The Psychology of Purpose

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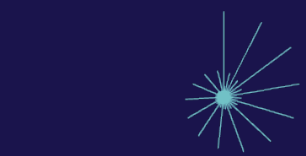

JOHN TEMPLETON
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I. DEFINING PURPOSE

The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.
– Ralph Waldo Emerson

You probably have your own conception of what a purpose in life is. Most people do. However, to study the topic in a scientific manner, a standard definition- one that all researchers agree upon- is needed. In this section, in addition to discussing the history of scientific research on purpose, we include the definition that has been used in most scientific investigations of the construct. In addition, we discuss some of the different forms purpose can take and distinguish the terms purpose and meaning.

The History of Psychological Research on Purpose

Early on Viktor Frankl (1959) recognized that purpose was central to human well- being. He became interested in purpose and meaning before World War II; however, his experiences as concentration camp prisoner #119104 further reinforced his belief that purpose was a critical component of optimal human functioning. Frankl noticed that fellow prisoners who had a sense of purpose showed greater resilience to the torture, slave labor, and starvation rations to which they were subjected. Quoting Nietzche, he wrote "Those who have a 'why' to live, can bear almost any 'how'" (p.82).

He also noticed that many of the individuals who survived the horrors of the concentration camp had someone or something for which they were living. Having something to live for was critical to Frankl's conception of purpose:

Being human always points, and is directed, to something or someone, other than oneself—be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself—by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love—the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself (p.110).

Frankl (1959) proposed that all people are motivated to discover a purpose for their lives; doing so is a natural human inclination. Without purpose, he argued, feelings of meaninglessness and emptiness ensue, and these feelings are associated with the depression, risk taking, and boredom that often lead people to seek counseling (Bigler, Neimeyer, & Brown, 2001; Fahlman et al., 2009; Harlow, Newcomb, & Bentler, 1986; Hedberg, Brulin, Alex, & Gustafson, 2011). When Frankl was freed from the concentration camp, he published a book outlining the importance of finding one's purpose in life.

As a result of Frankl's book, psychologists in the 1950s and 60s became interested in studying the role of purpose in human functioning. More recently, the advent of positive psychology, a psychological approach to understanding not only what can go wrong but also what can go right in the course of human development (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), has led to yet more scientific interest in

understanding what it means to have a purpose in life, how a purpose develops, and why it is important to lead a life of purpose.

Purpose Defined

While definitions of purpose have varied in the past, more recently a consensus has emerged: a purpose in life represents a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once personally meaningful and at the same time leads to productive engagement with some aspect of the world beyond the self (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003). This definition includes at least three important components, including a goal orientation, personal meaningfulness, and a focus on aims beyond the self.

First, a purpose in life is a goal. It is a long-term, ultimate aim that directs more proximal behaviors. However, not all goals are purposes. Only far-horizon aims that are particularly meaningful are likely to represent purposes in life. For example, seeking to earn good grades is unlikely to represent a purpose since it is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Imagine an individual who wants to earn good grades to become a teacher. He may find purpose in instructing and molding young minds, and he may realize that to achieve his personally meaningful, far horizon aim, he needs to earn good grades. In this case, earning good grades represents an important objective along the path to purpose. This definition of purposeful goals suggests aims are intentionally selected, and recent research suggests individuals may possess a motivational self responsible for selecting and directing attention toward particular goals, including toward purposeful aims (Fishbach, 2014). The motivational self resolves differences among competing goals and prioritizes goals; in the case of purposeful goal pursuit, personally meaningful aims are likely to be prioritized by the motivational self over sources of goal pursuit.

Next, a purpose in life is personally meaningful. This may seem obvious, but it means that although external forces can help nurture the growth of purpose, the motivation for pursuing such an aim ultimately comes from within. Purposes are so personally meaningful, in fact, that individuals feel compelled to actively pursue them by investing time, energy, and resources to make progress toward them. For example, an individual who finds purpose in becoming a caring and compassionate doctor is likely to feel compelled to study hard to get into medical school.

Finally, a purpose in life is inspired, at least in part, by a desire to make a difference in the world beyond the self. Individuals pursue a purpose because it offers them a meaningful way of contributing to the broader world. Accordingly, seeking wealth and fame is unlikely to represent a purpose in life, but seeking to make enough money to care for one's family may represent a source of purpose since it involves contributing to the well- being of individuals beyond the self, in this case one's family. There are other ways of contributing to the broader world as well. Working to enhance the environment, caring for animals, creating a new art form, or seeking to follow God's tenets represent other ways of contributing to the world beyond-the-self.

