Exploring Meaning and Purpose in Life and Hope with Nonclinical Older Adults

by

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Abstract

Meaning and purpose in life and hope, independently and collectively, play important roles in human functioning. Yet there remain gaps in our knowledge of the constructs and of the relationships between and among them. The aim of this study was to deepen our understanding of meaning, purpose, and hope by exploring the lived experiences and understandings of the individual constructs and of their interrelationships with nonclinical older adults.

A qualitative research methodology, specifically, basic qualitative research, was used to complete the in-depth exploration. The results revealed that meaning, purpose, and hope are: (1) distinct constructs with at least eight common attributes, (2) inextricably linked and function together to sustain each other, (3) associated with giving, and (4) associated with personal benefit. The results are discussed in the context of current research literature. Implications and recommendations are presented for future research as well as clinical practice.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Joan Frances Ewasiw. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Exploring Meaning and Purpose in Life and Hope with Nonclincial Older Adults", No. Pro00029187, March 8, 2012.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother, Frances Ewasiw. It is also dedicated to the memory of my father, Mike Ewasiw, and my maternal grandparents, Jan (John) and Maria (Mary) Bruchal.

Acknowledgements

I feel extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to conduct this research, and it would not have been possible without the support and contribution of a number of people. I would like to express my profound gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Denise Larsen and Dr. Sophie Yohani, for their kind guidance, thoughtful feedback, and continuous support. I would also like to express my most sincere gratitude to Dr. George Buck, Dr. Margaret Iveson, and Dr. Carol Leroy for their feedback and support. Finally, I am especially grateful to the women and men who generously shared their stories and reflections on meaning, purpose, and hope.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1

Introduction

“The deepest healing is the healing of the deepest wound. The deepest wound is the frustration of the deepest need. The deepest need is the need for meaning, purpose, and hope” (Kreeft, 2005, p. 17).

“Hope is conceived as able to change lives: either through some link between psyche and soma affecting physical well-being, or by the imparting of meaning or purpose to human existence, or through its motivational properties” (Eliott, 2005b, p. 38).

Contextualizing the Study

Scholarship on the individual constructs of *meaning*, *purpose*, and *hope* spans centuries, worldviews, and disciplines. Particular groupings of these individual constructs are similarly widespread: *Meaning and purpose* and *meaning, purpose, and hope* are frequently seen in the academic literature. To illustrate, the three constructs—meaning, purpose, and hope—have roots in theology (Laila, 2008; McDonald, 2008; Tillich, 1957) and philosophy (Marcel, 1951/1978, 1951/2010) and are clearly evidenced in the health and social sciences, including, for example, nursing (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Duggleby & Wright, 2005; Lin, 2008; Miller, 1986, 2000), medicine (Bertero, Vanhanen, & Appelin, 2008; Breitbart & Heller, 2003; Chochinov, 2003, 2012; Chochinov et al., 2002; Clarke & Kissane, 2002; Coyle, 2006; Edwards, Pang, Shiu, & Chan, 2010; Farhadi, Reisi-Dehkordi, Kalantari, & Zargham-Boroujeni, 2014), psychology (Brody, 1990, 1999; Frankl, 1952/1986, 1959/1962, 1959/2006, 1969/1988, 1972, 2000; Park, 2007; Vos, 2018; Vos & Vitali, 2018; Wong, 1998b, 2009b, 2012a, 2012b; Yalom, 1980), religion and spirituality (Büssing et al., 2014; Flannelly, Galek, & Flannelly, 2006; Rovers & Kocum, 2010; Vaillant, 2008), education (Hicks, 1997, 1998; Walker, 2006), and anthropology (Keen, 1974).

Further, the importance of meaning, purpose, and hope, individually and collectively, in human lives is well documented. To illustrate, people who report greater meaning and purpose also report, for example, greater well-being (Bonebright, Clay, & Ackenmann, 2000; Pinquart, 2002; Reker, Peacock, & Wong, 1987; Reker & Wong, 1988; Ryff, 1989; Wong, 1989; Zika & Chamberlain, 1987, 1992) and life satisfaction (Chamberlain & Zika, 1988; Steger, 2006; Steger & Frazier, 2005; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992) and lesser psychopathology (see Steger, 2012, for a review). Additionally, the importance of meaning and purpose is evidenced in health and helping professional practice. Meaning focused interventions, programs, and therapies, that often incorporate purpose, are widely employed. Included among those that reflect meaning and purpose are, for example, Breithbart et al. (2010), Bugental (1965, 1987, 1999), Frankl (1959/1962, 2000), May (1969, 1975, 1981), Rosenfeld, Cham, Pessin, and Breitbart (2018), Wong (1998b, 2012a), Vos (2018), and Yalom (1980). Additionally, "meaning-centred treatments create large improvements in the client's quality of life and psychological well-being" (Vos, 2018, p. 93; Vos & Vitali, 2018).

The literature on hope reveals a number of parallels to that of meaning and purpose. For example, evidence supporting the importance of hope is also vast, and individuals reporting greater hope also report greater well-being (Davis, 2005) and life satisfaction (Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib, & Finch, 2009; Wrobleski & Snyder, 2005) and lesser psychopathology (see Cheavens, Michael, & Snyder, 2005, for a review; Mascaro & Rosen, 2005, 2006). Additionally, regarding health- and helping-professional practices, a number of hope-focused interventions and programs are being employed (Cheavens, Feldman, Gum, Michael, & Snyder, 2006; Duggleby, Williams, Popkin, & Holtslander, 2007; Duggleby et al., 2007; Edey, Larsen, & LeMay, 2005; Larsen & Stege, 2010a, 2010b, 2012). Importantly, hope is identified as one of four factors, across theoretical orientations, that contribute to change in the therapeutic process. (Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 1999).

Meaning, purpose, and hope, collectively, are also important in human lives (Chochinov, 2012; Frankl, 1959/1962; Health Canada, 2015; Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2015). Perhaps the best-known and most poignant illustration of this importance is found in the work of Viktor Frankl (1959/1962), an Austrian psychiatrist and neurologist and founder of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis. In his internationally acclaimed book, *Trotzdem Ja Sum Leben Sagen: Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager* (1946; *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, trans. 1959), Frankl described his experiences as a Nazi concentration camp prisoner during World War II as well as his therapeutic doctrine. As an inmate and in his observations of other inmates, he found corroboration for theories on meaning that he established prior to his imprisonment. He wrote, "The sudden loss of hope and courage can have a deadly effect" (1959/1962, p. 75). Through this quote and throughout his book generally, Frankl implied that without hope, life has no meaning or purpose, and that this could lead to death.

Chochinov (2012), a Canadian psychiatrist, echoes Frankl's (1959/1962) perspective on the importance of the three constructs. Related to his work on palliative end-of-life care, he writes, "Hope, toward the end of life, is intimately connected to notions of meaning and purpose. Without such hope, loss of the will to live or a heightened desire for death is much more likely" (Chochinov, 2012, p.18).

The World Health Organization (WHO), by extension, also reflects the importance of meaning, purpose, and hope in people's lives. Briefly, the WHO (2019a) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (para. 1). Regarding health and quality of life, and in the context of measuring quality of life, the organization identified six domains: physical health, psychological, level of independence, social relations, environment, and spirituality/religion/personal beliefs (WHO, 2019b, para. 2). Beliefs are associated with meaning, purpose, and hope. To illustrate, Büssing et al. (2014) took an interdisciplinary approach to quality of life and health and broadly defined "spirituality as all attempts to find meaning, purpose, and hope in relation to the sacred or significant (which may have a secular, religious, philosophical, humanist, or personal dimension)" (p. 1). In other words, the three constructs are relevant and important to quality of life and health.

Of more immediate concern to counselling psychology, and in particular in a Canadian context, since 2006 the Mental Health Commission of Canada has taken a "recovery orientation" (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2006, p. 44) to mental health, mental illness, and addiction services. According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada (2019), "The concept of 'recovery' in mental health refers to living a satisfying, hopeful, and contributing life, even when a person may be experiencing ongoing symptoms of a mental health problem or illness" (para. 1). They also state that the recovery principles include "hope, dignity, self-determination, and responsibility" and add that these principles "can be adapted to the realities of different life stages and to the full range of mental health problems and illnesses" (para. 2). Further, in their description of the second of the two pillars upon which the recovery approach stands, they state that "many intersecting factors (biological, psychological, social, economic, cultural, and spiritual) have an impact on mental health and wellbeing" (para. 5). Clearly, hope plays a prominent role in recovery orientation. Additionally, it may be the case that "living a satisfying, . . . and contributing life" (para. 1) reflects meaning and purpose. Either way, spirituality is identified as a factor impacting mental health and well-being. As noted earlier, according to Büssing et al. (2014), spirituality includes "meaning, purpose, and hope" (p. 1; see also Chochinov, 2006, p. 88).

The Mental Health Commission of Canada's *Guidelines for Recovery-Oriented Practice* (2015) is more explicit in describing the importance of meaning, purpose, and hope. It states, "Hope is the foundation on which a journey of recovery is built" (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 19). Further, it states, "[Hope] can be activated by accepting people for who they are and holding a belief in everyone's potential to build a life of meaning and purpose" (p. 19; as cited in Allott, Longanathan, & Fulford, 2002). These guidelines also include a section on working with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. One of the core principles in working with these populations is that the "practice must be holistic, strengths-based and culturally safe, and promote hope, belonging, meaning and purpose" (p. 74).

Finally, meaning, purpose, and hope, along with belonging, are a focal point in Health Canada's (2015) report addressing mental wellness among First Nations. The *First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework* (Health Canada, 2015) offers a more detailed description of the constructs:

> Mental wellness is a balance of mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional. This balance is enriched as individuals have: **PURPOSE** in their daily lives whether it is through education, employment, care-giving activities, or cultural ways of being and doing; **HOPE** for their future and those of their families that is grounded in a sense of identity, unique Indigenous values, and having a belief in spirit; a sense of **BELONGING** and connectedness within their families, to community, and to culture; and finally a sense of **MEANING** and an understanding of how their lives and those of their families and communities are part of creation and a rich history. (para. 1)

The Canadian perspective of the importance of meaning, purpose, and hope to health/wellness aligns with the global perspective.

Regarding health and helping professional practice, there do not appear to be interventions, programs, or therapies specifically identified as being focused on meaning, purpose, *and* hope. That said, there are practices, including some that are meaning focused and hope focused, that preserve or foster participants' experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope (Breitbart & Poppito, 2014; Breitbart et al., 2012; Cheavens et al., 2006; Chochinov, 2012, 2019; Duggleby et al., 2007; Vos & Vitali, 2018; Wong, 2012a). Such practices contribute to, for example, greater well-being and life satisfaction and lesser psychopathology.

Despite their widespread prevalence, evidence of importance, and potential to preserve or foster meaning, purpose, and hope in human lives, there are significant gaps in our understandings of these constructs, both individually and collectively. For example, regarding meaning and purpose, though the research consistently supports their importance, it is not as consistent in its use of definitions, operationalizations, and measures of meaning and purpose to obtain those results. To illustrate, based on authors' definitions of the two constructs, they elect either: (a) not to define them (Frankl, 1959/1962), (b) to make a distinction between the two (George & Park, 2013; McKnight & Kashdan, 2009; Yalom, 1980), (c) to consider one construct as an aspect of the other (Damon, Menon, & Bronks, 2003; King, Hicks, Krull, & Del Gaiso, 2006; Martela & Steger, 2016; Reker & Wong, 1988, 2012; Ryff, 1989; Steger, 2009; Wong, 2012b; Vos, 2018; Vos & Vitali, 2018), (d) to use one construct to define the other (Klinger, 1998, 2012), or (e) to use the terms interchangeably (Pisca & Feldman, 2009). Interestingly, George and Park (2013) conclude, "Existing empirical literature has typically treated meaning and purpose as identical" (p. 365). Based on my review of the literature, it appears that the prominent conceptualization of the two constructs is that purpose is an aspect of meaning.

As is the case with meaning and purpose, although the importance of hope in theory and in practice is consistent in the literature, the definitions, operationalizations, and measures for hope used in that documentation are not. Indeed, there are no consensual definitions or operationalizations of hope (Duggleby, 2001; Eliott & Olver, 2002; Jevne, 2005; Simpson, 2004). To illustrate, there are unidimensional (Snyder, 1995) as well as multidimensional (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Miller, 1986, 2000; Nekolaichuk, Jevne, & Maguire, 1999; Shrank, Stanghellini, & Slade, 2008) conceptualizations of the construct. That said, many research-derived descriptions overlap considerably (Larsen, Edey, & LeMay, 2007).

Further, the three constructs—meaning, purpose, and hope—are readily seen together in the research literature, and there appear to be two common scenarios where this is the case. First, when the focus of the research is a topic other than meaning, purpose, and hope, the findings include the three constructs. For example, explorations of spirituality (Büssing et al., 2014; Flannelly et al., 2006; Rovers & Kocum, 2010; Vaillant, 2008) and palliative care diagnosis and palliative care (Bertero et al., 2008; Chochinov, 2002, 2012; Chochinov et al., 2002; Clarke & Kissane, 2002; Edwards et al., 2010) reflect findings including the three. Second, when the focus of the research is one or two of the constructs, the findings reveal associations of meaning, purpose, and hope. For example, meaning focused research (Lin, 2008; Park, 2007; Wong, 2012a; Wong & Fry, 1998), hope focused research (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Duggleby & Wright, 2005; Miller, 1986, 2000), and meaning or purpose and hope focused research (Breitbart & Heller, 2003; Brody, 1990, 1999; Feldman & Snyder, 2005; Halama, 2002; Kunzendorf & Buker, 2007-2008) reveal associations of the three constructs. That said, there appears to be a void in the research of meaning, purpose, and hope in the context of the three constructs. Specifically, I was unable to find any qualitative studies exploring the lived experiences and understandings of meaning, purpose, and hope and their interrelationships.

Statement of Purpose

Given the importance of meaning, purpose, and hope in people's lives and the limitations of current research on them, the current study aims to begin to address the gaps in our understanding by exploring the three constructs and their interrelationships in human experience. A qualitative research methodology—guided by the question: how are meaning, purpose, and hope experienced and understood by nonclinical older adults?—facilitates this in-depth exploration.

Non-clinical older adults were selected as the participant population for this exploration because I felt that they would likely be "information-rich" (Patton, 2015, p. 267) informants. "Information-rich cases, [are] cases from which one can learn a great deal about the focus of inquiry" (Patton, 2015, p. 308).

I believed that we could learn a great deal about meaning, purpose, and hope and their interrelationships from nonclinical older adults for a number of reasons. Generally, higher meaning and purpose (see Steger, 2012, for a review) and hope (see Cheavens et al., 2005, for a review; Mascaro & Rosen, 2005, 2006) are associated with lower psychopathology. Thus, by extension, I thought that the nonclinical criterion might increase the likelihood of and depth of stories of meaning, purpose, and hope.

Further, while meaning and purpose appear to be important at all stages of adulthood, including emerging adulthood, young adulthood, middle-age adulthood, and older adulthood (Steger, Oishi, & Kashdan, 2009), a number of studies have found that those in the later stages generally report greater meaning and purpose than those in the earlier stages (Reker, 2005; Steger et al., 2009). Additionally, meaning and purpose change across the adult lifespan (Dittmann-Kohli & Westerhof, 2000; Reker et al., 1987). Thus, I thought that older adults would have a greater breadth of experiences of meaning and purpose from which to draw.

Additionally, there appears to be a positive correlation between and among meaning and purpose and hope (Feldman & Snyder, 2005; Halama, 2002). While the literature on hope is virtually silent on developmental aspects of hope, I thought that if older adults have more experience of meaning and purpose to draw upon, they are also apt to have more experiences of hope. Thus, I thought that the selection of older adults would increase the likelihood of experiences relating meaning, purpose, and hope. In short, older adults might serve as information-rich informants.

I selected a qualitative research design to explore meaning, purpose, and hope and their interrelationships because it is an area that has not been examined before. Indeed, according to Richards and Morse (2007), inductive methods are best for new areas of inquiry. Additionally, I felt that with a qualitative method, the resulting rich descriptive findings (McLeod, 2001) would provide a foundation for understanding the topic. Further, not knowing what the research might reveal, I chose basic qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Basic qualitative research has a broad scope: according to Merriam (2002), researchers employing this method "[seek] to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved, or a combination of these" (p. 6).

Finally, though the aim of the study is to contribute to our understanding of meaning, purpose, and hope, the ultimate aim is that this understanding will contribute to theory and the improvement of practice within helping professions. Indeed, this includes contributing to theory and practice as it relates to older adults. According to the WHO (2018), "People worldwide are living longer" (para. 2). "The pace of population aging around the world is also increasing dramatically" (para. 3). "By 2020, the number of people aged 60 years and older will outnumber children younger than 5 years" (para. 1).

While certainly older adults' experiences vary, in general they are faced with life transitions, for example, "retirement, relocation to more appropriate housing, and the death of friends and partners" (WHO, 2018, para. 9); biological changes, for example, declining health; and mental health challenges, for example, "depression and dementia" (para. 10). The current study aims to contribute to addressing such concerns.

Points of Clarification

Meaning and purpose *of* life versus meaning and purpose *in* life. A critical point regarding life meaning and purpose to the current research is illustrated in the distinction between "meaning and purpose *of* life" and "meaning and purpose *in* life." Meaning and purpose *of* life tends to be of concern to philosophers and theologians and to focus on objective evidence (Klemke & Cahn, 2008; Mentz, 2007). Meaning and purpose *in* life, on the other hand, tends to be of greater concern to health care professionals and to focus on the experience and its functions and correlates (Debats, Drost, & Hansen, 1995; Hicks & King, 2009; Pisca & Feldman, 2009). Though understandings of meaning and purpose *in* life can have philosophical or theological underpinnings, the constructs in the current study are being viewed through a psychological lens. Thus, the focus of the current research is on meaning and purpose *in* life.

Meaning and purpose. In this dissertation, when I am discussing authors' works, I endeavour to use the terms *meaning* and/or *purpose* in a manner that is consistent with the particular author's usage. Outside of those circumstances, however, I treat meaning and purpose as two separate constructs, and, in keeping with scholarly tradition, I pair them.

Terms. The following are terms that I use in the current dissertation.

C*onstruct*. I use the term *construct* to describe meaning, purpose, and/or hope.

Aspect. I use the term *aspect* to describe the eight attributes that are common to each of the constructs. Specifically, the aspects found in the current study are: binary, cognitive, affective, behavioural, relational, temporal, dynamic, and agentic.

Dimension. I use the term *dimension* to describe the two that make up the binary aspect. Specifically, I use situational dimension and global dimension to describe the binary aspect.

Quotation marks. I use quotation marks to denote participants' words throughout the document.

Theoretical Framework

As evidenced in my brief introduction to Viktor Frankl's (1959/1962) *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, meaning, purpose, and hope are relevant to existential psychology. The three constructs are also relevant to positive psychology. To illustrate, Martin Seligman (2002), one of the initiators of the domain of positive psychology, described it by saying:

> Positive Psychology takes seriously the bright hope that if you find yourself stuck in the parking lot of life, with few and only ephemeral pleasure, with minimal gratifications and without meaning, there is a road out. The road takes you though the countryside of pleasure and gratification, up into the high country of strength and virtue, and finally to the peaks of lasting fulfillment: meaning and purpose. (p. xiv)

One of the strengths that Seligman is referring to is hope (2002, p. 155).

According to Bathyany and Russo-Netzer (2014),

> While positive psychology focuses on human strengths and positive emotions (Seligman [&] Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and tends to emphasis the "brighter" side of human functioning; existential psychology traditionally tends to address the

> "darker" or unsettling aspect of human existence, such as guilt, suffering, and mortality. (p. 10)

Further, Bathyany and Russo-Netzer (2014) "see these perspectives as complementary to each other" (p. 19) and indeed suggest,

> Addressing the full range of human conditions, emotions, and concerns, as they are manifested in human motivations of fear of death, alongside the love of life, can deepen our understanding of positive human functioning, flourishing, growth, and mental health and portray "the life worth living" as a whole. (p. 19)

Jurica, Barenz, Shim, Graham, and Steger (2014) echo the notion that existential and positive psychologies complement each other. Yet other authors call for an integrated view (Hammond, Teucher, & Hamoline, 2014; Wong, 2009a, 2010). Indeed, Wong (2010) suggests that existential positive psychology (EPP) would broaden the definition of positive psychology to "the qualitative and quantitative study of what enables people to survive and flourish individually and collectively in the totality of life circumstances" (p. 2). Existential psychology and positive psychology or EPP underpin the current study.

Researcher Background

Quite a number of years ago my best friend introduced me to Viktor Frankl's (1959/1962) *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy.* I found Frankl's account of his experiences of World War II particularly difficult to read. This was the case because, in general, I find it very difficult to read true stories of horrific human experiences. In particular, however, many details of his story parallel those of my great grandparents, grandparents, mother, and aunt's. I had heard first hand accounts of the horrors of the war from my family, including, for example, the terror of: their journey from Buczacz, Poland to Oświęcim, Poland "or now better known by its new German name, Auschwitz" (Johnson, 1999, p. 28); the sorting process and entering the gas chamber at the Auschwitz concentration camp; the approximately two weeks in that concentration camp, and so on. Notably, among those stories was one of kindness that my family was shown by a German soldier after they had been relocated from the Auschwitz concentration camp to a labor camp near Meppen, Germany.

Somehow, *Man's Search for Meaning* and, retrospectively, meaning, purpose, and hope were helpful in contributing to my understanding of how my family survived the atrocities of the Second World War and went on to live positive and productive lives. It has contributed to my understanding of humanness and how meaning, purpose, and hope are applicable to human lives.

In particular as I have worked on the current research, Frankl's notions of the human spirit, or the noetic dimension, and its attributes, for example, will to meaning, purpose in life, and hope (Fabry, 1994, p. 18), along with others underlie my thinking as I, and those I support, endeavour to learn and grow.

Dissertation Format

In the following chapter, I present a review of the research literature on meaning, purpose, and hope, individually and collectively. In chapter three I outline the qualitative research methodology that I used to explore older adults' lived experiences of the three constructs and their interrelationships. In the two subsequent chapters I present the findings. Chapter four deals with the constructs individually and chapter five with the constructs collectively. Finally, in chapter six, I summarize and discuss the results in relation to the existing research literature. I also discuss the clinical and research implications and limitations of the current study and make recommendations for future directions.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The following review presents theoretical and research literature on meaning, purpose, and hope. While meaning, purpose, and hope have been addressed from a number of different scholarly points of view, the aim of the current review is to provide a foundation for understanding the constructs as they relate to the helping professions, and more specifically, counselling psychology. In this review I will focus primarily on literature from the fields of psychology, nursing, medicine, and religion and spirituality.

In order to provide a broad overview of the work from prominent researchers and theorists and a foundation for understanding meaning, purpose, and hope, the review begins with a brief introduction to the three constructs in the context of Erikson's psychosocial model of lifelong development (1950, 1963, 1998; Erikson, Erikson, & Kivnick, 1986). It continues with definitions, origins, sources, theories, and research of the individual constructs of meaning, purpose, and hope. Literature with nonclinical populations and all three constructs was selected and presented where possible. Following the review of the individual constructs is a summary of the literature that specifically explores the relationships between meaning, purpose, and/or hope. In general, throughout this review, the literature is presented chronologically within each section so as to illustrate the transition in thinking of the constructs over time.

Meaning, Purpose, and Hope in the Context of Erikson's Psychosocial Model of Lifelong Development

Participants in this study are at the eighth stage in Erikson's model of psychosocial development. To provide some background, Erikson proposed a theory of human development that he referred to as an “all-encompassing psychological theory” (Erikson, 1950, p. 424). It was all-encompassing in that it described the stages of the human life cycle from birth to death and incorporated psychological as well as social dimensions of life (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1998; Erikson et al., 1986). Briefly, in each stage “one psychosocial theme is focal, that is, two opposing tendencies (one apparently positive; one apparently negative) must come into balance to produce the stage’s central strength” (Kivnick & Wells, 2013, p. 45). For example, in the first stage—infancy—the tendencies “are a sense of trust and a sense of mistrust [and] their balance . . . helps create the basis for the most essential overall outlook on life, namely, hope . . .” (Erikson et al., 1986, p. 33). Indeed, according to Erikson (1963), “‘hope’. . . [is] mandatory for survival” (p. 5). The eighth stage is characterized by the opposing tendencies of ego integrity and despair. “If a person considers his or her life has had meaning, then he or she will gain a sense of integrity. Despair can result if the person feels his or her life has not been meaningful” (Thorne & Henley, 2005, p. 446). That said, “the integration of the two opposing poles allows for the capacity for wisdom to emerge” (Knight, 2017, p. 1055). Finally, according to Hill and Burrow (2012), “Erikson viewed purpose as a strength possible at all ages” (p. 76). From a psychosocial perspective, meaning, purpose, and hope are important in the lives of older adults. Research related to older adults is threaded through the discussion on these three constructs below.

Brief History of the Study of Meaning and Purpose

The following is a presentation of the definitions, origins, theories, and research on meaning and purpose.

Definitions of meaning and purpose. Despite common usage, both generally and scholastically, consensual understandings of *meaning* and *purpose* remain elusive. This section includes descriptions of meaning and then of purpose as offered by prominent theorists in the field over the past five decades. This is followed by a summary.

Definitions of meaning. One of the earliest proponents of meaning and purpose is Viktor E. Frankl (1952/1986, 1959/1962). Although Frankl is one of the most revered scholars on meaning in the social sciences, he refrained from formally defining the construct. In fact, according to Dr. Alexander Batthyany (personal communication, March 10, 2011), President and Head of the Science Department of the Viktor Frankl Institute in Vienna, Frankl argued that it could not be defined. Further, he indicated that Frankl maintained that in order to define a construct, it is necessary to refer to something that underlies it, that is, to deduce it from something. Meaning, according to Frankl, like existence, is irreducible (A. Batthyany, personal communication, March 10, 2011).

Although Frankl did not define meaning, many scholars have sought to articulate his use of the term. Batthyany, for example, posits this definition of meaning: "Vis-a-vis the range of possibilities (i.e., the range of our freedom) that one possibility which is most worthy of being realized, i.e., that which should be and would not be without our actualizing it from potential to reality. Cf. The Doctor and The Soul" (personal communication, March 10, 2011). My understanding of this definition is that meaning is that which is chosen to be to actualized.

Others, Battista and Almond (1973), for example, who developed a multidimensional measure of meaning called the Life Regard Index (LRI), defined meaning "by the concept of positive life regard, an individual's belief that he is fulfilling his positively valued life-framework or life-goal" (p. 409).

Klinger (1977), author of *Meaning and Void: Inner Experience and the Incentives in People's Lives*, presented the conditions under which people feel their lives are meaningful and the conditions that erode that feeling. He defined meaning in terms of purpose. In more recent publications, Klinger (1998, 2012) has reported on etymological analyses and indicated that meaning is "bound up with intentionality and purpose" (p. 28, p. 24). Further, he stated, "what a life means is what that life purposes" (p. 28, p. 24).

Antonovsky (1979), in his book *Health, Stress, and Coping*, presented the salutogenic model of health. It involves sense of coherence (SOC), a dispositional construct, for which he later established a scale (Sense of Coherence Scale [SOC-S], 1987) and defined as:

> A global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli deriving from one's internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable, and explicable; (2) the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement. (p. 19)

He called components (1), (2), and (3) in his definition comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness, respectively. Thus, meaningfulness is the perception that the demands are "worthy of the energy investment and commitment" (Kortokov, 1998, p. 55).

In his book *Existential Psychotherapy,* Yalom (1980) made a distinction between meaning and purpose. He described meaning as "sense, or coherence" (p. 423). Further, he stated, "It is a general term for what is intended to be expressed by something. A search for meaning implies a search for coherence" (1980, p. 423). Briefly, he defined purpose as “intension, aim, function” (1980, p. 423). This definition is expanded in the *Definitions of purpose* section, immediately following this section.

Reker (1992) developed the Life Attitude Profile – Revised (LAP-R), a multidimensional measure of discovering meaning and purpose and the motivation for finding meaning and purpose, and Wong (1998a) developed the Personal Meaning Profile (PMP), a measure of peoples’ perceptions of personal meaning in their lives. Earlier on, however, they (Reker & Wong, 1988) collaborated and developed the Sources of Meaning Profile (SOMP), a measure of specific domains of a person’s life from which meaning is derived. Out of this work came a much-quoted definition of meaning: “the cognizance of order, coherence, and purpose in one’s existence, the pursuit and attainment of worthwhile goals, and an accompanying sense of fulfillment” (p. 221).

Baumeister (1991), in his comprehensive multidiscipline overview entitled *Meanings of Life*, described meaning as “a shared mental representation of possible relationships among things, events, and relationships . . . meaning connects things” (p. 15).

Park and Folkman (1997), in their exploration of meaning in the context of stress and coping, developed a model of global and situational meaning. They posited that meaning “refers to perceptions of significance” (1997, p. 116), and they further described global meaning as “the most abstract and generalized level of meaning: people’s basic goals and fundamental assumptions, beliefs, and expectations about the world” (1997, p. 116) and situational meaning as “the meaning that is formed in the interaction between a person’s global meaning and the circumstances of a particular person-environment transaction” (1997, p. 116).

More recently, meaning researchers King, Hicks, Krull, and Del Gaiso (2006) stated, “Life is meaningful when it is understood by the person living it to matter in some larger sense. Lives may be experienced as meaningful when they are felt to have significance beyond the trivial or momentary, to have purpose, or to have a coherence that transcends chaos” (p. 180).

Steger (2005) developed the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ), a measure designed to assess the presence of and search for meaning. More recently, he stated “Meaning in life necessarily involves people feeling that their lives matter, making sense of their lives, and determining a broader purpose for their lives” (Steger, 2012, p. 177).

Most recently, in a meta-analysis of 60 articles in 11 languages on meaning-centred therapies, Vos and Vitali (2018) describe meaning as a “neutral evidence-based term for a subjective sense of purpose, values, understanding, self-worth, action-directed goals, and self-regulation” (p. 608).

Definitions of purpose. In keeping with his approach to meaning, Frankl did not formally define purpose. Batthyany, in his interpretation of Frankl’s use of purpose, contrasted it to meaning: “Meaning, then, is something more fundamental and existential, whereas purposes are not” (personal communication, March 10, 2011).

Building on Frankl’s theory (1952/1986, 1959/1962), Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964, 1981) developed the Purpose in Life test (PIL). The PIL is an attitude scale designed to measure the degree to which individuals experience purpose in life. According to Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964), purpose in life is “the ontological significance of life from the point of view of the experiencing individual” (p. 201).

Yalom (1980) defined purpose as “intention, aim, function” (p. 423) and expanded on that definition by stating, “When we inquire about the purpose of something, we are asking about its role or function: What does it do? To what end?” (1980, p. 423).

Ryff’s (1989) six-factor model of psychological well-being measure stated that a subject who scores higher on the Purpose in Life Scale (PILS) “has goals in life and a sense of directedness; feels there is meaning to present and past life; holds beliefs that give life purpose; has aims and objectives for living” (p. 1072).

Purpose researchers Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003) defined purpose as a “stable and generalizable intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and leads to productive engagement with some aspect of the world beyond the self” (p. 121).

Additionally, based on “a synthesis of relevant findings from social, behavioral, biological, and cognitive literatures” (p. 242), McKnight and Kashdan (2009) defined purpose as “a cognitive process that defines life goals and provides personal meaning” (p. 242). More specifically, they stated,

> Purpose is a central, self-organizing life aim that organizes and stimulates goals, manages behaviors, and provides a sense of meaning. Purpose directs life goals and daily decisions by guiding the use of finite personal resources. Instead of governing behavior, purpose offers direction. . . . Living in accord with one’s purpose, . . . offers that person a self-sustaining source or meaning through goal pursuit and goal attainment. Furthermore, purpose is woven into a person’s identity and behavior as a central, predominant theme—central to personality as well. (2009, p. 242)

Finally, Vos, in a description of meaning and purpose, indicated that purpose is “a specific example of meaning in life, . . . often associated with goal-directedness” (personal communication, June 13, 2019).

Summary. Prominent theorists in the field have perceived meaning both unidimensionally and multidimensionally. Viewed as a single dimension, meaning is defined in terms of possibilities (A. Batthyany, personal communication, March 10, 2011), purposes (Klinger, 1997), challenges (Antonovsky, 1987), coherence (Yalom, 1980), connections (Baumeister, 1991), or significance (Park & Folkman, 1997). Multidimensional perspectives view meaning as goals and fulfillment (Battista & Almond, 1973); cognizance of order, coherence, and purpose, pursuit and attainment of goals, and sense of fulfillment (Reker & Wong, 1988, 2012); significance, coherence, and purpose (Steger, 2012); or purpose, values, understanding, self-worth, action-directed goals, and self-regulation (Vos & Vitali, 2018).

Like meaning, purpose has been defined as either a unidimensional or multidimensional construct. More specifically, from a unidimensional perspective, it is viewed as ontological significance (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964); intention, aim, or function (Yalom, 1980); or goal-directedness (J. Vos, personal communication, June, 13, 2019). From a multidimensional perspective, purpose is seen as goals, directedness, meaning, beliefs, and aims and objectives (Ryff, 1989); intention to accomplishing something meaningful and leading to productive engagement (Damon et al., 2003); or defining life goals and providing personal meaning (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009).

Origins of meaning and purpose. Respected theorists and researchers in the field also have addressed the constructs of meaning and purpose by describing: (a) how they are created (Frankl, 1959/1962, 1969/1988, 2000; Chamberlain & Zika, 1988; Klinger, 1977, 1998, 2012), (b) the needs they fulfill (Baumeister, 1991), and (c) the sources (Ebersole, 1998; Emmons, 1999, 2003; Folkman, Moskowitz, Ozer, & Park, 1997; Heine, Proulz, & Vohs, 2006; Kwee, 2012; Reker & Wong, 1988; Vos, 2016; Wong, 1998a; Yalom, 1980). To further our understanding of meaning and purpose, here are brief descriptions of findings from each of these areas.

