On Purpose: Motivational and Contextual Predictors of Purpose and Positive Engagement Among Urban-Residing, African American Youth

by

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Dedication

To Thomas L. Florence and Shermine S. Florence,
my late grandparents who paved the road for my educational journey.

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Abstract

Popular narratives of African American adolescents in inner city school contexts underscore problems related to low achievement, school disengagement, and delinquency. In reality, many youth in urban high schools experience positive developmental trajectories that inform identity processes and create successful routes through adolescence. Part of the identity-formation process in adolescence includes acquiring a purpose, defined as "a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self" (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003, p. 121).

Though studies have highlighted the importance of purpose, few studies have examined purpose in low-income, African American adolescents. This quantitative study used an integrative personality framework to examine purpose and its correlates among urban-residing, African American high school students (N=151, 51% Male). Study 1 explored associations between purpose and personality, motivation, and contextual characteristics. Study 2 sought to identify profiles of purpose in African American students. Study 3 examined the relationships between these profiles of purpose and engagement.

At the individual level, highly motivated students and more conscientious students reported higher purpose scores. Related to context, students who felt that they

mattered to an adult in school scored higher on purpose. Interestingly, students who felt that their neighborhoods had less social capital also were more likely to have purpose.

Three profiles of purpose emerged in Study 2: Achieved Purpose (high purpose exploration/high purpose commitment), Unattained Purpose (high exploration/low commitment), and Diffused Purpose (low exploration/low commitment). Adolescents in the Achieved Purpose group had higher indicators of motivation, mattering, conscientiousness, and hope than their peers. Study 3 found that purpose profiles were associated with engaged living, but not school engagement. Students in the Unattained Purpose group were less engaged than their peers in the community through activity involvement and volunteerism.

Findings from this study reveal the importance of both motivation and contextual factors in fostering purposefulness among African American youth in urban schools. Efforts to improve achievement and well-being for students in urban contexts should consider interventions that provide opportunities for students to discover purpose and engage in activities that can support optimal development.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Adolescents must answer at least two important life questions: 1) who am I? and 2) what am I going to do with my life? (Eccles, 2009). The first question is a question of identity; the second question is a question about purpose. The answers to *both* questions have crucial implications for the route that adolescents take in their transition to adulthood. An adolescent with a sense of purpose has found a path where he or she is guided by an overarching life aim. Purpose can potentially furnish youth with a meaningfully engaged route through adolescence and provide guidance in the transition into a productive adult-self. Empirical research suggests that those who have a sense of purpose live lives that are more meaningful (i.e., they have a sense of significance) (Baumeister, 1991) and that are imbued with a higher level of well-being (See Ryff & Singer, 1988). Purposeful individuals are happier, report a greater sense of hope, and experience less anxiety (Bronk, Hill, & Lapsley, 2009; Burrow & Hill, 2011; Kiang, 2012). Further, individuals who report a sense of purpose often demonstrate a desire to make a unique contribution to the world (Damon, 2008). They are also more likely to be prosocially engaged, pursuing activities that benefit others (Klar & Kasser, 2009; Thoits, 2012). These dual benefits of having purpose represent what Robert Putman (2001) describes as a "virtuous cycle", where the presence of purpose has desirable outcomes both for the individual (i.e., increased well-being) and for society (i.e., positive contributions) (see also Steger, 2012).

In contrast to the benefits experienced by those who have a sense of purpose, young people who lack purpose may be predisposed to move through adolescence without a sense of direction or drive—a way of being that William Damon and colleagues identify as "adolescent drift" (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003). Importantly, studies have shown that only one in five adolescents can identify a life purpose (Bronk, 2010; Damon, 2008).

Though empirical social science research about purpose has existed for over 50 years, relatively little is known about purpose and its correlates. First, we have limited knowledge of the factors that are associated with purpose, particularly among adolescents. Second, studies of purpose have tended to focus on dispositional traits that are correlated with purpose. As a result, little is known about the motivational and contextual factors that may also be associated with purpose. Finally, studies of purpose in adolescence have largely ignored the experiences of youth of color residing in urban or high poverty contexts.

This empirical study endeavors to address these gaps in the literature. The study uses McAdam's integrative personality (IP) perspective as an overarching frame that incorporates dispositional traits and characteristic adaptions (e.g., motivation, developmental considerations) to guide our understanding of the development of purpose in adolescence. Within the integrative personality framework, I combine expectancy value theory (EVT) and developmental systems theory (DST) in an effort to examine the relationship between purpose and well-being among a sample of African American adolescents living in a high poverty, urban context. EVT is an identity-linked motivational theory that asserts that an individual's assessment of his or her ability in a certain domain (i.e., expectation) and the subjective value attributed to various tasks are two key indicators of identity and are core determinants of motivated behaviors (i.e., they

determine who one is and what one chooses to do). DST posits that there is a dynamic interaction between person and context and that this interaction is paramount in shaping the trajectory of adolescents. IP, EVT, and DST are integrated in the effort to address a set of questions that are subsumed in three studies. Study 1 explores the extent to which dispositional traits (e.g., conscientiousness), motivational identity (i.e., expectations for success, subjective task value), and contextual factors (e.g., mattering in school) are associated with purpose among this population of youth. Study 2 examines the extent to which there are empirically identifiable profiles of purpose among African American, urban-residing youth, based on exploration and commitment to purpose. Study 3 investigates whether profiles of purpose, considered in concert with dispositional traits, expectancy motivations, and contextual factors, predict well-being (e.g., school engagement) among low-income, urban-residing African American adolescents.

The Nature of Purpose

Purpose has been a topic of empirical inquiry in the field of psychology since the 1960s, yet many foundational questions concerning the nature of purpose are still debated (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006). One key question centers on how purpose originates: is purpose determined (i.e., a prescribed or preordained reality as in fate) or is it cultivated and discovered? Numerous philosophers and theologians (e.g. Aristotle, Aquinas, and Kierkegaard) have asserted that purpose is divinely inspired or emerges as a part of one's "fate". In sum, purpose is something that is predetermined. From a psychological perspective, however, purpose is viewed as an outcome that develops through cognitive processes and personal agency (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009) as part of an identity development process. It is important to note that notions of a "discovered" purpose in psychology are not necessarily in conflict with philosophy's notions

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that purpose represents one's fate. However, since this study approaches the exploration of purpose from a psychological perspective, primacy is given to theorists who assert that one gains purpose as part of an *identity discovery* process in which one develops key notions about the self based on various commitments to values and goals.

A second key question relates to whether an individual's purpose is fixed or is a phenomenon that changes over the course of an individual's life. The answer to this question has yet to be determined empirically; however, psychology defines purpose as an intention to which a person is committed. Damon (2008) suggests that the truly purposeful are, "those who have found something meaningful to dedicate themselves to, who have *sustained this interest over a period of time*, and who express a clear sense of what they are trying to accomplish in the world and why" (p. 60). Because purpose indicates sustained commitment, it is unlikely that truly purposeful people frequently experience changes in their purpose. In fact, because purpose is defined as a sustained phenomenon (i.e., one that remains consistent and guides one's actions and shapes one's roles over time) researchers have most often studied purpose among adult populations. More recently, scholars have begun to examine purpose among adolescents as purpose is intricately connected to identity development in adolescence. Though purpose has been most frequently studied in adults, examining the developmental stage of adolescence provides some key insights into the experience of purpose, illuminating how it contributes to well-being across the lifespan.

Purpose in Adolescence

Adolescence is a developmental stage marked by identity-formation processes (Erikson, 1968). Purpose is considered an aspect of one's identity, so an understanding of purpose requires

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a consideration of identity more broadly. Though purpose and identity are closely linked, they are two distinct constructs. Identity has been referred to as "self-representation" (Harter, 2006). Identity can be described as one's conception of and expression of self. Identity is, in sum, who one chooses to *be*. Purpose, however, represents an intention to *do* – to accomplish something specific in life. Identity and purpose are two sides of the "self coin". In other words, the development of purpose (i.e., of what one intends to do) supports the commitment to identity (i.e., a stable, clear sense of self) and vice versa (Bronk, 2011; Burrow, O'Dell, & Hill, 2010). Erikson (1968) suggests that commitment to purpose in adolescence is psychosocially advantageous and that, ideally, purpose emerges concurrently with identity. In other words, the presence of purpose promotes positive development.

The study of purpose in adolescence is firmly rooted in a positive youth development (PYD) frame. Though individuals can hypothetically begin to explore and commit to purpose at any point in the lifespan, it is ideal if purpose is discovered earlier in life, as its presence seems to have desirable consequences for adolescent development. In eschewing the deficit perspective, PYD scholars seek to understand and promote what is developmentally adaptive in the transition between childhood and adulthood. Purpose is one of the key potentialities that has been identified as a psychosocial vitality (i.e., causes thriving at the psychological and social levels) that supports positive development (Côté, 1997).

Three major frameworks for PYD include purpose in their recipe of what supports a successful adolescence. First, purpose is a part of a list of *developmental assets*, developed by Peter Benson and colleagues as a comprehensive catalog of specific internal and external assets that prevent health compromising behaviors in adolescence (Benson, 2003). The internal assets

are organized into four categories: commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. "Purpose" is in the positive identity category, and the presence of purpose is linked to a positive view of personal future (Scales & Leffert, 2004). Secondly, the *Five C's* framework for positive youth development (*competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring*) was refined to include "*contribution*" as a sixth "C". The *Five C's* indirectly highlights purpose through promoting the idea that youth have potential to positively impact (i.e., contribute to) the world in which they live. Purpose is, by definition, "beyond-the-self", and implies that others should benefit from the endeavors of purposeful adolescents (Damon, 2008). Finally, purpose is part of the *thriving* framework of adolescent development, which promotes fostering in young people a "spiritual sense and a moral commitment to make healthy, integrated contributions to self, family, community, and civil society" (R. M. Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003, p. 174). Since purpose is, by definition, partially about an individual's contribution to others, it promotes this spiritual sense and moral commitment to society as part of thriving in adolescence (Damon et al., 2003).

The preceding three frameworks highlight why purpose can be considered an important aspect of development in adolescence. Because adolescence is a period of change, purpose in adolescence is understood as a developmental phenomenon, similar to identity. It is clear that purpose is a key indicator of positive youth development, as theories suggests that it supports optimal functioning in adolescence (Benson & Scales, 2009; Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006; Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003; J. V. Lerner, Phelps, Forman, & Bowers, 2009). A young person who can identify a purpose has a tool to help him/her determine what is meaningful to self and of consequence to society. Both of these outcomes reinforce and support

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positive development and can provide necessary direction and goals as a young person navigates life and the process of becoming adult. The positive youth development frameworks (i.e., the developmental assets framework, the five C's framework, and the thriving framework) highlight the benefits of focusing on purpose and its relevance for supporting positive outcomes among young people.

The overarching goal of this study is to investigate purpose using an integrated personality (IP) approach to the understanding of human development. IP articulates a comprehensive framework for understanding the whole person, including how aspects of context contribute to personality (McAdams & Pals, 2006). Personality is conceptualized as a developing pattern that includes dispositional traits (e.g., extraversion) and characteristic adaptations (i.e., motivational, developmental considerations). Dispositional traits are the aspects of personality that represent human individuality. These traits are usually decontextualized (i.e., expressed in a range of situations and typically over a long period of time). Characteristic adaptations are a "wide range of motivational, social–cognitive, and developmental adaptations, contextualized in time, place, and/or social role" (McAdams et al., 2006, p. 208) that can inform purpose in adolescence. Studies of purpose have often been studied solely at the level of dispositional traits. Thus, there is a need for attention to theories that situate purpose in an understanding of motivation and context, and that allow us comprehend how both proximal and social contextual factors might be associated with purpose. Exploring the relationship between purpose and motivational factors and between purpose and contextual experiences will help support a broader, more nuanced, culturally and contextually rooted exploration of purpose. This three-part study endeavors to address these gaps in the study of purpose.

Study 1: Dispositional, Motivational, and Contextual Correlates of Purpose in Adolescence

Dispositional traits reveal one layer of personality that is important to consider when exploring purpose in the lives of individuals. Studies of purpose in adolescence have suggested that purposeful youth, described as those with "intense commitments" (Bronk & Finch, 2010, p. 36), share certain personality traits. A qualitative exploration of purpose in adolescents identified individuals termed "purpose exemplars" (i.e., examples of high purpose adolescents). These young people demonstrated an ability to develop creative strategies to overcome obstacles (Bronk, 2005). The characteristics (i.e., intense commitment and ability to overcome obstacles) displayed by these purpose exemplars are commonly associated with dispositional traits (e.g., "grit" and "conscientiousness") that are associated with hardiness and with "optimism" (McAdams, 2012; Ho, Cheung, & Cheung, 2010). They also had distinct goals. This study provides an analysis of potential correlates of purpose at the dispositional trait level. I hypothesize that, within a population of African American adolescents, grit, conscientiousness, and hope will positively correlate with purpose.

Though dispositional traits provide some level of understanding of purpose, characteristic adaptations (e.g., developmental considerations) that gauge developmental realities related to identity and motivation provide a deeper layer of insight about purpose in adolescence. The established link between purpose and identity has implications for how we understand purpose in the experience of adolescence. Scholars have borrowed from the long history of identity research to elucidate our understanding of purpose. Research on identity has recently been informed by a motivational identity conceptualization, which applies motivational theories to identity processes (Kaplan & Flum, 2009). Using a motivational identity conceptualization is useful for our

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understanding of purpose, as motivation and purpose are both about "doing". Recall that purpose is the "doing" aspect of identity. Motivation is defined as "an energized internal state that results in goal-directed behaviors" (Schunk, Meece, & Pintrich, 2012, p. 5). In other words, motivation is about the internal capacity to "do". We can surmise that purpose in life is not only linked with identity, but it is rooted in and reflective of what motivates (Kashdan & McKnight, 2013).

According to Kaplan and Flum (2009), the relations between motivation and identity are basically the "relations between a person's goal-directed action (i.e., motivation) and the kind of person he or she may become (i.e., identity)" (p. 74). Conceptually speaking, goals are the link between motivation and purpose. When an adolescent is highly motivated, having identified a domain that s/he intends to pursue, purpose can organize those goals and provide a direction for what s/he desires to accomplish in the future. In this work, I draw a link between an individual's goal-directed behaviors (in the present) and what he or she wants to ultimately do in life (purpose).

Motivation and Purpose

One example of a motivation theory that has been found to be particularly relevant as an explanation of identity processes is expectancy value theory (EVT). EVT is a motivation theory that has been used to explain how children and adolescents are motivated in both school and in extra-curricular activities (Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Fredricks, Simpkins, & Eccles, 2005). According to EVT, identity can be theorized as:

[t]wo basic sets of self perceptions: (a) perceptions related to skills, characteristics, and competencies, and (b) perceptions related to personal values and goals. Together these

two sets of self perceptions inform both individuals' expectations for success and the importance they attach to becoming involved in a wide range of tasks (Eccles, 2009, p. 78).

Self-perceptions related to skills, characteristics, and competencies are a gauge of self-efficacy. Perceptions related to personal values and goals are comprised of four components: (a) interest value, (b) attainment value, (c) utility value, and (d) relative cost (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Using EVT as a lens, the present work suggests that purpose may uniquely associate with motivational identity where this form of identity is measured by two distinct indicators: expectation for success (self-efficacy) and task value (interest). In sum, I posit that adolescents who have identified domains where they have high self-efficacy and high interest value will be report a greater sense of purpose.

Empirical research to date provides very little insight into the motivational correlates of purposefulness in adolescents. However, the motivational identity framework suggests that highly motivated adolescents are more likely to have identified a purpose because motivation energizes the goals that are guided by purpose. Using this motivational identity framework, I hypothesize that highly motivated youth will be more likely to score high on the exploration and/or commitment dimensions of purpose.

Purpose at the Contextual Level

Much of the prior research on purpose has focused on individual traits (e.g., extraversion) and socio-cognitive factors (e.g., motivation and goals) that are highly correlated with and predictive of purpose. Though an individual's motivational identity and, by extension, his or her purpose, are aspects of self, it is important to highlight that the development of purpose is not

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merely a consequence of intra-individual traits. An individual's environment is also likely to contribute to his/her purposefulness. However, few studies consider contextual variables that might inform the development of purpose (see DuRant, Getts, Cadenhead, Emans, & Woods, 1995 for one exception). The relative absence of attention to context in empirical research on purpose is problematic given that scholars have long asserted that adolescents develop in dynamic systems of interaction (Ford & Lerner, 1992; Brofrenbrenner, 1977). This research seeks to advance existing knowledge about purpose by exploring a conceptualization of purpose that is situated in the understanding that individual level factors (e.g., motivation) alone are insufficient for understanding purpose among youth. Indeed, in keeping with the understanding that individuals develop within systems, I suggest that it is essential to consider contextual factors that may be associated with purpose among African American youth. Because purpose is a significant component of positive youth development, I root the study of purpose in *developmental systems theory* (DST) (Lerner & Castellino, 2002).

DST, a theoretical framework that is foundational to the study of positive youth development, posits that three elements are central in understanding development: 1) the individual, 2) the context in which that individual is embedded, and 3) the interaction between individual and context. The present study considers the extent to which family context, school context, and neighborhood context factors are associated with purpose among low-income, urban residing African American adolescents.

Family and Purpose. The family unit is the primary socializing force in the life of a young person. Although a number of family practices may be important to helping youth to develop purpose (e.g., parenting style, socialization messages), a small but compelling body of

research exists that suggests that family practices related to religion/spirituality may be especially important to cultivating a sense of purpose in the lives of adolescents. Studies have identified religion/spirituality as a source of meaning and purpose (DeVogler & Ebersole, 1981; Sommer, Baumeister & Stillman, 2012). These studies demonstrated that individuals frequently identify religious belief or spirituality as providing meaning to life. Religion and spirituality are important in the lives of African Americans (Taylor, Chatters, & Jackson, 2004). Although no studies to date have explored the link between religiosity, spirituality and purpose among African American youth, there are good reasons to anticipate that this link between purposefulness and spirituality may be especially significant for African American adolescents—particularly low-income, African American youth. According to the *National Survey on Youth and Religion*, Black youth are more likely than youth of any other racial/ethnic group to say that religious faith is important in their lives (Smith & Denton, 2005). Additionally, low-income adolescents are more likely than high or middle-income counterparts to say that religious faith is important in shaping daily life (Smith & Denton, 2005). The cultural messages that emerge in families where religion and/or spirituality are central may support notions of purpose, rooted in a particular cultural belief around notions of transcendence – defined as "coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe and one's place within it" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 533). In such family contexts, purpose may be more likely to develop.

School and Purpose. Beyond the family, the school represents the second contextual space that I will explore as potentially influencing purpose in adolescence. In particular, I suggest that the nature of relationships that adolescents develop with adults in school may associate with the purposefulness. Though there are numerous school context indicators that

influence psychosocial development, the experience of mattering to adults in school may be particularly relevant to for the development of purpose in adolescence. Mattering is "the psychosocial experience of feeling significant to others" (Dixon, 2006, p. 1655). When schools are spaces where young people feel like they matter, it is possible that purpose is more likely to be present in tandem with that sense of significance. Mattering to adults at school is a measure of school climate that has particular relevance in the experience of African American adolescents (Tucker, Dixon, & Griddine, 2010). Mattering is essential because of the importance of relationships with adults in fostering school belongingness. Adults co-construct adolescent identity and adolescents who believe that they are significant to a non-familial adult, may be better able to see themselves as significant in the world (i.e., have purpose). One qualitative study of African American male high school students suggested that mattering to adults in school "likely helped…build a strong foundation of self-efficacy and self-confidence from which they have found a sense of purpose and an enduring sense of intrinsic motivation and drive for continued school engagement and academic success" (Tucker et al., 2010, p.135). The current study uses a quantitative approach to empirically examine the extent to which the perception that mattering to adults in school is associated with purpose for African American male and female students.

Neighborhood and Purpose. At the community level, representing the third level of contextual analysis, safe and socially connected neighborhoods may create avenues for adolescents to positively engage in activities that could support the development of purpose. Safe neighborhoods, with supportive adults and opportunities for involvement, have been identified as an asset for adolescents (Benson, 2003). It is likely that neighborhoods high in social capital (i.e.,

safe, socially connected neighborhoods) provide contexts where young people can engage both through meaningful interactions with members of the community and where they have access to multiple opportunities for participation in activities. Opportunities for activity involvement in the community can support motivation (i.e., self-efficacy in activities and valuing activities), which may support purpose development. Neighborhood disadvantage may have the opposite effect as it is characterized as presenting few structures for engagement and fewer safe opportunities for young people to explore and develop interests (e.g., fewer extracurricular activities, few job opportunities, and less green space). Empirical studies have associated neighborhood disadvantage with poor well-being outcomes that may hinder the development of purpose (Rankin & Quane, 2002). Neighborhood violence, which is sometimes associated with neighborhood disadvantage, has been shown to be linked to lower levels of purpose among African American adolescents (DuRant, Cadenhead, Pendergrast, & Slavens, 1994).

