

MY GIRLS AND SPIRITUALITY:
AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE ADOLESCENTS WITH VOICE

by

AMARIS BARAKA

(Under the Direction of Larry Nackerud)

ABSTRACT

This study described an interpretative, race-homogeneous, gender-specific qualitative study of 14 African-American female adolescents between the ages of 11 and 15. The purpose of the study was twofold. The first purpose of the study was to investigate the meaning of spirituality by African-American female adolescents. The second purpose was to investigate the use of spirituality by African-American female adolescents.

Findings of the study revealed that: a) African-American female adolescents voiced diverse meanings for spirituality; and b) spirituality is used as “self-talk” messages by African-American female adolescents. Four themes emerged from the finding that spirituality had diverse meanings for my girls: 1) spirituality is sacred; 2) spirituality represents culture; 3) spirituality represents victory and triumph; and 4) spirituality is having concern for others. Two themes emerged from the finding of “self-talk”: 1) making the right choice; and 2) having a “can do” attitude.

INDEX WORDS: Spirituality, African-American, Females, Adolescents, Qualitative Research.

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REDEDICATION

I rededicate this dissertation to Jesus Christ without whom this dissertation would not have been possible. It is because of Him, and Him only, that this journey that was foretold to me has been accomplished. I glorify Him and praise Him for this mighty work and for being God in my life.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Jamila Amaris Baraka. Thank you for your abiding love, constant devotion, immeasurable patience, continuous faith, endless understanding, and steadfast words of encouragement. You are truly a wonderful blessing from above.

This dissertation is also dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Carrial Mae Taylor. Mother, as I called her, instilled in me a life sustaining, unshakable belief in God and the power of spirituality. Mother lived her life to the glory of God, and she was determined that her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, family, and friends would understand that our faith should be in God who is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, without whom our lives would be nothing.

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Chapter 1

The Twenty and the One: A well-worn one dollar bill and a similarly distressed twenty dollar bill arrived at a Federal Reserve Bank to be retired. As they moved along the conveyor belt to be burned, they struck up a conversation. The twenty dollar bill reminisced about its travels all over the country. "I've had a pretty good life," the twenty proclaimed. "Why I've been to Las Vegas and Atlantic City, the finest restaurants in New York, performances on Broadway, and even a cruise to the Caribbean." "Wow!" said the one dollar bill. "You've really had an exciting life!" "So, tell me," says the twenty, "Where have you been throughout your lifetime?" The one dollar bill replies, "Oh, I've been to the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, the Lutheran Church..." The twenty dollar bill interrupts, "What's a church?"

Introduction

The above caption reminds me of my childhood experience with church attendance and spirituality. There were times when I felt exactly like the dollar bill. As far back as I can remember, my childhood consisted of having to attend Sunday school and church every Sunday. It did not matter to my grandmother that our church only met once a month because there were plenty of churches to attend in our community. What I would have welcomed as a Sunday off, my grandmother saw as an opportunity to fellowship with these churches. My grandmother did not limit our interactions with spirituality to serving Jesus on Sundays only. Our household was frequently filled with praying, singing, and reading the Bible. And talk about praying. I remember days when I would kneel beside my grandmother as she prayed for what seemed like hours. My knees would begin to hurt, and I would quietly reposition my body to a sitting position to increase the circulation in my legs. I can also remember the times when my grandmother would close her bedroom door and prayed alone. Even though her door was closed, I could hear her earth shattering prayers throughout our white, trimmed in green, six room home. As a child, I did not fully understand spirituality. For then, I was fearful of spirituality. I was afraid of the fire and brimstone that would consume my small body if I did wrong. I feared doing wrong, being punished, and being sentenced to hell.

As I entered my adolescent years, my former ideas regarding spirituality changed. What at first had seemed like a burden during childhood had been transformed into a welcomed, life sustaining comfort during my adolescent years. This passion and new relationship with spirituality continued from adolescence to adulthood. This continuous love for spirituality developed into the present study. It is my hope that within the chapters of this writing I will bring the reader into a greater understanding of spirituality as it is experienced by African-American female adolescents.

In Chapter 1, I reveal the significance of studying spirituality among African-American female adolescents. With that purpose in mind, I begin by interjecting a brief synopsis of my own lived experience with spirituality. The chapter continues with my interpretation of the combined voices of my participants in regards to spirituality and the present study. The vignette introduces my girls to the reader. This will be followed by the purpose of the study, the statement of need, theoretical foundation, assumptions, research questions, and limitations of the study. Chapter 1 concludes with a statement of the significance of the study. It is my hope that after reading the chapter, the reader will understand the need to conduct a study on spirituality, the significance of spirituality to African-American female adolescents, and the importance of having voice. It is also worth noting that I chose to refer to my participants as “my girls” and titled my dissertation as such because of the closeness and protectiveness that I feel towards my participants.

Vignette

The developed vignette of the combined voices of my girls expresses the significance of conducting a study on spirituality and African-American female adolescents.

“You asked me, “What do you want to be called in the study?” I gave you aliases, but you chose to change them to further protect my anonymity. I am now called, Trust, Humor, Joy, Belief, Honor, Integrity, Hospitality, Victory, Beauty, Heritage, Love, Peace, Courage, and Umoja; names that you believe are important to my African-American culture. I represent the young African-American female adolescents that are normally overlooked in studies, 11 to 15-year-olds that is. My first instinct was not to participate in the study because researchers have misrepresented my culture in the past. However, your sincerity in wanting to conduct a qualitative study which would allow my voice to be heard for generations to come was too important for me or my parents to let pass. My timidity about being in a study was surpassed by my desire for people to know how important spirituality is to me.

As I begin to answer your questions about spirituality, I must first reiterate the importance of not misrepresenting me in your study. Remember that I am a human being. Remember, too, that I can only speak of self and my experiences. Don't try to compare me to other cultures for I am unique in my own respect. My uniqueness is only possible because of the spirituality within me.

Please allow me to tell the people about spirituality in my own words, my own voice. I want people to know that spirituality is the very core of my being and it radiates throughout my being. I want people to know that spirituality is my friend, my confidante; my leader; my guide; my teacher; my freedom. I want people to know that I don't just have Sunday spirituality. I have a Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday spirituality that is present in everything that I do. I want people to know that spirituality is in my church, my singing, my dancing, my sport

activities, my school, my family, my friends, my thoughts, my dreams, my secrets, my determination, my communications, my everything. I want people to know that because of spirituality “I Am Somebody! I Am Somebody!”

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to investigate what spirituality means to African-American female adolescents and to gain a richer understanding of how spirituality is used by this group of individuals. My own lived experiences with spirituality and a desire to conduct a study that centered on a positive aspect of African-American female adolescents was the passion behind the study. As I reviewed the literature on African-American adolescents, I noticed that researchers frequently centered on at-risk and high-risk youths (Darity & Myers, 1984; Franklin, 1988; Salem, Zimmerman, & Notaro, 1998; Hammack, Robinson, Crawford, & Li, 2004). At-risk and high-risk adolescents were described by researchers as adolescents who were experiencing situations such as poverty, family instability, discrimination, trauma, substance abuse, violence, and pregnancy. In actuality, however, I believe that everyone is at-risk because there are seen and unseen dangers in society that can affect anybody at any given point or time in his or her life. Researchers also frequently used a between-group comparison design when conducting research on African-Americans (Franko & Streigel-Moore, 2002). These studies were usually biased because they used theoretical and empirical instrumentation that were normed on and based on Western society's standards (Spencer, 1995; U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1985).

In the present race-homogeneous, gender-specific study, I focused exclusively on the culture and spirituality of African-American female adolescents. Phinney and Landin, well known researchers, stated,

“This type of research allows the researcher to study a group on its own terms, rather than in terms of its similarities to or differences from other groups. In studying a single ethnic group, researchers can identify and describe issues of particular or even unique importance to that group, or explore topics relevant to the group that have been ignored in mainstream psychology. When the researcher examines specific cultural characteristics associated with a group, the researcher can document the impact of cultural factors on particular outcomes and can also extend or test theories derived from mainstream samples with minority groups and provide evidence that general psychological constructs or processes apply, or do not apply, to a particular group” (1998, p. 91).

Betancourt and Lopez (1993) acknowledged that cultural and racial characteristics are important, but existing literature sparsely documented what these characteristics are. Copeland and Hess (1995) conducted a study of gender and racial differences in response to coping. They reported that the importance of race as a potential variable could not be overlooked. Phinnay, Lochner, and Murphy (1990) reported that cultural background and environmental influences affect an adolescent’s reaction to stressful life events. And that is why I chose to conduct the present study in this manner. My purpose was to add to the literature on African-American adolescents by conducting a race-homogeneous, gender-specific study that centered on the spiritual strength of my girls and not on perceived challenges that are frequently reported by researchers.

Statement of Need

In this section of Chapter 1, I establish that there is a significant need for a race-homogeneous, gender-specific study that focuses on the unique characteristics of African-Americans; is gender specific to address feminine issues; uses a culture-specific theory that is designed for African-Americans; focuses on a strength of African-

Americans; and uses a female African-American researcher. Research has shown that adolescence is a critical transitional period in which young adolescents must learn to cope with pressures and changes brought about by physical and emotional maturation (Sans and Howard-Hamilton, 1995). African-American youth can experience additional stress due to developmental changes and their racial status. Societal pressures, physical changes, and chronic stressors such as cultural conflicts, negative stereotypes, and disadvantaged status can ultimately affect the mental health and coping skills of African-American adolescents. This section began with a presentation of statistics on African-American adolescents. Next, the section focuses on challenges faced by African-American adolescents. The section concludes with a focus on successful coping mechanisms for African-American adolescents.

The statistics reported in this section paint a bleak future for African-American adolescents because they focus on the negative, not the positives aspects of African-American life. For example, McKinnon and Humes (2000) reported the poverty rate for African-Americans was 26% in comparison to a national rate of 13%, and the poverty rate for African-American children under the age of 17 years was 37%. Staveteig and Wigton (2000) reported that from 1997-1999 the poverty rate remained unchanged for African-Americans even though more African-Americans were employed outside of the home. Additionally, the increase in outside employment for African-Americans was significantly lower than for Whites (12% to 74%). McKinnon & Humes (2000) observed that the poverty rate for African-Americans was 26% in comparison to a national rate of 13%, and the poverty rate for African-American children under the age of 17 years was 37%. In 2005, African-American employment remained stagnate at 10.8 percent while

white employment decreased to 4.7 percent making African-American unemployment more than 2.3 times more than Whites. African-American male salaries were 70% of White males (National Urban League, 2005).

Poverty rates can be directly or indirectly related to the household composition. In 1998, 5.4 million children resided in homes with a relative head of household, and 39% of households had no relative present (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1998). In 1999, 45% of African-American households were headed by single females and 8% by single males (McKinnon & Humes, 2000). It is my belief that, on an average, males are normally paid higher than females.

African-American children are overrepresented in the welfare and juvenile systems and underrepresented in the educational system. In 1999, 547,000 or 43% of the children in foster homes were African-American (Children's Bureau, 2000). Researchers documented the juvenile population to be 80% White and 20% African-American, but the rate of juvenile incarceration was 69% African-American and 31% White (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). National Urban League (2005) report indicated that African-American who are arrested are three times more likely to be imprisoned than Whites who are arrested; an African-American's average jail sentence is six months longer than a White's for the same crime; the average jail sentence shows that African-American receive, on average, a longer felony sentence than Whites; African-Americans are sentenced to death four times more often than whites; White felons are likely to get probation than African-American; and African-American are twenty times more likely than Whites to be a victim of hate crimes.

In the educational arena, 16,611,700 million students were enrolled in college, and of this number, 7.6% were African-American females and 4.3% were African-American males (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2005). Results from college entrance exams for high school graduates indicated that the average African-American scored 857 in comparison to the average White who scored 1,059 on the SAT (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2005). These statistics painted a bleak future for African-American adolescents because of their narrow focus on the negative, not the positives aspects of their lives. The latter part of the section focuses on the challenges faced by African-American adolescents.

Research has labeled African-American students as being disinterested in school and low academic achievers (Portes & Zhou, 1994; Weissert, 1999). However, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) disagreed with these findings. They reported that African-American students who attend predominately African-American schools experience higher academic achievement than students who attend predominately white schools. Tyson (2002) conducted an ethnographic study with African-American students from two all-African-American elementary schools (one Christian and one public) to examine the education achievements of African-American students and their attitudes toward school. The fifty-six students who participated in the study were from middle-class (\$40,000-\$79,000), educated (high school or college) families. Seventy-five percent of the students were from two-parent families. Results from the study revealed that the African-American students in the study were excited and enthusiastic about learning and achieving in school. They actively participated in classroom activities. Results from the study indicated that students experience emotional distress and develop a negative

attitude towards school if they do not reach their academic goals. These findings are consistent with previous studies. Stevenson, Chen and Uttal (1990) reported that while the achievement of elementary aged African-Americans and Latino was lower than Whites (based on dominant culture achievement tests), their and their parents' beliefs about the importance of educational achievements were higher than Whites. However, as the students aged, their beliefs about the importance of educational achievement lessened. This could be attributed to the messages that the students receive from teachers and the inequality of disciplinary procedures. Results from these studies indicate that when students receive positive support from their educational environment, they will have a more positive attitude towards education.

McBride, Paikoff, and Holmbeck (2003) conducted a longitudinal study of the sexual development of African-American adolescents. Specifically, the study examined the relationship between family conflict and onset of sexual intercourse. A total of 198 African-American families participated in the study that began when the adolescents were in the 4th or 5th grade. Results from the study indicated boys became sexually active at a younger age than the girls. Also, an increase in family conflict resulted in early sexual intercourse. Additionally, more developed preadolescents who self-reported greater levels of family conflict reported being sexual intercourse early. The study indicated that frequent family conflicts and /or more developed bodies could predict early sexual intercourse among African-American adolescent.

Stevens (2001) conducted a study regarding early sexual experience among African-American female adolescents. The researcher wanted to determine the relationship between early sexual initiation and substance abuse. The participants were 36 (20

pregnant and 16 non-pregnant) African-American female adolescents age 17 to 19 years. Five females reported having the presence of a father in the home, 17 were high school graduates, 8 attended college, and 29 received public welfare funds. The average age for sexual intercourse was 16 years. Results from the study should challenge thinking because the results were going to bias towards early sexual intercourse because the majority of the participants (81%) received public welfare funds. To receive welfare funding, the individual must have been pregnant or delivered a child/children. This population would, indeed, have a higher rate of early sexual intercourse. However, if no child was produced, the respondents in this or other self-report studies could deny participation in early sexual intercourse. Finally, results indicate that there does not appear to be a correlation between early sexual intercourse and substance abuse among African-American female adolescents. Reasons given for abstaining from early sexual intercourse were support from family, peers, church, community, work, and educational environments. Again, the inclusion of church was an important strength for this population.

Murray (1994) was concerned about the early sexual experiences of African-American adolescents. The purpose of their study was to identify the characteristics that decrease the likelihood of early sexual intercourse among African-American female adolescents. They reexamined 582 of the original 8,450 surveys from the National Center for Health Statistics' 1988 National Survey of Family Growth Cycle. Variables examined in the data were socioeconomic status, parental control, family structure, family sexuality socialization, pubertal timing, pregnancy knowledge, contraceptive knowledge, degree of social autonomy, and religiosity. Results indicated that adolescents who engaged in

sexual intercourse late were usually from two-parent families, the mother and the father were likely employed, the mean annual family income were slightly higher, were more knowledgeable about contraception, received sexual education from parents, experienced more social autonomy, and reported attending church at least once per week. Results from the study indicate that more research needs to be conducted on the sexual practices of African-Americans adolescents today and the use of spirituality as an intervention to possibly reduce early sexual intercourse among this population.

Pugh-Lilly and Poulin (2001) explored violence and delinquent behaviors among African-American adolescents. The sample consisted of 11 African-American female adolescents from predominately low socio-economic status, single-parent households (N=8). The participants included two Baptists and one Methodist, and the others denied any religious affiliation. Each of the participants completed the Self-Report Delinquency Scale (Elliott & Huizinga, 1983) and a semi structured interview that addressed delinquent behaviors. Participants reported such delinquent acts as running away from home and fighting to defend self against verbal or physical threats. The fighting may have been attributed to cultural expectations because they were instructed to defend themselves against others. Ironically, none of the participants reported understanding why others fought or threatened them. Results from the study indicated that most of the students felt like they had to verbally or physically defend themselves because societal institutions, such as the schools and police, failed to give them protection.

Clark, Coleman, and Novak (2003) conducted a study on racism and African-American adolescents. One hundred and twenty African-American students, 55 females and 65 males, in grades 9-12 participated in the study. The students were administered

the Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS; Forman, Williams, & Jackson, 1997), a modified version of the EDS, and the Child Behavior Checklist-Youth Self-Report Form (Achenbach, 1991) to measure their internal and external perceptions of racism. Results from the study revealed that there were significant differences between male and female perceptions of being harassed or threatened, males more so than female. Males and females scored highest on their perception of people acting as if they are better. Finally, all participants who had experienced racism scored higher on internalizing and externalizing symptoms than participants who had not experienced racism. Results from the study revealed that feelings and responses to actual or perceived discrimination may be unique to this population.

Hammack, Robinson, Crawford, and Li (2004) conducted a study on the mental health of African-American adolescents. They examined the relationship between family stress, poverty, and depression among African-American adolescents. The participants were 1,704 low socioeconomic, inner city youths who ranged in age from 13 to 18 years. Fifty-five percent of the participants were female. Results of the study indicated that African-American adolescent females reported higher levels of depression associated with family stressors, such as the death of a close family relative, an unmarried single family member became pregnant, and poverty. For the males, higher depressive symptoms were associated with family stress, not poverty.

Fuller (1992) also conducted a study of depression among African-American adolescents. He compared depression levels among maladaptive and normally adjusted African-American adolescents. The sample consisted of 78 (27 experimental group and 51 control group) middle-class participants. Maladjustment was defined as individuals

with high rates of absenteeism, conduct disorders, and attention deficit disorders. The Children's Depression Scale was used to assess the depression levels of the participants. Findings indicated that the adolescents who presented with maladaptive behaviors were more clinically depressed than adolescents without maladaptive behaviors. The researchers recommended family therapy, social skills training, and psychotherapy as methods of intervention for this population.

Constantine and African-Americanmon (2002) conducted a study on low self-esteem and African-American adolescents. They explored the correlation between parental racial socialization messages and self-esteem among African-American adolescents. African-American racial socialization is defined as messages and strategies African-American parents use with their children to help them to transcend negative messages of non-African-Americans (Thomas & Speight, 1999). One hundred and fifteen students participated in the study. The students were 36.5% 6th graders, 29.6% 7th graders, and 33.9% 8th graders of a predominately African-American parochial school. 62.6% of the students were females, 36.5% males, 56.5% African-Americans, 29.6% West Indian Americans, and 13.9% African- American/West Indian. Results from the Teenager Experiences of Racial Socialization Scale (Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2002) and the Hare General and Area-Specific Self-Esteem Scale (Hare, 1996) indicated that when African-American adolescents are taught to conform to mainstream society's standards, they exhibit low levels of self-esteem. These findings are consistent with research in the field. Martin and Dukes (1991) reported that self-esteem among African-Americans is higher on general self-regard traits because these traits function on cultural factors that provide a shield against institutional and societal insults.

The attitudes of therapists who treat African-American adolescents for mental health issues have been the focus of research. Sue and Zane (1987) reported that therapists may have difficulty working with African-American clients because of their own biases which can range from stereotyping clients, having misconceptions about African-American culture, lacking adequate training in diversity, using ineffective treatment methods, and misdiagnosis of clients. White (1970) stated some therapists have lower expectations for success for African-American behavior than white behavior.

Martin (1993) conducted a study to investigate the differences in therapists' perceptions of African-American and white adolescents and how those perceptions might contribute to the high dropout rate of minorities from therapy. Forty, PhD trained, psychotherapists were randomly assigned to one of two groups. Both groups were given an identical scenario of a client's case. The only difference between the scenarios was the racial make-up of the client. Results from the study indicated that the behavior of the African-American client was rated significantly lower than that of the white client. In order to help decrease bias among therapists, researchers need to conduct studies that address the culture and behaviors of a particular population.

Spencer, Fegley, and Harpalani (2003) conducted a study of the coping abilities of African-American adolescents who faced such challenges as racial stereotyping, identity issues, self-esteem issues, and racism. In their study, they reexamined Spencer's (1995) five year longitudinal study of African-American youth. Data revisited in the study were that of 498 African-American adolescents as they progressed through grades 8-12. Results from the study indicated that the most significant coping mechanisms used by the participants in the study were religion and spirituality. During the third year of the study,

10th grade boys acknowledged that emotional well-being were significantly correlated with African-American pride, religion, and spirituality. Twelfth-grade girls in the study made a similar comment during the fifth year of the study. The researchers concluded that adolescents develop a healthy sense of self and a healthy sense of self in relations to others when they use religion, spirituality, and cultural pride as coping mechanisms.

Researchers support the finding that spirituality and the African-American church has contributed much to the success of African-American adolescents (Stewart, 1999; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Ladner, 1998, Ladner & DiGeronimo, 2003). Stewart (1999) stated, “African-American spirituality connotes the possession of a soul force spirit that divinely mediates, informs, and transforms a human being’s capacity to create, center, adapt, and transcend the realities of human existence.” The key, I believe, to understanding a culture is to understand its spirituality, the core of its existence. Culture, for me, refers to the heritage, strength, and spiritualness of African-American which enabled them to endure and sustain themselves as equals in society. Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) stated, “Religion is the most sacred schedule of values around which the expression and the meaning of life tends to coalesce.” Religion and spirituality have been instrumental in helping African-Americans to develop value and meaning in their lives. To understand the spirituality of African-Americans is to understand the culture of African-Americans. Research presented in this section established that there was a significant need for a race-homogeneous, gender-specific, culturally-specific theoretical study with an African-American researcher. Researchers have acknowledged that cultural and racial characteristics are important, but existing literature seldom

documented what these characteristics are (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). Rather, research has centered on the at-risk or high-risk behaviors among African-American adolescents.

Theoretical Foundation

A theory is an organized set of principles that is designed to explain and predict some phenomenon. Good theories always provide specific testable predictions. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) stated that theory keeps the data together and helps the researcher to organize the study (p. 22). The theory I chose for my present study was Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III's culturally specific Model of African-American Spirituality. In this section, I will present a brief overview of both Stewart's thoughts on African-American spirituality and his Model of African-American Spirituality to expand our understanding and knowledge of African-American spirituality. The five components in Stewart's model are: the Formative Function (development of African-American consciousness, community, and culture); the Unitive Function (uniting of self and community); the Corroborative Function (acknowledge the value, meaning, and existence of African-American people); the Transformative Function; and the Sacralative or Consecrative Function (African-American life is sacred). This section will be instrumental in helping the reader to acquire a greater understanding of African-American spirituality and the importance of using a culturally specific model of African-American spirituality for my study.

The Model of African-American Spirituality relates to the values, beliefs, expectations, and spirituality of African-Americans. Stewart (1999) stated that "African-American spirituality is unique in that this soul force spirit is the ultimate reference point for African-American existence. This spirit permeates African-American life and instills

in African-American people a will to survive; a desire to confront and surmount all threats to their being and existences while concurrently creating idioms of life and culture which provide them with adaptive mechanisms that reinforce their sanity, affirm their wholeness, and establish their spiritual and ontological location in American society” (p. 3). African-American spirituality is a powerful, creative force that originates out of the soul and culture of African-Americans and helps them to survive in society.

The Formative Function is the first component that Stewart uses to critically examine African-American spirituality. This function supports the development of African-American consciousness, community, and culture. African-Americans, as a people, have been devalued and dehumanized by an oppressive society (Stewart, 1999, p. 29). Yet, in spite of the atrocities that were inflicted upon them by a society, African-Americans have developed an unbreakable connection to God which has enabled them to consciously process, confront, and transcend all acts of oppression. African-Americans, as far back as slavery, have found freedom and unity in spirituality. African-Americans have always believed that God created all human beings in His image, and He has always wanted them to be free to serve Him without restraints (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, p. 4). Because of seeing themselves as being created in God’s image African-Americans have taken on the characteristics of God by being forgiving of others. This belief in God, spirituality, and forgiveness has enabled African-American families and communities to develop their own identity and culture which contributed to the development of an “I am somebody” attitude (Stewart, 1999, p. 36).

The Unitive Function, the second component, refers to African-Americans desire to unite self and community (Stewart, 1999, p. 40). African-Americans’ sense of

community originates back to their African culture where an individual's destiny was linked to his community, not the individual (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, p. 5). This integration of self and community helped African-Americans to develop a sense of wholeness, empowerment, meaning, purpose, sanity, and value, not only in Africa, but also within a society that tried to tear them apart.

