to what I said about the benefits of him completing his degree, he replied, "I will take what you said into consideration. I never quite thought of it like that."

Brandon and I talked about his social circle, his support network. He spoke highly of a young lady who had become a good friend to him. She became a mentor for his daughters. She also has helped him see things from a woman's point of view. She attends his children's activities and also car pools for their activities. He also spoke of his three good friends. He said that when he began to develop a personal relationship with God he knew he needed to change his circle of friends. He said, "I needed Godly friends." He described his friends as men who understood what he needed and helped provide those things. Sometimes, it was a shoulder to cry on, financial support, or a buddy to attend functions. He said, "Our relationship is like brothers. We all have a strong relationship with the Lord. We pray together and fast together."

There was a profound statement that Brandon shared during our observation. "Life makes you question your faith, but God has not let me down. He is my guiding light. Knowing God is what I use to govern myself." As we sat at the table, his son began to engage him in a conversation about wrestling practice. He said, "Hey Dad, today I pinned the best wrestler on the

team. Coach was not happy with him, but I was happy." They laughed and we began our interview.

At the completion of my interview with Jr., he asked me why I was conducting interviews. I told him, the interviews were for my dissertation, which I needed to complete to receive my Ph.D. He asked, "Is a Ph.D. really that important?" I told him education was important; depending on what you want to do with your life, a Ph.D. might be a degree you need. He thought for a while and responded, "I think I might be a good coach. But, my dad always says I should have a backup plan. My back up plan is a lawyer, like CSI (Crime Scene Investigation, a television show)." He nodded his head as if he was confident of the choice he had made. His statement was interesting because CSI does not have lawyers on the show. They have forensic scientist and police officers.

My experiences with the Jackson family. My husband and I have known Brandon Sr. for more than eight years. We used to attend the same church. During the time we were attending the same church, our interaction with him was very casual. When Brandon Sr. brought his son to Southern Illinois to live with him, we began to interact with him more. Brandon Jr. became friends with our son. They also were on the same sport teams at school. We asked Brandon Sr. about his son participating in OVOTC programs. He told my husband and me that he wanted his son involved in OVOTC programs. Although Brandon Sr. was very eager for his son to participate, his son's attendance was very inconsistent. It wasn't until I interviewed Brandon Sr. that I gained a greater perspective of what he was experiencing. He was a single dad, who had never had a father figure in his life, and he was raising three children. I also found out that he did not have a car. His mode of transportation was a bicycle. He worked a lot of hours. Many times, his children had to find rides from their sport events and practices. There was something that I

noticed about Brandon Sr. When he was not working, he was committed to supporting his children by attending all of their sport events and activities. Although I had various opportunities to interact with Brandon Sr., I cannot say I knew much about him. Throughout our interview, Brandon was careful by not disclosing details and events of his life that he was not proud. He only alluded to the fact that he made a lot of mistakes growing up.

The Mitchell Family

Kristian is a 31-year-old single, Black American female and mother of three children, two sons, Terrel who is nine years old, Terrance who is three years old and a daughter, Kenzi who is 12 years old and in sixth grade. Kenzi was the only child in Kristian's family who participated in One Vision Outreach programs. She is the only child who participated in the interview. The other children in the home, Kristian's two boys and a niece, Kayla, were included in the observation.

Kristian recently resigned a job as a manager of a residential facility. Her income level was $10,000-$19,999 per year. She completed 17 years of school. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Rehabilitation Services. She also is receiving government assistance in the form of Link and Medicaid, and housing.

Upon arriving at Kristian's front door, I was greeted by her barking dog, three children, and her niece. The children were excited to have company. There was a homey feeling in Kristian's home. Her home was set up with an emphasis on children and family. Kristian loves animals and, as we walked to have a seat in her front room, I met her guinea pig and her cat. Except for a television and a couch, her front room was set up as the animal's room. There was a large dog bed and toys, her guinea pig had a large cage, and her cat had a perch under the television stand. Kristian's walls were bare and there was no evidence of her personal style, but

there was a sign which expressed some of her thoughts about life. The sign read, “Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.” When I asked Kristian about the sign, she said that the sign was the statement she lived her life by.

Kristian’s life had mirrored a woman who had experienced a lot of pain and disappointment, but continued to believe good things were in store for her and her family. When Kristian was 18 years old, she and her mother began to have conflicts. Kristian’s mother did not like her boyfriend. Kristian and her boyfriend were in a serious relationship. They had two children together. At the age of 21, Kristian’s mother told her she was no longer welcome in her home. Kristian packed hers belongings and, her two children and, with nowhere to go she headed for a shelter. After staying at the shelter for a while, Kristian moved in with her boyfriend who was living with his mother. They eventually got married. During their marriage, Kristian’s husband became very physically abusive and began to have numerous affairs. Some of the affairs resulted in him fathering other children.

After working and saving, Kristian was finally able to rent a place of her own. She moved out of her husband’s mother’s house and began planning for her future with her children. At the age of 23, Kristian decided it was time to go to college. She relocated to Southern Illinois, enrolled in college, and began to pursue a degree in Radiological Sciences. She wanted to be an ultrasound technician. Once she began her classes, she quickly realized she would not be able to handle the amount of time required in clinics; so she changed her major. She decided to pursue a degree in rehabilitation services. Four years later, she earned a Bachelor of Science in Rehabilitation Services.

Kristian began working a new job. She also began a new relationship with a married man. She became pregnant with her third child. As the relationship progressed, Kristian wanted a deeper commitment from the father of her third child. She became very depressed. Although he was separated from his wife and he lived in his own apartment, he did not want a serious relationship. Kristian sank deeper into a depression; she sought help from her physician. She described herself during this time in her life as, being present but checking out.

In addition to having problems in her relationship, Kristian also began to have problems at her place of employment. She made a decision to resign knowing she would not be able to collect unemployment. When I asked her how she felt about her decision she said, "There were a lot of things going on at the job that could have affected my career. I am just glad I resigned. Three days after I resigned, the company was investigated by the Attorney General." Although she did not know how she would make it financially, having a piece of mind seemed more important.

When Kristian and I began our interview, I asked her if she had a table we could sit at to conduct our interview. Kristian told me she did not have a table or chairs. I told her it did not matter; we would conduct our interview on the floor. We sat on the floor with the tape recorder and the microphone and began the interview. During our interview, we had various interruptions. Her three-year-old son and two-year-old niece were playing, running, laughing, and constantly asking questions. Each time the children asked a question, Kristian would patiently respond and wait to make sure they were satisfied with her answer before she continued with the interview. Kristian had a very mothering, calm personality. She did not show any signs of frustrations, although we were interrupted numerous times.

I also asked Kristian about her social support system, she replied, “I really don’t have one.” Two years ago her mother relocated from Chicago to Southern Illinois. Kristian’s mother lives less than a mile away. Kristian talked about how excited she was when her mother said she was moving to Southern Illinois. She said her mother promised to help her out financially and with her children. She said in the two years since her mother has moved to Southern Illinois, her children have not spent one night in her mother’s house. She also talked about her brother and sister who moved to Southern Illinois with her mother. She said her sister always tells her that her mother will not allow her to help. Her brother helps her when he can, but he has a disability from a car accident. He is paralyzed from the waist down and limited financially. Kristian says she does not have any friends in Southern Illinois. She talked about a woman in Chicago who she has been good friends with since ninth grade. She talks to her every day. At the conclusion of my observation, I asked Kristian one last question. I asked Kristian how she saw the world. Her response was, “There are good people and good men. I know I will find a job that I am happy with and my kids will be okay.”

My experiences with the Mitchell family. I met Kristian during the time I was a researcher. She signed herself and her children up to participate in a study where I was the researcher assigned to complete her home visit. It was during one of the home visits that I invited her to attend a SPAC meeting. She attended several meetings and soon became very involved. Kristian’s home was always clean and she took very good care of her children. One of the concerns I had as I got to know her better was she was often depressed. She also was on medication for depression. Whenever I talked to her about attending counseling, she made excuses. I always got the impression she really did not want help. I felt that she wanted a pity party. Kristian and I had several conversations about things that her children were doing while

they were attending OVOTC programs. She had a hard time believing that her children would do anything wrong. She often believed her children were being bullied. In general, Kristian had a very sad disposition. It was hard for me to be around her for long periods of time. She made me sad.

The Williams Family

Jerri is a 54-year-old, married Black American, grandmother. She is raising her grandson Charles Dudley. Charles's mother Monica also was interviewed in the study with two of her children. Charles is being raised by his grandmother because he has a volatile relationship with his mother. Charles is 12 years old and he is in seventh grade. He is a B student. He plays basketball. Charles has been diagnosed with ADD (attention deficit disorder). He has been put on medication and according to his mother; his behavior has stabilized and his grades have improved.

Jerri completed eight years of school. She currently does odd jobs cleaning apartments and babysitting. Her yearly income is less than $4,999. Her combined income with her husband is $10,000 -$19,999 per year. She also is receiving government assistance in the form of Link and Medicaid. Charles attends church every Sunday with his grandmother and other siblings.

Jerri greeted me at the door with a big smile on her face. We had been trying to set up our appointment for three weeks. As I walked into Jerri's home, I was surprised to find the smell of cigarette smoke in her home. The smell was very strong. I began coughing from the fumes. Jerri is a cancer patient. She has stomach cancer. Her cancer had been in remission several times. Recently, her cancer returned. She is going through chemotherapy.

Jerri lived in an older mobile home that she owned with her husband. Her home was neat and clean. Boxes and containers were neatly stacked. Her home was orderly, but crowded with

many items. Her appliances were dated. She had begun to cover her kitchen cabinets with contact paper. Her home was quiet. In the background, I could hear a television and birds chirping. Jerri has four birds. She talked about how much her birds were part of the family. She said the birds wake up at six thirty in the morning. They are the alarm clock. She also said one of her grandchildren sleep walks and the birds chirp when he comes into the front room in the middle of the night. Their chirping serves as a warning to wake her up and get her grandson back in bed.

Jerri was very weak, but she celebrated every day. She talked about her 17 grandchildren and how blessed she was to have lived to see them born. She was first diagnosed with cancer when her three children were young. Jerri has three adult children, two daughters and a son. Each of her daughters has four children and her son has nine children. She said, when her children were young, she would cry out to God and say, “Please let me live to see my babies grown. But I never prayed for grandbabies. Now that God has allowed me to live this long, I want to help my grandbabies.” I asked her what she meant by helping her grandbabies, she said, “Have a better life.” She said, “My kids did not do it, I did not do it. I have 17 grandbabies at least some of them will.” I asked her what she was referring to. She said, “School.”

Jerri and none of her three children completed high school. She also talked about how she prays for her children to find spouses. She believes children should be raised by both a mother and a father. When I asked her why was this important, she had a hard time elaborating. She began saying, “I see more men with their children than I see women.” I had a hard time connecting her conversation to the question I had asked her. Eventually, she talked about being raised by women. She mentioned how she always wanted her father in her life, but she was

raised by aunts and her grandmother. She did not elaborate much about her father, but she became sad when she talked of not having a relationship with him.

Jerri is happily married, but was a single mother while she was raising her three children. For several years, she has had custody of Monica's sons. Recently, one of Monica's sons moved home with Monica. Jerri is raising one son at this time. When I asked her about having custody she said, "Monica is a good mother, but she does not have control of her children. I am afraid that her boys may turn out like my son. He is in prison. I see so much of my son in them. I want a different life for them." We talked about what things were important to her and she said family, education, and helping her grandchildren prepare for their future. When I asked her how do you help them prepare, she said, "I have a photo album for each child. In the photo album, I keep pictures, clippings of their achievements, memories of their school events, any type of memory of their accomplishments. I want them to look at these books and know what kind of life they can have, how things should be for them if they stay in school. I also want them to know that they do not have to stay in Southern Illinois and struggle. If they need to move away to make a decent living, I want them to be okay with that."

I asked Jerri about her support system, she replied, "It's just me, my God, and family. I asked her about friends, and a support network at church. She said she did not have friends and she did not go to a particular church. She said she goes to church every Sunday, but she picks different churches. When I asked her why she chose not to belong to a particular church she shared, that she got tired of being talked about or people assuming things. I did not pry, I could tell she was uncomfortable discussing the details.

Her grandson Charles also talked about people and relationships. I found it interesting that he used the word "negativity" to describe many interactions that go on around him. When I

asked him what he meant by negativity, he said “The shooting, killing, fighting that goes on.” I got the impression that his grandmother had really begun to teach him about avoiding situations and people who could be a stumbling block for his future. There were several things that stood out to me during my observation with Charles. Charles talked about his grandfather. He was referring to his grandmother’s husband. He said, “I can tell he really loves my grandmother. Whatever she needs, he gets it for her. He is also good with saving money.” Charles also said his grandfather was one of the people he wanted to be like when he grew up.

Charles also talked about his grandmother’s illness. He talked about being sad that his grandmother’s stomach cancer had returned. He spoke in a whisper when he said, “She will probably be gone soon.” I asked him why he said that and he responded, “She is starting to lose a lot of weight.” Charles also talked about how important family was to him. Other than family, one of the things that made him happy was being mentored. He enjoyed having people around him who would help him be a better person. What insight for a twelve-year-old. Jerri’s interview was long. Many times when I asked her questions, she would give unrelated answers. I realized, she really missed having plain old girl time communication. I will always remember her interview; Jerri was happy about the simple things in life.

My experiences with the Williams family. Prior to conducting the interview I had one conversation with Jerri Williams. My interaction with Jerri occurred when her daughter Monica asked her to come see the type of programs we were facilitating at OVOTC. Jerri’s input influenced Monica’s decision to allow her children to participate in OVOTC programs. There were also two occasions when I had lost contact with Monica because she moved. I went to her mother to ask her if she would have Monica get in touch with me. Jerri was always polite and she related my messages to Monica. When Jerri’s cancer was in remission, she was very active

participating in catering events for non-profits. She was planning on catering an event for OVOTC before her cancer returned.