In Study 1 I explore the personality, motivational, and contextual correlates of purposefulness for a sample of low-income, urban residing adolescents. I consider the extent to which dispositional traits (e.g., conscientiousness), motivational identity (i.e., expectations for success, their subjective task value), and contextual factors (e.g., mattering in school) associate with a sense of purpose among African American, urban-residing youth. At the individual level, I hypothesize that adolescents who indicate higher grit, conscientiousness, and hope will have higher levels of purpose. Additionally, I hypothesize that adolescents who report higher levels of motivation related to higher self-efficacy and task value in either the school domain or in an extracurricular activity, will report a higher level of purpose. At the contextual level, I hypothesize that adolescents who reside in contexts where religious/spiritual practices are

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emphasized (family-level), who believe that they matter to adults (school-level), and who live in neighborhoods that they perceive as safe and socially connected (community-level), will report higher levels of purpose.

Study 2: Profiles in purpose

Burrow and Hill (2011) assert that there are two dimensions of purpose: exploration and commitment. This assertion derives from James Marcia's developmental frame, and is grounded in an appreciation that if purpose is discovered (rather than prescribed), then that discovery process will naturally include: 1) some degree of exploration; and 2) some variation among youth in the extent to which they commit. Given this developmental reasoning, in this study I employ a bi-dimensional measure of purpose that distinguishes between purpose exploration and purpose commitment among African American youth.

Considering the various patterns of purpose exploration and purpose commitment that could potentially manifest, this study takes a person-centered approach to distinguish between various groups of students in the sample. Cluster analysis will be used to identify these variations in purpose because this person-centered analytic method allows researchers to identify and describe groups of individual cases defined by similarities along multiple dimensions of interest (Henry, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 2005). In choosing to use cluster analysis instead of a variable-centered approach, I am acknowledging that the singular and exclusive use of variable-centered approaches in studies of human development has limitations. Bergman and Magnusson (1997) assert that, "The modeling/description of variables over individuals can be very difficult to translate into properties characterizing single individuals because the information provided by the statistical method is variable oriented, not individual oriented" (1996, p. 292). Using a cluster

analytic approach in this study will allow for a description of African American adolescents not in terms of whether or not they have purpose, but in terms of their varying degrees of purpose exploration and commitment to purpose. Using this person-centered approach in conjunction with the variable-centered approach will allow for an understanding of the ways in which different profiles of purpose, considered in conjunction with various personality, motivational, and contextual factors contribute to positive development among low-income African American urban residing youth.

Two previous studies have used cluster analytic methods in their empirical investigation of purpose. Although both studies were focused on adolescents, neither focused on African American youth. Burrow, O'Dell, and Hill (2010) classified a sample of White/non-Hispanic (76%) adolescents (N=318) from three suburban high schools (two of which were Catholic schools) in terms of purposefulness. They identified four distinguishable profiles by levels of commitment and exploration of purpose: "Achieved" (high purpose commitment/high purpose exploration); "foreclosed" (high purpose commitment/low purpose exploration); "uncommitted" (low purpose commitment/high purpose exploration); and "diffused" (low purpose commitment/low purpose exploration). The study found that adolescents in the Achieved and Foreclosed groups had higher positive affect than students in the other profiles. The second study that used cluster analytic methods to understand purpose clustered students by *types* of purpose (e.g., "self-oriented long term aims", "other-oriented long term aims") and not by commitment or exploration to purpose (Bronk & Finch, 2010). The study also identified four clusters of youth: youth without clear long-term aims; youth with self-oriented long-term aims; youth with other-oriented long-term aims; and youth with both self- and other-oriented long-term aims. The

sample (N=144) attended a suburban high school and was majority White/non-Hispanic (73%). Study findings demonstrated that those with "other-oriented" long-term aims scored higher on "openness" as a personality characteristic and had higher life satisfaction scores.

This proposed dissertation study differs from the previous studies that used cluster analysis in both the sample demographics and study context. More specifically, this study will focus on African American, urban-residing adolescents in a low-income, urban public school. Additionally, unlike previous studies, the current study will explore motivational (e.g., identity-based) and contextual (e.g., family religiosity; school culture) correlates of purpose.

Study 2 examines the question of whether there are empirically identifiable profiles of purpose that reflect varying levels of exploration or commitment among African American adolescents. I hypothesize a four profile solution similar to the one identified by Burrow et al. (2010) will fit with the data from the students in this sample. The profiles identified in Study 2 will be used in Study 3 to explore the extent to which different profiles of purpose are associated with school and community engagement.

Study 3: Purpose and Engagement Among African American Adolescents Urban Contexts

In the past fifteen years, a handful of studies have emerged that associate purpose with an assortment of positive outcomes in adolescents. However, African American adolescents and adolescents residing in low-income urban contexts have generally been absent from these well-being focused, empirical studies of purpose. Despite the emergence of interest in purpose among youth, popular as well as social scientific, narratives about African American adolescents from high poverty, urban contexts are disproportionately focused on negative social outcomes– e.g., teen pregnancy, premature school withdrawal, poor academic performance and delinquency. The

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almost exclusive focus on negative outcomes among African American low-income, urban youth misses the point that despite the realities of social ills in low-income, urban communities, strengths (e.g., purpose) are still present in youth and opportunities for positive youth development abound. This study shifts from the more commonplace, negative-focused narratives of African American youth by attending to well-being outcomes that emerge in and outside of school.

In contrast with previous studies of purpose that have focused on individual level indicators of socioemotional functioning as outcomes (e.g., positive affect, openness, and satisfaction) (see Kiang, 2012; Hill, Burrow, & Bronk, 2014), this study focuses on indicators of positive functioning that extend beyond the self (i.e., school and non-school engagement). School engagement is a positive outcome that measures students' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional participation in school (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris 2004). Behavioral engagement refers specifically to the ways one participates in school (Frederick et al., 2004). It encompasses positive conduct, involvement in learning activities, and participation in school related activities (Furrer, 2003; Finn et al, 1997; Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). Emotional engagement is an indicator of belonging and value. School connectedness is associated with this dimension of engagement and addresses a student's reaction to school and the people in the school (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009). Cognitive engagement is an indicator of a student's investment in learning and the education process. Cognitive engagement is associated with knowledge, skills and content, but it is also the "why" behind the student's engagement with learning. It deals with future goals and aspirations, as well as relevance of coursework to student's processes of engagement with school (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006).

Students who are engaged in school tend to do better in school overall and are less likely to drop out of school (Finn & Rock, 1989). More specifically, emotional and behavioral engagement have been linked to academic achievement, acting as a mediator between relatedness and achievement (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Voekl, 1997). Furthermore, cognitive engagement has been associated with higher grades (Appleton, Christenson, Reschyl, 2006; Wang & Eccles, 2011). Students who have higher engagement at all three levels also tend to be more motivated in school (Eccles & Wang, 2012). The positive correlations between engagement and motivation and between motivation and purpose imply a potential relationship between engagement and purpose. Indeed, Yeager and colleagues (2014) recently found an association with purposefulness and engagement. In the study, students who indicated a higher "purpose for learning" also demonstrated persistence with tedious tasks, which is an indicator of cognitive engagement. The concept of a "purpose for learning" invited participants to identify a distinct purpose for doing an assignment. Though the "purpose for learning" approach is distinct from a notion of a broader life purpose, this association between purpose and engagement is still noteworthy. The Yeager study was done among a college-age, predominately non-African American sample (only 5% African-American). The present study examines the extent to which an association between purpose in life, contrasted with the narrower "purpose for learning," and engagement in school holds for low-income, urban residing African American youth.

Although school engagement is a potentially important index of positive outcomes for youth, it is important to consider other indicators of positive life outcome for youth. Because schools, particularly low-income urban schools, often represent spaces of contention that do not engage the interests and talents of youth (Noguera, 2003; Ginwright, Camamara, & Noguera,

2005), it is especially important to consider indices of positive functioning that extend beyond schooling. One such general index of positive functioning is "engaged living" (Froh, Kashdan, Yurkewicz, & Fan, 2010). Engaged living has two components: 1) social integration and 2) absorption in activity. Social integration refers to "being passionate about helping and being connected to others" (Froh, et al., 2010, p. 312). Absorption in activity indicates "being intensely and readily engrossed in passionate activities (Froh, et al., p. 313). This study includes engaged living (i.e., social integration and absorption in activity) as potentially associated with purpose because this conceptually aligns with Froh et al.'s (2010) assertion that altruistic and prosocial engagement are implicit in what it means to have purpose in adolescence.

Study 3 seeks to examine the extent to which purpose exploration and commitment, considered in conjunction with motivation and context, are associated with school engagement as well as engaged living among African American adolescents attending school in a low-income, urban school district. The focus on "engaged living" as a broader index of functioning is in line with Damon's conjecture that people living with purpose contribute meaningfully to the world through pursuing goals that have benefits "beyond-the-self" (Damon et al., 2003). Importantly, in the "engaged living" construct development study which focused on a diverse population of adolescents in an affluent school district, purpose was found to be associated with social integration (Froh et al., 2010). Thus far, however, engaged living has yet to be studied with African American youth who reside in low-income, urban settings. This study serves as a correction to that gap.

Dissertation Study: The Identity and Context Theory of Purpose and Engagement

The proposed study uses the integrative personality framework (McAdams, 2012) to understand the correlates of purpose and outcomes related to well-being in adolescents. The integrative personality framework which guides this study suggests that in order to understand the role of purpose in human personality, personality must be viewed from multiple levels. Two of those levels, namely dispositional traits and characteristic adaptations (i.e., motivational, developmental considerations), are considered in this conceptualization. It is important to note that this study does not attempt to test causal relationships. The data are strictly correlational. The goal of the study, then, is to explore how purpose is situated in association to personality, motivation, context and engagement among urban-residing, African American adolescents.

Study 1 examines the association between individual (dispositional traits and motivation) and contextual level factors and purpose in this sample of youth. The dispositional traits include those distinct personality traits (i.e., grit, conscientiousness, and hope) that have been associated with purposefulness in previous empirical research. Motivation and context represent two aspects of characteristic adaptations that also ground this study theoretically. The motivation variables reflect the contribution of an expectancy value theoretical (EVT) frame, which asserts that motivation is based on 1) expectation for success and 2) value for tasks/activities. The contextual factors reflect attention to developmental systems theory (DST) and consider whether experiences in the family, school, and neighborhood environments associate with purpose among adolescents.

Study 2 assesses the presence of distinguishable profiles of purpose for African American adolescents. Purpose profiles are determined through measurements of individuals' exploration

of and commitment to purpose. The focus on identifying profiles of purpose is intended to broaden the dialogue about purpose by moving beyond dichotomous discussions that represent youth as either having purpose or being purposeless. The intent is to imagine youth in a developmental frame that understands that they vary in level of exploration and commitment to purpose.

Study 3 tests the extent to which different profiles of purpose are associated with school-related (i.e., school engagement) and non-school related (i.e., engaged living) well-being outcomes. The study examines three domains of school engagement: behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. Engaged living is measured as social integration (i.e., helping others and connection with community) and absorption in activity.

Organization of Dissertation

This research is organized as follows: Chapter Two reviews the extant literature related to purpose. The review is organized according to the integrative framework for personality psychology, focusing on the correlates of purpose connected in light of multiple layers of personality. Literature is highlighted that explores purpose as an aspect of personality that occurs at two distinct levels: dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations. Following the literature review, Chapter Three provides information about the study site and an overview of the methodology used in the research. Chapter Four reports the results of the three studies. Chapter Five discusses the results and provides implications and directions for future studies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Victor Frankl was one of the first scholars in psychology to consider purpose as an important concept in the social sciences (Bronk, 2013). The publication of his book, *Man's Search for Meaning* (1959), was a watershed moment for the field of psychology. Ideas about "meaning" and "purpose" had been common in the parlance of philosophy, but these ideas were not taken seriously in the social sciences until Frankl wrote about purpose as an inner strength that gave a "why" to human existence. Frankl asserted that a lack of purpose was a threat to one's existence. He wrote, "Woe to him who saw no more sense in his life, no aim, no purpose, and therefore no point in carrying on" (Frankl, 1959, p. 76). In other words, lacking "purpose" or "meaning" is a threat to one's well-being and to one's survival. Frankl's conceptualization of purpose led to the development of logotherapy, a meaning-based clinical therapy method used for those suffering from mental illness (Frankl, 1955). Eventually, the presence of purpose came to represent not just a therapy mechanism, but a foundational human strength. In other words, purpose has come to be defined as a crucial part of "what makes life worth living".

In the 21st century, purpose has (re)emerged as a key construct in the field of positive psychology (Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003). Inquiries in positive psychology have focused on understanding factors that can lead individuals, communities and societies to thrive (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Damon (2003) asserts that, "The search for meaning and

purpose is key to achieving the fortuitous ends envisioned by the positive psychology

movement..." (p. 120). This assertion is grounded in the idea that purpose provides a proactive

source of human motivation that can lead to outcomes such as authentic happiness and "flow"

(i.e., intense experiential involvement in activity) (See Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman &

Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2005).

Martin Seligman (2011), often considered the father of positive psychology, developed

the notion of "flourishing", a central concept in positive psychology. He theorizes that, "[W]ell-

being is the topic of positive psychology [and]…has five measurable elements, Positive

Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement" (p. 24) (PERMA). Seligman

calls these areas the five pillars of positive psychology, suggesting that each contributes to well-

being. Importantly, "purpose" is an aspect of meaning, and is therefore considered to be

foundational in the theory of human flourishing (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009).

The presence of meaning/purpose in life has a myriad of positive correlates related to

psychological health, physical health, and overall well-being (Bronk, 2013). Having purpose or

meaningful goals in life has been associated with resilience (DuRant et al., 1994; Masten &

Reed, 2002), positive affect (Bronk, 2012; Keyes, Schmotkin, & Ryff, 2002); lower levels of

boredom (Falhman et al., 2009); lower depression and anxiety (Kiang et al., 2012; Ryff &

Singer, 1989); increased hope (Bronk et al., 2009; Burrow et al., 2010; Mascaro & Rosen, 2005;

Van Dyke & Elias, 2007); lower likelihood of drug and alcohol use (Newcombe & Harlow,

1986; Padelford, 1974); greater life satisfaction and happiness (Bronk et al., 2009; Ho et al.,

2010; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006); greater self-efficacy (Dewitz, Woolsey, & Walsh,

2009); higher grades in school (Yeager et al., 2014); and greater psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2006; Ryff & Singer, 1989).

Given its association with these positive outcomes, purpose is a promising topic of study for researchers and practitioners who desire to understand optimal human functioning (Linley, Joseph, Harrington, & Wood, 2006). Yet the concept of purpose is rather nebulous. "Purpose" and "meaning" are often discussed in the literature in ways that fail to distinguish the two concepts one from another (Damon et al., 2003; Steger, Bundick, & Yeager, 2012). Indeed, Frankl used the two words interchangeably, as have others who followed in his conceptual lineage (see for example, Crumbaugh, 1968). This tendency to conflate the terms "meaning" and "purpose" lends itself to a muddled understanding of both purpose and meaning (Steger et al., 2012). In order to ensure clarity, I will explore definitions of the two constructs with a particular focus on the definition of purpose.

Definitional Matters

Definitions of the construct "meaning" have been situated in the cognitive domain. The concept of "meaning" highlights one's thinking about one's significance (i.e., importance) in the world. Steger and colleagues assert that meaning is "the extent to which people comprehend, make sense of, or see significance in their lives, accompanied by the degree to which they perceive themselves to have a purpose, mission, or overarching aim in life" (Steger, Bundick, & Yeager, 2012, p. 1666). This suggests that meaning has a first component (significance) that contributes to a belief about one's importance and a second component (purpose) that informs an aim or mission in life (Steger, 2012).

A second definition, offered by Roy Baumeister (1991), is similar to Steger's definition, yet offers a slightly different view. Baumeister also conceptualizes "meaning" as an aspect of an individual's thinking about significance, but does not assume that meaning *must* include an aim or mission (i.e., purpose). Baumeister suggests that the essence of meaning is "connection." That is to say that meaning involves an understanding of the relationships among things and people. Baumeister identifies four needs that support meaningfulness: a) purpose, b) value, c) self-efficacy, and d) self-worth (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). According to Baumeister, only one of these four needs has to exist for one to have "meaning." However, of the four needs, only "purpose" represents an "intention to do". Thus, in contrast to Steger's conceptualization, Baumeister notes that meaning can exist without leading to an intention to do something (i.e., meaning can exist without an accompanying purpose).

Despite the differences in the conceptualizations of "meaning" offered by Steger and Baumeister, these theorists do agree on a unique aspect of purpose. Both theorists agree that "purpose" refers to an aim or an intention to do something. Because it entails an intention to "do", purpose is linked to goals. In fact, one review found that there are three core components of purpose across the literature: a) commitment, b) goal directedness, and c) meaningfulness (significant to oneself) (Bronk, 2013). In sum, purpose drives behavior and is linked with a *commitment* to act or accomplish a *goal* or set of goals that are personally *meaningful* (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009).

Two things are evident in the literature that distinguishes "meaning" from "purpose". First, meaning has multiple components, one of which *can* entail a notion of having purpose. By this definition, "meaning" *does not* require an accompanying purpose, thus Baumeister's

conceptualization of meaning is more appealing. Secondly, because purpose is represented as a component of meaning, purpose is always meaningful. In sum, one can have meaning without a purpose, yet it is not possible to have purpose without meaning. Therefore, "purpose" and "meaning" are two distinct, yet overlapping terms.

There are two prominent definitions of purpose in the literature that successfully differentiate purpose from meaning, by situating purpose as being connected to goals or intention to act. Kashdan and McKnight (2009) assert that purpose is, "a central, self-organizing life aim that organizes and stimulates goals, manages behavior, and provides a sense of meaning in life" (p. 304). Damon and colleagues (2003) define purpose as "a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self" (p. 121). In closely comparing the two definitions, a clear point of departure emerges.

Kashdan and McKnight incorporate the three aforementioned components of purpose by representing commitment, goal-directedness, and personal meaningfulness as part of the scope of the definition. Damon et al. include those three components, but go a step beyond to include a "beyond-the-self" component, suggesting that true purpose, though personally meaningful, cannot be completely self-focused. In other words, purpose is always "transcendent". The distinction between these two definitions is subtle, yet significant.

Purpose and Transcendence

The "beyond-the-self" aspect of Damon's definition is well aligned with Frankl's original discussion of purpose in that both acknowledge "transcendence" as part and parcel to purpose. Frankl asserted that purpose could only be found "in the world", rather than within one's self. He

titled this notion, "the self-transcendence of human existence." Frankl argues that this self-transcendent aspect of existence,

> [d]enotes the fact that being human always points, and is directed, to something or someone, other than oneself—be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself—by giving himself to a cause to serve…the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself…In other words, self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence (p. 110).

Frankl's analysis suggests that "beyond-the-self" is central to any complete definition of purpose. Consistent with Frankl's notion that purpose is transcendent, in their seminal positive psychology text, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, Peterson and Seligman, (2004) included purpose as an aspect of transcendence. Purpose, according to Peterson and Seligman, resides in the realm of the transcendent – that which reaches "beyond other people… to embrace… the larger universe" (2004; p. 519). Given this "beyond the self" conceptualization of purpose, this study rests on the definition of purpose that is offered by Damon and colleagues. These researchers assert that purpose is "a stable and generalized intention to do something that is both meaningful to oneself and of consequence to the world beyond the self" (Damon et al., 2003, p. 121).

An Integrative Personality Perspective on Purpose

Purpose has often been considered merely as an aspect of individual personality. However, McAdams reminds us that people exist in "a complex social and cultural context" (McAdams, 2012, p. 108). McAdams asserts that in order to have a more nuanced understanding of personality constructs such as purpose, those constructs must be couched in a broad

phenomenological framework that acknowledges multiple levels of the human experience. More specifically, McAdams and colleagues use an integrative framework for personality (McAdams & Pals, 2006) that suggests that individuals are best understood by examining their experience at three levels: 1) dispositional traits, 2) characteristic adaptations, and 3) integrative life stories. The following sections review what we know about purpose in light of dispositional traits and characteristic adaptations.

Personality as supporting purpose development: Dispositional traits

Traits represent one aspect of personality and a body of research demonstrates that certain traits correlate with purposefulness. Research has found a connection between meaningfulness/purposefulness and trait concept known as hardiness (McAdams, 2012). Hardy individuals are described as: 1) welcoming challenges; 2) exerting control over difficult events; and 3) making lasting commitments amidst uncertainty and change (Maddi, 1998; Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982). In considering the experience of adolescents and school behaviors, it seems that characteristics that are associated with high levels of hardiness may frequently co-occur within those adolescents who have a purpose in life. Certain traits lend themselves to hardiness (i.e., commitment or perseverance over time), namely: grit, conscientiousness, and hope. The presence of such traits may give an indication of which young people are more inclined to develop a sense of purpose in life.

Grit. Grit is defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelley, 2007). Grit is a trait that is likely associated with those who have purpose because purpose has components of both goal orientation and commitment. Thus, purposeful adolescents may tend to persevere in pursuit of the goals that are aligned with their

purpose. Consistent with this notion, a study of college students found a positive relationship between grit and purpose (Hill, Burrow, & Bronk, 2014). Importantly, Hill et al.'s study focused on a sample of emerging adults that was 90% Caucasian. Grit is considered a non-cognitive measure that predicts success in various populations. The proposed dissertation study will explore the association between grit and purpose among African American high school students who reside and attend school in a low-income urban context.