The Corroborative Function, third component of the Model of African-American Spirituality, focuses on self-valuation and self-determination (Stewart, 1999, p. 55). Webster's Dictionary (2002) defines corroborative as "confirming or attesting the truth or accuracy of." Stewart believed that African-Americans used spirituality as a defense mechanism to protect them from the dehumanization they experienced because of their skin color. Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) stated that spirituality helped African-Americans to affirm their own culture and heritage by affirming their own self-worth and self-determination (p. 15). African-Americans found self-value and self-worth as they expressed their spirituality through music, prayer, worship, sexuality, stories, and relationship with community. These feelings of self-value and self-worth enables African-Americans to overcome any atrocity that society tries to inflict upon them and to keep their minds, bodies, and spirits free to determine their own realities.

The Transformative function, the fourth component of Stewart's Model of African-American Spirituality, focuses on the ability of African-Americans to use spirituality to change self and their surroundings (Stewart, 1999). African-American people believe that change must first be conceived; then, it can be achieved. The Sacralative or Consecrative Function is the final component of the Model of African-American Spirituality (Stewart, 1999, p. 68). This function purports that all life is equal and

important to African-Americans, but not more important than spirituality. African-Americans believe that spirituality is sacred, it continuously affirms the love between God and themselves, it teaches African-Americans that they are God's children, and it enables African-Americans to reach desirable goals.

In this section, I presented a brief overview of Stewart's thoughts on African-American spirituality and his Model of African-American Spirituality to expand our understanding and knowledge of African-American spirituality. The five components Stewart listed in his Model of African-American spirituality were: the Formative Function, the Unitive Function, the Corroborative Function, the Transformative Function, and the Sacralative or Consecrative Function. After reading this section, the reader acquired a greater understanding of African-American spirituality and the importance of using a culturally specific model of African-American spirituality for my present study.

Assumptions

Assumptions are statements that are assumed to be true without proof or demonstration (Morris, 1978). This qualitative study of spirituality was based on the following assumptions:

1. I assumed that spirituality could be defined and investigated.
2. I assumed that because of the ages of my girls they would be able to articulate and document their experiences with spirituality.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided the present study are: 1) What is the meaning of spirituality to African-American female adolescents?; and 2) How do African-American female adolescents use spirituality in their lives?

Limitations

Limitations improve the trustworthiness of data because they help the reader by detailing the circumstances under which the data was collected (Glesne, 1999). I acknowledge the following limitations of the present study:

1. My girls were recruited through word of mouth and referrals from people known to me. Therefore, people who were unknown to me or my referral sources were not recruited to participate in the study.
2. The documentation of spiritual experiences was based on self-reporting.
3. My girls were between the ages of 11 and 15. Therefore, their responses are limited to their understanding of spirituality at this stage in their lives.

Significance of the Study

The present study is significant because it advances the literature on the meaning of spirituality and how it is used by African-American adolescents in their everyday lives. Research on spirituality and African-Americans is the avenue I chose to use to gain a greater understanding of the African-American experience. Wanting to understand spirituality from their perspective was imperative to me because I did not want to make the same mistakes of researchers who base their assumptions about African-Americans on Western cultural expectations. Gunaratnam (2003) stated that “it was not unusual for researchers to exclude African-Americans from studies because of researchers’ self-perceptions of having difficulty gaining access to and understanding language or cultural differences” (p. 55). McLoyd & Steinberg (1998) reported African-Americans may be reluctant to participate in studies because of this fear of being continuously misrepresented by researchers who do not want to take the time to understand their

language or culture. Yet, these same researchers have chosen to generalize their research findings to a population of African-Americans.

The present study is different than previously mentioned studies in this section because I, an African-American female researcher, gained access to my girls, obtained permission from my girls to study them, conducted face-to-face interviews with my girls, used several qualitative methods of data collection, chose to study a strength of my girls, protected their confidentiality, used a culturally specific theoretical model of spirituality, and member checked with my girls to ensure that I did not misrepresent them. Overall, I believe that there was a pressing need for the present study because it used an interpretative qualitative design which sought to understand my girls' perspectives; it was a race-homogeneous, gender-specific study that centered on the unique characteristics of African-Americans; it was gender specific which addressed feminine issues; it used a culturally-specific theoretical study; it used an African-America female researcher; it gave voice to my girls; and it centered on spirituality as a strength to help them African-American females to positively transition through this critical period of adolescence which can sometimes be made more stressful because of their "double jeopardy" of being African-American and female.

Conclusion

In Chapter one I revealed the importance of studying spirituality and African-American female adolescents. I begin by interjecting a brief synopsis of my own lived experience with spirituality. The chapter continued with a vignette of my interpretation of the combined voices of my girls in regards to spirituality and the present study. This was followed by the purpose of the study, the statement of need, theoretical foundation,

assumptions, research questions, limitations of the study, and the significance of the study to the practice of social work. Chapter 1 concluded with a statement of the significance of the study to social work practice. Chapter 2 will present a review of literature that is significant to the study.

Chapter 2

Waking Up for Church: One Sunday morning, a mother went in to wake her son and tell him it was time to get ready for church, to which he replied, "I'm not going." "Why not?" she asked. "I'll give you two good reasons." He said. "One, they don't like me, and two, I don't like them." His mother replied, "I'll give YOU two good reasons why you SHOULD go to church. One, you're 54 years old, and two, you're the pastor!"

Literature Review

Chapter 1 presented the reader with an overview of the significance of the study on spirituality and African-American female adolescents. A personal synopsis and a vignette were presented at the beginning of the chapter. These were followed by the purpose of the study, the statement of need, theoretical foundation, assumptions, research questions, limitations of the study, and the significance of spirituality to the practice of social work. Chapter 2 provides a critical examination of the relevant scholarly literature as a foundation for advancing the knowledge and understanding of adolescence and the meaning of spirituality. Chapter 2 examines the relationship between spirituality and adolescent development. The literature is presented in an inductive format. It begins by critically examining studies on adolescent development in general and concludes by specifically focusing on literature related to the two research questions. Careful attention is directed towards: 1) adolescent development; 2) spiritual development; 3) adolescent spiritual development; 4) the meaning of spirituality; and 5) Use of Spirituality. These five parts are needed to advance the knowledge and understanding of adolescence and spirituality.

Adolescent Development

The first part in the review of the literature is adolescent development. As stated in the previous chapter, adolescence marks the beginning of a significant period in the life of a youth who must learn how to cope with the physical and emotional changes that

manifest during this time (Sans & Howard-Hamilton, 1995). The effects of societal pressures and physical changes may ultimately affect the mental health and coping skills of adolescents. The purpose of this section of the review is to focus on literature that addresses adolescent development. Key, Brown, Marsh, Spratt, and Recknor (2001) conducted a comparative study to examine the affects of depression among physically healthy and unhealthy adolescents. The study consisted of one hundred and twenty-five (81 African-Americans and 44 White male and female adolescents age 13 to 18. Physical illnesses attributed to the unhealthy participants were cystic fibrosis, insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, spina bifida, and asthma. Each participant in the study was administered The Beck Depression Inventory. Results from the study indicated that there were no significant differences between the children with or without physical illnesses. In addition, no significant differences were found based on race, gender, or SES.

However, different results were reported by researchers who conducted a comparative study of participants with and without psychotic disorders. Williamson, Birmaher, Ryan, Shiffin, Lusk, Protopapa, Dahl, and Brent (2003) conducted a comparative study of psychotic (N=30) and non-psychotic (N=30) children and adolescents. Fifty-two percent of the participants were female and 87% were White. The average age was thirteen years. Psychotic illnesses reported by the participants were major depressive disorder (13); anxiety (11); depression (2); and adjustment disorder with depressed or anxious mood (4). All participants were administered the Stressful Life Events Schedule, the Life Events Checklist, and the Life Events and Difficulties. The participants listed hospitalization or injury, death of a pet or family member, change in school or parent's job, being bullied or fighting at school, criminal behavior, and arguments with siblings

and parents as being significant stressors in their lives. Results indicated that children and adolescents with psychotic disorders had significantly more stressful events and behavior disorders than children without psychotic disorders.

Researchers have conducted studies which centered on the physical and mental development of adolescents. Klaczynski, Goold, and Mudry (2004) conducted a study to explore the relationship between weight and psychosocial development in adolescents. The researchers in the study based their hypotheses on the Social Identity Theory which states that one social group's self-esteem is based on its ability to feel superior to another group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The participants in the study were 17 male and 90 female undergraduate students from introductory psychology classes. Results from their study indicated that: 1) males were more likely than females to believe that they had control over their body, and they were less likely to internalize culture's relationship between thinness and success; 2) prejudices towards obese individuals stem from one's acceptance that people are responsible for their own weight. However, it is worth noting that males were highly underrepresented in the study. Further research needs to be conducted with an equal number of male and female participants.

To add to the literature on adolescent development, Washburn-Ormachea, Hillman, and Sawilowsky (2004) conducted a study to examine the relationship between gender and adolescents' ability to cope with peer stressors. Two hundred and eighty-five, 124 boys and 161 girls, eighth- and ninth-grade students were administered the COPE instrument. The study included upper to lower class Whites, Asian/Pacific Islanders, African-Americans, Hispanics, and "Other." Thirty-three percent of the adolescents reported arguments/fights were their biggest stressor. The results of the study indicated

that there were significant gender differences. Females were more affected by the situation than males. For example, girls reported more fights with opposite-sex friends and boys reported more fights with same-sex friends.

The above researchers have revealed that adolescence can be a difficult stage of development. However other researchers have focused their studies on possible solutions for this issue. According to Brinthaupt and Lipka (2002), early adolescence represented a period of intense identity development. It is believed that one-fifth of youths who have high self-esteem in late childhood, start to decline during early adolescence (DuBois & Tevendale, 1999). To determine an effective way of working with adolescents and self-esteem, DuBois, Lockerd, Reach, and Parra (2003) conducted several focus group sessions with 61 sixth- and seventh- grade adolescents (22 males, 39 females, 38 Whites, and 23 African-Americans) to obtain their perspective on self-esteem and to enlist their assistance in preparing a curriculum that would be effective with their population. African-Americans stated that prejudice from peers and adults impacted their self-esteem. Females stated that pressure to conform to gender roles impacted their self-esteem. The results of the study also indicated that adolescents preferred hands on type activities, such as peer interaction and outdoor activities, to increase self-esteem; positive ways to increase self-esteem eliminated negative ways, such as bullying or interacting with deviant peers; and it was importance to interact with adults, such as counselors, parents, older role models. The study revealed that children are capable of expressing their needs and preferences which include wanting adults to be involved in their lives.

Giordano, Cernkovich, and DeMaris (1993) conducted an analysis to examine the impact of family and peer relations on African-American adolescent social development.

The researchers interviewed 942 adolescents aged 12 to 19 years. Fifty-one percent of the adolescents were female and 50% were African-American. Results from the study indicated that African-Americans valued family relationships over friends. In particular, African-Americans valued parental control and supervision and family intimacy. African-American females scored higher on familial control, but not on family intimacy. African-American males scored slightly higher than females on family intimacy. The results of the study indicate that for African-American adolescents in the study, family relationships are a significant part of African-American adolescent development.

Researchers have revealed an interest in the internal experiences of African-American adolescents. For example, Juhasz (1989) conducted a study of the role of significant others in the development of African-American adolescent self-esteem. The study consisted of 113 African-American Catholic school students from middle-class families. There were (52) 10-11 year olds (21 boys and 31 girls) and (61) 12 to 14 year olds (34 boys and 27 girls) in the study. The study revealed that all four groups rated their mother as being the most significant person in the development of their self-esteem. As the adolescents aged, the significance of their mothers lessened but continued to remain the most significant person in their lives.

Researchers have investigated the influence of media on African-American adolescent development. Roberts, Foehr, Rideout, and Brodie (1999) reported that the average African-American adolescent watched television for 5 hours per day compared to 2 hours 48 minutes by non-African-American adolescents. This overexposure to television can have positive or negative affects on the self-esteem of young African-American viewers depending on whether or not they are portrayed in a negative or positive manner by the

media. Ward (2004) conducted a study to determine the relationship between media and African-American adolescent self-esteem and racial self-esteem. One hundred and fifty-six African-American high school adolescents participated in the study. Fifty-seven percent of the participants were from two-parent families and 23% female head-of-household families, and 70% were females. The other participants either lived with their mother and one extended family member, 16%, or with a mother, father, and extended family member, 4%,. Participants were asked to indicate how much television they watched, drama, comedy, music videos, and sports, and which programs they watched, predominately African-American or otherwise. The participants were then asked to identify themselves with popular male and female television characters. In addition, the participants were administered the State Self-Esteem Scale (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991) and the Private Esteem subscale from the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luthanen & Crocker, 1992). Participants reported spending approximately 52 hours per month viewing television during summer months. Eleven and one-half to 13 hours were spent watching predominately African-American television programs. Participants also reported strongly identifying with African-American characters as opposed to white characters. However, frequent viewings of music videos seem to lower self-esteem. Finally, religiosity seemed to decrease the negative effects of media use on African-American adolescent self-esteem.

Researchers have specifically centered on support for female adolescents. Researchers have emphasized the need for female adolescents to constantly hear about the importance of maintaining a positive, supportive relationship with their mothers (Chodorow, 1995; Goldberg, 1994; Girls Incorporated of Greater Santa Barbara, 1997;

and Carpenter, 2001). Based on this idea, Owens, Scofield, and Taylor (2003), developed a curriculum that can be used with groups or programs that focus on parent-child relationships and adolescent self-esteem. They stated that the goal of the group or program should be to enhance and build supportive relationships between mothers, daughters, and other women because this fosters positive self-esteem in female adolescents. They stated that this type of group would be more effective than other types of clinical interventions because it emphasizes cohort and intergenerational relationship within the group.

Research has also been conducted to address support of adolescents who are experiencing acute mental depression among male adolescents. Lines (1999) conducted a study with five 12 to 15 year old adolescents to determine the effectiveness of an in-school bereavement therapy group. Lines believed that when adolescents encounter the death of a loved one, they begin to question their own morality, and they respond to the loss based on their religious or lack of religious beliefs. The boys' beliefs were found to range from naïve to profound. For example, one boy denied God's existence because his parents died. Each received individual counseling prior to being introduced to group therapy. Results from the study indicated that the group sessions appeared to be helpful in unblocking resistances in the participants. Their support and understanding of each other was acknowledged both during group and after the group sessions. The researcher concluded that more schools should offer bereavement groups for their students.

Spiritual Development

The second related part in this relevant review of the literature is spiritual development. The purpose of this section of the literature is to critically examine

spiritual development literature and the different theoretical. Holden (2000) used a transpersonal theory approach in her case study of a depressed female in her late thirties. The chief objective of transpersonal theory is acquire a larger understanding of human nature and human development by integrating spiritual experiences with psychology (Washburn, 1995, p. 1). Each level of consciousness must be explored in order to help clients successfully deal with whatever is disturbing them in the present and to help them to move forward in the future (Washburn, 1995, p. 2). In this case study, the participant faced great anguish as she struggled with staying committed to a bad marriage (old brain) or finding alternative ways of working through the dilemma (new brain). Results from the study indicated that the participant was able to work through her dilemmas and move forward into a life that was more pleasing for her.

Thayer (2004) conducted a study which used Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and theology to construct an instrument that would predict spiritual development. Kolb (1984) described learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." Thus, his theory was based on four types of learning: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Learners must be able to incorporate new experiences into their lives. Observe and reflect upon these experiences, and utilize a theory that would incorporate these new perceptions. Finally, the learner can use these new perceptions to solve dilemmas in the future. Three hundred and nine individuals; 125 males, 176 females, and 8 missing; who were familiar with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory participated in the construction of the instrument. The final instrument was administered to one thousand six hundred and eighty-seven college students. Data from the study produced

four scales: Transcendent Scale (growing through a relationship with God); Vision Scale (Growing through the word); Reflection Scale (growing through critical reflection); and New Life Scale (growing through relationships with others). Seventy percent of the participants reported that the transcendent mode (prayer, repentance, and worship) was their main way of developing spiritually, but all four modes were needed to establish full spiritual development.

Bucker (2003) conducted a study that utilized Systems Theory to explain spiritual development and its relationship to 12-step recovery. Systems Theory examines the relationship between biological and social systems and how they affect the behavior and functioning of the individual (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2003). Bucker (2003) believed that the 12-steps in Alcoholic Anonymous were based on spiritual principals because they require individuals to verbalize their powerless over the substance and to surrender to a higher power. Results from the study indicate that three orders of change are necessary for spiritual growth and sobriety. During the first-order change, the alcoholics believe that they have control over their drinking, and spiritual individuals believe that they have the power to remain sin-free. Individuals in this order of change, if successful, will become risk takers and this careless behavior will lead them back to their old patterns of survival. During the second-order change, alcoholics acknowledge that they are powerless over alcohol, and the sinners acknowledge that they are powerless over sin. Thus, the individuals look at themselves and realize that they must surrender to a higher power in order to succeed over old patterns of behavior. During the third-order of change, alcoholics surrender their lives to a higher power and daily prayer for guidance as to their higher power's will for their lives. The sinners, on the other hand, begin to see their

higher power as being a redemptive force during third-order change. Individuals in this stage of spiritual development experience personal healing and contribute to universal healing. During these stages of development, individuals become less centered on themselves and more concerned about the welfare of others and creation. This relates to systems theory in which the individual understands that he or she is connected to other individuals in the universe, and his or her behavior impacts the lives of others and creation.

Grainger and Kendall-Seatter (2003) studied drama as a positive avenue to utilize in developing spirituality in children. Heathcote and Bolton (1995) stated that drama is the making and shaping of new worlds and the investigation of issues within them, so it has remarkable potential as a tool in the development of spirituality. This observational study was conducted with nine- and ten-year-old students who participated in a play based on Moses and the persecution of Israelites in Egypt. The teacher set the stage for the production by acting as a narrator. Her re-enactment of the situation helped the participants to connect with the people they were dramatizing. Group discussion emerged as each scene was enacted. Results from the study indicated that the students experienced fear, pain, regret, and sorrow during the drama. Results from the study indicate that spiritual development can take place in positive or negative relationships.

Eaude (2003) explored the possibility of using psychoanalytic tradition and cognitive development to understand spiritual development. He posits that when people accept the terminology spiritual development, they are assuming that all children develop spiritually. Fowler (1981) agreed that everyone is born with the capacity to develop spiritually, and how this faith develops depends upon our language, rituals, and early

interactions with our primary care givers and society. Eaude (2003) conducted an ethnographic study with fourteen teachers of four and five year old primary school students to determine their beliefs about spiritual development. He spent eight days with each teacher. Results from the study indicate that spiritual experience: 1) is integrated into all areas of developments, such as emotional, psychological, and moral; 2) is important for developing meaning and identity in one's life; and 3) can develop from a positive or negative experience; and 4) must be acquired through active, not passive involvement in the learning process.

Wheeler, Ampadu, and Wangari (2002) were concerned about the applicability of Western theories on the spiritual development in African-Americans. African-Americans have usually been subjected to the theories of Western society which reflect a power difference in which the African-American is usually classified as abnormal or lacking in some psychological respect. Yet, African-Americans, as a people, are strong people, but will more likely than not, fall short when analyzed with Western theories. For example, Western theorists place high emphasis on individual achievement, but African-American place high importance on community. Spirituality is a tool that has been used by African-American to help them overcome these negative stereotypes.

Eaude (2003) studied fourteen teachers of four and five-year-old children to indirectly understand children's spiritual development. He centered on the importance of understanding spirituality as it is perceived by the child, not adult perception. These perceptions connect the child to his or her culture, values, and relationships. He proposed that adults can learn much about the spiritual development of children by: focusing on things that are familial and practical to the child; understanding that indirect questions are

more revealing, and learning which activities contribute to the spiritual development in children. He also wanted to emphasize that spirituality overlapped many aspects of a child's development, including psychological, emotional, and moral development.

Broadbent (2004) conducted a study with two dance classes of Y2 children in a Roman Catholic primary school in Liverpool. The purpose of the project was to explore how creative dance would stimulate spiritual development in children. Children participated in dance workshops, dance journals and interviews. The primary theme that emerged from the data was that children place a strong emphasis on the way they felt participating in the different activities or the feelings they received from participating in the activities.

Smith and McSherry (2004) conducted a study to explore spirituality and child development as they express their beliefs at different stages of development. Findings from this paper add to the literature by stating that: spirituality is important to all aspect of health regardless on one's age; it connects children's spirituality with their everyday experiences; and it emphasized that spiritual care should be married to everyday nursing care. In other words, the two should always be used in conjunction with each other.

Lee and Loke (2005) used the Health Promotion Lifestyle Profile II instrument to conduct a study to determine the relationship between health-promoting behaviors and psychosocial well-being of 247 Hong Kong university students. Areas of interest in the study were health responsibility, physical activity, nutritional habits, psychosocial well-being, interpersonal relations, stress management, and spiritual growth. In reviewing spiritual growth, results from the study indicated that no significant differences were noted between male and female responses. About fifty percent of each gender reported

“growing and changing in positive ways”, believing that their life had a purpose”, “working towards long term goals”, and awareness of important things in life”. These studies indicate that different theoretical approaches have been used to address spiritual development with some success.

Koslander and Arvidsson (2005) conducted a study with 12 psychiatric nurses to determine how they foster spiritual development in their practice with their patients. Three themes emerged from the data: 1) Nurses show their spiritual side by really caring about the patients; 2) Nurses who care address the spiritual needs of their patients; and 3) Nurses realize that incorporating spirituality into their practice is difficult task. The study revealed that there are nurses that both care for their patients and have an understanding of spirituality or nurses who care, but do not understand the significance of spirituality to their patients and the relationship that spirituality brings.

Adolescent Spiritual Development

The third part in the literature is adolescent spiritual development. The purpose of this section of the literature is to focus on literature on adolescent spiritual development. The importance of adolescent spiritual development has been echoed by researchers throughout the world. Australian, English, Canadian, and American researchers have conducted studies on the importance of spiritual development of children. The Australian school curriculum, for example, is very liberal in that it incorporates the teaching of basic skills and concepts with spirituality in an effort to help students to better understand their world. In an effort to examine teachers’ spiritual beliefs and their ability to stimulate spiritual development in their students, Rogers and Hill (2002) conducted a three year longitudinal study with 147 second-year undergraduate students enrolled in a primary

school teacher program. Results from the study indicated that teacher trainees had a variety of ways of viewing spirituality. Five themes emerged from the data: spirituality and 1) self, 17%; 2) religion, 13%; 3) nature, 38%; 4) relationships, 9%; and 5) major life events, 16%. Seventeen percent of the data did not fall into any particular theme.

Overall, the researchers believed that the trainees were struggling with their own ideas about spirituality which could have resulted from the theoretical approach used in the study. The constructivist approach was used to guide the study. The participants were asked to share their prior knowledge and understanding of spirituality which is consistent with Crotty's (1998) belief that people construct new ideas by relating them to something that they already know.

Schools in England and Wales have a two-fold mission of enabling pupils to learn and achieve and to encourage spiritual and cultural development. Watson (2003) reviewed 44 articles to examine academic's understanding of spirituality and its ability to enhance the spiritual development of pupils. In his review of the literature, he reported that there were multiple definitions of spirituality (Copley, 2000; and Erricker & Erricker, 2000). For instance, Bosacki (1998) defined spirituality as an inner, emotional feeling. Fisher (1999) related spirituality to people's health and well-being while Hay and Nye (1996) associated it with music and poetry. Based on these findings, Watson concluded that spirituality could be incorporated into any curriculum, such as religious and secular. In order to enhance the spiritual development of students, curriculum should encourage students to: 1) be aware of their spiritual experiences and emotions, such as children should be able to articulate their own cultural understanding of spirituality; 2) critically examine their religious traditions; 3) strive for freedom, morality, and personal growth.

In other words, instead of being taught spirituality, student should be given the opportunity to develop their own understanding of spirituality.

Another English researcher also focused a study on adolescent spiritual development. Watson (2000) conducted a pilot study with individuals of various religious and non-religious backgrounds to examine their understanding of the spiritual development of school children. The demographics of the participants in the study included three environmentalists – one atheist, one agnostic, and one Pagan; one Buddhist; one atheist from the Sea of Faith; two Anglican evangelists; one Catholic chaplain, and one Anglican person-centered counselor. Results from the study indicated that the participants differed in their experiences and understanding of the meaning of spirituality. For example, most of the participants assumed that a spiritual experience was any experience that changed the understanding or perception of the individual, and this spiritual experience may not be religiously based. Based on these findings, the researcher suggested that an effective educational system should stimulate students to explore different models of spiritual development, such as a naturalistic model, in an effort to make sense out of their own world.

A Canadian researcher, Bosacki (2001) focused her attention on the spiritual development of adolescents. Her study examined the correlation between spirituality, gender, and psychological well-being. Researchers believe that it is during adolescence when gender roles become more pronounced (Finders, 1997; and MacCoby, 1998). To test the accuracy of these findings, Bosacki (2001) conducted a study with 239 9-12 year-old Canadian adolescents and 127 teachers. Results from the study indicated that the students and their teachers supported stereotypical views of masculinity and femininity.

A greater finding of the study revealed that it is important for students to be allowed to verbalize their feelings. In other words, researchers can collect richer data from adolescents when they are given the opportunity to voice their opinions and to accept or reject the views of others. This method of data collection proved beneficial in promoting the spiritual development of adolescents.