Purpose researchers have not paid much attention to the nature or source of purposeful aims, but motivational research illuminates at least two key facets of purposeful goal pursuit. First, the motivation for wanting to contribute to the broader world can come from anywhere. Motivational scholars (Kalkstein, Kleiman, Wakslak, Liberman, & Trope, 2016) suggests that beyond-the-self motivations can stem from sources of information or inspiration that are psychologically and temporally close to or psychologically and temporally distant from the individual. People are particularly adept at high-level learning, including learning in abstract and decontextualized ways, when the source of information is psychologically or temporally distant. At the same time, they tend to learn at low levels, including in more specific and contextualized ways, when the source of information is psychologically and temporally closer. This suggests that the motivation to pursue more abstract purposes in life may well come from sources psychologically and temporally far away, such as when a seventeen-year-old living in Los Angeles gets inspired to fight child labor in the far East after watching an Indian news channel YouTube clip reporting on Indian youth forced to work in the silk industry. At the same time, the motivation to pursue a more concrete purpose may come from a source of inspiration closer to home, such as when an individual is inspired to become a caring and thoughtful teacher after having a caring and thoughtful teacher. Second, research by motivational scholars also sheds light on what motivates youth with purpose to pursue personally meaningful aims (Fishbach, Koo, & Finkelstein, 2014). Evidence from this line of research suggests that individuals committed to pursuing a personally meaningful aim are likely to be motivated by negative feedback and by attending to subgoals they have yet to accomplish. Finally, recent motivational research also suggests enabling individuals pursuing a purpose in life to experience the intrinsically-motivated positive emotions associated with accomplishing subgoals may help keep them progressing toward personally meaningful aims over time (Klein & Fishbach, 2014).

When each of these features-- goal orientation, meaning, and a beyond-the-self motivation-- exists, purpose is present.

Noble and Ignoble Sources of Purpose

Based on the preceding definition, it should be clear that a purpose in life need not be noble or moral or even prosocial in nature. Meaningful goals directed beyond the self can be quite destructive. For example, Hitler likely found purpose in trying to create a purely Aryan race and the individuals who attacked Paris on November 13th, 2015 likely found purpose in promoting ISIS aims. These actions represented (1) far horizon aims (2) that were likely highly personally meaningful and (3) motivated, at least in part, by a desire to make a difference in the world beyond the self. Accordingly, these actions likely represented purposes, albeit vicious ones.

Although it can be difficult to distinguish noble from ignoble aims, it is not impossible. Philosophers have devised tests that can be applied to do so. Though ignoble and destructive purposes undoubtedly exist, they have rarely been the topic of scientific investigations, at least from the perspective of meaning. Therefore, this site focuses on noble or at least neutral forms of purpose and their role in human development.

Purpose in Life Versus Meaning in Life

Early in scientific discussions, the terms purpose in life and meaning in life were used interchangeably, but more recently, they have been distinguished from one another. A purpose in life represents a subset of sources of meaning (Bronk & Dubon, 2016). In other words, meaning is a broader, more inclusive construct than purpose. For instance, researchers have described purpose as just one aspect of the "four needs of meaning" which also include value, efficacy, and self-worth (Baumeister, 1991). Similarly, other researchers have included purpose as part of their definition of meaning along with the extent to which people make sense of or see significance in their lives (Steger, 2009). Psychological researchers argue that a purpose in life refers only to those sources of meaning that are both goal-oriented and motivated by a desire to make a difference in the world beyond the self (Bronk & Dubon, 2016). That means that individuals may find meaning in watching a shooting star, but they may find purpose in working to preserve natural resources.

II. MEASURING PURPOSE

Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.
–Helen Keller

In conjunction with the growth of positive psychology, scientific attention to purpose has increased dramatically over the past approximately twenty years. Before this, researchers largely believed it was impossible to investigate a construct as multifaceted and complex as this. Purpose is admittedly a challenging variable to study. As a result, scholars have utilized a wide range of social scientific methods to gain insight into what purpose is and what difference it makes to lead a life of purpose. Most commonly, interviews, case studies, document reviews, and surveys have been used in the scientific study of purpose.

Interviews

Interviews allow researchers to explore aspects of purpose that could not be studied any other way. For instance, interviews provide detailed descriptions of the motivations behind purpose. They have also been used to explore the development of purpose, the antecedents of purpose, and the changes in purposes over time (Bronk, 2013). By their nature, however, interviews are costly and time consuming to collect, and consequently, few purpose interview protocols exist.