How meaning and purpose are created. According to Frankl, individuals find meaning in three principal ways, and he classified them in terms of values: creative, experiential, and attitudinal. More specifically, according to Frankl (1969/1988), "the first is what *he* [the individual] *gives* to the world in terms of his creations" (p. 70). This might include, for example, achievements or good deeds. "The second is what *he takes* from the world in terms of encounters and experiences" (1969/1988, p. 70). Examples of experiences might include events of encounters with people. "The third is *the stand he takes* to his predicament in case he must face a fate which he cannot change" (1969/1988, p. 70). This includes, for example, positive as well as seemingly negative situations.

Klinger (1977, 1998, 2012) took a biological perspective, suggesting that the human brain does not have the capacity to sustain purposeless living. Additionally, he suggested, "to have a goal is to have a purpose for action, and that purpose provides meaning for the action" (Klinger, 2012, p. 28). Thus, according to Klinger, meaning arises naturally from the pursuit of and commitment to goals.

In a factor analytical study of three meaning measures, the Purpose in Life test (PIL), the Life Regard Index (LRI), and the Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC-S), Chamberlain and Zika (1988) concluded that meaning is multidimensional and that it may be obtained through one or more of the following: goal achievement or fulfillment, an enthusiastic orientation that views life as interesting and exciting, having a clear philosophy or framework, or contentedness and satisfaction with what one has in life.

Needs fulfilled by meaning and purpose. Baumeister (1991; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002; Sommer, Baumeister, & Stillman, 2012) argued that there are four universal needs associated with the quest for meaning: purpose, value, efficacy, and self-worth. Purpose or purposiveness reflects the need to see that one's current activities are directed toward some future or possible states. Value refers to the need to have one's courses of action be right and good and justifiable. This need is the basis for morality and social justice. Efficacy is the belief that one can make a difference, and self-worth is the belief that one is a good and worthy person. Satisfaction of the four needs, according to Baumeister, will likely result in the sense that one's life has meaning.

Sources of meaning and purpose. Yalom (1980), based on an overview of the literature, identified six sources of meaning: altruism, dedication to a cause, creativity, the hedonistic solution, self-actualization, and self-transcendence. Regarding altruism, Yalom stated that the "belief that it is good to give, to be useful to others, to make the world better for others, is a powerful source of meaning" (1980, p. 434). He described dedication to a cause as a source of meaning by qualifying that it is a cause outside of oneself, for example, family, a political or religious cause, or a scientific venture. On the role of creativity as a source of meaning, Yalom indicated that it could apply to any realm. Thus, creating is not limited to the arts and sciences but extends to human interaction as well. In describing the hedonistic solution as a source of meaning, Yalom quoted Brennecke and Amick (1975): "Life is a gift. Take it, unwrap it, appreciate it, use it, and enjoy it." (as cited in Yalom, 1980, p. 437). Thus, Yalom suggested that engagement in what life has to offer is a source of meaning. Regarding self-actualization, he indicated that dedicating oneself to realizing one's potential provides meaning. Finally, in discussing self-transcendence, he suggested that striving “toward something or someone outside or ‘above’ oneself” (p. 439) provides a source of meaning.

Based on a thorough review of the literature and the results of testing on adults ranging in age from 18 to 98 years, Reker and Wong (1988) developed the Sources of Meaning Profile (SOMP), wherein they identified 13 sources of meaning, including: “pleasurable or leisure activities, meeting basic needs, creative abilities, personal relationships, personal achievement, personal growth, religious beliefs and activities, social or political causes, service to others or altruism, acceptance and recognition by others, enduring values and ideals, traditions and culture, and legacy” (p. 236). The measure was subsequently revised (SOMP-R; Reker, 1996) and financial security, humanistic concerns, hedonistic activities, material possessions, and relationships with nature were added to the taxonomy of sources of meaning.

Wong (1998a) used mixed methodology with participants from various walks of life between the ages of 18 and 60-plus to develop the Personal Meaning Profile (PMP) and found seven major sources of meaning: achievement, acceptance, relationship, intimacy, religion, self-transcendence, and fairness.

Using narrative methodology with samples ranging from adolescence to old age, Ebersole (1998) found that people hold meaning in relationships, service, belief, obtaining, growth, health, life work, and pleasure.

Emmons (1999) used semiprojective sentence-completion tasks to focus on personal strivings with community participants of a broad age range and suggested that people draw meaning from family and love, work, religion, and various personal projects.

Folkman, Moskowitz, Ozer, and Park (1997), in their longitudinal qualitative study with gay caregivers of partners with AIDS, revealed that the six highest ranking common sources of meaning in positive meaningful events included connection, respite, achievement, hope, affirmation, and partner's happiness. Positive meaningful events are defined as "events that touch on valued beliefs and goals, are appraised as beneficial, and evoke positive emotion" (Folkman et al., 1997, p. 295).

Heine, Proulz, and Vohs (2006) developed the meaning maintenance model (MMM). The MMM proposes that people have a basic need for meaning and when their sense of meaning is threatened, they reaffirm meaning in other domains. The domains that Heine and colleagues identify as areas of threat as well as sources of meaning include self-esteem, certainty, belongingness, and symbolic immortality.

Kwee (2012) discussed meaning from a Buddhist point of view and suggested that it "is derived from warm friendliness, compassionate caring, and harmonious relationships in balance with oneself in order to eventually secure everyone's enjoyment of a relative sane and happy life on the planet" (p. 250).

Based on a systematic review of the empirical research, Vos (2016) identified five domains of meaning, and along with each of them he described the underlying value:

> Materialistic-hedonic domain of meaning . . . value: the value of having material goods, objective success, nice physical experiences . . .
> Self-oriented sources of meaning . . . value: the value of the self . . .
> Social sources of meaning . . . value: the value of being connected with others belonging to a specific community, and improving the well-being of others and children in particular . . .
> Transcending/higher sources of meaning . . . value: values about something larger than their materialistic-hedonic experiences, themselves, and other human beings, merely for the sake of that larger value . . .
> The meaning of being here ("meta-meaning") . . . value: the value of being able to have values and the meaning of being able to experience meanings . . . This type of meaning can be implicitly present and underlying the other types of meaning. (p. 69-70)

Summary. A consolidated view of the above review is encapsulated as follows: Klinger's (1977, 1998, 2012) and Chamberlain and Zika's (1988) notions of how meaning is created are subsumed in Frankl's (1959/1962, 1969/1988, 2000) creative, experiential, and attitudinal values. Baumeister's (1991; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002; Sommer et al., 2012) purpose, value, efficacy, and self-worth describe the needs fulfilled by meaning. Emmons' (2003) amalgamation of his own (1999), Wong's (1998a), and Ebersole's (1998) sources of meaning reveals a four-part taxonomy, consisting of: work/achievement, intimacy/relationships, spirituality, and self-transcendence/generativity. Finally, Vos (2016) identified materialistic-hedonic domain of meaning, self-oriented sources of meaning, social sources of meaning, transcending/higher sources of meaning, and the meaning of being here ("meta-meaning") (p. 69-70). Results from all of the authors described in this section generally fit into the domains identified by Vos (2016).

Theories of meaning and purpose. Frankl (1952/1986, 1959/1962, 1959/2006, 1969/1988), Yalom (1980), and Wong (1989, 1998b, 2012a; Reker & Wong, 1988), whose definitions and origins of meaning and purpose were presented in the previous sections, are prominent theorists in the field. Indeed, each of them has also developed a form of or an approach to therapy. These theorists were selected because their work contains meaning, purpose, and hope. The following section expands on their theories and provides information about their therapies, particularly as they relate to hope.

Viktor E. Frankl. Viktor Frankl was the earliest and perhaps most influential theorist and practitioner (Batthyany & Levinson, 2009; Eliott, 2005b; Steger, 2009; Wong, 1998b, 2009, 2012a; Yalom, 1980) to associate the three constructs of meaning, purpose, and hope in the field of psychology. He began developing his theory prior to World War II and verified it through personal experience and observation as an inmate of Nazi concentration camps during the war. He then refined it through a career that spanned more than fifty years after his release.

According to Frankl (1969/1988), the universe contains meaning. Further, each human being has a unique purpose that he or she alone can fulfill. Finally, according to Frankl the primary motivational force in humans is to "find and fulfill meaning and purpose" (1969/1988, p. 35).

Although Frankl (1959/2006) did not formally define either meaning or purpose, he stated, "The meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour" (p. 108). Additionally, he asserted that there are two dimensions to meaning: ultimate or super-meaning and meaning of the moment.

Ultimate meaning, according to Frankl (2000), is a meaning that we can never reach, but into which we gain insight in small increments. He described it as being "necessarily . . . beyond comprehension" (p. 143). Ultimate meaning refers to "transcendence, i.e., something larger (not physically) and all encompassing, and not solely naturalistic" (A. Batthyany, personal communication, September 1, 2011). According to Batthyany (personal communication, September 1, 2011), for Frankl, this is God. Thus, for Frankl, meaning has a religious dimension. For those who do not believe in God, according to Frankl, ultimate meaning could be, for example, existence, nature, or the cosmos (A. Batthyany, personal communication, September 1, 2011).

Meaning of the moment, on the other hand, is our understanding of the demands life places on us at any given moment in time. According to Frankl (1959/2006), "each situation in life represents a challenge to man and presents a problem for him to solve" (p. 109). Further, it is up to each individual to discern the meaning of the moment and to make responsible choices and decisions based on the voice of our conscience.

Critical in Frankl's (1959/1962) theory of meaning and purpose, as well, is the perspective that "It [does] not really matter what we [expect] from life, but rather what life [expects] from us" (p. 77), suggesting that there is a "master plan." Indeed, Frankl implied that it is up to individuals to conduct themselves in faith that there is a plan.

These key aspects of Frankl's (1952/1986, 1959/1962, 1959/2006, 1969/1988) meaning and purpose theory are perhaps better understood through the theory behind the form of psychodynamic therapy he developed and named logotherapy or "therapy through meaning." In logotherapy, the human being comprises the body or soma, the mind or psyche, and the spirit or noetic core. The human spirit, or the noetic dimension, is conceptualized as our healthy core. Unlike the body and the mind, the spirit does not get sick. It can, however become blocked by biological or psychological illness. Among the attributes of the noetic dimension are: will to meaning, purpose in life, self-transcendence, faith, hope, love, dignity, conscience, responsibility, ideas and ideals, creativity, sense of humor, and the capacity for choice (Fabry, 1980, 1994; A. Batthyany, personal communication, August 26, 2011). Logotherapy, then, operates on the premise that individuals have the inner resources of the noetic dimension, which can be unblocked, if necessary, and drawn upon.

The three basic tenents of logotherapy are: (1) the freedom of will, (2) the will to meaning, and (3) the meaning of life (Frankl, 1952/1986, 1959/1962, 1959/2006, 1969/1988). The *freedom of will* acknowledges that though individuals do not always have freedom from certain conditions, they are always free to choose their attitude toward their circumstances. The *will to meaning* is the basic striving of human beings to discover meaning and find and fulfill their unique purpose in the world. The *meaning of life* reflects the notion that meaning can be found in any life situation, regardless of how dire, at any given moment in time.

At the heart of Frankl's (2000) theory of meaning is the notion of self-transcendence. According to Frankl, true meaning can only be found when an individual commits him or her self to a value or cause outside of and greater than the self.

For Frankl, then, will to meaning, purpose in life, and hope, and more specifically hope of a self-transcendent nature, are attributes of the human spirit or noetic dimension (A. Batthyany, personal communication, August 27, 2011). As such, though access to them may become blocked, they are always present as part of the healthy human core. In describing his experiences in concentration camps during the Second World War, Frankl (1959/1962) wrote that loss of hope could have "a deadly effect" (p. 75). Without hope, according to Frankl, people could die (1959/2006).

Irvin D. Yalom. Yalom (1980) asserted that there is no intrinsic meaning in the universe; he took a more secular or atheistic approach to meaning and purpose.

Yalom (1980) addressed meaning and purpose through the theory behind his existential psychotherapy, which is based on the four ultimate human concerns: death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness. He asserted that meaning is a defense mechanism for the anxiety of life and that the task of humans is to create and instill meaning in their lives.

According to Yalom (1980), there are two levels of meaning: cosmic meaning and terrestrial meaning. Cosmic meaning refers to “the meaning of life” (p. 423) and terrestrial meaning refers to “the meaning of *my* life” (p. 423). For Yalom, “‘meaning’ refers to sense or coherence . . . and ‘purpose’ refers to intention, aim, function” (1980, p. 423). Further, he stated “terrestrial meaning . . . embraces purpose: one who possesses a sense of meaning experiences life as having some purpose or function to be fulfilled, some overriding goal or goals to which to apply oneself” (1980, p. 423).

According to Yalom (1980), three conditions need to be met in order to create meaning: (1) recognition of personal responsibility in creating meaning, (2) focus on one’s purpose, and (3) acknowledgement that meaning is a by-product of actively and creatively engaging in life.

In addition to focusing on meaning and purpose, Yalom’s (1980) existential psychotherapy emphasized such human capacities as choice, responsibility, hope, and finding meaning in adversity. While Yalom acknowledged the importance of instilling and maintaining hope and of finding meaning, particularly in adversity, he did not discuss the interrelationship of the constructs.

Paul T. P. Wong. Wong’s (1989, 1998b, 2008, 2012a; Reker & Wong, 1988) theory of meaning and purpose is rooted in Frankl’s (1952/1986, 1959/1962, 1959/2006, 1969/1988) work. Thus, for Wong (2012a), the universe has intrinsic meaning and humans are “meaning-seeking and meaning-making” (p. 619) beings. He described his approach to meaning and purpose as spiritual.

Wong (2012a; Reker & Wong, 1988) identified two levels of meaning: ultimate meaning and provisional meaning. Ultimate meaning, as described by Reker and Wong

(1988), refers to “the givens, such as the existence of the universe, the existence of life” (pp. 222-223), whereas provisional meaning refers to the day-to-day experiences. Ultimate meaning is discovered from the givens and provisional meaning is created “through making choices, taking actions, and entering into relationships” (Reker & Wong, 1988, p. 223).

Further details of Wong’s (1989, 1998b, 2012a; Reker & Wong, 1988) theoretical conceptualization of meaning and purpose are evidenced through the therapy that he developed, which he calls meaning-centred counselling and therapy (MCCT). According to Wong (2012a), MCCT evolved from logotherapy. While MCCT shares the basic principles of logotherapy, the following are some of the differences.

One key difference between the two therapies is the definition of the tenent *will to meaning.* According to Wong (2012a), the will to meaning of MCCT consists of “two psychological processes: the motivation to seek the core meaning of a given life situation, and the motivation to seek purpose and significance for one’s life goals” (p. 643).

Additionally, in discussing intervention strategies of MCCT, Wong (2012a) clearly articulates inclusion of hope. More specifically, in his emphasis on the power of belief and affirmation as motivation, he states “belief, whether it is religious faith or humanistic affirmation, gives people hope” (2012a, p. 639).

Finally, one of five fundamental principles and skills Wong (2012a) claims clinicians gain through MCCT, is to “tap into people’s capacity for meaning construction in order to help clients make sense of their predicaments and restore their purpose, faith, and hope” (p. 643). Thus, Wong offers a brief explanation for the interrelationships between meaning, purpose, and hope.

Summary. As evidenced in Frankl's (1952/1986, 1959/1962, 1959/2006, 1969/1988), Yalom's (1980) and Wong's (1989, 1998b, 2008, 2012a; Reker & Wong, 1988) theories, the constructs of meaning and purpose have different connotations and meaning is described as having two levels. Meaning and purpose can be conceived as religious (Frankl, e.g., 1959/1962), spiritual (Reker & Wong, 1988; e.g., Wong, 2012a), or secular (Yalom, 1980), and they can be found, discovered (Frankl, e.g., 1959/1962; Reker & Wong, 1988; Wong, e.g., 2012a), or created (Reker & Wong, 1988; Wong, e.g., 2012a; Yalom, 1980). All three theorists recognized the human capacities for choice, responsibility, hope, and finding meaning in adversity.

Research on meaning and purpose. There is widespread agreement among theorists that meaning and purpose play an important role in people's lives (Steger, 2009; Wong, 2012b; Wong & Fry, 1998). Meaning and/or purpose, for example, have been associated with life satisfaction (Bronk et al., 2009; Chamberlain & Zika, 1988; Steger, 2006; Steger & Frazier, 2005; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992), enjoyment of work (Bonebright et al., 2000), positive psychological functioning (Halama, 2003), positive affect and emotions (Hicks & King, 2007; King et al., 2006; Ryff, 1989; Steger et al., 2009), love, joy, and vitality (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006), happiness (Debats, van der Lubbe, & Wezeman, 1993), hope (Feldman & Snyder, 2005; Halama, 2002; Kunzendorf & Buker, 2007-2008), higher levels of psychosocial development (Varahrami, Arnau, Rosen, & Mascaro, 2010), and physical health (Ryff & Singer, 1998) and general well-being (Reker et al. 1987; Steger, Kashdan, Sullivan, & Lorentz, 2008; Zika & Chamberlain, 1987).

Additionally, higher levels of perceived meaning and/or purpose have been associated with lower levels of negative functioning. More specifically, higher levels of meaning and/or purpose have been linked to lower levels of psychopathology (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964), stress (Mascaro & Rosen, 2006), anxiety (Flannery, Perry, Penk, & Flannery, 1994; Mascaro & Rosen, 2005; Thompson, Coker, Krause, & Henry, 2003), depression (Crumbaugh, & Maholick; Debats et al., 1993; Feldman & Snyder; 2004 Flannery et al., 1994; Mascaro & Rosen, 2005, 2006; Mascaro, Rosen, & Morey, 2004; Ryff, 1989; Steger et al., 2006; Steger et al., 2009), suicidal ideation (Harlow, Newcomb, & Bentler, 1986), and need for therapy (Battista & Almond, 1973). Higher levels of meaning and/or purpose appear to be a positive factor in people's lives.

Finally, empirical research suggests that meaning-centred practices are effective. For example, Vos and Vitali (2018) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of different types of meaning-centred treatments. It included 60 clinical trials with a total of 3,713 participants (p. 608). These trials were published in 11 different languages (2018, p. 610), and they included populations with a range of presenting concerns, for example, cancer, noncancer physical disease, psychological disease, transitional moments in life, caregivers, and other (2018, p. 614). The analysis revealed that both immediately after the last session and at follow-up, the meaning-centred interventions resulted in "strongly [improved] quality of life and [reduced] psychological stress" (2018, p. 608).

Brief History of the Study of Hope

Like meaning and purpose, there is no consensual definition or operationalization for hope (Duggleby, 2001; Eliott & Olver, 2002; Jevne, 2005, Simpson, 2004) and, like meaning and purpose, the word invokes multiple understandings (Eliott & Olver).

According to Eliott and Olver's (2002) exploration of the discursive properties of hope, depending on the context, it can be:

> objective, subjective, an evaluation, an expectation, an empirical fact, an individual desire, a warrant for action, an excuse for inaction, present oriented, future oriented, focused on the self, focused on another, a burden, a resource, vulnerable, impervious, a feature of the patient, a feature of the caregiver, an attribute of the individual, an attribute of the situation, inherent within the individual, and/or inspired by sources external to the individual. (p. 190)

The following is a presentation of definitions, sources, theories, and research on hope.

Definitions of hope. Stephenson (1991), in her review of definitions and contextual usage of the word hope in the literature of philosophy, theology, psychology, psychiatry, and nursing, reported that "hope was viewed as part of human development, a process, a theory and a source of meaning in life" (p. 1456).

More recently, in a review of 49 definitions of hope in psychiatry, which includes Stephenson's, Schrank, Stanghellini, and Slade (2008) found that hope is:

> a primarily future orientated expectation (sometimes but not always informed by negative experiences such as mental illness) of attaining personally valued goals, relationships or spirituality, where attainment: i) will give meaning, ii) is subjectively considered realistic or possible and iii) depends on personal activity or characteristics (e.g. resilience and courage) or external factors (e.g. resource availability). Hope comprises four components: affective (e.g. trust, confidence, humour and positive emotions); cognitive (e.g. reflecting on past experiences, goalsetting, planning and assessing the likelihood of success); behavioural (e.g. motivation and personal activity); and environmental (e.g. availability of resources, health care and relationships). (p. 426)

What is particularly relevant to the proposed study in these reviews of hope is the prominence of meaning.

Sources of hope. Sources of hope have been explored in diverse populations. The following studies represent that diversity and were selected for their inclusion of meaning and purpose as a source of hope.

Herth (1993) worked with 60 older adults in the community and in institutional settings (p. 142). She used a combination of an interview, the Herth Hope Index (HHI), and the Background Data Form to explore the meaning of hope. Her study reveals, among other things, hope-impeding and hope-fostering strategies. Included in the hope-fostering strategies were interconnectedness with self/others/world, purposeful activities, uplifting memories, cognitive strategies, hope objects, refocused time, lightheartedness, and spiritual beliefs/practices (Herth, 1993, p. 148).

Hicks (1997, 1998), in his qualitative study using interviews, autobiographical writing, and a focus group weekend with 20 environmental and global issues educators, identified “some of the hazards of living in postmodern times, including a sense of disconnectedness and loss of meaning” (1997, p. 93). Further, he explored how the educators might be affected by these hazards and what sources of hope and inspiration they might draw on in their work. Ten sources of hope were identified, including the natural world, faith and belief, a sense of self, other people’s lives, collective struggles, visionaries, human creativity, mentors and colleagues, and humor (Hicks, 1997, 1998). Expanding on faith and belief, Hicks (1998) stated that these may be spiritual or political and that they “[offer] a framework of meaning in both good times and bad” (p. 227).

In a qualitative study with 24 healthy nonreligious Swedish adults, Benzein, Saveman, and Norberg (2000) explored the meaning of the lived experience of hope. They found that hope was both an internal process—related to being—and an external process—related to doing. Further, their work revealed, “the experience of meaning is the trigger that starts hope related to being, which is a prerequisite for hope related to doing”

(Benzein, Saveman, & Norberg, 2000, p. 314). Thus, their results revealed meaning to be a source of hope.

Lindholm, Holmberg, and Mäkelä's (2005) aim, in working with women with breast cancer, was to gain a better understanding of the roles of hope and hopelessness in patients' vitality. They collected data from 49 participants via questionnaires and one participant via an interview. Among their findings were that communion with others and meaning in life are sources of hope.

Harris and Larsen (2008) conducted a qualitative study with 12 individuals diagnosed with HIV and AIDS. These individuals also self-reported high-risk behaviours shortly following their diagnosis. The study explored the participants' experiences of hope though interviews, and the data revealed that the participants' understandings of hope fell into six categories: future orientation, drawing the past forward, behaviour/control, relationships, meaning and purpose, and hope as a process following diagnosis. Additionally, their sources of hope fell into five themes: receiving support, engaging in meaningful life experiences, perceiving options, receiving treatment, and maintaining life quality. More specifically, inspiration, purpose and meaning, and faith and spirituality were cited as aspects of engaging in meaningful life experiences.

Noh, Choe, and Yang (2008) explored hope in a qualitative study with 25 Koreans with schizophrenia using in-depth interviews. They found four themes: meaning in life, happiness, anticipation of a better future, and energy to live. "For the participants of this study, hope was interpreted as meaning in life. . . . Thus, if there is no meaning in life, there is no hope" (Noh, Choe, & Yang, 2008, p. 72). Both internal and external sources of hope were identified, and more specifically, "internal sources of hope include self-confidence and youthfulness, and external sources of hope include love from others through harmonious relationships and new beginnings as symbolized by nature" (2008, p. 74).

In exploring the experience of hope with 30 older bereaved women after they cared for a spouse with terminal cancer, Holtslander and Duggleby (2009) found that the participants' main concern was losing hope. Further, through the interviews for this qualitative study, the authors found that the participants were searching for new hope, which involved finding balance, finding new perspectives, and finding new meaning and purpose.

In summary, common to all of these studies is the notion that meaning and purpose are sources of hope. Other sources of hope include: interconnectedness with self/others/world (Harris & Larsen, 2008; Herth, 1993; Hicks, 1997, 1998; Lindholm, Holmberg, & Mäkelä, 2005; Noh et al., 2008), spiritual beliefs/practices (Harris & Larsen, 2008; Herth, 1993; Hicks, 1997, 1998), meaningful/purposeful experiences (Harris & Larsen, 2008; Herth, 1993), cognitive strategies (Harris & Larsen, 2008; Herth, 1993; Holtslander & Duggleby, 2009), positive emotions (Herth, 1993), creativity and humor (Hicks, 1997, 1998), hope objects (Herth, 1993), and receiving treatment and maintaining life quality (Harris & Larsen, 2008).

Theories of hope. Snyder's (1994, 1995, 2002), Dufault and Martocchio's (1985), Miller's (1986, 2000), Nekolaichuk, Jevne, and Maguire's (1999), and Duggleby and Wright's (2005) hope theories, outlined in this section, provide different ways of understanding hope. They were chosen because each includes life meaning and purpose.

Charles R. Snyder. Snyder (1995) developed a unidimensional model of hope that he called hope theory. According to Snyder, hope is the "process of thinking about one's goals, along with the motivation to move toward (agency) and the ways to achieve (pathways) these goals" (p. 355). For Snyder (1994), goals are "any objects, experiences, or outcomes that we can imagine and desire in our minds" (p. 5).

Snyder's hope theory has a cognitive focus. More specifically, it focuses on thoughts and perceptions and how an individual's cognitions help them achieve their goals. Regarding emotions, Snyder (1995) suggests that "the quality of emotions reflects the person's perceived level of hope in the particular situation" (p. 355).

In more recent work, Feldman and Snyder (2005) explored the relationship between hope and life meaning. The details of this study are presented in a subsequent section of this document entitled *Meaning, purpose, and hope.* Briefly, however, Feldman and Snyder concluded, "Hopeful thinking is at the heart of the meaning construct itself" (2005, p. 407).

Karin Dufault and Benita C. Martocchio. Dufault and Martocchio (1985), in their seminal work on hope with elderly cancer patients, developed a multidimensional model. They defined hope as a "*multidimensional* dynamic life force characterized by a *confident* yet *uncertain* expectation of achieving a future *good* which, to the hoping person, is *realistically* possible and *personally significant*" (1985, p. 380).

Dufault and Martocchio's (1985) model of hope consists of two spheres: generalized hope and particularized hope, each of which comprises six dimensions: affective, cognitive, behavioural, affiliative, temporal, and contextual. *Generalized hope* is a sense of some future beneficial but undetermined change, not linked to any particular concrete or abstract object. Dufault and Martocchio state that “generalized hope protects against despair when a person is deprived of particular hopes, and preserves or restores the meaningfulness of life—past, present, and future—in circumstance of all kinds” (1985, p. 380). *Particularized hope* is concerned with some especially valued concrete or abstract outcome, good, or state of being. More specifically, particularized hope “clarifies, prioritizes and affirms what a hoping person perceives is most important in life” (1985, p. 381). Like generalized hope, particularized hope “preserves and restores the meaning in life” (1985, p. 381).

Each of the six dimensions is characterized by a particular set of components as they relate to hope and hoping. The *affective* dimension focuses on the emotions and sensations associated with hoping. The *cognitive* dimension centres on “the processes by which individuals wish, imagine, wonder, perceive, think, remember, learn, generalize, interpret, and judge in relation to hope” (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985, p. 384). The action orientation of the hoping person reflects the *behavioural* dimension. Actions may be motivated by hope or function to achieve a hope. The *affiliative* dimension focuses on relatedness or involvement with other people, both living and dead, God, a higher power, or creative force, and with other living things. Experiences of time, including past, present, and future, of the hoping person characterize the *temporal* dimension. The *contextual* dimension focuses on “those life situations that surround, influence, and are a part of the person’s hope” (1985, p. 388). Frequently, the context experienced is one of actual or potential loss. Finally, Dufault and Martocchio argued that some sphere or dimension of hope is always present.

Judith Fitzgerald Miller. Drawing on the work of Dufault and Martocchio (1985), as well as other researchers and theorists, Miller (1986) conceptualizes hope as:

> a state of being characterized by an anticipation for a continued good state, an improved state, or a release from a perceived entrapment. The anticipation may or may not be founded on concrete, real world evidence. Hope is an anticipation of a future that is good and is based upon: mutuality (relationships with others), a sense of personal competence, coping ability, psychological well-being, purpose and meaning in life, and a sense of "the possible." (p. 52; as cited in Miller, 2000, p. 523-524)

Miller (2000) developed a three-level model of hope. She described level one as "superficial wishes" (p. 525); level two as "hoping for self-improvement, personal accomplishments, and relationships" (p. 525); and level three as "hoping for relief from suffering, personal trial, or entrapment" (p. 525). Further, according to Miller, meaning and purpose are critical elements of hope. Indeed, she stated that purpose and meaning in life enable "individuals to have something to live for, to devote energy to, and to feel a sense of life satisfaction" (2000, p. 528).

Cheryl L. Nekolaichuk, Ronna F. Jevne, and Thomas O. Maguire. Nekolaichuk, Jevne, and Maguire (1999) also drew on the work of Dufault and Martocchio (1985), but developed a model that extended the conceptualization of hope to incorporate health as well as illness. Nekolaichuk and colleagues' model of hope was based on a study with a population that included healthy adults, nursing professionals, and individuals living with a chronic or life-threatening illness. The underlying assumptions for the model were that hope is a unique experience and that individuals have their own meaning of hope. The model is dynamic and multidimensional, including a personal, situational, and interpersonal dimension. The personal dimension, *personal spirit,* comprises meaning, vibrancy, engaging, caring, and value. Nekolaichuk et al. describe *personal spirit* as a dominant factor "characterized by a holistic configuration of hope elements, revolving around a core theme of *meaning*" (1999, p. 591). Meaning, in the context of the model, is life meaning.

The two other dimensions are situational and interpersonal (Nekolaichuk et al., 1999). The situational dimension, *risk,* comprises predictability (precise, near, certain, stable, and expected) and boldness (confident, fearless, and fast), and the interpersonal dimension, *authentic caring,* comprises credibility (honest, realistic, and trusting) and comfort (tender, warm, happy, connected, and accepting).

Wendy Duggleby and Karen Wright. More recently, Duggleby and Wright (2005) explored hope in elderly palliative patients. Their work focused on what hope is and how it transforms. According to Duggleby and Wright, transforming hope is the process that enables people to live with hope. Transforming hope comprises acknowledging "life the way it is," searching for meaning, and positive reappraisal. More specifically, "life the way it is" involves recognition that previous hopes may not be viable and it is necessary to come to terms with losses; searching for meaning involves reflecting on and finding meaning and value in one's life; and positive reappraisal involves adapting to changes in life and establishing new patterns of hope. Additionally, according to Duggleby and Wright, transforming hope is facilitated by spirituality, supportive relationships, and controlled symptoms.

Summary. Based on the aforementioned models, hope is considered: unidimensional (Snyder, 1994, 1995, 2002) or multidimensional (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Duggleby & Wright, 2005; Miller, 1986, 2000; Nekolaichuk et al., 1999), future oriented (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Miller, 1986, 2000), directed toward the attainment of a goal (Snyder, 1994, 1995, 2002), a rational and cognitive process

(Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Snyder, 1994, 1995, 2002), an emotional experience (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Nekolaichuk et al., 1999), a way of behaving or acting (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Snyder 1994); dynamic (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Nekolaichuk et al., 1999), a spiritual connection (Duggleby & Wright, 2005; Nekolaichuk et al., 1999), experienced within a relationship (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Duggleby & Wright 2005; Nekolaichuk et al., 1999), and associated with meaning and purpose (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Duggleby & Wright, 2005; Miller, 1986, 2000; Nekolaichuk et al., 1999; Snyder, 1994, 1995, 2002).

Research on hope. As with meaning and purpose, there is widespread evidence for the importance of hope in people's lives (Eliott, 2005a; Jevne, 2005). Psychologically, higher hope has been linked with higher levels of psychosocial development (Varahrami et al., 2010), life meaning and purpose (Feldman & Snyder, 2005; Halama, 2002; Kunzendorf & Buker, 2007-2008), life satisfaction (Bronk et al., 2009), positive functioning (Halama, 2003), feeling more confident and challenged, energized, and inspired by life goals (Snyder et al., 1991), and increased feelings of self-worth (Chang & DeSimone, 2001). Higher hope is also associated with decreased psychopathology (Chang & DeSimone, 2001; Cheavens, Michael & Snyder, 2005) and psychopathological symptoms, including, for example, lower levels of depression (Feldman & Snyder, 2005; Mascaro & Rosen, 2005, 2006), anxiety (Feldman & Snyder, 2005), stress (Mascaro & Rosen, 2006), and suicidal ideation (Kunzendorf & Buker, 2007-2008). Generally, hope appears to be a factor in people's ability to effectively deal with life's challenges (Clarke, 2003; Snyder, 1995).

Physically, hope has been found to assist in coping with health problems as well as adjusting to them. It is a factor in healing and contributes to the maintenance of good health (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Herth, 2005; Kaplan, 2000, Post-White, 2003). Finally, in studying placebo effects, Frank (1973), a seminal psychotherapy researcher, echoed Frankl (1952/1986, 1959/1962, 1959/2006, 1969/1988) by suggesting that, “hopelessness can retard recovery or even hasten death, while mobilization of hope plays an important part in many forms of healing” (p. 136).

Brief History of the Study of Meaning, Purpose, and Hope

The following summarizes quantitative research, which explores the relationships between meaning and/or purpose and hope. Two of the studies also incorporate other constructs.