   Conscientiousness. Another trait that is linked to hardiness, and likely related to purpose, is conscientiousness. Conscientiousness is characterized as a need for achievement or commitment to work (Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991). When adolescents score higher on the conscientiousness, it is likely that they will be more self-disciplined and likely to have a high achievement orientation, potentially causing them to be more likely to make purposeful commitments (Komarraju, Karau, Schmeck, & Avdic, 2011). Importantly, those higher in conscientiousness have been shown to be more likely to have involvement in church or other have other prosocial community involvements that potentially support the development of purpose (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2007).

   Conscientiousness, one of the Big Five personality traits, has been shown to be correlated with well-being measures and positive school outcomes (Hill et al., 2014; Ivcevic, Ivcevic, Brackett, & Brackett, 2014; Komarraju, Karau, & Schmeck, 2008). Conscientiousness and grit have been associated, with some studies finding high correlations between both constructs (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Hill et al., 2014;). Others have found differences in predictive validity between the constructs (Ivcevic et al., 2014), thus it is important that studies test for grit and conscientiousness separately. Conscientiousness also has been associated with being able to

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find meaning in life (McAdams, 2013; Hill et al., 2014). Empirical studies of adults have identified associations between conscientiousness and meaning (Schutte & Ryff, 1997; Schnell & Becker, 2006; Grant, Langam-Fox & Anglim, 2009). However, conscientiousness has not been studied in relation to purpose in life among an adolescent population. Indeed, the literature on the relation between conscientiousness, grit, and purpose is skeletal and still leaves questions unanswered, especially with respect to the experiences of racially and class diverse high school students. This study will seek to advance the field by exploring the relation between these aspects of personality for low-income, urban residing African American youth.

Hope. Hope is a trait that has been linked to purpose in life, as part of the positive psychology family (Bronk et al., 2009). Hope has been considered similar to optimism, which is an indicator of well-being that is has been conceptually linked with purpose commitment (Diener et al., 2009; Peterson, 2000; Scheier & Carver, 2003). Additionally, hope is a part of the *Character Strengths and Virtues* classification, representing "a cognitive, emotional, and motivational stance toward the future" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 570). In that classification, hope is included, along with optimism and future mindedness, as a strength under the virtue of transcendence. Peterson and colleagues make a distinction between hope and optimism by suggesting that hope is emotional, while optimism is purely expectational.

An additional conceptualization of hope indicates that it is primarily a cognitive construct (Snyder & Lopez, 2005). In this framework, hope is examined as a goal-oriented construct that consists of two distinct components: pathways and agency. Pathways measures that one knows how to achieve a goal. Agency measures whether or not the individual has the motivation or

drive to reach the goal. Previous research suggests that hope and purpose have a strong positive

relationship (Burrow, O'Dell & Hill, 2010)

Purposeful individuals are more likely to foster a sense of personal agency, which

directly connects to Snyder's conceptualization of hope. Though purpose and hope have been

found to be related constructs in studies with adolescents, no studies, to my knowledge, have

shown this association in a sample of low-income, African Americans. Therefore, this study

looks to identify any potential association between hope and purpose in this population in order

to better understand positive psychological constructs in this population of adolescents.

Purpose and characteristic adaptation: the identity and motivation links

Though investigating dispositional traits can contribute to our understanding of purpose,

trait theory alone falls well short of being comprehensive in developing an adequate

understanding of purpose. The characteristic adaptation level of the integrative personality theory

recognizes that beyond dispositional traits there are a "wide range of motivational, social–

cognitive, and developmental adaptations, contextualized in time, place, and/or social role"

(McAdams & Pals, 2006, p. 207) that can also influence purposefulness. This "characteristic

adaptation" component of McAdams' framework suggests that psychosocial phenomena such as

identity development and motivation also should be used to enhance our understanding of

purpose in the experience of adolescents.

Purpose is rooted in one's sense of self, as an aspect of identity (Cote & Levine, 1983).

Erik Erikson (1968) wrote described identity development as the process where young people try

out different roles and make important decisions related to personal beliefs and professional

plans. Accordingly, he notes that the successful completion of identity development leads to

fidelity, or a commitment to a particular set of values and beliefs (Erickson, 1968). A commitment to a set of values and beliefs can inform a sense of purpose if, consistent with the definition of purpose, that commitment motivates an individual to do something or strive toward accomplishing a goal. In that sense, identity is the "being", while purpose represents the "doing" that can ground identity. Identity development can engender the development of purpose, in that when an individual has an achieved identity, that realization gives some support for understanding what one should do in life (Oyserman & Destin, 2010).

While Erickson is widely known for his psychosocial development stages that informed our understanding of identity, he also made key references to purpose in his writing. He refers to purpose as an "indispensable contribution" to identity development (1968; p. 122). He suggests that there is a bi-directional, mutually reinforcing relationship between identity and purpose such that identity can inform purpose, and purpose can also serve to solidify one's identity. Erikson's writings suggest that, "finding a purpose can facilitate the resolution of identity crises by offering a meaningful ideal to which individuals can dedicate their efforts. Indeed, it is through purposeful engagement with one's environment that one can form a sense of identity" (c.f. Hill & Burrow, 2012, p. 79).

A number of empirical studies have demonstrated both that identity and purpose are related constructs, and that these are unique determinants of well-being (Burrow & Hill, 2011; Hill & Burrow, 2012). Adolescents who increased on purpose commitment over the course of a school year also reported increased identity commitment (Burrow & Hill, 2011). Accordingly, presence of purpose assists in resolving identity crises in that having something to do increases the likelihood of commitment to an identity (Hill & Burrow, 2012). In sum, research suggests

that identity development supports purpose development and commitment to purpose influences

one's identity. The mutually reinforcing relationship between identity and purpose can have

positive consequences for adolescents as both identity and purpose become mechanisms for

goals. Identity commitments can *inform* goals (i.e., guide one's goal selection), while purpose

coordinates goals.

   Purpose and motivation: linked through goals. McAdams' notion of characteristic

adaptations points to the importance of attending to motivation in any study of personality.

Motivation, defined as "the process whereby goal-directed activities are instigated and

sustained," is important to consider as it relates to adolescent behavior, especially when it comes

to school outcomes.

   Purpose is referred to as a "central source of motivation" in the human experience (Van

Dyke & Elias, 2007). The link between purpose and motivation hinges on the importance of

goal-directedness to both constructs. As referenced earlier, goal-directedness is one of the three

components of purpose (along with commitment and personal meaningfulness) (McKnight &

Kashdan, 2009; Bronk, 2013). Kashdan and McKnight (2009) theorize that, "Living in accord

with one's purpose…offers that person a self-sustaining source of meaning through goal pursuit

and goal attainment" (p.242). Purpose serves as a guide that provides direction for goal-oriented

behavior; it can cause (i.e., motivate) one to act. Therefore, various scholars have associated

motivation theories with the development of purpose, through this goals connection.

   Purpose is both a component of identity and is closely linked with motivation through the

centrality of goal-directedness. Thus, it seems appropriate that a motivational identity framework

be used to help understand the development of purpose. Motivational identity is described as

"the relations between a person's goal-directed action and 'the kind of person' he or she is or may become" (Kaplan & Flum, 2009, p. 74). It is at the nexus of motivation and identity that purpose can be discovered. When one has identified that which highly motivates and has an achieved identity or sense of self, purpose discovery is within reach. Although a motivational identity lens can support our understanding of how one can develop a sense of purpose, there has yet to be any conceptualization of purpose (or any empirical study of purpose) that links the construct to motivational identity theory. In this study, I use a theory of motivational identity, Expectancy Value Theory (EVT), as a frame for exploring purpose among African American youth.

Expectancy value theory and identity. Motivational identity theories apply theories of motivation to identity processes. However, among motivational identity theories, Expectancy Value Theory (EVT) is especially relevant for understanding the discovery of purpose in adolescence because it hones in on the motivational realities of adolescence and their attempts to answer the related questions of, "who am I" and "what am I going to do with my life" (Eccles, 2009). Purpose is a response to the "what am I going to do with my life" question; it provides context for the development of identity formation, while being informed by identity-related choices.

Jacquelynne Eccles and Alan Wigfield originated the modern version of expectancy value theory in the 1980s, demonstrating how students' performance in school was related to self perceptions of (a) self-efficacy for a task or activity (i.e., perceived ability to succeed at task or activity), and (b) the value attached to task or activity (i.e., importance attributed to task or activity). This theory was supported in empirical research that sought to understand the

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performance of children and adolescents in school-related subject areas (Eccles & Wigfield, 1995; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002). Students who have high self-efficacy in a certain subject area and who valued success in that particular area are said to be highly motivated for that specific task or activity (Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, & Wigfield, 2002). Being highly motivated in a task or activity leads to engaging in school in productive ways, including involvement and greater likelihood to participate or enroll in courses (Guay, Marsh, & Boivin, 2003; Jacobs et al., 2002; Nagy, Trautwein, Baumert, Köller, & Garrett, 2007).

In a 2009 article, Eccles put a twist on the classic motivation theory, suggesting that those two self-perceptions, expectation for success and value related to tasks or activities, become markers of identity. In other words, what one believes about his or her ability in a certain area and the value placed on specific activities inform an identity process that reinforces a sense of self related to both "being" and "doing". In other words, individuals will pursue tasks and activities that correspond with a sense of "who to be" and "what to do".

If identity is a two-sided coin of "being" and "doing", then purpose represents the "what to do" side of the motivated action. Therefore, according to EVT, purpose has the potential to be developed when one has a keen sense of the domains in life where expectation for success is relatively high and where value is placed on activities related to that particular domain.

Eccles (2009), discussing identity formation as a motivation process, states: "people select those activities for which they feel most efficacious" (p. 81). The connection between purpose and expectation for success is quite intuitive. Purpose is found in a specific area where an individual feels efficacious. For example, a young person who finds a purpose in "creating music that uplifts and inspires" must expect to be effective in the domain of music. Further, a

person whose identity and purpose lie in a particular domain where s/he feels effective is likely to expect to be successful in that domain.

According to EVT, value has four separate components: a) interest value, b) attainment value, c) utility value, and d) cost. Purpose may be most relevant to interest value and attainment value of an activity. Since purpose is a stable and generalized intent to "do", then those activities or goals that comprise one's purpose should be intrinsically enjoyable (interest value), in order to be potentially sustained over time. Activities that are intrinsically motivating are "personally expressive" and related to one's true self. This true self, based on what is intrinsically motivating, can "give direction, meaning and purpose to one's life" (Waterman, 2004, p. 216).

Attainment value is the second component of value that is important for the development of purpose. It is defined as the personal importance of doing well on a task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Eccles states: "Those parts of an individual's self-image that are central or critical to self-definition should influence the value the individual attaches to various educational and vocational options… (and) influence the individual's achievement-related choices" (p. 83). When certain a certain task, like helping others, is valued as part of one's identity, it is more likely that it will also determine what one is motivated to do (purpose).

Purpose, as a component of identity, is developed out of that which an individual finds motivating. EVT gives insight into what one determines to be motivating, based on three aspects of the individual's experience. These three aspects include a) the individual's self-concept related to specific domains, b) the individual's intrinsic enjoyment of tasks or activities, and c) the importance an individual attaches to certain tasks or activities, as a manifestation of self. A

deeper consideration of how these motivational identity mechanisms support purpose development is currently missing from the literature.

In addition to dispositional traits and characteristics adaptations, the third level of personality in the integrative personality theory is the level of the life story narrative. Narrative identity has been defined as, "[A]n internalized and evolving narrative of the self that incorporates the reconstructed past and the imagined future into a more or less coherent whole in order to provide the person's life with some degree of unity, purpose, and meaning" (McAdams & Pals, 2006, p. 209). The use of life story narrative has potential to be used in qualitative research to give insight into the types of narratives that associate with purposefulness among various populations of young people. Additionally, narrative identity arrived at through interviews could be a mechanism to support purpose development. Though qualitative approaches and intervention studies are promising avenues for purpose researchers, both are outside of the scope of this review.

Understanding Purpose, Considering Context

The integrative personality framework and expectancy value theory highlight the nuanced ways in which purpose can be impacted by various individual level factors, (e.g., motivation and personality). However, to have a more complete picture of purpose, it is necessary to explore the extent to which context might inform or might be associated with manifestations of purpose. Hill, Burrow, and Sumner (2013) state that:

[S]tudies are needed to clarify the process by which individuals come to find a purpose, given the multiple routes that exploration may take… *as well as the potential settings and contexts involved*… Research should examine these effects across different samples

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and socioeconomic categories to determine which contexts best promote and discourage

the development of purpose (emphasis added) (p. 234).

Though it has been proposed that research examine ways in which various contexts promote

purposefulness, very few studies have followed up with that suggestion. This study seeks to

address that gap.

An exploration of how purpose is influenced by context finds a theoretical home within

developmental systems theory (DST). DST "positions human development in relational and

contextual space" (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006, p. 903), which allows for a more

nuanced look at ways to harness those potentialities and use them to the advantage of the young

person and society. The theory combines the assumptions of multivariate, multilevel

organizational and dynamic interactionism to understand the process whereby development takes

place (Ford & Lerner, 1992).

Family. The family unit represents a contextual space where various cultural messages

are transmitted to children and adolescents (Suizzo, 2007). These messages convey notions about

aspects of self, including religious/spiritual identity. Researchers assert that the family represents

the most important source of religious socialization (Mattis, J.S. & Mattis, J.H., 2011; Petts,

2014; Regnerus, 2003). Adolescents who grow up in families where religion is central are more

likely to adopt religious/spiritual practices as an important part of their own lives (Smith &

Denton, 2005). Religiosity is a cultural system in which both families and institutions are linked

to psychosocial development of adolescents (Mattis et al., 2011). Thus, family experiences

around religious and spiritual practices potentially provide some insight into the development of

purpose in adolescence.

Religion (and spirituality) allows people to participate in large systems of meaning that can provide a sense of purpose in life (Sommer, Baumeister, & Stillman, 2012). Studies have demonstrated an association between religion and purpose (Peterson & Roy, 1985, Dufton & Perlman, 1986; Davis, Kerr, & Kurpius, 2003). Spiritual and religious goals provide people with purpose above other types of goals (e.g., work goals or relationship goals) (Emmons, 2005). Family practices associated with religion potentially offer an avenue for purpose development through participation in religious institutions (e.g., churches) that are often replete with messages about transcendence (Peterson & Roy, 1985).

Family practices related to religion influence adolescent's religiosity—often measured by affiliation, organizational involvement, non-organizational involvement, and subjective religiosity (Mattis et al., 2011; Regnerus, 2003). Many studies have linked religiosity or spirituality in adolescence with positive developmental outcomes (Lerner, Roeser, & Phelps, 2008). One study found that adolescents with purpose were more likely to be religious (Bronk & Finch, 2010). Religious practices and spiritual development among children and adolescents is understudied (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003; Regenerus, 2003; Wallace & Williams, 1997). Religion is very central in the experiences of African American youth and families (Mattis & Grayman-Simpson, 2003). High levels of religiosity amongst African Americans and the associations between religion and purpose in this population suggest that family faith practices might represent an important contextual variable in an exploration of purpose in African American adolescents. I am not aware of any studies that use family faith practices as a context measure for adolescent positive development. This study uses a measure of family faith practices to explore potential association between family context and purpose in adolescents.

School. Various levels of the school context influence development in adolescents (Eccles & Roeser, 2010). The school potentially has implications for identity and purpose commitments. This is true not just because of how much time adolescents spend in school, but also because school represents a space for the development of relationships that can contribute to adolescents' interests and their sense of self. As stated earlier, DST theorizes that identity is formed within the context of relationships, including ones that develop in the school (Lerner & Castellino, 2002). The culture of a school affects the quality of those relationships and the potential ways that those relationships in school shape the development of the young person.

Though peer relationships in school are important and have significant consequence for the development, relationships with adults in the school are key indicators of the successful outcomes of students (Davis & Dupper, 2004; Eccles & Roeser, 2010; Klem & Connell, 2004). "Mattering" in school is an important school culture measure that has received very little attention. Mattering is the extent to which a person feels like he or she is important to, cared for, and noticed by another (Rosenberg, 1985). Students who believe that they matter to adults tend to score higher on indices of positive development (Greenberger, Chen, & Beam, 1998; Marshall, 2001; Rayle, 2005). For example, one study with African American males showed that mattering to adults in school contributed to academic achievement (Tucker, Dixon, & Griddine, 2010). Marshall (2001), in a study of Canadian high school students and college students, found that mattering to parents and friends was significantly correlated with purpose in life. The present study examines the extent to which African American youths' perception that they matter to adults in their schools is associated with their sense of purpose.

Neighborhood. The community or neighborhood in which an adolescent lives contributes to the health and development of that young person (Brody et al., 2001; Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn, 2007). Safe, cohesive neighborhoods may support the development of purpose in two ways: (a) such neighborhoods can present opportunities for youth to have positive interactions with adults who care about them and who can constructively guide them; and (b) such neighborhoods can present opportunities for positive engagement in potentially meaningful activities. When neighborhoods are unsafe and socially disconnected, it is less likely that youth will have opportunities to have positive interactions with adults and get engaged in prosocial activities – thus precluding opportunity for purpose development. On the other hand, when neighborhoods represent a context for positive engagement, then it is possible that purpose is more likely to be developed.

Neighborhood social capital is a measure that assesses the social norms present in a community that support notions of mutual benefit among people in that community (Boyce, Davies, Gallupe, & Shelley, 2008). When a neighborhood is high in social capital, it is an environment where there are positive interactions between people and safe spaces to spend time (Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner, & Prothrow-Stith, 2011). Youth who perceive their neighborhood to be high in social capital are less likely to be engaged in problem behavior (Gage, Overpeck, Nansel, & Kogan, 2005). One study of African American youth and exposure to violence in the community found that adolescents who had been exposed to more community violence had lower purpose in life (DuRant, Getts, Cadenhead, Emans, & Woods, 1995). While violence exposure does serve as an index of community functioning, it does not provide a comprehensive picture of residents' perception of community norms and assets.

One indicator of neighborhood social capital is whether or not there are public spaces to spend free time (leisure centers, parks, etc.). The presence of such neighborhood spaces provides a context for positive development (Larson, 2000) and could potentially promote purpose, as involvement in community-based activities can provide avenues to finding purpose (Hill, Burrow, & Sumner, 2013). However, in the absence of such spaces, young people lack opportunity for sustained, active-learning opportunities during non-school hours (McLaughlin, 2000).

A second indicator of neighborhood social capital is the presence of trust between members of a community. Relational trust is a key indicator of natural mentoring relationships that develop between youth and non-familial adults in a community context (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). The presence of natural mentoring relationships is a key indicator of positive youth development and a key asset for adolescents (Rhodes and Roffman, 2003), particularly low-income African American youth (Hurd & Zimmerman, 2010). Positive engagement in the community, through the avenue of relationships with caring adults, could lead to purposeful pursuits being discovered. Therefore, neighborhood social capital is a possible contributor to the development of purpose. To my knowledge, this is the first empirical study to explore the relation between neighborhood social capital and purpose.

Purpose in urban-residing adolescents

Studies using a developmental systems theory theoretical framework would do well to take a closer look at the experience of adolescents in urban[1] areas. Psychology has a history of looking at the various ills (e.g., crime) that exists in cities, while almost completely ignoring

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[1] Urban is used here to denote communities that are located in geographic municipalities that have a high proportion of people of color and various indicators of low socioeconomic status.

positive outcomes and strengths that exist in low-income urban spaces (Park & Peterson, 2010).

In exploring positive outcomes and strengths, the goal should not be to ignore the significant and

sometimes intransigent challenges that young people often endure in living with the realities of

poverty. Taking an assets approach should recognize the maladies of urban poverty even while

seeking to understand how urban-residing young people develop strengths in such context.

Empirically studying the development of virtues, such as purpose, will fortify our knowledge of

the ways that low-income, urban residing ethnic minority youth "live well" despite the

limitations that they face. Such conceptualizations can contribute meaningfully to our knowledge

of resilience and our understanding of how to support "roses growing in concrete" (Duncan-

Andrade, 2009). Of the studies on purpose in adolescents, three studies indicate promise in

prospect of the importance of studying purpose among urban-residing adolescents.

DuRant and colleagues' (1994, 1995) survey study of African American adolescents

residing in urban housing projects in the South sought to understand the relation between

violence exposure, hopelessness, depression, parenting practices, and purpose in life. They found

that youth with higher purpose in life withstood the pressures associated with exposure to

violence, by avoiding involvement in violence (DuRant, Cadenhead, Pendergrast, & Slavens,

1994). They also showed that youth who had purpose in life anticipated having a higher

socioeconomic status for adulthood (DuRant et al., 1995).

A second study, by Pizzolta et al. (2011), investigated purpose among a racially diverse

group of adolescents in a rural, low-income community who participated in a youth development

program over the course of a school year. The youth development program included a purpose

intervention, in which a small number of participants (n= 30) were involved. Study findings

suggested that a brief intervention could increase purpose scores and that the change in purpose scores contributed to higher GPAs at the end of the school year.

Finally, a recent study by Yeager and colleagues (2014) demonstrated that, among a diverse (48% Latino, 38% African American, 5% Asian, &4% White) sample of urban-residing, low-income high school seniors, students who had a self-transcendent purpose for attending college (e.g., "I want to become a better educated citizen so that I can contribute to society") demonstrated more academic self-regulation and were more likely to persist in college.