Results

Grounded theory is an appropriate design choice when a theory is not available to explain a process (Creswell, 2007). Constant comparative method was used during open, axial, and selective coding to analyze data by identifying themes consistent with sense of purpose as well as any additional emerging themes identified within transcripts of individual interview, audiotapes, and/or observations. Seven questions were read to participants to elicit information related to five constructs of sense of purpose, optimism, faith, hope, spirituality, and sense of meaning. Different sets of interview questions for parents and their children (See Tables 1 & 2, pgs 83-84) were used for the interviews. Quotations taken directly from participant responses were examined to identify common themes. Observations of participants' home environment, interactions, and conversations were conducted to identify practices associated with sense of purpose. During open coding, common and uncommon categories related to sense of purpose were identified in each family (Creswell, 2007). The common categories were God, relationships, education, communication, financial security, autonomy and independence, leadership qualities, perseverance, self efficacy, life lessons, cooperation and opportunities. Less common categories, appearing in at least one family, were discipline and structure, and celebration of life.

Common Categories

Beliefs about God. Spirituality was incorporated in the lives of most of the families participating in the study. There were no questions asked during the interview that specifically asked about their spirituality. A belief about God was a topic that came out as parents talked about what they believed a person needed to be successful. These families expressed spirituality

in different ways, but they professed the Christian faith as their foundation for their expression. Some families referred to God as the source of their life. Brandon Jackson said he found his sense of purpose when he established a personal relationship with God. He believed a relationship with God was the most important legacy he could pass to his children. He said, "I discovered what my purpose was, when I start going to church. That was my biggest eye opener. Once you have purpose, you can move forward, and you have a goal."

Talonda Greer also felt God was how she and her children would be successful. She stressed that the spirituality she had was more than the traditional aspect of attending church. She stated,

> I want my children to remember that they can do anything as long as they put God first and keep Him in their lives. I just believe that they need that foundation. Spirituality is very important to me. More than just a religion, we are basically focusing on a relationship with God.

Jerri Williams, a grandmother who had fought cancer in various stages of her life, referred to God as "Awesome." Her desire was to see her children become adults. She said God answered her prayer and so much more by allowing her to see her children grown and witnessing the birth of 17 grandchildren. Jerri stated,

> Girl, I have a wonderful God, and you know, when I first got sick, I asked God to let me live 'til my children got grown and he truly did that. Then, when they got grown, they started having children, then I ask for the grandkids and I end up with a lot of them. So, I guess God still got me here for them.

There were parents who did not attend church regularly, but felt it was important for their children to know about God. They found different ways to practice spirituality. In some cases,

their children attended churches that had youth programs. Natalie Pope's spirituality with her son included reading the Bible and talking about God with him. Sharita Johnson's approach was prayer. She talked about the importance of teaching her children about prayer. She stated, "I do like a lot of prayer. I tell them 'pray about everything.' " It ain't going to happen overnight. You might want it to happen overnight, but it ain't going to happen like that. Pray and be patient about it."

Ann Simmons's desire for her children to live a Christian life style was based on fear and her desire for them to go to heaven. Ann said,

> I want them to have a Christian lifestyle. I think Jesus should be the main focus. I try to constantly introduce them to the Bible and to give 'em a background in church. I don't want them to go to hell. I don't want them to suffer like the Bible says.

Five children in the study referred to God during their interviews. Jarvis Greer, Damarcus Greer, Zelda Johnson, and Richard Johnson mentioned church or youth groups as places where they learned about God. When Shawn Pope was asked what things his mother taught him that were important to him, he mentioned God. He gave a description of what he and his mother studied. He said, "Well so far, we've read the first five chapters or books."

Importance of relationships. Being connected to friends and family played a significant role in participants' lives. Some participants felt being hurt or negative influences of friends or family members caused them to distance themselves. Kendra Jones talked about the hurt she experienced after her first husband died. She said her family held things over her head about his death and reneged on their agreement to help her during her time of grieving. She said, "With family and friends, sometimes it isn't good when you want them to do something for you."

Monica Dudley felt the lack of having a close family unit was why it was so important for her children to be close. She expressed her desire for her children to have a close relationship. She was sad about the relationship she had with her siblings. She said,

> Basically, I try to keep them close. That's hard to do, 'cause nowadays you really don't get to see your whole family. All they see is us and their grandmamma, so it's like now; I want to keep them all together so they will know family. Family is basically all you got, it ain't much left but family. 'Cause I don't have my brother and sister no more. My brother is in prison, been in and out of prison all of his life so; I really never got to be with him and my sister, she money crazy so she ain't never around.

Many of the children in the study expressed the importance of friends. Tevin Jones talked about how friends and family made him happy. He stated, "Family, some friends, well most friends, not all friends, make me happy." When Zeraya Johnson was asked about being successful, she stated how much she loved her friends and family. When she was asked why, she said, "They just help me do stuff, my homework and stuff." Mia Dudley had a positive perspective on the importance of her friends. When she was asked why her friends made her happy, she responded, "They keep me moving forward."

Paternal influences were very common among the families. The Johnson children seemed very comfortable with having a male who modeled behaviors of a father. I thought it was interesting that the children referred to the boyfriend of less than six months as Daddy and in some cases "our step dad." Brandon Jackson, the single dad, believed his most important role was raising his children. He said that, by being in their life, he was giving them something he never had. John Jones, the step father of Tevin Jones, used every opportunity to remind Tevin of the life he did not want. Tevin said,

> He always tells me, 'I'm the person that you don't want to be'. When I do something wrong or something bad happens to me, he just likes to give me a heads up on what happens if I do keep down that path. I see how hard it is for him to go through the things he's gone through, so when he tells me not to be those things, well, not to be what he is now, kind of helps me to focus more and have a better opinion on what I want to do with myself.

Members of the family also served an additional role in many of the lives of the adolescents. When the adolescents were asked who they wanted to be like when they grew up, many of them named members of their family. Charles Dudley, who was living with his grandmother and grandfather, was asked who he wanted to be like when he grew up he said, his grandpa. He later went into detail of why he wanted to be like him. Charles said,

> 'Cause he treated my grandma right and he know how to save money and stuff like that. Uh, he helps me and my grandma a lot, like. Uh, you can tell that he loves my grandma cause everything my grandma needs and stuff like that, he get it for my grandma. He'll cook for my grandma. When my grandma don't feel like getting up he comes wake me up.

Kenzi Mitchell said both her mother and her auntie were people she aspired to be like. When she was asked why, she said, "My mom, I like what she does. She helps people when they have problems. My auntie, I think she helps people. She'll cook at a church; she will help people that need food. Jarvis Greer talked about his mother being his role model. He stated, "She's a single mother raising four children. Most people don't, most moms don't really do that often. She's done it for what, fifteen years or so." There were many negative maternal influences in the lives of the parents. Ann Simmons mother was very abusive. Her interaction with her mother

negatively influenced her social interaction with her children. Talonda Greer's mother was a workaholic who never spent time with her children. Talonda began repeat the same behavior one she had a family until she realized she was following in her mother's footsteps. Kendra Jones was raised by a drug addicted mother. It was normal for her to put herself in the role of being the care giver or enabler. She repeated this cycle in her relationships with men.

Importance of education. For all of the families in the study, education was important. In some cases, adolescents who stated what they wanted to be when they grew up did not know what type of schooling their career choice required; but their responses included attending college or some form of education after high school. Reginald Johnson was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up. He responded, "A firefighter." When he was asked what he needed to do to become a fire fighter, he said, "I need to take a test and go to the school that teaches you to be a firefighter." Tevin Jones was asked the same question and he said he wanted to be a neurosurgeon. When he was asked what he needed to do to become a neurosurgeon, he said, "I need to finish high school; go to college. I plan on getting a Masters degree, if not a bachelors, and basically just stay focus on the goal I got."

For parents who owned their homes (Brandon Jackson and Michelle Dell), school was an option, but was not seen as the only way to be successful. I think owning a home gave these parents the feeling of having a higher level of accomplishment. I believe having that increased level of confidence made it easier for them to see success being obtained in ways other than attending college. Brandon Jackson talked about his desire to see his children become successful by achieving whatever they want to be. He stated,

> I would like to see them all do well into whatever their career aspirations are. Doing that, finish with school, if that's their choice or direction. I always want them to think more of

> working for themselves, so whatever they do; I want them to be the best at it. That's one of the things I tell them. If you make shoe strings, if you are the best shoe string maker in the world, guess what? Everybody wants to get something as simple as shoe strings from you and you will be a millionaire.

When Michelle Dell was asked how she would like to describe Keesha in 10 years, she responded,

> I would like to be able to describe her as happy and successful within her definition of success. I like to see her pursue her dreams and feel success within herself, whatever that is. Even if it's not going to college you know, but still feeling successful and in control of her destiny and not just waiting for somebody else to make the decisions of her life.

In some families, education was seen as the only way out of the cycle of poverty. Sharita Jonson, Monica Dudley, Jerri Williams, and Kendra Jones expressed the hardships they had experienced because they did not complete high school or, in Kendra's case, she did not complete high school in four years. Sharita Johnson had put all of her hope on her children success. She said, "I want them to make something out of themselves, finish school, something that I didn't do."

Monica Dudley talked about how hard it was for her to provide for her family without an education. She said, "Cause I didn't get one and I know how hard it is not to have an education. I don't want them to go through what I had to just to give them what they need." Jerri Williams talked about her children and herself not finishing high school. She felt it was her responsibility to see some of her grandchildren complete high school and attend college. She stated,

> Well, my kids, you know, things ain't what I wanted out of my kids in life. I wanted my kids to get an education and you know settle down and have a family. You have to get

> and education that's what I really want for my kids, but they didn't do it so, I'm truly hoping out of 17 grandbabies someone's got to make it.

Kendra Jones had some college courses, but she had not completed a degree program. She talked about how she encouraged her children to take school seriously. She said,

> School, I instill in them a lot of school, how it's important to go to school and get good grades, because if you don't go to school and do what you suppose to do and don't get good grades it kind of hurts. As far as, if you want to be a doctor or something and you don't get good grades and you can't make it into the doctorate program, you get setback. I also tell them that because I had kids, I didn't go through school like I was supposed to, like I wanted to. So, I was kind of setback and just went to a job.

Two mothers talked about their college experience. Talonda Greer expressed not being prepared for college. She said,

> When I was 17 years old, I came here to college as a freshman student. I had no clue what college was all about. I really try to talk to them about, you don't just pay your tuition and go to school. You actually have to go to class and pass those classes or you will be kicked out of school. No one ever told me that and it is simple. I guess people think you will just know that, but I was the first in my family to go away to school. I honestly don't think my mother knew to tell me that.

Kristian Mitchell talked about getting a college degree, but having to change her educational direction because she was not getting what she needed in the job market. She said, "With the economy being the way it is, I'm learning that the goals I had set forth in the past are not necessarily relevant into the future. Now, I am trying to figure out what's the best step for me and my family." There also was an adolescent who felt the responsibility to achieve educational

status in his family because no one had graduated from college. Tevin Jones believed he would be setting a new standard for the children in his family. He said,

> Nobody in my family is a doctor or never graduated from college before. So, it would be like a first for me and a bigger thing to my family to bring some kind of, I guess you can say a level, of smartness to the family, like a certain kind of standard with the younger kids.

All of the youth in the study believed, in order to achieve their career aspirations, they needed to attend additional educational training after high school. Most of the children did not know what type of educational training they needed. When Mia Dudley was asked what she needed to do to become a singer she said, “Get to college and get an education.” Micah Dudley was asked what she what she needed to do to become a model. She said, “Go to college.”

Three youths were able to identify the type of training they needed to reach their career aspirations. Jarvis Greer said, “I got to complete high school then I have to go to culinary college, which I plan to do.” When Reginald Johnson was asked what type of schooling he needed to become a firefighter he said, “The school that teaches you to be a firefighter.” When Lisa Simmons was asked what she needed to do to become a football player she said, “Um, like run a lot and exercise a lot.”

Communication. The importance of communication varied among the families. The Pope family used non verbal communication during my entire visit. There were times when Shawn Pope would give an answer during the interview and his mother would stare at him as if she was not pleased with his answers. The body language of Natalie Pope resembled a silent threat. I got the impression that the stares she gave to her son during his interview were a way of intimidating him to make sure he did not say anything that might be damaging or embarrassing.

Shawn's body language during the interview was odd. Because he knew his mother was staring at him, he did not look in her direction, but stared straight ahead as he answered each question. There was very little verbal communication between them.

There was very little communication or interaction in the Simmons household. Ann Simmons spent most of her time interacting with her friend. She only responded to her children when they requested food. Whenever they tried to engage her in conversation her response was, "Go play the game." When her children were asked what their mother said about what they wanted to be when they grew up they both responded, "Nothing."

Several families saw communication as a way to get to know their children and to be able to guide them. Talonda Greer used communication as a means of getting to know her boys. She said, "Um, at this point in my life, I really make an effort to have one on one time with each of the boys, to listen to them, just to kind of feel out where they are and you know how they feel basically. We just talk a lot more."

Monica Simmons also felt communication was a way of knowing what was happening in her children's life. She said,

> Communication, that's hard cause don't too many kids talk to their parents anymore. They would rather keep it and just deal with it without telling somebody what's wrong. I try to get them to talk to me about anything. I don't care what they talk to me about, just long as I know.

All of the parents used communication as a way to encourage their children. Most of the parents used communication to share life stories and give instructions. Doing my observation, all of the youth, with one exception, Shawn Pope, appeared to be able to communicate clearly, their

needs and wants, to their parents and siblings. The youth also used communication to give instruction to each other.

Financial security. Most of the families viewed the purpose of money as being able to provide their children's basic needs, food, shelter and clothing. Money also was seen as a means of protection from doing unlawful things. Sharita Johnson believed, if her children received a good education, they would be able to financially provide for their family, instead of doing things that might be dangerous or unlawful. She said,

> I want them to know they don't have to go to these streets for things that they want or need or what not. 'Cause you can work hard, you can get whatever you want so you don't have to go out here and do none of that crazy stuff like basically anything that's off the wall.

In some families, there was a belief that having extra money would allow their families to enjoy comforts in life. In Jerri Williams home, she had a discussion with her grandchildren about winning a lottery. She said,

> First I would never get that money. But if I did, I'll buy all my kids a place where they can make sure everybody's safe. Then I would go wherever I want to go and have a good old time. Then I would bring you all back by summer's end. Then we would go back to traveling. Then I'd give money back to the church, to the Boys and Girls Club, to anybody. That's when I could live my life, that's all I wanted, that's my dream.