Meaning, purpose, and hope. Halama (2002) considers meaning to be multidimensional and comprises three components: cognitive, motivational, and affective. To assess the interrelations among the components, six questionnaires, two for each of the three components, were administered to 168 university students. The Personal Meaning Index (PMI) of the Life Attitude Profile - Revised (LAP-R; Reker, 1992/1999) and the Framework dimension of the Life Regard Index – Revised (LRI-R; Debats, 1998) were used to assess the cognitive component of meaning. The Hope Scale (Snyder, 1995) and the Will/Tenacity to Purpose dimension of the Test Noo-dynamics (TND; Popielski, 1991) were used to assess the motivational component. The Fulfillment dimension of the Life Regard Index – Revised (LRI-R; Debats, 1998) and the Acceptance of Life dimension of the Test Noo-dynamics (TND; Popielski, 1991) were used to assess the affective component. The results revealed strong positive correlations between all of the meaning and purpose and hope measures.

Feldman and Snyder (2005) also explored the relationships between meaning and/or purpose and hope. In their research, four scales were administered to 139 college students. The Life Regard Index (LRI; Battista & Almond, 1973) and the Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC-S; Antonovsky, 1987) were used to measure meaning. The Purpose in Life test (PIL; Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964, 1981) was used to measure purpose. The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), a unidimensional scale, was used to measure hope. The results revealed strong positive correlations between the meaning and hope and between purpose and hope. Additionally, through factor analysis, Feldman and Snyder found “a single factor underlying the meaning scales and hope measure, offering evidence that hope is a component of meaning” (2005, p. 401).

Feldman and Snyder (2005) posited that “hope is a component common to all theories of meaning” (p. 401). They interpreted Frankl’s (1972, 1992) logotherapy, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, and Solomon’s (1986) terror management theory (TMT), and Antonovsky’s (1979, 1987) sense of coherence as each containing goal-directed thinking. They then concluded that because goal-directed thought processes are central to the agency and pathways of hope theory and to establishing meaning, “hopeful thinking is at the heart of the meaning construct itself” (2005, p. 407).

Meaning, hope, and psychosocial development. In an empirical study of meaning, hope, and psychological development, Varahrami, Arnau, Rosen, and Mascaro (2010) administered the Personal Meaning Profile (PMP; Wong, 1998a), the Herth Hope Scale (HHS; Herth, 1991), the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), and the Measures of Psychosocial Development (MPD; Hawley, 1988) to 301 undergraduate students. Varahrami and colleagues found that meaning, hope, and level of psychosocial development generated statistically significant correlations. Interestingly, the Herth Hope Scale, a multidimensional scale, which contains a spiritual component (Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995), generated a higher correlation with both the meaning and level of psychological development scales than the uindimensional goal-focused Hope Scale.

Purpose, hope, and life satisfaction. Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib, and Finch (2009) examined the relationship among purpose, hope, and life satisfaction in three age groups: adolescents, emerging adults, and adults. They administered the Revised Youth Purpose Survey (Bundick et al., 2006), the Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) to 153 adolescents, 237 emerging adults, and 416 adults. The results revealed that the agency subcomponent of hope mediated the relationship between purpose and life satisfaction during adolescence and emerging adulthood, whereas both subcomponents, the agency and the pathways mediated the relationship between purpose and life satisfaction during adulthood.

Summary. Halama (2002) and Feldman and Snyder (2005) provided empirical evidence that meaning and/or purpose and hope are related to each other. Additionally, Varahrami et al. (2010) and Bronk et al. (2009) provided evidence that higher levels of meaning and/or purpose and hope are positively correlated with higher levels of psychosocial development and life satisfaction, respectively.

Chapter 3

Methodology

As stated previously, this research project developed from my interest in meaning, purpose, and hope. Moreover, there is a dearth of research on the three constructs. The general aim of the current research is to contribute to our understanding of the area. According to Richards and Morse (2013), in cases where "the purpose [of the research] is to understand an area where little is known," qualitative methods are best (p. 27). I have elected to use a qualitative research paradigm. More specifically, I chose basic qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to explore the experiences and understandings of meaning, purpose, and hope of nonclinical older adults.

This chapter presents why and how a qualitative research paradigm, and in particular basic qualitative research, is a good fit. It begins by describing the research process, including the theory of knowledge, philosophical stance, and strategy. It then continues with information about the participants; the data, generation and analysis; trustworthiness; and ethical considerations.

Research Process

Michael Crotty (1998) offers a framework that was helpful in my process of designing, executing, and writing up this research. His framework comprises four elements: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods. In theory and in practice, these elements inform one another. The following describes and situates the current research in each of them.

Epistemological stance. Crotty (1998) describes epistemology as "a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know" (p. 3). The current study is grounded in a constructivist epistemology. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), “constructivism . . . underlies . . . basic qualitative [research]” (p. 24).

Constructivism assumes that meaning is constructed, as opposed to discovered (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). Specifically, meaningful and multiple realities are constructed, developed, and transmitted within various social contexts (p. 42). A social context, according to Crotty (1998), involves interaction between human beings and their social world (p. 42).

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), “a central characteristic of all qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds” (p. 24). Further, Merriam’s (1998) description encapsulates the process: “The researcher brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people’s constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied” (p. 22-23). Meaning, purpose, and hope are considered by researchers to be uniquely experienced (Benzein, Saveman, & Norberg, 2000; Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Frankl, 1952/1986, 1959/1962, 2000; Nekolaichuk et al., 1999), and this was also reflected in the current study. It was my constructivist epistemological stance that guided my exploration of participants’ experiences with them. This led to the resulting co-constructed meanings presented in the current document.

According to Crotty (1998), epistemology is “embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology” (p. 3). Following are descriptions of the theoretical perspective and the methodology as they relate to the current study.

Theoretical perspective. The theoretical perspective is the philosophical stance that informs the study (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Crotty describes it as the “view of the human world and social life within that world" (1998, p. 7). The theoretical perspective of the current research is based on interpretivism, one form of it in particular, namely, hermeneutics (1998, p. 5). Hermeneutics is consistent with the constructivist epistemological underpinnings of the current research. In particular, both hermeneutics and constructivism incorporate co-understanding and co-constructing of meaning.

Hermeneutics, according to McLeod (2001), "views people as existing within multiple horizons of meaning as striving to make sense of their experience, as constituted by their cultural and historical context, as engaging in dialogue" (p. 28). In other words, based on a hermeneutic perspective, there exist many levels of meaning within a given experience; these meanings cannot be separated from culture or history; and these meanings are made and understood through dialogue.

Indeed, according to McLeod (2011), "A central aspect of hermeneutic ways of knowing is an emphasis on the role of *dialogue* – a new and deeper understanding emerges through an interaction between what one already knows and what is known by another person" (p. 32). Given that both the participant(s) and the researcher are engaged in and impacted by the dialogue, I had to consider my personal context on an ongoing basis, and I kept a journal of my reflections from conception to completion.

The theoretical perspective provides the context for the development and implementation of the methodology (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). It is "the philosophical stance lying behind a methodology" (Crotty, 1998, p. 66).

Methodological framework. The methodology is the "research design that shapes our choice and use of particular methods and links them to the desired outcomes"

(Crotty, 1998, p. 7). The methodology selected for the current study is basic qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In basic qualitative research, sometimes known as basic interpretive inquiry (Merriam, 1998, 2002, 2009), the researcher seeks to learn about "a phenomenon, a process, the perspectives [and/or] worldviews of the people involved" (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). This fits with my aim of exploring the experiences and understandings of meaning, purpose, and hope and their interrelationships of older adults. Additionally, basic qualitative research is consistent with both the constructivist stance and the hermeneutical theoretical perspective of the current study.

Merriam (1998, 2002, 2009) outlines this approach by describing its four main characteristics. First, according to Merriam (2002), "researchers strive to *understand the meaning* people have constructed about their world and their experiences; that is, how people make sense of their experience" (pp. 4-5). Indeed, "the primary goal of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret these meanings" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 25). Second, "*the researcher is the primary instrument* for data collection and data analysis" (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). Because researchers have the capacity to be responsive, adaptable, reflexive, and capable of comprehending nonverbal communication, there is a potentiality for greater depth in understanding (Merriam, 2009). Third, the process of basic qualitative research "is *inductive*; that is, researchers gather data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively deriving postulates of hypotheses to be tested" (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). Finally, the product of such an inquiry is "*richly descriptive*. Words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the research has learned about a phenomenon" (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). Understanding how individuals make sense of their experiences is central to the basic qualitative approach as well as the aim for the current research, and I sought to understand the meanings the participants constructed about their experiences and their world.

Method. The method, according to Crotty (1998), comprises "the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis" (p. 3). I employed interviews to gather the data. "The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 3). The analysis for the current study was guided by Merriam's qualitative research framework (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The data collection and analysis were consistent with the aforementioned elements. More detailed descriptions of the participants as well as the data collection and analysis follows.

Participants

This section describes the recruitment and selection of the participants and briefly highlights the participants' demographic information.

Participant recruitment. I used **"**purposeful sampling" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 197; Patton, 2015, p. 267) to identify and select "information-rich cases" (Patton, 2015, p. 267) for the in-depth study of meaning, purpose, and hope. I recruited the participants in two large cities in Western Canada. The means of recruitment was through the use of posters (see Appendix A), which were hung in both public and private institutions, including a University and Community as well as Seniors Centres; leaflets (see Appendix B), which were distributed during recruitment presentations at public and private institutions, including a Philosopher's Café and Seniors Centres; and notices (see Appendix C), which were placed in Internet classified advertisements under Community Volunteers.

The posters, leaflets, and notices included my email address and telephone number and individuals who were interested in participating in the study were invited to contact me. I followed up with a telephone call to provide the potential participants with more detailed information about the study and to screen for eligibility.

Participant selection. The eligible participants were nonclinical older adults who self-identify as living with meaning, purpose, and hope. More specifically, the participants met the following criteria: (1) not currently under the care of a psychologist or psychiatrist and do not have a current psychiatric diagnosis; (2) between 60 and 75 years of age; (3) perceiving meaning, purpose, and hope as individual constructs; (4) considering themselves to be living with meaning, purpose, and hope; and (5) willing and able to (a) reflect on their experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope, and (b) discuss their experiences and their reflections on them.

Ten participants were selected and interviewed for the study. The data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 197). The emerging findings guided the data collection and sample size (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202). Indeed, the number of participants was based on the achievement of redundancy, which Lincoln and Guba (1985) define as when "no new information is forthcoming from new sample units" (p. 202).

Introduction to the participants and their stories. The ten participants in the current study are similar, in that they all have experiences and understandings of meaning, purpose, and hope; they are different in terms of gender, age, sexual orientation, relationship status, commitments, profession, employment status, religious or spiritual beliefs, interests, and/or life experiences. And, as one might expect, their stories are diverse.

The following is a brief introduction to the participants and the identification of their stories, along with a summary of their demographic information. Participants' names and other potentially identifying names used in the document are pseudonyms.

Alice. Alice is a 60-year-old woman who received an undergraduate degree when she was younger and a second one as a mature student. She retired from a career in the field of education and currently enjoys part time work as a design consultant, artist, and volunteer. She also enjoys a range of hobbies and spending time with family and friends. Alice is married, has two adult children, and lives with her husband in a large city in Western Canada. She describes herself as a non-practicing Catholic, who is spiritual. She was interested in considering the constructs of meaning, purpose, and hope and appeared eager to share her experiences of them. Her stories are of her experiences: (1) of her mother and family of origin through her mother's illness and subsequent death; (2) at a Presbyterian church; (3) of creating, for example, having and raising children, doing art, designing, gardening, and landscaping; and (4) of witnessing geese at a lake. Alice also shared her reflections on those experiences and on the three constructs.

Gillian. Gillian is a 62-year-old woman who holds an undergraduate degree, a professional diploma, and a professional certificate, and she has also completed most of the work for a graduate degree. She is retired from teaching at a post secondary educational institution and now spends time travelling, volunteering, pursuing personal interests, and supporting friends and family. Gillian is divorced, has one adult child, and lives independently in a large city in Western Canada. In terms of religious or spiritual identity, Gillian described herself as a non-practicing Anglican. She shared four stories, including her experiences of: (1) reading a card, (2) her propensity for tears, (3) supporting her parents through her mother's illness and to the end of her life, and (4) helping her older brother and friends in need. Through her stories, Gillian shared her experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope and her reflections on the three constructs.

George. A 71-year-old man, George has completed a bachelor's as well as a master's degree. He is a retired government employee, and he enjoys new experiences and learning new things. He spends time volunteering in the community and participating in educational endeavours. He is single, has never been married, does not have children, is Anglican, and lives independently in a large city in Western Canada. George shared experiences: (1) of volunteering for a provincial election campaign, (2) that influenced his initial choice of career directions, (3) relating to a fatal tornado, and (4) of a chance meeting, three-year guardianship, and ongoing relationship. He also willingly reflected on his experiences and on meaning, purpose, and hope, and he shared those reflections.

Carol. Carol, a 68-year-old woman, is currently a full time doctoral student and part time research assistant at a university in a large city in Western Canada. She left a career in the social service field to further her education. Carol is divorced, has three adult children, and lives independently. She spends some of her free time with family and friends. She also does volunteer work. In terms of religious or spiritual identity, Carol described herself as spiritual and agnostic. Carol shared aspects of her life that she felt reflected meaning, purpose, and hope. Her story focused on the experiences that led to her social conscience and career path. Carol also reflected on her experiences and the three constructs and talked about those reflections.

Howard. Howard is a 67-year-old man who has completed both a bachelor's and a master's degree and is retired from a career within the field of education. He is married, has three adult children, is Roman Catholic, and lives with his wife in a large city in Western Canada. Howard shared his experiences of his recent hip replacement and subsequent infection. He also reflected on his experiences and on meaning, purpose, and hope and shared those reflections. As a result of the physical limitations relating to these health challenges, his current activities are less physical in nature. They include, for example, reading, listening to the radio, watching television, and spending time with family and friends.

John. A 71-year-old man, John, completed post secondary education at an institute of technology. He has retired from ownership of a small business. In addition to spending time with family and friends and volunteering in the community, John is currently working on a book aimed at helping people manage their personal finances. He is married, has two grown children, and lives with his wife in a small city on the Canadian West Coast. John described his religious or spiritual identity by saying that he was raised Catholic and that, though he is non-practicing, he is spiritual. John shared four stories, including his experiences: (1) relating to a Santas Anonymous donation, (2) of being an Uncle at Large, (3) with his son, and (4) of writing a book on managing personal finances. He also shared his reflections on his experiences and on meaning, purpose, and hope.

Herman. Herman, a 60-year-old man, recently separated from his husband and moved back to a large city on the West Coast of Canada. He shared that, during his long-term intimate relationship, he was the homemaker; he volunteered in the community; and he occasionally worked part-time. Herman indicated that he currently lives independently and works at several part time jobs. He also indicated that he is logging volunteer hours as a mentor/counsellor and that he is exploring employment options within the social service sector. This is a field in which he received a bachelor's degree earlier in his life. Herman also writes, primarily creatively, although shortly after volunteering for this project, he took it upon himself to write down the stories he wished to share. He indicated that writing the stories was helpful for him in his process of reflection, and he provided me with copies of the stories in advance of our interviews. Herman shared three stories, including his experiences of: (1) supporting his friend prior to and at the end of her life, (2) his long-term intimate relationship, and (3) living with, recovering from, and moving beyond long-term, recurrent depression. Herman also reflected on his experiences and the three constructs, and he shared those reflections. In terms of religious or spiritual identity, Herman described himself as a Panentheist.

David. David is a 60-year-old man, who has completed college and some university, has had a lengthy career in childcare, and is currently between childcare contracts. Outside of his full time work, he spends time on his home based business and pursuing personal interests, including, for example, volunteering and travelling. David is single and the father of an adult child. He lives independently in a large city on the West

Coast of Canada. David describes himself as spiritual. He willingly considered the constructs of meaning, purpose, and hope as well as his experiences of them. He shared his experiences and reflections of the three constructs as they relate to: (1) performing acts of kindness, (2) becoming a single father and changing his career, and (3) his family of origin.

Jeck. Jeck is a 74-year-old man who has completed a bachelor's and a master's degree. He is retired from a career as a researcher and currently enjoys working part time as a tutor and as a writer. He also enjoys learning new things, for example, taking classes and volunteering. Jeck is divorced from his first wife, lives apart from his current wife, has two adult children, adheres to the Unitarian faith, and currently lives independently in a large city on the West Coast of Canada. Jeck shared his experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope in relation to two stories: (1) of relationships and (2) reconnecting with a friend and collaborating on a book about science. Jeck also reflected on his experiences and on the three constructs, and he shared his reflections.

Rosemary. A 73-year-old woman, Rosemary, has completed high school and is retired from a long career as an office worker. Throughout her life, including to the present, she has been actively involved in textiles. She has, for example, learned about, crafted, constructed, taught, and written magazine articles and a book about textiles. Rosemary also enjoys time with family and friends and reading and taking courses to learn new things. She is divorced, has two adult children, and lives independently in a large city in Western Canada. When Rosemary was asked about her religious or spiritual identity, she indicated that she had none. Rosemary shared three stories, including her experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope as they relate to: (1) supporting her daughter through a difficult time, (2) falling and breaking her arm, and (3) her involvement with textiles. Rosemary also reflected on her experiences and the three constructs and shared her reflections.

Participants' demographic information. Of the ten participants, four are women and six are men, and they range in age from 60 to 74 years. Three are married, two are single, one is separated, and four are divorced, and with respect to sexual orientation, nine self-identified as heterosexual and one self-identified as homosexual. Three of the participants live with their partners and seven live alone. Two of the participants have no children and the eight remaining participants each have one, two, or three independent adult children. Of the ten participants, one was raised in England and the remainder were raised in Canada. Regarding their current place of residence, six of the participants currently live in a large city in Western Canada, three live in a large city on the West Coast of Canada, and one lives in a small city, also on the West Coast of Canada.

With regard to the highest level of education completed, the participants range from high school to post secondary education, including training at institutes of technology, colleges, and bachelor's and master's levels at universities. Regarding current employment situations, six of the participants described themselves as retired. Of those six participants, however, two of them are still in the work force: one works part time as a design consultant and artist and the other as a writer. As for the participants who have not retired, one works as a childcare worker and a home based business owner; another as a doctoral student and a part time researcher; another as a part time tutor and writer; and the final participant as a part-time homemaker and personal support worker.

While all of the participants volunteered to participate in the current research, eight of them also explicitly stated that they do volunteer work.

Regarding religious or spiritual identity, each of four participants indicated that they are Anglican, Roman Catholic, Unitarian, or Panentheist. One participant said that she is a non-practicing Anglican. Two participants said that they are non-practicing Catholics, but that they are spiritual. One participant said that he is spiritual and another said that she is spiritual and agnostic. The final participant responded with "none" to the question of religious or spiritual identity.

Data Generation

Given my awareness that, as the researcher, I was the "primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 187), I needed to be aware of any potential biases. I acknowledge that, coming from a background of teaching English as an additional language, I find it puzzling that meaning and purpose, in a number of different fields, are typically melded together.

The current study used in-depth semi-structured interviews as the form of data generation. Interviews are a common form of data collection in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 108). According to Patton (2015), "the purpose of interviewing, . . . is to allow [one] to enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 426). Specifically regarding semi-structured interviews, they "[allow] the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 111). The use of research interviews as a method for data generation is consistent with the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological underpinning of the current study.

It must be noted as well that one of the participants wrote his stories in advance of his interviews. He shared three stories, and he offered me written copies, which I accepted and, with his consent, included in the data.

Participants each had two interviews, with two exceptions: one participant had a third interview because he chose to share three stories and preferred to share one at each interview, and one participant chose to discontinue his participation in the research following his first interview. He nevertheless offered to review the transcript and also offered me the option of using the data collected to that point in my study; I chose to include it.

The interviews were one-to-one, and they were conducted in-person or using software application aided Internet/Skype in private settings. The settings included, for example, the University of Alberta Clinical Services, my office at the University of Alberta, a private room at a public library, and the participant's home.

Before the interviews began, in order to maintain confidentiality, each participant was asked to choose a pseudonym. Additionally, they were told about the study and asked to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix D).

I used interview guides, which I shared with the participants in advance of the interviews. The guides for the first interviews had all of the same questions, though in three different sequences (see Appendix E). The guides for subsequent interviews were similar, but they also included questions reflecting specific content from the participants' previous interview(s). The aim in using the guides was to ensure some continuity across the participants, including that questions were not missed. The aim in providing them in advance of the interviews was to allow the participants an opportunity to give consideration to what they might say.

The first interviews began with the collection of some demographic information (see Appendix F). The participants were engaged in a natural conversation, so as to develop rapport and create a space for in-depth dialogue. The first interviews included the participants' stories of their experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope and reflections on those experiences. Specifically, I started by asking the participant to tell me a story about meaning. After they shared that, I asked them to tell me a related story about purpose, and after that, a related story about hope. In effect, for each situation (or story) that they chose to share, they broke it down into three stories, that is, three parts of the whole. During the interviews, I used clarifying statements and probes in an effort to invite further reflection and to develop a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and understandings.

The second, and in one case third, interviews were an opportunity for the participants to add to what they shared during their previous interviews. It was also an opportunity to member check, which involved gaining additional information and clarifying understandings, in particular as it related to emerging patterns noted through the analysis.

It is important to note that the last question I asked of the first five participants during these second interviews was whether, if I had asked them to begin with a story about purpose or hope, they would have shared a different story or a different set of circumstances. The fifth participant indicated that she would have. So, after collecting data on 13 stories, in the interest of understanding meaning, purpose, and hope from a broader perspective I changed the order of the questions. Subsequently I received seven stories from two participants with the sequence of purpose, hope, and meaning and nine stories from three participants with the sequence of hope, meaning, and purpose.

In terms of duration, the first interviews lasted approximately 70 minutes, on average, and the second interviews an average of 50 minutes. For the participant who had a third interview, it lasted approximately 125 minutes.

All of the interviews were audio-recorded, with the permission of the participants, and transcribed verbatim either by me or by a professional transcriptionist. Participants were asked to review the transcriptions and make changes or corrections, and all of them gave some feedback.

Meaning, purpose, and hope can come out of difficult situations (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Frankl, 1959/1962, 2000; Holtslander & Duggleby, 2009; Wong, 1998b, 2012b; Yalom, 1980). Indeed, all of the interviews reflected some degree of difficulty for the participants, and it was necessary to conduct the interviews with the skills and sensitivity that I have acquired through my counselling psychology training and clinical experiences. Further, information regarding appropriate psychological services was available for the participants.

After each interview, I noted my observations of the participant's relevant nonverbal behaviours and, in keeping with McLeod's (2011) suggestion, I wrote memos of my reflections, reactions, and impressions of the interview as "insights… [arrived]" (p. 78). According to McLeod, writing memos "capture[s] personal and intuitive dimensions of the process of 'meaning-making' as they occur" (2011, p. 133).

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis is conducted throughout the data collection process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 195; see also McLeod, 2011). The analysis for the current study was guided by Merriam's (2009) qualitative research framework (see also Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In addition to the *open coding* (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 204) and *axial or analytic coding* (2016, p. 206) of the transcriptions and written documents (provided by one participant), my process of analysis included memos (2016, p. 196) and an audit trail (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p, 142). Briefly, the coding was aimed at breaking down the data into smaller meaningful segments so that I might ultimately regroup them in ways that addressed the research question. The memos contributed to both the breaking down and the regrouping of the data. The audit trail was the documentation of the decisions made throughout the analysis.

I began the data analysis noting "reflections, tentative themes, hunches, ideas, and things to pursue" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 196) after the first interview. Overall, being mindful of the inductive and comparative aspects of the constant comparative method, I began the coding process. In particular, I began open coding (2016, p. 204). Open coding is a process of identifying segments of data that might be useful (2016, p. 204). As I progressed, I incorporated axial or analytical coding (2016, p. 206). In axial coding, through a process of interpretation and reflection, open codes were grouped together (2016, p. 206). These codes were applied to each transcript as they became available. Data with codes that go together, from both within and across participants, formed categories. These categories represent recurring patterns. The aim is that the categories "must be *responsive* to (i.e., answer) the research question(s) and . . . as *sensitive* to the data as possible, . . . *exhaustive*, . . . *mutually exclusive*, . . . [and] *conceptually congruent*" (Merriam, 2009, p.186).

In keeping with the hermeneutic approach, I moved "back and forth between the part and the whole" (McLeod, 2001, p. 27). In other words, I read, and reread, the entire text to get a more holistic sense of the data, and I looked at the segments relative to the whole. The stories revealed segments that appeared relevant to four different areas in particular.

First, the stories revealed segments that were relevant to how each of the three constructs were experienced and understood. Additionally, after the participants shared their stories, I asked them what each construct of meaning, purpose, and hope meant to them. Their definitions were reflected in their experiences of each construct. Ultimately, the patterns reflected eight common aspects across the three constructs. I described the various aspects of the constructs in the current study.

The second area was the interrelationship between the three constructs. The stories revealed segments that appeared to reflect relationships between and among meaning, purpose, and hope. In the second interviews I asked the participants how they understood the relationships between and among the three constructs, and their responses reflected what was revealed in their stories. Ultimately, the patterns reflected bidirectional interrelationships between all of the possible pairs of the constructs.

Finally, the data revealed segments that seemed helpful in understanding the whole. Ultimately, the third and forth patterns reflected the relevance of *giving* and *benefiting.*

Though I changed the sequence of the questions for the first interview after receiving 13 stories, the patterns in the four aforementioned areas remained the same.

Evaluating the Study

The importance of critically evaluating the quality of a study is well recognized (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; McLeod, 2001, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002, 2015). Guba and Lincoln (1989) outline a set of criteria for evaluating trustworthiness in constructivist qualitative research, which includes: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (pp. 233-243). These standards were used to assess the current study because they are consistent with its philosophical underpinnings. Following are descriptions of each criterion and summaries of how they were addressed in the current study.

Credibility. Credibility addresses congruency between the participants' constructed realities and the way in which the researcher represents them (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237). In order to meet this criterion, I engaged with the participants throughout the research process, and I employed member checking. Member checking involves review and assessment of the researcher's textual reconstructions by the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In addition to verbally communicating, the participants were provided verbatim transcriptions of their interviews and written information about the analysis and write up. They were invited to reflect upon these documents and add new information and/or offer feedback. Peer examination was also employed: I consulted with my supervisors regarding the interpretations of the findings.

Transferability. Transferability is concerned with the extent to which the findings have applicability in other contexts. Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest that thick description—a detailed account of “the time, the place, the context, [and] the culture” (p. 241)—contributes to the degree of transferability. Through the provision of thick description, readers are able to evaluate the extent to which results from the study might be transferable to other times, locations, situations, and people. For this reason, I endeavoured to provide detailed descriptions in this final research report.

Dependability. Dependability is concerned with the inquiry process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 242). It involves showing that the methods and research process could be followed. In order to establish dependability, I have kept records of the inquiry process. More specifically, I have documented the methods, procedures, decision points, and so on, through an audit trial and a research journal/memos.

Confirmability. Confirmability deals with the extent to which a study is grounded in the participants' stories; that is, the degree to which the study is “divorced from the values, motives, biases, or political persuasions of the inquirer” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243). As this was a constructivist and hermeneutic study, it incorporated co-understanding and co-construction of meaning. I reflected on and considered how my perspective might be influencing the development of meanings in the study, and I provided information about myself so that the readers might consider how it impacted the findings. Additionally, the audit trail and the research journal/memos provide documentation of the research process.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research process, efforts were made to ensure the well-being of participants, beginning with the submission of a proposal for this study to the University Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta (Pro00029187). It also included informed consent (see Appendix D), voluntary participation, confidentiality, and referral options for future counselling or support (see Appendix G for example).

In the introduction of the interview, participants were informed of the nature of the study and asked to read and sign a consent form. I also employed *process consent*. Process consent is aimed at ensuring that the participant is continually informed of and consents to the research process (Munhall, 1988).

Confidentiality of the interview data was maintained throughout the research process. Before beginning the interviews, the participants were asked to provide me with pseudonyms for themselves. After transcription of each interview, the participants reviewed the transcripts. If they contained names of people or places, I asked that the participants provide pseudonyms for those in their stories. Additionally, all recordings, transcripts, and documents from the study are kept in a locked and secure location. All electronic files are secured with a password. The transcriptionist, as she had access to the data, was required to sign and adhere to a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix H).

When the study is completed, all documents will be kept in a locked storage cabinet for a minimum ten-year period, at which time they will be destroyed.

Chapter 4

Findings: Meaning, Purpose, and Hope, Individually

Each of the four women and six men who participated in the current study had an understanding of meaning, purpose, and hope and at least one personal story that they perceived to involve all three. They shared those stories as well as their reflections, or understandings, of their experiences and of meaning, purpose, and hope during in-person or software application aided Internet/Skype interviews.

This chapter and the next present the findings from those interviews. In the context of meaning, purpose, and hope, the current chapter presents patterns from the participants' experiences and understandings of each of the individual constructs, and the following chapter presents those of the three constructs combined.

Aspects of Meaning, Purpose, and Hope

Analysis of the data suggests that there are at least eight key aspects common to all three constructs among the participants in this study. More specifically, each of meaning, purpose, and hope seem to have, to a greater or lesser degree, a binary, cognitive, affective, behavioural, relational, temporal, dynamic, as well as agentic aspect to them. To clarify, *binary* reflects two dimensions: a situational dimension and a global one. As the names suggest, the situational dimension relates to a particular experience or understanding, and the global dimension to a generalized experience or understanding. *Cognitive* deals with mental processes, *affective* deals with emotions and/or feelings, and *behavioural* deals with actions. *Relational* reflects relations, and these could be with the self, another (or others), a higher power, nature, and/or an object (or objects). *Temporal* deals with time, specifically, past, present, and future, and *dynamic* deals with change.

Finally, *agentic* reflects having a sense of agency, that is, having a sense that one is the agent of, or in control of, his or her actions.

The chapter comprises three sections, one for each of the three constructs of meaning, purpose, and hope, and each section has eight subsections, one for each of the eight aspects. For example, under “Meaning” is “Binary aspect of meaning,” “Cognitive aspect of meaning,” “Affective aspect of meaning,” and so on. Further, each subsection presents an illustrative example as well as an across cases synthesis of the aspect. Overall, the examples highlight one participant’s experiences and, where possible, his or her reflections or understandings. My aim in presenting the examples is to illustrate the analysis; to expose the reader to the breadth and depth of the participants’ experiences and understandings of meaning, purpose, and hope; and to honor my participants and their stories. Indeed, to honor my participants, as much as possible, I allowed their voices to be heard; that is, I used their own words. The syntheses focus on the participants’ understandings. I focused on the understandings, largely because they were more considered and concise in nature; however, when they were sparse, I included experiences. Finally, at the end of each section and at the end of the chapter is a summary.

The examples of the various aspects of meaning, purpose, and hope were not always singular or “clean” categories. For example, a cognitive aspect of meaning might convey some affective qualities of meaning as well. In determining the placement, I considered the overall context of the quotation and placed it with the aspect that most reflected its content.

Aspects of meaning. The binary, cognitive, affective, behavioural, relational, temporal, dynamic, and agentic aspects of meaning are illustrated as follows.

Binary aspect of meaning. The binary aspect of meaning includes a situational (or particular) dimension as well as a global (or generalized) dimension. Of note, the situational dimension was reflected by all of participants and the global dimension, by approximately half of them.

The following example illustrates the ways in which David experienced and understood the two dimensions of meaning. This is followed by a synthesis of the participants' understandings of the same.

An example from David. David shared a story that he was passionate about, yet he did so in a voice and manner that was both warm and gentle. He shared a story of performing acts of kindness, a practice that he has actively engaged in for nearly five decades. David described a number of examples from the broad range of kind acts that he has performed over the years. The following, according to David, is "[perhaps] the most beautiful one."

David began by explaining that the incident occurred when he was at a small supermarket in California. He said that he had just made a purchase and that, as he was leaving the store, he overheard part of a conversation between the manager and another customer. He heard that the customer wanted to pay for his order by cheque, but that the manager would not accept that form of payment. David said that the customer was "[begging] him, 'Please we need this food for our family. It's a good cheque. We promise you. It's a payroll cheque.'" The manager was firm in his refusal to take the cheque. David described walking out of the store, and then stopping. He said that he thought about the situation as well as the possible ramifications of offering to help, and quickly concluded,

> It’s the right thing to do. I have to do it. My heart tells me that there is a brother and sister of mine that need food, and they need help, and I am here, and I can help, and I believe that God wants me to do this.

He elaborated, “I am always praying to be an instrument of God’s love. That’s my prayer. So God has given me another opportunity to be of service to my fellow man. So I went back in the store.” David explained that he learned the amount of the cheque and said,

> “I have enough. I can take your cheque.” And they started crying, and it was so beautiful. . . . It’s just life changing. They were hugging me, and they said, “We didn’t think there were people like you anymore in the world!” . . . My whole life was worth living, just for that moment right there. To touch somebody like that, so profoundly, and make such a huge difference in their lives, you know?

David also explained that the couple then offered remuneration. His response was, “I don’t need anything back, just go ahead and help somebody else in need. You know, pass it on.”

In talking about performing acts of kindness and meaning David said, “So every time I have an opportunity to perform one of these acts, it gives me, my life, huge meaning. I would live for moments like that. [It] just lets me give, does my heart good, makes my day.” He also shared some of his relevant spiritual beliefs. In his words,

> I think God is love, so if I am acting in love, then I’m doing God’s will. . . . I am being an instrument of God’s love by doing acts of kindness. . . . And that’s the way our Creator would want us to live. To love each other as ourselves. Love thy neighbor as thyself. Do unto others . . . I am my brother’s keeper. All those things. . . . Those beliefs are motivating me to want to be a good person and to be a powerful force for good in the world, or for God in the world, same thing, right?