Though these three studies demonstrate that purpose in urban-residing or low income adolescents is a construct that can be explored and primed, they all have various limitations. For example, DuRant's studies focused on violence, which is only one index of community quality and does not give a nuanced picture of assets that may exist in urban communities. Additionally, in focusing on violent behaviors, the study failed to address important motivational factors that might have an effect on purpose. Finally, the study used a measure of purpose that has been found to be less useful with adolescent populations (Bronk, 2013). The Pizzolta study was an intervention study that measured internal control (i.e., perception of control over academic success), purpose, and academic grades. Being a small intervention study, it did not demonstrate empirical strength necessary to infer that purpose had an impact on positive outcomes. Additionally, the primary outcome was grades, which focuses only on one aspect of students' experiences in school and completely ignores positive development that would manifest outside of the school-context. The study done by Yeager and colleagues is promising in its use of a large-scale intervention, yet it did not prime participants for purpose or ask about an overall life purpose – instead it asked specifically about the reason for going to college. Their focus on

"purpose for learning", as it was called, is valuable but not comprehensive in scope. The current study builds on these previous studies in that it assesses the correlates of purpose for a marginalized group of adolescents adopting a contextualized identity-based motivational frame to explore how traits, motivation, and context are associated with purpose. The current study also represents a departure from these studies in that it adopts the use of a person-centered analytic approach. Additionally, this study is different in that it includes a broader conceptualization of positive development that is not focused solely on school-related outcomes, but also in how positive development may manifest in the community.

Summary

Purpose is a construct that is central in positive psychology and knowledge of the factors that are associated with purpose in adolescents can bolster positive youth development in urban communities. Though the construct purpose is promising as a contributor to well-being and positive outcomes, research on purpose has been more frequently studied in emerging adult and adult samples and in White and middle class samples. Empirical studies about the presence of purpose in adolescence have only begun to emerge in recent years, suggesting that there is much yet to be discovered about how sense of purpose develops at earlier points in the lifespan.

Extant research is not clear about how purpose develops, in terms of both the individual and contextual factors that may support the presence of purpose in the lives of young people. It would be useful to understand purpose, both as a naturally occurring, intra-individual phenomenon, influenced by motivation and personality. Yet, also from a developmental systems standpoint, it is necessary to understand how the family, neighborhood, and school can support

the development of purpose or the traits that would incline someone to commit to purpose. Studies exploring how contextual factors influence the development of purpose are scarce.

Empirical studies of positive strengths in among residents of urban spaces are lacking, as are studies of purpose among low income and ethnic-minority populations. Much of the work on purpose focuses on relatively privileged populations of youth who may have more easily traversed routes into a realized adult self. Urban residing youth are substantially underrepresented in the literature on purpose, yet studies are beginning to note the potential for purpose to contribute to positive outcomes for urban-residing adolescents in schools. More empirical studies are needed to help us understand the factors that may be linked to a sense purpose among this population and to create strategies for interventions in support of purpose in urban communities.

In sum, this study explores how motivation, dispositional traits, and contextual factors associate with purpose in adolescents. Motivation is represented as an identity-based construct that measures expectation for success and subjective task value for various activities. The dispositional traits explored as potentially associating with purpose are grit, conscientiousness, and hope. The relevant contextual variables are faith practices at the family level, mattering to adults at the school level, and neighborhood social capital at the community level. This research is subsumed in three separate studies:

Study 1 explores the extent to which motivational identity (i.e., expectations for success, subjective task value), dispositional traits (e.g., conscientiousness), and contextual factors (e.g., mattering in school) are associated with purpose among a sample of low-income urban residing adolescents (ages 14-19).

Study 2 uses a person-centered approach to explore whether there are identifiable profiles of purpose (exploration and commitment) among low-income urban-residing, African American adolescents.

Study 3 examines the extent to which profiles of purpose considered in concert with expectancy motivations, dispositional traits, and contextual factors predict youths' school and prosocial engagement.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This study analyzes cross-sectional data collected in a Detroit high school. Pilot testing of the survey instrument took place at the school in the Spring of 2015 and the data collection commenced in September 2015, at the start of the 2015-2016 school year. The pilot study served as an opportunity to get a sense of how students would engage with survey items. I had three primary goals with this pilot: to 1) understand how long it would take for students to complete the survey; 2) get a sense of which words might be unfamiliar and which measure items might be unclear; and 3) receive feedback regarding clarity of directions for any of the sections of the survey. Ten students (4 males and 6 females) at the school completed the pilot survey.

As part of the process for the pilot, the students and I went through each section of the survey one at a time. After reading the directions, I timed the students as they answered the questions. Each section of the survey took between 1.5 minutes and 5 minutes for students to complete. In total, each of the 12 sections took a total of 33 minutes. After each section, I led a 2-4 minute discussion on each section. At the completion of the sections, the students and I had a discussion on the overall survey and how they imagined the survey would go for a group of younger peers. Students shared that, even though it was a long survey, much of it was interesting. Based on the feedback received, I altered the wording for the instructions on six of the sections. One particular scale (Big Five Index) had six words that were unfamiliar, so I used synonyms

that would be more familiar for the target population (see procedure and outcomes related to pilot in Appendix B).

Study Setting

The site for this study was Woodlawn Academy[2], a public school in the Detroit city school system. The neighborhood in which the school is located is 94% African American[3]. The majority of Woodlawn students live in the immediate community. On average students commute fewer than 4 miles to school[4]. The neighborhood in which Woodlawn Academy is located is a high poverty area. Forty-percent of children in this community come from families in poverty, defined by using the Census Bureau poverty measures[5]. The unemployment rate for families living in this neighborhood, at 15%, is three times higher than the national average[6]. One out of every five housing units in the neighborhood is vacant[2]. The neighborhood has been the focus of targeted efforts by the city of Detroit to improve health and well-being outcomes in neighborhoods. More specifically, the neighborhood where the school is located is part of an initiative by a local philanthropic foundation that is aimed at providing neighborhood residents with high-quality education, youth development, safety, and community leadership opportunities.

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[2] The name of this school is a pseudonym.

[3] census.gov

[4] excellentschoolsdetroit.org

[5] Data Driven Detroit www.datadrivendetroit.org.

[6] census.gov

Approximately 400 students are enrolled in Woodlawn Academy. The school receives

Title 1 support[7], as 82% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Consistent with the

demographic profile of the neighborhood, 99% of the students who attend Woodlawn are

Black/African American[8]. In the 2013-2014 school year, 74% of the students from the 2010 9th

grade cohort graduated as seniors. Thirty percent of the students who graduated matriculated into

a two or four year college[3].

Setting implications related to study focus

Though students at Woodlawn are susceptible to the ills typically associated with

schooling in high poverty contexts, many programmatic supports have been implemented to

support student learning and development. The school has been supported through a small

schools initiative implemented with support from a local foundation that aims to address high

dropout rates and poor school performance on standardized testing.

Procedure

Students in grades 10-12 were invited to complete a survey[9]. Three teachers at the school

were recruited to facilitate the process of informing students about the study and to facilitate data

collection. After agreeing to help with the study, the teachers were provided with consent forms

for students to take home and return back to the teacher. Every student under the age of 18 who

was interested in participating in the study was required to turn in a consent form signed by a

parent or guardian in order to be included in the study. The parental/guardian consent form

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[7] Title 1 is a federal education policy initiative aimed at improving academic outcomes for disadvantaged youth.
[8] nces.gov

[9] Ninth graders were not included because the study's intent was to assess purpose and engagement at the secondary level. In September of the school year, 9th graders had limited secondary experience.

included an introduction to the researcher and relevant background related to education in Detroit, an overview of the study, and contact information for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) should there be any further questions regarding the study. The consent forms indicated that participation in the study was voluntary and that students could choose to discontinue at any point in the process. Students turned in consent forms to the teachers and I collected them from the teachers on a weekly basis.

Students were assented just prior to taking the survey. The student assent form, much like the parent consent, introduced the researcher, provided an overview of the study, and gave information for IRB. Based on teacher preference, the surveys were given either on paper or electronically. In total, 151 students participated in the study. The paper/pencil version of the survey was taken by 132 students (71% response rate) and took as long as an hour to complete. It was administered to students during the regular science or English class period. The online version was taken by 19 students (37% response rate) and took up to 40 minutes to finish. This online version was also administered during the regular class period, however it was taken in the school's computer lab instead of the traditional classroom setting.

For both the paper/pencil and electronic survey administration, I read the students instructions for the survey and told students they could begin. Each student completed the survey on his or her own, reading through the questions independently. Students were able to ask questions about the meaning of words that were unfamiliar. Each student who participated in the study received a $10 gift card to a local restaurant.

Participants

The sample of students who completed the study was fairly evenly split between male and female participants (52% male). Students ranged in age from age 14-18 ($M = 16.07$, SD = .88). The majority of participants were in the 11th grade (48.7%; n= 73). Tenth graders represented 24.7% (n= 39) of the sample, and twelfth graders were 26% (n= 39) of the sample. On average students reported grades in the B- range, with 43.7% (n= 63) of students reporting having grades of B- or above.

Measures

The survey used in this study, the Youth Identity and Experience Survey, is a compilation of various measures of adolescent development at the individual and contextual levels. The measures, their inter-correlations, and descriptive statistics are reported in Table 1.

Purpose was measured using The Revised Youth Purpose Survey (RYPS), created by William Damon and colleagues at the Stanford Center on Adolescence (Bronk, Hill, & Lapsley, 2009; Burrow & Hill, 2011). The RYPS is a 20-item scale that includes a 15-item "purpose commitment" subscale and a 5-item "purpose exploration" subscale. The "purpose commitment" subscale is used to assess an adolescent's reported attainment of a life purpose. The "purpose exploration" subscale gauges the extent to which the adolescent is currently in the process of searching for a life purpose. Two sample items include "I understand my life's meaning" (commitment) and "I am seeking purpose or mission for my life" (exploration).

All items on the scale are measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The reliabilities for each subscale have been demonstrated in previous studies a (α= .90 commitment and .89 exploration; Bundick et al., 2008; Sumner, Burrow, & Hill, 2014). For this sample, the

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reliability for purpose as a composite was α=.82. Both purpose commitment (α=.68) and purpose exploration (α=.84) subscales also had acceptable reliabilities for this sample.

Dispositional Traits, Motivation, and Context.

Hope. The Hope Children's Scale (Snyder et al., 1997) is a 6-item measure that assesses the presence of hope in children and adolescents. Snyder and colleagues conceptualize hope as a cognitive trait that encompasses pathways and agency related to goals. The items in the scale measure one's beliefs in his or her "capabilities to produce workable routes to goals (the pathways component), as well as the self-related beliefs about initiating and sustaining movement toward those goals (the agency component)" (Snyder, et al., 1997, p. 401). Three of the six items measure pathways and the other three measure agency. Sample items include "I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future (agency)" and "When I have a problem I can come up with lots of ways to solve it (pathways)". Items are scored on a Likert type scale with 1 = "None of the time" to 6= "All of the time".

The Children's Hope Scale has been found to have good reliability, with alpha ranging from .72 to .86 (Snyder, 2002)). According to Snyder, the studies that were included did not show differences in hope between races, but the comparison was only two studies that had a small sample of African American students (n=12 and n=26). In the current study, with an all African American sample, the reliability for hope was good (α=.77).

Conscientiousness. Conscientiousness is a dispositional trait that is part of the Big Five Index (BFI). The BFI is a 44-item scale that measures five aspects of personality (i.e., Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) (John, Naumman, & Soto, 2008). Conscientiousness which is measured with 9 items from the BFI, is described as a

"socially prescribed impulse control that facilitates task- and goal- directed behavior" (John et al., 2008, p. 120). The items for this scale are statements in response to the phrase, "I see myself as someone who…". Example items from the conscientiousness subscale include: "Does a thorough job" and "Can be somewhat careless" (reverse coded). Items on the BFI are rated on a scale ranging from 1 ("disagree strongly") to 5 ("agree strongly").

Conscientiousness has demonstrated good reliability in studies of adults ($\alpha=.78$). To my knowledge, the scale has not been used with a sample of African American adolescents prior to this study. In a sample of African American college students, the internal consistency was reported at above .70 for each of the five BFI factors, however the reliability for conscientiousness was not specified (Worrell & Cross, 2004). With the present sample of African American adolescents, the reliability for conscientiousness was low, but acceptable ($\alpha=.60$).

Grit refers to individuals' perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews & Kelly, 2007). The GRIT short form is an 8 item measure that was created and tested among various populations, from adolescents to adults ($\alpha=.78$; Duckworth et al., 2009; GRIT-S). Grit is considered a non-cognitive measure that predicts success in various populations. The scale measures two separate dimensions: 1) consistency of interest, and 2) perseverance of effort. Each dimension contains four items. A sample consistency of interest item is, "My interests change from year to year" (reverse coded). A perseverance of effort item example is, "Setbacks don't discourage me". Items are scored on a five point Likert-type scale with 1 = "not like me at all" to 5 = "exactly like me". Composite scores for grit are calculated as a mean. In this sample of urban-residing adolescents, GRIT as an overall composite did not have

a high reliability (α= .46). When split into subscales based on the two dimensions of GRIT, consistency of interest had a reliability of .61, while perseverance of effort had a reliability of .46.

Motivational identity (expectancies and values) is a conceptualization of what drives motivated behavior that uses both expectation and value for tasks as the measure. Expectation is assessed by the 4-item (α= .89) Ability Self-Perceptions scale. Value is measured by the 6-item Subjective Task Value scale (α= .91) (Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, & Wigfield, 2002; Eccles et al., 1984). Each of the expectation and value items was asked about three specific domains: school, extracurricular activity, workplace. Example items include, "How well have you been doing in the following areas (school, extracurricular, workplace)?" (expectancy); "How much do you like what you do in the following areas of life (school, extracurricular activity, workplace)?" (value). Traditionally these items have been used to measure self-perceptions about ability and value in subject specific areas or tasks (e.g. math, music). In this study, motivational identity around broader domains (i.e., school and extracurricular activity) are assessed. Osborne and Jones (2011) suggest that the expectancy value framework can be used with domains (e.g., academics) and not just with tasks or subjects.

Scale creation for motivational identity only included items related to school and extracurricular activities. Workplace items were excluded, as many students were not employed and skipped those items. Items were scaled on a five point Likert scale with 1 = lower indicator (e.g., not good at all) and 5 = higher indicator (e.g., very good), depending on the specific question. Scores are calculated as a mean. Motivational identity variables (school and extracurricular activities) had strong internal consistency for this sample. The composite

motivational identity scale (expectancy and value) for school had a reliability of .87, while

motivational identity for extracurricular had a reliability of .90. The composite score of

expectancies and values for school and extracurricular activities was used in the study and had an

internal consistency of $\alpha = .93$.

Family Faith Importance. This measure was developed for the current study and assesses

the practices and values in a family that align with religious/spiritual commitment. The scale

consists of five items. Sample items include, "Religion/spirituality is important in my family"

and "My family often attends religious services". The Family Faith Importance measure borrows

items from the *Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality* (1999). The

measure used in this study situates faith-related practices as a dimension of family-based cultural

experience. Items are on a five point Likert scale with 1 = "I disagree a lot" to 5 = "I agree a lot."

Scores are calculated as a mean. In this study, the reliability of this scale was strong $\alpha=.86$.

Neighborhood Social Capital Scale (NSC) ($\alpha=.78$) This measure comes from the Health

Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC) and assesses neighborhood characteristics. This index

has been used to determine the quality of community contexts from the standpoint of children

and adolescents (Boyce, Davies, Gallupe, & Shelley, 2008). The measure has five items on a 5-

point Likert scale with 1 = "I disagree a lot" to 5 = "I agree a lot." Scores are calculated as a

mean. A sample item is, "You can trust people around here". The scale also includes a sixth item

assessing how often respondents feel safe in the neighborhood, with 1 = "Never" and 5 =

"Always." The NSC score is calculated as a mean of the 6 items. With this population, the

neighborhood social capital scale had a Cronbach's alpha of .79.

Mattering is measured at the school level to understand the extent to which young people feel as though they matter to adults at the school. For the purposes of this study, questions from the *The Mattering to Others Questionnaire* (MTOQ) (Marshall, 2001) were altered to ask mattering questions specifically about adults at school. The original measure consists of eleven items, nine of which were used for this survey. The original scale said, "I feel special to my mother". For purposes of this survey that question was changed to say "I feel special to an adult at school". In a previous study the Cronbach's α from the general mattering scale was .74. Items are on a five point Likert scale from 1 = "Not at all" to 5 = "A lot". Scores are calculated as a mean. With the current sample the alpha for the index of mattering was strong (α=.88).

Positive Engagement Outcomes.

School engagement is measured by the school engagement measure (SEM) (Fredricks, et al., 2005). This measure has 18 items total and assesses the three dimensions of student engagement: 1) behavioral engagement (5 items, α=.77); 2) emotional engagement (5 items, α=.86); and 3) cognitive engagement (8 items, α=.82). Three sample items include: "I get in trouble at school" (behavioral) (reverse coded), "School is a fun place to be" (emotional), and "If I don't understand what I read, I go back and read it over again" (cognitive).

Behavioral engagement is a measure of how well school related behaviors demonstrate compliance the norms of the school environment. Emotional engagement items measure affect related to school and is typically associated with school belonging and value of the school space. Cognitive engagement is concerned with self-regulation and value related to assignments at school. Items are on a five point Likert scale from 1 = "Not at all" to 5 = "A lot". Scores are calculated as a mean. With the present sample, the composite school engagement measure had a

Cronbach's alpha of .81, indicating reliability. The subscales had varied reliability scores. Behavioral engagement did not hold together well (α= .51). Both emotional engagement (α= .73) and cognitive (α= .81) showed good internal consistency.

The Engaged Living Scale (Froh, 2010) is a measure of youth engagement in life and contains two constructs: 1) absorption in activity (α= .84), which is a measure of being intensely and readily engrossed in passionate activities; and 2) social integration (α= .82) which measures being passionate about helping and feeling connected to others. Sample items include "While doing my hobbies, I am very into it" (absorption) and "I love to volunteer" (social integration). Items were scored are on a six-point scale with 1 = "definitely not like me" to 6 = "exactly like me." In this sample, the composite engaged living measure had a reliability of .89. Social integration had a reliability of (α= .82), while absorption in activity was (α= .84).

Chapter 4: Results

The goal of the overall study was to explore purpose and its correlates among a population of low-income urban-residing, African American adolescents. Specifically, I aimed to understand the motivational, personality, and contextual correlates of purpose, and to identify profiles of purposefulness and the relation between those profiles and engagement outcomes among youth in the sample. The three studies that comprise the overall study have the following objectives: Study 1 sought to understand the relationship between purpose and various individual level and contextual level factors; Study 2 used a person-centered analysis in order to identify profiles of purpose among the population of interest; and Study 3 explored how profiles of purpose, considered in conjunction with other individual-level and contextual-level factors, associates with engagement outcomes.

Power Analysis. nQuery Advisor (Elashoff, 1996) was used to conduct a power analysis and to determine the appropriate target sample size for the planned analyses. Power simulations, such as the formula used by nQuery Advisor, have been found to be useful in determining characteristics of effective models (e.g., number of variables and sample size) that can be used in determining sound statistical models (Glastonis & Sampson, 1989). The various models in the study included up to nine variables. In the power simulation, nine was entered as the number for variables in the model. An R^2 of .12 was selected, as a predicted estimate of the minimum effect size that would be detected. Studies on purpose and adolescents have typically had effect sizes of

.20 or higher (Bronk et al., 2009), thus a conservative estimate of .12 was used for the R^2 indicator. To achieve a power of 80% on nine predictor variables, with the ability to detect an effect size of at least .12, it was necessary to have a minimum of 124 participants. A total of 151 participants were recruited for the current study, which was sufficient for the proposed analysis plan. Additional power analyses were performed, using GPower (Buchner, Erdfelder, Mayr, & Faul, 2007) for post hoc studies, in order to test for adequate statistical power with smaller sample sizes.

   Data Analysis. Data analyses were conducted using SPSS (IBM Corp. Version 22). The data cleaning process began with a check for missing data. Continuous variables were assessed for normality by graphically and statistically checking the distribution. Finally, as part of the data cleaning process and checking for adherence to the assumptions of ordinary least squares regression, I checked for multivariate outliers using both Mahalanobis distances and Cook's Distance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Preliminary descriptive analyses were performed to examine means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis for all continuous variables and the frequency of all categorical variables. T-tests were used to examine whether mean differences on the study variables exist between male and female students. As a final step in the preliminary analyses, I ran correlation analysis to examine bi-variate relationships among the study variables.

   Study 1 employed correlational and multivariate regression analyses to examine associations between purpose and motivational, personality, and contextual variables. Regression analyses were initially performed with the entire group, and then separately by gender. Study 2 used hierarchical cluster analysis to identify profiles of purpose among the sample. K-means clustering was used to confirm the cluster solution. ANOVA models were then used to compare

the profiles on the various motivational, personality, contextual, and personality factors. Lastly, Study 3 employed OLS regression to predict school engagement and engaged living using the purpose clusters groups from Study 2 along with the previously used motivational, personality, and contextual variables.