Brandon Jackson also saw money as an avenue to enjoying life's comforts and being in charge of making decisions about the type of jobs he worked. He said,

> I try to make sure I put emphasis on, the money is not going make you happy, but it's good to be wealthy, to be able to do what you want to do with your family. There are

> times, I wish my financial situation is better so we can go on a family vacation somewhere and go do something as a family as oppose to saying, we can't do that. You can go on trips. You put yourself in a position where, I'm not a slave to my job that is liberating. So many times, I've been in a position where I had to work and there a lot of other jobs that I've taken that I didn't like them but I had to do it because I got a family to take care of. That's the compromise you make. I don't want them to be in that position ten years from now. I want them to be secure in their financial situation. I don't want to see them stressed out working for somebody.

Michelle Dell was financially stable. Although she talked about her ability to provide for her children's basic needs, she saw money management as key to making your own decisions in life. She said,

> You know you should be working for what you have and contributing to that, instead of expecting someone else to take care of those needs for you. Because knowing her family history and their issues with money management and self sufficiency, she comes from a family that's been on the doles (during the depression era, the doles was considered assistance) for generations, you know. If you're content with that then, I at least feel there's not much of a future there. You don't get the rewards of earning. You get the sadness of 'woe, is me I can't move up' you know, 'move my station'.

During Keesha Carter's interview, she identified the ability to handle money as the number one thing she learned from Michelle. Michelle prided herself on being able to provide security for her family. On several occasions, throughout the interview and during the observation, Michelle said, "I not warm and fuzzy, you may not get the hugs you want, but you will have what you need, a roof over your head, food, and clothes."

Having a successful career and paying your own way was something Michelle stressed. Michelle did not believe in giving an allowance to children. She believed you worked for what you wanted. An example would be doing extra chores to earn money to purchase a dress for a school dance. She talked about conversations she had with Keesha where she said, “Just because it is free, does not mean you need to take it. You have to stop expecting handouts and learn how to work for want you want.”

Monica Dudley also felt money management would provide financial autonomy. She said, “Know how to do it financially. I tell them, you know, ‘be able to manage your life in what you got and what you can get’.” There was one adolescent who experienced the loss of having a two parent income. Since his father’s death, his mother has been the only bread winner. Tevin Jones equated success with having an abundance of money. He said, “I never thought I was successful, not once in my life, because I never got a check for a million dollars.”

Autonomy and independence. All of the parents wanted their children to be independent and have a sense of autonomy. The parents described independence as the ability to take care of their families and make their own decisions. Sharita Johnson, Monica, Dudley and Jerri Williams were the only parents who did not talk about ways they could become more independent or in charge of their lives. These parents had several things in common. These parents did not have high school diplomas. Their individual incomes were less than $4999 per year. Jerri Williams was fighting cancer and had prepared herself for dying. However, Sharita and Monica appeared to have given up hope for themselves. They put all of their resources, focus, and hope into their children achieving independence.

Some parents stressed the importance of their children choosing careers that they wanted. Natalie expressed her desire for her son to choose his own path. She said,

> I hope that he finds the career path that he wants. I hope that he grows; he has a lot of gifts and abilities like he likes to draw and I hope that he can further develop in that area. He likes to play basketball, so I hope that he continues to be athletic and sees where that takes him.

Parents also talked about autonomy in terms of their likes and dislikes and their personal style. Talonda Greer believed success was related to her children having a sense of autonomy. She felt it was her responsibility to help her children develop autonomy. She said, "I think it takes a strong sense of self. I believe that they get from their parents that they cannot be followers. They have to understand that they have to be leaders." She also recognized the importance of letting them develop as individuals. She said, "They really need to know who they are and I'm really trying to work that out within them. Each of the boys, you know, they just need to be who they are and the best them that they can be."

Brandon Jackson believed teaching his children to think critically and be trendsetter increased their autonomy. He said,

> I challenge them to critical thinking. I think that is important. One of the things I don't try to do is impose what I want on them. I rather give them something to think about during a course of a conversation. They talking and they say something I totally disagree with, I ask them the question 'why' and if you just ask why a lot of times, that's a never ending question. That opens up their thinking possibilities or makes them think why do you want to go that route and it's because this, that, and another and why do you think that's beneficial, so just to get them to see it. What I've noticed is, if you allow them enough time to really expound on it and think about it, they eventually come to the conclusion that you trying to lead them to.

There's another thing I always tell them, never be scared to be an individual. Don't be a follower, be a leader, be a trendsetter. If there is something you want to wear, wear it! If somebody don't like it, that's their right. Everybody's entitled to their opinion. But do it, if it's something that you want to do because you wanted to, not because somebody else told you what to do. If you live to please people, you going to have a long miserable life.

Perseverance. Each family expressed the importance of perseverance. Each parent said perseverance consisted of never giving up. Kendra Jones's statement encompassed many beliefs held by other parents in the study. Kendra believed her children should adopt a "never give up" attitude. She said,

> They got to have perseverance. It's hard and you know even all I'm going through as far as trying. You can't give up; you have to keep pushing even when it just seems like you trying as hard as you can. You just have to have perseverance, which is the most important of it. You also need a strong mind. They need will power and to just get up and go do it. Just set your mind one way and just go do it."

Tevin Jones, one of the adolescents, described what it would take for him to be successful. He said, "So being successful, basically, is just hard work that you have to do and nobody else can do it for you, because in the end all you have is yourself to be depending on." The other youth in the study did not talk about perseverance. I'm not sure if they understood the work involved in fulfilling their career aspirations.

Self efficacy. Most of the families exhibit components of self efficacy, in terms of believing they could have a better life and get through the hard knocks of life. In the Dudley household, the mother, Monica, appeared to lack self efficacy. She expressed not knowing how

to answer questions her children needed answered. She also talked about not being able to retain enough information in six hours a week of educational training in a GED classroom.

Keena Jones expressed a desire to go back to college. During my observation at her home, she talked about being fearful, because of her age. She was not sure she could pass the courses. Sharita Johnson was asked if there was anything in life that was keeping her from being successful. She responded by saying,

> Me. cause I got hurt. To say, I don't have that, was deep in here. Help me get that extra push to make me feel like I wanna do something with my life. It's not saying that I don't wanna, but I need what you call that extra encouragement or need that somebody to talk to or what not and like try, just basically a second opinion from somebody, feedback basically. I just know getting true, I been through other stuff but this decision on how you go about this or what not or try this or what not, don't give up so quick, that's my thing I give up so quick.

All the children in the study exhibited self efficacy. They believed they could achieve their career goals. They believed they had the skills and resources necessary to achieve their goals. They believe good grades and college was all they needed to achieve their goals. When James Simmons was asked what he needed in order to be a basketball player he said, "Learn, be a good sport, and go to college." Zelda Johnson planned to become an editor, fashion designer, and a hair salon owner. When I asked her what she needed to do to accomplish her goals she said, "My homework and go to college."

Self esteem and confidence were important for success. In the Mitchell household, Kristian talked about the importance of confidence and self esteem. She said,

> Confidence and self-esteem. It's so important right now because it's just different right now. I mean, from even how we grew up in my generation, it's just so important. If you don't have those things, you know you will fall prey to whatever somebody is trying to get you to do. You have to have your own mind basically.

Talonda Greer said she thought a person should be confident without being arrogant. Kendra Jones described confidence as having a strong mind, having will power and just getting up and doing it. She said, "A person needs to just set their mind one way and just go do it." Michelle Greer thought self esteem was what was needed for a child to be successful. She said,

> I think self esteem, determination, and perseverance are kind of necessary. But, self-esteem is the biggest. Sometimes you can lose your way before you get to the starting line. If they have the confidence and self esteem to at least run the race, they have a better chance at succeeding but if they think they're going to fail before they even start, they're definitely going to fail. So, I think having the confidence to try things which is self-esteem.

Although all of the parents wanted their children to embody characteristics of self esteem, when asked how do you instill a level of self esteem in your children, the response was usually, "Just talk to them." Natalie Pope identified self esteem as being able to love yourself. She said,

> Well, I think that people define success in many different ways. I think that an individual has to define success for themselves because you can have all the money in the world, you can have so many different things, but I think one of the things that a person has to have is love for themselves, first of all, to be successful. Because if you don't have that, you don't have anything, if you don't care for yourself. And that's one of things that I

> hope above anything else that I will teach my child is, that he loves himself and that he knows that, I guess and that's it.

Kristian Mitchell believed that building confidence was a way she was developing a sense of purpose in her children. She said,

> For me to instill a sense of purpose in my kids means building up their confidence, letting them know, when they walk out the house, they're the best they can be, and that whatever kids say to them that doesn't mean that's what it is. If you see something in yourself and you're not liking it, you can change and that we're growing everyday basically, life is a learning process.

Thoughts about life lessons. Many of the parents talked about life lessons they had learned. They discussed lessons they learned by not completing school, making unlawful decisions, and having children before marriage. Some parents welcomed the idea of their children experiencing life lessons. Life lessons also were seen as a means to build character in their children. Brandon often talked to his children about the timeliness of education. He said,

> Most of the time I tell them, I want you to do better than me. I don't want you to wait 'till you're thirty-three and go to college. So that's the thing I tell them. You have so many opportunities ahead of you and if you make the best of those opportunities now, later on down the line, you will be in a much better position than where I am at my age, if you do all the things like I know that you can do.

Tevin, talked about lessons his step father tried to instill in him. He reminisced; as he talked about listening to his step father say, "You don't want to go down the path that I have gone down." Tevin also felt some lessons were permanent and life altering. He learned lessons

by being in a gang, getting caught stealing, and understanding the circumstances that caused his father's death. He said,

> Not until you do drugs, like the way my dad did, then he died. When you, I guess, get in a gang, selling drugs, stuff like that and making wrong decisions, 'cause everybody gets one chance, and you just throw it away, and you never get another one, pretty much.

Brandon talked about the life lesson he learned by not waiting until marriage to have children. He had experienced the break up with his children's mother and not being able to provide for them the way he wanted. He said,

> Not having children before I was married, that's something my mom always put a lot of emphasis on, but I didn't listen. Not that I regret my children in any way at all, but I understand in reason, why she said what she said, because it's a lot different doing it outside of marriage. So, those are just a lot of things, life lessons, that grandma and my momma taught me.

Kendra Jones felt life lessons would help her children develop into better adults. She said,

> I want them to experience that life isn't easy you know. It's some bumps in the road, but I think they can manage, do what they need to do. Talonda also expressed the benefits of her children experiencing life lessons. She said, "I would like for my children to have experienced enough hardship that they're stronger and more confident in themselves, but not so much that it will break them.

Natalie Pope thought it was important to teach life lessons using various tools and everyday opportunities. She said,

> If you teach him to reflect on certain instances and teach them certain values in certain instances and maybe how you have gone through a struggle or something. Show them how you overcame that or if you can just teach them through other teaching tools. I know that I teach him life lessons through books, through TV shows, and just talking to him on an everyday basis about things.

Michelle Dell, believed life lessons should be an honest experience. She believed sharing both the good and bad experiences was important in helping adolescents become successful. She said,

> Yes, there has been many of my life experiences, because that's how you learn, you know. I'm not ashamed of 'the good, the bad, the ugly'. It is what it is. This is how I dealt with it, or that was wrong. Things aren't always peachy. You can't enjoy the good without the bad, so yeah, I've experienced. My life has been pretty much an open book, you know.

Cooperation. Team work was displayed by both the adults and the children. Each of the families mentioned different ways they practice team work in their home. Some examples were selecting the movie for movie night, selecting the game for game night, and babysitting younger siblings. In Talonda Greer's home, her fiancé Anthony, assisted with laundry, going to the store to purchase taco shells for dinner, and the children assisted one another with chores.

In the Johnson's home, when Sharita left for appointments, her children followed a hierarchy system. They followed instructions given to them by their older siblings. The older siblings assumed the role of their mother. They asked their siblings questions, such as are you hungry, do you have homework. They also gave instructions, such as take your things to your room. In Monica Dudley's home, her children assisted with food preparation and cooking. In

Michelle Dell's home, chores were shared and the transporting of Keesha to practices and sport events was shared by Michelle and her daughter Ciara.

Throughout the interview and observations, parents talked about the desire for their children to have leadership qualities. Some parents believed developing leadership qualities was part of learning how to be a team player. Parents believed leadership qualities were needed to become successful. Brandon Jackson talked about the importance of putting your best foot forward. He said he would not accept anything less from his children. Brandon also had different thoughts about leadership when it came to his daughters and his son. He said,

> I guess for my son, I expect him to be more of a leader. Then my girls, I want them to be individuals and to be strong independent women. I want them to be independent thinkers who can critically think for themselves and not be so emotional.

Talonda Greer, believed leadership qualities included her boys being, strong, Black men who were active in their communities and churches. She also said they needed to be team players and have compassion. Natalie Pope, saw leadership qualities as being God fearing and caring. Kendra expressed leadership as hard work and dedication.

Exposure to new things. In most of the families, the children's exposure to new things came through activities at home including, movies, video games, television, and card games. They were also on sports teams, in clubs at school, and in youth programs at church. Two parents expressed how they felt exposure to new things would help their children.

Michelle Dell saw sports and travel as an avenue to expose her child to new things. She said having various experiences was important. Michelle said,

> She's involved in sports and what not and I like that. But if she wasn't, it's really the experience of these things and not the golden achievement. She doesn't need to be the all

> star, you know. She's there, it's good. I think it's more than the varied experience versus any one experience. Since she's been with me we been to D.C.; we been to California, and she's being exposed to so many different things that give her different options and that's more important to me, more than any one thing that she can do.

Ann Simmons felt exposing her children to a variety of things would help them become well rounded. She wanted them to experience both exposure through sports and the arts. She said, "I want them to be well rounded. So, I want 'em to know how to do everything as far as

> recreational activities, like riding horses, swimming, bowling, going to museums, seeing the opera, being very culturally motivated."

Less Common Categories

Discipline and structure. The Greer family demonstrated discipline and structure in their household. A lot of emphasis was placed on the completion of homework and chores. I also had a sense that the children were accustomed to eating dinner at a certain time. One of the first questions they wanted answered was "What's for dinner?" Other families demonstrated a schedule of routine and chores, but they did not demonstrate or discuss specific protocol or daily expectations of their children, in terms of structure.