After David shared his story, I asked him what meaning meant to him. He said, “Meaning to me is like significance, importance. My life has meaning; my life has importance, significance.”

Regarding the binary aspect of meaning, in his experiences, David indicated that each kind act that he has the opportunity to perform—as he put it, each time he has the opportunity to "give"—"it gives [him, his] life, huge meaning." As he is referring to individual situations, he appears to be reflecting his experience of the situational (or particular) dimension of the binary aspect of meaning. David's description of his beliefs, including, for example, "doing God's will" and "being an instrument of God's love by doing acts of kindness," appear to reflect a broader perspective on what is significant or important to his life. These, together with the notion that performing kind acts also "[motivates him] . . . to be a powerful force for good . . . , or for God in the world," appear to be reflecting the global (or generalized) dimension of the binary aspect of meaning.

David also appears to reflect the dimensions of the construct's aspect in his definition. The first phrase of his definition, "Meaning to me is like significance, importance," could be interpreted as being applicable to a specific or global sense. Notably, it could reflect the significance or importance of a situation or of his life. The second phrase, "My life has meaning; my life has importance, significance," appears to reflect a more global understanding. Though David did not explicitly speak to the notion, which I described as the dimensions of the binary aspect of meaning, his experiences and understanding seem to reflect both dimensions of this aspect of the construct.

A synthesis of the participants' understanding of the binary aspect of meaning. As was the case with David, both Herman and John appeared to reflect the binary aspect of meaning in their understanding of the construct. Herman offered a detailed definition of meaning, including, "Meaning is something I bring to something. . . . It's more about judgment, . . . reflection and looking onto something and make decisions about it." He also included, "Meaning . . . I can associate with something that's a path with a heart."

The first quote, where he refers to "looking onto something and make decisions about it" suggests looking at a situation. Thus, it appears to reflect a more particularized, or the situational dimension of the binary aspect of meaning. The second quote, "a path with a heart" suggests an overall direction and could be interpreted as a direction in life, thus reflecting a more generalized, or the global dimension of the binary aspect of the construct. Overall, it appears that Herman's understanding reflects both dimensions of the binary aspect of meaning.

John, as part of his definition of meaning, said, for example, "Apart from the spiritual nature . . . the meaning might be how you use your life." His phrase "how you use your life" could suggest the things that one does in her life, that is, the particular things that one does in her life. It could also suggest the things, collectively, that one does in her life, that is, the broader perspective of the collective. His reference to the spiritual nature of meaning, suggests a broader sense of the construct. He appears to be reflecting the situational and/or global dimensions of the binary aspect of meaning.

Cognitive aspect of meaning. The cognitive aspect of meaning deals with mental processes, including remembering, thinking about, and perceiving the construct. Mental processes appear to be reflected in all of the participants' descriptions of their experiences of meaning.

An example from Jeck. Jeck shared a story about relationships. He briefly described experiences with his family as well as with his doctor and his minister. Regarding his family and what was meaningful to him, Jeck talked about the births of his children. Though generally analytical and matter-of-fact in his descriptions, his voice exuded a warm enthusiasm as he shared, "When my children were born . . . I was present, and it was an amazing experience." Later in the interview he added, "To have a family . . . was an experience that I valued, and I still value, and . . . I've benefited from." Further, he explained that, though not exclusively, "family and friends . . . [give] meaning to [his] life."

After Jeck shared his experiences, I asked him what meaning meant to him. His reply was very brief. He responded, "significance."

Jeck's reference to his experience of meaning, for example, of "[valuing]" and "[having] benefited from" having a family, suggests mental processes. His understanding of meaning as "significance" further supports an association to mental processes or a cognitive aspect of meaning.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the cognitive aspect of meaning. After reflecting on their experiences, a number of other participants in this study also described understandings of meaning that reflected mental processes. Indeed, a number of the participants' understandings paralleled Jeck's. Gillian, Howard, and David, for example, describe meaning as, "something that's meaningful or . . . important," "a sense of what's important," and "significance, important," respectively. Two other participants also associated meaning with cognition, though their characterizations were somewhat broader. Carol said, "It's kind of philosophical" and Herman, "It's thought, it's rational. . . . It's much more in the realm of the intellectual, the rational."

Affective aspect of meaning. Emotions and feelings related to meaning comprise the affective aspect of the construct. All of the experiences of meaning that the participants shared seemed to be associated with emotions and/or feelings.

An example from Rosemary. Rosemary shared a story of falling and breaking her arm. She began by saying that she “slipped on the ice, and . . . broke [her] arm, very badly” and that, when she went to the Emergency Department, she was told she required surgery. Though the accident itself, her interactions with hospital staff, and the operation each held meaning for her, she largely talked about the construct in the context of what happened following her surgery. Additionally, during the post surgery segment of her story, her tone shifted from one of matter-of-factness to one of energy and joy. This was particularly the case as she shared the support that she received and her reaction to it. In her words,

> I was very lucky. I had wonderful people, and I was absolutely astounded at the support I got from my friends and family: one of my friends . . . picked me up from the hospital [and] took me home; another one took me to the library; someone else took me to the bank. . . . It was astounding to me. I had so many friends, and my phone has never rung so often, since I’d lived here. . . . It is just astounding how wonderful that was and how that sort of gave my life meaning.

Further, she explained, “It gave my life meaning, because it made me feel like a real valid person. My friends rallying round is what made me feel like that, it made me feel as if I had some value to them.” She added, “I’d never thought about [having value] before.”

After Rosemary described her experience, I asked her to tell me what meaning meant to her. Her description of her understanding was, in effect, a reiteration of her experience. She said, “So meaning would be something that would make you feel that you are a valid person inside.”

Rosemary’s experience is clearly supported by her understanding and both appear to have an association with emotions and feelings. That is, her experience of “[feeling] that [she] had some value to them” and her understanding “[making] you feel that you are a valid person” both seem to reflect the affective aspect of meaning. Further, her joy seemed to reappear through her telling of the story and in particular as she described the support she received.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the affective aspect of meaning. A few other participants' understandings of meaning also suggested an association to the affective aspect of it. For example, Alice said, "My definition of meaning . . . I . . . go back to the word joy . . . [to describe what makes] my life meaningful." Similarly, John described his understanding as "your own happiness." He also added,

> Another thing about a meaningful experience is, it's one you never forget, those things come back to me just like yesterday . . . and maybe that's because they are emotional. . . . They are imprinted. They are in there forever.

The implication was that the experience was imprinted in his mind, but pointing to my heart, I asked, "And maybe here?" John replied, "Yeah, definitely, which is lucky for me." Later in my interview with John, he added, "Anything meaningful is anything that affects you." He was again reinforcing the affective aspect of meaning. Another participant, Herman, also made the connection between meaning and emotions, saying, "The meaningfulness of it then [is], if it's alive, if it touches you . . . it's emotional."

Behavioural aspect of meaning. The following examples of actions illustrate the behavioural aspect of meaning. A number of the participants' descriptions of their experiences of meaning appear to be associated with actions.

An example from Herman. In language that was poetic in tone and in an animated manner, Herman shared his experiences of having been in a 24-year intimate relationship. Briefly, he explained that he and his partner had a wedding in celebration of their 11-year union; they were legally married eight years after that; and they separated five years later. He said of his relationship, "One is a part of the world, the social world, the community—in this marriage, in this partnership—and so that is one way where one is very deeply . . . meaningfully connect to life and humanity." Particularly relevant to the current illustration is what Herman referred to as his "physical . . . sense" of the relationship. In his words,

> All that we shared, all that we *did* share, was very meaningful. We walked together. We made examples for our community: the renovations that we did . . . now it's like a cabin in the forest . . . part of it has a living roof . . . the gardens are gardens.

When I asked for clarification of what he meant by, "We walked together," I learned that he was speaking both literally and figuratively. The literal meaning is straightforward. According to Herman, figuratively "[walking] together" included doing things with his partner, for example, renovating their home and planting gardens.

As the interview progressed, I asked Herman how he would define or how he understood meaning. He offered a rather detailed response. Included in that response was, "Meaning is something I sort of develop out of something. Like when I look at it, or reflect on it, or think about it, or read about it, or act with it, then it's a meaningful action." And he added, "It's practical to the extent that you want to practice."

Herman's experiences of "sharing," "[walking] together," and "[making] examples" as well as his understanding of "meaningful action" suggest actions. Thus, it seems that his experiences and understanding reflect the behavioural aspect of meaning.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the behavioural aspect of meaning. Two other participants also described an understanding of meaning that was associated with actions. Alice, for example, said, "it could be accomplishment" and David, "It's something I am going to be doing."

Relational aspect of meaning. Relations with the self, another (or others), a higher power, nature, and/or an object (or objects) associated with meaning are reflected in the relational aspect of the construct. All of the participants' descriptions of meaning suggested an association with relations.

An example from Alice. While Alice was sharing a story about her mother and her family of orientation, she interjected two other stories to illustrate a point. One of these side stories was of her experience of witnessing geese at a lake. She began it by describing the meaningfulness of the experience,

> There must have been five thousand geese right on the lake in front of our house, so I went down there in my pajamas, and these geese all took off, and that was just, that was another one of those euphoric experiences. To be part of this, and to hear the honking and the flapping and the wind as they flapped overhead, it was an awe-struck experience. . . . Oh my God, I am a part of this, I am a part of these geese, and it's part of the universe, where we're all connected, and we're all feeling the same thing.

Interestingly, her voice in the telling of her experience reflected awe. With regards to her experience, she furthered, "That connectedness, that energy, . . . it's not of ourselves, [it] is something else, that's universal."

After sharing her experiences, I invited Alice to talk about what meaning meant to her. She said, "satisfaction or joy or accomplishment." Later in the interview, when I asked her whether or not she had anything to add, she responded, "So, how I derive . . . meaning? . . . supporting others."

Alice's speaking of a "connectedness, . . . that's universal" in her experience is further supported by her talking of "supporting others" as part of her understanding of meaning. It would seem, then, that both her experience and understanding of meaning reflect relations. Her experience suggests relations with the self, others, a higher power, nature, and objects. Her understanding appears to reflect relations with others, and in supporting others, it may also involve relations with the self and/or a higher power. Thus, it appears that Alice is reflecting a relational aspect of meaning.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the relational aspect of meaning. A few participants, Carol, John, and Herman, described their understanding of meaning as "spiritual," and they appear to associate spirituality with self, another or others, and/or a higher power. Herman also had more to say about his understanding of meaning, including specifically suggesting the relational aspect. He said, "It's about the world. It's about a person in the world. I don't think you'd have your sense of meaningfulness . . . , if it weren't in the world, if it weren't in relation to something."

Temporal aspect of meaning. The past, present, and/or future time associated with meaning constitutes the temporal aspect of the construct. All of the participants' stories of meaning reflected time. Indeed, the construct was described in relation to all three times.

An example from George. George shared a story about a chance meeting that led to a three-year guardianship and an ongoing relationship. He highlighted a number of meaningful incidents as he fondly described the evolution of his relationship with Nathan. George explained that he met Nathan and his family through his workplace, soon after they arrived from another province. George also quickly added, however, that not long after the family arrived, the "parents left [the province, and] they left [Nathan] too." According to George, "[Nathan] was a drop-off kid, and [he] was left by his family at age sixteen." George went on to describe how he supported the teenager, saying, for example, that he "made sure that [he] had food, clothes, and shelter, and the Guardian's Student

Allowance from [the province's] social service." Further, George described his role: "I was indeed his guardian, while he went to high school." He also talked about "[getting Nathan] through high school and into a career that [he] hoped would be satisfactory and self-fulfilling." He furthered,

> It's been a lasting relationship, because now that [Nathan is] married, . . . I guess he's my next of kin. . . . He is named beneficiary of my retirement savings plan. He has his own children now, . . . and I am watching as they proceed through this career choice business.

Finally, with regard to having supported Nathan, George said, "So in hindsight I can say it's a meaningful experience, because now I'd be willing to do it again, especially for an indigenous person who wanted to go to school in [a Western Canadian city]."

I asked George about his understanding of meaning. Following reflection, he explained, "This word, 'meaning' . . . I've pushed it into the past. . . . Some of my learning experiences in the past have influenced the decisions that I've made later, and so those learning experiences are now meaningful for me."

It would appear that George's experiences of meaning are supported by his understandings of them and that both reflect past, present, and future times. Regarding his experiences, for example, having supported Nathan as a teenager reflects the past; his current relationship with him, the present; and his willingness to "do it [support a youth] again," the future. And regarding his understandings, George said that he "pushed [meaning] into the past," which reflects the past; he said that it was, "now meaningful," which reflects the present; and he referred to "decisions [he's] made later," which reflects the future. Through George's experience and understanding, he is reflecting the temporal aspects of meaning.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the temporal aspect of meaning. Also relevant to temporality, Carol commented, "I think meaning . . . [is] more present. [It is] more present, even though [it extends] into the future." In her suggestions of the present and future orientations, she is reflecting the temporal aspect of meaning.

Dynamic aspect of meaning. The dynamic aspect of meaning deals with change. Most of the participants' stories suggested that there were changes in what was meaningful over time. Additionally, most of the participants shared more than one story, and there appeared to be change both within and across their stories. It is important to note that the changes appear to have been impacted, to a greater or lesser extent, by internal as well as external factors. To clarify, internal factors would include, for example, personality, interests, values, abilities, experiences, beliefs, and external factors would include, for example, other people and circumstances.

An example from Howard. Howard shared a story that, somewhat uniquely, was developing at the time of the interview. It was a story about a hip replacement surgery and the subsequent complications, ramifications, decisions, and outcomes. Howard's presentation of his story was quite emotion-evoking for him. At times during his telling, he paused to contain his emotions; at other times, his eyes welled up with tears; and at other times still, he wept. Regarding the initial surgery and the complications, Howard explained that he had had a routine hip replacement operation, followed by an infection; a procedure to "[open] it up and [clean] it"; a superbug diagnosis; a surgery to replace the hip with one "that is made of cement and laced with antibiotics"; and an aggressive drug regimen. Certainly one of the most tearful—and perhaps most meaningful—incidents for Howard was his superbug diagnosis. Indeed, Howard explained, "if this was not dealt with and they could not find a cure, . . . death was possible." Though that was the case, Howard also said that, over time and through reflection, this experience "helped [him] to begin to prioritize things." He talked about gaining "a sense of what's important," and he made reference to people in his life, for example, "family, grandchildren, and so on." He also talked about his "legacy." In the context of his hospital stay and in his words, "I wanted . . . my legacy to be that I tried to be as good a patient as I could be and that, even in illness, I could help others learn and benefit from what I had." Howard gave a number of examples of things that he did and did not do, and regarding these efforts, he said, "I was able to help others; that was [meaningful] for me. That gave me meaning." Howard also offered a quote and shared his thoughts regarding his experience. He said,

> They say life is lived forward, but understood backwards. And I think that over time . . . I will discover what the meaning of all this was. In fact, I'm sure there's going to be meaning because of this. Other times in our lives when we've been met with challenges, . . . it turned out to be a blessing.

Howard reflected on his experiences and suggested that he understood meaning to be "what's important."

In Howard's experience, as his condition and how he "dealt with it" changed, so too did what was important or meaningful to him, and he appears to anticipate further reflection and new meaning on his overall experience at some point in the future. It appears that what is important or meaningful to him may change again. Through both his experiences and his understandings, Howard appears to be reflecting a dynamic aspect of the construct.

Finally, regarding Howard's condition, at the time of the interview he was still on the course of medication. He did, however, say, "[The medication] is working. The infection is just about finished, just about over."

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the dynamic aspect of meaning. Like Howard, most of the other participants shared their understandings of meaning that are associated with "importance," which, because of its fluctuating nature, is ultimately associated with change. To illustrate, Gillian reflected Howard's sentiments, saying "something that's meaningful or is important." Jeck described it as "significance." David, combined the two terms, "importance, significance." John and Alice said, "the meaning might be how you use your life" and "it could be accomplishment," respectively. Herman said, "It's about the world. It's about a person being in the world." Overall things that are "important" or "significant," "how [one uses his or her] life," what one "[accomplishes]," as well as "being in the world" all change. This was also reflected both within and across the participants' stories. Finally, Herman was also explicit in saying, "meaning changes over time." The participants' understandings of meaning are associated with the dynamic aspect of the construct.

Agentic aspect of meaning. A sense of having some measure of control of one's actions, as it relates to meaning, reflects the agentic aspect of the construct. At some point during the interviews, all of the participants reflected a sense of agency related to meaning.

An example from Alice. Alice shared an emotion-evoking story of an experience that she had more than twenty years ago during a church service. This was the second story that she interjected during the telling of her story about her mother and family of orientation. Alice began by describing a meaningful experience. In her words,

> I was in a Presbyterian church with my husband and his family, and I have no idea what this Minister said, none whatsoever, . . . but I felt this opening up, and . . . what went through my mind was that I am a conduit of love, and it felt

> like I was lighter than air, and all my cells had separated, and I was taking in light, and it was very profound.

She began to cry but continued to describe the incident. She said, "It was amazing. It was like I was wide open. It felt like I was a billion little stars all just flickering. . . . It was a physical sensation, and it was a lot of energy." She also said that she had a sense of "being open and accepting and loving and complete calm and peace."

As we explored a little further, Alice appeared to make sense of or attach meaning to her experience. She described it as a "sense of connection [to] the universe." She also talked about "being part of the universe, being non-judgmental, . . . accepting of [herself] and others."

Further, and specifically regarding the construct, Alice talked about "looking for," "[finding]," and "[creating]" meaning. Indeed, it appears that she employed one or more of these in identifying and/or attaining meaning in her experience at the church. Looking for, finding, and creating inherently suggest a deliberateness or intentionality and, in this context, reflect an agentic aspect of meaning.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings and/or reflections of the agentic aspect of meaning. Alice was not alone in reflecting on her experiences and associating agency with meaning. Herman also described his experience as "the creation of meaning." Similarly, Rosemary spoke both generally, about the experience of "making your own meaning" and more personally, about the same: "I had to make my own meaning." She also added, "I feel that meaning in life is to . . . take control of yourself. You have choices, and you make your own choices." Carol talked about finding meaning. In her words, "You have to find new meaning" and "I think it's a constant search for meaning, for me."

George and Jeck also talked about “[finding] . . . meaning.” Howard described both “[finding] . . . meaning” and “discovering . . . meaning.”

Summary of meaning. Based upon the experiences and understandings shared by the participants’ in the current study, meaning appears to be the subjective sense of what is “important” or “significant,” from a situational, or more specific, perspective and/or a global, or more broad, perspective. It primarily involves thought and feeling in evaluation and decision-making. It can be associated with “doing,” and it is relational, in that it is associated with the self, another (or others), a higher power, nature, and/or an object (or objects). It can change over time and is associated with the past and present, as well as future. Finally, it has an agentic component.

Aspects of purpose. The following are illustrations of the binary, cognitive, affective, behavioural, relational, temporal, dynamic, and agentic aspects of purpose.

Binary aspect of purpose. The situational (or particular) dimension as well as the global (or generalized) dimension make up the binary aspect of purpose. All of the participants’ stories reflected the situational dimension of the binary aspect of purpose. Fewer than half of the participants’ stories also reflected the global dimension.

An example from Carol. Carol shared a story about the experiences, in particular those that occurred early in her life, that contributed to her social conscience and career path. She started by describing her family life, saying,

> I had lots of love and attention. . . . I think feeling loved, it was like unconditional love. . . . I had supportive friends and family. . . . I had stability. . . . Our family was involved in the United Church, which was a very good way to grow up. . . . It was a lovely childhood. . . . I just had so many opportunities. . . . I never had any doubts that I [would] be successful or happy or a good mother or anything.

Further, regarding her upbringing, she said, “I . . . think that it gave me a lot of strength.”

Carol also talked about experiences that led her to an awareness of “social [injustices]” and her development of a “social conscience.” She described a consciousness in her family that “wasn’t big, but . . . always just there.” For example, she recalled the family “[saving] all [their] clothes and [giving] them to the poor” and personally “[having] to invite those kids that won’t be invited somewhere else” to social functions.

Additionally, she said that a neighbor, who was a social worker and the head of a receiving home, was influential in broadening her perspective. To illustrate, in Carol’s words,

> We would go for drives with the [neighbors] out to the receiving home, and when I saw all those children there, and a lot of them were Indian [sic] children, they weren’t with their parents. I couldn’t bear to think what that would be like, if someone decided I couldn’t be with my parents.

She continued, “So I decided at an early age that I wanted to be a social worker and that I wanted to, I suppose, save these children. I mean that would be the kind of idea I had at the time.” This sense of purpose, which developed in childhood, according to Carol, was strong. In her words, “I couldn’t wait to be a social worker and work with these kids.”

Carol indicated that other factors played a role in her social conscience. In particular, she talked about her experience of friendships that began in elementary school and continue through to the present, and she said, “I think that we just had hope for the future. We thought that we could change the world, and I think that came from that generation, partly, too.” She furthered, “[having] a value of social justice and . . . that I think . . . came out of being from such a socialist province, too.”

Carol explained that she become a social worker and that, over time, she pursued other work within helping professions. For example, she and her husband, “had a group home for young teenagers," and she taught at a university in Western Canada. With reference to her employment experiences, she talked about "having [the] belief that . . . the world, or that things, can be made better for people, and that what you're doing can help."

After Carol told her story, I asked her what purpose meant to her. She described it by saying,

> Purpose is more functional. So my purpose is defined by what happens to me. My purpose is to do a dissertation . . . , or be a doctor, . . . to be a good grandmother, to be a good mother . . . , to be a good friend. . . . [It]'s a more functional thing.

Regarding the binary aspect of purpose, Carol's story suggests two dimensions of the construct, that is, the situational (or particular) dimension and the global (or generalized) dimension. For example, her aim in becoming a social worker and working with children to "make things better for these kids" appears to be associated with particular situations, and her focus on "social justice" and "[changing] the world" appeared to be associated with a more global or general perspective. Her understanding of purpose, including, for example, "[doing] a dissertation," appears to be focused on the situational dimension of the binary aspect. Her reference to "[functionality]" might be interpreted more broadly, that is, more globally. Considering Carol's description of her experiences and reflections overall, there appears to be evidence of both dimensions of the binary aspect of purpose.

A synthesis of the participants' understanding of the binary aspect of purpose. A few other participants' responses to the question about their definition of purpose seem to reflect the binary aspect. For example, David described his understanding as follows,

> Purpose is like a goal . . . that I have a reason to live, that . . . my life has a purpose and . . . for me, it's like my calling is to show kindness and love wherever

> I can. I think probably . . . , we all have that purpose of, that's why we were given life. . . . We are all here to love each other.

Some elements of his understanding, for example, having "a goal" and having "a reason to live," could also be interpreted as reflecting the situational dimension and/or the global dimension of the binary aspect of purpose. "[Showing] kindness and love wherever [he] can" and being "here to love each other" suggest a broader, more general, or global dimension of the binary aspect.

Jeck's response was, "Purpose is related to your goals and what you would like to achieve for yourself or others." He also said, "Purpose is a bit more general, . . . more far-reaching. The purpose of his life was dah, dah, dah." We could interpret the "goals" portion of his response as the situational and/or global dimension of the binary aspect of purpose. The "purpose of his life" portion, however, appears to reflect the global dimension.

Cognitive aspect of purpose. Remembering, thinking about, and perceiving are among the mental processes associated with the cognitive aspect of purpose. All of the participants' descriptions of their experiences of purpose appear to be associated with mental processes.

An example from George. George shared a story of his experience relating to a natural disaster. He introduced the story by saying,

> As a result of the tornado of 1987, twenty-seven people were killed. And they lived in the same area of [the city] that I did. So I had my brush with death, even though I didn't know about it until afterwards.

Regarding his experience of purpose, George explained, "I remember that my foster son was working in [the area] on that very day." He continued, "As soon as the tornado was over, I got into my car and went straight to the . . . store . . . to make sure that [he] was . . .

okay." He added that he was "glad to make . . . person-to-person contact" with him. George also talked about tornados in terms of prevention, saying, "I . . . think there's not much you can do, . . . except pay more attention to weather forecasts. I now watch the weather channel every chance I get."

After George shared his story, I asked him to talk about what purpose meant to him. He described his understanding by saying, "Purpose to me is like proposal or intent or plan."

George's experiences of "[remembering]" his foster son and "[thinking]" about and "watching" in preparation for the potential of a tornado are supported by his understandings of purpose as "proposal or intent or plan." Both his experiences and understandings appear to involve mental processes, thus, suggesting a cognitive aspect of purpose.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the cognitive aspect of purpose. A few other participants, in their definitions of purpose, also appear to associate it with mental processes. Howard, for example, talked about deciding, specifically, he said, "I had to decide what I was going to do." John associated purpose with the mental process involved in wanting, saying, "I think it's anything you want it to be, and it's only what you want it to be." Finally, Alice spoke more personally about the construct, saying, "My purpose is to get to know myself," which would also involve the cognitive aspect of purpose.

Affective aspect of purpose. The affective aspect of purpose deals with emotions and feelings. All of the stories that the participants shared appear to be associated with emotions and/or feelings.

An example from David. David shared his experiences of becoming a single father and changing his career. He began by talking about his experience with his daughter. He said, “Her mother left, abandoned her, so I was all she had in the world.” And because of what happened, David made a decision, explaining, “The moment I decided to take care of my daughter, . . . my life took on a purpose, a true purpose . . . protecting my daughter, ensuring her safety.” His story of purpose was transformational. Regarding his new career, in David’s words,

> I found this wonderful career. . . . I stumbled into [it] inadvertently, through raising my daughter, becoming a single dad, [and] out of my desire to protect her. . . . I chose childcare, . . . and . . . my life was filled with joy. I had a house full of happy children, laughing . . . , playing. My daughter had the happiest childhood I could ever imagine any child could ever want.

He went on to describe the progression of his career,

> Through my childcare, I felt this very strong desire to protect children, . . . to give them a safe place and to give them a happy childhood. . . . I wanted them to have joy in their lives, and I came to the realization that that’s really the most important thing, is to have . . . a joyful life. And that comes about through love, having a safe, loving environment. . . . I was helping families as well, . . . supporting mostly single mothers and occasionally married couples, supporting them in raising their children, so that gave my life a lot of purpose. . . . That was a great purpose. And with each family that I’ve worked with, I feel that I’ve made a difference in their lives, and I’ve helped to make the world a better place.

For David, his career choice reflected a deep sense of purpose. In his words, “It’s like this is my purpose in life. . . . This is my gift, this is my calling. . . . This is what I’m good at, and I have a lot to offer, and that’s a wonderful purpose.”

After David shared his story, I asked him how he would define purpose. Included in his response was the belief that he, and “probably” every person, has the purpose of “[loving] each other.”

In his story, David suggests that his purpose involves, for example, “joy” and “love,” and his description of purpose involves, for example, “love.” Both his experiences and understandings suggest emotions or the affective aspect of purpose.

A synthesis of the participants’ understandings of the affective aspect of purpose. The emotional aspect was also relevant to Gillian’s understanding of purpose. She describe it by saying, “I think part of having a purpose is hopeful,” thus reflecting the affective aspect of the construct. John also spoke of the affective aspect of purpose and, indeed, all of the constructs. He said, “All three . . . [meaning, purpose, and hope] have one thing in common. They make you feel good inside.”

Behavioural aspect of purpose. Action in relation to purpose is associated with the behavioural aspect of the construct. All of the participants’ descriptions of experiences and understandings of purpose appear to be associated with actions.

An example from Gillian. Gillian shared a story about helping her older brother as well as friends in need. She explained that the people she helped were experiencing some level of physical and/or mental health challenges and that some of them were in care facilities. She described many situations where she, for example, helped with the management of daily living tasks, such as, shopping, arranging cleaning services, assisting with moves; provided financial assistance; and spent time with these people socially, both within and outside of their residences. At times, during her description of the details of her experience, Gillian became emotional. Her description of her purpose, “to make a difference in someone’s life or [to] make a difference,” for example, came through tears. And those tears continued as she explained, “I’m sort of like that story about somebody throwing starfish back in the sea, and it’s like, . . . what difference does it make? Well for that starfish, it makes a difference." It would seem that Gillian's abiding desire to help others was a deeply held purpose.

After she shared her experiences, I asked Gillian about her understandings of purpose. She said, "purpose means . . . being sort of proactive."

In both her experiences and her understandings of purpose, there is a suggestion of action. Thus, she appears to be reflecting the behavioural aspect of purpose.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the behavioural aspect of purpose. Other participants also described their understandings of purpose in association with actions. Indeed, three other participants reiterated Gillian's understanding: John said, "do something"; Rosemary, "to do something"; and Herman, "do something that's there, that's purpose." Herman furthered, "it's action." Finally, Carol made a more general statement, saying, "Purpose is more functional."

Relational aspect of purpose. The following examples of relations with the self, another (or others), a higher power, nature, and/or an object (or objects), as they relate to purpose, illustrate the relational aspect of the construct. All of participants' descriptions of their experiences of purpose suggest an association with relations.

An example from Jeck. Jeck shared his experiences of reconnecting with a friend and initiating collaboration on a science book with him. He described his intention, saying, "That's kind of the direction I'm headed in with this book, to reestablish contact with [Johann] and to try to help him help himself." Further, he added, "The purpose is to make [Johann] happier, make me happier, make us both feel that we're doing something useful, something that matters, something that fits in with our capabilities, etcetera." Jeck also described the initial contact and the response that he received, "I just contacted

[Johann] for the first time in, oh . . . , probably thirty, forty years, a couple of weeks ago, and he quickly responded. . . . He agreed to work with me on a book." Understandably, there was joy in Jeck's voice, and he went on to say, "I am very hopeful that that will produce some good results." Finally, he added, "I'm going to get something out of this too, I hope."

After Jeck shared his story, I invited him to talk about what purpose meant to him. His response was, "Goals and what you would like to achieve for yourself or others."

Jeck's experience of initiating a reconnection and collaboration with a friend, with the purpose of mutual gain, reflects relations with the self as well as with another. His understanding of purpose of achieving a goal for "[one's self] or others" reflects comparable relations. Both Jeck's experiences and understandings suggest a relational aspect of purpose.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the relational aspect of purpose. Two other participants' understandings of purpose also appear to reflect the relational aspect. John, for example, described his understanding by saying, "The purpose is . . . success, . . . is to share it." And Herman, said,

> Something is purposeful in that it has a way of being in the world and it's something to do with other people. . . . It could be with animals or earth or plants or anything like that, but it's related to the world.

In John's case, the implication is that the relation could be with others and, in Herman's case, the relation could be with others, a higher power, nature, or an object or objects.

Temporal aspect of purpose. The temporal aspect of purpose is associated with past, present, and/or future time. All of the participants' descriptions were about purpose in association with time.

An example from George. George told the story of his experience volunteering "to help in the election campaign" for a provincial election. One of his aims was "to learn about what goes on during an election campaign." Indeed, George spoke more about learning, and in the context of purpose, he said, "This was again one of the purposes of my life, to learn new things, to be a life-long learner." Of this specific volunteer opportunity, in addition to "the purpose of . . . [gaining] a learning experience. . . . There was also the purpose of informing the voters of [the district] that my candidate, in my opinion, was the best person to represent us in the [provincial] legislature." And more broadly, he said, "My own purpose of it all was . . . to improve the democracy that we preach in Canada and to act out my tiny responsibility for the future."

After George shared his experiences, I asked him to talk about his understanding of purpose. Particularly relevant to temporality was his comment, "Purpose has to do with something that will give a result in the future."

In describing his experiences, George said, "one of the purposes of [his] life" reflects an ongoing purpose, established prior to his volunteer experience, thus suggesting past time. His comment, "to gain a learning experience," suggests present time and "to improve . . . democracy," suggests future time. Additionally, his understanding suggests that something in the past and/or present "will give a result in the future," thus reflecting past and/or present and future times. George's experiences and understandings suggest time or the temporal aspect of the experience of purpose.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the temporal aspect of purpose. Another participant, Carol, also incorporates time in her understanding of purpose: "Purpose [is] more present. [It is] more present, even though [it extends] into the future."

It would seem, then, that her understanding of purpose is also associated with the temporal aspect.

Dynamic aspect of purpose. Change is the key element in the dynamic aspect of purpose. Almost all of the participants' descriptions of purpose appear to reflect change within each story. Additionally, almost all of the participants shared more than one story and, for those participants, there also appeared to be change across the different stories. The changes also appear to be associated with changes in circumstances.

An example from Rosemary. Rosemary shared a story of her involvement with textiles. She started by saying,

> Running through my whole life, even from childhood, 'cause I was sick as a kid, so I had to be quiet, so I was taught to sew and embroider and knit. All my life I've done this. So that once I retired, I rented a room, like a studio, and I made things. . . . This is my purpose. I make things. I take classes. In the past, I've done a lot: I've taught; I've written a little book; I've written articles for magazines. So this is my main interest. Everything is slanted towards textiles: knitting and quilting and sewing and embroidery. And in fact, on Wednesday I'm going to a conference in Saskatchewan, to take a couple of classes.

She talked about a number of other textile related activities. For example, she said, "I've been taking sketching classes, . . . [and] I intend to . . . base the embroidery or quilting on the sketching." She also referred to the time she broke her arm and indicated that she was still able to maintain her involvement in her area of interest. In her words, "Even if I couldn't actually do anything, lots of my reading is related to textiles, and there are places in the city I could go to see textiles." Rosemary described textiles as "[her] main purpose in life." In fact, she said, "It's the whole purpose of my life. It's why I get up in the morning, because I've got to go and finish off the picture."

When I asked Rosemary about her understanding of purpose, she said that it was "to do something." In her explanation, she talked about her observations of others' experiences of purpose. For example, she told me that her son changed his career, and she described how his purpose changed through the process of retraining and seeking new employment.