Missing Data and Outliers. To address missing data, I conducted a missing data analysis in SPSS. Missing data analysis revealed that 90.1% of all cases had complete data on all of the nine variables used across all three studies. In other words, the majority of the cases had complete data for the scales and subscales used in the study. Missing values were excluded in the calculations of scales and subscales, thus mean scores were summed based on the number of complete items. After assessing the missingness in the data, I ran analyses to determine whether or not there was a pattern of missingness in the data. I used Little's MCAR test to determine whether the data was missing completely at random (MCAR). The test was not significant, indicating that the data were likely missing completely at random (Chi-Square = 9373.51, $df =$ 9405, $p = .589$). In order to remain conservative in the various analyses associated with the study, imputation was not performed and missing data was deleted pairwise for each analysis in each of the three studies. Thus, the actual sample size for each of the studies varied from 132 to 148 participants. With the use of a $p < .001$ criterion for Mahalanobis distance, no outliers were found among the cases. The Cook's Distance statistic was also analyzed, as an additional indicator for potential outliers. The highest Cook's D value was .059. This statistic did not exceed 1, indicating that there were no outliers that influenced the regression.

Preliminary Analyses. Psychometric properties for study variables are reported in Table 2. Across the motivational, personality, and contextual variables, all of the indicators met the assumption of normality based on skewness (+/- 2) and kurtosis (+/- 7) scores. Reliability indicators were sufficient for all variables with the exception of the personality variable, grit (α=.46). A composite purpose score ($M = 4.71$, $SD= .76$) was derived from a combination of purpose exploration and purpose commitment items (range 1-7). The composite purpose score met the assumption of normality based on skewness and kurtosis indicators.

An overall motivation measure ($M = 3.82$, $SD =. 69$) (range 1-5) was created from a combination of expectation and value for school, and expectation and value for extra-curricular activities. Therefore, the composite motivation variable reflected youths' motivation for academic and extra-curricular activity-based tasks. On average, participants reported moderate levels of motivation for both school and extracurricular activities. The mean motivation score was above the midpoint.

The three personality variables in the study included: Grit (M=3.36; SD=.50), Conscientiousness ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .58$), and Hope ($M = 4.26$; $SD = .91$). Each of these variables was measured on a 1-5 scale. Grit was excluded from the final analysis because of its low reliability (α=.457). Conscientiousness had a Cronbach's alpha of .60, which is lower than the commonly suggested threshold of .70. However, since .60 falls in the range of marginally acceptable reliability, and because of the wide use of conscientiousness as one of the Big Five factors (John, Naumman, & Soto, 2008), it was included in further analyses.

The contextual variables, including family faith practices (1-5 scale), mattering in school (1-5 scale), and neighborhood social capital (1-6 scale), represent the third category of variables

present in this study. Family faith practices had a mean (M = 3.04, SD = 1.03) only slightly

above the midpoint. The mean for mattering (M = 3.00, SD = .90) was also found to be slightly

above the midpoint. Neighborhood social capital had a mean that was below the midpoint on the

scale (M = 2.90, SD = .90). Reliability scores for all three contextual variables were high enough

(α = .79 to .88) for all to be included in the analyses.

T-tests were used to determine whether or not differences existed on each of the study

variables by gender. The means for male and female participants did not significantly differ on

most study variables (See Table 3). No significant mean differences were found between male

and female participants' purpose, conscientiousness, family faith practices, mattering,

neighborhood social capital, engaged living, or school engagement scores. Significant

differences existed on the motivation variable, with a lower motivation mean among boys than

girls, $t(2)$ = -1.64, p=.01. Additionally, at a marginally significant level, the average level of hope

was higher among boys than girls, $t(2)$ = 1.09, p = .07.

Bivariate Correlation Relationships. Pearson correlations were used to examine bivariate

relationships among the study variables (See Table 4). Many of the variables were moderately to

highly correlated in the positive direction. For example, purpose was significantly and positively

correlated with motivation, r = .49, $p < .001$, conscientiousness r = .36, $p < .001$, hope r = .30, $p <$

.001, and mattering r = .37, $p < .001$. The correlation between purpose and family faith practices

was trending toward significance r = .16, p = .051. The correlation between purpose and the

engagement outcomes, engaged living r = .55, $p < .001$ and school engagement r = .36, $p < .001$

were also positively correlated.

Study 1

Main Analyses. The first aim was to understand the association between adolescents' sense of purpose and the individual and contextual factors included in this study (e.g., motivation, mattering). An ordinary least squares regression was executed, with purpose as the dependent variable and the motivation, personality and contextual variables as the predictor variables (See Table 5). Age and gender were entered as controls in the model. Assumptions test results indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern, as the tolerance indicators for the variables in the regression analysis were well above .40 (e.g., motivation, tolerance = .72; neighborhood social capital, tolerance = .87). Tolerance is calculated by 1- squared multiple correlation, thus the high tolerance levels indicate that most of the variance is able to be predicted by the other predictors in the model. I used a casewise outlier command to identify cases that had a standardized residual above 3. No multivariate outliers were identified in the model output.

Results indicated that four of the variables were significantly associated with participants' purpose: motivation, conscientiousness, mattering, and neighborhood social capital. An R^2 value of .40 (adjusted R^2 = .36) indicates that motivational, personality and contextual factors account for 40% of the variance in adolescents' purpose. Table 5 displays the standardized regression coefficients, R^2, and F statistic. The multiple correlation was significantly different from zero, $F(8,142) = 10.87, p<.001$, with R^2 at .40 and 95% confidence limits from .29 to .51. For the four regression coefficients that differed significantly from zero, 95% confidence limits were calculated. Motivation was a significant, positive predictor of purpose ($\beta = .32, p < .001$). The confidence limits for motivation were .198 to .534.

Conscientiousness positively predicted purpose ($ß = .23, p = .002$). For conscientiousness, the confidence limits were .133 to .486. Mattering also emerged as a significant, positive predictor of purpose ($ß = .32, p = .000$). Mattering confidence limits were .108 to .362. Finally, neighborhood social capital was a significant, negative predictor of purpose at ($ß = -.22, p = .006$). the confidence limits for neighborhood social capital were -.283 to -.036.

Collectively, the variables in the model (i.e. motivation, hope, conscientiousness, family faith practices, mattering, and neighborhood social capital) explained 40% of the variance in adolescents' purpose, after controlling for gender and age. Significant predictors of purpose included motivation, conscientiousness, mattering, and neighborhood social capital. The direction of the relationship between purpose and the significant IVs suggests that higher motivation, conscientiousness, and mattering is associated with higher purpose. In contrast, lower neighborhood social capital is associated with higher purpose.

Post-Hoc Analyses. As an exploratory follow-up, the same regression model was performed after filtering the data set by gender. In this model, I included the following seven predictors: age, motivation, hope, conscientiousness, family faith practices, mattering, and neighborhood social capital. Since each of the separate models by gender had fewer cases, I used GPower to run a post-hoc power analysis in order to determine power for this set of analyses. The male sample achieved a power of 79%, with seven predictors, a sample of 77, and effect size of $R^2 = .20$. The female sample included 72 cases and seven predictors. With the same effect size indicator, power in this analysis was 75%. Just as in the original regression model, all variables were included in the post-hoc regression models, regardless of the correlation pattern. Both models were underpowered, but the models were worth testing.

The regression model for both females and males were significant however different variables were associated with purpose across the two models. In both sets of analyses, the assumption for non-collinearity was met, as tolerance levels were well above .40 in each model. Across both studies, tolerances ranged from .715 to .925. There were no outliers in the regression models for either the female or male participants.

Model statistics for the model predicting purpose among female participants was $F(7,67)$ = 8.29, p = .000, with R^2 at .50 (adjusted R^2 = .44) and 95% confidence limits from .35 to .65. In addition to the coefficients that were significant in the combined gender sample (i.e., motivation, conscientiousness, mattering, and neighborhood social capital), age and family faith practices were also significant predictors of purpose for girls (See Table 8). Age positively predicted purpose for females, $\beta = .22$, p = .027, with 95% confidence limits from .02 to .30. Family faith practices was a negative predictor of purpose (β = -.25, p = .016), with 95% confidence limits -.30 and -.03.

The model predicting purpose among male participants was significant $F(7,72) = 7.624$, p < .001, with R^2 at .46 (adjusted R^2 = .40) and 95% confidence limits from .31 to .61. For young men motivation ($\beta = .28$, p = .013) and conscientiousness ($\beta = .25$, p = .025) were predictors of purpose; neighborhood social capital and mattering were not significant predictors of purpose (See Table 8). However, family faith practices was a marginally significant positive predictor of purpose for males, ($\beta = .20$, p = .058).

In sum, for the entire sample, two personality factors (higher motivation and conscientiousness) and two contextual factors (mattering to adults in school and neighborhood social capital) were associated with higher purpose. When the sample was split by gender, results

revealed that age was a significant predictor of purpose for female students; on average, each year increase in age was associated with .25 higher purpose scores among female students. For female adolescents, family faith practices was a negative predictor of purpose, as each unit increases in family religiosity for female participants was equivalent to a .25 decrease in purpose scores. In the male sample, family faith practices emerged as a marginally significant positive predictor of purpose, as each unit increase in family religiosity for male participants was equivalent to a .20 increase in purpose scores.

Study 2

Main Analyses. Study 2 employs person-centered analysis to understand distinctive profiles of the "exploration" and "commitment" domains of purpose among African American, urban-residing adolescents, and to understand associations between these profiles and the focal motivational, personality, and contextual variables in the study. Based on a previous person-centered analysis of purpose in adolescents (Burrow, et al., 2009), I hypothesized that four empirically distinct groups would emerge from the profile analysis. These four groups derive from James Marcia's Identity Theory (Marcia, 1966), which identifies four distinct identity groups associated with identity exploration and identity commitment. As applied to purpose theory, one group was expected to have high purpose commitment and high purpose exploration (i.e., achieved). The students in a second group were expected to have high purpose exploration scores, but have low purpose commitment (i.e., moratorium). Group three was expected to have students who indicate low purpose exploration, but high purpose commitment (i.e., foreclosed). Lastly, the fourth group were expected to have students who have low scores on both purpose exploration and purpose commitment (i.e., diffused).

Survey data from 148 African American students in grades 10-12 was used to generate the purpose profiles. These were the participants who completed the purpose scale. The variables used to create the clusters were purpose exploration (5 items) and purpose commitment (15 items). A mean score was created for these two factors and the factor scores were standardized. The raw mean score for purpose exploration was 4.95 (S.D.=1.24), while the raw mean for purpose commitment was 4.64 on a 1-7 scale (S.D.=.70).

I utilized hierarchical cluster analyses to determine existing profiles of purpose for this population, as this is the form of cluster analysis recommended for smaller samples (Norusis, 2011). Hierarchical cluster analysis allows the identification of profiles of students, based on how they "cluster", or group together, on indicated variables. The variables in this case are purpose commitment and purpose exploration; both variables were z-transformed for this analysis. Using the z-transformed scale was important for reasons of interpretability and in that z-transformed scores contributed to readability for the graphic output of the clusters. Clusters were derived using the agglomerative algorithms which begin with each case as a cluster and progressively merges cases into larger clusters until all of the cases are one large cluster. I utilized the Ward method of clustering with a squared Euclidean distance measure. This linkage method creates clusters with minimized error variance. In minimizing error variance this method creates distinct clusters that are less likely to overlap with other clusters (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984).

Based on the theory driving this profile analysis, I examined cluster solutions 3-5, in order to explore the anticipated cluster solution of 4, in comparison to closely related solutions (i.e., solution 3 and solution 5). I used the dendrogram and the agglomeration schedule

coefficients to examine 3 to 5 cluster solutions, in order to determine the ideal cluster solution

for this data. Additionally, I graphically depicted the 3 to 5 cluster solutions in order to examine

the respective distances from the mean for each cluster in the solutions. I also assessed cluster

sizes for each possible cluster, looking for similarity in cluster sizes across the clusters. I used a

non-hierarchical cluster analysis (k-means) to confirm the number of clusters identified by the

hierarchical clustering. Previous studies suggest that using this combination of clustering

methods provides a relatively robust identification of meaningful clusters and takes advantage of

the strengths of both methods (Burrow, O'Dell, & Hill, 2010).

The Clusters. The four-cluster solution was selected based on theoretical reasons, cluster

sizes, and distinctiveness of the clusters around the means. This solution was the most

interpretable and theoretically meaningful. Examination of the cluster means (graphically

represented in Figure 1) suggests cluster groups of high exploration/high commitment (n=51),

high exploration/low commitment (n=43), low exploration/low commitment (n=46), and an

outlier group, very exploration/very low commitment Low Purpose (n=8). The high

exploration/high commitment group corresponds to the "Achieved" purpose designation. The

high exploration/low commitment group represents the "Uncommitted" purpose designation.

Both the low exploration/low commitment and very low exploration/very low commitment

groups correspond to "Diffused" purpose, based on the theory guiding the clusters. The

"Foreclosed" group, which theoretically would have been high exploration/low commitment, did

not appear in this sample.

Statistics for the four clusters that emerged are reported in Table 6. The "Achieved"

group (high exploration/high commitment) indicated scores above the mean on both purpose

exploration and purpose commitment. The purpose exploration and purpose commitment means were significantly higher than the other three groups. Additionally, this was the only group of the four that was above the mean on purpose commitment. The "Uncommitted" group (high exploration/low commitment) was slightly above the mean for exploring purpose, but below the mean on purpose commitment. The purpose exploration score for the "Diffused" group was significantly lower than the purpose exploration score for the "Achieved" purpose group. The two remaining groups are below the mean on both purpose exploration and purpose commitment. The Low Purpose group (low exploration/low commitment) falls below the mean at a moderate level. The Very Low purpose group (very low exploration/very low commitment) is approximately 2 standard deviations below the mean for both purpose exploration and purpose commitment.

To validate the clusters identified in the hierarchical cluster analysis, a non-hierarchical cluster analysis (k-means) was performed, specifying a four-cluster solution. Visual inspection of cluster standardized mean scores on the clustering variables suggested similar patterns across the two clustering methods, yet there was a key distinction. In terms of similarities between the two clustering methods, the high exploration/high commitment cluster ("Achieved") and the very low exploration/very low commitment clusters were almost identical across both analyses. In the k-means analysis, the cases from the low commitment/low exploration cluster from the original (i.e., hierarchical) analysis were split into a larger low commitment/low exploration cluster and a small high commitment/low exploration cluster. Because the hierarchical clustering method is more accurate for studies with lower sample size, and because of the cluster sizes, the clustering pattern for the hierarchical means clustering was determined to be the accurate representation of

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the clusters for this study. Comparisons of cases across the two cluster analytic methods

indicated that 71.0% of cases were similarly classified, suggesting relatively robust cluster

groups.

This Very Low Purpose group appeared in all of the cluster solutions as a distinct cluster

and thus was considered in the initial cluster comparisons. However, because of the small size of

the Very Low Purpose group, the cases in this cluster were folded into the Low Purpose group.

Though these were two distinct clusters, theoretically they were in the same group ("Diffused"),

both having low purpose exploration and low purpose commitment. Thus for further analyses,

these two were collapsed into one "Diffused" purpose group. The three purpose groups used in

all further analyses are: Achieved Purpose, Uncommitted Purpose, and Diffused Purpose.

Post-Hoc Analyses. As an exploratory step, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was

used to compare the three purpose profiles with regard to group difference on the motivational,

personality (e.g., conscientiousness), and context variables (e.g., mattering in school) (See Table

6). Motivation scores were significantly different between groups. More specifically, the students

in the "Achieved" group had higher motivation scores than their peers in the other two groups

$(F(2,138) = 13.83, p < .001)$. The mean motivation score (range 1-5) was higher for the

"Achieved" purpose group $(M = 4.20)$ than the "Uncommitted" purpose $(M = 3.78)$ and

"Diffused" purpose $(M = 3.53)$ groups.

There were also significant mean differences between groups on the two personality

variables, hope $(F(2, 144) = 3.40, p = .036)$, and conscientiousness $(F(2,144) = 8.395, p = .000)$.

The "Achieved" purpose group $(M = 4.51)$ reported significantly higher hope scores than both

the "Uncommitted" purpose $(M = 4.08)$ and "Diffused" purpose $(M = 4.14)$ group. Group

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differences for conscientiousness were also significant, with the "Achieved" purpose group ($M =$ 3.56) reporting higher conscientiousness scores than the "Uncommitted" purpose ($M =$ 3.16) and "Diffused" purpose ($M =$ 3.14) groups.

With respect to contextual variables, differences between groups on one of the school context variables also emerged. Analyses revealed significant group differences for mattering ($F(2,144) =$ 6.083, $p =$ .003). Post-hoc analysis indicated that the "Achieved" group ($M =$ 3.28) reported significantly higher mattering scores than the "Diffused" purpose ($M =$ 2.69) group. The ANOVA models for group differences in family faith practices and neighborhood social capital were not significant.

In summary, three groups of urban-residing, African American adolescents emerged from the effort to identify profiles of purpose from the purpose exploration and purpose commitment measures. The profiles were: "Achieved" purpose (high exploration/high commitment), "Uncommitted" purpose (high exploration/low commitment), and "Diffused" purpose (low exploration/low commitment). Post hoc analyses highlighted differences among the profiles with regard to motivation, personality, and context. Relative to youth in the "Uncommitted" purpose and the "Diffused" purpose groups, the youth in the "Achieved" purpose group reported significantly greater motivation, hope, conscientiousness, and mattering.

Study 3

This third study explored the associations between purpose and engagement. In this study, engagement takes two forms: *engaged living* as a community-level indicator and *school engagement*. Two separate models were tested, one for each of the two engagement outcomes. Independent variables in each of the two models included the Study 1 motivation, personality,

and contextual variables (i.e., purpose, motivation, hope, conscientiousness, family faith practices, mattering, and neighborhood social capital) and the purpose profiles from Study 2.

Purpose, in this study, is measured as categorical variable, representing three profiles (i.e., "Achieved", "Uncommitted", and "Diffused" purpose) from Study 2. The purpose profiles variable was dummy coded. The target group ("Achieved") became the reference group and was coded as "1" and the other variables were coded as "0" [10]. Therefore, purpose findings in the regression model were comparing "Uncommitted" and "Diffused" purpose groups to the "Achieved" purpose group in testing the effects of purpose on engagement.

Engaged Living. OLS regression analysis was performed to explore the extent to which purpose profiles, motivation, personality (i.e., hope and conscientiousness), and contextual variables (i.e., family faith practices, mattering in school, neighborhood social capital) were associated with engaged living. Assumptions test results indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern, as the tolerance indicators for the variables in the regression analysis were above the .40 threshold (e.g., motivation, tolerance = .702; mattering, tolerance = .691). Using the casewise outliers subcommand, I requested identification of cases where the standardized residual exceeded 3. One case was identified as an outlier. I then performed Cook's distance test and discovered a Cook's d statistic of .651, which does not exceed the cutoff of 1. Therefore, the outlier was not removed from the regression analysis.

Table 10 displays the unstandardized regression coefficients, the standardized regression coefficients, R^2, and adjusted R^2 for engaged living. The engaged living regression model was

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[10] Dummy coding procedure described at: Chapter 3 - Regression with categorical predictors. UCLA: Statistical Consulting Group.
from http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/spss/webbooks/reg/chapter3/spssreg3.htm (accessed January 8, 2016).

significantly different from zero F(8,142) = 14.91, p < .001, with R^2 at .46 (adjusted R^2=.44) and 95%confidence limits from .37 to .59. These findings suggest that together, the purpose profiles, motivational, personality and contextual factors, predict 46% (44% adjusted) of the variance in engaged living for youth in this study. Motivation ($\beta = .34, p < .000$) and "unattained" purpose ($\beta = -.22, p = .01$) predicted engaged living. Additionally, hope, family faith practices, and mattering in school were approaching significance as predictors of engaged living ($p = .054$; $p = .062$, and $p = .099$ respectively). Confidence limits at 95% were calculated for the two regression coefficients that differed significantly from zero. The confidence limits for motivation were .264 to .666. Confidence intervals for "Diffused" purpose were -.739 to -.101.

Motivation and "Diffused" purpose were significant predictors of engaged living. More specifically, higher motivation predicted higher engaged living. Inclusion in the "Diffused" purpose group, compared to the "Achieved" group predicted lower engaged living scores. In terms of the size of the effect, motivation ($\beta = .34$) had the greatest effect on engaged living, as it had the greatest effect size. The second largest predictor of engaged living, based on effect size, was "Diffused" purpose ($\beta = -.22$).

School Engagement Direct Effects Analysis. The second engagement outcome explored is school engagement. In this set of analyses, I explored the association between school engagement, purpose, motivation, personality, and context. Table 10 reports the results of this regression analysis. Once again, the assumption for non-collinearity was met, as model tolerance indicators were above the .40 threshold. Using the casewise outliers subcommand, I requested identification of cases where the standardized residual exceeded 3. No outliers were identified.