Brandon Jackson believed discipline and developing good habits was something parents needed to implement early in a child's life. He said,

> Now, when they are teenagers, it's more or less everything that you done from when they were infants and all the things you've instilled in them. You don't wait til a child is teenager to start trying to discipline them, that's backwards. You start early and, by the time they are teenagers, they already have a line that they know they're not going to cross. They going to be kids and do typical kids stuff for the most part, but you expect

them to be respectful and you expect them to be manner-able, courteous, responsible and just genuine. Treat people genuinely like you want to be treated, so the same thing I try to pass on to them. I think making sure they develop good habits like learning how to prioritize, learning how to be responsible, learning how to be accountable, I'm big on accountability. I don't want to hear about your excuse, that's not going to fly with me.

Celebration of life and happiness. Celebration of life of life was a topic that Jerri Williams stressed. There was an understanding of end of life not only with Jerri but also with her grandson, Charles. I got the impression that death was something the family discussed regularly. Because there was a possibility of Jerri dying relatively soon, the family celebrated life by doing activities, going to amusement parks and just being at as many events as possible to support family. Jerri talked about how she had a group of her grand children over every other weekend. It is what she called, "their time".

When Jerri was asked to describe her family's routine from morning until night, she talked about all of the things they did together. I asked her about their routine on school days, she said nothing was different on school days. I got the impression that she was approaching everyday as if it was her last. She focused only on the activities they shared together. She mentioned one of her desires for her children was that they lived life to the fullest.

When the children in the study were asked what they thought about life, their responses were always positive. Regardless of their environment and the adversity they faced, life made them happy. The only time they said life made them sad was when they spoke of the family members they had loss to death. Zelda Johnson expressed emotions of laughter and tears as she described how she felt about life. She said, "Sometimes when things don't go my way I feel like

life is horrible and everything, but then, when I'm having a good day, I'm really happy, I feel happy for having a life. When my uncle died, it kinda made me sad."

Keesha Carter, within the last year had experienced the joy of being placed in a safe home and the loss of several family members. Keesha was asked how she felt about life, she said,

> Stress free, because you have a parent to take care of you, so that you don't have to learn how to become an adult at an early age. That's stress free. The tragedies make me sad, because you think about growing up with some of your family members, you know, just doing things with them when you older and now you can't so…

Tevin Jones was asked if there was anything about life that made him happy or sad. He said, "Yeah the people that died like my dad, my grandma, my auntie, my uncle, my grandfather and you know some other people. Other than that, the only sad parts to my life is when people die or when things don't go your way, that you thought they would and then, you know, like you learn that as you get older."

When the parents were asked what they thought about life, their perspective was usually parallel to their happiness with life. Jerri Williams, Talonda Greer, and Brandon Jackson all professed a deep relationship with God. They were also the only parents whose outlook on life had very little to do with their financial status. Talonda based her happiness on the growth she had experienced in her life. Talonda said, "I feel hopeful for my future. I feel like I've grown a lot since I moved here. I see good things in my future for me and my kids.

Brandon's happiness came from making a job change. He said,

> Right now, I am currently very happy with the direction I am in. I have made some decisions just as of recently that have really brought the joy back. When you do what you

love, it never feels like you're working, so that's where I'm at. In the future, I see myself owning a business, that's my ultimate goal. I really don't want to work for anybody, I mean I would, but ultimately my goal would be to use that as an avenue to have my own business.

Axial Coding Categories

During axial coding, categories identified in open coding were assembled in models (See Figures 1-5, pgs. 174-176). Identified core categories are displayed in relation to the five constructs of sense of purpose. Some categories are related to more than one construct. Some categories appeared to have a stronger influence on the construct. During axial coding, communication was found to be the core category through which all other categories were connected. Both verbal and non verbal communication influenced various aspects of the categories and the five constructs. Parents wanted their children to communicate with them and with each other. In many families, daily communication and an open dialogue were encouraged. Through the use of communication, parents also shared life lessons, encouraged team work, autonomy, and independence. Parents also encouraged their children to pursue higher education. How parents communicated or reacted to their struggles or success, influenced how their children communicated about their families' struggles. In some families, parents were careful not to tell or express their current problems around their children. In these families, the children expressed optimism and faith. The less the children knew about their family's struggles, the more they believed their parents could and would provide everything they needed. They were more optimistic about their life and their future. The more the children knew about their family's struggles, the more they began to form opinions about their life and their future. If their parents

were positive about their future, then the children were positive. If the parents spoke negatively about their future, then the children had a more pessimistic view.

Concepts of Sense of Purpose

Spirituality, optimism, faith, hope, and sense of meaning were concepts of sense of purpose that were examined for the study. These concepts were not selected to develop the grounded theory; grounded theory categories are not known prior to data collection. These concepts were examined to see if participants were incorporating the concepts in their sense of purpose practices. The practice of sense of purpose constructs, spirituality, optimism, faith, hope, and sense of meaning, for the families included the following: Spirituality practices included an integration of mind, body, and spirit. Optimism practices included assuming good things would happen. Faith practices included having complete confidence in someone or something. Hope included having goals and implementing a plan to accomplish the goals, sense of meaning practices included believing that their life was rewarding. When family members had a rewarding life, they also had self-worth, self-efficacy, purpose, and felt valued. These five constructs were chosen because of their association with each other in the literature.

Spirituality. Spirituality is "experiences and expressions of one's spirit in a unique and dynamic process reflecting faith in God or a supreme being; connected with oneself, others, nature, or God ; and an integration of the dimensions of mind, body, and spirit" (Meravigilia,1999).The spirituality construct was related to several categories. The categories were God, celebration of life, and life lessons. There were parents whose children were members of youth groups; however, these parents did not participate or attend church. There also were families who chose to teach their children about the Bible and/or prayer at home, but did not attend church.

Figure 4.1 Faith Construct Category Relationships

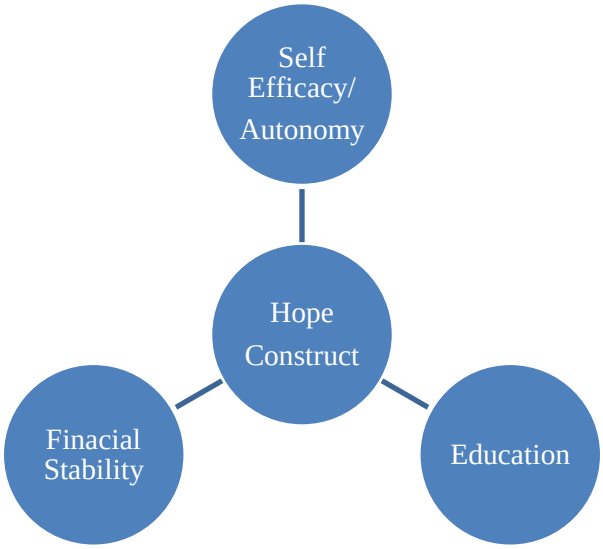

Figure 4.2 Hope Construct Category Relationships

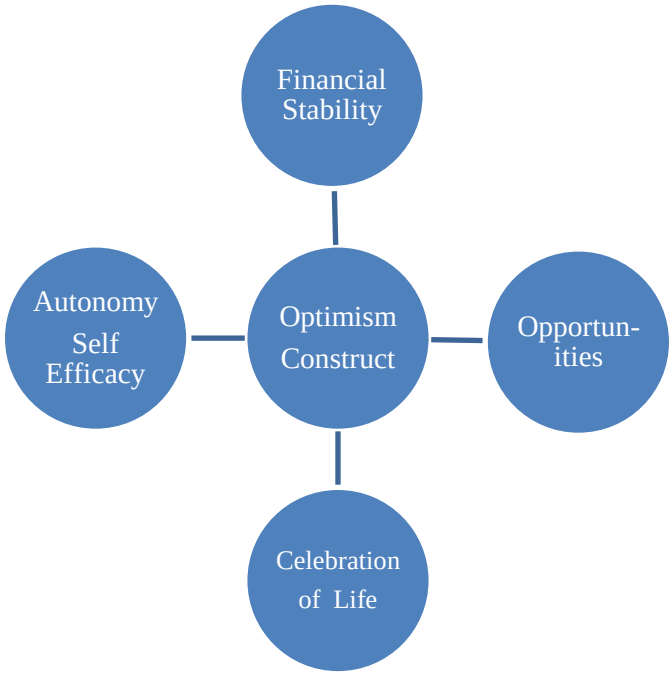

Figure 4.3 Optimism Construct Category Relationships

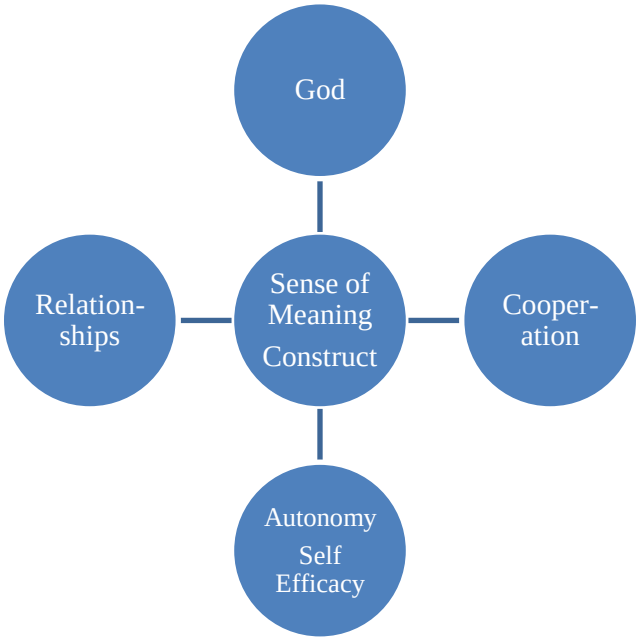

Figure 4.4 Sense of Meaning Construct Category Relationships

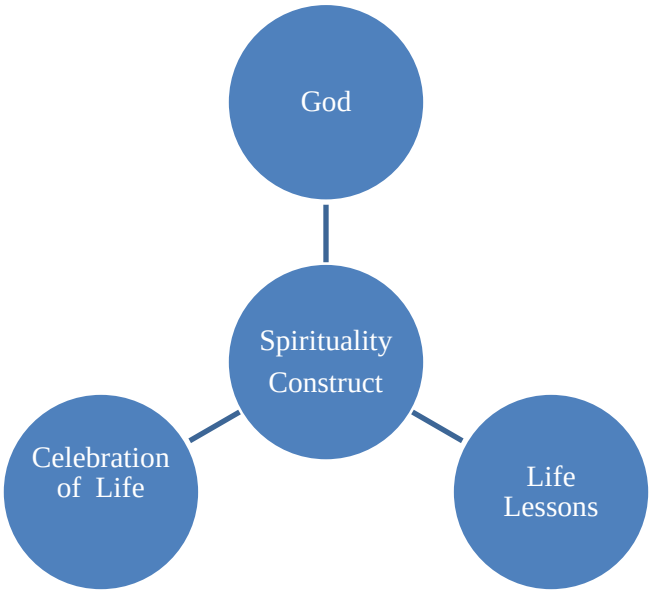

Figure 4.5 Spirituality Construct Category Relationships

There also were parents who attended church with their children, and who professed a personal relationship with God. These parents described their personal relationship with God as a relationship that included prayer, Bible meditation, a submission of their will to obey what was written in the Bible and a total dependency on their higher power. There also were several parents who did not allude to any type of spirituality.

Some parents expressed how spirituality influenced their happiness. They believed their lives were good. Even though parents expressed not having everything they wanted, they were happy. Many parents talked about life lessons with their children. They attributed their behavior changes to their spiritual growth.

Optimism. Optimism is assuming good things will happen (Roesch, et al, 2010). Optimism was expressed in various ways among the participants in the study. Optimism was influenced by self efficacy, financial security, opportunities, and celebration of life categories.

All parents were optimistic about their children's future. They expressed a desire to see their children complete high school, attend college and pursue their career choice or; complete high school and pursue their career choice without attending college. Parents believed their children would have the confidence and skills necessary for them to achieve their career aspirations. Several parents were optimistic about their own future. The reasons for being optimistic varied among parents.

Michelle Dell was optimistic because she had achieved a level of financial status that made her happy. She said, "I feel blessed and I feel the future is optimistic. I'm content. I do have a promising future." Brandon Jackson, Talonda Greer, and Natalie Pope's optimism was related to their belief that they had opportunities available to them. Brandon Jackson was optimistic because he had recently left a job, where he was no longer satisfied and. He had returned to something he loved, cutting hair. Talonda Greer was optimistic because she had matured, since moving to Southern Illinois. She said, "I feel hopeful for my future. I feel like I've grown a lot since I moved here. I see good things in my future for me and my kids." Natalie Pope was optimistic because she was no longer living in a shelter. She had a place of her own.

Jerri William's and Kendra Jones's optimism was because they were happy to have a life. Jerri Williams, the cancer patient was optimistic because she believed God had extended her life and given her an opportunity to impact her grandchildren's life. Kendra Jones's optimism stemmed from her knowledge that she could have a life of her own. Kendra Jones described herself as, "Free." Although she missed her deceased husband, she no longer had to worry about where he was and what he was doing. Ann Simmons and Kristian Michelle did not express optimism. They talked about what they did not have and what needed to change in their lives. Sharita Johnson and Monica Dudley expressed discouragement.

Faith. Faith is strong unshakeable belief in something without proof, convictions of truth based on doctrine, complete confidence or trust in a person, or any set of firmly held principles or beliefs are all united by one commonality (Newton, 2010). Faith influenced the discipline and structure category. In families were faith was identified, family members believed they would achieve their goals. In these families, their faith reinforced their behaviors. Faith, as defined, was seen in Talonda Greer's family, Brandon Jackson's family, and Michelle Dell's family.

Michelle's faith was based on her philosophy of hard work pays off. She believed she could achieve whatever she put her mind to as long and she worked hard. Talonda and Brandon's faith was guided by their belief that God wanted the best for them; he would guide and protect them in every phase of their life. Many of the other participants had been through various hardships. For them, "seeing believed." They did not exhibit faith.