Though Rosemary's focus was textiles, it appears that her experiences changed over time and with particular circumstances. She indicated that it was initiated because of her health as a child and that it changed, for example, when she retired and, again, when she broke her arm. Further, in her experience, it appears that "over the years" her involvement in textiles has included various aims, for example, appreciating, learning, reading, creating, producing, competing, writing, selling, and teaching. Additionally, regarding her understandings, her description of "[doing] something," in the context of her experiences, reflects change. Overall, the changes suggest a dynamic aspect of purpose.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the dynamic aspect of purpose. As was the case for Rosemary, the implication in a number of participants' definitions of purpose suggests that it is associated with change. For example, Carol described it by saying, "My purpose is defined by what happens to me." Included in Herman's definition was, "Purpose is the physical world, is acting in the physical world." By virtue of the fact that "what happens to [one]" and the "world" change, it would seem that both Carol's and Herman's understandings of purpose reflect change or the dynamic aspect of the construct.

Agentic aspect of purpose. Having a sense of agency or having a sense that one has some degree of control over one's actions is fundamental to the agentic aspect of purpose. All of the participants suggested a sense of agency regarding purpose during their interviews.

An example from Alice. Alice shared a story about creating. With a certain clarity, she talked about creating and purpose. She said, “We are creators. . . . I think that our job here on earth is to create. We create our lives. We create our families. You know, we create. We are always creating things.” Alice also spoke more personally, saying, “It’s an innate drive. I need to create, and it doesn’t matter whether it’s painting or designing or landscaping. . . . I have a real need to create.” She went on to describe her experiences in some of these areas and added that, regardless of the activity, “when [she is] creating, [she gets] . . . [a] spiritual connection.”

Regarding purpose, in particular, Alice continued with the same theme. She said, “We’re the creators of our own purpose.” It would seem then, that she associates personal involvement in the process of attaining purpose. Thus, reflecting the agentic aspect of the construct.

A synthesis of the participants’ understandings and/or reflections of the agentic aspect of purpose. Other participants also appeared to associate purpose with agency. Indeed, when I asked Carol about her experience of purpose, she was explicit in that association.

> I think that . . . , if you are a person who is raised [with] . . . unconditional love and so on . . . with some sense of responsibility, not just spoiled or whatever, then I think that you feel that you can have some agency, that you can and do have some control, and . . . how are you going to use that? So, having a purpose and not just being a passive person in your life, I think that’s all part of it too, or for me it was.

She was also explicit about its importance to her, saying, “I need to find a purpose and decide what my purpose is to feel satisfied with my life.” Howard, in his story about his hip replacement and subsequent infection, also talked about “trying to find purpose . . . in this [experience].” Jeck spoke about “[finding] a purpose.” Finally, John said, “I like to think that we have many purposes.” He furthered, “One chooses their purposes.” It seems that the participants associate purpose with agency or the agentic aspect of the construct.

Summary of purpose. Based on the data collected from the participants in the current study, it appears that purpose is a subjective “proposal or intent or plan” or “goal,” situational or global, which involves mental, emotional, and physical activity from decision-making through implementation. For example, regarding the mental, “I had to decide what I was going to do,”; regarding the emotional, “my life has a purpose . . . it’s . . . to show kindness and love wherever I can,”; and regarding the physical, “to do something” and “it’s action.” Purpose has the potential to change over time and is associated with the past, present, and future. It is relational, in that it involves, for example, the “[self],” “others,” “[a higher power],” and/or “animals” Finally, it is associated with a sense of agency.

Aspects of hope. The binary, cognitive, affective, behavioural, relational, temporal, dynamic, and aspects of hope are illustrated as follows.

Binary aspect of hope. Included in the binary aspect of hope are situational (or particular) as well as global (or generalized) dimensions. All of the participants’ stories reflected the situational dimension of the binary aspect of hope, and 26 of the stories also reflected the global dimension of the binary aspect of hope.

An example from John. John shared his story of volunteering as an Uncle at Large[1] to two young brothers. The boys were quite close in age, and they had lost their father in an automobile accident. Sharing the story evoked emotion in John: he teared up a few times through the telling of it. John described a number of experiences with the boys. Following are two of those experiences; they are also examples of times that were particularly emotion-evoking for him. The first was regarding one of the boys and his struggle for friends. In John's words,

> Because he didn't have friends that lived around the place, [and] I knew from what his mother told me, he was worried he didn't have many friends, so I started to tell him, "Well you know, it's not important to have a huge number of friends. It may be important to have one friend you can truly call a friend and, . . ." long story short, [the boy] said, "You mean like you?" (tearing up) Then I knew that [being an Uncle at Large] was all worth it.

And the second is in relation to an occasion when John was going to spend time with the boys. He described it by saying, "just . . . going to pick them up, and they're out sitting on the curb. . . . (tearing up) And [having] their mother tell me they've been there for half an hour. . . . It's tough [for the boys]." John also talked about wanting to "be a decent . . . Uncle at Large to the young boys" and about "[getting] lots of great feedback from them, so it was certainly worthwhile."

Regarding hope, John described himself as "a person of hope." As that related to his experience with the boys, he said,

> I couldn't hope to ever give them a father experience to replace in any way a dad, but . . . we would do things like . . . well, they had a horse, and I had a pickup truck, so we might . . . go out and buy . . . some hay . . . and haul it in . . . or, . . . just any experience, just simply spend time with them.

In other words, though John could not replace the boys' father, he hoped that he could provide positive experiences for them. John also encapsulated his experiences with the boys—actually, the boys, their sister, and their mother—by saying, "The whole thing gives me hope."

After John shared his story, I asked him what hope meant to him. He described it in two ways. First he said, “Hope to me is a connotation with the future. . . . And hope is . . . I don’t think, as . . . [humans], we’ll tackle anything we don’t think is possible.” In the second interview, when I asked whether or not he had anything to add to his understanding, he said, “Hope, I always come back to just an attitude.”

Regarding the binary aspect of hope, including the situational dimension as well as the global dimension, it seems that in John’s experience as well as his understandings, he is reflecting both dimensions. To illustrate, the situational dimension appears to be reflected in his experience of hoping to “provide positive experiences for [the boys],” and in his understanding of hope being a prerequisite for “[tackling]” an endeavour. The global dimension appears to be reflected in his experience of being, as he describes it, “a person of hope,” and in his understanding of hope as an “attitude.”

A synthesis of the participants’ understandings and/or reflections of the binary aspect of hope. As was the case with the two previous constructs, a few of the participants’ responses could be interpreted as the situational dimension and/or the global dimension of the binary aspect. For example, included in Gillian’s understanding was, “To see something that is worth reaching for.” Seeing something that is worth reaching for could reflect a single particular situation or a much broader sense of hope.

Through the dialogue of the interviews, a number of the participants somewhat randomly provided evidence of the global dimension the binary aspect of hope. For example, Carol said,

> Hope for me was, I don’t know what it is, intrinsic? I’m not sure what the word would be, but it would be like breathing or something. You wouldn’t ever sort of recognize it, to say that, I am full of hope for myself or for other people. It just seems that it’s all part of the way you’re living your life and your beliefs.

She furthered by telling me that she "[had] a strong feeling of hope" and that she had "no reason not to be hopeful." David said, "now my life is full of hope" and Rosemary, "I am an optimistic person. I always hope for the best." It appears that, for a number of the participants, the global aspect of hope is part of their identity.

Cognitive aspect of hope. The cognitive aspect of hope is associated with mental processes, for example, remembering, thinking about, and perceiving the construct. All of the participants' descriptions of hope appear to be associated with mental processes.

An example from Herman. Herman, in his particularly articulate way, shared a story about living with, recovering from, and moving beyond long-term, recurrent depression. He began the story with the following heartfelt introduction,

> It's not what you want. It's not what anybody wants. People want to live . . . a life that would be, that would feel like something of what we might define as an ordinary life. Everybody has ups and downs, everybody has challenges, everybody has ways that they suffer, but depression takes your life away, . . . at times.

He also explained, "The long-term recurrent depression lasted from the time I was eleven until I was just shy of forty-three." He went on to talk about how he "[lived] with it to the best of [his] ability, . . . with some degree of integrity and grace." Regarding hope, Herman shared an interesting insight into his experience,

> The core of hope, of not giving up, plays an essential role. And the thing that you have to live with [for] so long is the core of hopelessness. So . . . one of the things that I learned in managing my darkness was, and I have lots of coping strategies, one of them was to recognize that, at times, [hope] and despair stand back to back. . . . Sometimes they are poles on a continuum, but sometimes [hope] and despair stand back to back, and if you can find a way to turn around, you can walk in the other direction.

After he shared his story, I asked Herman to reflect on his experiences and talk about what hope meant to him. He described his understanding of it by saying,

> I am hopeful in that I am full of this thing which I can label hope . . . or life, or belief in myself, or confidence, or knowledge, or wisdom. They're all the same package. They all live in this same place with freedom to be.

He furthered,

> Hope is simply something that you experience or can't right now. . . . And if you know it, you know it, and if you don't, you don't. . . . Hope is pure. . . . Hope is true. It's like air or water or consciousness. It's an aspect of consciousness. It will always be true, but there is sometimes big, big, big, big things in the way of experiencing it.

Based on Herman's experience, he "[has] lots of coping strategies" to manage the hopelessness, including intentionally turning his back on despair and walking towards hope. And based on his understandings, he indicates that hope is within same realm as "knowledge" and "wisdom" and that it is associated with "consciousness." As such, it seems that in both his experience and understanding, he is describing mental processes or the cognitive aspect of hope.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the cognitive aspect of hope. Not unlike Herman, a number of other participants offered understandings associated with mental processes. Briefly, Alice said, simply, "hope is a positive thing"; David, "an expectation, almost"; Gillian, "to see something that is worth reaching for"; and Carol, "it's all part of . . . your beliefs." Jeck incorporated the mental processes of being realistic in saying, "I mean, it's easy to hope, but it's not easy to hope realistically." Finally, John shared his understanding of hope, which included the mental processes of attitude and acceptance, in saying: "Hope, . . . a positive attitude, and the way you accept all the things that happen to you, or don't happen, in your life."

Affective aspect of hope. Emotions and feelings related to hope comprise the affective aspect of the construct. All of the descriptions of hope that the participants shared seem to be associated with affect.

An example from Rosemary. Rosemary shared a story of supporting her daughter through a difficult time. It was apparent from her telling of it that it had been a very trying experience for both of them. She introduced the story by explaining,

> My daughter was having a difficult time because the man she married was into drugs, and it was in England, so, far away, and she was taking drugs too, at the time, I think, for a short time. . . . He was in rehab.

She continued, “If it hadn’t have been for [their] child, I am sure she would have committed suicide, because that was how dreadful it was.” With a tone of exasperation she recalled, “And being here was very difficult for me, because . . . I couldn’t know what was happening. I couldn’t do anything.” She described a particular telephone call that she made to her daughter’s home, “I phoned and the phone was answered by a police officer. It was really scary. . . . It was a very, very scary experience.” Rosemary also talked about her reaction, saying, “So I hoped, all the time. I had this hope that she would be strong enough to deal with things, when he came back from rehab, cured. Or leave him and find another way out.” Further, regarding herself, she added, “I had . . . hope for myself, that I wouldn’t fall apart. It wasn’t going to do anybody any good if I had collapsed . . . through worry about her.”

Rosemary described her experience, overall, as “the strongest hope [she] could think of.” She also said, “I always felt that things would turn out and that [her daughter] would come back to Canada, and would leave [her husband].” In the conclusion to her story, Rosemary revealed that, “Eventually [their daughter] left and went to a shelter, and

[Rosemary's] ex-husband, who lived in [a city in Western Canada], persuaded [their daughter] to come to Canada."

After Rosemary shared her story, I asked her what hope meant to her. She said, "I think it's sort of optimism, if you're optimistic about things, you have hope. . . . desire, so something you want, you hope you are going to get whatever you hope for."

Rosemary's experiences of hope, both for her daughter and for herself appear to be associated with her "[feeling] that things would turn out." Her understandings of hope, that is, through "optimism" and "desire" also suggest an association with feelings. It appears then, that in both her experiences and her understanding, she is reflecting the affective aspect of hope.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the affective aspect of hope. Several participants also associated hope with emotions. David and Gillian, for example, parallel Rosemary's understanding of hope in saying, "optimism . . . desire" and "hope is sort of the lack of despair," respectively. Herman described his understanding by saying, "Hope is about being. It's about being with freedom, being with lightness, being with grace, being joyful, being unencumbered, . . . that's what hope means to me." He also said, "Hope is more in the realm of feeling." Regarding understandings of hope, Jeck said, "the emotional realm, . . . is where hope lies," and Carol remarked, "I can feel it." Finally, John acknowledged that meaning, purpose, as well as hope "make you feel good inside."

Behavioural aspect of hope. The following examples of actions, as they relate to hope, illustrate the behavioural aspect of the construct. Indeed, many of the participants' descriptions of experiences and understandings of hope appear to be associated with actions.

An example from John. John shared a story about writing a book on managing personal finances. His enthusiasm about his book was reflected in his telling of the story. He began by talking about his experiences in life in the context of hope. He said, for example, "in terms of where the hope . . . comes in, . . . late in life I realized . . . the possibilities and what a person can do." And, specifically regarding the book, he explained, "I finally have the knowledge I need to do this." He also described his aims. Initially, he spoke generally: "I hope that it will do some good"; then he spoke more specifically: "I am going ahead and assuming that [the book] is going to be beneficial for, hopefully, tens of thousands of people. . . . I have high hopes for the book." Finally, with a smile in his voice, he added, "Also, on a much more personal level, my one son is absolutely hopeless when it comes to money. Very subtly, I am doing him a manual."

After John shared his experiences, I asked him how he understood hope. He talked about how he saw a role for hope in initiating and attaining some aim. For example, he talked about "the hope of attaining some goal or having some outcome that is positive to you." He furthered, "Hope is, . . . I think we have to be able to envision a positive outcome or we don't start," and he explained, "it's the hope that . . . gives me the will or strength to start whatever it is."

With regard to his experiences, John describes his hopes in terms of the impact and success of the book he is writing. With regard to his understanding, John's use of "hope of attaining some goal," "[envisioning]," and "[starting] whatever it is" suggest action. It appears that in both his experience and his understanding, he is reflecting the behavioural aspect of hope.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the behavioural aspect of hope.

A couple other participants also included actions in their definitions of hope. Carol, for example, talked about the activity of living. She said, "It's all part of the way [you live] your life." George, described action by saying, "to hope, is something I can see as a verb."

Relational aspect of hope. The relational aspect of hope deals with relations and those could be with the self, another (or others), a higher power, nature, and/or an object (or objects). All of participants' descriptions of hope suggest an association with relations.

An example from Alice. Alice shared a story about her experiences of her mother and her family of orientation through her mother's illness and subsequent death. She began by explaining that her mother had been diagnosed with cancer and that she took the lead role, not only in "[being] there for her," but also in managing her family concerning their mother's care. Regarding her mother, she said, "I felt very privileged that I was able to be there for her, . . . I was able to support her, be present for her, and be her advocate." Regarding her family, she said, "It was up to me to hold this family together, and . . . direct things." Alice also talked about the connection she experienced in her relationship with her mother. For example, in her words, "I got to know her [on] a different level, . . . maybe in a non-judgmental way? Knowing her as a person . . . was one of my profound experiences." Another example occurred following her mother's death. Again, in Alice's words, "When my mother died, well she was with me, and after the funeral, I felt her leave. It was, "Whoosh." Relevant words that Alice used to describe her experience were "spiritual, soulful."

Regarding hope, Alice's association with it was "positive," and she also shared that she had a "fairly positive attitude." In the context of her story, Alice described shared hopes as well as individual ones. With regard to shared hopes, for example, in talking about her mother and with reference to her family, she said, “First of all, when she was first diagnosed with cancer, . . . we were hopeful that she would recover, then we were hopeful that she wasn’t in any pain, and then we were hopeful that she would die.” Regarding individual hopes, for example, with reference to the future, Alice said, “I hoped that our family would stay united.”

After Alice shared her story, I asked what hope meant to her. She responded, “Right now, . . . [the] thing going through my mind is, ‘I hope everything will be okay.’” She went on with her description, “It’s that whole positive outlook, to stay positive, to meet challenges as they come, to be open to change, and to be open to changing your definition of hope.”

Alice’s experience appears to reflect the relational aspect of hope through relationships with herself (based on her hopes), others (based on shared hopes), and a higher power (based on her reflections of the spiritual nature of the experience). Her understanding, given the broad nature of hoping that everything is going to be okay, suggests inclusion of the self, others, a higher power, nature, and/or an object or objects. Her experiences as well as her understandings suggest a relational aspect of hope.

A synthesis of the participants’ understandings of the relational aspect of hope. Like Alice, Carol described an understanding of hope that suggests a relational aspect. She described her beliefs, “I believe that people can change and that things can be made better for people, and for me that’s hope.” As she went on, she intimated that “[she was] full of hope for [herself and] . . . for other people.” Thus, she is referring to her relationships with her self and others or the relational aspect of hope. John’s understanding of hope reflects a relational aspect as well. In his words, “Hope . . . comes back to the idea, . . . of attaining some goal or having some outcome that is positive to you." John's statement that the attainment of a goal and an outcome be positive to the individual suggests a relationship with the self and a reflection of the relational aspect of hope.

Temporal aspect of hope. As they relate to hope, the past, present, and future times reflect the temporal aspect of the construct. All of the participants' descriptions were about hope in association with one or more of the three times.

An example from Gillian. Gillian shared a story of reading a greeting card and being "moved by it." In her words,

> This card, it was actually from Bridgehead, which is Oxfam, and I bought these greeting cards, . . . the picture on them was a quilt that was made in memory of, I think, a doctor or missionary, who had died, but at the bottom was this quote, "You have to believe you can make a difference."

Gillian described her reaction to the card in the context of hope. She said, "the whole idea of [it] is hopeful," and "I think that you are looking at the world in a hopeful way." And then Gillian brought up an audio presentation that she had listened to, by a theologian named Bart Ehrman. According to Gillian, he talked about early Christianity and apocalypticism, including an association with good and evil forces. She then contrasted the future with the forces of evil to those where you believe that you can make a difference, and she described the latter as having a "hopefulness in it."

After Gillian shared her story, I invited her to talk about her understanding of hope. She replied, "Hope is sort of the lack of despair or something." She also said, "To see something that it worth reaching for, something that is in the future."

Regarding Gillian's experiences, "looking at the world in a hopeful way" suggests a present time, and her comparison of the future with evil forces to one with a belief that "you can make a difference" suggests a future time. Regarding her understandings, "lack of despair" suggests a present time and "something that is in the future" suggests a future time. Thus, it seems that her experiences as well as her understandings of hope are associated with both present and future times or a temporal aspect of the construct.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the temporal aspect of hope. Associations with time were evident in a number of other participants' understandings of hope as well. Regarding the past, for example, George and Carol said, "And, because I've had hopes in the past that have actually happened, . . ." and "I had never given up hope, . . . no matter what happened," respectively. With regard to the present, Herman, George, and Carol all included it as part of their understanding of hope. For example, Herman, said,

> Hope for me, isn't a future thing. Hope for me is a circle. It's a sphere that I live in. It's ground that I can walk on and that will simply, like the fool on the tarot, appear before my feet.

George, said, "Hope has meaning for me at the present time." Carol, said, "I'm always hopeful," describing herself as being "full of hope." Regarding the future association to hope, Gillian, David, John, Carol, and Jeck said, "something that is in the future," "something to . . . happen in the future," "Hope to me is a connotation with the future," "it's future oriented," and "it's projecting onto the future," respectively.

Dynamic aspect of hope. The dynamic aspect of hope deals with change. Many of the participants' descriptions of hope appeared to reflect change, including within and, in cases where the participants shared more than one story, across them. Changes in circumstances appear to be associated with the dynamic aspect of hope.

An example from Alice. As I have mentioned, Alice shared a story of creating. She talked about it in the context of various activities, for example, family, art, gardening, and landscaping. In sharing her experiences of hope, as it relates to having and raising children, she said,

> When our son was born, and he was born six weeks early, . . . the doctor said, "Well don't go home and set up a crib." And . . . that was another profound experience where I realized; this is out of my hands. I have no control over this whatsoever; there's nothing I can do to make this better. So, . . . [despite] all those stories I'd heard about births and babies . . . my hope changed.

Alice also said that "he was fine," and then she went on to encapsulate her experience,

> So creating, . . . and hope, . . . and evaluating. And . . . of raising children: you are hopeful that they'll be healthy, you're hopeful that they'll do okay, you're hopeful that they'll be polite and smart and respectful, and you're very hopeful, and especially when you have a newborn. . . . And so, all the way along, you review your hope. And you maybe make changes. Like that story about hope changes. . . . So you hope that your kids are going to be geniuses, and when you find out that maybe they have some learning difficulties, well you hope that they're going to graduate. Your hope changes.

And after Alice shared her experiences, I asked her to describe her understanding of hope. She responded, "To stay positive, to meet the challenges as they come, to be open to change, and to be open to changing your definition of hope."

In Alice's experiences, she describes how her hope changed with changing circumstances. For example, she had hopes regarding the birth of her son, and when the doctor suggested that she not "set up a crib," her hopes changed. Regarding her understandings, she speaks of "challenges" and "[being] open," not only "to change," but to "changing [one's] definition of hope." The changes that she talks about in both her experiences and understandings reflect the dynamic aspect of hope.

A synthesis of the participants' understandings of the dynamic aspect of hope. A number of participants' definitions of the construct, by extension, reflect change. For example, David and Rosemary described hope as, “optimism, desire . . . expectation” and “optimism, . . . desire, . . . something you want, you hope you are going to get whatever you hope for,” respectively. Gillian’s understanding was similar, “to see something that’s worth reaching for.” Finally, included in Herman’s definition is, “Hope is about being. It’s about being with freedom, being with lightness, being with grace, being joyful, being unencumbered.” Of the aforementioned understandings of hope, for example, “desire,” “expectation,” or what we value and “[reach] for” as well as “being” change over time, and they reflect the changing or dynamic aspect of hope.

Agentic aspect of hope. A sense of having some degree of control over one’s actions, as they relate to hope, reflects the agentic aspect of the construct. All of the participants suggested a sense of agency, as it related to hope, during their interviews.

An example from Herman. Herman shared a story about a 12-year friendship with Bernice, an elderly neighbor. He talked about their relationship, including supporting her through various health challenges, and he focused on his “experience of being with [her] . . . in the last eleven days of her life.” Regarding that period, he went into considerable detail, in particular, of the ninth day. She had been in the hospital and, like the previous days, he went to see her. When he arrived, he learned from her family that she was “non-responsive.” He said that soon after he arrived, her family left “in grief,” but he stayed with her. Herman then described an experience that dramatically impacted his life. He explained that it got to be “the middle of the night” and that “at a certain point, [Bernice] started to talk.” In his words,

> She was talking, and at one point she really clearly said, “My name is [Bernice Learner].” So I knew she was addressing somebody, . . . It wasn’t a clear narrative, but she was somewhere. She was somewhere important. . . . And I just held her hand.

He indicated that she continued for a period, and he said,

> Then it stopped, . . . and then she sunk down into this place of discomfort, so I go and get the attendants and they . . . make her comfortable, and I come back into the room and she said, "I'm fine now, you can go home.

Herman obliged, and the next day he went back to the hospital. When he saw her, again in his words, "The very first thing she [said] to me [was], 'You called me back from the dead!'" He continued, "So, . . . my presence . . . with her on that journey . . . was me keeping her tethered [to life]." He furthered, "I really, really felt like I was with her on this important journey." He described it as "walking [her] to her death [and back]."

As Herman continued his story, he explained that a social worker suggested that Bernice might have been "[lingering] because [she wanted] to ease the pain of the people left." He also said that because of that, and at Bernice's son's suggestion, he did not go to the hospital the following day. Bernice passed away in the afternoon of that day.

After reflecting on his experience, Herman offered the following summary:

> I was in this position . . . of trust and love [with her]. . . . She could have died that night, and she might have preferred to die that night, if there had been nobody to tether her, and as she said, "call her back from the dead." But I think she was . . . grateful . . . that I was there with her. And so that sense of knowing, that for however small a thing that is, one individual dying, that if you are the only person, if you are the only person in the world who could do that, and you were there, that's pretty marvelous. That's pretty meaningful.

He went on to explain the impact of "joyfully going to the end with [Bernice]." He said that doing so "freed [him] at some deep spiritual level." It left him in a position where "[he] could say, 'I have done enough, . . . [and] I am enough.' And that is the core of what I would call hope." He also explained that, just over a year later "the grief stopped and a weight lifted of my shoulders, . . . and the message that came to me is, 'I'm free now to live my own life.'" Herman said that he then began the process of "reconnecting with hope, . . . setting down hopelessness, . . . [and] reclaiming hope.” In a heartfelt description of his experience, Herman said, “I have the ultimate hope. I create it every day. I create it in (tearing up) every one of my relationships. They all benefit from the ultimate hope, which is the core of life. I love.” He also made a general statement regarding hope, saying, “Each one of us has it in us, so any individual can recreate the hope.”

As Herman shared his story, it appeared that he had made sense of his experience. Indeed, he connected it with hope and talked about “creating” as well as “recreating” it. It would appear, then, that he is reflecting the agentic aspect of the construct.

A synthesis of the participants’ understandings and/or reflections of the agentic aspect of hope. Jeck’s and Alice’s understandings of hope also reflect an agentic aspect. Jeck, for example, talked about “[finding] another hope.” Alice described four areas of hope, each of which could suggest choice. Her description: “To stay positive; to meet the challenges as they come; to be open to change; and to be open to changing your definition of hope.”

Summary of hope. Based on the data collected from the participants in the current study, it appears that hope is the subjective situational or global “experience” and/or “expectation,” that is based in positivity, for example, “positive outlook,” “optimism,” and “being joyful.” It has the potential to change over time, and it is associated with past, present, and future. It is associated with mental capacities, in that it is deemed “realistic” and “part of… your beliefs” and with emotions, in that “[one] can feel it.” It involves doing in that, “it’s all part of the way [you live] your life.” It is relational, in that the hope can be directed towards the self, other (or others), a higher power, nature and/or an object (or objects). Finally, it is associated with a sense of agency.

Patterns of the Aspects of Meaning, Purpose, and Hope

Based on my participants' experiences and understandings of meaning, purpose, and hope, it appears that each is associated with situationality, globality, cognition, affect, behaviour, relations, temporality, dynamism, and agency. In order to present a more complete picture of the data, I think that it is important to highlight a few noteworthy patterns regarding some of the aspects. For example, regarding the binary aspect, situationality as well as globality appeared to be evidenced in each of the three constructs. That said, situationality appeared to resonate more strongly for the participants than globality. Further, within globality, of the three constructs, hope appears to resonate more strongly for the participants. In considering the cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects, it seemed that the cognitive and affective aspects resonated more strongly for the participants for meaning and hope and behavioural for purpose. Regarding the relational aspect, as one might expect, the experiences and understandings of relations with the self resonated more strongly for the participants for all three of the constructs. Indeed, each of the constructs is subjectively experienced and understood. Further, after the self, relations with higher power came next, in terms of resonating, for the participants for meaning, and relations with another or others came next for purpose and hope. With regard to temporality, though there appeared to be evident of past, present, and future for the participants for each of the three constructs, past and present resonated more for meaning and present and future, for purpose and hope. The dynamic aspect appeared to resonate similarly across the three constructs. Finally, with regard to the agentic aspect, though the data revealed that agency was relevant for the participants for each of the three constructs, it appeared to resonate more strongly for them for meaning.

Chapter 5

Findings: Meaning, Purpose, and Hope, Collectively

The current chapter is a continuation of the presentation of the findings from the interviews of the ten participants. The previous chapter presented patterns of participants' experiences and understandings of meaning, purpose, and hope, individually, and the current chapter presents patterns of the three constructs, collectively. These patterns of the constructs combined are organized in two sections: The first describes the relatedness of meaning, purpose, and hope and the second, the nature of the experiences and understandings of three constructs, combined.

Relatedness of Meaning, Purpose, and Hope

The participants shared a total of 29 stories, including personal experiences and understandings, that included each construct, meaning, purpose, and hope. Regardless of whether the participants started their stories with a meaningful, purposeful, or hopeful experience, as they continued, they incorporated experiences of the two remaining constructs. Additionally, as they incorporated experiences of the remaining constructs, they also revealed relationships between and among the three. Further, as the participants reflected on their stories and shared their understandings, they used language, and at times explicit language, that verified these relationships. The following two subsections highlight the relationships between and among meaning, purpose, and hope. The first subsection introduces patterns in the participants' experiences and understandings of the relationships between and among the three constructs. The second subsection highlights the participants' experiences and understandings of the patterns of the interrelationships, collectively.

Relationships between and among meaning, purpose, and hope. Analysis of the data suggests that there are relationships involving two as well as three of the constructs; I refer to them as dyadic and triadic relationships, respectively. Dyadic relationships—and in particular when they reflect a direction from one construct to another—are the most common amongst the participants in this study. More specifically, the most common relationships are cases of a participant's experience of meaning appearing to precede or lead to an experience of purpose and, in the same way, purpose preceding or leading to meaning, purpose to hope, hope to purpose, hope to meaning, and meaning to hope. These six relationships, which are bidirectional between the pairs of constructs, are the focus of the current section. They are also summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Directional Dyadic Relationships

Dyadic Relationships
Meaning > Purpose
Purpose > Meaning
Purpose > Hope
Hope > Purpose
Hope > Meaning
Meaning > Hope

The following is a presentation of the analysis of the participants' experiences and understandings of the aforementioned relationships. It is organized according to the particular constructs in the relationship and the direction involved. There are six subsections, one for each relationship, for example, "Meaning to purpose," "Purpose to meaning," "Purpose to hope," and so on. Each subsection includes a description of the process of the particular relationship, highlighting the relevant aspects of the constructs; an illustrative example of one participant's experiences and understandings of that relationship; and an across cases synthesis of the terms or comments participants used in describing their experiences and understandings of the same.

Relationships were revealed in the data in three different ways: through their stories, participants described the relationships implicitly, partially explicitly, and/or explicitly. To clarify, *implicit* examples are embedded in the text. Identifying implicit examples relies on the highest level of researcher interpretation. For each story, it was necessary to clarify the participant's understanding of each construct, meaning, purpose, and hope; to identify text that reflected each construct; and then to determine how they appeared to be interrelated. For the most part, the implicit evidence evolved through a lengthy discourse. Due to space constraints, the current document only includes concise examples. *Partially explicit* examples name at least one construct in the description of the relationship; that is, they use either meaning, purpose, or hope in the description of the relationship. *Explicit* examples use two of the constructs' names to describe the relationship. Of these three types of relationships, identifying explicit examples required the lowest level of researcher interpretation.

I have highlighted the aforementioned six relationships in the current section because they occur in most of the participants' stories. Also revealed in the data, however, are another relationship involving two constructs and two relationships involving three constructs. Specifically, these relationships are experiences of meaning and purpose co-occurring; experiences of meaning and purpose preceding or leading to the experience of hope; and the experience of meaning preceding or leading to the experiences of purpose and hope. In order to provide the reader with a broader view of the data and the data analysis, I have provided an illustration of a single case in Appendix I. This case contains all six of the common relationships as well as the relationships of the experiences of meaning and purpose co-occurring and the experiences of meaning and purpose preceding or leading to the experience of hope.

Meaning to purpose. The relationships in which the experience of meaning preceded or led to the experience of purpose appear to reflect a pattern that involves particular aspects. To clarify, the cognitive aspect (primary) and the affective aspect (secondary) of meaning as well as the behavioural aspect (primary) of purpose appear to be particularly relevant to the relationship. The binary aspect, including the situational and/or global dimensions, for both constructs also seems relevant. Further, there seems to be a process of sense-making associated with the meaningful experience. This making sense appears to lead to an understanding, which is ultimately associated with an aim or goal. The aim or goal is associated with doing and is perceived by the participants as a purpose or as purpose.

An example from Gillian. Gillian shared a story about her propensity for tears. She talked about her emotions, and she said that they were "on the surface about a lot of things." Indeed, as she shared her story, there were several moments when her eyes welled up with tears and a number of other moments when she spoke through them. With regard to meaning, she explained,

> I think for all my life (tearing), I've had this great propensity for tears, like even when I was a little kid. As often as not, it's something happy rather than something sad, and I think for many, many years it was like a great embarrassment to me, because you can't really hide it. All of a sudden it happens, and sometimes people have sort of commented on it, and . . . over the last ten or twelve years, I've realized [that I ought] to sort of accept it. . . . Why should I be embarrassed about it? It's just how I am.

Further, she said, “my appreciation, or, . . . the upside of having a propensity to cry, . . . [is] that other people feel comfortable crying around me.”

Regarding purpose and her tendency to tear up, Gillian said, “I have some purpose in being able to accept . . . myself, for how things are.” She also described a few situations where she supported individuals who were crying and in need of comfort, and then, more generally, she said, “It’s almost like the purpose of my tears [is] to be able to . . . interact with other people who need that sort of acceptance.”

With regard to the relationship between meaning and purpose, Gillian’s story seems to provide implicit evidence of her experience of meaning preceding or leading to her experience of purpose. After the meaningful experience of sense-making and accepting and appreciating her tears, she concluded: “I guess in a way it is a purpose that I can be of comfort to other people who really maybe are in distress and crying.” In other words, her valuing of her propensity for tears came before her perceived capacity to support others, in particular, through their tears.

After Gillian shared her story, I invited her to reflect on her experiences, and I asked her whether she was able to give me her impressions or understandings of how meaning, purpose, and hope might be interrelated. Her reply included an explicit description of meaning to purpose. She said, “Something meaningful leads to a purpose. I think . . . the one comes from the other.” Her understanding supports her experience of a direction from meaning to purpose.