One purpose interview protocol, the Revised Youth Purpose Interview (Andrews et al., 2006), is a semi-structured interview protocol that takes approximately an hour to administer and is commonly used with adolescents and college aged youth. The interview includes two sections. The first half consists of broad questions that probe participants' general interests. It includes questions such as,

"What are some of the things you really care about?" and "Imagine you've been given a magic wand and you can change anything you want in the world, what would you want to be different?" The mental simulation required to answer this latter question has been found to enhance meaning (Waytz, Hershfield, & Tamir, 2015). At the same time, it encourages youth to think about how they might want to contribute to the broader world, and contribution is a key component of purpose. Following this line of questioning, the interviewer should be able to identify the couple of aims that matter most to the participant. The second half of the interview probes these aims more deeply. More specifically, the interviewer asks why these aims matter, how they became important, and what- if anything- the participant is doing to act on these potentially purposeful aims. This information reveals if the participant has identified a clear purpose in life. Variations on the protocol have also been used (see Malin, Reilly, Quinn, & Moran, 2014).

The second protocol, the Life Story Interview (McAdams, 2008), does not directly explore purpose. Instead it investigates generativity, or the desire to contribute to future generations in a personally meaningful way. It is typically studied among older adults. Generativity overlaps with purpose; both refer to a desire to engage in activities that are at once personally meaningful and at the same time motivated by a desire to contribute to the world beyond the self. The Life Story Interview (McAdams, 2008) protocol takes approximately two hours to administer. Participants are asked to discuss their lives as though they were writing a book. Accordingly, they are asked to identify chapters, turning points, main characters, and high and low points. Interviewees also discuss their goals for the future, challenges encountered, personal ideologies, and life themes (McAdams, 2008). Interviews such as these help researchers identify people's purpose in life and understand how those purposes influence other aspects of their lives.

Case Studies

Case studies are in-depth, descriptive, often theory-generating, methods for investigating a process within a specific context (Merriam, 2014). They feature multiple interviews, often conducted over a period of time. A recent study of purpose featured case studies of young people who led exemplary lives of purpose (Bronk, 2011). A dozen young people with particularly highly developed purposes in life were interviewed three times over the course of adolescence and the early twenties, often referred to as emerging adulthood. Additionally, parents, peers, and colleagues were interviewed to gain insight into the way commitments to purpose change over time (Bronk, 2011, 2012).

Findings revealed that though the young people did not identify their purposes in life until later, experiences during childhood often set the stage for purposeful commitments (Bronk, 2012). For instance, one young woman living in rural Texas was searching for an idea for her 4-H project when she saw her Dad pour used motor oil into the weeds behind their house. She knew this was not a healthy practice, especially since her family got their drinking water from a well on the property. She decided to explore alternatives for disposing of used oil. Ultimately, she founded an oil-recycling program. Over the years, it became so popular that it spread across the county and state. She won several high-profile environmental awards, and years later she still found purpose in working to

preserve the environment. Though the activity did not start out highly meaningful, it became so, especially as she discovered that she was good at the work. Case studies are invaluable for revealing these kinds of in-depth findings about the development of purpose.

Document Reviews

A document review, which involves a systematic examination of written papers including biographies, interviews, speeches, letters, and personal journals, is another method that has been used to investigate purpose. Mariano and Valliant (2012) culled interviews conducted with young men in the early 1940's to learn more about purpose among the Greatest Generation. They discovered, among other things, that approximately 38% of the sample showed signs of leadings lives of purpose and that the presence of purpose was related to positive childhood environments.

Another team of researchers (Bronk & Riches, 2016) reviewed historical documents, including biographies and interviews, to explore the relationship between purpose and heroism among real life heroes. They discovered that for Oscar Romero, an archbishop of San Salvador who spoke out against poverty and social injustices, purpose preceded heroic action. Archbishop Romero found purpose in fighting for the rights of El Salvador's poorest, and this enduring commitment prepared him to act heroically when the occasion arose. On other hand, in the case of Miep Gies, one of the women who helped hide the Anne Frank family, heroic action proceeded the growth of purpose. Gies had not felt strongly one way or another about the plight of the Jews, but the experience of hiding the Franks changed her, and she spent the rest of her life advocating for equal treatment for all. Through reviewing historical documents, both of these teams of researchers gained insight into the experience of purpose among people who they could not otherwise have contacted.

In spite of the strength of document reviews, they are used relatively infrequently as a method for studying purpose. The reason is that documents were typically written, or interviews typically conducted, with some other aim in mind. Any document review must rely on the hope that discussions about purpose, goals, personal meaning, and beyond-the- self intentions spontaneously arise.