Some children in the study believed their parents would provide everything they needed. Their faith was in their perception of their parent's ability to meet their needs. Other children in the study, who had experienced more hardships, did not exhibit faith. Their responses or belief system was based on experience. One example was Kenzi Mitchell. Kenzi was the daughter of Kristian, who recently resigned from her job. When Kenzi was asked what she thought about life she said, "Life is hard. Cause you don't really know what to expect next coming up. Cause I see people who are just on the side of the street and their just sitting there and they don't have anything to do, and they can't get jobs, so something like that."

Hope. Hope is a sense of successful goal directed determinations and plans of ways to meet goals (Snyder et al., 1991). Hope was influenced by education, self-efficacy, and financial security, categories. Jerri Williams exhibited hope when she said; "Out of 17 grandkids someone will make it." She was determined to break the cycle of poverty in her family. She believed some

of her grandchildren would finish high school and attend college. Jerri had put a plan in place. She began to collect all clippings of her grandchildren's accomplishments and she saved them in photo albums for each child. She said, "Because, I want my grandkids to know the life that I lived and their parents lived and people around them. I want for them to grow up and know that the more you strive for life, the more you get out of life. Look back, at your parents or grandparents that nobody ever did for you, but that they need to make it. That's what I want, for them to make it or at least to strive to make it. That's what I want."

Talonda Greer's self-efficacy was based in her belief that God would guide her and help her master skills needed to achieve her goals. Talonda said, "I just believe in God and I believe anything that I want to do, if it's the right thing for me to do, He'll give me everything I need to get it done. If it's not the right thing for me to do, He'll make it so, I will not get it done. I know because that has happened." Talonda expressed that the most important role at this time in her life was to raise her sons to be "strong Black men who were active in their communities and churches." Her plan included attending church with them weekly, implementing structure and discipline in her home, and giving each of her boy's one-on-one time with her to get to know them better. She believed she had a responsibility to mold them consistent with their individual personalities. Michelle also had planned for her future financially. Michelle said she will be able to retire early because of her financial planning. Michelle Dell exhibited hope. She was determined to change Keesha's mind set from a "poverty mind" to a mindset where she believed in making an honest living and paying for what she wanted. Michelle trained Keesha in money management. She also taught Keesha that she had to earn what she wanted, such as doing extra chores for special purchases.

Ann Simmons, Kristian Mitchell, Natalie Pope, and Kendra Jones did not have hope. They talked about the improvements they wanted in their lives; however, they did not appear convinced that good things could happen to them. I got the impression that they knew they should be working towards something, but were not convinced they could achieve their goals. Ann Simmons was the only who had attempted to do something different. As of Spring 2012, she enrolled in school, as she had many times before. During the fifth week of classes, I asked Ann how school was going, she responded, "I haven't bought my book yet. So, I haven't done any work." Ann did not have a plan. Monica Dudley and Sharita Johnson exhibited discouragement. They saw life as hard and acted as though their circumstances could not be changed. Talonda Greer exhibited hope. Her belief was based on her personal relationship with God. Brandon Jackson expressed very specific desires he had for his daughters and his son. He wanted his son to be a leader and his daughters, to be strong independent thinkers. He understood concepts that needed to be implemented in their lives, but he did not have a plan. He also did not make a plan before he left his job. According to the definition of hope used for the study, Brandon did not exhibit hope. Brandon, however, believed giving his children a foundation in the Christian faith, by teaching them the Bible and how to live a Godly life was the blue print for their future. He believed being rooted in his faith is how he found his purpose. His plan was to provide them with a strong foundation in the Christian faith.

Sense of meaning. Sense of meaning is a rewarding authentic life, which includes having purpose, value, and a feeling of self-efficacy and self-worth (Baumeister, 1991).The construct, sense of meaning, was influenced by the categories, cooperation and relationships. Parents who exhibited a sense of purpose understood the importance of building relationships, teaching their children how to have healthy relationships and building skills, which encouraged cooperating

with others. In each of these families, the parents were developing leadership skills in their children.

Jerri Williams, Michelle Dell, Brandon Jackson, and Talonda Greer were the parents who exhibited a sense of meaning. These parents had defined their purpose. Jerri Williams felt her life was rewarding because of the things she could impart to her grandchildren. Michelle Dell had found her niche working in the financial industry and wanted to help others become financially free.

Brandon Jackson, found his purpose being a father to his children. He was happy that he was able to give them something he never had, being raised by a father. He said, "Internet, BET, TV, all the things that have tendencies to overshadow the relationship that, we as people, should have with our Creator. I don't ever want them to lose sight of that, because in that, is how you going to find your purpose. That's how I found out. I think my road, the road that I travel they don't even have a clue. So they don't see the end result, but they don't know the process. So from my own life experiences and the process that I had to go through all while being guided by a lot of prayer is just His grace. Those things allowed me the opportunity to define my purpose."

Talonda found her purpose in helping her boys become strong individuals. She said, "I basically just believe that, as long as my boys understand and know that I'm their mother, I will always be there for them. Everything I do, I do for them, to make their lives better and to just help them become stronger individuals. They really need to know who they are and I'm really trying to work that out within them. Each one of the boys, you know, they just need to be who they are and the best them that they can be." Because these parents had found a sense of meaning in their life, their lives had value; they possessed self-efficacy and a sense of self-worth.

Selective Coding Categories

During selective coding, categories, constructs, causal and environmental factors were examined. The relationship between common and less common categories were connected to each other and the five constructs. The influence causal and environmental factors may have had on these relationships also was examined. After organizing this information, a theory was written.

Causal and environmental factors. Causal and environmental factors were present throughout the study. Causal factors were poverty and parental education levels. Poverty was a factor that influences how parents promoted a sense of autonomy and independence in their children. The more impoverished, they were the more they wanted their children to be in a position where they could control their own life, make their own decisions, and not have to depend on anyone. In nine of the families, the parents communicated the limitations they faced because they did not have adequate money to provide for their children and expose them to different opportunities. They were sad that they could not provide more for their children.

Parental education levels influenced parents' ability to believe they could have a better life. Parents who had at least a high school diploma were concerned for their children's future and their own. They were thinking about ways they could improve their own standard of living. Most of the parents were not where they wanted to be financially, but having at least a high school diploma gave them the self efficacy to believe they could have something better. Parents who did not have a high school diploma put all of their hopes and dreams in their children's success. They did not believe they could have something different. Many times, I wondered if they believed their situation was permanent.

Environmental factors also were present throughout the study. They were the location of the participants' homes, the condition of their homes, and their social environment. During the time of the study, there was only one family who was living in the Lake Heights community. Her goal was to move her family to another state. She was very discouraged about the condition of her home. She said after numerous complaints had been made to management of an eight month period of time, she had not received any repairs. She was embarrassed by the condition of her home and was embarrassed for others to know where she lived. She talked about constant bickering of the tenants who lived in the Lake Heights community. The location felt like a place of hopelessness. One study participant who moved out of Lake Heights referred to Lake Heights as a dump. She was glad to be out of the housing projects. She was glad to no longer be associated with government housing. The property that she was currently renting needed a lot of work. She also talked about numerous complaints she had made to her landlord and to code enforcement about the electrical problems, leaks in the ceiling, and pest problems. In spite of these problems, she was proud of the rental property. I got the impression that not having the stigma of living in the projects was liberating regardless of things that needed to be repaired. Many of the families lived in houses that needed various repairs and were section eight properties. Although part or all of their rent was being paid by the government, no one could tell. This location was different than having the stigma of living where "the poor people lived," such as Lake Heights.

For many families in the study, their social environment had changed over the last several years. Some of the families had relocated to Southern Illinois in search for a better life style. Some had changed their friend groups. These changes had been positive for each of the families. They were developing positive relationships and communication skills.

After examining the causal and environment factors in the study, it is possible that these factors influenced how common and less common categories were related to each other. Causal and environmental factors may also have influenced how common and less common categories were related to the five constructs. These factors also influenced how strong or weak each category was in each family.

Sense of purpose is a term that does not have a universal definition. For this study, and based on the characteristics of each of the five constructs examined in the study, I created a definition for sense of purpose. Sense of purpose has been defined as: A rewarding life that integrates the connectiveness of mind, body, and spirit. This rewarding life is one of direction, having a plan to achieve goals and the confidence in the belief that the goals will accomplished. This belief promotes value, self efficacy, and self worth. Based on the definition, the following theory was developed.

A parent's ability to promote a sense of purpose in their children can only be accomplished after they have established their own sense of purpose. Parents who do not have a sense of purpose may be knowledgeable of the skills needed to promote success in their children. As a means of being proactive, parents involved their children in practices and activities that promoted success. However, these practices did not help children uncover who they were, why they were created, and how they should or could impact the world. These practices promoted the hope of money and wealth without providing the satisfaction of knowing their true purpose. Until parents discover a sense of meaning and purpose in their own lives, they will continue to unknowingly lead their children towards an incomplete destiny.

Summary

This chapter reported findings from the study that described and interpreted attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to a sense of purpose among Black American families participating in an Outreach program in Southern Illinois. A total of 26 participants, consisting of 10 parents and 16 children were interviewed and observed. Transcripts of the interviews were analyzed and field notes of the observations were coded using the constant comparative method. Common and less common themes related to sense of purpose were identified. The common categories were God, family and friends, education, communication, money, autonomy and independence, leadership qualities, perseverance, self esteem and confidence, life lessons, teamwork and exposure to new things. Less common categories appearing in at least one family were discipline and structure, lack of self efficacy, celebration of life. Five concepts of sense of purpose, spirituality, optimism, faith, hope, and sense of meaning, were used to help determine if these families exhibited a sense of purpose. Four families exhibited a sense of purpose. A grounded theory was developed based on this information. A summary of the study discussion, conclusion, and recommendations related to these findings are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to describe and interpret attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to a sense of purpose among Black American families participating in an Outreach program in Southern Illinois. This chapter presents a summary of the study, conclusions, discussion, recommendations for health education practice, recommendations for future studies and recommendations for clergy and other professionals.

Summary of the Study

Statistics confirmed that health risk behaviors are disproportionately higher among Black American youth in comparison to the national average and other ethnic groups (CDC, 2009). Adolescents engaging in more health-risk behaviors are more likely to experience higher levels of poverty, lower academic achievement, and increased health problems as adults (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics [FIFCFS], 2010; Turner-Musa & Lipscomb, 2007). The levels of health disparities of Black Americans have been linked to individual resiliency skills. The more resilient a person is, the more likely he/she is to have a sense of meaning and purpose in life, thus reducing risky behaviors (Benard, 2004).

Ten families, comprised of 26 individuals, were selected to participate in in-depth interviews and observations. The sample consisted of seven Black American mothers, one Black American father, one Black American grandmother, one Caucasian guardian, and 16 children. These families had varying social economic status. The parent's income levels ranged from less than $4,999 to more than $30,000 per year. The educational level of the parents ranged from ninth grade to a Masters degree. Some parents owned homes, others lived in government

housing, and others rented homes. The youth and adolescents in the study ranged in age from 6-16 years. They all attended public school, ranged grade levels from first grade to tenth grade.

The interviews and observations were conducted on the same day. The observations took place before, during, and after the interview. The observations consisted of both a time of silence and a time when the participants were asked questions. These questions were used to create a snapshot of each family's story.

There were different interview questions for the parents and the children. The parents' questions addressed topics about future aspirations and goals for themselves as well as their children, descriptions of their daily activities, and questions exploring the requirement for success. The youth and adolescents' questions addressed career aspirations, activity involvement, and lessons learned from parents and others.

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. How, if at all, is a sense of purpose demonstrated, taught and encouraged in the homes of selected Black American families?

2. How, if at all, are faith, optimism, hope, sense of meaning and spirituality expressed in the homes of these families?

3. How do youth perceive that their parents and/ or guardians demonstrate, teach and encourage a sense of purpose in their family?

4. How, if at all, does faith, optimism, hope, sense of meaning and spirituality impact the goals of these youth?

Individual interviews and observations were conducted to obtain information from selected Black American families. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Field notes were written after each observation. Both the interviews and observations were analyzed using the constant comparative method. The constant comparative method was used to develop open, axial, and selective categories.

During open coding, common and less common categories were formed. These categories were developed from the responses from the interview question of parents and their children. The common categories were God, relationships, education, communication, financial security, autonomy and independence, leadership qualities, perseverance, self efficacy, life lessons, cooperation and opportunities. Less common categories, appearing in at least one family, were discipline and structure, and celebration of life.

During axial coding, these categories were organized and a model was developed. The model linked the common and less common categories to the five constructs of sense of purpose, optimism, faith, hope, spirituality, and sense of meaning. The central category linking all the categories and constructs together was communication. There were various environmental factors that may have influenced the prevalence of certain categories and how they were connected to the five constructs. Some causal factors were poverty, parental education levels, and illness. During selective coding, categories were used to develop a grounded theory about sense of purpose, as it is related to optimism, faith, hope, spirituality, and sense of meaning.

Conclusions of the Study

The following conclusions can be drawn from the findings of the interviews and observations:

1. Parents who had not developed a sense of purpose within themselves did not develop a sense of purpose in their children.

2. Parents wanted their children to be successful, but the knowledge and practices and associated with success were limited.

3. Most parents connected their children with programs they thought would help their children become successful.

4. For most parents, having knowledge of the connection between having a sense of purpose and being successful was limited.

5. Parents who embraced spirituality practices, including church attendance, Bible reading, prayer, and stricter adherence to the instructions in the Bible, exhibited a sense of purpose and encouraged a sense of purpose in their children.

Discussion

In this study, parents who had not developed their own sense of purpose did not develop a sense of purpose in their children. According to Frankl (1963), humans have an innate drive to find significance and meaning in their life. When a meaning for life is not achieved, the result is psychological distress (Frankl, 1963). Parents who have not discovered their life purpose usually do not realize how this impacts their youth or adolescents. Adolescents and youth who do not have a sense of purpose often become parents who are unable to give a sense of purpose to their children, hence, continuing a cycle of higher levels of risky behaviors and lower academic achievements (Benard, 2004; DHHS, 2010).