Researchers from the United States of America have also conducted research on adolescent spiritual development. Batten and Oltjenbruns (1999) conducted an exploratory qualitative study to examine the correlation between bereavement and adolescent spiritual development. There were four participants in the study who ranged in age from 15 to 18. Two of the participants were a brother and a sister who lost their older brother in a car accident. The other two participants were an unrelated male and female who each lost a younger male sibling to suicide. All losses were experienced within two years prior to the study. Findings revealed that following the death of an immediate family member, the participants acquired new perspectives on self, others, sibling relationships, life, death, and a higher power. For example, the participants reported feeling more mature, wanting to spend more time with family and friends, thinking about the real meaning of life and death, and being angry at God. These examples reveal that the loss of a sibling or close family member may permanently impact the spiritual development of adolescents.

Pike (2000) explored the use of poetry as a stimulant for adolescent spiritual and moral development. This longitudinal study was conducted on 30 comprehensive school children as they progressed from ages 11 through 15. Results from the study indicated that poetry was an important avenue for spiritual and moral development. They were

able to infer significant moral and spiritual experiences and challenged their own perceptions from the readings.

Aksan and Kochanska (2005) conducted a study to examine the development of conscience in children. Their focus was specifically on the structure and stability of conscience in preschool age children. Results from the study indicated that conscience in relation to guilt was present and stable in the 33 and 45 months-old toddlers.

Trousdale (2004) explored the possibility of using narratives to nourish spiritual growth in children from various theoretical perspectives. Reader response theorists encourage the student to bring the entire self into the readings. Literary theorists believe that when a writer leave gaps in his or her story, the child can then enter the story and use this or her imagination and spiritual insight to her the child formulate the story. Overall, the literatures in this section reveal that are different ways of effectively promoting spiritual development in adolescents throughout the world.

Meaning of Spirituality

The fourth part in the literature is the meaning of spirituality. The purpose of this section is to give an overview of the different meanings of spirituality that people have constructed based on their individual experiences. The meanings will be presented verbatim when possible as to give ownership and possession to the individual. Also, I attempted to categorize the definitions as a way of possibly interpreting the responses. The categories I chose for spirituality found in the literature are sacred, meaning, coping mechanism, identity, character, value, relationship, unity, and relaxing. At the end of this section, the reader will be able to understand the complexity of constructing a universal definition for spirituality.

Spirituality as Sacred

Spirituality is sacred because it pertains to the trinity, possessing godlike qualities, Christian experiences, beliefs, and practices.

Spirituality enables an individual to express how he or she relates to a larger whole - that the individual perceives as greater than him or herself (Spreccace, 2002).

Spirituality is having a purposeful relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and in the context of community of believers (Sheldrake, 2000).

Spirituality is being godlike, or possessing godliness. Spirituality is knowing God that I might please Him. I must first know God. Then, I must allow this knowledge of God to teach me how to please Him. Obedience is the root of spirituality (Roberts, 2004).

“Spirituality is the response of the individual, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to Christ’s ongoing invitation to ‘repent and believe the Gospel. There is...one only and all-embracing Catholic spirituality: the rootedness of the individual both in the paschal mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection and in the community of the Catholic Church brought to birth by the paschal mystery” (Stravinskis, 1991, p. 900).

“Christian spirituality is life in the Holy Spirit who incorporates the Christian into the Body of Jesus Christ, through whom the Christian has access to God the Creator in a life of faith, hope, love, and service. It is visionary, sacramental, relational, and transformational” (McBrien, 1994, p.1058).

Christians believe spirituality is the daily expression of one’s ultimate beliefs, indicated by openness to the self-transcending love of God, self, neighbor, and world through Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit (Dreyer, 1995).

Christian spirituality centers on experiencing God, as savior, through Jesus Christ. We recognize that the gifts of life, of peace, of reconciliation, and of righteousness, come from Jesus Christ. And in the divine pattern portrayed by Jesus’ life and death, we

acknowledge as well the model for our own acceptance of that gift. In every situation, our first notion is to look towards Jesus. From the beginning to the end, Christian spirituality is imitating Christ (Johnson, 1990).

Spirituality is a serious, long-term, commitment to align oneself with his or her environment and to transcend reality, to align oneself with God, and to embody the spirit in the world (Pierce, 1999).

Christian monastic spirituality invites individuals to seek the kingdom of God first through prayer, fastings, silence, vigils, reading, or good works. These methods are seen as means to that end which is Jesus Christ (The Monastery of Christ in the Desert, 2002).

“Spirituality is the search for the sacred” (Pargament, 1997, p. 39).

“Spirituality is union with God and transformation of consciousness” (Higgins & Higgins, 1975. p.0).

“Spirituality is the inner life or spirit of each of us as it relates to the unseen world of Spirit or of God. It’s the name we give to the dimension of seeing and living that goes far beyond the material world to deeper trust and eternal values” (Harpur, 1996, p. 107).

Spirituality as Meaning

Spirituality is meaning because of the purpose, understanding, and significance it gives to the lives of individuals.

Spirituality is the foundation that helps individuals to find meaning and understanding about the significance of being human. It focuses on the question of "Why am I here?"

Spirituality is not based on any specific religious belief (Spreccace, 2002).

Spirituality is a person’s way of expanding, using, seeking, finding, or creating personal meaning in the entire universe (Thibault, 1991).

“Spirituality is an experience that occurs in the midst of, and gives depth and integrity to our lives as people who live in a particular culture, in a particular place and time” (Brady, 1998, p. 1).

“Spirituality is defined as that personal function which relates life’s meaning to transpersonal reality. Spirituality is an element of a person’s individuality and is not necessarily defined by association with a certain tradition or by organizational affiliation. It is multidimensional and operates (to varying degrees) in acknowledgement of the unconscious self, the needs of others, and the realm of the sacred. Such awareness varies among individuals and throughout a person’s lifetime” (Bessinger, Dohnivan, & Kuhne, 2002, p. 1385).

“Spirituality is the struggle for the divine encounter and for human identity” (Leech, 1985, p. 128).

Spirituality refers to a set of beliefs, principles, or values that one uses to guide his or her life and to give meaning and purpose to life, especially during stressful times. Spiritual health embraces the capacity for love, compassion, forgiveness, joy, and fulfillment. It is a remedy for anger, fear, anxiety, self-absorption, and pessimism. Spirituality takes the individual to a higher level and can be a common bond among people (Ingel & Roth, 2000).

Spirituality as a Coping Mechanism

Spirituality is a coping mechanism because it is used as a resource to help individuals cope with the challenges of life.

Spirituality is the way an individual uses habits, rituals, gestures, and symbols to interpret and manage life (Spreace, 2002).

Spirituality, for some individuals, plays a significant role in quality of life, coping, and the search for meaning during times of crisis (Craig Hospital, 2002).

Spirituality as Identity

Spirituality is identity because it refers to the uniqueness of each individual.

Spirituality forms who we are as people and how we make decisions (News USA, 2002).

Spirituality as Character

Spirituality is character because it refers to the qualities and attributes of individuals.

“Spirituality is the essence of a person's being. Spirituality is who we are. It is tied to the individual's worldview. It can encompass many things such as religion, identity, heritage, culture and so on. For each person, spirituality is different, although there are many groups who share common spiritualities” (White, 2002).

Spirituality is a substance of the person. It is the ability of persons to transcend themselves through knowledge and love to reach beyond themselves in relationship to others. In this sense, even a newborn child is spiritual (Schneiders, 1999, p. 2).

“It forms in us a personal relationship to the Earth so that we treat her with respect and reverence. It is a centering of ourselves in creation through a relationship to the four directions, the foundations of the universe and the place where the spirits dwell” (Steinmetz, 1980, p. 12).

Spirituality as Value

Spirituality is value because of its significance to the individual.

“The experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives. Spirituality is experience; personal lived reality. Spirituality is an experience of conscious involvement in a project which means that spirituality is neither a peripheral experience such as the result of a drug overdose nor an episodic event such as being overwhelmed by a beautiful sunset. It is an ongoing and coherent approach to life as a consciously pursued project. Spirituality is a project of life integration which means that it is holistic involving body and spirit, emotions and thought, social and individual aspects of life. It is an effort to bring all of life together in an integrated synthesis of ongoing growth and development. Spirituality the, involves one's whole life in relation to reality as a whole. This project of life-integration is pursued by consistent self-transcendence toward ultimate value. This implies that spirituality is essentially positive in its direction. The focus of self-transcendence is value that the person perceives as ultimate. One might perceive life itself, persona or social well-being, the good of the earth, justice for all people, or union with God as ultimate value, as that which claims one's whole life-energy” (Schneiders, 1999, pp. 1-4)

Spirituality is having to do with the quality of the relationship to what or who is most important to us (Gallup, 1997).

Spirituality as Relationship

Spirituality is relationship because of its ability to connect individuals with God, spirit, self, and the community.

“The child’s development of an awareness of the relationship which has been initiated by God..., the role of the child’s community in fostering that relationship, and the child’s understanding of, and response to , that relationship” (Morgenthaler, 1999, p. 6).

“Spirituality is doctrineless. Spirituality has little to do with what an individual believes, but is more about feelings, inner knowledge and, most importantly, relationship with spirit. Spirituality may not even acknowledge a need for salvation. Spirituality places its primary emphasis on individual experiences of the Divine. It makes each person responsible for his or her own relationship with the Holy. Spirituality encourages humans to learn more about themselves, and affirms the possibility of union with God/Spirit. Meditation and contemplation take precedence over “going to church” or worshiping a God who is “out there.” Spirituality stresses integration with God and all of creation through bringing a personal relationship with the divine into all other relationships” (Eckes, 2004, p. 2).

Spirituality as Unity

Spirituality is unity because of its ability to unite individuals with each other, God, and nature.

“Spirituality is like cement that links all beings to each other at the earth and it remains the cement for the entire creation that shares the same source and the same future” (Sekagya, 2005).

“Spirituality is trusting and encouraging each other at all levels of the organizational hierarchy, as that will enhance workers’ desire to attend their workplace everyday; minimizing workplace politics because they are in fundamental contradiction with the trust issue; respecting each other’s (religious and other) convictions, and exactly for that reason: not interfering with them; valuing diversity, as that is not only morally the best thing to do, but is also benefits the company in many ways such as enabling a broader organization perspective through the extended cultural availability at work.; and enabling a more extensive group of customers to identify with the organization; enabling workers-where possible-to perform in the area and at the time that aligns best with

their skill, creativity, and interests, in order to serve as an advantage to them as well as the organization in total; encouraging workers to explore their skills in various regards, and facilitating training in these areas, so that all their hidden talents can surface, allowing them to ultimately bring in an even bigger part of themselves at work; and recognizing and rewarding people when they deserve it and in the ways their specific personality values these recognitions and rewards best” (Marques, 2002, p. 2).

Spirituality as Relaxing

“Spirituality is whatever is generally beautiful and awe-inspiring in nature; not always bound by human standards; but generally kind and loving in human nature. Much of what people strive for after satisfying the basic needs of life, has to do with enriching their higher spiritual nature through music, art, poetry, acts of kindness, forgiving, and understanding others” (Zeldman, 2002, p. 2).

“It’s about seeing life as a great adventure.
It’s about surrendering my will to the Creator’s.
It’s about celebrating the sacredness in everything.
It’s about willingness to tackle new challenges head on.
It’s about movement towards reuniting with the Creator.
It’s about acknowledging the Divine Order in the universe.
It’s about having compassion for others, even if I’d rather not.
It’s about being serene and forgiving those who cause me pain.
It’s about pausing to give thanks for the glorious, golden dawn.”
It’s about appreciating the fading, iridescent glow of the sunset.
Ultimately, it’s about responsibility and taking charge of my life” (Thompson, 2002, p. 4).

Use of Spirituality

The fifth part in the literature is spirituality and choice. The purpose of this section is to reveal that in addition to physical and emotional changes, youths must also deal with choices that may manifest themselves during adolescence. The following topics will be addressed in this section: 1) Puberty’s affect on family relationships; 2) Adolescents questioning their religious beliefs; 3) Adolescent religious values vs. parental religious values; 4) Adolescent religious practice; and 5) The affect of religion and spirituality on adolescent behavior. At the end of this section, the reader will be able to gain a greater

awareness into the issues that affect adolescents and the influence of spirituality on his or her decisions.

A review of the literature revealed that puberty may be a stressful time for adolescents and their families. Researchers have indicated that distance and conflicts increase between children and their parents, especially between the adolescent and the mother (Steinberg, 1990; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Holmbeck & Hill, 1991). Mekos (1991) found that conflicts and distancing were gender specific. Girls, who were close to their mothers before puberty, became close to their fathers during puberty. Boys, who were close to their fathers before puberty, became close to their mothers during puberty. These drastic changes in relationships, while normally short-term, may prove to be less strenuous on adolescents and more strenuous on families (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Gecas and Seff (1990) reported that parents' marital and life satisfaction decrease during this period, and other studies found that nearly 66 percent of mothers and fathers described puberty as the most difficult stage of parenting (Pasley & Gecas, 1984).

Parents may be especially affected by the transition of their child into adolescence if the child questions traditional religious beliefs. Fowler (1981) reported that older adolescents enter a stage where they begin to develop their own religious beliefs, instead of relying solely on the teaching of their parents. Hill (1986) stated that puberty signals the onset of spiritual maturity for the adolescent and for an adolescent not to question his or her parent's religious beliefs is a sign of immature development. Parents, on the other hand, may translate this questioning of religious beliefs as a sign of rebelliousness against the family's values, especially African-American parents (Steinberg, 1996, p. 358).

Dudley and Dudley (1986) conducted a study to determine if parental religious values were transmitted to adolescents. They randomly selected 712 individuals from twenty-one Seventh-day Adventist churches in the United States. A total of 218 two-parent families and 29 single-parent families with a high school age youth participated in the study. The participants were given a Value Attitude Scale. Results indicate that the mothers were more traditional than the fathers, and both parents were more traditional than their children. They found that in an effort to separate themselves from their parents, adolescents as a group will reveal their independency by not following the traditional values of their parents. Their results also indicated that although adolescents were less traditional than their parents, they tended to have values that were closer to their parents than their peer when they had traditional parents. In other words, it appears that if adolescents are allowed some level of independence, they may actually treasure the religious values of their parents.

Parents may also be affected by their adolescents' independence when they display changes in their religious practices. Wuthnow and Glock (1973) revealed that during adolescence the child becomes less oriented towards religion and more oriented towards spirituality. Media reports have indicated that today's adolescents are much more into spirituality than traditional religion (Curran & Estes, 1998, p. D4). Farel (1982) reported that while the majority of adolescents pray and believe in God (87 percent and 95 percent, respectively); only 60 percent of all young people feel that organized religion is significant in their lives. Smith, Denton, Faris, and Regnerus (2002) revealed that nearly 44 percent of 8th graders, 38 percent of 10th graders, and 33 percent of 12th graders

reported frequently attending church. Other researchers have reported similar findings (Potvin, Hoge, & Nelsen, 1976; and Bensen, Donahue, & Erickson, 1989).

Sloane and Potvin (1983) explored the interaction between gender and denomination and age as a predictor of religious practices and beliefs. Religious practice referred to church attendance and participation in religious studies and church-related activities. Belief was based on the ideas that God punishes people who have sinned, the Bible is God's word, and the church represents God. Denomination was defined as Sect-like Protestants (Pentecostal, Holiness, Mennonite, etc.), Baptists (American and Southern), Catholics, Mainline Protestants (Methodist, Presbyterian, etc.), and others (including those who did not identify their denomination or identified non-Christian religions). The investigators interviewed 1,121 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 in their homes during 1975. Results indicated that the relationship between gender and denomination and age and either measure of religiousness is unaffected by the other measure of religiousness. This indicates that practice and belief are strongly related to each other, but they are also independent of each other. It was noted that age, gender, and denomination affected practice; and age and denomination affected belief. Denomination greatly affected the outcome of both measures with sectarian groups scoring the highest, and the lowest was those who indicated no religion or non-Christian religion. Their findings also indicate that girls scored higher on practice than boys for all denominations except sectarian, and girls scored higher on belief. There was no correlation between age and gender on either practice or belief. In other words, girls were as likely as boys to score low on practice and belief as they aged. Also, there was a significant correlation

between age and denomination with younger Baptist, Catholics and mainline boys and girls scoring higher on practice and the reverse were noted on belief.

In a later study, Potvin and Sloane (1985) returned to their previous data to determine if there was an interaction between parental control and age and religious practice. Eight hundred and sixty-eight of the previous 1,121 subjects participated in the present study. Participants that classified themselves as having no denomination or non-Christian denomination were excluded from the study. Findings indicate that as most of these adolescents age, they show a decline in religious practice. However, there was no significance between age, parental religiousness, parental control, and religious practice. Neither being a low control or high control religious parent did not predict that a child would continue the same religious practices as their parents as they age. The investigators indicated that there was a correlation between age, parental control, personal religious experience and religious practice with increasing age. Those who showed the greatest decline were those who scored high on experience and parental control. While there were no findings that supported an increase in practice with age. However, it was noted that practice remained stable among adolescents who scored low on experience and high on parental control. Based on these findings, it could be hypothesized that the more an adolescent attends church the more he or she will be exposed to its flaws. This over exposure to the flaws of churches appears to lead to a decrease in the adolescent's church attendance.

Parents may be concerned that a decrease in the adolescent's participation in religious activities such as church attendance may lead to an increase in sexual activity. Woodroof (1985) conducted a study of 477 college freshmen attending eight colleges affiliated with

the churches of Christ to study the relationship between religiosity and premarital sexual activity. The subjects were Whites who ranged in age from 17-19, 60% were female and 40% were male. The participants reported their religious behaviors as follows: 79% attended services three times a week, 50% prayed daily, 60% studied the Bible daily or frequently, and 68% attended Sunday school every week. Church attendance was highly correlated with involvement in church activities, and females reported being more active than males. Results of the study indicated that just over 25% reported being sexually active. Of these, 50% had intercourse rarely, 62% began their coital relationships when they were 17 or older, and 36% reported having only one partner. Males were more active than females. Finally, in exploring the relationship between parents and adolescent sexual behavior, lower levels of sexual activity were noted among adolescents whose parents were married and attended church regularly, and their fathers were church leaders.

In a second examination of the above data, Woodroof (1986) studied the relationship between reference groups, religiosity, and premarital sexual behavior. Previous researchers have reported that adolescents who have friends who are sexually active will likely be sexually active (Schulz, Bohrnstedt, Borgotta, & Evans, 1977; DeLamater & MacCorquodale, 1979; Mirande, 1968; and Jessor & Jessor, 1977). In the present study, participants reported that following statistics for their friends: 60% were members of the churches of Christ, almost 50% were active in the church, 47% attended church services three times a week, 46% prayed regularly, and 38% studied their Bible often. Results of the study indicated that friends' perceptions of their sexual activity were somewhat related to their own experiences. Thirty-six percent of the participants reported that at

least one of their best friends was sexually active, while a little over 25% of them admitted being sexually active. Males and older respondents reported more sexually activity than females and younger respondents. Finally, if friends were both members of the same church, they were less permissive in regard to sexual expectations.

Studer and Thornton (1987) conducted a study of contraceptive usage among 224 sexually active, unmarried, religious female adolescents born in July 1961. This intergenerational, longitudinal study first centered on their mothers. Initial data was collected on each mother via a personal interview and five telephone interviews over an eighteen year period. Finally, in 1980, personal interviews and confidential questionnaires were completed by the adolescents. Thirty-eight percent of the adolescents who attended church services once or more per week reported having sexual intercourse, and 64% who attended church less than monthly reported engaging in sexual activity. Likewise, 45% of adolescents who said religion was important engaged in sexual activity, and 60% who said religion was not important were sexually active. Thirty-three percent of adolescents who attended church regularly used the pill, IUD or over-the-counter methods as their choice of birth control. Thirty-seven percent of the adolescent who felt that religion was important used the pill or IUD, and 30% used over-the-counter methods. On the other hand, 48% of adolescents who seldom went to church used the pill or IUD, and 17% used over-the-counter methods. Likewise, 42% who felt religion was not important used the pill or IUD, and 25% used over-the-counter methods. These results indicate that religious adolescents are more inclined to use medical methods of contraception than over-the-counter methods.

Thornton and Camburn (1989) further examined the above data to determine the relationship between religious affiliation and sexual behavior and the reciprocal influence of sexual behaviors and values on religious participation. In this review of the data, the researchers considered the responses of the mothers and the male and female adolescents. Therefore, the number of participants increased to 888. Results indicate that the premarital sexual attitudes of mothers are passed on to their children. The attitudes and religious attendance of mothers influence the sexual behavior of the children. In evaluating the reciprocal effect of premarital sex on religious attendance, premarital sexual attitudes have a statistically significant negative impact on religious attendance.

Petersen and Donnenwerth (1997) focused on secularization and the influence of religion on beliefs about premarital sex. They reexamined data from a study conducted by Davis and Smith (1993). The data was collected from 1,500 White adults over a twenty-one year period from 1972 through 1993. The participants listed their religious affiliation as being conservative Protestants (e.g., Baptist, Church of Christ, Assembly of God, and Nazarene), and mainline Protestant (e.g., Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, and Disciple of Christ). Findings indicated that beliefs about premarital sex were more permissive from the late 1980s to the early 1990s than during the 1970s. For example, 21.4% of participants indicated that premarital sex was acceptable in 1972, and 41.9% stated that premarital sex was acceptable in 1991. Results indicate that there is a decline in traditional beliefs about premarital sex over the years.

Meier (2003) used two waves (1995 and 1996) of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to examine two sets of relationships between attitudes, religiosity, and first sexual experience among adolescents: 1) the effect of religiosity and attitudes about

sex as a predictor of first sexual encounter, and 2) the effect of sexual intercourse on subsequent religiosity and attitudes. The study consisted of 4,948 male and female adolescents between the ages of 15 to 18. The adolescents had to be virgins in 1995 and never married by 1996. The adolescents also must not have been forced to engage in sexual activity during the two time periods. Results indicated that high religiosity reduced the likelihood of engaging in premarital sex, but the effect was greater for females than males. Personal as well as parental attitudes also contributed to the likelihood of adolescents participating in sexual behaviors. A more permissive attitude was a good predictor of first sex. In examining the effect of first sex on religiosity and attitudes, results indicated that experiencing sex for the first time between waves had no significant effect on religiosity for males or females. In this particular study, 19% of the participants engaged in sexual activity by the second wave.

Hardy and Raffaelli (2003) conducted a study with 303 teens aged 15-16 to examine bi-directional associations between religiosity and first sexual intercourse over a two year period. Church attendance and importance of religion were used to determine religiosity. Results indicated that teens who reported high religiosity were less likely to report sexual experience during the longitudinal study period. When evaluating for gender and race, the researchers did not find any significant differences. Finally, the researchers tested the relationship between transition to sexual activity and later religiosity and found no significant relationship. In other words, sexual activity did not predict a decrease in later religiosity.

In a later study, researchers Rostosky, Regnerus, and Wright (2003) conducted a longitudinal study of 3,691 adolescents (ages 15-21) to determine if adolescent religiosity

and sex attitudes are good predictors of age at which a male or female adolescent will participate in sexual intercourse for the first time. Findings indicated that religiosity reduced the likelihood of coital debut for both sexes. However, in examining the impact of race on sexual debut, African-American males who had signed virginity pledge or were more religious were significantly more likely to debut than less religious African-American males who had not signed a virginity pledge. After accounting for religiosity, negative feelings regarding the experience also reduced the likelihood of participating in sexual intercourse. In other words, an adolescent's internal value system was as much a predictor of adolescent sexual behavior as religious participation.

Other studies centered on the relationship between religiosity and adolescent drug usage. McIntosh, Fitch, Wilson, and Nyberg (1981) focused their study on the effect of mainstream religious social controls on adolescent drug usage in rural areas. The study consisted of 1,358 participants aged 12 to 19 years in grades seven through twelve. The sample included 723 males, 625 females, 405 African-Americans, 862 Whites, and 71 Mexican-Americans. Religious affiliation was listed as Fundamentalists (47), Church of God (48), Church of Christ (60), Baptist (532), Methodist-Moravian (130), Lutheran (99), Catholic (218), and Liberals (44). Findings indicated that church attendance and attachments to conventional parents and peers tend to deter adolescent drug use. On the other hand, adolescents whose parents and peers use or encourage drug usage are likely to use various types of drugs. Also, as the seriousness of drug usage increases, peers, parents, and religiosity become less effective in deterring drug use.

Albrecht and Amey (1996) used data from the Monitoring the Future Survey to study adolescent substance abuse among rural African-Americans. The study consisted of

12,168 African-American (16%) and White high school seniors. Forty-nine percent of the participants were female and 51% were males. The researchers examined the correlation between race, residence, gender, family structure, religious attendance, grade point average, and the availability of unearned income to determine patterns of substance abuse among adolescents. Findings indicated that urban and rural African-Americans are less likely than Whites to use any drug. Females are less likely than males to use drugs. Adolescents from two-parent families are least likely to engage in hard drug use. Children of highly educated parents are more likely to drink than smoke, 32% and 16% respectively. Adolescents who never attend religious services are more likely to use drugs than those who attend on a weekly basis. Adolescents with high GPAs and plans for the future used less drugs than other adolescents. Finally, both African-American and White parents of rural teens were less educated than urban parents. However, religion in rural homes was more important than religion in urban homes.