A synthesis of the words or phrases the participants used to describe the relationship of meaning to purpose. All of the participants’ stories revealed implicit evidence of a direction from the experience of meaning to the experience of purpose, and some also contained particular language that described the nature of that direction. David, for example, used “motivating” and “set [him] on the path of,” and John used “encouraged.” Additionally, a number of participants were either partially or fully explicit in their description of the order of occurrence and direction of influence from one construct to another. Gillian, for example, in the context of another of her stories, used the word “informed” to describe the relationship of her experience of meaning to her experience of purpose. Carol used “then” as well as “helps to define.” Alice used “gave.” David used a different form of the same word: “gives.” George used “nudged,” “encourage,” and “influenced.” Jeck used “next comes,” and he also described the relationship by saying, “Within . . . meaning you can find a purpose.” Finally, John described the relationship by saying, “I would say you even have meaning in mind when you are looking at your purpose.”

Purpose to meaning. In relationships where the experience of purpose preceded or led to the experience of meaning, the behavioural (primary) and the cognitive and/or affective (secondary) aspects of purpose as well as the cognitive aspect (primary) and the affective aspect (secondary) of meaning appear particularly relevant. The binary aspect, including the situational and/or global dimension, for both constructs also appears relevant. The experience of this relationship appears to involve an awareness that the participants have as they enact their purpose. Information from this awareness, that is, feedback, is then made sense of and evaluated. This evaluation, or the value of the experience, is then associated with importance or significance or, indeed, meaningfulness.

An example from John. John shared his experience of making a donation to Santas Anonymous[2] together with a co-worker. His story begins when, after a late night at the office, he and his coworker "decided to go grab a hamburger on the way home." In describing his experience of purpose, John said,

> Right in front of us is this huge banner, "[call sign]: Santas Anonymous Drop Off Depot – Last Night." . . . [We] were playing . . . the radio, and one of their promotions came on reminding everyone about Santas Anonymous and that tonight was the last night. . . . Probably the reason this little promotion was aired, . . . they were short of gifts for boys in the age range of twelve. So, . . . we were both still eating and at one point we looked at each other with the idea that, "Hey, why don't we do this?" and . . . we went through all our pockets, the glove box, my parking change, and everything else and came up with about a hundred bucks to go and get some gifts. . . . I happen to remember there was [a retail store] just up the road. . . . So we whistled in there with about five or ten minutes to go before closing, . . . only to be greeted with a big sign saying: "All Timex Watches Half Off," and . . . they were a hot little item at the time, cheap watches that looked good. Kids wanted them. So we just took whatever we had and got these half-price watches and then drove them back to drop them off . . . and went on home.

As John continued his story, he indicated that the following day, he drove out of province to celebrate Christmas with his family. The telling of this part of the story was emotion-evoking for John. He explained,

> I [went to] my brother's house for gift opening, and the family [was] together Christmas morning, and things were sort of wrapping up, and . . . (choking up) I heard over my shoulder, my younger nephew say, "Oh a watch! Mom and Dad, thank you!" and go give them a big hug and everything, and then [I] turned around, and, literally, I teared up.

He went on to say:

> I didn't . . . say anything to anybody there in [the city where he spent Christmas] about the experience that I'd had. I kind of just forgot about it, but it was very meaningful to me in that I realized just what the smallest of gestures can mean, probably to somebody else, like in this case, I witnessed my nephew opening his [watch], but I got far more out of it than the boy or his mother or anybody else involved.

In considering the relationship between purpose and meaning, the following quotation from John best describes his experience:

> I was being rewarded somehow for this act, however insignificant it was, a couple nights earlier, because I got to look at the face of a twelve-year-old opening up a watch and he was thrilled, so . . . I hadn't thought about the kids back in [the city he came from] until that moment, but then my imagination started . . . , "Oh yeah there are some kids . . . right about now opening up some watches" and I was really moved, far more moved than I thought I would ever be, and in fact [I] hadn't even thought about any consequences past giving the gifts on the Friday night.

John's stated purpose, of donating to Santas Anonymous, preceded his emotional reaction to giving or the feedback, which he ultimately made sense of and, indeed, valued and identified as meaningful. As John continued with his story, he was also explicit in describing his understanding of the relationship between purpose and meaning. He said, "I guess any story of purpose gives automatic meaning, if it has an effect on me." He is suggesting that, when the experience of purpose somehow impacts him, he experiences meaning.

A synthesis of the words or phrases the participants used to describe the relationship of purpose to meaning. All but one of stories in the current study seemed to have implicit evidence of the relationship of the experience of purpose to the experience of meaning. Among these implicit descriptions, Alice used "gives" to describe the relationship. A number of the descriptions also contained particular terms or statements to partially or fully explicitly describe the relationship. Carol used "then it has." Gillian, George, Howard, John, and David all used some form of "gives." Alice also used "brings" as well as "derive." Finally, Rosemary described the relationship by saying, "To have meaning in your life, you have to have a purpose."

Purpose to hope. Particular aspects seem relevant in the relationship in which the experience of purpose preceded or led to the experience of hope. These include the behavioural (primary) and the cognitive and/or affective (secondary) of purpose as well as the cognitive and/or affective of hope. Also relevant to both constructs is the situational and/or global dimension of the binary aspect. The process appeared to include the participants choosing and pursuing an aim or a goal, or indeed, a purpose, which they felt positive about, and this positivity appeared to foster hope.

An example from Gillian. Gillian shared a story about supporting her parents through her mother's illness and subsequent death. Sharing her story evoked a lot of emotion for Gillian, and she cried a number of times while telling it. She talked about her mother, saying, "She was ill for about (crying) four years and just failing . . . it was little strokes."

Gillian described her experience of purpose:

> I was sort of the main emotional support for my father and, . . . especially in the last couple years of my mother's life, . . . every weekend I would go up to [where they lived] to sort of relieve him, and go up to the hospital and help her eat or sit around the table or just stay in the evening and give him a break. Or if I had a long Christmas vacation or a long weekend or something, maybe he would go away and I would just stay there. . . . Up until that, I had no experience with sick people at all, and I had no idea what to do, and I don't have any nursing background or anything that would make me think I know how I can be really useful, and swab them or whatever, and I think I knew I had to be there to support my father (crying), and I think it was, . . . as much as, . . . I felt it was important to be with my mother and her lack of communication, to just be there, . . . [it was also important] to support my father.

She talked about the impact that spending time with, in particular, her mother had on her. She said, "I understand this, and I can learn some more about this, and I feel comfortable in this situation. I am not intimidated by the situation or by the pain or the lack of interaction or whatever." Gillian went on to say, "I certainly learned . . . the importance of just *being* [emphasis added] with someone." She also said, "With my mother, . . . I learned quite a lot about myself. "

In reflecting on her experiences, Gillian said, “I just realized and really felt that there (crying) was some sort of gift in just *being* [emphasis added].” And with reference to her mother, she said, “You just need to be accepted as you are.” And she added, “I guess that’s partly the thing about purpose, if you see meaning in what you are doing . . . and as long as you are doing your best, you can’t have regrets afterwards (crying).”

Regarding hope, Gillian said that she had taken a course on hope, more than ten years ago, at the college where she worked. She said, “One thing that hit me at the time . . . was, ‘My hope is not your hope.’ And that was really profound to me.” She explained that she learned to respect that, for example, what she hopes for isn’t necessarily the same as what her parents hope for. She said, “For me, maybe just the hope (crying) that I can make a difference, and that is a quiet thing; it’s not a big thing, in the grand scheme of things.”

In terms of the relationship between purpose and hope, Gillian said,

> I didn’t feel totally hopeless. Maybe the hopelessness is if you can’t figure out anything you can do or how you can be helpful, but when I understood that just by *being* [emphasis added] that I made a difference, . . . then it wasn’t hopeless (crying), because I think helplessness and hopelessness go together.

As Gillian’s text suggests, once she was able to clarify how she might be helpful, she didn't feel totally hopeless. That is, once she clarified how she might pursue her purpose, she felt a change in her experience of hopelessness. In terms of the constructs, the positivity that she gained from enacting her purpose was associated with and preceded or led to hope.

Additionally, in talking about her understanding, Gillian was explicit in describing the relationship between purpose and hope. She said, “I think if you have a purpose, you have hope.” She explained, “I think a purpose means . . . moving forward, so inherently there is hope involved in that I think.” It appears that, as she reflected on the constructs, she had a sense that hope is inextricably linked to purpose.

A synthesis of the words or phrases the participants used to describe the relationship of purpose to hope. All but one of the participants’ stories contained implicit evidence of the experience of purpose preceding or leading to the experience of hope. A number of participants were also partially or entirely explicit in describing the relationship. David and John, for example used, “gives”; George, “thereby boosts”; and Gillian, in another of her stories, “providing” to describe their experiences of the relationship of purpose preceding or leading to hope.

Hope to purpose. The relationships in which the experience of hope preceded or led to the experience of purpose appear to reflect a pattern that involves specific aspects. These include the cognitive and/or affective aspects of hope as well as the behavioural aspect (primary) and the cognitive aspect (secondary) of purpose. Also included are the situational and/or global dimensions of the binary aspect of both constructs. In each of the stories of hope to purpose, the object of the hope is the aim or goal or, indeed, purpose. That is, hope was directed to a particular purpose. In addition to preceding purpose, hope also appears to provide an energy that contributes to or sustains it.

An example from George. George shared a story about the experiences that led up to his decision to pursue a career in astronomy. He started by describing experiences of learning about the solar system, when he was in the sixth grade; going on a field trip to the Dominion Observatory in Ottawa with Boy Scouts, when he was in his early teens; and watching his first partial eclipse of the sun with smoked glasses in his back yard, when he was in high school.

He also talked about purpose as it related to his pursuits. He said, “I purposefully went into action and proceeded to go to the University of Toronto and study astronomy, and then [to] the University of Virginia,” and “My purpose was to devote the rest of my life to a career as a professional scientist in astronomy.”

Regarding hope, he said, “I was hoping to be a professional astronomer for the rest of my life and . . . find some meaning or knowledge about extra-terrestrial patterns. I was hoping to be a success.”

With regard to the relationship between hope and purpose, there appears to be evidence of a direction from his experience of hope to his experience of purpose. George said, for example, “So my hope as a teenager was that I was going to be a professional astronomer. . . . I was going to pursue my astronomy interests and actually make it my career-choice.” In other words, his hope of becoming a professional astronomer preceded his purpose of pursuing his interests in astronomy and making it his chosen career. Indeed, George’s career was the object of his hope.

George was also explicit in describing his understanding of the relationship of hope to purpose. He said, “The hope is in the present and the hope stimulates my purposeful attempts to realize the thing hoped for. I hope for something and then I plan to proceed.” Here, George’s use of “stimulates” suggests that his experience of hope influences his experience of purpose. It might also describe his hope as providing energy that contributes to sustaining his purpose.

A synthesis of the words and phrases the participants used to describe the relationship of hope to purpose. All but three of the participants’ stories contained implicit evidence of the relationship from the experience of hope to the experience of purpose. Additionally, John was partially explicit in using “gives” and Alice was entirely explicit in using “brings” to describe the relationship.

Hope to meaning. The cognitive and/or affective aspects and the binary aspect of hope as well as the cognitive aspect (primary), the affective aspect (secondary), and the binary aspect of meaning appear relevant to the relationship in which the experience of hope precedes or leads to the experience of meaning. Further, the data appear to reveal two patterns of hope to meaning, and they appear individually or together in the participants’ stories. The first pattern is one that appears to reveal an experience of hope, that is, a hopefulness or a hopeful disposition, as a filter through which meaning is experienced and perceived. The second pattern is one that appears to reveal that the object of the participant’s hope is that which is meaningful. In both cases, it appears that this hope also contributes to sustaining meaning. The following is an example of the first pattern and Appendix I is an example of the second.

An example from John. John told a story about his son. He shared a number of experiences and highlighted two that he indicated were particularly meaningful to him. The telling of those two experiences evoked emotion for John. The first incident occurred when his son was graduating from high school. John said, “I attended his graduation. . . . And he was chosen Graduate-of-the-Year.” He furthered, “[It was] one of my proudest nights. . . . Yeah, [it] was amazing.” The second incident occurred just after his son had his first child. In John’s words, “My first son had his first child, and we were coming out of the hospital, . . . and I just said, ‘[William] you are going to be a great (tearing up) father.’” And he went on to say that his son replied, “Well, I learned from the best.” John’s assessment of what his son said was, “Okay. I am on the right track.” Further, in talking about his experiences, John said, “because [they] touched me emotionally, . . . that made [them] meaningful.”

With regard to hope and parenthood, John shared his sentiments: “I guess when you hold a child for the first time, that’s probably the most important word . . . that you could [use to] describe that situation . . . [hope]. But it’s for them.” He furthered, “You’re full of hope when you walk out of the hospital, when you’ve got that bundle in your arms. That’s probably the best word that you could [use to] describe that day.”

On the relationship between hope and meaning, John’s discourse implicitly suggests an order from hope to meaning. First, he said,

> I think that hope might affect you. If I’m a person of hope, which I think I am, I don’t think a life is shaped by the events of our life. [I think] our life is shaped by our reaction to those events.

He went on to say, “Hope . . . I just equate . . . to an attitude or . . . your state of mind and how you receive it.” John appears to suggest that hope impacts our reaction to life events. By extension, he appears to suggest that hope would be a factor in whether and to what degree those events are meaningful. To illustrate, in talking about the experience of having his son named Graduate-of-the-Year, John said, “That was an amazing night and very meaningful to me. . . . I took it as a little feedback on me too because, whether we like it or not, they are our image. That’s my belief.” John’s hopeful nature appeared to be a lens or a filter through which he perceived his son’s accomplishment as a personally meaningful success.

A synthesis of the words and phrases the participants used to describe the relationship of hope to meaning. All but five of the participants’ stories seemed to contain implicit evidence of relation of the experience of hope to the experience of meaning. Additionally, Jeck provided an explicit description of his experience of the relationship. He said, “At the beginning is hope, next comes meaning.” He also explained,

> Hope, . . . is kind of like the beginning of it, that’s where the door opens, . . . I hope that I . . . whatever. And then within that hope or along with that hope, you find a meaning, so it kind of leads naturally into a meaning.

Meaning to hope. The relationship in which the experience of meaning preceded or led to the experience of hope appears to involve specific aspects. These include the cognitive (primary) and the affective (secondary) aspects of meaning as well as the cognitive and/or affective (primary) aspects of hope. Again, either or both dimension of the binary aspect of both of the constructs is relevant. Regarding the process, it appears that the meaningful experience was made sense of, and it was ultimately perceived as positive. This positivity was associated with hope, and indeed, it appears to fuel or foster the hope.

An example from David. David described his experiences of his family of orientation. He said, “I had a very sad childhood, so I ran away from home a lot, and I cried a lot, and I lived in fear.” In speaking about his father, David explained,

> For some reason he always hated me, I don’t know why, no happy memories, not one, not one memory my whole childhood with him ever being kind or loving to me, only hating and . . . shouting [and being] intimidating [and] threatening.

He also said that “[he] was always trying to get [his father] to love [him] . . . and [that he] never could.” Indeed, David described a number of difficult, yet meaningful, experiences. One such experience illustrates the relationship between meaning and hope. It involved his father, and it occurred when David was ten years old. In his words,

> He was hitting me all over my body, and I remember he hit right here with . . . four hangers and blood was coming out, that’s how hard he hit me, and I remember looking at Dad and I thought, “He was going to kill me.” I just prayed to God to help me, and all of a sudden, he had an asthma attack, as soon as I made

> the prayer, . . . he couldn't breathe, well, barely. He started wheezing at the end of the bed: "Uhh! Uhh! Uhh!" And I squeezed by, and I ran out, and I ran away from home. . . . One of my many run aways. I thought, "Wow, well that gives me hope. I've seen proof that God exists. God helped me in my time of need." There is God, and for some reason I'm going through this experience in my life, which is very difficult, but somehow I had the belief that God is still looking out for me and watching over me and protecting me. So that was very meaningful.

In this example, it appears that David made sense of his experience of the beating, the praying, the "asthma attack," and the getting away and that he ultimately perceived it as both meaningful and positive. It appears that the positive that he found in the experience gave way to or fostered or fueled the hopeful conclusion that he came to. Indeed, David indicated that his meaningful experience "[gave him] hope."

A synthesis of the words and phrases the participants used to describe the relationship of meaning to hope. All of the stories appeared to incorporate implicit evidence of the relationship of meaning to hope. Additionally, David, in another of his stories, used "gives" in both an implicit and a partially explicit description of the relationship. Other participants were either partially or entirely explicit in their descriptions. George, for example, also used a form of the word "gives" to describe the relationship. Carol used "will be partly defined by" and "reinforces." Rosemary also used a form of "[reinforces]" and "give you the confidence to."

Summary of the relationships between and among meaning, purpose, and hope. In the context of the participant's stories—which involve meaning, purpose, and hope—aspects that appear to be particularly relevant to relationships involving meaning include the cognitive (primary) and the affective (secondary); purpose, behavioural (primary), cognitive and/or affective (secondary); and hope, cognitive and/or affective. Additionally, the situational and/or global dimension of the binary aspect of all of the constructs appear relevant. In these relationships, meaning appears to be associated with sense- and/or decision-making; purpose with doing and feedback; and hope with a perspective or disposition and/or a source of motivation or sustaining energy.

Interrelationships between meaning, purpose, and hope. The data suggest that the experience of meaning, purpose, and hope, when viewed together, is complex and variable. While individual relationships involving two or three of the constructs play a role in the overall patterns of the participants' experiences, it appears that internal and external factors do as well.

In an effort to gain a better sense of the interrelationships between the three constructs, after the participants shared their stories, I invited them to reflect on their experiences and to speak to their perceptions of the interrelationships. Their responses often highlighted relationships, and indeed a direction, typically between two constructs. Those were included in the previous subsection as well in Appendix I. The appendix also presented two less common, though not unique, relationships. Carol, Alice, John, Rosemary, Herman, and Jeck also, however, with at times somewhat overlapping perspectives, spoke to the interconnectedness and/or the dynamics between the three constructs, collectively. Carol, for example, appears to concisely describe the interrelationship as secured together and refers to how the three constructs "partly [shape]" her experiences. Alice and John suggest the notion that there is a positivity associated with meaning, purpose, and hope and that the experience of the three constructs has a "snowball" effect. Rosemary and Herman suggest that, at any given point in time, one of the three constructs seems to take precedence over the other two, yet they remain connected. Herman also suggests that as there is a change in the experience of one construct, so, too, are there changes in the experiences of the others. Finally, Jeck offers a general description of a recurring sequence of the three constructs.

With reference to the interrelationships of the three constructs, Carol said, “I am interested in the fact that I’ve had certain experiences, and they are partly shaped by meaning and hope and purpose.” Regarding the three constructs, she added, “to me, they were locked together.”

In Alice’s reflections, she talked about the importance of the triangle. She said, “For me, nothing sits alone. It’s in this triangle, all fit into one, . . . we can’t separate them.” She also expressed it by saying, “the three are that same triangle, that they’re all embedded in one.” She provided examples, including “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; mind, body, and spirit; hope, meaning, and purpose.” Further she said, “The three of them, in my opinion, go together. And without one, you don’t have the other, . . . I think the three of them work together like cogs on a wheel.” She also appeared to suggest that there is a positivity associated with meaning, purpose, and hope and that there is the potential of a snowball effect. In her words, “If we have a positive attitude, generally we have a positive outlook on life and more hope, meaning, and purpose. . . . One can lead to another and maybe one is motivational to the other. . . . I think it’s all kind of snowballing, and it just sort of carries you forward.”

John described the relationships by saying,

> I would say that they are interrelated in that I don’t think you could exclude any one of them. You’ve either got all three or you’ve got none of them. . . . It would be like [like] missing a piece of the puzzle . . . You need all three. I think it all goes together.

He echoed Alice’s notions regarding positivity as well as snowballing. He said,

> All three . . . [meaning, purpose, and hope] have one thing in common. They make you feel good. They make you feel good inside. . . . It's like . . . snowballing, . . . If you feel good, you'll have more of them and you'll feel better, and on and on and on.

Another participant, Rosemary, suggested that at any given point in time one of the three constructs appears to take precedence over the other two; yet, they remain connected. With reference to the interrelationship between meaning, purpose, and hope, she said,

> It's just a question of which is more important, takes more importance at the time, and whether the purpose takes a back seat, while the meaning comes up, and the hope is more prominent, so depending on what the circumstances are, when one or the other would be more prominent, but they would all be linked.

And she summarized the notion by saying, "I recognize that they were related and sometimes hope is very strong, and sometimes meaning is very strong, and sometimes purpose is very strong, but they're all interrelated."

Herman also suggested that as there is a change in the experience of one construct, so too are there changes in the experiences of the others. He explained it like this:

> The interrelationships between purpose, hope, and meaning are incremental; they change, they transform, they modulate, they become, incrementally. . . . In a way, they probably have to move together. They can't move separately, . . . so as the ante goes up, as one moves incrementally towards, in my case, self-actualization, . . . it seems like purpose [is up], . . . set aside meaning and hope.

He described "a purposeful [event]" and continued, "then meaning takes precedence, and purpose and hope are the stall words. . . ." and so on.

Herman, in the context of his story about depression, also said,

> My story is the unfolding of the landmarks, the milestones, and stepping stones along the journey that gave rise to the learning and the growing, and that allowed me to keep taking the next purposeful step in the creation of meaning and the recovery, and enactment, of hope. They are seriously interconnected, the three . . . purpose, meaning, and hope.

Finally, Jeck offered a description of his experiences regarding the interrelationships of the three constructs.

> Hope . . . is kind of like the beginning of it, that's where the door opens. . . . I hope that I . . . whatever. And then within hope or along with that hope, you find a meaning, so it kind of leads naturally into a meaning. And within that meaning you can find a purpose, so that's . . . [the] sequence . . . of the three . . . Then at the end of that, one of two things, maybe even more than two, but at least two things will happen. Either your purpose will be achieved eventually or it won't. If it is achieved, then you might want to recycle and go back and find another hope that you can pursue through the chain. If it doesn't, then you can just continue with it, or you can say, "Well I guess I'm just not capable of this right now" or that "the stars aren't right," or whatever. Whatever reason you give, and so at that point you recycle again.

Jeck also referred to Ken Wilber, who he described as "an obscure philosopher," and said that he was "taking a more Wilberian view." He summarized his view: "That's what I'm talking about here, that it's a hierarchy of sorts, . . . more of a temporal hierarchy. At the beginning is hope, next comes meaning, next comes purpose."

Summary of the interrelationships between meaning, purpose, and hope. The participants' understandings appear to reflect a sense that all the three constructs are necessary, and it seems that they are inseparable. Further, the constructs appear to function together in such a way as to foster or sustain each other. There is also the suggestion that, at any point in time, one construct takes priority over the other two, and that, overall, each construct contributes to the others.

The Nature of the Participants' Experiences and Understandings of the Three Constructs

Although the examples of the participants' stories in the previous chapter and the current chapter, to this point, were limited to relevant illustrative segments due to space constraints, I hope that the reader has a sense of their diverse nature. Indeed, the stories vary considerably. To further elucidate the breadth of the variety, the following are just a few examples of spectrums across which the stories appeared to fall.

The first concerns the starting points of the stories in the participants' lives. They seem to be spread across a broad age range, including childhood, early adulthood, adulthood, and older adulthood. At one end of the spectrum, for example, might be Alice's story of creating art, which began in "grade three," so perhaps seven years of age, and at the other end, Jeck's story of reconnecting with an old friend and initiating a collaboration on a book, which began at 74 years of age.

The circumstances of the stories also varied, ranging across a spectrum from situations of relative ease to ones of considerable difficulty. For example, George's story of his career pursuit, when he was introduced to the solar system and developed an interest in astronomy might reflect a situation of ease, and Howard's story of his hip replacement, when he faced his mortality, of difficulty.

Further, the stories also appeared to fall at various points along a continuum of seemingly ordinary to seemingly extraordinary experiences. For example, Gillian's story, in which she described reading a card might reflect an ordinary situation, and Alice's story of being at a church and somehow feeling like "a billion little stars all just flickering," an extraordinary.

Finally, there was variety in the number of incidents involved as well as the span of time over which those incidents occurred. For example, Alice, in her story of being at the lake, described a single incident, that is, her experience of witnessing "five thousand geese… taking off," which occurred in the early hours of morning, and David, in his story of performing acts of kindness, described countless kind acts that he performed over nearly five decades.

Despite the diversity in the participants' stories, they appear to share some common patterns. Perhaps the most fundamental of the commonalities, which I will reiterate here, is that all of the stories were subjectively perceived as worthy of attention. Further, as evidenced in the previous section, there appear to be relationships between and among the experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope. Noteworthy as well, however, is that the stories appear to be associated with giving and, ultimately, with benefiting. The following two subsections present data that are intended to elucidate the giving as well as the benefiting.

Giving. The participants' stories about meaning, purpose, and hope, collectively, appeared overwhelmingly to be about giving. Regarding giving to another or others, the stories included family, friends, acquaintances, strangers, and/or a higher power. The current section presents the findings on giving to another or others as well as to oneself.

Many of the stories reflected both giving to others and giving to the self. In identifying patterns of giving, I considered the participants' main focus in the telling of their stories. The main focus of most participants' stories appeared to be about giving to others. In a few cases, the main focus seemed to be about giving to the self, and in fewer cases still, there seemed to be an equal emphasis on giving to others and giving to oneself.

The following three subsections present syntheses of stories of *Giving to another or others*, *Giving to another or others as well as to oneself,* and *Giving to oneself.* Many of the stories were complex and a number of them included more than one case of giving. For each story, I highlighted the main recipient(s) as well as the nature of the giving. In stories where there was more than one case of giving, and in an effort to give the reader a sense of the breadth of the giving, I also mention the recipient(s) and the nature of additional cases.

Giving to another or others. The ten participants shared 21 stories in which the primary focus seemed to be giving to another or others. Alice, Gillian, and David, for example, shared stories of supporting their families of orientation. Alice and Gillian each shared a story about supporting their mothers through their respective illnesses and deaths. Alice described "supporting her [mother] . . . [being] present for her, and [being] her advocate." She also talked about "[holding her] family [of orientation] together, and [directing] things" in matters regarding their mother's care. Gillian described the "importance of . . . *being* [emphasis added]" in supporting her mother, and she also talked about supporting her father through the experience.

In another of Alice's stories, she described an experience that she had at a church. Briefly, in her words, "It felt like I was a billion little stars all just flickering." Further, she indicated that "what went through [her] mind was that [she was] a conduit of love." Though she was not explicit about who received her love, this story was interjected during her telling of the story of supporting her mother and family of orientation. Thus, it would seem plausible that she was a "conduit" to her mother and siblings.

Gillian also shared another story of supporting a family member—her older brother—as well as friends. Further, she indicated that these people had some physical and/or mental health difficulties, and she talked about helping them with daily living tasks. Finally, she described developing supportive interpersonal relationships with them.

Five participants shared six stories that were primarily about being committed to and supporting members of their respective families of procreation, including, for example, a partner, children, and/or grandchildren. In Herman's story about his 24-year intimate relationship, he spoke of the support that he provided for his partner.

John and David spoke of raising their son and daughter, respectively. In particular, David described his experience of becoming a single father and pursuing a career that enabled him "to stay with [his] daughter and raise her." Further, "out of [his] desire to protect [her]," he became a childcare worker and "[started] a daycare." David described his career in childcare as one of "helping families, . . . supporting families." He also talked about his work in childcare in the broader context of his spiritual beliefs. In his words,

> To me, [childcare] feels like a sacred trust. That's how I regard it, and I love these children. I love them like my own. I want to protect them and care for them, and I don't see any difference between other people's children and mine because they're all children of God. The way I see it . . . I think God is love, so if I am acting in love that I'm doing God's will.

It appears that David is also giving to God.

In one of her stories, Rosemary spoke of supporting her daughter, particularly through her difficult marital situation. She described providing emotional as well as financial support.

Howard, in his story about his experience of hip surgery and subsequent superbug infection, talked about supporting his family in the immediate aftermath as well as his intension to improve upon that in the future. Specifically, he described his "family, grandchildren" as being "what's important," and he talked about his plan to "be a better spouse, . . . a better grandpa, a better father." Additionally, with reference to his hospital stays and the staff there, Howard talked about using his health difficulties “as a way to make other people’s lives better and to make their jobs better and to support them.” Indeed, he described the ways in which he gave to the staff. For example, he made every effort to manage without troubling them and to facilitate staff-in-trainings’ learning.

John shared a story about writing a book on managing personal finances. Though he indicated that the aim of it was “to do a lot of people a lot of good,” he emphasized that he was “very subtly . . . doing . . . a manual” for his son.

George shared two stories that involved what he came to view as family. Both stories stem from his experiences of a “chance” meeting with a teen-aged boy, who was “left” by his family. In the first story, George described how he assumed the role of the teen’s guardian and ensured that the boy had food, clothing, and shelter, as well as an education and a career direction. He went on to explain that he maintained the relationship over the years and that, at the time of the interview, the now grown man was “married . . . and . . . has his own children.” Further, George indicated that he considers this man his “next of kin.” In the second story, which was actually a story about a deadly tornado, he explained that his “foster son would be the first person that [he] would hope for.” He said he knew that the young man was working in the area where the tornado was “initially . . . tracking its way towards” and that “as soon as . . . [it] was over,” he “got into [his] car and went straight to the . . . store . . . to make sure that he was okay.” As George described it, “So I was caring . . . for the person I knew the most.”

Three participants shared four stories that dealt with giving to friends. Herman shared a story about supporting an elderly friend through health difficulties, including a final one which led to her death. Indeed, he described being with her “that night, the night she made her incredible journey up to the gates of some ceremony of her death, and back again." Herman also described how he supported his friend's family of procreation during their mother/grandmother's final days and afterward.

Gillian, in two of her stories, described giving to friends. In the first story, she described the impact a card had on her. The phrase on the card read, "You have to believe that you can make a difference." She explained that, "It stayed in [her] head. . . . [She] kept thinking about that off and on throughout the years." Further, she talked about "[making] a difference in one person's life or [making] a difference, . . . [being] more important to her than," for example, material possessions.

Throughout both interviews, Gillian provided numerous examples of giving to friends. In her second story, she highlighted a particular context for giving to friends, specifically describing her personal propensity for tears and how that tendency allowed her to "be of comfort to other people who really maybe are in distress and crying."

Finally, Jeck shared a story about reconnecting with an old friend and proposing that they co-author a book. In his words, "The direction I am headed in with this book [was] to reestablish contact with [Johann] and to try to help him help himself." Indeed, Jeck indicated that among his aims were "to make [Johann] happier."

Three participants also shared four stories about giving to strangers. George, for example, shared a story about volunteering in a provincial election campaign. His aim, in his words, was "to improve the democracy . . . in Canada and to act out [his] tiny responsibility for the future Government of" the province in which he resides.

In Carol's story, she described early life experiences that influenced her development of a social conscience and her decision to become a social worker. She also described her work as a social worker as well as in other helping professions. For example, she talked about “having a group home for young teenagers” together with her husband and teaching at a Western Canadian university, so that in various ways, she gave to countless strangers.

John shared two stories of giving. In the first, he described making a donation to Santas Anonymous, along with a co-worker. In the second, he described his experience of volunteering with Uncles at Large, an organization that provided companionship, support, and mentoring for boys from single-parent families. Though John and the boys started out as strangers, their relationship evolved as the volunteering continued.

Finally, David, in his story about performing acts of kindness, described a practice of giving to strangers that spanned nearly fifty years. David also indicated that, based on his spiritual beliefs, his kind acts reflect a “force for good in the world, or for God in the world.”

Giving to another or others and giving to oneself. Three participants shared stories that appeared to give comparable weight to their experiences of giving to another or others as well as giving to the self. Alice, in her story about creating, described a number of situations in which she “created.” Her description of, for example, raising and supporting her son and daughter reflects her giving to others. Her description of, for example, creating art reflects her giving to herself. Indeed, regarding her art, she was explicit about the focus. In her words, “I thought that my accomplishment would be to get into the National Art Gallery, . . . but then, all of a sudden that doesn’t matter anymore because I’m not doing the art to get into the National Art Gallery, I am doing the art for myself.”

In his story about his family of orientation, David described a number of ways in which he gave to his father, and he explained that he was aiming to gain his father's affection. In David's words, "I was always trying to get him to love me." When it was apparent that that was not going to happen, again in his words,

> I thought, "Okay! I'm just going to love myself." He's not going to, so [I] can't depend on anyone for my happiness except [myself]. . . . so I learned that I have to find it within. . . . I've learned . . . [to] create my own joy, find my own joy, . . . so, I do it every day by creating that reality.

Jeck, in his story about relationships, shared that he provided support for his family. He also talked about his aim of "becoming a better person," and indicated that "friends and family can help with that, because . . . they have a different perspective." Further, he explained that he saw his minister and his doctor as friends, and he described how he sought support from them as well as from his family.

Giving to oneself. Four participants shared five stories that are associated, primarily, with giving to oneself. In one of Alice's stories, one where she described her "euphoric" experience of "being a witness to this group of geese" taking off from a lake, she described her aim by saying, "My purpose was to enjoy it, and to be part of it, . . . participating, but not interfering." George, in a story about his career aspirations, described his aim of becoming a research scientist in astronomy. Clearly, such an aim involved education, and the giving to himself, in his case, included a Bachelor's as well as a Master's degree. Herman, in a story about his nearly thirty-two years of recurrent depression, indicated that his aim was to recover. He talked about having "lots of coping strategies," and he described a number of his attempts to help himself. Rosemary, in two of her stories, indeed, two stories that were also about health related difficulties, described things she did to contribute to her recovery. Her first story was about being "sick as a kid," and her second story was about having broken her arm not long after turning 70 years of age. In both cases, her involvement with textiles was a factor in her recovery. Interestingly, all of the participants in this subsection also shared other stories, and each of them shared at least one story where the focus was on giving to another or others.