Surveys

Purpose has most commonly been investigated through surveys. Surveys of purpose have been administered on their own and along with interviews and case studies. Surveys are often employed in social science research because they are quick, easy, and relatively inexpensive to administer. However, surveys also have drawbacks. For instance, they offer a relatively brief snapshot of a relatively narrow set of experiences. Surveys have most commonly been used to identify correlates of purpose. For instance, as a result of survey research we know that purpose is positively correlated with life satisfaction and hope (e.g. Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib, & Finch, 2009) and negatively related to boredom (e.g. Fahlman, Mercer, Gaskovski, Eastwood, & Eastwood, 2009).

The first survey of purpose ever created, the Purpose in Life Test (PIL, Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1969), was designed with the assistance of Viktor Frankl, the father of modern research in meaning and purpose. It is a 21-item scale that poses questions, such as "My personal existence is (1) utterly meaningless, without purpose or (5) purposeful and meaningful" and "In life I have (1) no goals or aims or (5) clear goals and aims." It is the most widely administered measure of purpose (Pinquart, 2002). One common complaint of the survey, however, is that it correlates too closely with measures of life satisfaction (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003; Dyck, 1987). In other words, it may be measuring life satisfaction rather than purpose as we currently understand it.

Since the PIL was introduced nearly 60 years ago, a host of other surveys have been created to assess purpose and closely related constructs. For instance, the Life Regard Index (Battista & Almond, 1973) measures meaningfulness and the significance of one's life. Sample items include "I feel like I have found a really significant meaning for leading my life" and "Living is deeply fulfilling." The Purpose in Life subscale of the Psychological Scales of Well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) focuses on the goal orientation aspect of purpose. It includes items such as "I live one day at a time and don't really think about the future" and "Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them." This scale has often been used in the medical field to assess the relationship between purpose and physical well-being (e.g. Jacobs et al., 2011; Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012). The Meaning in Life questionnaire (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006) measures the search for and identification of the personal significance of one's life. Items include "I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful" and "I understand my life's meaning." Consistent with new approaches to measuring motivational constructs, such as purpose, this measure assesses both the process of searching for meaning and the outcome of having identified a source of meaning in life (Toure-Tillery & Fishbach, 2014).

Other more recent surveys of purpose have been created with specific participants in mind. Along these lines the EPIL (Existence Subscale of the Purpose in Life Test; Law, 2012) is a 7-item purpose measure designed specifically for early adolescents. It draws heavily from items in the original PIL. Similarly, the Life Purpose Questionnaire (LPQ; Hablas & Hutzell, 1982; Hutzell, 1989) was created for use with older individuals and with individuals who suffer mild cognitive impairments. It includes statements similar to the PIL, but it uses simpler response options (agree – disagree Likert scale).

Whereas some measures of purpose only assess the identification of a purpose in life, others also assess the degree to which someone is searching for purpose. For instance, the SONG (Crumbaugh, 1977) and the LAP-R (Reker, 1992) are both used to assess the search for purpose, and the Revised Youth Purpose Survey (Bundick, et al., 2006) draws heavily from existing measures of purpose and meaning to gauge both the search for and identification of personally significant aims among adolescents.

Something missing from most surveys of purpose is the beyond-the-self dimension. Most surveys of purpose only assess the goal orientation and personal meaningfulness aspects of purpose, leaving the beyond-the-self motivation unaddressed. The Claremont Purpose Scale (Bronk, Riches, & Mangan, under review) was created to assess all three dimensions of the purpose construct, including goal

orientation, personal meaningfulness, and beyond-the-self motivation, among adolescent and college aged samples. The CPS includes 12 questions in total, including 4 items that assess goal orientation ("How hard are you working to make your long-term aims a reality?"), 4 items that assess personal meaningfulness ("How clear is your sense of purpose in life?"), and 4 items that assess a beyond-the-self motivation ("How often do you find yourself hoping you will make a meaningful contribution to the world?")

III. THE BENEFITS OF PURPOSE

When you do nothing, you feel overwhelmed and powerless. But when you get involved, you feel the sense of hope and accomplishment that comes from knowing you are working to make things better.
– Pauline R. Kezer

People who lead lives of purpose tend to be both psychologically and physically better off than those who do not. Young people with purpose also tend to exhibit indicators of academic success, and as a result, efforts to foster purpose in school settings have become increasingly common. In this section we review research that establishes the healthful and beneficial correlates of leading lives of purpose.

Psychological Benefits

People who lack a sense of purpose in life tend to suffer psychologically. Scientific studies find that compared to others, individuals without a purpose in life are more likely to suffer from depression, boredom, loneliness, and anxiety (Bigler, Neimeyer, & Brown, 2001; Fahlman et al., 2009; Harlow, Newcomb, & Bentler, 1986). Research also finds that individuals who lack purpose are more likely to abuse drugs (Harlow, Newcomb, & Bentler, 1986; Nicholson, Higgins, Turner, James, Stickle, & Pruitt, 1994; Padelford, 1974; Roos, Kirouac, Pearson, Fink, & Witkiewitz, 2015).