Bahr, Maughan, Marcos, and Li (1998) studied 13,250 seventh to twelfth grade adolescents to examine the relationship between family, religiosity, and the risk of drug usage. Eighty-three percent of the participants were White, 5% were Native American, 3% were Latino, and the remaining 9% were African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Pacific Islanders, and "other." Seventy-five percent were from two-parent families. Adolescents whose peers used drugs were more likely to use drugs. An increase in religiosity was a good indicator of negative drug use among adolescents and their friends. Parents who are religious have a stronger bond with their children, and the maternal bond is stronger than the paternal bond. Finally, adolescents who have family members who use drugs are more likely to have friends who use drugs.

Merrill, Salazar, and Gardner (2001) also conducted a study to evaluate the relationship between parental and family religiosity on adolescent substance abuse. The sample consisted of 1,036 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints undergraduate college students. Ninety-four percent of the participants were White, 50.4% were men, 13.8% reported previous drug usage, and the average age was 22 years. Thirty-two percent of the participants were seniors, 21% juniors, 17% sophomores, and 20% freshmen. Ninety-six percent of the adolescents attended weekly religious services. Results from the study indicated that 885 (86.2%) denied prior drug usage. Abstinence was attributed to the fact that the students believed drugs violated their religious beliefs and their personal moral code. Finally, the study also revealed that adolescents from less religious families were more likely to use drugs.

Emmons and Kneezeel (2005) conducted a study to determine the relationship between spiritual and religious commitments and gratitude among individuals with either congenital or adult-onset neuromuscular diseases. There were 199 participants in the study of which 84% identified themselves as Christians. The participants ranged in age from 23 to 85. Results from the study indicated that individuals who described a history of spiritual or religious experiences reported having more gratitude and a stronger commitment and responsibility to community and others than do individuals who are less spiritual or religious.

Wink, Dillon, and Fay (2005) used secondhand data from a longitudinal study to explore the relationship between spirituality, narcissism, and psychotherapy. Three hundred individuals participated in the study. Due to sample attrition, only 184 of the 300 participants were assessed during late adulthood. Results from the study indicated

that spiritual individuals reported having autonomous (healthy) narcissism in late adulthood. Individuals with healthy narcissism were characterized as being independent, high goal setters.

Beckwith and Morrow (2005) conducted a study with late adolescents to determine the impact of religiosity and spirituality on their attitudes towards sex. The participants in the study were 330 undergraduate students from a southeastern doctoral research institution. Results from the study indicate that students with religious attitudes held more conservative attitudes toward sex. In regards to spirituality, individuals who had experiences with spirituality or were pursuing a spiritual life tends to have conservative views towards sex.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 provided a critical examination of the relevant scholarly literature as a foundation for advancing the knowledge and understanding of adolescence and the meaning of spirituality. Chapter 2 examined the relationship between spirituality and adolescent development. It began by critically examining studies on the relationship between spirituality and development in general and the meaning of spirituality. It concluded with a focus on spirituality and choice for adolescents. Careful attention was directed towards: 1) adolescent development; 2) spiritual development; 3) adolescent spiritual development; 4) the meaning of spirituality; and 5) the use of spirituality. Chapter 3 will focus on the research methods and procedures used in the present study.

Chapter 3

The Best Way To Pray: A priest, a minister, and a guru sat discussing the best positions for prayer while a telephone repairman worked nearby. "Kneeling is definitely the best way to pray," the priest said, "No," said the minister. "I get the best results standing with my hands outstretched to Heaven." "You're both wrong," the guru said. "The most effective prayer position is lying down on the floor." The repairman could contain himself no longer. "Hey, fellas," he interrupted. "The best prayin' I ever did was when I was hangin' upside down from a telephone pole."

Research Methods and Procedures

Chapter 2 examined the relationship between spirituality and adolescent development, and concluded with a focus on the various meanings of spirituality. It began by critically examining studies on the relationship between spirituality and development in general and the meaning of spirituality. Careful attention was directed towards adolescent development, spiritual development, adolescent spiritual development, spirituality and choice, and the meaning of spirituality. Chapter 3 focuses on the research methods and procedures used in the present study. The chapter begins with a rationale for the research methods. Also included within the chapter is a brief introduction of my girls who participated in the study and my co-investigator, data collection procedures, and the data analysis. It is my hope that I will present my research methods and procedures in such a way that researchers will be able to use them as a map to duplicate the study.

Rationale for Research Method

As I began to plan the study, I had to determine which method, quantitative or qualitative, would be the most appropriate to use to obtain the information I was seeking from my girls. Merriam (1998) stated qualitative research is an encompassing term that uses different methods of inquiry to study people in their own environments (p. 5). Qualitative research focuses on how people feel and experience their surroundings (Sherman & Webb, 1998, p. 7). Qualitative researchers collect data that will help them to

understand how people make meaning of their world and the experiences they have within their world. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) explain that there are five characteristics of qualitative research. Qualitative data collection takes place in the natural setting and the researcher is the key instrument (p. 29). Qualitative researchers are concerned with why things happen, not just how many times they happen (p. 31). Qualitative researchers use inductive analysis (p. 31). In general, inductive researchers draw conclusions or develop hypotheses after the data has been collected and analyzed (Thyer, 2001, p. 351). “Meaning” is also an essential feature to the qualitative approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 29). The researcher is concerned about the way people make sense out of their lives.

Grinnell (1997) stated the qualitative approach to research acquisition is expansive in its inquiry to social work problems, whereas, the quantitative approach is intentionally limiting. While each approach serves an important and distinct function in reflecting reality, contributing to our knowledge base, and guiding our practice activities, there are some noted differences between them (p. 67).

Qualitative research data collection methods are in-depth interviews, direct observations, and written documents (Patton, 2002, p. 4). The qualitative method gives you more depth. In order to obtain quality data, the researcher must spend more time with fewer participants or use triangulation to collect more data. For example, a qualitative researcher will continue to interview participants until he or she reaches saturation. Data can also be obtained from interviews with significant others, archival documents, personal journals, multiple theories, and/or different investigators to acquire further details about the phenomena being studied.

Quantitative researchers use assessment instruments to reduce observations to measurable, numeric responses. The key quantitative data collection methods are surveys, tests, experiments, and secondary data (Patton, 2002, p. 13). These methods give greater breadth than qualitative research because the researcher is able to collect information from a larger number of participants. This information is less detailed than that obtained by qualitative researchers because it may reveal how many, but it doesn't tell you why a respondent answered a certain way.

Another way in which the two methods differ is in how they explore a phenomenon. Quantitative research has independent and dependent variables that are being studied, but qualitative research explores the whole concept (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Qualitative research is very descriptive. These careful attentions to details allow the reader to become a part of the environment (Patton, 2002, p. 437). In a qualitative study, the researcher is the instrument. It is more subjective. Therefore, the researcher must reveal skill and competency in the area that he or she is studying. The researcher must also remain focused and both become easily distracted (Patton, 2002, p. 14). In contrast, a quantitative researcher must make sure that the instrument that is being used measures what it is suppose to measure. Quantitative research is objective. It does not rely on the common sense or gut instincts of the researcher (Thyer, 2001, p. 30). The instrument must then be administered in the same order to all participants.

Both quantitative and qualitative research use direct observation when asking questions. The main differences between the two methods is that quantitative researchers ask structured, closed-ended questions either during face-to-face interviews or through slow mail or email surveys. The questions must be asked in order with no deviation in

the wording. Qualitative interviewers ask unstructured, open-ended questions that allow room for probing. Rubin and Babbie (2002) suggest that semi-structured interviews permits flexibility during the interview process. The investigator has the option to decide how and in what order the questions will be presented (p. 235). Both methods can be used to conduct research, but the qualitative method was more appropriate choice for me for the present study because of the questions that I wanted to be able to ask and the information I wanted to receive from my girls. Wanting to understand the meaning of spirituality and how it was used by my girls prompted me towards a qualitative study design which allowed me to ask semi-structured, probing questions of my girls in their natural environments.

Participant Selection Procedure

According to Glesne (1999), it is impossible to interview everyone that you would like to in a study. Therefore, a strategy needed to be used to obtain the most appropriate participants for the study. LeCompte, Preissle, and Tesch (1993) stated, “Criterion-based selection requires that the researcher establish in advance a set of criteria or a list of attributes that the units for study must possess. The investigator then searches for exemplars that match the specified array of characteristics” (p. 69). For the present study, I used the following criterion: 1) African-American female adolescent between the ages of 11 and 15; 2) Must either reside in Key, Sankofa or Diamond, Sankofa (fictitious names of towns to protect the anonymity of my girls); 3) Must have some knowledge of spirituality; and 4) Be able to articulate their thoughts. With the criterion in mind, I began the process of developing my questions while simultaneously thinking of people who could be recruited for my study. After my questions were developed (See

Appendix A), and I had determined which methods of data collection were appropriate for my study, such as individual face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews, journaling, artifacts, I started making contacts with parents known to me via telephone and face-to-face conversations. Being the mother of an adolescent girl gave me access to parents of adolescents. I contacted parents in both town of interest to obtain help in locating participants for my study. Even though I knew my circle of associates were small, I counted on the idea of each one reach one to increase the possibility of acquiring enough girls for the study. Parents, as well as their children, offered suggestions as to possible participants for my study.

Snowballing and maximum variation sampling (Glesne, 1999) were used to recruit 17 girls. My goal was to interview as many of these girls as possible until I reached saturation. I chose the number fifteen because I thought the number was large enough to obtain diversity among my girls, and I thought I could manage fifteen participants and their data without feeling overwhelmed. Hill and Williams (1997) suggested that 8 to 15 girls were needed to establish consistency in findings. Seventeen girls were initially recruited because I anticipated that there may be some participant fallout along the way. I was especially interested in studying African-American female adolescents between the ages of 11 and 15 because: 1) I am the mother of a 12-year-old adolescent; and 2) This age group has been underrepresented in studies. Caissy (1994) acknowledged that adolescents in this age range are the least studied population. among adolescents.

Compiltion of a list of 17 participants prompted me to begin making telephone or face-to-face contacts with their parents. Two families initially declined participation in the study. One girl declined to participate in the study because she questioned whether

could contribute to the study because as she put it “I don’t know anything about spirituality. I don’t know what I would say.”. In the other case another possible participant, the mother refused to allow her daughter to participate in the study. I had prior knowledge from the parent and adolescent that had referred this parent to me that she was a Jehovah’s Witness, and I was prepared for the possibility that she might not give permission for her daughter to participate in the study. This feeling resulted from my own biased understanding that Jehovah’s Witnesses do not normally engage in intimate relationships with individuals outside of their religion unless absolutely necessary. However, for diversity, the possibility of receiving rich data, and/or being totally wrong, I followed up on the lead as it was given. This particular mother listened attentively to my explanation about the study. Then, she proceeded to ask me a series of questions about my denomination and church attendance. I explained to her that I was non-denominational but had roots that stemmed from Baptist and Pentecostal upbringing. I reassured her that the information obtained from her daughter would be held confidential, and no one associated with the study would try to convert her daughter to another religion.

The mother stated that it would probably be helpful for her daughter to participate in the study because she might divulge information to me that she might not discuss with her. The mother wanted to know if she would have access to her daughter’s information. Wanting my girls to feel free to express themselves and to adhere to confidentiality, I informed the mother that no identifying information from the child would be provided, and the mother declined her daughter’s participation in the study. Both families that initially declined were provided with my contact information and instructed to contact me

if they changed their minds. The mother did not respond to my invitation for the duration of my study.

After I had obtained fifteen potential girls for my study, 10 from Diamond, Sankofa and 5 from Key, Sankofa, I began making telephone calls to schedule the individual face-to-face interview sessions. Appointments were made with my girls from Diamond, Sankofa first because they were larger in number and farther away from me than the girls in Key. It was my idea that I would have difficulty scheduling interviews with them because of geography and size. However, I was remarkably surprised to discover the exact opposite to be true. The girls in Diamond had very flexible schedules which allowed me to complete their interviews in one week. Scheduling interview appointments for my girls in Key, Sankofa proved to be quite difficult. Being closer geographically and being smaller in number gave me the idea that I would not have any difficulty scheduling these girls. However, what I had not anticipated was that my girls in Key, Sankofa and their siblings would participate in several extracurricular, recreational, and church activities which severely limited available time for them to participate in my study. In all, after much effort I was able to schedule appointments with 13 of the original possible girls. Two girls, one from each town, could not be reached and did not return left messages I left on their voice mail. Following the suggestion of my major professor, I was able to recruit one additional girl who agreed to participate in the focus group interview, but not the individual interview. The final sample consisted of fourteen girls between the ages of 11 and 15. There were approximately 2 to 3 girls for each age in the study which allowed for possible comparison and contrast later in the study. Two of the participants were bi-racial but considered themselves to be African-American. So, based

on self-report, they were included in the study. Of the final fourteen participants selected for the study, ten were from Diamond, Sankofa and four were from Key, Sankofa.

Finally, a co-investigator was hired to help with the data collection process. Because of repeated scheduling conflicts, my co-investigator was unable to participate in any of the individual interview sessions in either town. The same difficulty was noted when scheduling the focus group interviews. My co-investigator reported that she could attend the last focus group session that was scheduled in Key. The group was scheduled at the co-investigator's church, and I assumed everything was in order when I informed her of the time and place. Unfortunately, in my telling her the place, I did not tell her specifically where we would be in the church. I assumed, which I later found out should never be done in a study, that the co-investigator was familiar enough with the church whereas she would know where we were having the focus group. After the focus group session was completed, I observed my co-investigator outside in front of the church. When we saw each other, we both laughed and shook our heads. This was our last opportunity to work together in an interview atmosphere with the present study, and it was just not to be. I learned a valuable lesson in assuming in a study. Don't. I was able to use the co-investigator during my analysis phase of the study.

Limitations

Glesne (1999) stated "limitations helps readers know how they should read and interpret your work" (p. 152). The two limitations observed in the study center on sampling and research strategies. Purposeful sampling, not random sampling, was used to obtain girls for the study. It was my goal to choose girls who met the criterion for inclusion into the study, not representatives of the population. The research strategies

used in the study may pose additional limitations. Interviews, journaling, and artifacts were the data collection methods employed in the study. There are limitations for each of these methods, and these limitations will be examined later in this chapter. The use of multiple methods and the presentation of my procedures, data, and questionnaire should increase the possibility of replication of the study. However, one should understand that I, being the instrument, am human and is subject to human error. Also, my interpretations may be different from another human instrument.

My Girls

As stated previously, the criterion for inclusion in the study was: 1) African-American female adolescent between the ages of 11 and 15; 2) reside either in Diamond, Sankofa or Key, Sankofa; 3) be able to articulate thoughts and feelings; and 4) have some knowledge of spirituality. The fourteen girls who participated in this race-homogeneous, gender-specific study were all African-American female adolescents between the ages of 11 and 15. Specifically, there were three 11, 12, 13, and 14-year-olds and two 15-year-olds. One adolescent, Umoja, chose to participate in the group interview but not the individual interview.

Protecting the identity of my girls was very important to me. So, I asked each participant to choose an alias. Each alias was later changed by me in order to further increase the anonymity of my girls. Glesne (1999) stated, "Participants have a right to expect that when they give you permission to observe and interview, you will protect their confidences and preserve their anonymity" (p. 122). The new aliases reflect words that are significant to me as an African-American female.

Below is a brief biographical description of my girls. They are presented in ascending age order.

Trust is an eleven-year-old elementary school student who described herself as being an “A” student. She reported her favorite subject was Math because it was easy for her to understand. She is a member of her school’s 4-H Club and the Student Council. She likes participating in school activities because they are fun, educational, and beneficial for her school. When outside of school, she remains active by participating in cheerleading and gymnastics. She also reported being an active member of a Baptist church. Trust reported that church helped her to learn about God. She stated, “It gives me a chance to sing and talk about him and to learn about God.” Her family includes her parents and a younger male sibling.

Humor is an eleven-year-old middle school student who described herself as an “A” student. Her favorite subject in school is English because the work is easy, and if she has difficulty with a question, her teacher will help her with it. She is a member of the Beta Club in school, and she plays recreational basketball. She is a member of a non-denominational church and participates in its choir and dance team. She stated that church was an important part of her life. She stated, “It keeps on the right track. It helps me not to cuss and to teach other people how to do right at school when they try to cuss, pick on people, and fight.” She lives with her parents, three female siblings, and one male sibling. She identified herself as being the youngest sibling.

Joy is an eleven-year-old middle school student. She described herself as being a “B” student. Her favorite subject is Band because she loves to play her instrument and participate in an activity that she feels is not accessible to every student. She reported

living with her mother, mother's boyfriend, and an older male sibling. Joy's mother is White and her father is African-American. Due to her self-identification of being Black, Joy was included in the study. She reported attending church infrequently with friends or her father and grandmother when she visited them during school vacations. She reported that church was an enjoyable experience for her. She reportedly joined the church, but she doesn't know which church she became a member of. She stated, "I like going to church. I just feel happy and blessed to be there. Just being there with my family makes me happy."

Belief is a twelve-year-old middle school student. She described herself as being a "B" student. She is a member of the school's basketball team. She enjoys participating in outer school activities such as Mime, Choir, and Girl Scouts. Belief reported joining a Baptist church and attending services on a regular basis. She describes church as a place of comfort. She reported, "They [church members] make me feel comfortable. When I first joined the church, I didn't know anybody. I was feeling shy until they came and talked to me. She lives with her parents and younger male sibling.

Honor is a twelve-year-old middle school student who lives alone with her mother. She described herself as being an "A". She is a member of a Baptist church and attends church on a regular basis. Church is a place of enlightenment for her. She reported, "Church helps me to know that the devil mainly looks at youths, and that I have to watch out for him." She is the youngest of four children.

Umoja is a twelve-year-old middle school student. She described herself as being an "A" student. She is a member of Future Business Leaders of America, School Orchestra, and The Step Team. She denies any participation in any church activities. She reported

being a member of a non-denominational church. Umoja resides with her mother and has four siblings.

Integrity is a thirteen-year-old middle school student. She described herself as being a “B” student. She denied participation in any school, church, or recreational activities. She admitted to playing basketball at home and attending church on an infrequent basis with her maternal and paternal grandmothers. Integrity sees church as being a place of instruction. She stated, “It teaches me a lot of things that I haven’t learned. It taught me that I was somebody. It taught me that I didn’t have to try to impress others just because they want me to.” She described herself as an only child who lives with her mother in a multi-generational household. In addition to her mother, she also resides with her grandmother, aunt, uncle, and male cousin.

Hospitality is a thirteen-year-old middle school student. She reported being a “B” student. She is active in Tumbling. She also a member of her church’s choir and dance ministry. She is also a member of a Baptist church and attends services on a regular basis with her family. She likes church because “it is fun and it makes you learn a lot of things. I also like singing.” She lives with her parents and two female siblings.

Victory is a thirteen-year-old middle school student. She reported being a “B” student. She reported that her favorite subject was Science because found it to be easier than other subjects. She is active in recreational basketball and track. She is a member of a non-denominational church and attends services on a regular basis. She sees church as being a source of structure. She stated, “Church teaches you how to pray.” She reported living with her parents and four siblings. When she was given other

opportunities to expand on her definition of spirituality, Victory continued to focus on fun and recreation.

Beauty is a fourteen-year-old high school student. She stated that Lunch was her most favorite subject because she enjoys talking and having fun. She reported being a “C” student. She also reported being a member of the Junior ROTC and Band in her school and is an usher in her Baptist church. Beauty sees church as a teacher and social setting. She stated, “It helps you to think. It helps you to let things out. It helps you to mature and meet more people.” She resides with her mother, step-father, and two younger female siblings.

Heritage identified herself as being a fourteen-year-old, straight “A”, middle school student. Her favorite subject in school is Language Arts because she wants to be a News Anchorman. She is active in her school. She holds membership in the Band, Beta Club, and Future Business Leaders of America. She also participates in recreational softball, takes voice and piano lessons, and sings in the church choir. She sees her Baptist church as a place as a source of education and socialization. She stated, “They [church volunteers] keep me active in a lot of things. I just don’t really want to be at home. We have choir practices and teen meeting. They get groups together to help us which get some people off the street and prevent them from doing bad things. They keep you centered on what you really need to be doing.” She resides with her parents and two younger siblings.

Love is a fourteen-year-old high school student. She reported being a “C” student. She reported liking Science because she enjoyed solving difficult problems. She is very active in school organizations and shares her time between Track, Cheerleading, and the

Math Team. She also enjoys participating in activities at her Baptist church, such as the choir and dance ministries. She relates to church as being a learning environment. She stated, “Church for me is like school. You learn about Jesus and what He does.” Love resides with her mother, her legal father, and two sisters. Love’s biological father is White and her mother is African-American. Love refers to herself as African-American and was included in the study.

Peace is a fifteen-year-old high school student who enjoys Language Arts and grammar. She reported being a “C” student. She is a member of the Family Career Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). It is an organization which helps them to focus on their goal and the future. She is also an active member of a non-denominational church and enjoys singing and dancing in the church. She described church as being uplifting. She stated, “When you have had a bad week, church helps to lift your spirit. It helps you to feel stronger. It’s a place where you can feel free.” She lives with her parents and four siblings.

Courage is a fifteen-year-old high school student. She reported having a “C” average. She denied participating in any school activities. She reported being a member of a non-denominational church. She reported that church was educational. She stated, “They [church leaders] teach you how to be a teenager. They teach you about Jesus Christ and how he died for us.” She lives with her parents.

Co-investigator

A co-investigator was hired to increase the trustworthiness of the data. My co-investigator was a staff member of a major university in the South. She reported having a Master’s Degree in Social Work. She reported attending church on a regular basis and is

a member of her church's Young Adult Sunday school. She currently resides in Key, Sankofa but is originally from a southern state. It was my intention to share the interview setting with my co-investigator. It was my intentions that she would help conduct individual interviews and to monitor the body language and verbal responses of my girls during both the individual and group interviews. However, due to constant scheduling conflicts between the availability of my girls and my co-investigator, the co-investigator was not able to conduct or participate in any of the individual interview sessions. She agreed that she would be able to participate in one of the focus group sessions, but as previously mentioned, due to miscommunication, she was able to attend this session either. At the suggestion of my major professor, I asked my co-investigator to provide feedback on her interpretations of my girls' transcriptions.

Data Collection Procedures

For this interpretative qualitative study, I chose to use four data collection methods to increase the trustworthiness of the data. The four methods I chose to use were individual interviews, focus group interviews, journaling, and artifacts. After receiving permission from the Institutional Review Board to conduct the present study, I began collecting data for my study. The first principal method I used to collect data in the study was individual interviews. A questionnaire (See Appendix A) was used during the semi-structured individual face-to-face interview. The purpose of the individual interviews with African-American female adolescents was to obtain information about their experiences with spirituality and its affect on their lived experiences. Individual interviews are effective with this population because they are confidential, focus on one girl, and provide valuable insight into that girl's life (Bickman & Rog, 1998, p.231). Kvale (1996) stated

that the interview is used to help the reader to understand how the interviewee feels about the situation, what it means to him or her, and how every part of his or her life has been affected by the experience.

The individual interviews were predominately conducted in the participants' homes. Glesne (1999) reported that a participant's willingness to cooperate with the researcher may be contingent on how unbothersome it is to see the researcher. Because of their busy schedule one family chose a church as their interview sight. Allowing the participants to choose a comfortable interview sight was an important step in establishing rapport with my girls. It was noted by Bogdan & Biklen (1992) that when good rapport has been established, the adolescent may be willing to reveal data that is thicker, more descriptive, more accurate, and highly personal.