As health educators, we need to educate parents about importance of having a sense of purpose and the skills to finding a sense of purpose. Sense of purpose was a category of personal strengths identified in resilient youth (Benard, 2004). Other categories were social competence, problem solving, and autonomy. Most youth development and resiliency studies have addressed social competence, problem solving, and autonomy. Many strategies and practices associated with these categories focused on skill development. Although skill development is necessary to increase resiliency in children, having a sense of purpose is a factor that influences a child's ability to make healthy choices. Sense of purpose involves having an understanding that life is meaningful and there is a reason for living (Benard, 2004). Parents, professionals, and mentors working with children trying to discover their sense of purpose need to be able to incorporate their special interests, creativity, educational aspirations, imagination, optimism, hope, faith, spirituality, sense of meaning, achievement motivation and goal directions into their learning and

exploration process. Understanding components involved in acquiring a sense of purpose will help increase awareness and understanding of the link between sense of purpose and success.

Health educators also need to increase the awareness and understanding of the difference between the link of having a successful life and developing a sense of purpose. All parents in the study demonstrated a desire to have successful children; however, their knowledge and practices associated with success were limited. The parents associated success with having money and a career. Success was connected with being able to provide for their families and pay bills. Mastens and Coatsworth (1998) identified academic success as one of two characteristics involved with being successful in life. The other characteristic was having a positive self-identity. This positive self- identity is what helps youth and adolescents make health-promoting decisions and plans for their future, and helps to give their lives meaning (Curwin, 2010). Parents wanted their children to be successful; they understood the importance of academics, but they did not know or understand the skills needed to promote success, or the individual strengths which help identify career choices that were in line with personal strengths.

Increasing parent's knowledge about the link between the importance of success and having a sense of purpose may motivate parents to adopt practices and strategies that foster various components associated with developing a sense of purpose. One example of increasing the parental awareness is through the use of social marketing. All of the parents and children in the study had access to social marketing media through the use of television and /or the Internet. Social marketing campaigns asking questions, such as "How does your child express creativity", or "Do you know what your child likes to do for fun", may be the beginning of getting parents interested in ways to promote sense of purpose.

Most parents used school and community based programs they thought would help their children become successful. Research indicates that engagement in activities and relationships impacts a child's perception of self (Klaw, 2008). The school and community programs provide a place where youth and adolescents form relationships with peers, mentors, teachers, and coaches. They serve as protective factors, which help to promote resiliency by providing skills that teach youth and adolescents how to overcome the effects of poverty, abuse, and other threats (Fox, 1994). When protective factors are in place, in communities, schools, and families, youth and adolescents engage in less risky health behaviors (Benard, 2004).

Identifying differences in how rural schools, urban schools, and community programs address sense of purpose would be important in developing sense of purpose strategies. Identifying how sense of purpose is addressed would assist health educators in identifying causal and environmental factors that may influence sense of purpose. Identifying differences would also help to develop appropriate skills and trainings. Identifying the common and less common categories of Black American families in other geographical locations also would be important in developing sense of purpose strategies. The categories important to different populations and geographical locations may be different. These differences may change which sense of purpose constructs need to be targeted during program development.

Some parents were not involved in their children's activities and did not model characteristics, such as hope, faith, and optimism. These parents were preoccupied with how they were going to get money for food and bills. In some cases, the parents were doing everything they thought they should do to promote success in their children. Some parents claimed they were tired and they wanted a break; others were preoccupied entertaining their friends. However, most parents who facilitated a sense of purpose in their children were involved and active in their

child's activities and relationships. Their interactions consisted of modeling positive behavior, communicating openly, and training their children to embrace their individuality and accepting their differences.

As health educators, we have to motivate parents to make small changes that will encourage their children to develop a sense of purpose. We need to develop strategies for parents and family members. Parents and family members have extensive opportunities to impact the lives of youth and adolescents. Strategies may consist of daily or weekly activities encouraging mind, body, spirit connections, positive words of encouragement, development of goal setting and planning skills, self-reflection activities, and increasing awareness that long term, positive behaviors, produce positive results. Programs developed should include topics promoting self esteem, individuality, the use of positive words, and the understanding of the cause and effect of choices.

Parents who embraced spirituality practices, including church attendance, Bible reading, prayer, and stricter adherence to the instructions in the Bible, and embracing the mind, body, spirit connection, exhibited a sense of purpose and encouraged a sense of purpose in their children. For some parents who did not practice spirituality, some of their children were beginning to exhibit behavior problems, such as discipline problems in school, stealing from stores, other robberies, and the absence of hope and faith that things would get better. Minimal practices of spirituality, lack of parental support, and negative peer influence have been identified as factors that increase risky behaviors among youth and adolescents (Turner-Musa & Lipscomb, 2007). Practicing spirituality heightened interpersonal connectedness, emotional equilibrium, and empowered change (Newlin et al., 2002).

These behaviors were seen among the four families who embraced spirituality. There also was one family who did not claim to belong to any religious organization. However, the mother in this family did exemplify a strong mind, body, spirit connection. She was able to promote a sense of purpose in the life of her children. Clergy who work with youth and adolescents should be trained to recognize the importance sense of purpose has in a child's development. These trainings should include: understanding the concepts of sense of purpose, knowing how to facilitate and teach these concepts to youth and others working with youth, and incorporating sense of purpose strategies with youth and adolescents. These trainings should target youth and adolescents who are of preschool, elementary school, high school, and undergraduate college levels. By the time children become adolescents, they begin forming their own ideas, deciding their career paths, and discovering their meaning of life (Curwin, 2010). Early exposure to concepts related to having a sense of purpose, would help youth make healthier choices during their adolescent years. Professionals and clergy would benefit from these trainings because, in many cases, they have the type of relationships that provide protective factors for the youth and adolescents to foster resilience.

Professionals and clergy need to recognize that many of the problems faced by youth are directly related to their belief that their lives do not have meaning. Most, if not all, youth and adolescents can communicate their desire to be successful. However, many do not know what being successful entails. Usually, youth believe if they go to college, they will be successful. Many youth do not realize they need to know how they want to be successful. If youth discover their life has meaning and purpose, they are more likely to choose paths that will help them pursue their goals (Klaw, 2008). Professionals and clergy who incorporate strategies of sense of purpose into their practices with youth and adolescents will help youth become aware of their

meaning of life, which will enhance their sense of purpose and motivate them to achieve academic success and formulate a positive self-identity.

There were some limitations to the study. Initially, the study was designed to interview and observe each family on different days. However, during data collection, in each family, the observations and interviews were conducted on the same day. This decision was a limitation because I was not able to observe differences in each family's routines, behaviors, interactions, or expressions of verbal and nonverbal communication. Privacy during the interviews was not always possible. In some cases, televisions were on and the children being interviewed were distracted. In some households, there were other distractions, such as multiple siblings asking questions, and large volumes of friends gathered in the homes. Interviews also were cut short because of parents needing to attend other appointments, complete household duties, or run errands for family members. One parent was not invested in the interview. Her responses to the questions were brief and did not appear to be well thought out. Because many of the parents had other distractions, it was hard to know if I received an accurate depiction of their family interactions, and routines.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are being made for health education other professionals and clergy and future research:

Recommendations for Health Education Practices

1. Provide trainings for health educators on resiliency research to increase the awareness of the importance of sense of purpose in the development of youth, adolescents, and their families.

2. Develop programs and strategies that can be modeled in the homes of families. These strategies would encourage family involvement and increase the knowledge level of the family members related to promoting a sense of purpose in the youth or adolescent.

3. Develop learning strategies about sense of purpose that can be incorporated in health education classes beginning with the kindergarten through twelfth grade age groups and college undergraduates.

4. Develop trainings for professionals and clergy to help them understand and incorporate sense of purpose techniques and strategies in their practice.

5. Increase the amount of health education literature focusing on resiliency in adolescents and youth. Most of the literature is from sociology, psychology, and nursing.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Investigate different knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices of sense of purpose of Black American families in rural and urban cities to identify similarities and differences.

2. Conduct multiple interviews to compare data among different age groups of youth and adolescents.

3. So that developmentally-appropriate strategies are designed for each stage of a child's life, examine how practices of sense of purpose in children and adolescents impact different stages in their lives.

4. Examine a variety of religions and spirituality practices among Black American families to identify if religion and spiritual practices influence how parents promote a sense of purpose in their children.

5. Examine beliefs, practices, knowledge, and influences of sense of purpose in Black American college undergraduates. Gaining a broader scope of the factors influencing their academic success might increase knowledge and understanding of how their sense of purpose was developed and the influences associated with their success.

6. Use data collected through this study to form hypotheses and develop a quantitative instrument to assess all four categories of personal strengths and the eleven constructs of sense of purpose for youth and adolescents.

7. Conduct a qualitative assessment about communication practices, discipline and structure, autonomy, and self-efficacy to better understand key influences of sense of purpose.

CHAPTER 6

REFLECTING ON THE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Completing Data Collection

On February 3, 2012 my final interviews and observations were completed. My data collection consisted of more than 26 hours of interviews, 10 hours of observation, and approximately 20 hours coding and analyzing transcripts and field notes. The data collection process was tedious and required that I was very organized. After each visit, I spent time thinking about my questions and whether my participants were giving me the information I needed. By the time I interviewed and observed the second family, I began to hear common themes. Saturation had already occurred in the data. At the end of the data collection process, I began to think about what I learned and how I felt.

During the study, I felt many different emotions. There were times when I laughed with my participants and others when I felt sadness as they talked about their struggles. There also were times when I left their homes, sat in my car, and cried. I wondered what the participants' lives would look like in five to ten years. I wondered if the youth in the study would finish high school and go to college, if the girls in the study would escape the teen mom pregnancy trend, and if the boys in the study would escape prison time. I also wondered if the time my family spent with them while they were in One Vision programs would be enough to keep them motivated to dream and go after their dreams. Sadly, the reality that all of them would not be successful came to my mind. This reality made me realize how important these families had become to me.

This experience motivated me to begin thinking of ways I could use my nonprofit to impact many families in situations similar to families in my study. I want to be part of helping people know their lives have purpose; they were put here on earth for a reason; they matter; and

they are not forgotten. I plan to incorporate this idea into trainings and workshops that I will facilitate. I believe as educators, we often are trying to communicate or teach new information, but, many times, we forget people need to be encouraged. We need to be reminded to show empathy and compassion.

Lessons Learned

There were several lessons I learned during this dissertation process. The first lesson I learned was qualitative researchers all have a different style of writing. During my prospectus, I was told that the language in my dissertation was written quantitatively. I used the Merriam (2009) book from my qualitative class. I had to change the language completely. Basically, I re-wrote the first three chapters after my prospectus. I would recommend understanding the expectations of your committee and reviewing research method books recommended by your committee members before beginning the writing of your prospectus.

The second lesson I learned was that the dissertation process is grueling. The process of writing a dissertation caused me to question my critical thinking skills and writing ability. This process also was a test of my patience. I had to remember that my committee members were on my side. They wanted to stretch me to produce a well-written dissertation that was publishable. They were not out to get me or to sabotage my work. When I embraced this thought process, I no longer saw writing my dissertation as a race that I needed to finish quickly. I began to see it as a learning process; that one day, I would be responsible to teach other students. I learned to work with my committee members, take their advice, and make necessary changes to my dissertation.

The third lesson I learned was to take a break and take care of myself during the process of writing my dissertation. I found out that, when I exercised, slept, and ate healthy foods, it was easier for me to concentrate. I also made less writing errors and I accomplished more in less

time. I tried to think of this process as a teachable moment, or several. I tried to think of this process similar to teaching courses and writing manuscripts for publication. This process has helped me practice balancing my writing with other responsibilities. I also have learned how important it is to take breaks and do others things that I enjoy. I took time to go out with friends, shop, and watch movies. Taking these breaks helped me recharge and focus on my research.

The fourth lesson I learned was the participants in my study were people who needed to be treated with the greatest of care. Although I am writing interpretations of different things I observed and analyzed from the interviews and my field notes, I had to tell the participants stories. I had been given an opportunity to represent them in my writing and I had a responsibility to tell their stories as accurately as possible.

The fifth lesson I learned was, if you choose not to transcribe your own data, participate in the proofing process. I did not transcribe my own transcripts, but I proofed every transcript. During the time, I was proofing my transcripts, I learned so much more about the families. Being involved in the transcribing process helped me identify common and less common categories. I also became familiar with the way they communicated information. I spent quite a bit of time coding. Because I spent so much time working on my transcripts, when I needed to verify quotes, it was easy for me to locate them in the transcripts.

My Mentors

My mother has been my greatest mentor. She has taught me to have compassion for people. She was the first in her family to receive a college degree. I am proud to share in her legacy as a second generation college graduate. She literally breathed life and dreams into me. According to statistics, my mother who was born poor to parents who did not have high school diplomas; should not have been as successful as she has become. But, she made it out of a life of

poverty and had the same dream for me. She showered me with positive affirmation, helped me think about and develop a plan to accomplish my future dreams, and she prepared me for the hard work I would have to endure.

My second mentor was Mrs. Mildred Johnson. I met her when I was in kindergarten. We called her the story teller. She wrote for *Ebony Jr.* magazine and she told African folk tales at the nursery school I attended. I became one of her drama students. I traveled with her performing plays and listening to her as she told us about the lives of those she wrote about in her stories. She inspired me to tell others' stories, to share what others may not be good at sharing, but want others to know. She taught me how to use my voice as an instrument of hope and love.

There are three people with whom I credit my reasons for being a health educator. Dr. Joyce Fetro, who was my Chair when I wrote my thesis for my Masters degree has been a great mentor. When I found out one of her areas of expertise was youth development, I knew I had the right chair. She has taught me valuable skills about teaching personal and socials skills to youth. She also has introduced me to many books and other resources that have helped increase my knowledge about youth development.

Dr. Kathleen Welshimer has allowed me to talk to her about community development and told me on numerous occasions when I was over extending myself and needed to set boundaries with the programs I was involved. She has given me a love for community organization. Dr. Roberta Ogletree has helped me develop as a health education professional. She has taught me the importance of understanding the health education competencies, developing my philosophies, and being involved in health education organizations. I am grateful for what they have taught me. Because of the care and support of my mentors, I am able to say, I am prepared, as a health educator, to make my contributions to the field.

REFERENCES

Amlund-Hagen, K., Myers, B. J., & Mackintosh, V. H. (2005). Hope, social support, and behavioral problems in at-risk children. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 75*(2), 211-219.