A summary of giving. In the current study, although the participants included giving to others as well as to themselves, the emphasis, by far, was on other-oriented giving. Overall, the recipients included family members, friends, acquaintances, strangers, a higher power, as well as the self. The nature of the giving, as one might imagine, varied both within and between other- and self-oriented. With regard to other-oriented giving, it appeared to include, for example, "[loving]," being a "conduit of love," nurturing, "caring . . . for," "[protecting]," "[helping]," "supporting," "[advocating]," "[witnessing]," "[volunteering]," donating, contributing, educating, and "directing." In terms of giving to the self, it appeared to include, for example, "loving," taking care of, seeking support, accepting support, "[creating one's] own joy," "[enjoying]," "[being] part of . . . participating, but not interfering," pursuing an interest, and educating. Perhaps understandably, the overlap between other- and self-oriented giving appears to be associated with love, care, support, and education.

Benefiting. The participants appeared to perceive value in all of the stories about meaning, purpose, and hope that they shared. Indeed, regardless of whether the stories arose out of situations of ease or of difficulty, all of the participants shared ways in which they believed they had benefited. The benefits appeared to fall into three particular areas. Specifically, the participants described positive emotions, personal satisfaction or fulfillment, and personal growth—each of which is illustrated in the following three subsections.

Positive emotions. All of the participants ultimately felt positive about the experiences that they shared. Several of them described experiences that, in the end, were associated with positive emotions. Alice, for example, in her story about her mother, said, "It was very, very sad and challenging, but also joyful." Indeed, despite how difficult it was for Alice to support her mother through her decline and to her death, in summing up her experience she again described a positive emotion. In her words, "so my purpose was to support her, and the meaning was internal for me, spiritual, and it gave me joy."

In another of her stories, one in which she talked about creating, Alice talked about a spiritual connection. After she described the connection while creating art, she explained, "It doesn't have to be painting. I can work in the yard and dig trees and shrubs and plant and get dirty and . . . when I am creating, I get that same spiritual connection." Indeed, she said, "It connects me to the universe."

In yet another of her stories, Alice described "being down by the water with the geese" and watching them take off. She described it as "an awestruck experience" and "a very positive experience, a very uplifting experience."

Gillian, in her story about helping friends in need, shared an emotion-evoking story about a friend and former colleague who had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. She explained that her friend was in a nursing home and that she and another of their former colleagues went "to visit her . . . every single Sunday for two years (crying)." She furthered, "Sort of memorable things . . . happened there . . . , and it was quite poignant. . . . We felt good afterwards, . . . I mean we felt very positive after our visiting time. . . . Somehow for all three of us, the day was better than if we hadn't been there."

In Howard's story about having a hip replacement and subsequent superbug infection—which was emotion-evoking for him—he described a situation in which a student licensed practical nurse asked whether she might watch as "they . . . [removed] the bandage on [his] incision, . . . and put a special kind of bandage on it." Howard not only agreed, but extended an invitation to others of her colleagues to watch as well. In Howard's words, "So when the time came, the nurse was changing the bandage and there [were] these five or six young nurses at the foot of the bed . . ." Again, in Howard's words, "I just felt so good to be able to have a purpose for being there, to be able to help someone, to help them learn, to help them become better nurses, (weeping) . . . I just felt so at peace with that, to be able to do that."

In reflecting on all four of his stories and in the context of meaning, purpose, and hope, John shared, "And the common denominator in all three is you feel good. It's good. It's good for you."

Finally, through the course of his story of performing acts of kindness, David highlighted a number of positive emotions. (See Appendix I for additional examples.) After sharing descriptions of some of the kind acts he has performed, David encapsulated his experiences. In his words,

> I just feel so wonderful inside, and I don't even need a thank you. I don't need that, because I just feel good to help people and to me, that's the secret of life, is giving and helping. I think I've discovered it; the greatest joy in life is giving.

The final sentence of David's description appears to segue to the following subsection.

Personal satisfaction and/or fulfillment. Indeed, David's description of his experience of "giving" as "the greatest joy in life" also reflects a strong sense of satisfaction or fulfillment. Many other participants' stories include a similar sense. Alice, for example, in her story about supporting her mother and managing her family of orientation described, "Just having the strength to jump in and do what needs to be done, and in return, you get satisfaction." She furthered, "It was a very difficult situation, but it was also very rewarding." And as she reflected on all four of her stories, she said, "So all of these experiences that I have had, when I get to a level of getting outside of my head, there is a satisfaction."

In his story about his hip and, in particular, in the context of not troubling the hospital staff, but rather giving to them, Howard said, "That gave me the sense that I could be useful, and it was not in vain that this was happening."

After John shared his story about making a contribution to Santas Anonymous, he made a general statement about his experience, "We get these little rewards." He furthered, "If it's a good thing [that you are doing], you are going to be rewarded over and over again." In the second interview, as he was reflecting on all four of his stories, he said, "To do something maybe for somebody in which you expect nothing in return . . . , and you get the satisfaction."

David, in the context of his experience of becoming a single father and subsequently a childcare worker, expressed his sense of satisfaction or fulfillment in a few different ways. In his words,

> I think I made the right decision to stay with my daughter and raise her and start a daycare . . . and I've had a very rich and rewarding life, and an amazing journey and it's not over yet. I have seventy-five letters of reference, and when I read those letters it brings tears to my eyes, . . . Just amazing letters. One mother said,

> "[David] was everything a mother could ever hope for, a true blessing." You know I read stories like that and sometimes I cry when I read them because I think, I've really made a difference in the world. I've done something good with my life.

He also said,

> With each family that I come into contact with, each child, each parent, . . . I'm planting seeds of hope for the future, and I feel that I've lived a wonderful life. And I can get to the end of my life and I can look back on it and I can smile and I can say, "You've done good."

Finally, upon further reflection and in consideration of his career, he added that if he had not changed direction, "I would have looked back at my life with regret, and I would have been sad. I would have reflected, 'My life hasn't made a difference, hasn't mattered to anyone.'"

Personal growth. Many of the participants' stories appeared to reflect personal growth. To illustrate, Alice, again in the story of her mother and family of orientation, said,

> I was able to be there for her, . . . and it gave me strength. I learned a lot about myself through this process . . . things like, "Oh I don't think I can do this, I don't think I can do this. Oh yes I can." And then mustering the inner strength, which I didn't realize that I had . . . and taking charge of the family through this whole process, and I didn't realize the power I had with my brothers. I would phone them and say, "We're having a meeting at six and I need you to be there," and all six of them were there.

In another of her stories, one in which she talks about creating, Alice also described her experience of gaining power and strength. Specifically regarding creating, in her words,

> It's an innate drive. I need to create and it doesn't matter . . . whether it's painting or designing or landscaping or whatever, I have a real need to create. . . . [and] by doing this, it gives me power and it gives me strength.

It appears that, through her experiences, Alice gained "power" and "strength."

Gillian, in the context of her story about supporting her parents through her mother's illness and death and then later in the context of all four of her stories, described her development. Regarding her mother she stated quite simply, “I was a different person by the time my mother died (crying) than before.” After reflecting on all of her stories, Gillian described her development in a couple of different ways. To begin with, she said, “With my mother . . . and some other people as well, . . . it was a journey for me to learn about myself.” She added, “I also have to say that I realized that I can [make a difference].”

In Howard’s emotion-evoking story about the difficulties that he had with his hip, and in particular regarding his superbug infection, he said that his experience left him “thinking about death.” He explained, “having . . . at least dealt with the question of illness and . . . how do you want people to remember you. This was . . . what I had thought I . . . learned.” Howard went on to say,

> It helped me to begin to prioritize things. It began to make me see . . . , I told my wife, in many different ways, . . . I have slowed down. I don’t walk near as fast. . . . I don’t remember ever seeing a more beautiful spring. I don’t remember seeing the grass and the trees so nice and green, and the birds, it seems like I’m hearing them for the first time (weeping).

Herman shared three stories of meaning, purpose, and hope. He indicated at the outset “that they were embedded within one another” and that “[I was] probably going to learn much greater depth as we proceed to and through the third one.” His stories were about his friendship with Pauline, his experience with depression, and his long-term intimate relationship. At the end of the third story, he tied the three stories together. Particularly relevant to the first story was his sharing that “[he] was the only person in the world who could have been with [Pauline] . . . the night she made her incredible journey up to the gates of some ceremony of her death, and back again, . . . a journey that [they] needed to make together.” Herman indicated that this experience “freed [him].” Relevant to the second story was that this allowed him to "[reclaim his] ability to experience [his] innate capacity for hope." Regarding all of this, and relevant to the third story, was that, "even though it [was] very hard," it allowed him to "leave [his] marriage." Herman also talked about "growing" through these and subsequent experiences. Overall, it appears that Herman has recovered from depression and come to appreciate his capacity to make decisions and move forward in his life.

In his story about his family of orientation, David described a couple of areas of personal growth that came out of his difficult childhood. Briefly, David shared that his father was physically and emotionally abusive towards him and that his mother "was complicit in her silence and condoned the abuse." He indicated that he made numerous attempts to "[win] his [father's] affection," but he was unsuccessful. He concluded that it was up to him to "love [himself]" and "create [his] own joy." With regard to David's difficult experiences, he said, "I'm sure they all played an important role in giving me a lot of insight and you could say compassion, [that] maybe I wouldn't have had otherwise." Further, David indicated that "[he is] always praying to be an instrument of God's love." David seems to have developed his capacity to give to himself and others, as well as to God.

Rosemary, in her story about having broken her arm, described a couple of areas of personal growth through her experiences. Regarding the first one, she implied that at the outset, it was unclear to her whether or not and to what degree she would "be able to use [her] hand again." Further, with reference to the use of her hand, "It made me realize how much my work [textiles] means to me." Rosemary also described the support that she received from family and friends, and in particular, regarding friends, she talked about a new-found sense of having “some value to them.” It appears, then, that Rosemary came to realizations regarding her passion as well as her value.

A summary of benefiting. The participants’ stories reflect personal benefit, in particular in three areas. These areas were associated with positive emotions, a sense of satisfaction or fulfillment, and personal growth. Regarding the association to positive emotions, for example, the participants indicated that they felt “very positive,” “good,” “so good,” “so wonderful,” “[joy],” “[uplifted],” “[awe],” and “so at peace.” With regard to the association to satisfaction or fulfillment, the participants used, for example, the following words or phrases: “you get satisfaction,” “it was very rewarding,” and “it gave me the sense that I could be useful.” Finally, in association with personal growth, the participants used, for example, the following words and phrases to describe their experiences: “made me realize,” “learned . . . ,” “it was a journey . . . to learn about myself,” “[grew],” “it [gave] me power and . . . strength,” “it gave me strength, which I didn’t realize that I had,” and “I was a different person . . . .”

Overall, the participants’ stories of meaning, purpose, and hope, combined, appeared to be associated with benefit through having positive experiences as well as through identifying and/or strengthening personal qualities, abilities, and/or priorities.

Chapter 6

Discussion

The following chapter discusses the results of the findings from the two previous chapters as well as from Appendix I. It begins with a discussion of the main findings in the context of the research literature. Specifically, focusing on the three constructs—meaning, purpose, and hope—with emphasis on each of the following areas: (1) as distinct constructs, (2) as inextricably linked, (3) as associated with giving, (4) as associated with positive emotions, and (5) as an upward spiral. For each of these areas, I synthesize and elaborate on the findings, and then I discuss them. This is followed by further discussion of the results, including theoretical and clinical implications and recommendations. I then discuss the limitations of the study and potential directions for further research. I conclude with a summary of the study, which highlights the findings.

It is important to note that, as indicated in chapters one and two, the research literature is inconsistent, particularly in its usage of meaning and purpose. Indeed, much of the literature melds the two constructs together in one way or another. Given that my findings revealed that the three constructs are distinct, I focus on literature that reflects this distinction. When I include literature that does not represent distinct constructs, I indicate that that is the case.

Meaning, Purpose, and Hope

Based on the data from the ten participants in the current study, each of the three constructs—meaning, purpose, and hope—is subjectively experienced and understood.

Distinct constructs. The data for this study reveal that meaning, purpose, and hope are experienced and understood as distinct multifaceted constructs. Regarding the distinct nature of meaning and purpose, the literature provides some examples of this distinction (Frankl, 1952/1986; George & Park, 2013; McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). Far more prevalent in the literature, however, is an opposing perspective, one that treats the two constructs as the same or somehow an integral part of the other (Damon et al., 2003; King et al., 2006; Klinger, 1998, 2012; Pisca & Feldman, 2009; Reker & Wong, 1988, 2012; Steger, 2009; Vos, 2016, 2018). There appears to be no question about the distinct nature of hope in the research literature.

Regarding the multifaceted nature of meaning, purpose, and hope, the current study revealed that, to a greater or lesser degree, the constructs have at least eight common aspects: binary, cognitive, affective, behavioural, relational, temporal, dynamic, and agentic. The existing literature provides some support for a combination of aspects in meaning (Frankl, 1952/1986, 1959/1962, 1969/1988, 2000) and purpose (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009) and substantial support for the same in hope (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985). The following highlights findings on the aspects of the constructs from the current study and provides relevant examples from the literature.

Regarding the binary aspect, the current study revealed that the participants experienced each of the constructs from one of two different perspectives. One perspective is more specific, or perhaps particular, and the other is broader, or perhaps generalized. I termed these perspectives the situational dimension and the global dimension, respectively, and, as indicated, the overall aspect binary. A number of authors have similarly distinguished two perspectives. For example, regarding meaning, Frankl (1959/2006, 2000), through his work before and during World War II, offered similar dimensions, terming them meaning of the moment and ultimate or super-meaning, respectively.

With respect to purpose, McKnight and Kashdan (2009), through their work on health and well-being, also described two perspectives. Indeed, their identification of lower- and higher-order goals and “a purpose” (p. 243) are similar to the situational and global dimensions, respectively.

Reker and Wong (1988, 2012) conceptualize meaning as “the umbrella construct, which subsumes purpose, understanding, etc.” (P. T. Wong, personal communication, August 27, 2018). They identify “two different but interrelated aspects” (Reker & Wong, 2012, p. 433-434) of meaning, and they identify them in the same terms that I do: situational and global.

Finally, regarding hope, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) developed a model of the construct with data from 65 years or older cancer patients. The model includes two spheres and six dimensions. The spheres, which they describe as particularized and generalized, reflect situational and global dimensions of the binary aspect of hope, respectively. Table 2 summarizes the terms used by these authors to describe similar dimensions to those of the binary aspect of the constructs.

Table 2

Binary Aspect of Meaning, Purpose, and Hope: Examples of Dimensions

	Situational Dimension (more specific or particular)	**Global Dimension** (more broad or general)
Meaning	Meaning of the moment (Frank, 1959/1962)	Ultimate or super-meaning (Frankl, 1959/1962)
Purpose	Lower- and higher-order goals (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009)	“A purpose” (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009)

Table 2 (continued).

Meaning (subsumes purpose)	Situational (Reker & Wong, 1988, 2012)	Global (Reker & Wong, 1988, 2012)
Hope	Particularized (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985)	Generalized (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985)

Interestingly, within the binary aspect, the situational dimensions of the three constructs appeared to resonate comparably among the participants. This may be attributable to the research design, that is, the participants were invited to share a story based on their experiences and later their understandings of meaning, purpose, and hope. Regarding the global dimension, however, hope appears to have resonated most strongly with the participants. Indeed, they, often randomly, spoke to their "[hopefulness]."

Regarding the cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects, cognitive deals with mental processes, affective deals with emotions and/or feelings, and behavioural deals with actions. In the current study, these three aspects, overall, appear to have more distinguishing features as well as variety in terms of the role that they play in the relationships between the constructs than the other aspects. More specifically, meaning was found to be the subjective sense of what is "important" or "[significant]." This primarily involved thought and feeling in evaluation and decision-making. There was an association with acting, but relative to thought and feeling, it was minor. Purpose, on the other hand, was found to be a subjective "proposal or intent or plan," "goal," or "[doing]," which involves mental, emotional, and physical activity from decision-making through implementation. That said, it warrants mention that acting appeared to play a larger role. Finally, hope was found to be the subjective "experience" and/or "expectation" that is positive in nature. The descriptions included, for example, "positive outlook," "optimism," and “being joyful.” Overall, the emphasis was on mental and emotional capacities. Acting was, however, also found to be associated with hope.

In situating these findings within the literature, meaning, as “importance” or “significance” was reflected in Frankl’s work. For example, in his description of meaning as a primary force in life he explains, “Meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own *will to meaning*” (Frankl, 1959/1962, p. 99). Regarding purpose, “[goals]” and “[doing]” were reflected in McKnight and Kashdan’s (2009) work. In their words: “Purpose—a cognitive process that defines life goals and provides personal meaning . . . Devoting effort and making progress toward life goals provides . . .” (2009, p. 242). Regarding hope, “positive” was reflected in Dufault and Martoccohio’s (1985) model. For example, with respect to generalized hope, they describe it as “an intangible umbrella that protects hoping persons by casting a positive glow on life” (1985, p. 350). Additionally, the particular dimension within their model in which it was reflected was the affective dimension.

Noteworthy is that the cognitive and affective aspects resonated more strongly for the participants than the behavioural aspect in meaning and hope, and the opposite was true for purpose. That is, the behavioural aspect resonated more strongly than the cognitive and affective aspects for purpose.

With respect to the remaining aspects, the relational aspect deals with relationships with the self, another (or others), a higher power, nature, and/or an object (or objects). The temporal aspect deals with time and, in particular, past, present, and future. The dynamic aspect deals with changes over time, and the agentic, with having a sense of agency. The current study reflected associations between each of the four aspects and each of the individual constructs.

The literature reflects the same for all three constructs. Indeed, Frankl's (1959/1962, 1969/1988, 2000, 1959/2006) and McKnight and Kashdan's (2013) work reflects the association between each of the relational, temporal, dynamic, and agentic aspects and meaning and purpose, respectively. For example, these four aspects of meaning are reflected in Frankl's statement: "Man does not simply exist but always decides what his existence will be, what he will become the next moment" (1959/2006, p. 129). Most concise of the illustrations of the aspects of purpose is the agentic. McKnight and Kashdan (2009) state that "personal agency . . . [is] central to purpose" (p. 242). Regarding hope, the relational and temporal aspects are reflected in the affiliative and temporal dimensions of the Dufault and Martocchio (1985) model, respectively. The dynamic aspect is reflected in Dufault and Martocchio's description of the construct, that is, "hope is a *multidimensional* dynamic life force . . . " (p. 350). The agentic aspect is reflected in Larsen, Edey, and LeMay's (2007) work on the role of hope in counselling (p. 405). Of note, the relational, temporal, dynamic, and agentic aspects are of comparable resonance to the participants across the three constructs.

Vos (2016), in his systematic review of meaning-centred practices world wide, found that "individuals experience meaning in life as a multidimensional phenomenon" (p. 70). Further, he indicated that this phenomenon "seems important and predictive of . . . general well-being" (2016, p. 70). It must be noted, however, that the "authors [of the studies] are often unclear about the use of the terms meaning and purpose" (J. Vos, personal communication, June 13, 2019). My understanding of Vos' comment, and my experience, is that authors do not often define or clearly explain their use of the terms, meaning and purpose.

As mentioned earlier, the finding that meaning and purpose are distinct contradicts the vast majority of the literature. It is not, however, a new notion. Frankl, for example, who is said to have "launched psychology's interest in [meaning]" (Steger, 2018, p. 3), through his seminal work (1959/1962) in the area, appeared to have conceptualized the constructs as distinct. Though he did not define them, various scholars have offered explanations of his use of the terms. Batthyany's (2011) interpretation, for example, is cited in Chapter 2, the literature review. More recently, George and Park (2013) have found direct empirical evidence that supports the notion that meaning and purpose are distinct constructs. Briefly, in a quantitative study, with a longitudinal design and 167 participants who were survivors of cancer, they found that meaning and purpose had different predictors and correlates (2013, p. 365). Specifically, meaning was predicted by spirituality, and purpose was predicted by social support. Meaning was positively correlated with posttraumatic growth and negatively with posttraumatic depreciation, and purpose was negatively correlated with intrusive thoughts regarding cancer.

Inextricably linked. Based on the data from the ten participants, it appears the experiences of the three constructs—meaning, purpose, and hope—are inextricably linked. Indeed, regarding the three constructs, the participants offered the following descriptions: "They are seriously interconnected," "locked together," "all embedded in one," "The three of them . . . go together, and without one, you don't have the [others], . . . [they] work together like cogs on a wheel," and "You've either got all three or you've got none of them . . . It would be [like] missing a piece of the puzzle . . . You need all three."

The notion of interrelationships between the constructs appears to be supported by empirical research. For example, in work with university and college students, Halama (2002) and Feldman and Snyder (2005) found strong correlations between and among the three constructs. Specifically, Halama found the correlations between meaning, purpose, and hope, while Feldman and Snyder, found correlations between meaning and hope as well as between purpose and hope.

Further, the data from the current study also revealed many words and phrases that suggested directionality between the experiences of the constructs. There was evidence in the data that the majority of the stories contained bidirectionality in all of the possible pairs of constructs, that is, a direction from meaning to purpose and from purpose to meaning; purpose to hope and hope to purpose, as well as hope to meaning and meaning to hope. A few of the stories had five of the relationships and a few of the stories had four.

Overall, the relationships primarily involved the binary aspects of each of the three constructs; the cognitive and affective aspects of all three of the constructs (although seemingly with less emphasis on these constructs for purpose); and the behavioural aspect of purpose.

Regarding the findings on meaning and purpose, specifically in the direction from meaning to purpose, it appears that meaning involved a sense-making of the circumstances which influenced an aim or goal or, indeed, purpose. In the direction from purpose to meaning, it appears that purpose involved an aware "doing" of the aim or goal.

Out of this came feedback, which in turn involved sense-making and evaluation of meaning.

In terms of the research, these two relationships—from meaning to purpose and from purpose to meaning—resemble elements of Reker and Wong's (2012) three-component model of the structure of personal global meaning (p. 435). The model contains a cognitive, motivational, and affective component. According to Wong, "The cognitive factor is related to understanding, . . . the motivational factor is related to purpose, [and] the affective factor is related to enjoyment or happiness" (personal communication, August 27, 2018). The model describes the direction from the cognitive to the motivational components with: "Directs selection of goals" (Reker & Wong, 2012, p. 435), which is similar to the current findings on meaning to purpose. As indicated, meaning involved sense-making which influenced a goal. Reker and Wong describe the direction from motivational to cognitive with: "Strengthens the belief system" (2012, p. 435), which is similar to the current findings on purpose to meaning. Specifically, during the enactment of their purpose, the participants had a cognitive and/or affective reaction, which was filtered through their belief system. Feedback from that reaction was then utilized in sense making and evaluation of meaning.

Further, Vos and Vitali (2018) present a systematic review of meaning-centred therapies. Some of the findings from the review are also presented in Vos (2016), and particularly relevant here is that he revealed that "purposes" motivate meaning (p. 65). It is important to note that it is unclear whether the studies included reflect situational and/or global meaning, but it is likely that they reflect a conceptualization of meaning that is somehow combined with purpose. McKnight and Kashdan (2009) also offer a description of the direction from purpose to meaning. Their use of purpose is akin to the global dimension of the binary aspect identified in the current study. They indicate that "purpose . . . [causes] well-formed, organized goal structures and meaning" (2009, p. 243). In other words, they are describing a broad or general purpose in life, which leads to the formation of goals as well as meaning.

The relationships in the current study between purpose and hope as well as meaning and hope bear some similarities. In the relationship with a direction from purpose to hope, it seems that the participants chose and pursued an aim or a goal, or indeed, a purpose, which they felt positive about and that that positivity fostered hope. In the case of meaning to hope, it appears that the meaningful experience was made sense of, perceived as positive, and, again, that positivity fostered hope.

In terms of the literature, Miller's (1986, 2000) work reflects these relationships. She indicated that "Hope is an anticipation of a future that is good and is based upon: mutuality (relationships with others), a sense of personal competence, coping ability, psychological well-being, purpose and meaning in life, and a sense of 'the possible'" (p. 52; as cited in Miller, 2000, p. 523-524). In saying that purpose and meaning in life are among the things that hope is "based upon," she is describing a direction from meaning and purpose to hope. Benzein, Saveman, and Norberg (2000) also found a relationship between meaning and hope. The first phrase of their description reflects meaning to hope: "The experience of meaning is the trigger that starts hope related to being, which is a prerequisite for hope related to doing" (p. 314).

Considering the findings on the direction from hope to meaning as well as hope to purpose, it appears that what the participants held as meaningful and purposeful, respectively, were their objects of hope. Further it seems that hope was a factor in sustaining the meaning and the purpose. There also appeared to be a second pattern of hope to meaning: It seems that hope, a hopefulness, or a hopeful disposition acted as a filter through which meaning was experienced and perceived.

In terms of supporting research, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) indicate that hope "preserves and restores the meaning of life" (p. 381). Feldman and Snyder (2005) indicate that "hopeful thinking is at the heart of the meaning construct itself" (p. 407). Neither of these two papers provides a definition or description of meaning, and it is unclear whether it includes purpose.

While there is some support for the individual relationships between the constructs, research exploring the interrelationships of meaning, purpose, and hope in the context of the three of them combined is extremely limited. And so the current findings appear to be novel and can be viewed as preliminary work in this area.

Associated with giving. The participants were invited to share stories about meaning, purpose, and hope from their lived experiences. They had between 60 and 74 years of experiences. The stories they chose were stories that meant something to them, that is, stories that held a certain significance or value to them. Interestingly, the stories they chose started anywhere from childhood to older adulthood. Perhaps more interestingly, the stories they chose were about giving. Though there was evidence of giving to the self, the overwhelming majority of the stories focused on giving to others. These others included family members, friends, acquaintances, strangers, as well as a higher power.

This other-oriented giving, in particular with older adult populations, is somewhat consistent with the research literature. Reker and Wong (2012), for example, examined sources of meaning in a Canadian sample of 120 community-residing adults, aged 52 to 93 years (p. 445). They found that 27 percent of the participants oriented toward self-transcendent sources of meaning (including, for example, leaving a legacy for the next generation, having an interest in humanistic concerns); 20 percent toward collectivistic sources of meaning (for example, service to others, commitment towards larger societal and political causes); 28 percent toward individualistic sources of meaning; and 25 percent toward self-preoccupied sources of meaning (2012, pp. 445-446). Prager (1996), in his examination of an Australian population (18 to 91 years of age), found preserving values and ideals, personal growth, and interest in social causes to be among the highest ranking sources of meaning for people over 60 (p. 128). Further, in a study of an Israeli population (18 to 91 years of age), Prager (1998) found that humanistic concerns and financial security were rated as among the highest ranking in participants aged 50 to 91 (p. 133). Though there is some variability in the sources of meaning, common among them—for populations that include the 60 to 75 year age range of the participants in the current study—is other-oriented giving. Also common among them is that the authors view meaning as subsuming purpose.

Further, though not specifically with older adult populations, other-oriented giving in the context of meaning is consistent with the research literature. Vos (2016), for example, "in a systematic literature review of 79 publications on what individuals [from around the world] experience as meaningful in life" (pp. 68-69), identified five domains of meaning. Among them is other-oriented giving. It is important to note, however, that

Vos' review reflected work that was unclear in its use of the terms meaning and purpose (J. Vos, personal communication, June 13, 2019). In addition to identifying the five domains, he highlighted their hypothetical underlying values. Regarding social sources of meaning, the underlying values included "being connected with others, belonging to a specific community, and improving the well-being of others and children in particular" (2016, p. 69). He also described each area in greater detail, and particularly relevant here are two of his illustrations of the social sources of meaning. Specifically, "altruism, e.g., selfless services to others, contribution to society" (2016, p. 69) and "taking care of children, e.g., becoming a parent, foster care, working in education" (2016, p. 69). Indeed, in the current study the participants' stories reflect a strong social source of meaning; for example, regarding selfless services to others, recall John's story of volunteering as an Uncle at Large, and regarding becoming a parent, recall David's story of becoming a single father.

In addition to the social sources of meaning, Vos (2016) identified the following sources of meaning: materialistic-hedonic domain of meaning; self-oriented sources of meaning; transcending/higher sources of meaning; and the meaning of being here ("meta-meaning") (p. 69-70). Further, he indicated that what is meaningful to an individual could be reflected in more than one area of meaning (2016, p. 68). Of the participants' stories that focused on other-oriented giving, there were indeed elements of all of these types of meaning. Most predominant among those, however, were the self-oriented sources of meaning and transcending/higher sources of meaning. Interestingly, in his concluding remarks, Vos stated, "Individuals experience different types of meaning, . . . with social and transcendent meanings as more beneficial to their well-being" (p. 71). This notion of contributing to one’s well-being serves as a helpful segue, because, certainly, there was evidence that the participants benefited from their experiences. In the following section, I present some examples of the benefits.

Associated with positive emotions. Though the stories about meaning, purpose, and hope that the participants chose to share covered a spectrum of starting points from circumstances of ease to those of great difficulty, common to all of them was an association with positive emotions. In particular, I will focus on the positive emotions that were directly articulated as well as those that came out of a sense satisfaction or fulfillment and valued personal growth through experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope.

Regarding positive emotions, in addition to explicitly describing their experiences of, for example, “[joy],” “[awe],” and “at peace,” there was evidence of the participants’ emotion during the interviews. Indeed, I could hear, for example, the joy and awe in their voices as they shared the stories. Additionally, participants were visibly moved during the telling of many of their stories. For example, many stories were told with eyes welling up with and through tears. With one possible exception, where the tears may have been reflective of a combination of joy and sadness, my understanding was that they reflected positive emotions.

Regarding satisfaction and fulfillment, the participants were explicit in describing these experiences. Indeed, they talked about, for example, having a sense of “satisfaction,” a “very rewarding” experience, and a “sense that” they “could be useful.” These experiences gave rise to such positive emotions as happiness, contentment, and gratification.

Finally, with regard to valued personal growth, through the course of their experiences, including challenging experiences, the participants felt that they had identified and/or strengthened personal qualities, abilities, and/or priorities. Overall, among the emotions related to these experiences were joy, optimism, and interest.

With regard to the literature, certainly there is evidence of an association between emotions and meaning. For example, Fredrickson (2001) stated, "First, emotions are typically about some personally meaningful circumstance . . . (Oatley & Jenkins, 1996; Russell & Feldman Barrett, 1999; Ryff & Singer, in press)" (p. 2). Further, research shows that experiencing positive emotions contributes to the promotion of well-being (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Lyumbomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005).

Upward spiral. The current data revealed a pattern of experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope fostering experiences of the same, creating an upward spiral. To clarify, as described in a previous section, meaning, purpose, and hope are inextricably linked. Indeed, many participants explicitly described a direction from one construct to another. They said things like “meaning gives purpose,” “hope brings purpose,” and so on. Further, there was substantial evidence of participants’ implicit and partially explicitly descriptions of the relationships. Additionally, all of the constructs were associated with the dynamic aspect, in other words they reflected change. Given that there were descriptions of all of the possible relationships between the constructs, and that all three of the constructs are ongoingly changing, it follows that meaning, purpose, and hope foster meaning, purpose, and hope. Put another way, if meaning gives purpose, and meaning is shifting, it follows that meaning is ongoingly giving new purpose. Though this purpose may not always be very different, it is new. Significantly, participants also implicitly and/or explicitly described experiences where meaning, purpose, and/or hope gave them more meaning, purpose, and/or hope. David, for example in the context of performing acts of kindness as well as his work in childcare, was explicit in his descriptions. He said, “My goal is to make the world a better place, so every time I do an act of kindness, . . . I am fulfilling my intentions, and . . . so my life has more purpose”; “Every time I do one of these acts of kindness, it gives my life more meaning”; and “Every time I . . . touch someone’s heart and touch their lives, . . . that gives me more hope, every time.” Further, following reflections of their experiences, Alice and John both described their understandings of the nature of this ongoing fostering of the constructs. They also referred to this fostering as “snowballing.” In effect, the participants’ experiences and their understandings of their experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope reflect an upward spiral of the experiences of the constructs.

Regarding the research literature, Reker and Wong’s (2012) work reflects a somewhat similar process whereby the experiences of meaning and purpose foster more experiences of meaning and purpose. It must be noted that Reker and Wong view meaning as an umbrella that subsumes purpose. They describe a situational meaning and a global meaning, and importantly, definitions of both include the notion that purpose is one component of them both. Further, they indicate that situational meaning is related to “the value and purpose of specific encounters and experiences in life that occur on a day-to-day basis” (2012, p. 435). They also explain that these are a source of global meaning. It follows then, that the meaning and purpose of ongoing and changing daily experiences ongoingly impact the global meaning.

Theoretical and Clinical Implications and Recommendations

To my knowledge, the current study was the first to qualitatively explore non-clinical older adults' experiences and understandings of meaning, purpose, and hope in the context of the three constructs. The study and the findings provide a preliminary understanding of the topic. Here, I discuss them in the context of prosociality, Fredrickson's (2001, 2013) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, and psychotherapy.

With regard to giving, the primary focus of most of the stories reflected prosocial behaviours. Prosociality describes behaviours intended to benefit others (Lay & Hoppmann, 2015, p.1; Keltner, Kogen, Piff, & Saturn, 2014). Interestingly, all of the participants in the current study described more than one situation of giving. Interestingly as well, according to Keltner, Kogan, Piff, and Saturn (2014), there is "general scholarly consensus that prosociality is widespread, intuitive, and rooted deeply within our biological makeup" (p. 425).