The regression model with motivation, personality, context, and purpose predicting school engagement was significant. The model statistic was $F(8,142) = 6.498$, $p < .001$, with R^2 at .300 and 95% confidence limits from .18 to .42. An adjusted R^2 value of .25 indicates that included variables account for 25% of the variance observed in school engagement. Conscientiousness ($\beta = .20$, $p = .015$) and mattering ($\beta = .24$, p = .007) were significant predictors of school engagement. Motivation ($p = .061$) and hope (p = .077) were approaching significance as predictors of school engagement. Confidence limits at 95% were calculated for the two regression coefficients that differed significantly from zero. The confidence limits for conscientiousness were .039 to .358. For mattering, the confidence limits were .043 to .272.

Conscientiousness and mattering were significant predictors of school engagement. Both predictors were positively associated with school engagement. In terms of effect size, conscientiousness had a greater effect on school engagement than did motivation. Purpose profiles did not predict school engagement in direct effects test of the model.

Sub-domains of School Engagement Post-Hoc Analysis. Theoretically, school engagement includes three sub-domains of engagement: behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement. For this sample, behavioral engagement did not have a strong reliability score ($\alpha=.51$) and was excluded from the post hoc analysis. I ran regression models with the purpose profiles, motivation, personality, and contextual variables on both cognitive engagement ($\alpha=.81$) and emotional engagement ($\alpha=.73$) as dependent variables. Just as in the direct effects test predicting composite school engagement, purpose profiles were entered along with motivation, hope, conscientiousness, family faith practices, mattering, and neighborhood social capital predicting emotional engagement and cognitive engagement.

The model statistic for cognitive engagement was $F(8,132) = 5.25$, p<.001, with an R^2 of .24 (adjusted R^2 = .20). Conscientiousness, hope, and mattering were significant predictors of cognitive engagement. Conscientiousness was positively associated with cognitive engagement (β = .24, p = .004). Hope was also a positive predictor of cognitive engagement (β = .18, p = .038). Finally, mattering in school was a positive predictor of cognitive engagement (β = .251, p = .007).

For emotional engagement the model resulted in $F(8,132) = 4.51$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 of .22 (Adjusted R^2 = .17). Motivation was a significant predictor of emotional engagement, β = .20 p= .03. Mattering was also a significant predictor of emotional engagement, β = .28, p = .003. Family faith practices was approaching significance (β = .16, p = .065).

In summary, motivation and purpose profiles were positive predictors of engaged living. The "Diffused" purpose group was a significant negative predictor of engaged living, even when accounting for differences in motivation, personality, and perceptions of context. Purpose profiles did not predict school engagement. Conscientiousness and mattering were positive predictors of school engagement. The post-hoc exploration tested the relationships between purpose profiles, motivation, hope, conscientiousness, family faith practices, mattering, and neighborhood social capital and two subdomains of school engagement (i.e., cognitive engagement and emotional engagement). Purpose profiles did not predict either subdomain of school engagement. These findings indicate that purpose is associated with engaged living, but not with school engagement.

Chapter 5: Discussion

With issues such as school failure, school violence, and dropout rates at the fore of conversations about urban schools, popular as well as social scientific discourses about youth of color often center on stories of failure, deviance, and delinquency. Missing from existing dialogues about youth of color (particularly low-income, urban residing youth of color) is an examination of key strengths such as purpose. This empirical study sought to explore positive developmental realities in the lives of low income, urban-residing African American adolescents by attending to the factors that are associated with purpose among youth attending an inner city high school. This study used an integrative personality (IP) framework to inform our exploration of purpose. In framing developmental realities such as purpose, IP considers personality at both the dispositional trait level (e.g., conscientiousness) and at the level of characteristic adaptation (e.g., motivation and contextual influences). In this chapter I review and discuss the study findings and explicate three contributions that this research makes to the fields of education and psychology. Finally, I highlight some of the limitations in this set of studies and discuss future research directions in the study of purpose in the lives of urban youth.

The dissertation had three aims. First, the study aimed to understand what individual traits and characteristics of context that are associated with purpose in the lives of urban residing African American youth. Previous literature on purpose in adolescence has focused

predominately on personality or other individual level correlates of purpose. This study sought to advance existing knowledge about purpose, by exploring the extent to which aspects of context may be associated with purpose among adolescents (Study 1). The second aim of this study was to develop a more nuanced conceptualization of purpose in African American adolescents, by identifying and understanding different profiles of purpose among this population of adolescents (Study 2). Drawing from Marcia's (1996) conceptualization of identity development, Burrow and colleagues (2011) have theorized that young people face a two step process related to purpose: 1) exploring purpose and 2) committing to purpose. Those two purpose indicators were used to differentiate profiles of purpose among students in this study. The final aim of this research was to determine how purpose profiles associate with community level and school level engagement for African American youth (Study 3).

Summary and Interpretation of Findings

  Study 1: Individual level and contextual level correlates of purpose. Study 1 examined the relations between specific indicators of personality, motivation, context and purpose in urban-residing, African American adolescents. Four key findings emerged in these analyses. Three of the findings aligned with the original hypotheses and one finding revealed an unanticipated outcome.

  Personality and purpose.

  Personality factors and purpose have been theoretically and empirically associated in previous studies (McAdams, 2012; Hill, Burrow, & Bronk, 2014; Komarraju, Karau, Schmeck, & Avdic, 2011; Scheier & Carver; Schutte & Ryff, 1997). Insightful findings emerged in this exploration of the associations between personality traits (specifically testing conscientiousness,

hope, and grit) and purpose in African American youth. Analyses revealed that conscientiousness and purpose were positively associated. No relationship was found between hope and purpose. Importantly, although grit was included in the conceptual frame for this study (and in the original hypothesis on personality and purpose), it could not be included in the analyses for this study because it did not prove to be a reliable measure in this sample of African American adolescents.

Grit, which has become a construct of increasing interest to social scientists, is defined as "perseverance and passion for long term goals (Duckworth, et al., 2007, p. 1087). Previous studies have associated grit with purpose in adolescents (Yeager et al., 2015). Therefore, one of the intentions of this analyses was to explore the relation between grit and purpose among African American youth. The fact that the grit measure proved not to be usable is worth exploring.

It is likely that the grit measure proved unreliable because of a disconnect between the wording of the items in the measure and the experience of students in this study. For example, the first statement in the measure says, "New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones." The language of being distracted by "ideas and projects", which was used in multiple items in this scale, may lack developmental relevance for adolescents. High school students, particularly the students in this sample, do not tend to have "projects" in the same way that an adult might, and projects related to school tend to not be self-directed, but rather guided by teachers. The language of "activities and interests" is likely more accessible to youth than "ideas and projects".

In addition to the possibility that the wording of the items of the grit scale may have contributed to the measure's poor developmental relevance, a second layer of issues emerges in

the inclusion of grit in studies involving students in this population. A debate exists about whether grit is a culturally appropriate construct in the experience of many African American youth, particularly youth who hail from disadvantaged communities and disadvantaged educational systems. Some educators and scholars suggest that grit represents an additional burden on Black students who are already tasked with navigating systemic oppression that exists in many urban schools (Ferlazzo, 2015). McGee, for example, asserted that grit may be "a tenuous bandage over a permanent wound" for African Americans (2013, p. 19). In other words, grit or perseverance becomes an unrealistic expectation in contexts (e.g., educational systems) that continually place undue burdens on African American youth. This study is not positioned to contribute to the debates about the cultural or contextual appropriateness of including grit in research on the lived experience of urban-residing African American youth from under-resourced schools. However, future empirical studies can explore the validity of the measure and examine the factors that contribute to the lack of reliability of the measure.

Hope, a measure of expectation related to desired outcomes, was not found to be significantly associated with purpose. Hope is operationalized as measuring one's sense of belief about his or her ability to meet goals (agency), and a sense of being able to generate successful plans to meet one's goals (pathways). Previous studies have reported a relationship between the hope and purpose, in populations of Caucasian adolescents (Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib & Finch, 2009; Burrow, Hill & O'Dell, 2011). The lack of relationship between hope and purpose for this sample of African American youth is certainly noteworthy. Though hope was a reliable measure that was significantly correlated with purpose, the study revealed that hope is not a driving force behind purpose for African American youth. It is possible that other factors

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(e.g., access to mentors) mediate the relationship between hope and purpose in this population. Future studies of purpose and African American youth should test for possible mediational relationships.

Although hope was not significantly related to purpose, this study found that conscientiousness (an index of personality) was a significant positive predictor of purpose. In sum, young people who embody traits of self-discipline and a high achievement orientation are more likely to report having purpose in life. Though previous studies have demonstrated an association between purpose and conscientiousness (Schmutte & Ryff, 1997; Schnell & Becker, 2006), this study is the first to demonstrate empirically that highly conscientious African American youth in a high poverty context are also more likely to report having purpose.

The question may arise of why conscientiousness was associated with purpose, while hope was not. Conscientiousness is likely associated with purpose because it embodies a notion of commitment, which is also a central component of purpose. Contrasting with hope, the relationship between hope and purpose hinges on the centrality of goals in both constructs. However, hope does not represent an adherence (i.e., a commitment) to pursuing those goals or a purpose. Conscientiousness may be the mechanism for that adherence. Therefore, adolescents who really high in achievement orientation are more likely to see hope lead to higher purpose. That distinction between hope and conscientiousness may give insight into why hope was not associated with purpose while conscientiousness had a positive, significant association. This study did not test for directionality in the relationship between conscientious and purpose, so it is unclear whether conscientiousness leads to purpose, or whether having purpose leads to higher conscientiousness. Since conscientiousness is categorized as a dispositional trait, one can assume

that it predicts purpose. Future studies should tease out the nature of the relationship between conscientiousness and purpose.

   Motivation and purpose. Previous literature has used self-determination theory to assert a link between purpose and motivation (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). This study of purpose used an identity-linked, expectancy value theory (EVT) of motivation to propose that purpose is more likely achieved by young people whose motivational identity positions them to place high value on, and to have expectations for, success related to academic and extracurricular activities. This is the first study to empirically demonstrate a relation between identity-linked motivation and purposefulness among adolescents. Highly motivated students do, indeed, report a greater purpose than less motivated peers. This finding suggest that it is paramount that youth find avenues for motivation as they progress through adolescence and into adulthood, as motivation informs the identity process (Eccles, 2009). In this regard, this study suggest that schools and out-of-school spaces may help youth to craft a sense of purpose in life by employing curricula and creating opportunities that optimize their motivation by tapping into their self-efficacy, interests and values.

   School and purpose. A third finding emerged regarding the link between purpose and school context. In alignment with the original hypotheses, adolescents in this study who indicated that school was a place where they mattered to an adult reported higher purpose than peers who did not believe that they mattered in school. This finding suggests that schools that successfully foster strong relationships between students and adults in the school are more likely to be spaces where young people can develop purpose. Mattering to adults and purpose may be related through two different mechanisms. First, positive relationships that adolescents have with

non-familial adults have been shown to support positive identity (Nakkula, 2007; Steger, Bundick, & Yeager, 2012) and mental health (Hurd & Zimmerman, 2010; Hurd, Sanchez, Zimmerman, & Caldwell, 2012). These relationships may affirm identity and add value to students' sense of self. That enhanced sense of self informed by relationships with adults may serve to foster an adolescents sense of significance in the broader world. This sense of significance in the broader world is the essence of purpose.

A second mechanism through which mattering may support purpose may be through the content of the conversations that unfold between caring adults and adolescents. Noddings (2002) has found that different types of conversations between adults and adolescents in schools are critical to educating moral adolescents. One type of conversation, the "immortal" conversation, may be especially relevant to fostering purpose. The "immortal" conversation invites dialogue about "big" questions such as the meaning in life and the purpose of human existence. These conversations, which can be formal or informal, are more likely to happen when adults and students in schools are relationally connected. Mattering to adults in school may increase the likelihood of adolescents engaging in meaningful, immortal conversations with caring adults in school. These conversations likely foster purpose in adolescents.

Neighborhood and purpose. Interestingly, the exploration of purpose and neighborhood context produced a fourth finding that was in contradiction to my hypothesis. In contrast with what was originally anticipated, young people who perceived their neighborhood as having lower social capital were more likely to have purpose. In other words, the African American adolescents who saw their neighborhoods as unsafe and less socially cohesive reported a greater level of purpose than did their peers who felt the neighborhood was more safe and socially

cohesive. This unexpected finding can be interpreted as a manifestation of one of two processes:

1) resilience or, what I am calling, 2) "re-scripting".

Resilience is defined a "dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar, Cicchetii, & Becker, 2000, p. 543). Resilience occurs when an individual experiences trauma or adversity and then, as a consequence of that adversity, experiences growth that allows him or her to ascend what was expected in light of the traumatic event. Adolescents who grow up in high poverty, socially marginalized communities are more likely to experience life events that represent "significant adversity". It is possible that the adolescents in this study, who are experiencing and acknowledging unsafe neighborhoods, have experienced adverse events in their neighborhood contexts and were able to adapt, possibly using those events to find meaning and motivation. This aligns with studies that highlight the presence of resilience in urban youth who are exposed to neighborhood level violence (Jain & Cohen, 2013).

Though resilience provides a helpful framework, it is likely that there is something much more complex and nuanced at play. I call this more complex process "re-scripting". Our life stories both help shape our identity and provide some substance through which we can find meaning (Baerger & McAdams, 1999; McAdams, 2012). Sometimes an individual's life story is fraught with trial, tribulation, and trauma and he or she is forced to find something that gives a "will to live"(See Frankl, 1985). In a forthcoming book, *Life On Purpose*, Vic Strecher (2016) narrates the story of a young Ugandan man named James Arinaitwe. As a young boy, Mr. Arinaitwe lost both of his parents to AIDS. As an orphan, he had little chance of receiving an adequate education. With support from a relative, he walked 300 miles to become part of a

program that helped orphans go to school. Eventually he earned a degree in public health in the U.S. and cofounded a not-for-profit organization called Teach for Uganda. The goal of his organization is to "ensure that 'one day all Ugandan children, despite their socio-economic status or family background, will receive an excellent and equitable education'" (Strecher, 2016, pp. 224-225). The story of his life should have been one of low-educational opportunity, yet he rewrote his life script. Mr. Arinaitwe took the adversity of his own experience (i.e., being relegated to low educational opportunities as an orphan) and turned it into his life pursuit, a purpose that is "at once both meaningful to self and of consequence to the world beyond the self" (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003, p. 121; definition of purpose).

My own experiences as a community-based researcher in Detroit corroborate this notion of "re-scripting". As part of an interview for an unpublished study of purpose in adolescence, an African American male spoke eloquently about the fact that because he is from a tough neighborhood, he is pursuing a purpose that will prove that he can be successful despite his humble beginnings. His goal was to achieve great things and then come back and improve his neighborhood. There was incongruence between his positive view of himself and the negative circumstances of his neighborhood. Students in low-income, under-resourced and sometimes violent neighborhoods are required to navigate dissonance between an undesirable environment and positive individual sense of self. Some adolescents may use this dissonance as a launching pad for overcoming the odds and finding meaning in life. This is what I call re-scripting. It is a re-writing of one's story, based on the theme of an adversity that lays a foundation for a life purpose.

Additional findings. In addition to the four main findings from Study 1, several other findings help to nuance our understanding of purpose in the lives of the youth who participated in this study. Gender emerged as an important part of the story of purpose. Young men in the study who reported a higher level of family religiosity indicated higher purpose than their male counterparts who reported low family religiosity. This association between family religiosity and purpose was marginally significant but was anticipated. Religion and spirituality have been shown to be a protective factor for adolescents (Davis, Kerr, & Robinson, 2003). The present findings suggesting that, for males, the religious commitment of the family associates with purpose indicates that spirituality and religion are important not only at the level of individual commitment, but also in relation to family practices related to faith.

In an intriguing twist, family religiosity was found to be a significant but negative predictor of purpose for females in this study. One possible explanation for this finding is the fact that some religious traditions enact patriarchal messages about the position and calling of men, while projecting subordinate and restrictive roles onto women. Religious institutions and religious families that adhere to more conservative and more patriarchal religious ideologies may communicate messages that support meaning and purpose to young men, while unwittingly undervaluing or undermining purpose among young women who are involved in those settings.

A second explanation for the difference in the effect of family religiosity across genders revolves around the socio-cultural context of our day which promotes a prevailing narrative about saving black boys. It is possible that African American male adolescents residing in families that have a strong sense of faith may be receiving targeted messages about purpose in life, meaning in life, and transcendence, which may be targeted to the "endangered black male."

In contrast, their female counterparts, who are not considered as "at-risk," may receive messages whose content has the impact of eroding purpose. This finding regarding gender differences in the effects of family religiosity on purpose among African American youth is worthy of further study. Qualitative research approaches may provide insight into the complexities of the relationship between gender, purpose, and spirituality/religion. It is important that these findings, along with the findings regarding the relation between purpose, neighborhood social capital and mattering in school, all support the need for a socioecological framework for purpose particularly in the lives of low-income, urban-residing youth.

For girls in the study, age was a positive predictor of purpose. In other words, girls in the study who were older indicated higher purpose than their younger peers. This finding did not hold true for boys. Age as a predictor is not a surprising finding, as psychosocial development theories of identity suggest that older individuals are more likely to have purpose. However, the fact that this finding was only true for adolescent girls in the study is intriguing. This finding of a developmental difference between males and females regarding purpose suggests that shifts in purpose may be more dramatic or may be more easily detected for females from one year to next. Longitudinal studies (both quantitative and qualitative) of change in purpose among youth may provide us with important information about gender differences in focus.

The findings on the association between motivation, personality, and context paint a picture of purpose that is more complex than conceptualizations linking purposefulness solely to dispositional traits. The discussion of purpose can be too easily mired in a individual-level focused framework that suggests that youth are wholly responsible for their own purposefulness or lack of purpose. This study demonstrates that with regard to purpose, context matters. Based

on this set of studies, family contexts influences purpose, albeit differently for males and females. Adolescents' relationships within the school context is associated with purposefulness with mattering in school positively associated with purpose. Further, neighborhood level characteristics are also associated with purpose in urban-residing adolescents, with students from less cohesive neighborhoods being more likely to have purpose. These findings contribute to a more nuanced, ecologically grounded understanding of purpose and positive development in youth in urban school environments.

Study 2**: Profiles of purpose in African American adolescents.** The second study explored profiles of purpose in African American youth. In this study I used cluster analysis as a person-centered approach to identify varying manifestations of purpose in urban-residing, African American adolescents. Purpose is operationalized as having two components: 1) purpose exploration (i.e., searching for purpose in life) and 2) purpose commitment (i.e., settling on a distinct life aim). This framework for understanding purpose is aligned with James Marcia's identity theory which conceptualizes identity in terms of exploration and commitment. Youth may fall along a spectrum in terms of both an exploration of and commitment to purpose. In alignment with Marcia's theory, purpose is said to have four possible statuses: a) high purpose exploration/high purpose commitment b) high purpose exploration/low purpose commitment; c) low purpose exploration/high purpose commitment; and d) low purpose exploration/low purpose commitment (Burrow, et al., 2010). Based on Marcia's original theory, these four groups would be labeled achieved, moratorium, foreclosed, and diffused, respectively. A previous study used cluster analysis and identified those four exact groups in a sample of suburban and high income adolescents attending a private school. My intent was to explore whether these four groups

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would be found in a profile analysis of purpose among low-income, urban-residing, African American adolescents.

Four groups did emerge from the cluster analysis, but the purpose profiles were different than what was initially anticipated. The groupings were: a) high purpose exploration/high purpose commitment b) high purpose exploration/low purpose commitment; c) low purpose exploration/low purpose commitment; and d) very low purpose exploration/ very low purpose commitment. In this urban-residing group of African American adolescents, the foreclosed group (low purpose exploration/high purpose commitment) did not emerge. The very low group was 2 standard deviations below the mean on both purpose exploration and purpose commitment. This group only had eight students, which was much smaller than the other three groups. The other 3 groups had close to equal numbers of students, ranging from 43-51.

The presence of a small cluster amongst three more equally distributed groups would normally be a reason for questioning the validity of the clustering results. However, this group emerged in each of the iterations of clustering, iterations that were both part of the main analysis and part of the post-hoc analysis, indicating that this was a legitimate group in the sample. The very low group was collapsed into the other low purpose exploration and low purpose commitment group, because of both the theory (predicting a single low exploration/low commitment group) and the fact that the very low group had such a small number of cases. Thus, I ended up with three groups, labeled as Achieved Purpose (high purpose exploration/high purpose commitment), Unattained Purpose (high purpose exploration/low purpose commitment), and Diffused Purpose (low and very low purpose exploration/low and very low purpose commitment).

The absence of a group that was low exploration/high commitment to purpose (i.e., foreclosed purpose) was a divergence from the previous study. However, it is not surprising that the foreclosed group did not appear amongst the population of students in this study. Adolescents in a foreclosed status are said to have adopted parental values or attitudes without exploring or evaluating different options (Kroger, 1995). The foreclosed identity status is typically found among groups of young people who are following a specified life path set by previous generations. For example, foreclosed identity is often found in vocational choice where there is a history of family members all following the same line of work (e.g. farming; Skorikov & Vondracek, 1998). In a low-income, urban setting predetermined vocational paths are likely uncommon. The realities of high unemployment, fluidity of employment, poor schooling options, and low levels of professional identity, that mark life in low-income settings might make it less likely that a young person would commit to a purpose without first going through an exploration process. This study suggests that a foreclosed purpose status is less likely among adolescents in low-income communities. The finding may also reinforce the importance of context in shaping the manifestations of purpose among youth.