Having the interviews conducted in my girls' homes appeared to be less bothersome for twelve parents because they did not have to interrupt their schedules to transport their children to the interview site. For example, Love's mother diligently worked on a school assignment, Honor's mother cleaned the house, Heritage's mother ran errands, and Humor's mother watched television while their daughters were being interviewed. My girls appeared to benefit from being in their home environments. The girls appeared to be relaxed and comfortable as they answered questions. Belief cleaned her bedroom and folded clothes. She would pause to answer questions. Peace sat and leaned back on her bed as she answered questions. Integrity seemed to have the most distraction during her interview. She had a younger cousin who was quite fascinated by the interviewing process and frequently positioned himself in the interview room only to be called out by his mother or uncle. One time he walked into the room as I was asking Integrity a

question, and he proceeded to try to answer it for her. Integrity covered his mother with her hand and put a finger up to her mouth to indicate that she did not want him to say anything. This visitation brought his mother from her bedroom, and she proceeded to take him by his arm and lead him out of the room. Finally, his uncle took him outside. Being in the home was advantageous for me, too, because it allowed me to collect richer data by obtaining first-hand observations of my girls in their natural environments (Glesne, 1999, p. 24). As reported previously, one girl, Umoja, did not want to participate in the individual interview session. As I probed for greater understanding, she shyly leaned her head to the side and said, “I just don’t want to do it. I want to be in the group part. I’ll do that.” Another girl, Trust, met me at a local church for her individual interview which was more convenient for her parents. Trust’s mother reported that it would be more feasible more me to meet them at church because they were normally there on Wednesdays for choir practice. This setting was convenient, but like Integrity, Trust’s interview was sometimes disrupted by individuals coming into the room. They would apologize and walk backwards as they closed the door to exit the classroom that we were in.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format which allowed for deeper probing based on participants’ responses. The interview questionnaire (See Appendix A) was designed to incorporate a variety of the participants’ thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and public and private experiences. Rubin and Babbie (2001) suggested that semi-structured interviews permit flexibility during the interview process, and the investigator has the option to decide how and in what order the questions will be presented (p. 235). Modifications were made to the original questionnaire to include

suggestions from my major professor and information redeemed significant based on my first interview with one of the girls (Patton, 2002, p. 27). For instance, my major professor suggested that I ask questions about what life was like for African-American female adolescents. I wanted to ask questions that probed more into the affects of spirituality on their lives, such as “What do you dislike about spirituality?” My goal was to make my questions more balanced as to not appear that I wanted my girls to have a particular mindset when it came to spirituality.

The interviews began with a brief introduction with each girl and her parent. This was followed by an overview of the study. Each girl and her parent were again informed that the participation in the study was completely voluntary, and they could withdraw participation at any time. Signatures on the consent and assent scripts were obtained from both the parent and the girl. Notification of confidentiality was discussed, and if there were no further questions, the interview began.

The amount of interviewing time varied with each girl. The shortest interviewee was Courage, and her session lasted approximately 30 minutes. The longest interviewee was Heritage with her session lasting approximately 90 minutes. On average the sessions were 60 minutes in length. To ensure the accuracy of the data received, all of the interviews were audio recorded. Audio-recording provides a more accurate account of what was said and allowed the researcher to pay closer attention to the interview (Glesne, 1999, p. 78). I encountered a problem with the microphone during Victory’s interview sessions and a group session. Anticipating the possible malfunctioning of an audio recorder, I carried two audio recorders with me into the field. Unfortunately, the microphones on either recorder did not recorder the sessions clearly. Arrangements were

made with Victory to conduct another session with them. The group session was also rescheduled. This will be discussed further under the group interview. The audio-recording were later transcribed initially by me, and then by a hired transcriptionist. Following the suggestion of my major professor, I applied for and received funding for my study which enabled me to hire the transcriptionist. Throughout the study, I analyzed and coded the transcripts for emerging themes or patterns.

Journaling was the second method of data collection I used in the present study (See Appendix B). This method of data collection is beneficial for adolescents because they use their own personal knowledge, beliefs, and experiences to convey their thoughts and ideas to the reader (Elbow & Clarke, 1987). Journaling allowed my girls the freedom to express their feelings. Beach (1977) stated that adolescents will have a vestige interest in a project if they are allowed to experience the creative control that writing permits.

Immediately following the individual interview, each participant was asked to explain what spirituality meant to her by either writing a short essay or poem, or drawing a picture. Humor wrote a poem; Belief, Peace, Honor, and Heritage drew pictures; Beauty included a small drawing on her essay; and the remaining girls wrote short essays of varying lengths. The one-time writing experience was beneficial for the study because it provided valuable leads for a more detailed study, and it verified other data that was presented in the study. As with interviewing, I analyzed the documents repeatedly in private to obtain patterns and themes that emerged from the data (Grinnell, 1997, p. 120).

Obtaining an artifact that represented spirituality to my girls was the next method of data collection that I used. Researchers have documented the importance of artifacts in studies. "Artifacts provide evidence for the topics and questions ethnographers address

because they are material manifestations of cultural beliefs and behaviors” (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993, p. 216). In regards to photographs, Becker (1986) stated, “Every part of the photographic image carries some information that contributes to its total statement; the viewer’s responsibility is to see, in the most literal way, everything that is there and respond to it” (p. 231). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) stated, “Pictures enable the viewer to explore what is important to the individual. While photos may not be able to prove anything conclusively, when used in conjunction with other data, they can add to a growing pile of evidence” (p. 145). Photographs can reveal what is important to people, push analysis to another level, and offer deeper insight into the meaning individuals place on their world. Photographs, along with other forms of data, increase the trustworthiness of the data

The girls in my present study were asked to show me an artifact that represented spirituality to them. LeCompte, Preissle, and Tesch (1993) suggest “placing the document in retrievable form, such as a photograph, film, or tape, to make it accessible for further manipulation” (p. 219). The researchers further recommended asking the following questions as you analyze the artifact: “Who uses it, and how is its use allocated? Who cannot or does not use it? Is it used by individuals or by a group? How many people use it? Is it read, manipulated, or displayed? Where and in how many different locations is it used? Under what circumstances and for what purposes is the artifact used? What meaning does the artifact have for the users? How is an object similar to or different from other materials in the same category?” (p. 219).

After each girl presented her artifact to me, I photographed the artifact for later analysis and returned the original artifact to the girl. Humor, Belief, Honor, Hospitality,

Victory, Beauty, Love, Peace, and Courage obtained personal artifacts from their bedrooms; Integrity and Heritage obtained public artifacts from their dining rooms; and Trust, forgetting to bring her artifact from home to the interview, obtained an artifact from the church. When I interviewed Joy I did not remember to ask her for an artifact. Later attempts at trying to obtain an artifact proved unsuccessful. So, I do not have an artifact for her. However, during her interview, Joy mentioned that her grandmother had given a Bible when she was younger, and it was much worn from her frequently using it. I think that she probably would have presented her Bible as her artifact because of its significance to her. Pictures of the artifacts and the results of analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

During my study, I obtained photocopies of artifacts that represented spirituality to my girls. These artifacts were retrieved from both private and public places. Nine of the girls retrieved artifacts from their private bedrooms, two from their public dining rooms, and one from the church where the interview was conducted. I was unable to reach one girl to obtain a photocopy of an artifact from her or to ask her what artifact she would have chosen. Pictures of the artifacts are presented in Chapter 4. Girls were presented with a Wal-Mart gift certificate for their participation in the individual interview sessions.

The fourth and final method of data collection I used in my present study was group interviews. Focus group interviews are advantageous because group members could stimulate each other to think or talk more. This is intended to increase dialogue and open the door for more probing by the participants and the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 100). The results obtained are more believable because any responses can be validated by other participants (Krueger, 1994, p. 8). My original intent was to conduct two focus

group interviews: one in Diamond, Sankofa and one in Key, Sankofa. As can happen in any study, the researcher should be prepared for the unexpected. I ended up conducting four focus group interviews instead of two: three in Diamond, Sankofa and one in Key, Sankofa.

The group interviews were conducted in public and private settings. The first group interview was conducted in a public classroom at the recreational center in Diamond, Sankofa. Prior to reserving the classroom, I communicated with the center's staff to obtain a list of days when the classroom would be available. Next, I contacted each of my girls and their parents to see which days were better for them. The classroom was reserved for the day in which the majority of the girls, seven, could attend the group meeting. Humor, Honor, Victory, Beauty, Peace, Courage, and Umoja attended the first group meeting. Three girls from Diamond, Sankofa did not attend the first group meeting. Joy and Belief were out-of-town, and Integrity forgot to attend the meeting. A telephone call to her residence revealed that she had gone to visit her grandmother.

The recreation room contained tables and chairs. I noticed that the girls were seated around one table as they interacted together before the meeting. Introductions were made between two girls who did not know each other. Before beginning the group, I asked the girls to arrange their chairs in a circle to encourage better dialogue between the girls.

The girls formed a circle close to large windows that overlooked a pond. The view made for a relaxed setting, but I was slightly nervous during the beginning portion of the group. My nervousness stemmed from not knowing how my girls would respond in a group setting. Going ahead with the group, I re-introduced myself to my girls again and established rules for the group. Confidentiality and respect were repeatedly encouraged,

especially since the girls were familiar to each other and lived in a small town. With the formalities being out of the way, I began asking questions. The group process seemed like it was going to be unsuccessful at first because my girls seemed to repeat what someone else had said. The meeting continued and girls not only started becoming more verbal, but they also asked questions of me and other participants. Following the group session, the girls were provided with a Wal-Mart gift card and refreshments. A parent volunteer helped with the food preparations.

After the group session, I listened to the tapes before giving them to my transcriptionist. To my surprise, I could not understand either audio-tape. I gave my tapes to the transcriptionist to see if she would have better luck than I did. She could not understand the tapes either. The phrase “all well made plans” echoed in my ears. The only thing I could do was to conduct another group. The positive part about this was that maybe the three girls that were unable to attend the first group could attend the second group. Trying to schedule one group became a chore. The second time I was only able to schedule three girls, Umoja, Beauty, and Honor, for the group meeting. Again, I scheduled a third group and only four girls, Umoja, Humor, Victory, and Peace, were in attendance. The second and third groups were held in the homes of Beauty and Peace, respectively. The lack of available funding prohibited me from being able to schedule additional groups at the recreational center. Reaching saturation in Diamond, Sankofa, I proceeded to schedule my group meeting with my girls in Key, Sankofa.

Scheduling the group meeting in Key, Sankofa proved to be less stressful than scheduling the individual interviews. The discovery of a commonality among the group members proved to be the key. Each of the girls from Key, Sankofa attended the same

church and were usually present at the church for choir practice on Wednesdays. The parents mutually agreed upon a Wednesday that worked well for their children to be able to remain at the church after choir practice to participate in the group meeting. The classroom used at the church was much smaller than the classroom in Diamond, Sankofa and did not offer a nature view from the window. As a matter of fact, the church classroom did not have a window at all. The smaller classroom worked well since I had a smaller group. Each of the four girls had previously reported that they would be in attendance at the meeting, but Trust did not come to the meeting. The girls that were attendance were quite different from the Diamond, Sankofa girls. These girls immediately started talking. It was difficult for me to ask my questions. Since the meeting was semi-structured, I went with the flow of the group in order to observe what was really significant with the girls. Like the previous groups in Diamond, the girls in this group focused more on situations that they were experiencing in their daily interactions with family, school, and peer members. The girls in Key, Sankofa also received refreshments and a Wal-Mart gift card after the group meeting. Each group averaged about 75 minutes in length.

After the initial field data was obtained through interviews, journaling, artifacts, and group meetings, I member checked to further increase the trustworthiness of the study. Through member checking, I was able to clarify information, increase the credibility of the study, stimulate additional thinking, and verify interpretations. The members were allowed to review their transcripts, my interpretations of their data, and to make corrections as needed. No transcripts were left with the participants because I

wanted to keep their information as confidential as possible, especially since I was working with minors.

Limitations

In this section, I will address the limitations noted in this qualitative study. I worked diligently to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected in the study. Schwandt (1997) defined trustworthiness or research validity as a quality of an investigation (and its findings) that made it noteworthy to audiences. In a qualitative study, or any study for that matter, one can not guarantee the validity and reliability of the data. However, in a qualitative study, there may be a greater possibility of human error because the researcher is the instrument, and the researcher has to rely on the participants to give accurate responses. Participants, according to Bickman and Rog (1998), may have poor memory recall or the questions may be poorly constructed by the researcher. Since I worked with adolescents, there is a possibility that they could have accidentally or deliberately verbalized the responses that they thought I wanted to hear or did not fully understand a question. For example, I asked Peace a question. After she stated she didn't know, I rephrased the question in order to stimulate her thinking. Her response to this was "You really want me to answer that one, don't you?" and laughed. What I thought would be helpful was interpreted as "I must answer this question."

Another limitation to the study was having a daughter close in age and familiar to girls in the study. Being in a position of authority and having daughter known to them could have placed them in a position of wanting to please me or not wanting to reveal some aspects of their lives to me. Thyer (2001) stated participants may not be totally honest, either deliberately or non-deliberately. On the other hand, it is possible that the girls

might have revealed things to me that they had not shared with their parents. As stated earlier in this chapter, when I was recruiting participants for my study, one girl's mother stated that her daughter might confide something in me that she might not have told her. Although this particular mother did not give consent for her daughter to participate in the study, she was aware that this could happen.

Data Analysis

This section of the chapter will focus on my data analysis. In order to make sense of the large amount of data, I began the process of analyzing and interpreting the data with the verbatim transcription of the interviews. Initially, I transcribed my first interview because I wanted to transcribe the tape as soon after I returned from the field as possible. I wanted to listen for such things as the way I asked question, the way my girl answered my question, my interpretations of what was happening in the setting, and which additional questions I needed to answer. As anticipated, I discovered that I needed to probe deeper because I did not feel like I had gained enough data from my first interview. I contacted my girl and her mother, and they were agreeable to further questioning. This process of reviewing the audio tapes and giving them to my transcriptionist immediately

After I had obtained all of my interview transcriptions, individual and group, from my transcriptionist, I attended two workshops on qualitative research software, Nudist6 and NVivo, to learn more about coding and data analysis. Funding for the workshops was provided through my major department. After completing the workshops, I attempted to purchase the software from other funding that was provided through my major department, and I was informed that I could not use the money to purchase software programs. Since the software could not be purchased with departmental funding, I

manually applied the coding techniques I had learned during the workshop. The transcriptions and journals were read and re-read and the artifacts were evaluated and reevaluated. Commonalities and differences were noted in the margins of the transcriptions and on separate sheets of papers for the artifacts.

Inductive analysis was used to analyze and draw conclusions about the data for the study. Patton (2002) stated “interpretation involves going beyond the descriptive data. Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusion, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order on an unruly but surely patterned world” (p. 480). I examined the data for findings and emerging themes without trying to limit them predict or to predict what those findings and themes would be in advance. In analyzing the data I wanted to gain a greater awareness of how my girls defined and used spirituality in their lives.

Limitations

In a qualitative study, or any study for that matter, one can not guarantee the validity and reliability of the data. Since this was a qualitative study, there was a greater possibility of human error because I was the instrument. Intuition, logic, and analytical skills were tools I used to compare and contrast the participants’ responses. In completing this process, I was aware that my own prejudices and biases might influence my perceptions. LeCompte, Preissle, and Tesch (1993) stated “Qualitative research is distinguished partly by its admission of the subjective perception and biases of both participants and researcher into the research frame” (p. 92).

Based on my perception of their responses, I developed inductive statements to draw conclusions (Thyer, 2001, p. 351). Using Inductive analysis, I examined the data for emerging themes without trying to limit them or predict what those themes were in advance. In drawing my conclusions, I understand that they may be tarnished with my own prejudices and biases. I attempted to eliminate my prejudices and biases as much as possible during all phases of the study, but I realized self was ultimately involved because I was the instrument. Instead of pretending like I didn't have any prejudices, I utilized them to help me to become more conscious of my perceptions and analyses.

Conclusion

Chapter 3 focused on the research methods and procedures used in the present study. The chapter began with a rationale for the research methods. Also included within the chapter was a brief introduction of my girls who participated in the study and my co-investigator, data collection procedures, and the data analysis. I believe that I have presented my research methods and procedures in such a way that they can be used as a map for researchers who would like to duplicate the study. Chapter 4 focuses on my research findings.

Chapter 4

A kindergarten teacher gave her class a "show and tell" assignment. Each student was instructed to bring in an object to share with the class that represented their religion. The first student got up in front of the class and said, "My name is Benjamin and I am Jewish and this is a Star of David." The second student got up in front of the class and said, "My name is Mary. I'm a Catholic and this is a Rosary." The third student got in up front of the class and said, "My name is Tommy. I am Baptist, and this is a casserole."

Findings

Chapter 3 focused on the research methods and procedures used in the present study. Included within the chapter was my rationale for the research methods, an introduction of my girls and co-investigator, the data collection procedures, and data analysis. Chapter 4 is a presentation of my research findings. The findings give a richer understanding of spirituality and its affects on the lives of the participants. The purpose of this chapter is to present my research findings. The findings give a richer understanding of spirituality and how spirituality is used by my girls in their everyday lives. The presentation of findings centers on the two research questions presented in Chapter 1. The first part of the chapter reveals a finding related to the first research question: What is the meaning of spirituality to African-American female adolescents? My finding reveals adolescents have multiple meanings for spirituality. Their meanings are broken into four themes: 1) spirituality is sacred; 2) spirituality exemplifies culture; 3) spirituality represents victory and triumph; and 4) spirituality is having concern for people. The latter part of the chapter reveals a finding related to the second research question: How do African-American female adolescents use spirituality in their everyday lives? The finding noted for this research question is that spirituality is used as "self-talk" messages by African-American female adolescents. "Self talk" is defined as any form of internal dialogue perceived by the individual, such as instincts, feelings,

thoughts, conscience, senses, or a voice. Two themes emerged from the finding of “self-talk”: 1) making the right choice; and 2) having a “can do” attitude. Transcriptions, journaling, and artifacts are used to facilitate the presentation of findings. These multiple methods of data collection increase the accuracy and credibility of my findings (Creswell, 2005, p. 252). Additionally, when possible, I referred to Stewart’s Model of African-American Spirituality to support my findings and themes. Two assumptions were made: 1) participants would be able to articulate and document their experiences with spirituality; and 2) spirituality could be defined and investigated.

Diverse Meanings

As stated above, the first part of this chapter focuses on my finding in regards to the first research question: What is the meaning of spirituality to African-American female adolescents? My finding for this question was my girls have diverse meanings for spirituality. My finding was consistent with the literature presented in Chapter 2 (Roberts, 2004; Sprecace, 2002; Sheldrake, 2000; Schneiders, 1999). Specifically, there is no consistent meaning of spirituality. Crotty, a researcher, stated that this inconsistency in meaning is expected because individuals construct their own meanings as they engage with their environment (1998, p. 43). My finding reveals that this ongoing debate regarding the meaning of spirituality is consistent with previous research on spirituality. Spirituality is neither an easily definable word nor is its meaning consistent from adolescent to adolescent.

Spirituality had multiple meaning to my girls. Adolescents in my study were able to express what spirituality meant to them based on their own lived experiences with spirituality. Four themes emerge from my data in regards to the finding that spirituality

has various meanings to the participants. They are: 1) spirituality is sacred; 2) spirituality represents culture; 3) spirituality represents victory and triumph; and 4) spirituality is having concern for people.

Sacred

The first theme that supports the finding that spirituality has various meanings to my girls is spirituality is sacred. For the sake of the study, based on my own experiences, I define sacred as pertaining to God, the soul/spirit, the church, and having God as a confidante. Stewart's sacralative or consecrative function of the Model of African-American Spirituality (1999) emphasized the importance of the soul to African-Americans. Stewart believed that the soul was more important than self to African-Americans. Excerpts from the data obtained from Trust, Joy, Honor, Hospitality, Heritage, Love, Courage, and Beauty illustrate a sacred meaning of spirituality. The participants reported the following information during their individual interviews when they were asked to give their meaning of spirituality.

Trust stated,

“It means being a Christian. It means coming to church. It means learning about God.”

Peace stated,

“It's like religion. It is what you believe.”

Joy stated,

“It means like you are spiritual when you are Catholic or Baptist or whatever. You go to church, and you are just spiritual about going to church and stuff. It's like going to church and being active in church activities and stuff. That's spiritual to me.”

Honor stated,

“It is the way people act when it comes to the Bible and stuff. Are they happy or sad when it comes to church? Do they understand what it’s about?”

Hospitality stated,

“It is like believing in God and the spirit and stuff. Believing in God is the main thing.”

Heritage stated,

“It means like you have a strong belief in your religion. For instance, if you are a Christian, you have different beliefs in things about God than other people do. You strongly believe in just your religion. You avoid all other types of religion. You don’t literally avoid them, but you don’t take part in those types of religions. You try to follow your religion.”

Love stated,

“Spirituality is being close to the Lord.”

Beauty’s meaning of spirituality centered on God being her only confidante. She stated,

“I guess it is how you feel deep down like things you don’t want to let anybody know.”

These portions of verbatim transcriptions from individual face-to-face interviews support the finding that spirituality has a sacred meaning for some of my girls in the study. My girls focused on the church, God, denomination, and religion in illustrate that spirituality has a sacred meaning to them. The participants were also able to illustrate the sacredness of spirituality through their journaling and artifacts. These methods of data collection are presented below beginning first with the journals and then with the artifacts. The following transcription is from my girls’ journaling activity.

Joy wrote about having multiple avenues to understanding the sacredness of spirituality.

Joy wrote,

“Well, spirituality to me is just being spiritual. By that I mean that you can start going to church more, praying, and watching church on television. Do activities with the church or anything that has to do with spirituality or being spiritual. Mostly it means knowing about God and what happened, like something about Jesus or Mary or anybody in the Bible.”

Love wrote,

“I think spiritually means to be close to God. To be able to talk to him, understand the Bible, and knowing that the Lord will always be there for you. The Lord will answer your prayers, watch out for you everyday, and protect you from harm. I think everyone should know that God is a forgiving God. I think a lot of kids are afraid to talk to him because they are ashamed of what they have done in the past. But they should know that the loving and forgiving.”

Heritage opted to use her journal to draw a picture that represented the sacredness of spirituality to her. Her drawing consisted of a girl kneeling and praying. In the drawing, the girl had thoughts of love, peace, hope, determination, Jesus, angels, and the pearly gates of heaven as she prayed.



Figure 1. Heritage's drawing: Praying girl

Beauty's journaling activity was a drawing and commentary centered on having a personal relationship with God and being relieved of any feelings of guilt related to shame.

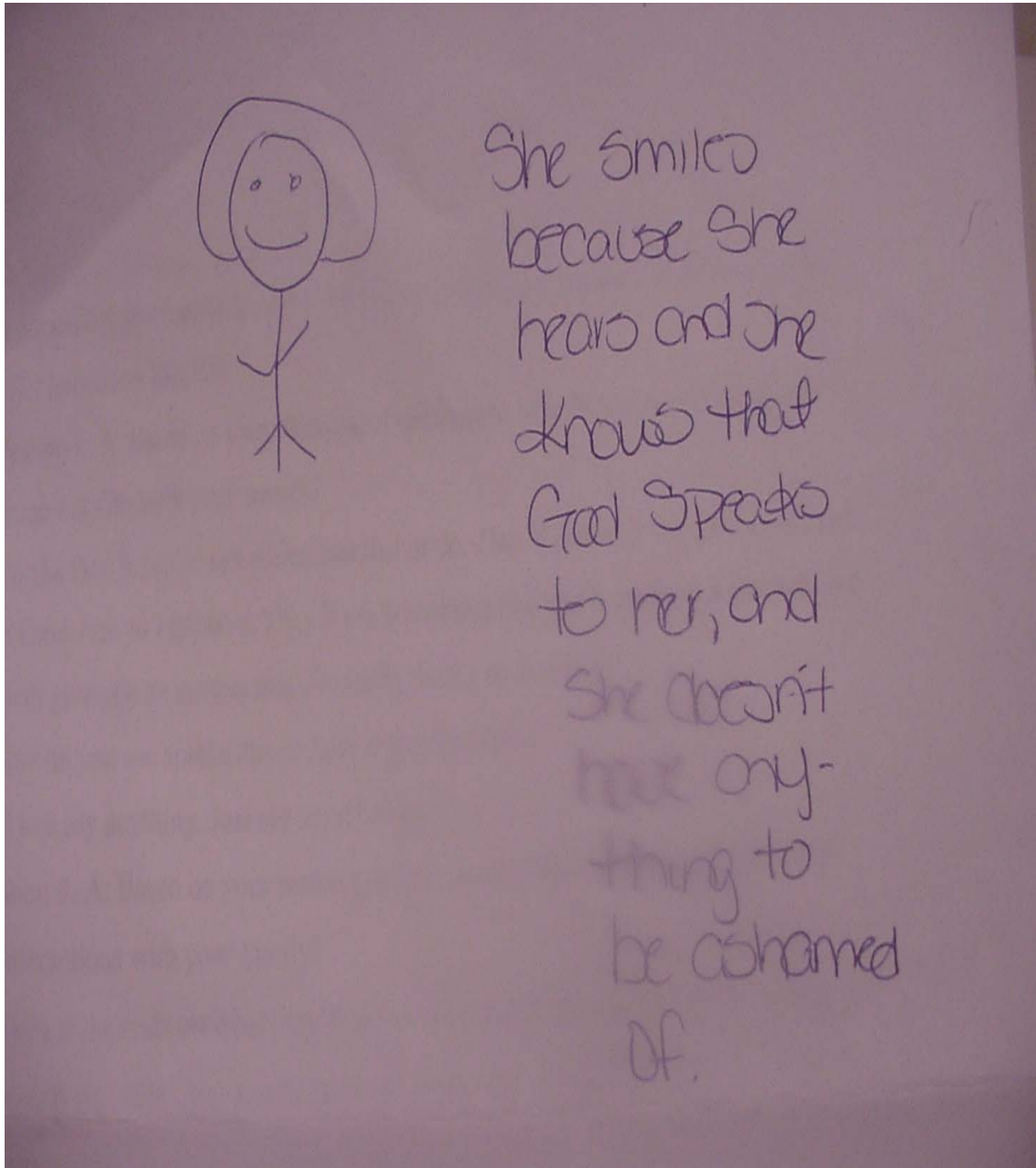


Figure 2. Beauty's drawing: Communication with God

My girls also used artifacts to represent the sacredness of spirituality. The artifacts that were sacred in nature to me because of my own subjective experiences with spirituality were the Holy Bible, the Ten Commandments, praying hands, and CDs of spiritual hymns. Artifacts that represent the sacredness of spirituality also expand to a collection of inspirational reading material and angels.