Angen, M. J. (2000). Evaluating interpretive inquiry: Reviewing the validity debate and opening the dialogue. *Qualitative Health Research, 10*(3), 378-395.

Anthony, E. J. (1974). The syndrome of the psychological invulnerable child. In E. J. Anthony (Ed.), *The child in his family: Children at psychiatric risk* (pp. 529-544). New York: Wiley.

Baumeister, R. F. (1991). *Meanings of life.* New York: Guilford Press.

Belanger, K., Copeland, S., & Cheung. (2008). The role of faith in adoption: Achieving positive adoption outcomes for African American children. *Child Welfare League of America, 87*(2), 99-123.

Benard, B. (1991). *Fostering resiliency in kids: Protective factors in the family, school, and community.* San Francisco, California: WestEd.

Benard, B. (1993). Fostering resiliency in kids. *Education Leadership Journal, 51*(3), 44-48.

Benard, B. (2004). *Resiliency what we have learned.* San Francisco, California: WestEd.

Bergman, L. A., & Magnusson, D. (1997). A person-oriented approach in research on developmental psychopathology. *Development and Psychopathology, 9,* 291-319.

Bernat, F. P. (2009). Youth resilience: Can schools enhance youth factors for hope, optimism, and success. *Women & Criminal Justice, 19,* 251-266. doi:10.1080/08974450903001610

Bigler, R. S., Averhart, C. J., & Liben, L. S. (2003). Race and the workforce: Occupational status, aspirations, and stereotyping among African American children. *Developmental Psychology, 39,* 572-580.

Birch, H. G. & Gussow, J. D. (1970). *Disadvantaged children: Health, nutrition, and school failure.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

Brooks, R., & Goldstein, S. (2001). *Raising resilient children.* Lincolnwood, IL: NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group.

Brown, D. L. (2008). African American resiliency: Examining racial socialization and social support as protective factors. *Journal of Black Psychology, 34,* 32-48. doi:10.1177/0095798407310538

Cei, L. (2010 August). Faith-based programs are low-cost ways to reduce recidivism *Corrections Today,* pp. 48-51.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Healthy You. (2009). *Health disparities experienced by black children, youth, and adults.* Retrieved from http:www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/disparities/black/black_disparities.htm

Chang, E. C., & Banks, K. H. (2007). The color and texture of hope: Some preliminary findings and implications for hope theory and counseling among diverse racial/ ethnic groups. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 13*(2), 94-103. doi:10.1037/1099-9809.13.2.94

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory.* London: Sage.

Connell, J. P., Spencer, M. B., & Aber, J. L. (1994). Educational risk and resilience in African American youth: Context, self, action, and outcomes in school. *Child Development,*

Children and Poverty, *65*(2), 493-506.

Constantine, M. G., Alleyne, V. L., Wallace, B. C., & Franklin-Jackson, D.C. (2006). Africentric cultural values: Their relation to positive mental health in African American adolescent girls. *Journal of Black Psychology, 32*, 141-153. doi:10.1177/0095798406286801

Cowan, P. A., Cowan, C. P., & Schulz, M. S. (1996). *Thinking about risk and resilience in families.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry research and design: choosing among five approaches. (Second edition).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Curwin, R. L. (2010). Motivating urban youth. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, *19*(1), 35-39.

Dahlberg, L. L., Toal, S. B., & Behrens, C. B. (1998). *Measuring violence-related attitudes, beliefs and behaviors among youths: A compendium of assessment tools.* Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/measure.htm

Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. (2010). *Youth risk behavior surveillance United States, 2009* (MMWR Publication No. SS-5). Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss5905.pdf

Department of Health and Human Services, *Healthy People 2020.* (2010). *Disparities healthy people 2020*. Retrieved from http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/about/disparitiesAbout.aspx

Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). *Youth violence: A report of the Surgeon General.* Retrieved from www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/toc.html

Duggleby, W., Cooper, D., & Penz, K. (2009). Hope, self-efficacy, spiritual well-being and job satisfaction. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 65*(11), 2376-2385. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2009.05094.x

Dunn, A. B., & Dawes, S. J. (1999). Spirituality focused genograms: Keys to uncovering spiritual resources in African American families. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 27*(4), 240-254.

Ey, S., Hadley, W., Allen, D. N., Palmer, S., Klosky, J., Deptula, D., Thomas, J., & Cohen, R. (2005). A new measure of children's optimism and pessimism: The youth life orientation test. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 46*(5), 548-558.

Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2010). *America's children in brief: Key national indicators of well being, 2010.* Retrieved from http://childstats.gov

Fisher, A. (2003). *Who will cry for the little boy.* New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Fowler, J. W. (1981). *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning.* New York: Harper-Row.

Fox, D. S. (1994). Promoting resiliency in students. *Thrust for Educational Leadership, 24*, 34-38.

Frankl, V. E. (1963). *Man's search for meaning: An introduction to logotherapy.* New York: Washington Square Press.

Garmezy, N. (1971). Vulnerability research and the issue of primary prevention, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 41*, 101-116.

Garmezy, N. (1974). The study of competence in children at risk for severe psychopathology. In E. Anthony (Ed.), *The child in his family, Volume 3: Children at psychiatric risk* (pp. 77-98). New York: Wiley.

Garmezy, N. (1991). Resiliency and vulnerability to adverse developmental outcomes associated with poverty. *American Behavioral Scientist, 3,* 416-430. doi: 10.1177/0002764291034004003

Gary, M. L., Gary, M. K. (2007). *Eight dimensions of family wholeness.* Unpublished manuscript.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory.* Chicago: Aldine.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than I.Q.* New York: Bantam Books.

Gray, K. (2009). Broken ties. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education, 26*(19), 11-12.

Grotberg, E. H. (1995). A guide to promoting resilience in children: Strengthening the human spirit. *Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflection Series, 7*(137). Retreived from http://resilnet.uiuc/library/grotb95b.html

Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Resources Information Center Annual Review Paper, 29,* 75-91.

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3rd ed.). New York: Taylor & Francis.

Hays, D. G., & Singh, A. A. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in clinical and educational settings.* New York, NY: The Guillford Press.

Henderson, S. (2010 May). We are still family. Ebony takes a look to see just how far the Black family has evolved. *Ebony,* 88-93.

Herrenkohl, T. I., Hill, K. G., Chung, I. J., Abbott, R. D., & Hawkins, J. D. (2003). Protective factors against serious violent behavior in adolescence: A prospective study of aggressive children. *Social Work Research, 27*(3), 179-191.

Hess, C. R., Papas, M. A., & Black, M. M. (2002). Resilience among African American adolescent mothers: Predictors of positive parenting in early infancy. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 27*(7), 619-629.

Howard, D. E. (1996) Searching for resilience among African American youth exposed to community violence: Theoretical issues, *Journal of Adolescent Health, 18,* 254-262.

Horsburgh, D. (2003). Evaluation of qualitative research. *Journal of Clinical Nursing, 12,* 307 312.

Hugen, B., & Venema, R. (2009). The difference of faith: The influence of faith in human service programs. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought, 28,* 405-429. doi: 10.1080/15426430903263310

Jones, J. M. (2007). Exposure to chronic violence: Resilience in African American children *Journal of Black Psychology,* 33, 125-147. doi: 10.1177/0095798407299511

Kabir, N., & Rickards, T. (2006). Students at risk. Can connections make a difference? *Youth Studies Australia, 25*(4), 17-24.

Kenyon, G. M. (2000). *Philosophical foundations of existential meaning.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Klaw, E. (2008). Understanding urban adolescent mother's visions of the future in terms of possible selves. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 18,* 441-461.

Krueger, R. A. (1988). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Lewis, L. M. (2007). Spiritual assessment in African American: A review of measures of spirituality used in health research. *Journal of Religion and Health, 47,* 458-475.

Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist, 56,* 227-238. doi: 10.1037//0003-066x.56.3.227

Masten, A., & Coatsworth, D. (1998). The development of competence in favorable and unfavorable environments: Lessons from research on successful children. *American psychologist, 53,* 205-220.

Masten, A. S., Coatsworth, D. J., Neemann, J., Gest, S. D., Tellegen, A., & Garmezy, N. (1995). The structure and coherence of competence from childhood through adolescence. *Child Development, 66,* 1635-1659.

Masten, A. S., Hubbard, J. J., Gest, S. D., Tellegen, A., Garmezy, N., Ramirez, M. (1999). Competence in the context of adversity: Pathways to resilience and maladaption from childhood to late adolescence. *Development and Psychopathology, 11,* 143-169.

McDermott, R. J., & Sarvela, P. D. (1999). *Health education and measurement: A practioners perspective (2nd ed.).* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Meravigilia, M. (1999). Critical analysis of spirituality and its empirical indicators. *Journal of Holistic Nursing, 17*(1), 18-33.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San Francisco, CA: Jossy-Bass.

Murphy, L. B. (1946). *The appraisal of child personality.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Murphy, L. B. (1974). Coping, vulnerability, and resilience in childhood. *Coping and Adaptions,* 69-100.

Murphy, L. B., & Moriarty, A. E. (1976). *Vulnerability, coping, and growth: From infancy to adolescence.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Murphy, L. B., & Murphy, G. (1974). A fresh look at a child. *Theory into Practice, 13*(5), 343-349.

National Center for Health Statistics. (2010, May). *Mortality among teenagers aged 12 19 years: United States, 1999-2006* (Issue Brief No. 37). Hyattsville, MD: Minino, A.M.

Newlin, K., Knafl, K., & Melkus, G. D. (2002). African American spirituality: A concept analysis. *Advances in Nursing Science, 25*(2), 57-70.

Newton, D. (2010). Faith, doubt and biblical criticism: Spiritual survival in the shifting sands. *Evangelical Quarterly, 82*(4), 326-339.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Peckham, M. (2009). Street involved youths' constructs of God. *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice, 22*(2), 44-54.

Roesch, S. C., Duangado, K. M., Vaughn, A. A., Aldridge, A. A., & Villodas, F. (2010). Dispositional hope and the propensity to cope: A daily diary assessment of minority adolescents. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 16,* 191-198. doi: 10.1037/a0016114

Rosenblum, A., Magura, S., Fong, C., Cleland, C., Norwood, C., Casella, D., Truell, J., Curry, P. (2005). Substance use among young adolescents in HIV affected

families: Resiliency, peer deviance, and family, functioning. *Substance Use and Misuse, 40,* 581-603. doi:10.1081/JA-200030816

Rutter, M. (1979). Protective factors in children's responses to stress and disadvantage. *Primary Prevention of Psychopathology, 3,* 49-74.

Rutter, M. (1987). Psychological resilience and protective mechanisms. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 57,* 316-331.

Rutter, M. (2010). The cutting edge: Gene-environment interplay. *Depression and Anxiety, 27,* 1-4.

Sampson, R., Raudenbush, S., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy, *Science, 277,* 918-924.

Sandelowski, M. (1986). The problem of rigor in qualitative research. *Advances in Nursing Science, 8,* 27-37.

Sarto, P. B. (2010). Logos and dia-logos: Faith, reason, and love according to Joseph Ratzinger. *Anglican Theological Review, 92(3),* 499-509.

Selivanova, Z. K. (2003) The life purpose orientations of adolescents. *Russian Education and Society, 45*(7), 6-15.

Shore, R., & Shore, B. (2009). *Kids count indicator brief. Reducing the child poverty rate.* Retrieved from www.kidscount.org

Snyder, C. R. (1994). *The psychology of hope: You can get there from here.* New York: Free Press.

Snyder, C. R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, L. M., & Sigmon, S. T. (1991). The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual

differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60,* 570-585.

Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tiet, Q. Q., Bird, H. R., Hoven, C. W., Wu, P., Moore, R., & Davies, M. (2001). Resilience in the face of maternal psychopathology and adverse life events. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 10,* 347-365.

Turner-Musa, J., & Lipscomb, L. (2007). Spirituality and social support on health behaviors of African American undergraduates. *American Journal of Health Behavior, 31*(5), 495-501.

U.S. Census Bureau, The 2012 Statistical Abstract, *The National Data Book.* (2012). Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2010). *Trends in high school dropout and completion rates in the United States: 1972-2008 compendium report* (NCES 2011-012). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011012.pdf

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention Statistical Briefing Book. (2009). *Law enforcement and juvenile crime*. Retrieved from http:// www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/JAR_Display.asp?ID=qa05260

Washington, O. G. M., & Moxley, D. P. (2001). The use of prayer in group work with African American women recovering from chemical dependency. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 82(1), 49-59.*

Washington, O. G. M., Moxley, D. P., Garriott, L., & Weinberger, J. P. (2008). Five dimensions of faith and spirituality of older African American women transitioning out of homelessness. *Journal of Religion and Health, 48,* 431-444. doi: 10.1007/s10943-088-9198-6

Werner, E. E. (1995). Resilience in development. *American Psychological Society 3,* 81-84.

Werner, E. E., & Smith, R. S. (1982). *Vunerable but invincible: A study of resilient children.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Werner, E., Smith, R. (1992). *Overcoming the odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood.* New York: Cornell University Press.

Woody, D., Woody, D. J. (2003). Parent effectiveness among single, low-income, African American mothers. *Journal of Ethic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 12*(4), 91-106.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARENT CHILD DYAD RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello (future participant's name), this is Mallory Gary. I would like to talk to you about assisting in a research study that I am conducting. You have been contacted because you had at least one child participate in outreach programs at One Vision Outreach Training Center. The study I am conducting also will include participation of your children. As part of my Doctoral Studies at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, I am conducting interviews and observations with families about attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in relation to sense of purpose; this study is part of her dissertation research. The goal of these individual interviews and observations is to understand how; spirituality, optimism, hope, faith, and sense of meaning are instilled in youth.

The study is voluntary in nature and reasonable steps will be taken to protect your identity. The study also will take reasonable steps to keep all records confidential. The study will include a coding sheet which has your contact information and the number and alphabet associated with your family. The coding sheet will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. The researcher is the only person who will have access to the code sheet and the field notes from the observations. Myself and a research assistant are the only people who will have access to the gathered data from the interviews. Upon completion of transcription and analysis the code list, field notes, audio tapes and transcriptions will be destroyed.