I compared differences across the three purpose profile groups: Achieved Purpose; Unattained purpose, and Diffused Purpose. These three groups were distinct across the variables included as potential predictors of purpose in the initial study. The Achieved Purpose group was comprised of students who indicated high scores both on exploration of purpose and commitment to purpose. They also were the only of the three groups that averaged above the mean for purpose commitment and they exhibited characteristics of positive development at the individual level and in terms of their perception of the school context. More specifically, group

comparisons revealed that the Achieved Purpose group had higher motivation, hope, conscientiousness, and mattering outcomes compared to the other groups.

Considering what we know about purpose, it is not surprising that adolescents in the Achieved Purpose group had higher outcomes on a number of positive indicators. Purpose represents an important component of psychological well-being and the presence of purpose has been linked to a number of positive outcomes, across the lifespan. Adolescents in the Achieved Purpose are distinct in that they have found something to which to commit (i.e., have discovered a purpose), even while being in an exploration phase, which is part of being an adolescent. We can surmise that it is advantageous to encourage adolescents to both think about and commit to a purpose instead of expecting that they have to wait until adulthood to discover meaning and direction in life.

The question of directionality is important to consider, as we do not know whether positive qualities (e.g., high motivation) lead to purpose commitment or if those with purpose commitments tend to be more motivated. This particular study is assuming that motivation is predicting purpose because it employs the motivational identity framework, which suggests that motivational theories support the development of identity (i.e., purpose). A different theory, namely identity-based motivation theory (Oyserman, 2013), would explore the relationship from the opposite direction, suggesting that identity (i.e., purpose) predicts motivation. Either direction is theoretically justifiable and in reality it is likely the case that a bi-directional relationship exists. Future studies can tease out some of the questions of directionality by adopting a longitudinal study design.

Study 3: Purpose and engagement. Finally, this dissertation explored the associations between purpose profiles and engagement at both the school level and the community level. School engagement has received quite a bit of attention as an important indicator of positive development and success (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). However, this study is intentional in also highlighting positive engagement outside of the school. In also exploring community level positive engagement, this study advocates for a more holistic approach to understanding indicators of well-being for African American adolescents.

Engaged living and purpose. Community-level engagement was assessed through a construct called engaged living. Engaged living is conceptualized as an outcome that measures a young person's social integration (e.g., altruism) and absorption (e.g., flow) in activity. In other words, this construct measures the extent to which an adolescent is positively involved in the community through volunteerism and also through extra-curricular activities (e.g., arts, sports). We know very little about how engaged living manifests empirically. Two studies have linked engaged living to character virtues such as gratitude and positive affect (Froh, Bono & Emmons, 2010; Froh et al., 2010). This study is the first to explore engaged living in a group of African American adolescents, thus the findings related to engaged living and its antecedents contribute new knowledge on manifestations of positive development amongst youth in urban schools.

Motivation and purpose were both positive predictors of engaged living for African American adolescents. Highly motivated students were more likely than their less motivated peers to report high levels of engagement through volunteerism and extra-curricular involvement. Purpose profiles also emerged as predictors of engaged living. Adolescents in the Achieved Purpose group were more likely than individuals in the Diffused Purpose group to

have high levels of engaged living. In other words, the students in the "Achieved" purpose profile were more likely to report high levels of helping activities in the community (e.g., volunteerism) and report flow in extra-curricular activities. Students who indicated both low purpose exploration and low purpose commitment were significantly less likely to report engaged living.

We can surmise from the relationship between purpose and engaged living that, when adolescents have committed to purpose, they may seek out opportunities and pathways to engage in purpose relevant activities. One example of this phenomenon is a student in Detroit whom I interviewed who was determined to find a cure for sickle cell, a disease that has devastating effects in the African American community. Though this adolescent was unable to engage in medical research, she volunteered in hospitals. This volunteer work gave her a way to positively engage in a way that would position her to eventually fulfill what she believed was her purpose. Having an identified purpose provided some avenues through which she could identify ways to be positively involved in the community.

School engagement and purpose. School engagement is an outcome that has been known to predict achievement outcomes in school (Wang & Eccles, 2011). Studies have shown that motivation and school engagement are highly correlated (Martin, 2009). This study sought to understand the relationship between purpose and school engagement. This association had not been explored empirically in any previous studies. In this study, motivation, hope, conscientiousness all emerged as positive predictors of school engagement. These associations were expected, yet still noteworthy in that they provide empirical evidence of the individual-level predictors of school engagement. Mattering in school was the only contextual-level factor

associated with school engagement in this study. Purpose did not emerge as a predictor of school engagement.

The question of why purpose profiles were not associated with school engagement is an important question to consider. It is possible that there is a disconnect between the specific types of purposes that youth in "Achieved" purpose profiles are selecting and what these same youth experience in school. If school does not endorse the aspect of one's identity rooted in his or her purpose, then school may not be a space that the student will find engaging. For example, if a young woman has an achieved purpose related to becoming a leader in her community, but in school she is not able to identify opportunities to foster that purpose, then school represents a space where the learning experience is out of alignment with that part of her identity. Qualitative studies are needed to explore what types of purpose are common in the experience of African American adolescents in urban schools and to identify if there is a misalignment between purpose and school experiences.

Contributions

Purpose in adolescence is an under-explored aspect of identity development in adolescence. The lack of attention to this aspect of development is especially salient in research on low-income, urban residing African American youth. The findings in these studies corroborate the position that purpose has the potential to serve as a positive path for young people as they navigate through adolescence. Adolescence is marked by an identity exploration process and the question of one's purpose figures prominently in this identity formation process. Purpose is an answer to the question, what am I going to do with my life? The present research on purpose furthers the research on this topic by making three distinct contributions. First, it

proposes a framework for purpose that is rooted in motivational identity, suggesting a potential link between motivation, identity, purpose, and engagement. Second, in exploring purpose and contextual factors, this dissertation sheds light on how aspects of context, particularly the family environment, the school setting, and the neighborhood can foster purpose in the lives of adolescents. Lastly, this work continues to shift the dialogue to focus on capacity for the development of strengths in African American students in urban school environments and how existing strengths relate to positive outcomes both in and out of school.

Purpose and motivational identity. The findings of this study reveal that motivation is an important part of the story of purpose. Previous studies have linked purpose and self-determination theory, suggesting that those who are more self-determined are more likely to have meaning (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). This study adopts a motivational-identity perspective on purpose in adolescents. Using this motivational-identity theoretical conceptualization of purpose invites novel, developmentally rooted angle on purpose as it relates to the experiences of secondary school students. This is the first study to use an expectancy-value theoretical lens of motivation to explore purpose. Expectancy value theory (EVT) roots motivation in tasks and activities that adolescents pursue. EVT that has been used to predict various academic outcomes (Eccles, O'Neill, & Wigfield, 2005). The finding that motivation, conceptualized as an expectation-value phenomenon, does indeed predict purpose is important in that it demonstrates benefits of strong motivation even beyond the oft-studied academic outcomes.

Motivation served not only as a positive predictor of purpose, but it was also positively correlated with engagement at both the school and community levels. The findings related to

purpose, identity, motivation and engagement suggest the possibility of a theory of psychosocial development that highlights the role of purpose as a noteworthy developmental asset.

Purpose and context. A second major contribution of this study is that it explored how the family, school, and neighborhood context associate with purpose. Adolescents exist in ecologies that collectively influence their specific trajectory. Purpose develops in the context of family values, school contexts, and communities. The tendency to examine purpose solely in relation to individual traits has been a shortcoming in previous studies of purpose. By taking a broader approach and including context in this exploration of purpose, this study makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the development of purpose and the developmental systems that support adolescent purpose.

Family context and purpose. Religion and spirituality have been linked to purpose, through notions of transcendence and calling (Dufton & Perlman, 1986). Religion and spirituality also represent a cultural strength in the Black community. This study explored convergence between family faith practices and purpose for African American youth. Black male adolescents who came from family contexts where religious practices were common were more likely than their male peers to have purpose. Religion has been identified as a protective factor for African American youth (Cole-Lewis, Gipson, Opperman, Arango & King, 2016). This study highlights that, specifically for males, involvement in families that emphasize faith potentially supports the development of purpose. This finding invites us to consider how to capitalize on the faith in families to address what many identify as a black male crisis in our cities. Families that are steeped in personal faith and those that are involved in faith communities may be able to

mobilize to foster in young men the types of purpose that can provide them with an alternative to the perils of street life.

School context and purpose. Schools represent a critical developmental space for adolescents (Eccles & Roeser, 2011) This study demonstrated that young people who felt like they mattered to an adult in school were more likely to report having purpose in life. Adults are co-constructors of adolescent identity (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2006). The school serves as a contextual space that has the potential to foster caring, supportive relationships that enhance students' psychosocial development. When students are in schools where anonymity is more likely, then it is less likely that they will have the adult relational supports needed in the identity development process. In contrast, mattering to adults in school predicted purpose. School reform efforts in urban communities should identify interventions that can support the types of interactions between adults and adolescents that will support the development of mattering and a sense of significance in the lives of youth.

Neighborhood context and purpose. Neighborhoods may support or inhibit the development of purpose for African American adolescents. Interestingly, this study had mixed findings about the ways that the neighborhood affects positive youth development. Study 1 found that students who perceived their neighborhoods as having lower social capital were more likely to have purpose than their peers who thought they lived in safer and more socially integrated neighborhoods. This finding counters assumptions that young people from disadvantaged contexts lack psychosocial vitalities that support positive development. Yet, at the same time, the students in the neighborhoods with higher neighborhood social capital were more likely to be positively engaged in their community. Ideally, communities will continue to develop outlets for

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students, even in the unsafe and socially disconnected neighborhoods, to be able to find spaces to positively engage through service, volunteerism, and extra-curricular involvement. The community schools movement that is currently developing in many urban school districts presents a unique opportunity for allowing youth to engage in positive ways through the presence of collective efforts to link an array of partners to students in order to provide comprehensive support.

Positive development in urban school contexts. Lastly, this study shifts the dialogue to focus on strengths in students in urban school environments and how certain strengths relate to various outcomes, both in and out of school. The final contribution of this study is arguably the most important. As we take a panoramic view of research on black youth as it has existed over the past 50 years, narratives of failure and dysfunction prevail. It has often been the case that studies of African American youth in urban environments are predicated on notions of dysfunctions and problematic outcomes related to both academic achievement and social development. Researchers use buzz-words, such as "achievement gap" when referencing Black youth in inner city school districts. In highlighting purpose as a positive strength worth understanding in an urban-residing, African American population of youth, the aim of this research is to invite an alternative narrative. We would be remiss if we fell prey to the belief that the majority of Black youth are falling victim to the school-to-prison pipeline. It would also be short-sighted to assume that positively engaged and academically successful youth are the rare exception in inner-city schools. It is important to study strengths in urban, African-America, low-income communities because doing so invites a more balanced approach to how we view youth in these types of contexts. The current study intentionally emphasizes positive development and

encourages us to adopt an assets-based perspective of African-American youth in our cities, and highlights the heterogeneity among youth with regard to their profiles of purpose (e.g., their degree of exploration and commitment).

Study Limitations

A few limitations must be addressed. The study findings were somewhat narrow in that they explored purpose in one setting. Focusing on one high school setting was useful in that allowed for an in-depth exploration of a single context and gathered data from a fairly large swatch of the school. However, exploring manifestations of purpose across multiple settings in Detroit or other similar contexts would have offered a perspective that is broader and may have further advanced the study of urban-residing youth in allowing comparisons across the different settings. Additionally, the relatively small sample size presented some limitations in available analytic methods. The direction of the relationships between the variables could not be assessed because of limitations in the study design. Using a longitudinal approach in future studies of adolescent purpose would allow for causal determinations.

Another limitation was related to the purpose measure used in the study. The *Revised Youth Purpose Survey* was developed and had acceptable validity and reliability metrics in previous studies that used the scale. These metrics were determined in populations of youth that were quite distinct from the youth in this study. The overall purpose construct had a reliability of .86, which was strong. Purpose consisted of two sub-domains: purpose exploration and purpose commitment. The reliability for the purpose exploration subscale was similar to what it was in the previous studies. However, the reliability for the purpose commitment subscale was not as strong as in the previous studies. The Cronbach's alpha for for purpose commitment was .68,

which was below the recommended alpha of .70 for reliability. Lower than ideal reliability for the subscale potentially presents a concern for the robustness of the clusters, which were determined based on both purpose exploration and purpose commitment.

From an analytical perspective, there are limitations in this study. First, this study was underpowered, particularly in the post-hoc analyses in Study 1. Exploring predictors of purpose by gender had the potential to provide unique insight, yet at the same time, it reduced the power by halving the sample size. Reduced power has the potential to skew results. Secondly, the multiple iterations of analyses performed for the dissertation studies increased the risk of a Type I error. These analytical concerns give reason for some caution in the interpretation of the study findings.

The fact that the study solely used quantitative methods of analysis in exploring purpose in this sample of adolescents is also a limitation. A mixed methods study, which included qualitative methods of analysis to complement the quantitative methods would have provided a more thorough scope of purpose in urban-residing, African American youth. Incorporating interviews or focus groups about how African-American youth are conceptualizing purpose would have allowed us to develop some insight into the differences in types of purposes that were associated with the various motivational, personality, and contextual factors.

Future Directions

Adolescents need a wide array of tools in order to become the productive, engaged adult citizen of the 21st century will require. One of those tools is purpose. Purpose has the potential to create a path through adolescence and into adulthood that can support positive, motivated behaviors and engagement. Studies in identity and purpose are essential in helping us create

avenues that will allow adolescents to find those paths into a productive adulthood. Purpose based interventions have been found to be successful. One longitudinal study demonstrated that a purpose intervention served to increase goal-directedness and life satisfaction in a sample of college students (Bundick, 2012). Similar studies with adolescents are needed to elucidate potential mechanisms to support the purpose acquisition and foster psychological well-being for those who are experiencing challenges in the identity formation process. These studies should focus on diverse populations of adolescents. Intellectual and financial resources should be aimed at understanding both the presence of purpose amongst African American adolescents and the creation of identity-based interventions that can support positive youth development.

Future research examining purpose and other psychological strengths in urban-residing African American adolescents may benefit from employing mixed methods designs to develop a more nuanced understanding of positive strengths. An exploratory sequential approach which begins with qualitative methods to develop a grounded theory of purpose and then develops new measures and interview protocols may be needed to construct a culturally-centered theory of purpose in urban-residing, African-American youth. Further quantitative studies of purpose can be implemented, which will delve into some of the questions of causality that exist regarding purpose development. This type of mixed methods approach can lead to the development of psychosocial interventions aimed at supporting the identity processes for youth who may have to navigate certain socioecological obstacles en route to a meaningful, productive adulthood.

The life story narrative methodology (McAdams, 2001) may present a useful tool in future explorations of purpose, both in examining the phenomenon I am calling "re-scripting" and as tool to intervene for adolescents who experience significant adversities. In *Man's Search*

for Meaning, Frankl made the conjecture that there is meaning, even in our adversities. Purpose interventions using the life story narrative may provide us with an opportunity to test mechanisms to enhance and support the livelihood and well-being of African American youth in our inner cities.

Table 1. Correlations for All Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Age		.073	.016	.020	.010	-.045	-.020	.059	-.094	.026	.074	.033	-.007	.014	-.056	.052	.023
2. Gender			.138	.111	.135	.138	.000	-.043	-.090	-.094	.107	-.085	.125	.128	.009	.168*	.095
3. Purpose				.847**	.945**	.491**	.144	.359**	.297**	.162#	.356**	.004	.551**	.364**	.293**	.183*	.326**
4. Purpose Exploration					.628**	.378**	.001	.185*	.174*	.107	.390**	-.025	.427**	.237**	.156	.117	.229**
5. Purpose Commitment						.485**	.211*	.413**	.328**	.170*	.279**	.016	.546**	.386**	.332**	.194*	.336**
6. Motivation							.247**	.315**	.371**	.243**	.272**	.185*	.574**	.378**	.413**	.290**	.214**
7. Grit								.378**	.261**	.061	-.047	.013	.118	.179*	.328**	-.030	.140
8. Conscientiousness									.238**	.107	.005	.008	.274**	.323**	.328**	.064	.314**
9. Hope										.238**	.234**	.297**	.411**	.334**	.278**	.123	.315**
10. Family Religiosity											.310**	.251**	.332**	.239**	.023	.276**	.205*
11. Mattering												.405**	.392**	.329**	-.012	.361**	.309**
12. Neighborhood Soc. Cap.													.294**	.122	-.061	.151	.136
13. Engaged Living														.485**	.333**	.285**	.432**
14. School Engagement															.582**	.706**	.870**
15. Behavioral Engagement																.206*	.305**
16. Emotional Engagement																	.396**
17. Cognitive Engagement																	

Table 2. Psychometric properties of study variables (n=151)

	M	SD	α	Range Possible	Actual	Skew	Kurtosis
Demographic Variables							
Gender	0.48	.50	--	1-2	1-2	.068	-2.023
Age	4.07[1]	.88	--	1-6	2-6	.098	-.078
Grade Level	3.01	.72	--	1-4	2-4	.010	-1.047
Study Variables							
Purpose	4.71	.76	.82	1-7	2.26-6.26	-.264	.329
Motivation	3.82	.69	.93	1-5	1.00-5.00	-.601	.724
Hope	4.26	.91	.77	1-6	1.83-6.00	-.290	-.438
Conscientiousness	3.29	.58	.60	1-5	1.56-4.89	.194	.203
Religious Practice	3.04	1.03	.86	1-5	1.00-5.00	-.191	-.508
Mattering	2.99	.89	.88	1-5	1.00-5.00	-.053	-.534
Neighborhood Social Capital	2.94	.89	.79	1-5	1.00-5.00	.089	-.178
School Engagement	3.28	.59	.81	1-5	1.80-4.72	.197	-.717
Engaged Living	4.04	.94	.89	1-6	1.93-5.93	.197	-.477

Table 3. Independent Sample T-Test: Gender and Study Variables

Study Variable	Mean (S.D.)		t (2,151)	F (2,151)	p
	Males	**Females**			
1.Motivation	3.73 (.79)	3.92 (.56)	-1.64**	7.18	.01
2.Hope	4.35 (.82)	4.19 (.99)	1.09+	3.46	.07
3.Conscientiousness	3.31 (.58)	3.26 (.59)	.52	.02	.90
4.Family faith Practice	3.15 (.99)	2.96 (1.05)	1.13	.21	.65
5.Mattering	2.91 (.85)	3.10 (.93))	1.30	.52	.47
6.Neighborhood Social Capital	3.04 (.93)	2.89 (.90)	1.02-	.07	.80
7.Purpose	4.62 (.81)	4.83 (.69)	-1.68	.38	.54
8.School Engagement	3.22 (.60)	3.37 (.57)	-1.57	.01	.92
9.Engaged Living	3.95 (.95)	4.18 (.88)	-1.53	.65	.42

Table 4. Correlations Among and Descriptive Statistics for Key Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Sex	--	.073	.138	.138*	-.043	-.090	-.094	-.085	.107	.125	.128
2. Age			.016	-.045	.059	-.094	.026	.033	.074	-.007	.014
3. Purpose				.491**	.359**	.297**	.162#	.004	.356**	.551**	.364**
4. Motivation					.315**	.371**	.243**	.185**	.272**	.574**	.364**
5. Conscientiousness						.238**	.107	.008	.005	.274**	.323**
6. Hope							.238**	.297**	.234**	.411**	.334**
7. FRP								.251**	.310**	.332**	.239**
8. Neighborhood Social Capital									.405**	.294**	.122
9. Mattering										.392**	.329**
10. Eng. Living											.485**
11. School Eng.											

Note. Ns range from 135 to 151 due to missing data. For sex, 1 = male, 2 = female. FRP = Family faith practices. Eng.=Engaged. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. +p =.051

Table 5. Regression Models Predicting Purpose (N=132)

	Model 1 β (SE)	Model 2 β (SE)	95% CI
Age	.006 (.073)	.006 (.060)	[-.113, .124]
Gender	.138 (.128)	.061 (.108)	[-.121, .305]
Motivation		.289 (.086)**	[.179, .524]
Conscientiousness		.123(.063)**	[.116, .493]
Hope		.240 (.093)	[-.029, .228]
Family Religiosity		-.003 (.053)	[-.115, .101]
Mattering		.323 (.066)**	[.143, .410]
Neighborhood Social Capital		-.209 (.064)**	[-.315, -.054]
$R^2/\Delta R^2$	.019/.019	.397/.378	
F/ΔF	1.350/1.350	10.866/13.788	

** $p < .01$.

Table 6. Female Participants Correlations Matrix (N=72)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Purpose		.070	.520**	.268*	.277*	-.081	.299*	.080
2. Age			-.204	-.010	-.112	-.031	-.032	.135
3. Motivation				.140	.383**	.298*	.262*	.214
4. Conscientiousness					.084	-.018	-.258*	-.085
5. Hope						.201	.259*	.307**
6. FRP							.209	.329**
7. Mattering								.587**
8. Neighborhood Social Capital								

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. + FRP = Family faith practices.