The first artifact that is presented in this section is the Holy Bible. The Holy Bible is associated with individuals who follow the Judeo-Christian belief. The Holy Bible is the main reading source of inspiration and guidance for Judeo-Christian believers. Trust, Peace, and Courage chose the Holy Bible as their artifact. Courage's bible was more worn than Peace's bible which may indicate that Courage had a closer relationship with her artifact. However, the same assumption can not be made in regard to Trust because her artifact was obtained from the church where her interview was conducted.

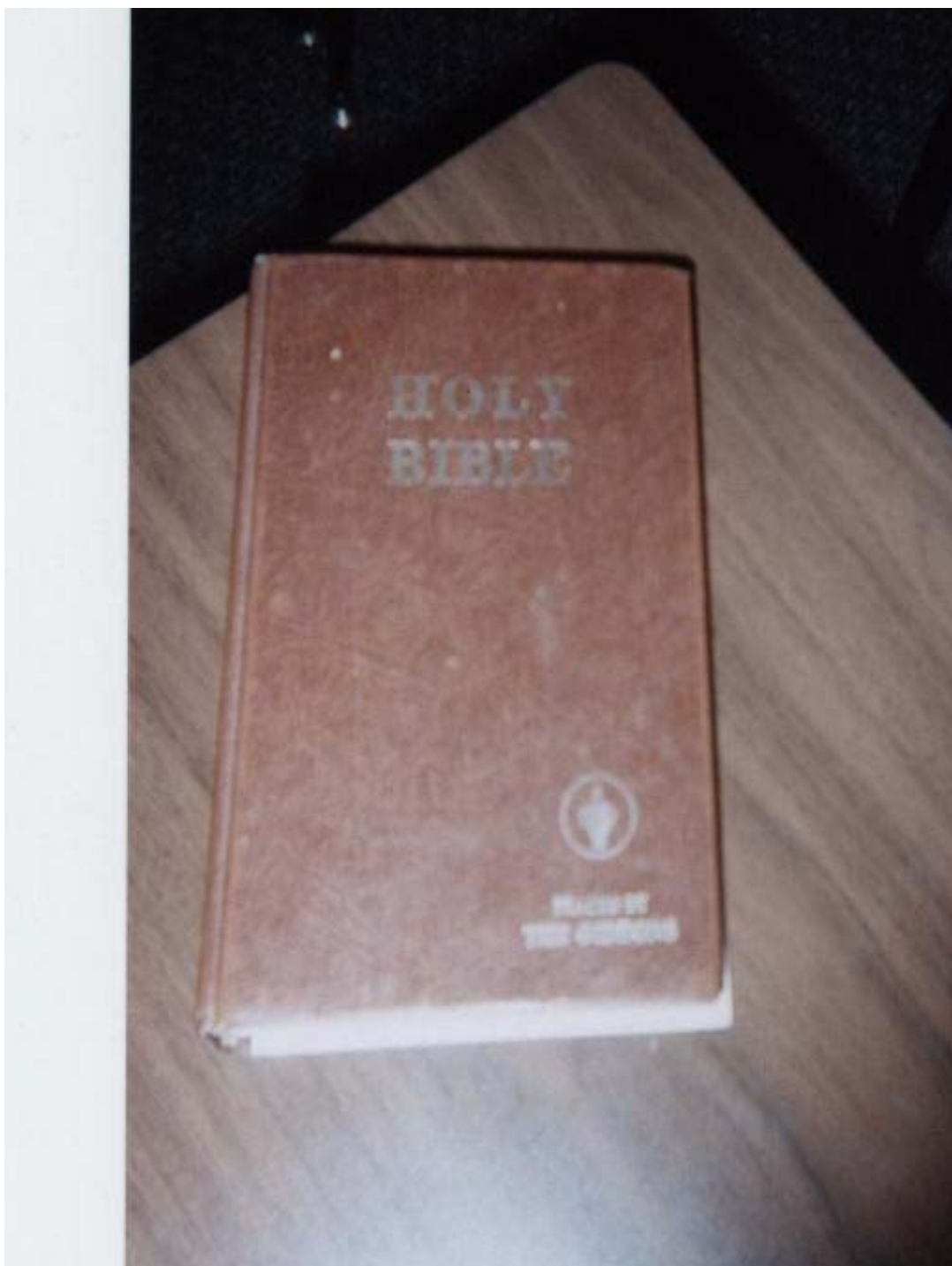


Figure 3. Trust's Artifact: The Holy Bible



Figure 4. Peace's Artifact: The Holy Bible



Figure 5. Courage's Artifact: The Holy Bible

Belief somewhat followed the same line of thinking as Trust, Peace, and Courage, but she specifically centered on the Ten Commandments as her artifact of choice. I chose to include the Ten Commandments' artifact in this section because the commandments are positioned within the Holy Bible. Judeo-Christians believe that the commandments were rules that were written by Moses as he received inspiration from God. Ladner (1998) referred to the Ten Commandments as "Biblical injunctions that were taught as the law" in churches (p. 75).



Figure 6. Belief's artifact: The Ten Commandments

The next artifacts that represented spirituality as being sacred are what I perceive as forms of worship. Honor, Hospitality, and Love presented artifacts that were representations of the sacredness of spirituality to them. Honor and Hospitality centered on sacred expressed through music. Honor used spiritual CD's; Hospitality enjoyed singing sacred songs in private and public arenas, such as home, church, and nursing homes. Love used praying hands to represent sacredness.



Figure 7. Honor's Artifact: Gospel CD's

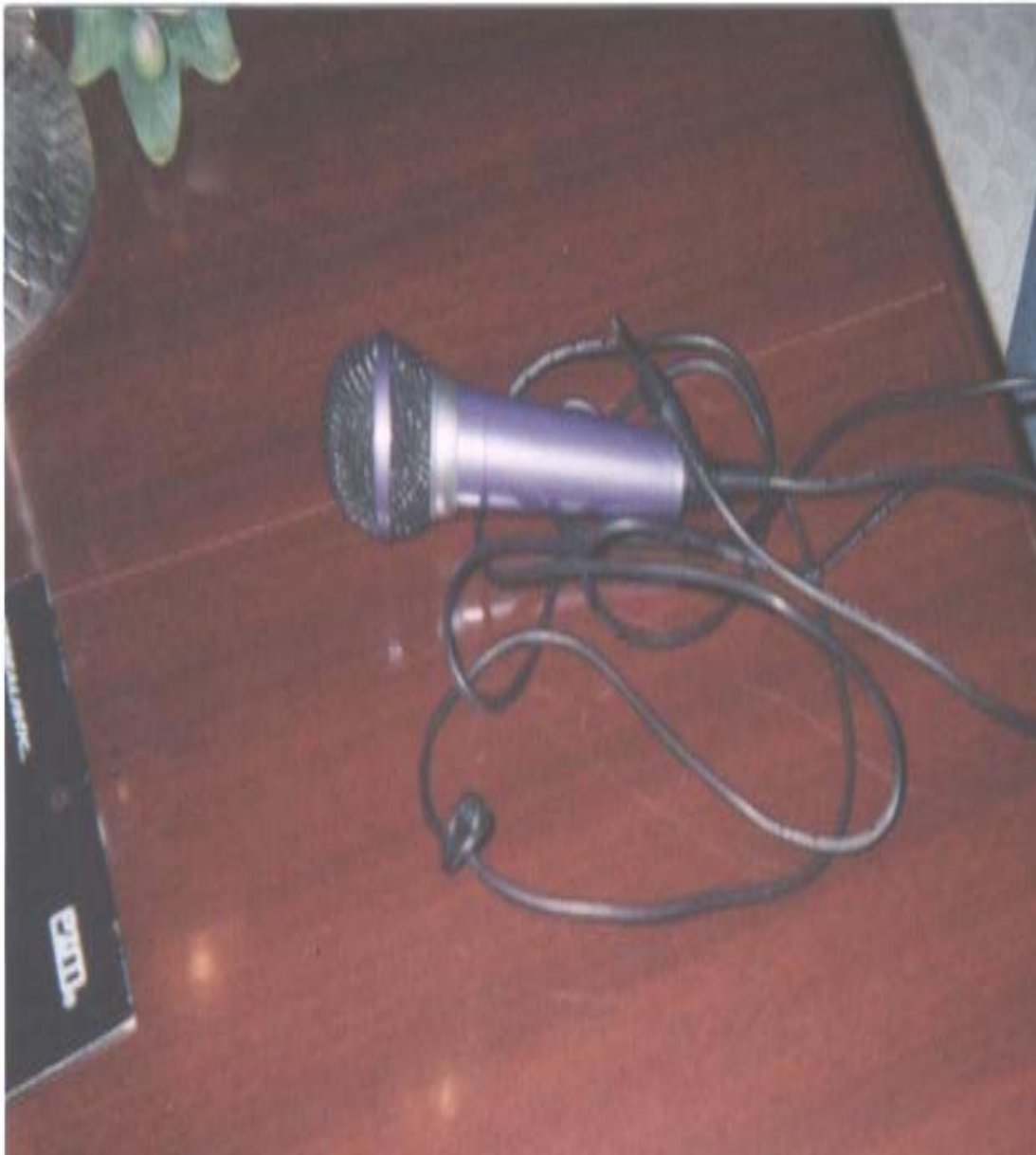


Figure 8. Hospitality's Artifact: Microphone



Figure 9. Love's artifact: Praying hands candle

Culture

The second theme that supports the finding of spirituality having various meaning to the participants is spirituality represents culture. Three of my girls chose framed picture artifacts of their culture as being representations of spirituality to them. Heritage focused on several African-American ancestors, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Fredrick Douglas, Harriet Tubman, Marcus Garvey, Mary Bethune, Malcolm X, and Elijah Muhammad; Beauty focused on her deceased paternal-grandfather whom she had a close relationship with; and Integrity focused on a framed picture of several of her. Dialogue from my Key, Sankofa focus group also reveals the girls understanding of spirituality and culture. The girls communicate that spirituality and culture are significant to their families, but they do not always view them as being convenient. These connections to culture are similar to Stewart's Formative Function of his Model of African-American Spirituality. This function reiterates the importance of developing African-American consciousness, community, and culture. Dialogue that represents spirituality as culture from the Key, Sankofa focus group will be presented first followed by artifacts that represent spirituality as culture.

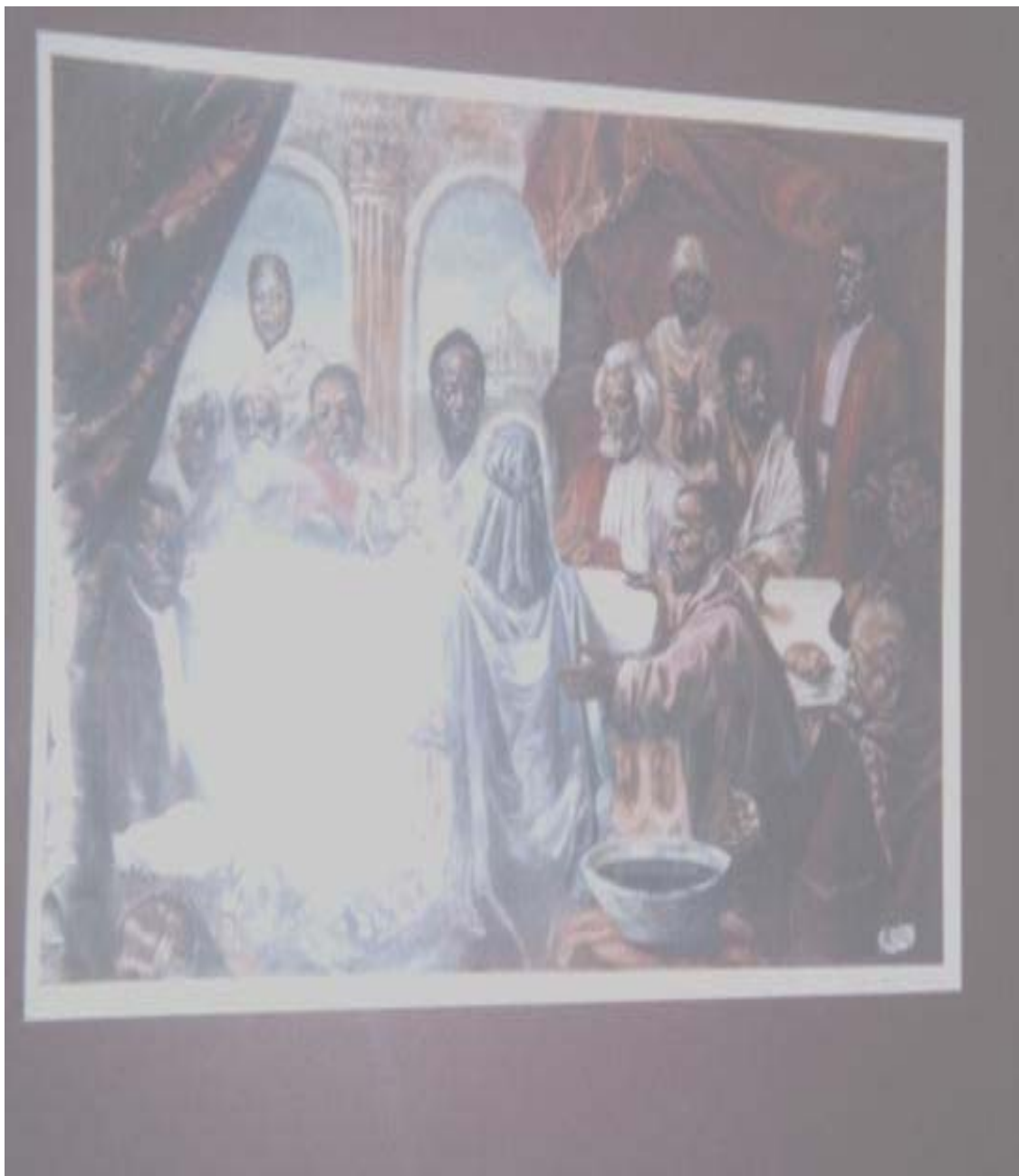


Figure 10. Heritage's artifact: African-American ancestors



Figure 11. Beauty's artifact: Deceased paternal-grandfather

Integrity's artifact: African-American cousins

I was not able to obtain a picture of Integrity's artifact because she was out of time for an extended period during my data collection. However, through a telephone interview, I was able to obtain information on what artifact she would have presented for the study. Integrity stated,

"There is a picture on our dining room wall that represents spirituality to me. It is a framed picture of my cousins when they were little. The frame has the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want on it."

Next, I will present verbatim transcription from my Key, Sankofa focus group which represents spirituality as culture.

Key, Sankofa Focus Group

- Heritage: "I was just going to ask do you all get to vote on where you go?"
- Love: "No, most of the time our grandma calls us, and tells us that she wants us to do something in her program or sometimes she'll call and say "I haven't seen yall in a while."
- Hospitality: "I hate that!"
- Love: "Then my parents will be like we have to go to Jamaica this weekend or whatever. Most of the time our grandma Wisdom doesn't call us that much, but we like to go and visit her once in awhile."
- Heritage: "I hate that when your parents put you on program or something, and then like tell you the day before."
- Love: "I know. Don't ask you if you want to do it. I mean you have something else to do or something like that. They will be like "Yeah, I signed you up for a program, dancing, this Saturday." You'll be like "Uhm."
- Heritage: "My mother will say "I signed you up for the essay contest." I'm like "What are you gong to write the essay?"
- Love: "Write the essay, and I will put my name on it."
- Heritage: "I know. I'll edit it."

Hospitality: (Laughing)

Love: “My mom is always signing us up for something because we were in gymnastics and dancing and all that. When we were younger, we use to do sign language and stuff like that. We kind of dropped some of that because school is getting harder now. It’s not like coloring in the lines, you know. We are done with that. So, we don’t have as much time to learn the dances. But our grandma always signs us up for stuff like that.

Hospitality: “Those grandparents, when they have kids, they want to show you off.”

Love: “Yeah!”

Hospitality: “Oh!”

Heritage: “They will be like introducing you to people you don’t even know. They will be like “Have you met my grandkids?”

Hospitality: “I will be like hey, girl!”

Love: “This is your cousin Anna. I will be like who? Who? Oh, hey, Anna.”

Hospitality: (Laughing)

Heritage: “I’ll be like yeah, uhm hum.”

Love: “And I’ll be like trying to remember it. And they’ll be like you remember that time. And I will be like, yeah, girl. Yeah!”

Heritage: “Refresh my memory.”

Hospitality: “They will all be showing us off.”

The dialogue between my girls reveals the significance of spirituality in relation to culture. The girls do not always appreciate culture when they do not have a voice in what happens, but their parents and grandparents are making a conscious effort to help them to understand the significance of the two. For example, Heritage chose a cultural artifact that represented spirituality to her, and in Chapter 3, she verbalized the importance of church volunteers keeping adolescents active and off of the streets.

Victory and Triumph

The third theme that emerged to support the finding that adolescents have various meanings of spirituality is spirituality represents victory and triumph. My girls in the study used different methods of data collection to emphasize victory and triumph. They noted victories in their attitude, such as overcoming negativity and being grateful; decision making skills, recreation, overcoming negativity, and gratitude. This theme is similar to the Transformative Function of Stewart's Model of African-American Spirituality (1999). This function states that African-Americans have always used their spirituality to transform their lives and their environment. African-Americans have a "if you can believe it, you can achieve" attitude. Excerpts from my girls' individual face-to-face interviews that represent victory and triumph are presented below.

Integrity stated,

"I think it is like something you do or something that that determines your life. For example, you decide to do the right thing."

Belief went on to relate spirituality to something that was familiar to her. She stated,

"It's like when you do something like write a report, and the teacher says it is bad, but you know it is good. So, you know that it is good."

Humor stated,

"It means excitement and spirit. It helps get spirit. Spirit is triumph and happiness."

Victory stated,

"Spirituality is having fun in sports. It is just having fun."

Excerpts from my girls' journaling exercises that represent victory and triumph are presented below.

Trust wrote,

“I think spirituality means doing your best, coming to church, and believing in yourself. I also think it means never giving up and believing in God. Also, it means doing the right thing and being honest.”

Victory wrote,

“Spirituality is having fun and showing that you are happy in what you’re doing or did for yourself or somebody else. It’s being thankful for what you have because a lot of people in the world today don’t have a lot. It’s just having fun and being excited about stuff like that.”

Humor wrote,

It gives me spirit;
It helps me in everyday life;
It helps me stay supportive and nice;
It’s a helpful feeling;
That keeps me proud;
Sometimes it even makes me loud;
It helps me feel good outside;
And in the end, if you haven’t read, look at the beginning.

My girls used their journaling exercise to represent spirituality as victory and triumph. Honor’s journaling exercise is a picture of two adolescents communicating with each other. The two adolescents are discussing the male adolescent’s decision to wear sagging pants. The male is victorious over not continuing to submit to a fad. Peace’s journaling exercise is a drawing that represents successfulness in obtaining her driver’s license. My girls also used artifacts to represent triumph and victory. Belief, Victory, and Humor’s artifacts represent success in sports. Each of these adolescents revealed that spirituality can represent victory and triumph.

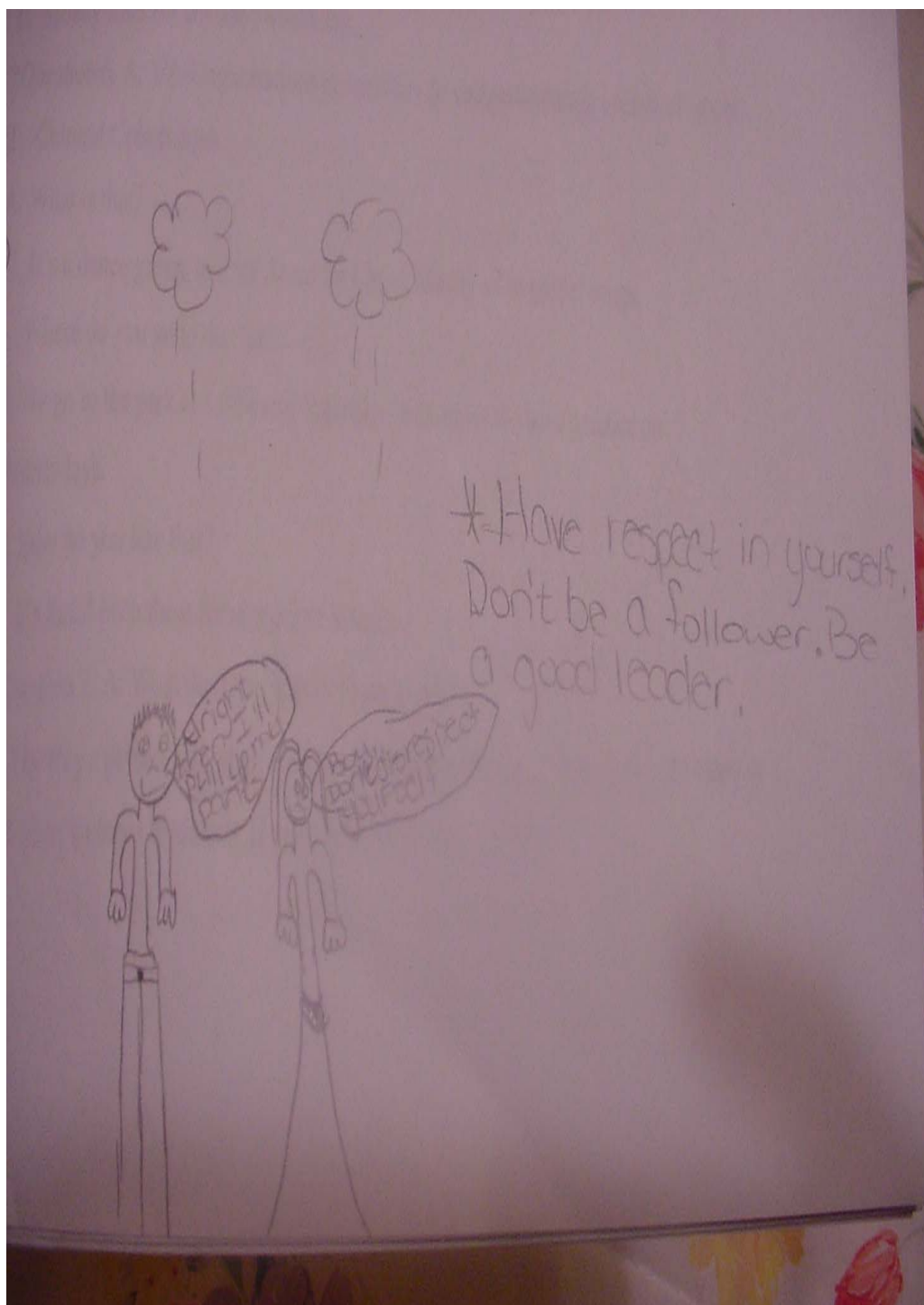


Figure 12. Honor's drawing: Self-respect

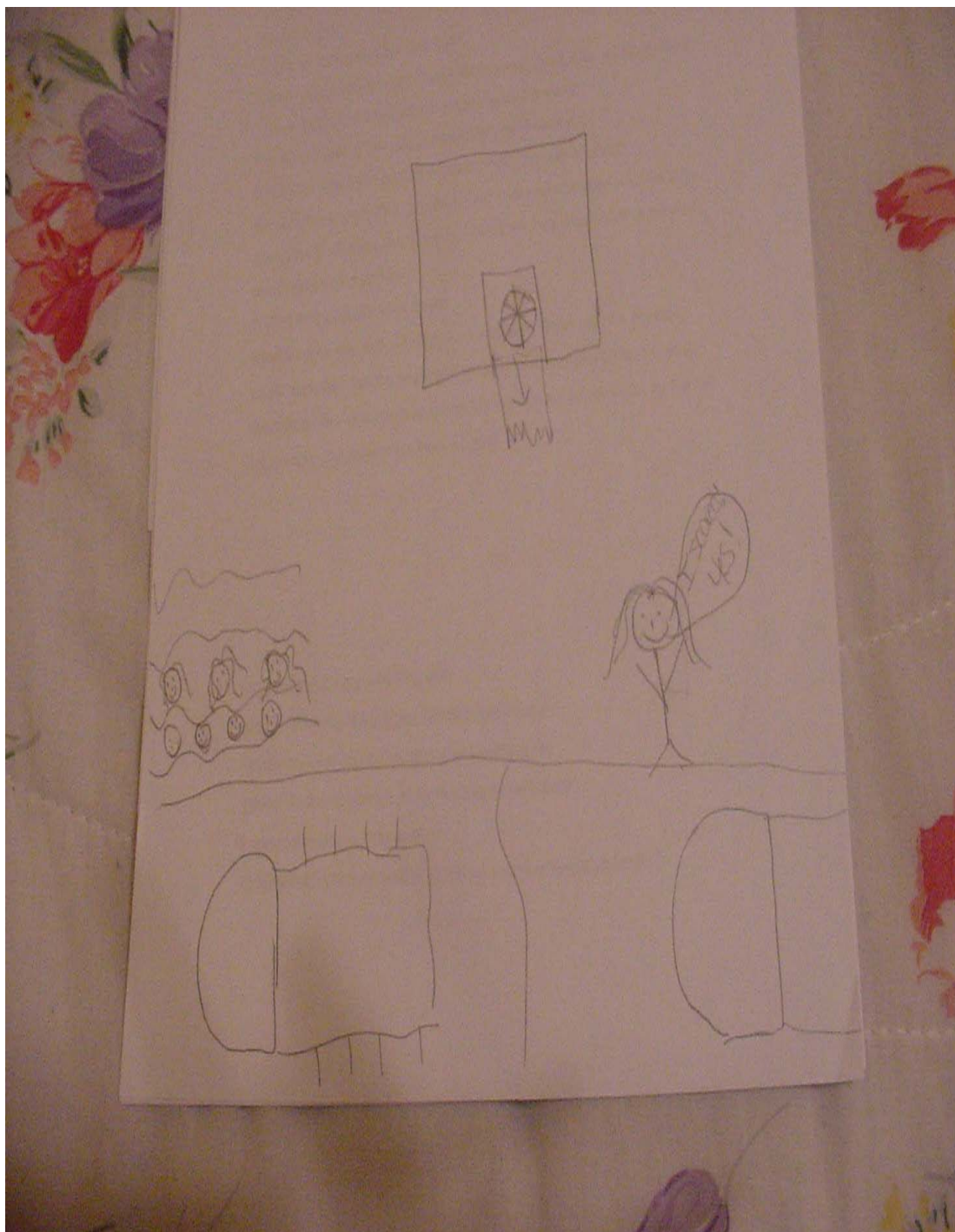


Figure 13. Belief's drawing: Success on the court



Figure 14. Peace's drawing: Passed driver's examination



Figure 15. Victory's Artifact: Track medals



Figure 16. Humor's artifact: Basketball and track trophies

Concern for Others

The fourth theme that emerges from the finding that spirituality has various meaning to the participants is spirituality is having concern for other people. This theme is similar to the Unitive Function of Stewart's Model of African-American Spirituality (1999, p. 40). This function echoes the importance of community, not individuality to African-Americans. Integrity was concerned about the safety and welfare of others. Hospitality focused on community support. Excerpts from their data are presented below.