In the current study, the recipients of the participants' prosociality were typically another or others, but in the case of at least one participant, the intended recipient was God. Though, overall, the primary motivation was giving, the participants received some benefits. According to Keltner et al. (2014), benefits from prosocial behaviour might include such things as feeling good about oneself; avoiding negative feelings, for example, guilt or anxiety; and/or receiving some social reward. In the current study, the participants experienced the benefit of positive emotions. These appeared to stem from a sense of satisfaction or fulfillment and/or personal growth.

It is important to note, as well, that research in the area of prosocial behaviour shows that "various positive states prompt prosocial behaviour, and . . . prosocial actions

[lead] to positive states" (Aknin, Van de Vondervoort, & Hamlin, 2018, p. 55). Positive states or positive emotions are relevant to the current research because of the identified association between positive emotions and meaning.

According to Fredrickson, experiencing positive emotions ultimately leads to enhancing one's potential to find positive meaning in the future (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2009; Fredrickson, 2001, 2013). Fredrickson developed the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2009; Fredrickson, 2001, 2013). According to the theory, "experiences of positive emotions broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires, which in turn serves to build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources" (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 1). Further, it is important to note that the relationship between positive emotions and meaning is reciprocal. In other words, in addition to positive emotions broadening thinking and increasing the likelihood of finding positive meaning, finding positive meaning triggers positive emotions (2001, p. 9). The implications of Fredrickson's findings for the current research are significant. In the current study, meaning, purpose, and hope foster the same. Given the evidence that experiencing positive emotions ultimately enhances meaning making capabilities, we might expect that this experience will ultimately lead to greater meaning as well as purpose and hope.

Indeed, hope also plays a role in Fredrickson's (2013) theory. She indicates that, in times of difficulty, hope "creates the urge to draw one's own capabilities and inventiveness to turn things around" (p. 4). Further, she explains that hope builds, for example, optimism and resilience to adversity (2013, p. 4). Overall, it seems that Fredrickson is identifying a second path to fostering the three constructs.

Another vehicle for fostering the experiences of the three constructs in people's lives is through counselling interventions. Vos and Vitali (2018) conducted a literature review and meta-analysis on the effectiveness of meaning-centred practices. In discussing the study, Vos (2018) stated, "After the last session and at follow-up, meaning-centred treatments created significantly large improvements in the client's quality of life and psychological well-being. . . . Quality of life included, general quality of life, meaning in life, hope and optimism, self-efficacy, and social well-being" (p. 93-94). Overall, the study revealed that "explicitly addressing meaning in a systematic way improves the client's quality of life, psychological stress and physical well-being" (2018, p. 94). According to Vos (2018), clients improved because of "their improvement in meaning-centred skills" (p. 101). Additionally, Wong (2012a), who developed meaning-centred counselling and therapy out of logotherapy, claims that his intervention "helps people acquire existential insight and psychological skills to transform and transcend unavoidable predicaments and pursue worthy life goals" (p. 627).

Hope has been identified as one of four key factors that contribute to change across a number of different theoretical orientations (Hubble et al., 1999). Though we are beginning to get a sense of both implicit (Larsen & Stege, 2010a) and explicit hope-focused practices (Edey & Jevne, 2003; Larsen & Stege, 2010b) in psychotherapy, there remains limited research in hope-focused practices and their effectiveness in therapy.

Research on the combined meaning-centred and hope-focused therapy is rare. That said, one study, "Efficacy of group meaning centered hope therapy of cancer patients and their families on patients' quality of life" (Farhadi et al., 2014), shows promise. It revealed that the meaning- and hope-focused intervention, which was delivered to the patients and their families had a positive effect on the patients' quality of life (QOL; 2014, p. 290). (As the authors did not delineate meaning, it is difficult to know whether or not purpose was also incorporated in the intervention.) Particularly noteworthy about the study was that "holding group sessions either for the patients or their families equally improved patients QOL" (2014, p. 290).

Evidence for the effectiveness of meaning-centred therapeutic interventions, the importance of hope in psychotherapy across a spectrum of approaches, and the efficacy of a group meaning-centred hope therapy are noteworthy. This evidence, together with the findings of the current study, for example, that meaning, purpose, and hope foster each other, suggest that approaching psychotherapy with a combined focus on meaning, purpose, and hope is promising. The data in the current study revealed that the three constructs have at least eight common aspects and that particular aspects are relevant to the six patterns of relationships between and among the three constructs. The question, then—in particular because the majority of the theorists, researchers, and authors meld meaning and purpose in some fashion in their conceptualizations—is how might effective interventions be introduced? It seems to me that the majority of the meaning-centred therapies inherently include both meaning and purpose. As such, a logical starting place might be to do as Farhadi, Reisi-Dehkordi, Kalantari, and Zargham-Boroujeni (2014) appeared to do and incorporate hope-focused interventions into a meaning-centred therapy. Early on or ultimately, the meaning-centred therapy could be examined and potentially divided into meaning and purpose. Alternatively, a new meaning, purpose, and hope centred therapeutic intervention could be developed. Given the complexity of each individual construct, there would be many points of entry into the benefits of the experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope as well as the fostering of more of the same.

Limitations of the Study

As is the case with research generally, there may be limitations inherent to the method. In this dissertation I have endeavoured to provide the reader with information about the participants and their experiences as well as the study itself, to help them decide whether and how far they can use my conclusions. That said, the following points highlight a few areas that warrant consideration.

The participants were self-selected. As such, they likely reflect a population that is open to prosociality. Indeed, in addition to volunteering to participate in this study, eight of the participants shared that they had volunteered in other situations. This may have influenced the findings. Giving and the benefits of doing so may not have played such a prominent role in another population.

The participants were all Caucasian. Nine of them were raised in Canada and one in England, so the study was limited in terms of cultural perspectives.

With regard to the highest level of education completed, participants range from high school to post secondary education, including training at institutes of technology, colleges, and bachelor and master's degrees at universities.

Inclusion in the study required that the participants perceived meaning, purpose, and hope to be separate. As part of the telephone screening process, the potential participants were asked if they would be able to tell a story about, for example meaning, and then a related story about purpose, and finally a related story about hope. In other words, for each situation that they chose to share with me, they actually shared three stories. These criteria and the interview protocol may have contributed to the finding that the constructs are distinct.

Further Research

As highlighted in the literature review, the importance of meaning, purpose, and hope, and in particular their importance in difficult life situations, including those commonly experienced by older adults, is well documented. Also highlighted in the review is the dearth of research on the three constructs combined. The current study further evidences the importance of meaning, purpose, and hope and offers initial understandings on how the three may be experienced in relation to one another. Given the significance of the constructs as well as the foundational nature of the current research, it will be important to continue to explore the topic. It will be important to contribute to the theory as well as practice in the area. In particular, from a counselling psychology perspective, the aim of any subsequent study would be to learn enough about the topic so that practitioners could facilitate gains for clinical as well as non-clinical clients. For example, in cases of clients with mental health challenges, those gains might align with the Mental Health Commission of Canada's (2019) notion of "recovery" (para. 1). In cases of clients, for example, seeking career counselling, those gains might be the same (less the ongoing mental health problem or illness). My suggestion would be to continue with a qualitative methodology before moving to a quantitative one. Such a direction aligns with Erickson's (2011) perspective that "quantitative inquiry can be seen as always being preceded by foundational qualitative inquiry" (p. 36).

In particular, I would suggest that qualitative research with only minor deviations from the current design could build on the foundational understandings. For example, first, one might maintain the design but recruit participants from a different age range and/or cultural or educational background. Second, one might remove the criteria that participants be able tell related stories of each construct, meaning, purpose, and hope. Third, one might limit the study to what I have termed the global perspective of the binary aspect of the constructs. Such modifications could shed light on, for example, the universality of the findings; the distinct nature of the individual construct; and/or the interrelationships between the constructs. Further, additional information could better inform directions for quantitative methodologies, lead to a better understanding of the processes involved in the interrelationships of the constructs, and, ultimately, contribute to the development of validated interventions that include the three constructs. Such interventions could foster meaning, purpose, and hope as well as growth.

Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to deepen our knowledge about how meaning, purpose, and hope are experienced and understood by nonclinical older adults. The participants in the current study shared their experiences and understandings of meaning, purpose, and hope. In the context of these three constructs, the results revealed that prosociality was valued. Further, they revealed that engaging in prosocial behaviour was both positive and beneficial. It was also found that each of the three constructs was experienced and understood as distinct and multifaceted. Indeed, there are at least eight common aspects. Particular aspects of each construct played a role in the relationships. It was revealed that there are six common relationships. It was also revealed that the constructs, though distinct, appear to function together. Further, participants suggested that the three constructs are inter-locked and that they cannot be separated. Finally, it was revealed that meaning, purpose, and hope foster meaning, purpose, and hope.

Footnotes

[1] Uncles at Large was and organization in which “Volunteers [offered] companionship, mentoring and friendly support to children ages 6 to 18 from single-parent families” (Uncles and Aunts at Large, 2019, para. 1).

[2] Santas Anonymous is a charity that was founded in 1955. The mission of the charity is “to see every child receive a new toy at Christmas” (Santas Anonymous, 2019, para. 1).

[3] Seva represents “selfless service through community action as goodwill toward fellow members, is a core belief in the philosophy of Sikhism” (Sohi, Singh, & Bopannna, 2018, p. 2068).

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Appendix A

Recruitment Poster

A Study on Meaning and Purpose in Life and Hope Among Older Adults

Meaning and purpose in life and hope have been found to be important in people's lives. If you:

- consider yourself to be living with meaning, purpose, and hope and
- are 60 years of age or better,

you may be eligible to participate in this research.

My name is Joan Ewasiw, and I am a Doctoral Student in the Counselling Psychology program at the University of Alberta. I am currently doing a study to understand meaning, purpose, and hope and how they are interrelated. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please call me at 780-722-2428 or email me at joan.ewasiw@ualberta.ca.

Thank you for your interest in my study.

Appendix B

Recruitment Leaflet

A Study on Meaning and Purpose in Life and Hope Among Older Adults

Meaning and purpose in life and hope have been found to be important in people's lives. If you:

- consider yourself to be living with meaning, purpose, and hope and
- are 60 years of age or better,

you may be eligible to participate in this research.

My name is Joan Ewasiw, and I am a Doctoral Student in the Counselling Psychology program at the University of Alberta. I am currently doing a study to understand meaning, purpose, and hope and how they are interrelated. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please call me at 780-722-2428 or email me at joan.ewasiw@ualberta.ca.

Thank you for your interest in my study.

Appendix C

Recruitment Notice

A Study on Meaning and Purpose in Life and Hope Among Older Adults

Meaning and purpose in life and hope have been found to be important in people's lives. If you:

- consider yourself to be living with meaning, purpose, and hope and
- are 60 years of age or better,

you may be eligible to participate in this research.

My name is Joan Ewasiw, and I am a Doctoral Student in the Counselling Psychology program at the University of Alberta. I am currently doing a study to understand meaning, purpose, and hope and how they are interrelated. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please call me at 780-722-2428 or email me at joan.ewasiw@ualberta.ca.

Thank you for your interest in my study.

Appendix D

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
Faculty of Graduate Studies
Department of Educational Psychology

Information Letter and Consent Form

Study Title: Exploring Meaning and Purpose in Life and Hope with Nonclinical Older Adults

Research Investigator:
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780-492-1164

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. This study is for the completion of the principal researcher's Doctorate of Counselling Psychology, and the results of the study will be used in her dissertation. The results may also be used in, but not limited to, scholarly articles, books, and conference presentations. However, none of the participants' identifying information, including names or identifying characteristics, will be used in any publications or presentations.

Purpose
The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of meaning and purpose in life and hope in nonclinical older adults. This information could benefit adults who lack understanding of their sense of meaning, purpose, and hope, as well as counsellors and other helping professionals who provide services to those adults.

Suitability
To participate, I agree that the following points are true about me:

- I am living with meaning, purpose, and hope;
- I am 60 years of age or older; and

- I am not currently under the care of a psychologist or psychiatrist.

Study Procedures

- The researcher will tell me about the study and I will be able to ask any questions.
- There will be a maximum of three interviews. The interviews will be one to one and a half hours in length and the topic of the interviews will be on my experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope.
- The interviews will be held at Education Clinical Services at the University of Alberta or at a place that is private and comfortable for me.
- The interviews will be voice recorded and then typed out word for word.
- After each interview, I will be given a typed copy of my interview in order to make sure it is correct.
- The researcher will share early results with me and will ask me for feedback.
- I can ask that a summary of the final report be given to me once the research project is complete.
- I can end my participation in the study at any time. Three weeks after I receive the typed copy of my first interview to review is the last point where I can fully withdraw. After that time, I am aware that the researcher can remove any mention of my interview, but the information I shared will still influence the results.

Potential Benefits

- I may find it helpful to talk about my experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope.

Potential Risks

- While it is not expected that I will become upset during or after the interviews, if I do become upset, I will have a list of places of low or no cost counselling agencies in my community.

Privacy

- Any information that I share will not be connected to my name.
- Any information in the interview that may identify me will be removed or changed.
- Any research personnel, such as a transcriber, that may work on the study will sign a confidentiality agreement and comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants.
- All files related to information I share will be kept in a locked and secure location.
- All files will be destroyed ten years after the study has been completed.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the University Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. Any questions you may have about this study may be directed to Joan Ewasiw at 780-722-2428. Questions about your rights as a research participant may be directed to the University Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta at 780-492-2615.

My participation in this study is completely voluntary, and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time.

Having read and understood all of the above, I ________________________________
agree to participate freely and voluntarily in this study.

___________________________________ ___________________________________
Signature of Participant Date

___________________________________ ___________________________________
Signature of Researcher as Witness Date

Two copies of this consent form will be provided. One is to be kept by you for your records, and the other is to be returned to the researcher.

Thank you for your participation in this study. Please feel free at any time to bring up any questions and/or concerns regarding your participation in this study.

Appendix E

Interview Guide

Note: The following open ended interview questions are intended to be used to elicit participant accounts of experiences and understandings of meaning in life, purpose in life, and hope and their interrelationships. Follow-up questions may be asked to obtain more detail and allow for personal experiences to be shared fully. The questions may not necessarily be asked in this order during the interview.

Guiding questions for in-depth interview:

As you are aware this study is about meaning in life, purpose in life, and hope. In our telephone conversation, I asked to think back on your life and identify two or three meaningful experiences that you have had. I am going to ask you to talk about those experiences.

1. Can you tell me a story about the first meaningful experience that stands out for you?
    a. Is this story about meaning in any way connected to hope for you? Can you tell me a story about that?
    b. Is this story about meaning in any way connected to purpose in life for you? Can you tell me a story about that?
    c. When you think about the stories that you have told me about meaning, purpose, and hope, is there anything more that you can tell me about how they are connected for you?

    (Repeat question sequence for the each of the meaningful experiences identified.)
2. We have been talking about meaning. What does meaning mean to you?
3. We have also been talking about purpose. What does purpose mean to you?
4. We have also been talking about hope. What does hope mean to you?

5. When you think about all of the stories that you have told me about meaning, purpose, and hope as well as what meaning, purpose, and hope mean to you, is there anything more that you feel should or could be mentioned that we have not already talked about?

Appendix F

Participant Information Form

Participant Pseudonym: ________________________

Today's Date: _______________________ Date of Birth: _______________________

Relationship Status (please circle one)

a. Single
b. Married/Common-Law
c. Separated/Divorced
d. Widowed
e. Other ____________________

Number of Children _______

Ages of Children ____

Present Living Situation (please circle all that apply)

a. Independent
b. With a partner
c. With family
d. Assisted living facility
e. Other ____________________

Highest Level of Education (please circle one)

a. Elementary school
b. Middle school
c. High school
d. Technical school
e. Undergraduate degree
f. Graduate degree
g. Other ____________________

Employment Status (please circle one)

a. Not employed
b. Part-time employment
c. Full-time employment
d. Other __________________

Occupation

a. Current ____________________
b. Previous ____________________

Ethnic/Cultural Background ___________________________

Religion ______________________

Appendix G

Referrals

If you are experiencing distress, or need someone to talk to, please consider seeking support at one of the following support agencies. All of these agencies provide no-cost or low-cost counselling.

The Support Network 24-Hour Distress Line
Phone: 780-482-4357(HELP)

Catholic Social Services
Phone: 780-432-1137
Address: several locations in Edmonton

Cornerstone Counselling Centre
Phone: 780-482-6215
Address: #302, 10140-117 Street

Hope Foundation of Alberta
Phone: 780-492-1222
Address: 11032-89 Avenue

Jewish Family Services
Phone: 780-454-1194
Address: #502, 10339-124 Street

University of Alberta Education Clinic
Phone: 780-492-3746
Address: 1-135 Education North Building

Appendix H

Research Consultant Confidentiality Agreement

Project Title: Exploring Meaning and Purpose in Life and Hope with Nonclinical Older Adults

Principle Researcher: Joan Ewasiw

Research Supervisors: Dr. Denise Larsen and Dr. Sophie Yohani

I, ______________________________, (name) have been hired to assist in this research study as ___________________________ (specific job description, e.g., research assistant, transcriber).

As part of this position, I agree to:

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, digital recordings, transcripts) with anyone other than the researcher, Joan Ewasiw, or research supervisors, Dr. Denise Larsen and Dr. Sophie Yohani.
2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, digital recordings, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, digital recordings, transcripts) to the researcher, Joan Ewasiw, or research supervisors, Dr. Denise Larsen and Dr. Sophie Yohani, when I have completed the research tasks.
4. after consulting with the researcher, Joan Ewasiw, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the researcher, Joan Ewasiw (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).

Research consultant:

(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

Researcher:

(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

Appendix I

One Participant’s Experiences and Understandings of Meaning, Purpose, and Hope and the Relationships Between and Among Them

The following is an illustrative example of the relationships between and among the three constructs, meaning, purpose, and hope. It is based on experiences and understandings that David shared in the context of his story of performing acts of kindness, one of three stories that he shared during the course of two in-person interviews.

The current appendix comprises three sections. The first section is an introduction to David’s story; the second presents his understandings of each construct (meaning, purpose, and hope), individually; and the third, his experiences and understandings of the interrelationships of the three constructs, collectively.

My aim in presenting this illustrative example is two-fold. First, it is intended to provide the reader with some insight into how I approached this segment of the data analysis, in particular, the relationships between and among meaning, purpose, and hope. Second, it is intended to provide the reader with a sense of the overall nature of the cases that contributed to the across cases syntheses of the interrelationships of the three constructs found in chapter five. This case in many ways parallels the remaining cases in the study.

Introduction to David’s Experiences

David shared his story of performing acts of kindness. He described a number of kind acts that he has performed over the almost fifty years since he started his practice. The following are abridged versions of three examples.

David's "earliest recollection, . . . of helping anyone" was when he was "maybe twelve" years old. He "was awakened, at about two in the morning, to the sound of spinning wheels in the snow outside of [his] bedroom window." And "[he] thought, 'Somebody needs help and I'm going to go out and help them.'" So he "slipped on a winter parka over [his] pajamas," put on his boots, went outside, asked the driver if he could help, started to push the car, and realized that the vehicle had a flat tire. He helped change the flat tire and then "[pushed it] out of the snow and . . . ditch." The driver offered him a "material gift" of what he had available to him, "which was some whiskey." When David "declined his offer," the man suggested that he would "pay [him] back some day and return the favor." David remembered replying to him, "No, no, just help somebody else. Pass it on." And, when he "went back in the house, [he remembered his] father shouting at [him] and criticizing [him], chastising [him] for what [he'd] done." David concluded by saying,

> I just remember that incident [and] thinking, "Well, I don't care what he thinks. I know I did good. . . . I'm sure that God knows that I did a good thing, and what I did was pleasing to God. And it's too bad [that] he can't see it.

In another example, David was driving on the highway and saw a vehicle stopped at the side of the road. He pulled over, went to the car, and asked the driver whether he might be of assistance. The driver did not speak very much English, so, according to David, "[They] communicated mostly by gesture." The driver needed to change a tire on his car, but he couldn't access a necessary tool. With some tools that David had in his vehicle, and some ingenuity and trial and error, they managed to change the tire. When it was done, "[the man] took out his wallet" and, essentially, asked how much he owed David. David described what happened after he refused the offer of payment. In his words: “He gave me a hug and it was a beautiful, beautiful human interaction, and he said, ‘I will remember you.’ You know? It was a beautiful, touching moment.” David concluded by saying, “I went away feeling so good.”

The final example is one that occurred when David was in Mexico for a four-month stay. He said that “[he] did several things down there, which made a very big impact on the local communities.” To illustrate, he gave the example of being at a lake where “the dock had two planks missing.” He said that it looked dangerous and that “[he] was concerned that someone could fall through the holes, perhaps drown or have an injury, especially children.” He said that “[he] took the initiative to take some measurements, . . . and [order] some wood.” And ultimately, “[he] bought some lumber and, . . . some nails, and got a hammer, and went to the dock and started hammering.” Further, he said,

> There were a lot of people who witnessed that, and they knew that I was not a Mexican local. They knew I was a tourist. . . . A lot of people just stopped, and looked as if they were kind of stunned.

David went on to say that, “a young girl came up to [him] while [he] was hammering away, and she looked very perplexed.” He said that she questioned who he was and what he was doing and that he answered her questions. David went on to say that he felt that, “[he] had planted a seed [of kindness] in that girl’s heart.” Further, he indicated that he believed that what he did “touched a lot of people’s hearts.” He said that, “as [he] was leaving, a family was driving past [him], and they slowed down in their car, and they said, ‘Thank you for the service that you have given to our community.’” David continued, “And that, . . . that brought, . . . tears to my eyes.” Finally, he said, “But I didn't need the thanks, because I did it, because it has its own reward, that intrinsic reward of doing something good that needed to be done."

David also spoke more generally about his experiences of performing kind acts and each of the constructs of meaning, purpose, and hope. With regard to meaning and the acts, he said, "They are extremely meaningful. I think that our lives are defined by the love we give and receive, . . . To me, kindness is love in action." He furthered, "I think God is love, so if I am acting in love, then I'm doing God's will. That's what I believe."

Regarding purpose, David said that his "purpose, . . . is to show kindness and love wherever [he] can." As it relates to performing acts of kindness, he said, "I am always asking for opportunities to be of service and help people, in my prayers and meditations. . . . I am always praying to be an instrument of God's love. That's my prayer." In addition to the immediate, David talked about the broader impact of performing kind acts. He said, "[This] is how I can help, in my own small way, to create a better world."

Regarding hope and the acts, David talked about "planting . . . seeds of kindness." He also mentioned Mahatma Gandhi, specifically the quote attributed to him, "Be the change you want to see in the world." Further, he indicated that "[he hopes] that by planting the seeds of kindness, that [he] can be the change [he wants] to see in the world." He expanded on the notion of being the change by saying,

> Hopefully it can be contagious . . . planting seeds . . . and people will be touched by my example and they will want to do the same. They will be inspired to act accordingly, and pass it on, and help others in need.

Finally, he said that he "[hopes] for a better, kinder world, more loving world."

David's Understandings of Meaning, Purpose, and Hope, Individually

In order to have a context within which to place David's experiences, it was important for me to gain an understanding of what meaning, purpose, and hope meant to him. After he shared his story, I asked David to reflect on his experiences and describe his understandings of each of the three constructs. The following is what he shared.

Regarding meaning, David said, "Meaning to me is like significance, importance. My life has meaning; my life has importance, significance." Regarding purpose, he said, "Purpose is, like a goal. Like, that I have a reason to live, that I can, my life has a purpose, and that for me, it's like my calling." And finally, with regard to hope, he said, "Hope is optimism, desire, an expectation almost, or something to happen in the future."

David's Experiences and Understandings of the Three Constructs—Meaning, Purpose, and Hope—Collectively

David's experiences and understandings of the three constructs combined were drawn from the segments of his interviews that were germane to his story of performing kind acts. This analysis is based on the interview data that included that story as well as his response when I asked him to consider his experiences and to speak to the interrelationships between the three constructs.

Based on David's experiences and understandings, it appears that there are at least eight relationships—seven dyadic and one triadic—between and among meaning, purpose, and hope. To clarify, I use the term dyadic to describe a relationship between two constructs and triadic to describe a relationship among three constructs. The following is a presentation of dyadic relationships reflecting David's experiences of meaning and purpose appearing to co-occur as well as six relationships where his experience of one construct appears to precede or lead to his experience of another construct; that is, meaning appearing to precede or lead to his experience of purpose and, in the same way, purpose preceding or leading to meaning, purpose to hope, hope to purpose, hope to meaning, and meaning to hope. Also presented is one triadic relationship reflecting David's experiences of meaning and purpose appearing to precede or lead to his experience of hope.

The evidence of the aforementioned relationships appears in different forms: implicit, partially explicit, and/or explicitly stated. To clarify, *implicit* examples are embedded in the text. It was necessary to establish David's understanding of each of the constructs of meaning, purpose, and hope; to identify text that reflected each construct; and then to determine how they appeared to be interrelated. *Partially explicit* examples use at least one construct, either meaning, purpose, or hope, in the description of the relationship. And *explicit* examples use two or three of the named constructs to describe the relationship.

The following presentation of David's experiences and, in some cases also, his understandings of the interrelationships between meaning, purpose, and hope is organized according to the constructs involved and the nature of the relationships. The examples are based on David's experiences, unless they are otherwise identified as reflecting his understandings.

Each of the relationships that suggest a direction is prefaced by identification of the relevant aspects of the constructs involved. To remind the reader of the eight aspects of meaning, purpose, and hope that I introduced in Chapter Four, briefly, the binary aspect reflects two dimensions: a situational dimension and a global one; the cognitive reflects mental processes; affective, emotions and/or feelings; behavioural, actions;

relational, relations; temporal, time; dynamic, change; and agentic, agency. To avoid repetition, I will interject that the binary aspect, including the situational and/or global dimensions, for all of the constructs in all of the relationships seems relevant. Also included in the preface is a description of the particular process involved.

Finally given the space constraints, I have limited the examples to those that are concise.

Meaning and purpose co-occurring. David appears to implicitly describe the relationship of meaning and purpose co-occurring. He said, "I'm being an instrument of God's love by doing acts of kindness." And he expanded on this idea by saying,

> I feel like I'm really channelling, like God is coming through me when I'm doing deeds, kind deeds, acts of kindness, acts of love, through my heart. When I'm acting with my heart, I feel God is coming through me.

David's description of his experiences suggests that engaging in what is purposeful, that is, performing act of kindness, had spiritual significance or meaning for him. Additionally, as he uses the words "When . . . I feel . . ." to describe his experience, it would appear that his experiences of meaning and purpose co-occur.

Meaning to purpose. The cognitive and affective aspects of meaning and the behavioural aspect of purpose appear to be particularly relevant to the relationship of David's experience of meaning preceding or leading to his experience of purpose. Regarding the relationship, it appears that David's meaningful experience is associated with sense-making. Making sense, in turn, appears to lead to an understanding, which he then associated with an aim or goal or, indeed, a purpose.

An illustration. David's story implicitly suggests a relationship in which his experience of meaning preceded and led to his experience of purpose. In describing a meaningful experience that played a role in his decision to perform acts of kindness, David said,

> I've read some spiritual books, one book that set me on the path of service and seva[3] . . . called *Self Introspection* by an Indian guru, from India that is, by the name of Kirpal Singh. He talked about the need to live a life of ahimsa, which is harmlessness to all creation, and the need to do service, service to others in need and so that touched my heart a lot, reading books such as that.

According to David, the book "set [him] on the path of service and seva." In other words, it appeared to be a factor in his aim to perform acts of kindness and fulfill his purpose, or goal, of "[showing] kindness and love wherever [he] can." It seems that his meaningful experience of reading the book played a role in his decision to enact his purpose.

After David shared his story, I invited him to consider his experiences and speak to the interrelationships of meaning, purpose, and hope. He began his reply by saying,

> Well if my life has meaning then, which means that it has significance and it means something, it's not for nothing, and . . . that gives me a reason to live. That means it gives me purpose, so the meaning gives the purpose.

It appears that in both his experience and understanding there is a direction from meaning to purpose.

Purpose to meaning. Most relevant to the relationship of David's experience of purpose preceding and leading to his experience of meaning appear to be the behavioural (primary) and the affective and cognitive (secondary) aspects of purpose as well as the cognitive and affective aspects of meaning. The process in the relationship appears to involve enacting a purpose and becoming aware of the impact of that experience. This action and reaction are feedback, which he in turn made sense of and evaluated and, ultimately, associated with "importance, significance" or, indeed, meaning.

An illustration. In his story, David identified his purpose in performing kind acts as “giving,” and he described this giving as “the greatest joy in life.” His description of “the greatest joy” suggests that it was meaningful for him. In his examples of the acts he has performed, he also talked about how “good,” indeed, how “wonderful” “giving and helping” felt. David also appears to have reflected upon and given his experiences consideration. For example, he was partially explicit in describing a relationship in which his experience of purpose led to his experience of meaning. More specifically, he said, “Every time I do one of these acts of kindness, it gives my life more meaning.” It appears that enacting his purpose, that is, performing kind acts, “gives” him the experience of meaning.

Purpose to hope. The behavioural (primary) and the cognitive and affective (secondary) aspects of purpose as well as the cognitive and affective aspects of hope were particularly relevant to David’s experience of purpose preceding and leading to his experience of hope. The process appears to have begun with his purposeful selection and performance of an act of kindness. He received feedback that he perceived as positive and he, in turn, associated it with hope.

An illustration. David was also partially explicit in describing a relationship in which his experience of purpose appeared to precede and lead to his experience of hope. In talking about performing kind acts and the reactions of people who are involved, David said, “Often they make remarks such as, ‘You restored my faith in humanity.’ And so that gives me hope.” Here David suggests that, based on responses he has received from recipients, performing acts of kindness—that is, acting on his purpose—“gives” him an experience of hope.

Hope to purpose. Particularly relevant to David's experience of hope preceding and leading to his experience of purpose were the cognitive and affective aspects of hope. Also relevant are the behavioural (primary) and the cognitive (secondary) aspects of purpose. In David's story of hope to purpose, the object of his hope is the aim or goal or, indeed, purpose. That is, his hope was directed to a particular purpose. In addition to preceding purpose, hope also appears to provide an energy that contributed to sustaining it.

An illustration. During the interviews, David identified a number of things that he hoped for. He indicated, for example, that he has "hope that [he] can help to create a better world, . . . a kinder, gentler, more caring, loving world." David described his purpose as contributing to "a better world." It would seem that in this partially explicit example, David's experience of hope preceded and led to his experience of purpose. Indeed, it appears that the object of his hope is his purpose. Further, David has been performing kind acts for almost five decades. It is conceivable that his hope is a factor in sustaining his purpose.

Hope to meaning. Relevant to David's experience of hope preceding and leading to his experience of meaning are the cognitive and affective aspects of hope. Also relevant are the cognitive (primary) and affective (secondary) aspects of meaning. The process in this relationship appears to parallel that of hope to purpose; that is, the object of David's hope seems to be meaning. In other words, David hopes for something that is meaningful. This hopefulness also appears to contribute to sustaining meaning.

An illustration. Again, in a partially explicit description, David implies that his experience of hope is also connected to meaning. He stated that he "[hopes] for a world with love and peace and kindness.” In this example, the object of his hope is something that is important or significant or, indeed, meaningful to him.

Meaning to hope. The relationship in which David’s experience of meaning appears to precede or lead to his experience of hope reflects the cognitive and affective aspects of meaning as well as hope. Regarding the pattern, it appears David’s meaningful experiences were made sense of, and he ultimately perceived them as positive. This positiveness was associated with hope; indeed, it appears to fuel the hope.

An illustration. In yet another partially explicit example, it appears that David’s experience of meaning preceded and led to his experience of hope. For example, he described a meaningful experience, including the recipients’ reaction to his act of kindness: “To them, I was their savior and saved their lives.” Then he went on to talk about how, in general, he was affected by recipients’ reactions: “Lots of these moments have happened to me in my life to give me hope.” His meaningful experiences “give” him hope. In other words, meaningful experiences appear to result in him experiencing hope.

Meaning and purpose to hope. A number of aspects of the constructs were relevant to David’s experience of meaning and purpose preceding and leading to his experience of hope. Particularly noteworthy were the cognitive and affective aspects of each of the three constructs as well as the behavioural aspect of purpose. Through the course of his meaningful and purposeful experiences, David perceives both as positive, and he associates both with hope. Indeed, meaning and purpose are factors in the fostering of hope.

An illustration. As David was telling his story, he also used a partially explicit statement that suggests a relationship in his experiences of meaning, purpose, and hope. The following quote suggests that his experiences of meaning and purpose precede and lead to his experience of hope. David talked about "living a life that has meaning, that is meaningful, that is making a difference and . . . giving [him] hope." Here David explicitly states that his life has meaning. He also indicates that he is making a difference; that he feels that he is enacting part of his purpose. So his experiences of meaning and purpose are "giving [him] hope." Further, David talked about performing kind acts (purpose) as well as his perceptions of those acts (meaning) and "[feeling] so wonderful inside." He also associated this positiveness with hope. This association is further elucidated in David's response to my invitation to consider his experiences and speak to the interrelationships between the three constructs. In his words,

> A life without significance is a life without purpose and there's no reason to live if your life means nothing. . . . and so a life with meaning and purpose gives optimism, gives hope for what tomorrow may bring. I mean now my life is full of hope, full of optimism, that there are so many more hearts that I can touch, so many more lives that I can impact and make a difference, have a significance in their life and so they all totally interrelate . . . in everything I do.

Thus, he appeared to describe, in explicit terms, his understanding of a relationship between the constructs that came out through his story. That is, he indicated that "meaning and purpose gives… hope."