Table 7. Male Participants Correlations Matrix (N=77)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Purpose		-.014	.479**	.476**	-.343**	-.374**	-.378**	-.063
2. Age			.055	.127	-.051	.114	.212	-.053
3. Motivation				.441**	.471**	.222	.265*	.184
4. Conscientiousness					.402**	.204	.274*	.078
5. Hope						.222	.201	.267*
6. FFP							.413**	.139
7. Mattering								.220
8. Neighborhood Social Capital								

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. FRP = Family faith practices.

Table 8. Female and Male Participants Regression Findings Predicting Purpose

	Females		Males	
	B (SE)	**β**	**B (SE)**	**β**
Predictor Variables				
Age	.159 (.07)	.222**	-.141 (.10)	-.138
Motivation	.620 (.13)	.506***	.288 (.11)	.281**
Hope	.069 (.07)	.099	.090 (.11)	.091
Conscientiousness	.314 (.12)	.270***	.351 (.15)	.252**
FRP	-.166 (.07)	-.252**	.163 (.08)	.200*
Mattering	.295 (.09)	.396***	.205 (.10)	.216**
Neighborhood Social Capital	-.170 (.09)	-.215*	-.214 (.09)	-.240**
R^2	.50		.46	
Adjusted R^2	.44		.40	

$p < .10$*; $p < .05$**; $p < .01$***

Table 9. ANOVA Comparing Clusters

	Achieved Purpose	Diffused Purpose	Unattained Purpose		
	1 (51)	2 (43)	3 (54)	$F_{(2,145)}$	LSD post-hoc
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Motivation	4.20 (.65)	3.78 (.52)	3.53 (.71)	13.829***	1 > 2, 3
Hope	4.51 (.85)	4.07 (.91)	4.14 (.91)	3.398*	1 > 2, 3
Conscientiousness	3.55 (.60)	3.16 (.49)	3.14 (.57)	8.386***	1 > 2,3
Family faith Practice	3.11 (.92)	2.98 (1.13)	2.99 (1.07)	.250	
Mattering	3.28 (.90)	3.02 (.80)	2.69 (.88)	6.083**	1 > 3
Neighborhood Social Capital	2.88 (1.01)	2.93 (.95)	2.98 (.71)	.190	

p < .10*; p < .05**; p < .01***

Table 10. OLS Regression Models Predicting Engagement

	Outcome Variables					
	Engaged Living			School Engagement		
	B (SE)	β	95% CI	B (SE)	β	95% CI
Predictor Variables						
Motivation	.465 (.10)	.344***	[.264, .666]	.139 (.07)	.164*	[-.007, .285]
Hope	.144 (.07)	.140*	[-.003, .290]	.096 (.05)	.149*	[-.010, .202]
Conscientiousness	.100 (.11)	.062	[-.121, .320]	.199 (.08)	.198**	[.039, .358]
Family Faith Practices	.117 (.06)	.129*	[-.006, .240]	.044 (.05)	.078	[-.045, .133]
Mattering	.132 (.08)	.126*	[-.025, .290]	.158 (.06)	.240***	[.043, .272]
Neighborhood Social Capital	.119 (.08)	.113	[-.003, .271]	.045 (.06)	-.069	[-.155, .065]
Unattained Purpose	-.231 (.16)	-.112	[-.543, .081]	-.177 (.11)	-.137	[-.403, .049]
Diffused Purpose	-.420 (.16)	-.216***	[-.739, -.101]	-.071 (.12)	-.059	[-.303, .160]
R²	.475			.296		
Adjusted R²	.443			.254		

p < .10*; p < .05**; p < .01***

Figure 1. Hierarchical Cluster Analysis Results

Purpose Profiles
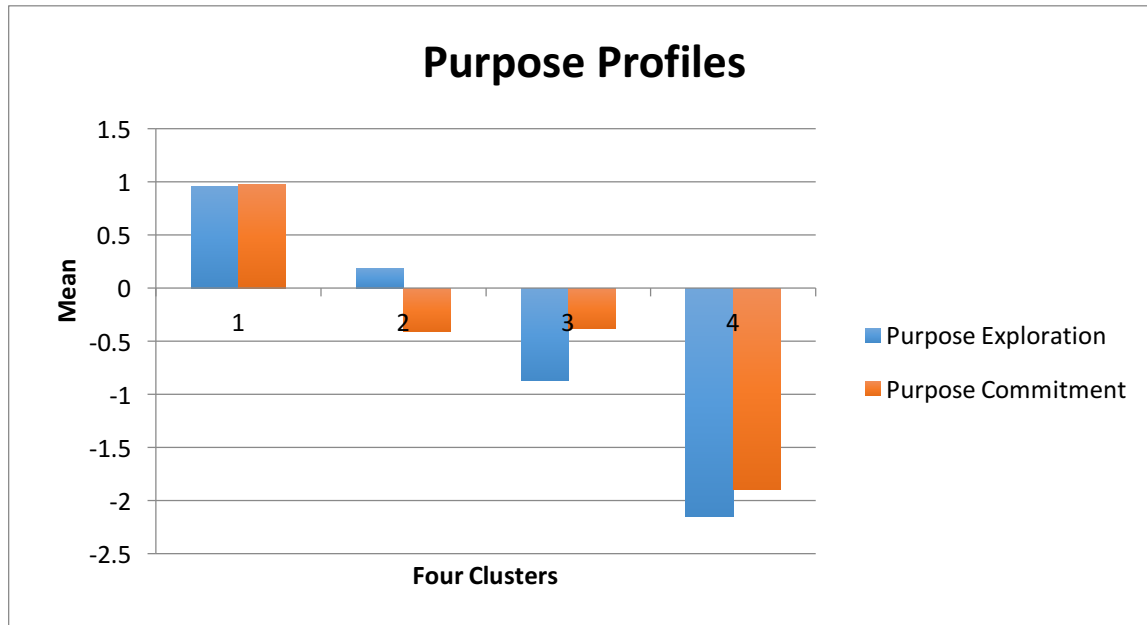
Cluster One (N=51): high exploration/high commitment

Cluster Two (N=43): high exploration/low commitment

Cluster Three (N=46): low exploration/low commitment

Cluster Four (N=8): very low exploration/very low commitment

Appendices

The Youth Identity and Experience Survey

THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO TAKE THIS SUVERY. PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. REMEMBER, THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.

What is your age? _____   **What is your Birth Date**? Month _____ Day_____ Year_____

What are the first three letters of your MIDDLE NAME? _____

What is your gender?   Male _____   Female ____

What school do you go to? _____

What grade are you in? ____9th _____10th _____11th _____12th

What is your race or ethnicity? (please check one)
_____African American/Black
_____Asian
_____Biracial/Multiracial (please specify) _____
_____Hispanic/Latino
_____Native American/American Indian
_____White/Caucasian
_____Other (please specify) _____

Which activities are you involved in?
□ *Arts (Dance, Instrumental Music, Visual Arts, Theater, Vocal Music, etc.)*
□ *Sports (school league, community league, etc.)*
□ *Leadership (community-based, school based programs, etc.)*
□ *Work (employment outside of school)*

How many hours per week do you spend participating extracurricular activities, including work?
_____0-2 hours   _____3-6 hours   _____7-10 hours   _____11 or more hours

Do you plan to continue involvement in the extracurricular activities after high school (check all that apply)?
_____No   _____ Not sure   _____Yes, as a college major   _____ Yes, as a hobby   _____Yes, as a career

Which category best describes your average grades last year? (Please check one)
_____A (93-100)   _____A- (90-92)   _____B+ (87-89)   _____B (83-86)
_____B- (80-82)   _____C+(77-79)   _____C (73-76)   _____C- (70-72)
_____D (69 or below)

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The Youth Identity and Experience Survey

SECTION 1: PERSONALITY

ONE

How much are the following statements like you?	Not like me at all	Not much like me	Somewhat like me	Mostly like me	Very much like me
New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Setbacks don't discourage me.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I am a hard worker.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I finish whatever I begin.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I am very diligent.	①	②	③	④	⑤

TWO

The six sentences below describe how young people think about themselves and how they do things in general. Read each sentence carefully. For each sentence, please think about how you are in most situations.	None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
I think I am doing pretty well.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
I am doing just as well as other kids my age.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
When I have a problem I can come up with lots of ways to solve it.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
Even when I want to quit, I know that I can come up with ways to solve the problem.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥

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THREE

How much are the following statements like you?	I agree a lot	I agree a little	I neither agree or disagree	I disagree a little	I disagree a lot
In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.	①	②	③	④	⑤
It's easy for me to relax.	①	②	③	④	⑤
If something can go wrong for me, it will.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I'm always optimistic about my future.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I enjoy my friends a lot.	①	②	③	④	⑤
It's important for me to keep busy.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I hardly ever expect things to go my way.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I don't get upset too easily.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I rarely count on good things happening to me.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.	①	②	③	④	⑤

FOUR

I see myself as someone who…	Disagree Strongly	Disagree a little	Neither agree or disagree	Agree a little	Agree Strongly
Is talkative	①	②	③	④	⑤
Tends to find fault with others	①	②	③	④	⑤
Does a thorough job	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is depressed, blue	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is original, comes up with new ideas	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is reserved	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is helpful and unselfish with others	①	②	③	④	⑤
Can be somewhat careless	①	②	③	④	⑤

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The Youth Identity and Experience Survey

Is relaxed, handles stress well	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is curious about many different things	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is full of energy	①	②	③	④	⑤
Starts conflicts with others	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is a reliable worker	①	②	③	④	⑤
Can be tense	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is clever, a deep thinker	①	②	③	④	⑤
Generates a lot of enthusiasm	①	②	③	④	⑤
Has a forgiving nature	①	②	③	④	⑤
Tends to be disorganized	①	②	③	④	⑤
Worries a lot	①	②	③	④	⑤
Has an active imagination	①	②	③	④	⑤
Tends to be quiet	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is generally trusting	①	②	③	④	⑤
Tends to be lazy	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is emotionally stable, not easily upset	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is inventive	①	②	③	④	⑤
Has a bold personality	①	②	③	④	⑤
Can be cold and distant	①	②	③	④	⑤
Perseveres until the task is finished	①	②	③	④	⑤
Can be moody	①	②	③	④	⑤
Values artistic, visually attractive experiences	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is sometimes shy, timid	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is considerate and kind to almost everyone	①	②	③	④	⑤
Does things efficiently	①	②	③	④	⑤
Remains calm in tense situations	①	②	③	④	⑤
Prefers work that is routine	①	②	③	④	⑤

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The Youth Identity and Experience Survey

Is outgoing, sociable	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is sometimes rude to others	①	②	③	④	⑤
Makes plans and follows through with them	①	②	③	④	⑤
Gets nervous easily	①	②	③	④	⑤
Likes to reflect, play with ideas	①	②	③	④	⑤
Has few artistic interests	①	②	③	④	⑤
Likes to cooperate with others	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is easily distracted	①	②	③	④	⑤
Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature	①	②	③	④	⑤

SECTION 2: EXPERIENCE

FIVE

Please read each statement and selecy the number (from 1 to 6) that is most like you. ONLY select ONE NUMBER next tp each statement.	Definitely not like me	Not much like me	Somewhat like me	Mostly like me	Very much like me	Exactly like me
I feel like a part of my community/neighborhood.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
I would like to make the world a better place.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
I feel everyone is put here for a reason.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
While doing my hobbies (ex. sports, reading, musical instruments, acting, etc.), I feel "in the zone."	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
I feel blessed.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
My hobbies (ex. sports, reading, musical instruments, acting, etc.) mean the world to me.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
I am a spiritual person.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
I use what I am good at to help others.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
I have a purpose in life.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥

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The Youth Identity and Experience Survey

I love helping people.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
I must be doing something active rather than doing nothing.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
I get so involved in what I am doing, that I get "lost" in it.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
I love to volunteer.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
While doing my hobbies (ex. sports, reading, musical instruments, acting, etc.), I am very into it.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
When I am doing something I like, I am only thinking about that.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥

SIX

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Neutral	Mostly Agree
I follow the rules at school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I get in trouble at school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
When I am in class, I just act as if I am working.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I pay attention in class.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I complete my work on time.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I like being at school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
School is a fun place to be.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I am interested in what I do at school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I feel happy in school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I feel bored in school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I check my school work for mistakes	①	②	③	④	⑤
I study at home even when I don't have a test.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I try to watch TV shows about the things we do in school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
When I read a book, I ask myself questions to make sure I understand what it is about.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I do extra research to learn more about the things we do in school.	①	②	③	④	⑤

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If I don't know what a word means when I am reading, I do something to figure it out.	①	②	③	④	⑤
If I don't understand what I read, I go back and read it over again.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I talk with people outside of school about what I am learning in class.	①	②	③	④	⑤

SEVEN

Answer these questions thinking about school classes, your most important extracurricular activity, and your job (if you have one).

	Not good at all	Not good	Somewhat good	Good	Very good
How good are you at school-related work?	①	②	③	④	⑤
How good are you at your extracurricular activity?	①	②	③	④	⑤
How good are you at your job?	①	②	③	④	⑤

Compared to your peers, how well do you expect to do in the following areas in the next year?	Much worse	Worse	Average	Better	Much Better
In school	①	②	③	④	⑤
In your extracurricular activities	①	②	③	④	⑤
In your workplace	①	②	③	④	⑤

How well have you been doing in the following areas?	Very poorly	Poorly	Average	Well	Very well
In school	①	②	③	④	⑤
In your extracurricular activities	①	②	③	④	⑤
In your workplace	①	②	③	④	⑤

How well do you think you'll do in the following areas in the next year?	Very poorly	Poorly	Average	Well	Very well
In your school responsibilities	①	②	③	④	⑤

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In your extracurricular activities	①	②	③	④	⑤
In your work responsibilities	①	②	③	④	⑤

In general, I find the following areas of life to be…	Very boring	Boring	Neutral	Interesting	Very interesting
School	①	②	③	④	⑤
Extracurricular Activity	①	②	③	④	⑤
Work Responsibilities	①	②	③	④	⑤

How much do you like what you do in the following areas of life?	Not at all	Not very much	Neutral	Much	Very Much
School	①	②	③	④	⑤
Extracurricular Activities	①	②	③	④	⑤
Work	①	②	③	④	⑤

To me, being good in the following areas of life is…	Not at all important	Not very important	Neutral	Important	Very important
School	①	②	③	④	⑤
Extracurricular Activity	①	②	③	④	⑤
Work	①	②	③	④	⑤

Compared to other activities, how important is it for you to be good at…	Not at all important	Not very important	Neutral	Important	Very important
School	①	②	③	④	⑤
Extracurricular Activity	①	②	③	④	⑤
Work	①	②	③	④	⑤

In general, how useful is…	Not at all useful	Not very useful	Neutral	Useful	Very useful
School	①	②	③	④	⑤

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Extracurricular Activity	①	②	③	④	⑤
Work	①	②	③	④	⑤

Compared to other categories, how useful is…	Not at all useful	Not very useful	Neutral	Useful	Very useful
School	①	②	③	④	⑤
Extracurricular Activity	①	②	③	④	⑤
Work	①	②	③	④	⑤

EIGHT

How much do you agree with the following statements?	I disagree a lot	I disagree a little	I neither agree or disagree	I agree	I agree a lot
As a child, religion/spirituality was important in my household.	①	②	③	④	⑤
As a teenager, religion/spirituality is important in my family.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I often attend religious services.	①	②	③	④	⑤
My family often attends religious services.	①	②	③	④	⑤
My family often discusses religious/spiritual topics.	①	②	③	④	⑤

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The Youth Identity and Experience Survey

How much do you agree with the following statements?	I disagree a lot	I disagree a little	I neither agree or disagree	I agree	I agree a lot
In my neighborhood, people say 'hello' and often stop to talk to each other in the street.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Where I live, it is safe for younger children to play outside during the day.	①	②	③	④	⑤
You can trust people in my neighborhood.	①	②	③	④	⑤
In my neighborhood, there are good places to spend your free time (e.g., leisure centers, parks, shops).	①	②	③	④	⑤
Where I live, I could ask for help or a favor from neighbors.	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Most of the time	Always
Generally speaking, I feel safe in the area where I live…	①	②	③	④	⑤

Each person has ideas or feelings about how other people see them. I am interested in how you think people think about you. Choose the rating you feel is best for you and circle the number provided.	Not at All	Not much	Somewhat	Most of the Time	A lot
I feel special to an adult at school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I feel needed by an adult at school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I am missed by an adult at school when I am away.	①	②	③	④	⑤
When I talk, an adult at school tries to understand what I am saying.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I am interesting to an adult at school.	①	②	③	④	⑤
An adult at school notices my feelings.	①	②	③	④	⑤
An adult at school gives me credit when I do well.	①	②	③	④	⑤
An adult at school notices when I need help.	①	②	③	④	⑤
I matter to an adult at school.	①	②	③	④	⑤

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The Youth Identity and Experience Survey

ELEVEN

How important are the following goals in your life?	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely important
Being a good visual artist (e.g., drawing, painting, etc.)	①	②	③	④	⑤
Having a high-status career	①	②	③	④	⑤
Being a good musician (e.g., singing, playing an instrument, etc.)	①	②	③	④	⑤
Owning my own business	①	②	③	④	⑤
Becoming a community leader	①	②	③	④	⑤
Having new and different experiences	①	②	③	④	⑤
Being a good writer	①	②	③	④	⑤
Having children	①	②	③	④	⑤
Participating in religious activities	①	②	③	④	⑤
Having a satisfying marriage/relationship	①	②	③	④	⑤
Having fun	①	②	③	④	⑤
Devoting attention to religious or spiritual life	①	②	③	④	⑤
Helping others in need	①	②	③	④	⑤
Having an exciting lifestyle	①	②	③	④	⑤
Having a high-paying job	①	②	③	④	⑤
Being involved in politics	①	②	③	④	⑤
Being a good actor or dancer	①	②	③	④	⑤
Volunteering in the community	①	②	③	④	⑤
Having a high standard of living	①	②	③	④	⑤
Having good relationships with my family members (parents, aunts, siblings, cousins, etc.)	①	②	③	④	⑤

TWELVE

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The Youth Identity and Experience Survey

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My life has no clear purpose.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
My life has a clear sense of purpose.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I am always working toward accomplishing my most important goals in life.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I rarely do anything that feels purposeful to me.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
If you really want to understand me, you have to know my purpose in life.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I am seeking purpose or mission for my life.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I understand my life's meaning.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I am searching for meaning in my life.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I have a purpose in life that says a lot about who I am.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I have a purpose in life that reflects who I am.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I have very few relationships that add meaning to my life.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I participate in one or more organizations that serve my purpose in life.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I have a life purpose that says a lot about the kind of person I am.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I am always looking to find my life's purpose.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
The choices I make in my life rarely have anything to do with my purpose.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I do many things that give my life meaning.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

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The Youth Identity and Experience Survey

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Not True			Somewhat True			Very True
I think about the past a lot.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
When I want to get something done, I make step by step plans and think about how to complete each step.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
Generally, I am more focused on what is going on now than on what will happen in the future.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I think a lot about what life was like when I was younger.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I often think of all the things I wish I had done differently in my past.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I take care of what needs done before having fun.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
The joy in my life comes from what I am doing now, not from what I will be doing later.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I often wish I could return to things as they used to be.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I am able to resist temptation when there is work to be done.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I try to live one day at a time.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I keep working at a difficult, boring task if it will help me to get ahead.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I like to enjoy what I am doing now rather than think about what I need to do to have fun tomorrow.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
Thinking about the past makes me very emotional	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
I get things done by working at a steady pace.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
If I take care of the present, the future will take care of itself.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

Congratulations! You are finished!!!! Thank you for participating ☺

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Pilot Testing of Youth Identity and Experiences Survey

1. Introduction of self and the survey
    a. Brief personal background and information about my pursuit of a Ph.D.
    b. Explain that I study aspects of who you are as a person (identity) and what you do in school and out of school (engagement)
    c. Explain that I am working on a dissertation and I will be doing it with students at School X.
    d. This is where you come in: I need your expertise. I need your help to tell me how this survey will go for students at your school. You all are experts on at least two things: You and School X. I am asking you to take this survey and talk me through it to help me get an idea of how this process might work with students at School X.
    e. This is NOT A TEST. There are no right or wrong answers. The questions are all about YOU. I am asking questions about your life and your experiences.
    f. Questions?
    g. Direction: Here's the survey. We'll walk through it together. Don't rush to answer as fast as you can and don't take too long to think about any questions. Usually the first response that comes to your mind is the best one. At the end of each section, STOP. We'll talk about the section briefly before going to the next section.
2. Give them time to answer Section 1. Time what time the first and last students done finish the sections Answer the following follow up questions after the section.
    a. Which questions were confusing?
    b. (Ask specific questions based on the scale)
3. Do Step Two for each scale in the survey – ALL 12 SECTIONS
4. At the end ask
    a. Overall, how was the experience for you?
    b. What parts of the survey were interesting?
    c. Which parts of the survey were most difficult?
    d. How many of you have parts where you just answered questions randomly?
    e. How would students at Cody do answering the questions on the survey?

UNFAMILAR WORDS and selected substitutions
*   "Quarrels" became "conflicts"
*   "Ingenious" became "clever"
*   "Assertive" became "bold"
*   "Aloof" became "distant"
*   "Aesthetic" became "Visually attractive"
*   "Inhibited" became "timid"

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