Integrity wrote,

“I think that spirituality is determining something about your life or seeing if you have been hurt or something. The main thing I think about is the how you feel when you are disobeying somebody or seeing if you hurt somebody in your everyday life.”

Hospitality wrote,

“First, spirituality means you have to know God. You don't have to believe in God to be spiritual or do things that other people do. You could do something like feed the homeless, sing to the nursing home residents, take care of them, or clean up the city.”

The data presented in this section supports the finding of the first research question: What is the meaning of spirituality to African-American female adolescents? The finding in regard to this question was spirituality has various meanings to the participants in the study. The meaning that the participants attributed to spirituality were based on their own lived experiences with spirituality. Four themes emerged from the finding: 1) spirituality was sacred; 2) spirituality represented culture; 3) spirituality represented victory and triumph; and 4) spirituality was being concerned about other people. The latter part of this chapter focuses on a finding related to the second research question: How do African-American female adolescents use spirituality in their everyday lives?

Self-Talk

The latter part of this chapter focuses on a finding related to the second research question: How do African-American female adolescents use spirituality in their everyday lives? The finding noted in regards to the second research question is spirituality is used as “self-talk” messages by African-American female adolescent. For the study “self talk” is defined as any form of internal dialogue perceived by the individual, such as instincts, feelings, thoughts, conscience, senses, or a voice. Two themes emerged from the finding of “self-talk”: 1) making the right choice; and 2) having a “can do” attitude.

The Right Choice

The first theme that emerged from the finding of “self-talk” is making the right choice. Adolescence has been classified as a major life changing period in a child’s life. During this period of change, adolescents are faced with the task of making daily decisions that can impact the rest of their lives. The participants in my study were no exception. They reported instances where they had to use “self-talk” to help them to make the right choice in regards to minor and major decisions that impacted their lives. For example, they reported having t make decisions in reference to such things as stealing a car, underage drinking, and assisting with household chores. The data presented below illustrates the importance of using spirituality to help African-American female adolescents to make the appropriate choices in life.

Trust reported that when she needs to make a decision, she categorizes her choice as good or bad; right or wrong. Then, she accepts responsibility for her actions and makes the decision that she believes is best for her.

Trust stated,

“I think about whether my decisions are good or bad; right or wrong. If I think something is not ok, I will not do it. If I think that it is something I should do, I will do it. For example, I had to decide whether or not to help clean up. I’ll felt tired and had a headache, but I thought about I made the mess. So, I had to clean it up.”

Adolescents reported that they encounter peers who try to persuade them to break the law. They stated that “self-talk” helped them to make the right choice. Joy, Belief, and Heritage recalled such incidences.

Joy recalled a time in when she had to make a decision regarding the breaking of a law. Joy had to decide if she wanted to yield to peer pressure or make a stand for the right thing. Even though neither of the adolescents brought the alcohol into the home, they had to make a choice whether to drink it or not. Joy chose what she felt was the correct thing to do. Yet, because she did not choose to remove herself entirely from the environment, she was still discipline. This incident reveals that there can be multiple choices associated with one incident.

Joy stated,

“Well, I had this situation, and it’s for real. I’m going to tell the whole truth. Another girl, Mercy, and I were at this friend’s house across the street. Grace said, “Get out the beer”, and Imani got it out of the refrigerator. Grace drank it, but I didn’t try it. I swear I didn’t try it. I knew something inside of me was going to know not to try it. So, I gave mine to Grace. That’s when I saw both of them drinking it. That’s why I was on punishment. I don’t know what told me not to do it, but I had some kind of feeling in me that told me I was going to get into trouble. So, I knew not to do it. But I was in the wrong place at the wrong time, and that is why my mom put me on punishment.”

Belief, like Joy, was faced with a life changing decision. She, too, had to decide if she was willing to break the law with her friends. Belief’s example illustrates that it is easy to get into trouble if one doesn’t think first.

Belief stated,

“It helps me to know what is right and what is wrong. I can think whatever I want. It’s is not like anyone is telling me what is right or wrong. I try not to be like others. Like when my friends stole somebody’s car, I said to myself, I’m not going to do that. My friends got caught and went to the Youth Development Center (YDC). It was stupid. They did it for no reason.”

Heritage gave an example of how she used “self-talk” with peers in her school environment.

Heritage stated,

“A teacher had some candy on her desk. They [students] told me to take some of it. I was like I wouldn’t want anyone to take any candy from me. So, I didn’t take the teacher’s candy.”

Honor, Beauty, and Love revealed that they expand their thoughts beyond the present or self when determining which choice is best for them.

Honor stated,

“I think about the future. I decide if the choice is good or bad for my future.”

Beauty stated,

“I think about the consequences of doing something, and I decide if it is right or wrong.”

Love and Courage reported that “self-talk” helps them to expand their thoughts beyond themselves.

Love stated,

“I think about what would be the right thing to do if God was standing right there. What would please him? I may not want to do my work in class or something like that. I know my parents or God wouldn’t be pleased with me just sitting there or sleeping in class. So, I will do my work.”

Courage stated,

“I ask God to give me the knowledge to pick the right choices that are best for me.”

Integrity and Peace reported that in addition to thinking, they also have a physical perception when faced with making the correct choice. Their physical bodies confirm the thoughts of their mind.

Integrity stated,

“Like seeing which one is right for me. I’ll say to myself if I do that one, how will it make me feel or not feel. Like if my friend asked me to come up there with them and my mom told me to stay at home, I’ll think about how I would feel if I did go. I’ll feel bad if I do something wrong. If it hurts me inside, then I’ll know it will hurt someone else.”

Peace stated,

“You can just feel it when something is right, and you know when you are not supposed to do something. When you have the good feeling, you are happy and you know you are going to succeed. When you make the wrong decision, you feel bad. You just don’t feel right. You feel weird; strange. You don’t feel the same.”

Hospitality revealed that “self-talk” is not controlling. The individual is able to choose which path she wants to follow. Hospitality and Victory, on the other hand, revealed that this idea is not always correct. Knowing the right thing and doing the right thing is sometimes in conflict with each other.

Victory stated,

“I should know right from wrong. My mama tells me sometimes. Otherwise, I just know what I should or shouldn’t do. If I don’t want to do it, I just won’t do it. If I do, I just do.”

Hospitality stated,

“Something like my conscience is telling me I shouldn’t do this. It is like you are telling me that I shouldn’t do it, and I know I’m not supposed to do it. Sometimes I don’t listen, and I pay afterwards. I’ll pay afterwards because I will get into trouble for not listening. If I get a bad grade, I

won't tell anybody. I know I should but I don't because I'm scared. Then, they [parents] will find out later. I know when I'm doing something wrong. I'll just get tired of hearing the voice. It gets to be annoying because sometimes I do a lot of bad thing. The voice is sort of like my parents saying, "You shouldn't do that. Don't do that." It's annoying. That is why I don't like spirituality sometimes."

The first theme that emerged from the finding of "self-talk" messages was making the right choice. African-American female adolescents in the present study revealed that prior to making any decisions they have an internal dialogue with self. This internal dialogue referred to as "self-talk" in the study helped the individual to determine if her choice was a right choice or a wrong choice. While "self-talk" was noticeably present, my girls revealed that they were responsible for whatever decisions they choose to make. The remainder of the chapter will focus on the second theme: having a "can do" attitude.

Can Do Attitude

The finding in regards to the second research question is spirituality is used as "self-talk" messages by my girls. The second theme that emerged from the finding "self-talk" messages is having a "can do" attitude. In the present study, having a "can do" attitude is defined by me as being positive, having determination, being persistent, being optimistic, and not accepting defeat.

Ladner, an African-American researcher, revealed in her study of African-American females, that possessing a "can do" attitude was significant to African-Americans. Yodit, Ladner's niece, reported the following in an interview with her aunt.

Yodit replied,

"I cannot speak for my generation at all. People's lives are too varied... My answer is the sky is the limit. Unlike previous generations of black Americans, I have seen great accomplishment by black men and women. There are ample examples. In addition, I do not feel that my race is a burden. At least, it hasn't

been so far. I feel that if I tried, I could do virtually anything. I feel that I have been prepared for life” (1998, p. 156-157).

Like Yodit, I, too, received words of encouragement from my environment in regards to having a “can do” attitude. I remember being told that with God’s help, I could do anything. Unfortunately, this message was not always verbalized to me. There were occasions when people around me seemed to be threatened by my desire to succeed. Messages of you can do all things was replaced with messages such as “You don’t act like anybody in our family. Studying too hard will make you crazy. You have enough education.” Through my use of “self-talk”, I continued, though not always easy, to persevere in the face of verbal obstacles. I purposed in my mind and heart to adhere to the most positive message received that I could do anything with God’s assistance.

As I began collecting data for my study, I had no idea that my girls were taught that they could do all things. Frequently my girls reported that either their parents or supportive others instilled into their minds the message “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13), and when needed, the African-American female adolescents would hear the message as “self-talk”. Their identification with the message is noted in their transcriptions and their choice of artifacts that represent a “can do” attitude.

The adolescents in the study reported incidences of using “self-talk” to help them to maintain a “can do” attitude. Hospitality, Victory, Beauty, Courage, and Integrity spoke of the importance of having a “can do” attitude in general.

Hospitality stated,

“Well, a lot of people have told me that you can do anything you set your mind to if you believe in God. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you is the one message that I hear all the time. “Like when I

read the Bible I think about I can do anything. Like anything I set my mind to do. I can just do anything. I feel energized.”

Victory stated,

“Never give up in what you do or want to be in life. People push me and ask me if I want to do this. If I want to do it but don’t think I can do, they will tell me I can do it. Go ahead and try it.”

Beauty stated,

“Following my dreams. Doing what I want to do. Not letting people put me down. When someone tells me that I can make it if I just try hard enough, they know I can make it.

Courage stated,

“Spirituality teaches me that I can be successful instead of going out and doing all sorts of things.”

Integrity stated,

“Follow your own path instead of going behind others. If you get into trouble following others, they might sit back and laugh at you. I set and achieve my own goals.”

Trust and Joy set educational goals.

Trust stated,

“I speak to my promise. I’ll make a goal and stick with it. I made a goal to make A’s and B’s in school and to pass to the next grade. I know that everything will be alright. I know that I can’t give up on anything.”

Joy stated,

“The reason why I keep going on is because I plan to become a veterinarian. My mom says it takes a lot of work, and I have to go to school for a long time. So, that’s why I’m not going to give up. As soon as I get out of high school, I plan to go to college.”

Love recalled her experience with being healed of Spina Bifida.

Love stated,

“I was born with Spina Bifida. He healed it, and I was able to walk and do gymnastics and all kinds of stuff. I stay strong just thinking about if it wasn’t for the Lord, I would be in a wheelchair or something like that.”

Joy, Heritage, and Belief obtained their sports goals by keeping a “can do” attitude.

Joy: stated,

“If I’m playing a sport or something and we lose a game, I know it’s not the end of the world. I score sometime and sometimes I don’t, but I keep trying. When I played softball last year, we were losing all the games, but then we won the championship.”

Heritage stated,

“When I am doing something like playing baseball, I think about what they say that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. So, I just feel like I can do whatever I want.”

Belief stated,

“We can do anything we want. Some people [bullies] think we can’t do something, but we can. Like they probably think that I can’t run [track], but I know I can. Spirituality teaches me to not listen to what other people say. Just follow my own heart. Some people try to stop me from doing things. They say that I can’t run or I’m stupid. I don’t worry about it. I just keep trying.”

Belief, Heritage, and Peace focused on African-Americans’ heritage of having a “can do” attitude. These excerpts are similar to the Formative function of Stewart’s Model of African-American Spirituality. The participants below verbalize their thoughts on the devaluing of African-Americans and their ability to overcome acts of oppression.

Belief stated,

“We’re free to do whatever we want.

Heritage stated,

“If you believe in something, you could sort of do anything. Like in the 1960s, black people endured hard times and were separated (Black vs. White). People [African-Americans] kept saying “Thank you, God, I’m still here!” or “God, please help us to get through this.” And you know

they did! I think we are real strong. A lot of people are single mothers. Black women, in particular, have been raped. I'm not saying white women haven't. I'm just saying that more Black women and people have been discriminated against. There are a lot of strong Black females around that do not have their dads in their lives. We're stronger than White people take us to be. I think that if I am smart and determined enough to do something, I will do it. The exception may be like getting into a country club or something."

Peace stated,

"We come from a long way. My culture says don't ever give up. Believe in yourself. You can do anything you put your mind to do. I believe that I can do anything."

The transcripts presented in this section support the finding that spirituality is used as "self-talk" messages by African-American female adolescents in my study. My girls were willing to verbalize their experiences with maintaining a "can do" attitude. The artifacts and journal writings referenced below depict having a "can do" attitude. Humor (See Figure 16, p. 114) and Victory (See Figure 15, p. 113) received trophies and medals in their respective sports. Belief (See Figure 13, p. 111) was elated to score on the basketball court. Peace (See Figure 14, p. 112) was determined to obtain her Driver's license.

These visual representations give us a glimpse into the thoughts of the participants. Success is significant to them and having a "can do" attitude enabled them to reach their goals in life. Overall, the passages and the visuals presented in this section illustrate the significance of giving and receiving positive messages. When faced with obstacles, whether it was a license examination, sporting event, medical condition, or school grade, these individuals took on a "can do" attitude which enabled them to reach their goals. Even during moments of self-doubt when one of my girls was unable to visualize her

own success, significant others believed for her, and this gave her the courage to reach for her dreams.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present my research findings. The findings gave a richer understanding of spirituality and how spirituality is used by my girls in their everyday lives. The presentation of findings centered on the two research questions presented in Chapter 1. The first part of the chapter revealed a finding related to the first research question: What is the meaning of spirituality to African-American female adolescents? My finding revealed adolescents have multiple meanings for spirituality. Their meanings were broken into four themes: 1) spirituality is sacred; 2) spirituality exemplifies culture; 3) spirituality represents victory and triumph; and 4) spirituality is having concern for people. The latter part of the chapter revealed a finding related to the second research question: How do African-American female adolescents use spirituality in their everyday lives? The finding noted for this research question was that spirituality is used as “self-talk” messages by African-American female adolescents. “Self talk” was defined as any form of internal dialogue perceived by the individual, such as instincts, feelings, thoughts, conscience, senses, or a voice. Two themes emerged from the finding of “self-talk”: 1) making the right choice; and 2) having a “can do” attitude. Transcripts, journaling, and artifacts were used to facilitate the presentation of findings. This triangulation method increased the trustworthiness of my findings. Additionally, when possible, I referred to findings from my literature review and Stewart’s Model of African-American Spirituality to support my findings. Two assumptions were made: 1) participants would be able to articulate and document their experiences with spirituality;

and 2) spirituality could be defined and investigated. The data presented in this chapter prove that these two assumptions were correct.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Reverend Billy Graham tells of a time early in his ministry when he arrived in a small town to preach a sermon. Wanting to mail a letter, he asked a young boy where the post office was. When the boy had told him, Dr. Graham thanked him and said, "If you'll come to the Baptist Church this evening, you can hear me telling everyone how to get to Heaven." "I don't think I'll be there," the boy said. "You don't even know your way to the post office."

Brian Cavanaugh's *Sower's Seed*

Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the findings of my spirituality study. The discussion of findings is an expansion of the presentation of findings in Chapter 4. Serving as the basis for the discussion of findings is the rich understanding attained by me of 1) what spirituality means to African-American female adolescents; and 2) how African-American female adolescents use spirituality in their lives. The findings discussed in Chapter 4 resulted from my use of a qualitative interpretivist design (Glesne, 1999) to collect and analyze my data. Data collection was accomplished through interviews, journaling, and artifacts. Data analysis was conducted throughout the study. Through a process of coding and re-coding, I identified themes within my data. These themes, along with supportive data, were presented in Chapter 4 and will be discussed in Chapter 5. Included in Chapter 5 is an overview of the study, findings and conclusions related to the research questions. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for future research, theory, and social work practice.

Overview of the Study

A review of the literature of African-American adolescents showed that studies frequently centered on what researchers described as at-risk or high-risk adolescents. Examples of at-risk and high-risk individuals are ones that are experiencing poverty, family instability, discrimination, trauma, substance abuse, violence, and pregnancy

(Darity & Myers, 1984; Franklin, 1988; Salem, Zimmerman, & Notaro, 1998; Hammack, Robinson, Crawford, & Li, (2004). Results from these studies paint a bleak future for African-American adolescents because they focused predominately on uneducated, at-risk, low social economic status adolescents. The researchers also used non-culture specific, Western theories and instrumentation to understand African-American adolescents. Noting these discrepancies in research, I chose to conduct a qualitative interpretivist, race-homogeneous, gender-specific study that used a culture specific theory. I also used Stewart's Model of African-American Spirituality, to focus on the spiritual strength of this population. A review of the literature indicated that the most significant coping mechanism for African-American adolescents was religion and spirituality (Spencer, Fegley, & Harpalani, 2003). Therefore, it was my hope to expand the literature on spirituality and African-American female adolescents between the ages of 11 and 25 by gaining a richer understanding of what spirituality means and how it is used by these individuals. An additional hope was that my study would assist social workers, who work with African-American female adolescents, to understand that spirituality can be used as an intervention with this population. The study represents my commitment to doing just that. In the next section of this chapter, I briefly summarize the findings and elucidate the themes for each of the research questions in the study.

Research Questions

The research questions first stated in Chapter 1 and again in Chapter 4 are restated in this section. The findings and themes associated with each research question are discussed below. Each research question along with its finding and themes are presented in order.

1) What is the meaning of spirituality to African-American female adolescents?

To answer this research question, I asked my girls to tell me their personal meaning of spirituality. The majority of my girls were able to present their meaning of spirituality without any assistance from me. Two required assistance, and one even asked me to turn off the tape recorder before she whispered that she did not know what it meant. I smiled inwardly as I thought about the fact that through her innocence she whispered her response in spite of the fact that the tape recorder was turned off, and we were the only two individuals in the room at the time.

As I coded and recoded the responses of my girls in regard to this research question, I noted one finding; my girls provided a variety of meanings for spirituality. I was open to the possibility that this might have occurred because as I reviewed the literature I noted that adults provided diverse meanings for spirituality. However, I secretly wondered if adolescents would be more consistent in their responses since they had not been exposed to as much of the world as adults. My findings support the literature that there are diverse meanings of spirituality based on the individual's lived experience with spirituality (Johnson, 1990; Stravinskias, 1991; McBrien, 1994; Brady, 1998; Pierce, 1999; Sheldrake, 2000; Sprecace, 2003; Roberts, 2004). Four themes emerged from the finding that spirituality had diverse meanings for my girls. The four themes were: 1) spirituality is sacred; 2) spirituality represents culture; 3) spirituality represents victory and triumph; and 4) spirituality is having concern for people.

The first theme, spirituality is sacred, revealed how my girls relate spirituality to God, the soul/spirit, the church, and having God as a confidante. This theme was similar to the Sacralative Function of Stewart's Model of African-American Spirituality (1999). My

thought going into the study was that anyone could be spiritual without attending church, but attending church would influence the sacredness of my girls' responses. My own experience with adult individuals helped me to realize that people outside of the church are sometimes more than or just as equally spiritual as individuals who attend church on a regular basis. Adolescents in the study spoke about attending church, participating in church related activities, having a personal relationship with God, religion, and church denomination in their responses. I expected to receive responses along this line, especially from my girls who attended church and/or participated in church activities on a regular basis. However, I was surprised to note the sacredness of a response from a girl who seldom attended church and did not talk about spirituality in her home because her mother did not attend church. Her mother, however, allowed the participant to attend church occasionally with friends or other relatives. From her response to the question, it is obvious that the times she has attended church have greatly impacted her life. She was even able to give an example of a miracle healing after her grandmother prayed for her and anointed her body with oil. My girls also chose artifacts that were representative of spirituality to them. It was noted that some of my girls who did not verbalize sacredness in their meaning of spirituality chose a sacred artifact. These differences in responses, I believe, revealed that individuals are capable of having diverse meanings of spirituality within themselves.

The second theme that emerged from the finding of spirituality has diverse meanings to adolescents was spirituality represents culture. This theme is similar to the Formative Function of Stewart's Model of African-American Spirituality that reiterates the importance of developing African-American consciousness, community, and culture

(1999). Three of my girls, in response to inquiry, shared framed pictures that were representative of their culture for their spiritual artifacts. These artifacts revealed the significance of family members, alive or deceased, and African-American ancestors, such as Mary Bethune and Harriet Tubman, as being representations of spirituality to African-American female adolescents. By choosing cultural artifacts, these adolescents revealed that when working with African-American female adolescents it is important for social work practitioners to understand the significance of heritage and relationships to these individuals.

The third theme that emerged to support the finding that adolescents had diverse meanings of spirituality was spirituality represents victory and triumph. This theme is similar to the Transformative Function of Stewart's Model of African-American Spirituality (1999). This function states that African-Americans have always used their spirituality to transform their lives and their environment. My girls in the study recalled instances of being victorious in attitude, such as overcoming negativity and being grateful; decision making skills, and recreation. African-Americans possess a "if you can believe it, you can achieve" attitude. Having this thought pattern has enabled African-Americans to overcome significant obstacles throughout their history. It was enlightening to note that this idea is still being instilled in and is important to today's African-Americans adolescents.

The fourth and final theme that emerged from the finding that spirituality has diverse meaning to my girls is spirituality is having concern for other people. This theme is similar to the Unitive Function of Stewart's Model of African-American Spirituality (1999, p. 40). This function echoes the importance of community, not individuality to

African-Americans. My girls in the study revealed that they were able to look beyond their individual needs and focus on the needs of their community. They were sensitive to the feelings of others, they spoke of being obedient, and reaching out to others in the community, such as nursing home residents and the homeless. These unselfish acts of connectedness to society revealed that African-American female adolescents are not as self-centered as people would have us to believe. African-American female adolescents used spirituality to help them to look beyond their needs and into the needs of others. My African-American female adolescents appeared to have constructed diverse meanings for spirituality and were able to change from one meaning to another without compromising their spirituality. Themes that focused specifically on the use of spirituality by African-American female adolescents are summarized and discussed under the next research question.

2) How do African-American female adolescents use spirituality in their everyday lives?