The interviews and observations will be held at your home. The interviews will be scheduled at your earliest convenience during the months of January and February. On the evening prior to your scheduled interview and observation, you will receive a phone call as a reminder of the scheduled time, place, and date of your interview and observation. On your scheduled interview day, I will review the consent forms with you and a signature must be

obtained prior to beginning the interview. The signature must also be obtained for any minor children participating in the study. The interviews will last approximately 60 minutes for parents and 30-60 minutes for participating children. The interviews will be audio-taped. Each interview will be separate to minimize any influence in answering the questions.

Prior to the home observation, I will review the consent forms signed prior to the interview. You will be identified by the numbers and alphabet assigned to you prior to your interview. This process will ensure that no information taped can be connected with a specific individual or name. During the observation, I will write field notes. The observations will last approximately 60 minutes. The first 30 minutes of the observation, I will sit and observe the family's interactions. During the last 30 minutes, I will engage in conversation with your family, when appropriate. At the end of your home observations, you will receive a $10.00 gift card from Wal-Mart. Your participating child/ children will be able to select one gift from the gift bag.

For this study, the risks are minimal. There will be no direct benefits to you or others for participating in this research. However, I am a mandated reporter and I am required to report or cause a report to be made to the child abuse hotline number (1-800-25A-BUSE) whenever she has reasonable cause to believe that a child known to her in her profession or official capacity may be abused or neglected. Prior to participation in the study, all participants are required to sign a consent form. Minor children participating in the study will be required to sign an assent form. Your signature will serve as approval for the audio taping. I would like to know if you are interested in participating in the research study. If you would like time to think about participating or have any additional questions about the study, please contact:

Mallory Gary: Researcher
300 North Smith Carbondale, IL 62901
(618) 529-3996
Email: mgary@siu.edu

Dr. Joyce Fetro: Chairperson
Pulliam Hall Room 307
(618)453-2777
Email: jfetro@siu.edu

This study has been reviewed and approved by SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail siuhsc@siu.edu

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANTS INFORMED CONSENT

As part of my Doctoral Dissertation at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, I (Mallory Gary) am conducting individual interviews and observations with families to describe their attitudes, beliefs, and practices in relation to sense of purpose. The goal of these individual interviews and observations is to understand how; spirituality, optimism, hope, faith, and sense of meaning are instilled in youth.

The interviews and observations will be held at your home. The interviews will be scheduled at your earliest convenience during the months of and January and February. The interviews will last approximately 60 minutes for parents and 30-60 minutes for participating children. The interviews will be audio-taped. The interview of each participant will be separate. Interviews will be transcribed word for word by another individual. I (Ms. Gary) and a research assistant are the only people who will have access to the gathered data from the interviews. After transcription and analysis have been completed, these tapes will be destroyed.

The observations will last approximately 60 minutes. During the first 30 minutes of the observation, I (Mallory Gary) will sit and observe the interactions of the family. During the last 30 minutes of the observation I will interact and engage in conversation with the family, when appropriate. During the observation, I (Mallory Gary) will write field notes. I (Mallory Gary) am the only person who will have access to the field notes from the observations. The field notes will be destroyed once the transcription and analysis have been completed.

The study is voluntary in nature and reasonable steps will be taken to protect your identity. No names will be attached to any specific comments made by you. The study also will take reasonable steps to keep all records confidential. The study will include a coding sheet which has your contact information and the number and alphabet associated with your family.

The coding sheet will be kept in a locked cabinet in my (Ms. Gary's) office. I (Mallory Gary) am the only person who will have access to the code sheet. The risk for this study is minimal. However, I (Mallory Gary) am a mandated reporter and am required to report or cause a report to be made to the child abuse hotline number (1-800-25A-BUSE) whenever I have reasonable cause to believe that a child known to me in my profession or official capacity may be abused or neglected. There will be no direct benefits to you or others for participating in this research. If you have any questions about the research, please contact: Dr. Joyce Fetro, Department Chair and Professor, SIUC, Department of Health Education and Recreation at (618) 453-2777 or Mallory Gary at 300 North Smith Street, Carbondale, IL 62901, (618)529-3996. If you have questions about the research study contact:

Mallory Gary: Researcher	Dr. Joyce Fetro:
300 North Smith Carbondale, IL 62901	Pulliam Hall Room 307
(618) 529-3996	(618)453-2777
Email: mgary@siu.edu	Email: jfetro@siu.edu

This study has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Il 62901-4709 at (618) 453-4533, or E-mail siuhsc@siu.edu.

I agree to participate in this study. I have read the material above, and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand a copy of this form will be made available to me for the relevant information and phone numbers. I realize that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time. I am agreeing to participate in the audio taped interview and observation.

First name:…….. Last name:……..

Date:…… Signature:……...

I have agreed to allow the researcher to audio-tape the interview. I am giving the researcher permission to attribute quotes anonymously to me and my child(ren).

Please check one:

I agree: _____ the researcher may quote me anonymously in her dissertation.

I disagree: _____ the researcher may NOT quote me anonymously in her dissertation.

First name:…….. Last name:……..

Date:…… Signature:……...

I am agreeing to allow my child to participate in the study.

Child's first and last name:……

Date:…… Parent's signature:……..

Child's first and last name:……

Date:…… Parent's signature:……..

Child's first and last name:……

Date:…… Parent's signature:……..

I am allowing my child to participate in the audio interview.

Child's first and last name:……

Date:…… Parent's signature:……..

Child's first and last name:……

Date:…… Parent's signature:……..

Child's first and last name:……

Date:…… Parent's signature:……..

APPENDIX C

CHILD (YOUTH) ASSENT FORM

As part of my (Mallory Gary's) Doctoral Dissertation (research study) at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, I (Mallory Gary) am conducting interviews and observations with families to talk about future goals and success. I (Mallory Gary) will be conducting interviews and observations. The interviews and observations will be held at your home. The interviews will be audio-taped. The interviews will be transcribed (typed) word for word by one other person (a research assistant). I (Mallory Gary) and the research assistant are the only people who will have access to the gathered data from the interviews. After transcription and analysis have been completed, these tapes will be destroyed.

The observations will last approximately 60 minutes. During the first 30 minutes of the observation, I (Mallory Gary) will sit and observe the interactions of your family. During the last 30 minutes of the observation I (Mallory Gary) will interact and engage in conversation with your family, when appropriate. During the observation, I (Mallory Gary) will write field notes. I (Mallory Gary) am the only person who will have access to the field notes from the observations. The field notes will be destroyed once the transcription and analysis have been completed.

The study is voluntary which means you do not have to participate if you do not want to. I (Mallory Gary) will take reasonable steps to protect your identity. No names will be attached to any specific comments made by you. The study also will take reasonable steps to keep all records confidential. The study will include a coding sheet which has your contact information and the number and alphabet associated with your family. The coding sheet will be kept in a locked cabinet in my (Mallory Gary's) office. I (Mallory Gary) am the only person who will have access to the code sheet. The risk for this study is minimal. However, I am a mandated reporter and I am required to report or cause a report to be made to the child abuse hotline

number (1-800-25A-BUSE) whenever I have reasonable cause to believe that a child known to me in my profession or official capacity may be abused or neglected. There will be no direct benefits to you or others for participating in this research. If you have questions about the research study contact:

Mallory Gary: Researcher
300 North Smith Carbondale, IL 62901
(618) 529-3996
Email: mgary@siu.edu

Dr. Joyce Fetro:
Pulliam Hall Room 307
(618)453-2777
Email: jfetro@siu.edu

This study has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Il 62901-4709 at (618) 453-4533, or E-mail siuhsc@siu.edu.

Printing and signing your name on this document means you are willing to talk to me. You also realize you are able to withdraw from the study at any time.

Child's first and last name:……

Signature:…….....

Date:……

Printing and signing your name on the line below means you are willing to allow me to audio tape you during our talk.

Child's first and last name:……

Signature:…….....

Date:……

APPENDIX D

PARENT INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Thank you for agreeing to participant in this study. Welcome to the interviews. My name is Mallory Gary. I am a graduate student from Southern Illinois University. I have invited African American parents and their children who have been members of One Vision Outreach youth program, to participate in this research study. I hope you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts because I am very interested in knowing what you think and how you feel. The information I obtain from these interviews will be used to better understand parents', and children's, attitudes, beliefs, and practices about sense of purpose. As it says in the consent letter, names will not be attached to any of your comments. Participation in the interview is completely voluntary. You do not need to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Everything you say will be kept confidential, except for things which be considered harmful such as child abuse or unsafe living conditions.

The interviews will be audio taped. My role here is to ask questions, listen, and help move the conversation along. There aren't any right or wrong answers, so please feel free to share your thoughts. We will be talking about sense of purpose for about 60 minutes (30-60 minutes for child interviews). After the interview session, information from the audio tapes will be transcribed word for word by a research assistant. After transcription and analysis have been completed, these tapes will be destroyed. The study also will take reasonable steps to keep all records confidential. The study will include a coding sheet which has your contact information and the number and alphabet associated with your family. The coding sheet will be kept in a locked cabinet in my office. A research assistant and I are the only people who will have access to the gathered data from the interviews. The risk for this study is minimal. However, I (Mallory Gary) am a mandated reporter and am required to report or cause a report to be made to the child

abuse hotline number (1-800-25A-BUSE) whenever I have reasonable cause to believe that a child known to me in my profession or official capacity may be abused or neglected. There will be no direct benefits to you or others for participating in this research. Because I will be taping the session, I must have consent of parents and caregivers, for themselves and their minor children before each individual's interview.

Thank you for taking time to participate in the interview. Before we begin, let me suggest a few things that will help our discussion flow smoothly. After each question is asked you will have an opportunity to answer. If you do not understand my question, please feel free to ask me to explain. All of your opinions will be respected.

This study has been reviewed and approved by SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail siuhsc@siu.edu

APPENDIX E

CHILDREN'S INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me today. My name is Mallory Gary. I am a student from Southern Illinois University. I am going to be talking with parents and children (youth) who have been members of One Vision Outreach youth program. I hope you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts because I am very interested in knowing what you think and how you feel. What I learn by talking to you and other children will help me better understand things that will help you be successful. Participation in the interview is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. You do not need to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Everything you say will be kept confidential and private, except if you tell me something for things which be considered harmful for you. I (Mallory Gary) am a mandated reporter and am required to report or cause a report to be made to the child abuse hotline number (1-800-25A-BUSE) whenever I have reasonable cause to believe that a child known to me in my profession or official capacity may be abused or neglected.

I will be taping your interviews. I will be asking questions, and listening to your answers. There aren't any right or wrong answers, so please feel free to share what you think. We will be talking for about 30 minutes. Because I will be taping the session, I have to have a signature from your parents/guardian and you. When you sign you are saying you agree to participate in the study and let me record you. Before we begin, let me suggest a few things that will help our discussion flow smoothly. After each question I ask, you will have time to think and answer. If you do not understand my question, you can ask me to explain. All of your thoughts are important and what you think is important to me.

This study has been reviewed and approved by SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail siuhsc@siu.edu

APPENDIX F

OBSERVATION SCRIPT

Thank you for agreeing to participant in this study. Welcome to the observations. My name is Mallory Gary. I am a graduate student from Southern Illinois University. I have invited African American parents and their children who have been members of One Vision Outreach youth program, to participate in this research study. The information that I obtain from these observations will be used to understand parents', and children's, attitudes, beliefs, and practices about sense of purpose. As it says in the consent letter, names will not be attached to any of your observations. Participation in the observation is completely voluntary. Everything I see will be kept confidential, except for things which can be considered harmful such as child abuse or unsafe living conditions.

I will write field notes to document everything I see during the observation. My role here is to observe and interact, when appropriate. The observations will take approximately 60 minutes. During the first 30 minutes, I will sit and observe the interactions your family. During the last 30 minutes, I will interact in conversation with your family, when appropriate. All of your interactions will be respected. I will also write field notes during the observations. After the observation, the information from my field notes will be transcribed and analyzed as data. The field notes will be destroyed once the transcription and analysis have been completed. The study also will take reasonable steps to keep all records confidential and to protect your identity. The study will include a coding sheet which has your contact information and the number and alphabets associated with your family. The coding sheet will be kept in a locked cabinet in my (Mallory Gary's) office. I am the only person who will have access to the code sheet and the field notes from the observations. The risk for this study is minimal. However, I must inform you that I am a mandated reporter and I am required to report or cause a report to be made to the

child abuse hotline number (1-800-25A-BUSE) whenever I have reasonable cause to believe that a child known to me in my profession or official capacity may be abused or neglected. There will be no direct benefits to you or others for participating in this research. Your consent was obtained prior to the interviews. However, because this is a voluntary process, I would like to make sure you are continuing your consent throughout the observation process. I must have consent of parents and caregivers, for themselves and their minor children before each observation. At the completion of your home observation you will receive a $10.00 gift card from Wal-Mart. Your participating child /children will have an opportunity to select a gift from the gift bag. Thank you for taking time to participate in the observation. All of your interactions will be respected.

This study has been reviewed and approved by SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail siuhsc@siu.edu

APPENDIX G

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (PARENT/GUARDIAN)

Parent Child Dyad Identification Number……

1. How old are you?.....

2. How many years of school have you completed?……

3. Please circle your **yearly** income range.

Less than $4999.00 per year

$5000.00 to $9,999.00 per year

$10, 000.00 to 19,999.00 per year

$20,000.00 to 30, 000.00

4. Please circle one.

Male

Female

5. Is there another adult who lives with you on a part-time or full-time basis? Please circle one.

Yes

No

If you answered yes please explain……

6. Do you receive any government assistance? Please circle all that apply.

Food Stamps (Link)

Medicaid

Housing

WIC

Other…….

APPENDIX H

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (CHILD)

Parent Child Dyad Identification Number……

Child#1…….

Child#2…….

Child#3…….

1. How old are you?.....

2. How many years of school have you completed?……

3. Please circle one.

Male

Female

VITA

Graduate School

Southern Illinois University

Mallory L. Gary

Mallorygere@aol.com

Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Bachelor of Arts, Biological Science, August, 1998

Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Master of Science in Education, Health Education, August, 2003

Dissertation Title:
Family Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices Facilitating a Sense of Purpose in Black American Children and Youth: A Grounded Theory

Major Professor: Joyce Fetro