To answer this research question, I asked my girls to verbalize their experiences with spirituality in relation to their family, academic, and peer relationships. All of my girls were able to respond to this question without any assistance from me. Although, there were instances when my girls chose not to elaborate on their responses or stated, “I don’t want to or I can’t answer that one”. For example, two of my girls chose not to answer the question relating to how spirituality was used their family. Their answers were reflective of the response above. I secretly wondered if my prior relationship with the families in question hindered my girls from feeling like they could freely answer that question. Since I did not want to damage the rapport I had established with my girls, I chose not to probe for richer responses, and I fully accept responsibility for this action.

In regard to the second research question, I noted a finding that spirituality influenced the “self-talk” messages received by African-American female adolescent. “Self-talk” was a phrase I constructed to give name and definition to my finding for the second research question. For the study, I defined “self talk” as any form of internal dialogue perceived by the individual, such as instincts, feelings, thoughts, conscience, senses, or a voice. Two themes emerged from the finding of “self-talk”: 1) make the right choice; and 2) having a “can do” attitude.

The first theme explores adolescent’s use of “self-talk” to help them to make the right choice when presented with minor or potentially life changing situations. For example, the my girls used “self-talk” while they made decisions not to steal a car, not to participate in underage drinking, and to assist with household chores. In analyzing the data, I noted that it was interesting that my girls placed their choices into a dichotomy - an either good or bad or right or wrong category. Even a mother of one of my girls in the study verbalized this dichotomous type of thinking process. I wondered if my girls’ interactions with society had taught them that all decisions had to be one or the other.

The second and final theme to be discussed in this section is regards to the major finding of the use of “self-talk” messages is having a “can do” attitude. For the study, having a “can do” attitude was defined as being positive, having determination, being persistent, being optimistic, and not accepting defeat. The girls in my study reported that the message “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13) was deeply implanted into their minds by significant individuals in their lives. As a matter of fact, this was the only biblical scripture quoted by my girls, which reveals the

significance and commitment of my girls to use spirituality to incorporate a “can do” attitude into their lives.

Discussion and Implications

The findings of the study support the literature regarding the significance of spirituality to adolescents, especially African-American adolescents. My girls in this present study revealed that because of their diverse meanings of spirituality they were able to incorporate spirituality into various aspects of their lives. For example, my girls used spirituality in the sacred sense in regards to church activities and attendance; they understood the importance of spirituality to their culture; they used spirituality in their interactions with friends to teach them how they should behave; they used spirituality in their decision making skills; they used spirituality during their sport activities; they used spirituality in their interactions within the family and school environments; and they used spirituality as a strength to help them during challenging times. These findings have revealed that spirituality is the essence of their being. They individually repeated from one interview to the next, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Spirituality is indeed significant to the African-American girls in the present study. The chapter concludes with implications for spirituality in future research, theory, and social work practice.

Implication for Future Research

Continued research on spirituality and African-American female adolescents is critical to future research. Literature has centered on at-risk African-American adolescents (Darity & Myers, 1984; Franklin, 1988; Salem, Zimmerman, & Notaro, 1998; Hammack, Robinson, Crawford, & Li, 2004) without offering possible solutions to the

critical issues in question. One possible solution, as revealed by the study, is the incorporation of spirituality into the helping process when working with African-American adolescents. I believe that too many studies have centered on problems and very little attention has centered on solutions to perceived problems. Future quantitative and qualitative studies need to focus on spirituality as a tool or coping mechanism for African-American adolescents. Quantitative studies centered on spirituality and African-

American female adolescents can give greater breadth than qualitative studies because the researcher is able to collect information from a larger number of participants. Qualitative studies can give greater depth because the researcher must spend more time with fewer participants. Future qualitative studies focused on spirituality and African-American female adolescents can corroborate the findings in the present study. I believe both quantitative and qualitative studies are needed to advance our understanding of the meaning of spirituality and the use of spirituality by African-American female adolescents and counter the poorly informed focused studies of the past.

Additionally, the study was unique in its own respect because it was a race-homogeneous, gender-specific study that was conducted by an African-American researcher. Too often comparison studies have been conducted between African-Americans and other races (Washburn-Ormachea, Hillman, & Sawilowsky, 2004; National Urban League, 2005). Studies need to be conducted that are race and gender specific to allow races and genders to be examined on their own merits (Phinney & Landin, 1998). For example, additional studies can be conducted that examine the use of spirituality by African-American male adolescents or females of a different age group.

Implication for Theory

As stated in Chapter 1, I began the study with the idea that research has predominately used Western theories to generate a greater understanding of African-Americans even though these theories were not normed on African-Americans. The use of Western theories to explain African-Americans has resulted in studies that are biased against African-Americans (Spencer, 1995; U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1985). In order to understand African-Americans on their own merits, it is imperative for researchers to use and develop culturally specific theoretical model for this population.

The theory I chose to use to guide the present study was The Model of African-American Spirituality (Stewart, 1999). This theory seemed appropriate for the study because it addressed the values, beliefs, expectations, and spirituality of African-Americans. Although the study did not test the theory, The Model of African-American Spirituality was useful in helping me to construct my questionnaire, determine my methods for data collections, and data analysis.

The Model of African-American Spirituality (Stewart, 1999) has five essential components: 1) the Formative Function examines the development of African-American consciousness, culture, and community); 2) the Unitive Function which unites self and community; 3) the Corroborative Function which acknowledges the value, meaning, and existence of African-Americans; 4) the Transformative Function which is African-Americans' ability to transform their lives and their environment; and 5) the Sacralative or Consecrative Function which recognizes the sacredness of spirituality. Four of these function were informed my research and were noted throughout Chapter 4. The Formative Function was supported by my girls in their choice of artifacts and group

dialogue that revealed a conscious awareness of spirituality and culture. The girls revealed the Unitive Function as they expressed their sensitivity to the needs and feeling of others, being obedient, and supportive to their community. The Transformative Function was noted in the girls having victorious attitudes and triumphs in various areas of their lives. The Sacralative Function was noted as my girls acknowledge their relationship with church attendance and activities. The data and functions elaborated upon in this section and Chapter 4 reveal the difficulty of placing data into one particular function. To the best of my ability and through member checking, I have placed data under the corresponding function. It is worth noting that I am a novice researcher and a more seasoned researcher may acknowledge similar or different interpretations of the data. Overall, the theory and its use revealed the significance of using a culturally specific theory to critically examine spirituality and African-American female adolescents with greater regard for the uniqueness of the members of the population.

Implications for Social Work Practice

The present study on spirituality and African-American female adolescents is significant to me as an African-American social worker. My study confirms my experiences with spirituality and my desire for social work lead me to the hope that this underutilized dimension of spirituality needs to be utilized more in the practice of social work. Social workers have declared that social work is a unique profession which incorporates all dimensions (e.g., biological, emotional, social, familial, spiritual, intellectual, economic, etc.) of the adult or child client into the helping profession (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2003). Yet, history has revealed that social workers have and continue to be divided on the appropriateness of incorporating spirituality into the

practice of social work. This is ironic since early social work practice was based upon spirituality.

Informal or lay social work services were first administered by family, neighbors, and friends who provided services to the sick, poor, and handicapped members of their community. These acts of humanitarianism were performed by different cultures (Farley, Smith, & Boyle, 2003; Popple & Leighninger, 2002). However, when social work was established as a profession, the workers became divided over the use of spirituality in the workplace. Five arguments were given for the exclusion of spirituality from the practice of social work: 1) social workers do not receive enough training to prepare them to properly address religious issues with their clients (Clark, 1994); 2) each religion has different standards that may conflict within the helping process (Pellebon, 2000); 3) unethical social workers may use religion to condemn clients (Popple & Leighninger, 2002; Netting, 1982); 4) social work's principal of empowerment conflicts with religion (Canda & Furman, 1999); and 5) religion is not empirically based (Weisman, 1997).

The first argument that is expounded upon to reveal the opposition among professionals to include religion and spirituality in the practice of social work is social workers do not receive enough training to prepare them to properly address religious issues with their clients. While it is true that The Council of Social Work Education requires accredited baccalaureate and master's programs to incorporate spirituality into its curriculum, critics believe that one or two courses do not properly train social workers to address religious issues (Clark, 1994). Ministers, on the other hand, receive extensive training in religion and social work. They are professionally trained at schools of theology to perform such duties as interpreting religious literature, conducting worship

and counseling services, and presiding over funeral and weddings (Poppo & Leighninger, 2002, p. 187). Based on these findings, one can understand why critics believe that the training social workers receive in religion fails in comparison to that of ministers and religious issues should be referred to a religious official. However, supporters of the inclusion of religion and spirituality in the practice of social work believe that while the initial training may be sparse, social workers are able to obtain extra training in spirituality and religion by attending annual workshops/conference that address the topic (Canda & Furman, 1999). The additional training will prepare social workers to properly address religious issues with their clientele.

The second argument that is expounded upon to reveal the opposition among professionals to include religion and spirituality in the practice of social work is each religion has different standards that may conflict within the helping process. Pellebon (2000) was concerned that new social workers may have difficulty working with clients who had different religious views than their own regarding such issues as abortions, premarital intercourse, masturbation, and gay and lesbian rights. For example, social workers are trained to discuss all available options with their clients, but a social worker with conservative Christian values regarding abortions may have extreme difficulty discussing this option with a pregnant individual. The example illustrates the fact that religious values may in fact conflict with social work principles.

The third argument that is expounded upon to reveal the opposition among professionals to include religion and spirituality in the practice of social work is unethical social workers may use religion to condemn clients. It has been documented by researchers that earlier charity organizations believed that individuals were destitute

because of their own moral weaknesses such as wasteful spending, adhering to sins of the flesh, and not being persistent (Poppo & Leighninger, 2002, p. 186). Even today, social workers are fearful that they may fall prey to the same critical attitude towards their clientele if they use religion or spirituality in the workplace. Netting (1982) found that social workers believed that a focus on religion would cause them to have a judgmental attitude towards clients. For example, traditional Christian followers are taught that homosexuality is a sin, and individuals who do not repent will be punished (Thompson, 1988). Traditional Christian social workers who accept the position may not be empathetic towards homosexual clients and the issues they bring to the forefront. Researches believe that these social workers may be more centered on preaching salvation to their 'unsaved clients' than adhering to social work's principals and policies (Canda & Furman, 1999, p. 65). Keith-Lucas (1985) believes that in order to reduce the likelihood of social workers becoming judgmental towards their clients, they should not include religion and spirituality in the practice of social work. He believed that excluding religion and spirituality would cause social workers to be less punitive and more understanding towards their clients.

The fourth argument that is expounded upon to reveal the opposition among professionals to include religion and spirituality in the practice of social work is the belief that social work's principal of empowerment conflicts with religion. Researchers stated that religion teaches individuals to accept the life that they have been given and to look forward to a better life on the other side (Canda & Furman, 1999, p. 65). In other words, individuals should mourn in silence and wait for a better day in eternity. Social work, in contrast, teaches empowerment. Empowerment is a concept that has been defined as "the

process of helping individuals, families, groups, and communities increase their personal, interpersonal, socioeconomic, and political strength and influence toward improving their circumstances” (Zastrow, 2000, p. 444). Clients are supported to take control over their own lives which is oppositional to religion’s idea of accepting life as it is.

The fifth argument that is used to explain the controversy among professionals regarding the inclusion of religion and spirituality in the practice of social work is religion is not empirically based. Weisman (1997) stated that spirituality and religion are too new and untested to be reliable for practice. Johnstone (1983) reported that social work is empirically based and relies on more scientific ways to justify human behavior, but religion relies on immeasurable ways of knowing to justify human behavior. For example, religion may state that marriages are made in heaven. Secular practice states that marriages are formed because of biological and psychological needs of individuals to be together (p. 270). The example illustrates that religion does not appear to be empirically based because one may not be able to scientifically prove the existence of heaven, but empirical research can be conducted on the compatibility of marriage partners. As the battle between social work professionals to include or exclude spirituality from the practice of social work continued to rage, another possibility was developed: Faith-based Initiative Programs.

Faith-based Initiative Programs were initiated by Governor George W. Bush on the state level and John Ashcroft on the federal level. The main purpose of the Faith-based Initiative Program was to give religious based programs the opportunity to receive government funding to provide social services to vulnerable populations such as children, chemically dependent client, and prisoners to name a few (Twombly, 2002, p. 947).

In 1996, John Ashcroft introduced the Faith-based Initiative Act, known as the Ashcroft Amendment, with its “charitable choice” initiative permitting states to contract directly with secular organizations to provide social services (Texas Freedom Network, 2003). The Ashcroft Amendment was passed by Congress on the federal level and became Section 104 of the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 (p. 7). Congress later called this the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act.

One criticism that has been leveled against faith-based initiative programs is that it clearly violates the First Amendment clause (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977; Glazer, 1989). The First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States asserts that the government should not have a religion, subscribe to religious beliefs, exhibit religious behaviors, or impose a religion or lack of religion on its citizens. Faith-based initiative programs may also violate state legislature. Also, as recently as 1947, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled in *Everson vs. Board of Education* “that neither a state nor the federal government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa” (Doerr, 2004, p. 46).

Another criticism that has been voiced against faith-based programs is that taxpayer funds maybe spent on faith-based programs that may or may not be licensed by the state. Critics of the faith-based agencies reported that religious based organizations that had 501(c)(3) status were already able to compete for government funding (Texas Freedom Network, 2003, p. 7). Popple and Leighninger (2002) reported that more than 90 percent of social service agencies receive government funding (p. 187). However, faith-based initiative legislature allowed agencies that do not have 501(c)(3) status to receive government funding (Texas Freedom Network, 2003, p. 9).

Another criticism of faith-based agencies is that they are not required to adhere to stringent regulations that other agencies must adhere to if they wish to receive state accreditation. In 1997, The Texas Legislature passed two bills that allowed faith-based children's home and childcare facilities and faith-based chemical dependency programs to participate in an alternative accreditation system instead of having to receive licensure through the state (Texas Freedom Network, 2003, p. 8). Critics of the Faith-based Initiative Program opposed alternative accreditation because it exempted faith-based agencies from having to adhere to the same regulations and standards as state licensed facilities (Twombly, 2002, 950). Therefore, this lack of accountability may lead to a decrease in service provisions such as safety and quality of care for participants of faith-based agencies (Texas Freedom Network, 2003, p. 9).

Critics have stated that faith-based initiative agencies are unconstitutional and do not meet the accreditation standards of state licensed agencies. People are concerned that vulnerable clients may not receive quality care. These criticisms against faith-based initiative agencies reveal that the conflict between human service professionals regarding the inclusion or exclusion of religion and spirituality in the practice of social work is neither new or close to being resolved.

Even though the battle for the inclusion or exclusion of spirituality from the practice of social work or Faith-based programs continued to rage among professional social workers, there was one group of people who did not have any difficulty including spirituality into their helping process. Informal and professional African-American social workers have always incorporated spirituality into their helping process. According to Martin and Martin (2002), African-American caregivers and early social workers

incorporated spirituality into their work with people. African-American women, slaves and free, were among the first informal social workers who provided services to their people and Whites. Martin and Martin (2002) stated,

“Historically, African-American women had always been in the forefront of African-American caregiving and the uplift cause. They almost single-handedly undertook the burden of caring for the sick, the elderly, the infirm, the orphaned, the mentally ill, the children, the men, the entire African-American community, and a great portion of the White community as well. Being largely responsible for holding individuals, families, and communities together, they, more than anybody else, suffered the shocks, strains, and traumas of separation and loss from both natural and human causes. They, more than anybody else, felt a need to dig deep into the spiritual reservoir of their heritage, to call forth sacred powers within to deal with the hardships and the uncertainties of being African-American women in a society that subordinate women and hated African-American people” (p. 165).

African-American women not only used their deeply embedded spiritual roots to provide needed services to others, but they also used it to help them to confront the oppression of White men, White women, and African-American men. African-American women, slave and free, not only endured the constant sexual abuse of the White man, but they were also blamed for their own victimization (Taylor, 1998). White women were against slavery, but they participated in the oppression of African-American women. For example, when Sojourner Truth gave her “Ar’nt I a Women” speech against slavery, White women yelled “Don’t let her speak!” (hooks, 1981). It was only when the White woman needed the help of African-American women to gain the right to vote that they acknowledged the African-American woman (Taylor, 1998). African-American male patriarchy limited the activities of African-American women in the church (Martin & Martin, 2002). Broughton (1907) stated that the majority of men believed that the scriptures forbade women to work in the church. In the face of such debilitating oppression, African-American women, significantly influenced by their spiritual roots,

continued to create a place for themselves in society. During the New Negro Era (1900-1935), African-American female social workers emerged to the forefront. As a result of their relentless efforts, African-American female and male social workers, such as S. Willie Layten, Maymie De Mena, Eva Bowles, and Ranson Wright, Jr., had a vision of sought to incorporate social work, race work, cultural diversity, interracial cooperation, and spirituality into the helping profession (Martin & Martin, 2002).

As an African-American social work professional, I, too, follow in the footsteps of my African-American predecessors and acknowledge that spirituality is both significant to and needs to be included in the practice of social work with African-American female adolescents. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (1997) stated social work professionals should “understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures; and have knowledge base of their client’s cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients’ cultures and differences among people and cultural groups (p. 7-8). Spirituality is rooted into the culture of African-American female adolescents and it is indeed a strength of this population. Therefore, it is imperative for social work professionals to include spirituality in the practice of social work with African-American female adolescents.

Findings from the present study support the inclusion of spirituality in the practice of social work with African-American female adolescents. My girls revealed that spirituality had diverse meanings for them. Social work professionals can use this finding to help their clients to understand themselves in relationship to their environment. Crotty (1998) stated that meanings were constructed based on the lived experiences of the

individual. Social work professionals can help their clients to understand the impact that their environment has had their understanding of spirituality. Social work professionals can also use this finding to help this population to understand that there is no universal definition for spirituality. Therefore, they can construct their own meaning of spirituality which may or may not be similar to those presented by other individuals. Social work professionals can help this population to understand that having their own meaning for spirituality makes spirituality unique and special for them. This may also be beneficial for African-American female adolescents who have reservations about spirituality. For example, if the adolescent has reservations towards spirituality because of the sacredness of it, then, like my girls in the present study revealed, the social work professional can help the adolescent to relate to the cultural, victorious, or caring aspects of spirituality.

Also in regards to spirituality having diverse meaning, social work professions can use this finding to help resolve conflicts between African-American female adolescents and their parents. NASW (1997) stated social work professionals should “seek to strengthen relationships among people in purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities” (p. 5). Social workers can use the diverse meanings finding to help parents to understand that their children may not have turned away from spirituality (Wuthnow & Glock, 1973; Woodroff, 1985; Dudley & Dudley, 1986). African-American female adolescents are revealing the significance of spirituality to them based on the mere fact that they are trying to determine what spirituality means to them. Believe me if spirituality was not important to them, they would not be trying to construct their meaning or meanings for spirituality. Social work professionals can help African-

American parents to understand that constructing their own meaning for spirituality is a sign of healthy African-American adolescent development. This may also benefit parents because they will understand that they themselves do not have to accept the preconceived ideas of others regarding the appropriate meaning for spirituality. It is not too late for parents to construct their own meaning for spirituality.

Additional finding from the present study revealed that African-American female adolescents used spirituality as “self-talk” messages to help them to make the right choice and to have a “can do” attitude. Social work professionals can use this finding to empower African-American female clients to help themselves and to accept responsibility for their own choices in life. NASW (1997) stated social work professionals should “promote clients’ socially responsible self-determination; and to enhance clients’ capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs” (p. 5). Social work professionals can use this finding to help African-American female adolescents to understand that spirituality is within them, and they have the opportunity to use this indwelling spirit to help them to make the correct choice in any given situation. Social work professionals can help African-American female adolescents to understand that they do not have to submit to peer pressure. For African-American female adolescents who are not using spirituality, social work professionals can help them to understand the significance of “self-talk” messages. For African-American female adolescents who are attuned to their “self-talk” messages but refuse to do the right thing, social work professionals can help them to understand that they have to accept responsibility for their actions by helping to them to understand the pros and cons of the choices that they choose to make.

For African-American female adolescents who hear “self-talk” messages, but they are not effective, social work professionals can teach them to use positive affirmation scriptures such as the one quoted by my girls in the present study: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” Philippians 4:13 (Thompson & Owen, 1988). Social work professionals can also engage those adolescents into the group process. It is possible that other African-American female adolescents can reveal their experiences with spirituality and “self-talk” messages, and this can help those adolescents who are having difficulty with “self-talk” messages. Listening and engaging with other African-American female adolescents may help them to find their own answers within themselves.

The present study revealed that social work professionals can use artifacts to help African-American female adolescents. The girls in the present study used artifacts to help them to relate to and appreciate their culture, express a belief in a God greater than themselves, be of service to self and others in the community, find value and meaning in their lives, and to highlight significant milestones in their lives. Social work professionals can encourage African-American female adolescents to obtain artifacts that they can use in their lives or present to other individuals to use in their lives. For example, my African-American female adolescent daughter made two artifacts for me during my PhD studies. I placed one picture with the message “Don’t you quit” beside my bed and, her version of the poem “Still I Rise” was placed on the wall above her computer that I used. These artifacts did not cost much because she made them by hand, but the spirituality that was connected to the artifacts was priceless. These outward spiritual artifacts along with my inward spirituality taught me that I could never give up.

Social workers must incorporate spirituality into the practice of social work to help African-American female adolescents to define their life and circumstances as well.

Finally, social work practitioners can conduct further research and evaluations on the effectiveness and need to include spirituality into the practice of social work with African-American female adolescents. NASW (1997) stated social work professionals should “monitor and evaluate policies, the implementation of programs, and practice interventions; to promote and facilitate evaluation and research to contribute to the development of knowledge” (p. 21). Social work practitioners could conduct research to determine which programs include spirituality into their intake assessments; use intervention as a tool; have program policies which prohibit the inclusion of spirituality; seek to incorporate the client as a partner in the intervention process by incorporating their wishes regarding the inclusion or exclusion of spirituality in the helping process.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 presented a discussion of the study. Chapter 5 began with an overview of the study. A discussion of the research questions and their findings and conclusions were presented next. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the implications for future research, theory, and social work practice.

Dissertation Summary

This document describes an interpretative, race-homogeneous, gender-specific qualitative study of 14 African-American female adolescents between the ages of 11 and 15. The purpose of the study was to investigate the meaning of spirituality and the use of spirituality by African-American female adolescents.

Previous literature on African-American female adolescents frequently centered on at-risk or high-risk populations. The studies predominately centered on such things as poverty, family instability, discrimination, trauma, substance abuse, violence, and pregnancy among African-American female adolescents. Very little if any attention was centered on the strengths of this population.

Findings of the study revealed that: 1) African-American adolescents have various meanings for spirituality; and 2) Spirituality is used as “self-talk” messages by African-American female adolescents. Four themes emerged from the finding that spirituality had diverse meanings for my girls: 1) spirituality is sacred; 2) spirituality represents culture; 3) spirituality represents victory and triumph; and 4) spirituality is having concern for others. Two themes emerged from the finding of “self-talk”: 1) making the right choice; and 2) having a “can do” attitude. Discussions and conclusions were interpreted from the findings of the study and implications of the findings for theory, future research, and social work practice were discussed.

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Appendix A

MY GIRLS AND SPIRITUALITY:

AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE ADOLESCENTS WITH VOICE

Interview Questions

1. How old are you?
2. What grade are you in?
3. What school do you attend?
4. What is your favorite subject in school?
5. What organizations or activities do you participate in at school?
6. What organizations or activities do you participate in outside of school?
7. What does spirituality mean to you?
8. Based on your meaning of spirituality, how do you use it during your daily interactions with your friends?
9. Based on your meaning of spirituality, how do you use it during your daily interactions with your family?
10. Based on your meaning of spirituality, how do you use it during your daily interactions with school personnel?
11. How do you use spirituality to help you make daily decisions?
12. What helps you to succeed as an African-American female adolescent?
13. How do you use spirituality as a strength in your life?
14. Where do you get your strength from as an African-American adolescent?
15. How does spirituality inspire you to succeed in life?
16. How does spirituality help you decide what is right or wrong in life?
17. What do you like about spirituality?

18. What do you dislike about spirituality?
19. What is your purpose in life?
20. How does spirituality help you to decide what your purpose is in life?
21. What has your culture told you about spirituality?
22. How do you express your feelings through spirituality?
23. If you attend church, what does church do for you as an African-American female adolescent?
24. What kinds of situations do you encounter with your friends as an African-American female adolescent?
25. What kinds of situations do you encounter with your parents as an African-American female adolescent?
26. What kinds of situations do you encounter at your school as an African-American female adolescent?
27. What makes these situations unique for you as an African-American female adolescent?
28. What, if anything, hinders you in life as an African-American female adolescent?
29. What is life like for you as an African- American female adolescent?
30. What would you like for people to know about African-American female adolescents?
31. What would you like other children to know about spirituality that I haven't asked you?

Appendix B

MY GIRLS AND SPIRITUALITY:

AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE ADOLESCENTS WITH VOICE

Writing Journal

Directions: Please use this form to write your meaning of spirituality. You can be creative with your writing, such as an essay, poem, song, or art drawing.