Not only is the lack of purpose associated with negative psychological states, but- more optimistically- the presence of purpose is associated with positive psychological states. In fact, purpose is a central component of most leading conceptions of optimal human development and psychological well-being (Bronk, 2013). Psychological well-being refers to not just the absence of negative states (e.g. depression and anxiety) but also the presence of positive ones (e.g. optimism, hope, life satisfaction), and discovering a purpose in life is associated with a wide range of positive states, including feeling good about oneself (self- esteem) and one's abilities (self-efficacy; Boyle, Buchman, Wilson, & Bennett, 2009; Kass et al., 1991; Lyubomirsky, Tkach, & DiMatteo, 2005; Steger & Frazier, 2005). Positive feelings about oneself, present among individuals with purpose, are evident among both emerging adults and working adults. This relationship has also been studied with adults facing a major life stressor: breast or colorectal cancer. Researchers found that cancer patients who received treatment including sessions to explore meaning in life reported higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy when compared to cancer patients who received more traditional care (Lee, Cohen, Edgar, Laizner, & Gagnon, 2006). Taken

together these results strongly suggest that pursuing a purpose in life may help individuals feel good about themselves and their lives.

Among individuals in their teens, twenties, and thirties having a purpose in life is related to feelings of optimism and hope (Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib & Finch, 2009; Steger & Frazier, 2005). Not only do more typical individuals with purpose report higher levels of optimism, but so too do cancer patients with purpose (Lee, Cohen, Edgar, Laizner, & Gagnon, 2006). This may be because hope and optimism, like purpose, are future oriented constructs (Bronk et al., 2009); pursuing a purpose in life necessarily includes planning for a meaningful future. Having a meaningful target toward which to direct one's efforts may contribute to a sense of optimism and hope.

Compared to others, individuals who lead lives of purpose are also more likely to report high levels of life satisfaction. From adolescence to late adulthood, individuals with purpose report being more satisfied with their lives (Boyle et al., 2009; Bronk et al., 2009; Steger & Frazier, 2005). This line of research suggests that the psychological benefits of purpose can be reaped throughout the lifespan.

However, with regards to the relationship between purpose and life satisfaction, it is important to keep in mind that pursuing and searching for a purpose are two distinct processes. Pursuing a purpose means individuals have already identified what it is that gives their lives meaning. Searching indicates that individuals are still exploring potentially meaningful aims. With this in mind, researchers have examined the relationship between life satisfaction and pursuing a purpose and searching for one. While having identified a purpose in life is associated with life satisfaction during the teens, twenties, and thirties, searching for a purpose is only associated with life satisfaction during the teens and twenties (Bronk et al., 2009). This finding can likely be explained by cultural expectations. This study was conducted with individuals living in the Western industrialized United States, where individuals are expected to be figuring out what they want to accomplish in their lives during their adolescence and college years (Bronk, 2013). However, by their thirties adults are supposed to know what they want to do, and so searching for purpose during this stage of life is likely to be an uncomfortable experience. More research is needed to see if this pattern of results holds in other cultures.

At this point it may seem that all good things are related to purpose, but it turns out that, at least in some cases, purpose is not related to happiness. This is somewhat surprising. Pursuing something personally meaningful, at first blush, seems like an activity that would make us happy, and in some cases it does. For instance, researchers have found that across the ages, one of the best predictors of happiness is having a purpose in life (Boyle et al., 2009; Lyubomirsky, Tkach, & DiMatteo, 2005). Similarly, engaging in meaningful activities (such as those involved in pursuing a purpose in life) is often associated with feelings of enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). However, in some instances, the pursuit of purpose can be difficult and stressful, and individuals who pursue meaningful purposes may actually be less happy than individuals who do not. For instance, studies find that being a parent can be a highly purposeful experience, but it is not always an easy or happy one. Compared to non-parents, parents actually report higher levels of meaning but lower levels of positive affective well-being (Umberson & Gove, 1989). Similarly, compared to non-caregivers, caregivers report lower levels of

positive affect but higher levels of purpose (Marks, Lambert, & Choi, 2002). These findings likely reflect the reality that parenting and caregiving, although highly meaningful, can be stressful and exhausting activities. These findings point to the nuanced and complex experience of leading a life of purpose.

Physical Benefits

Compared to others, individuals who lead lives of purpose are not only psychologically but also physically healthier. A growing body of research examines the positive physical and health effects of having a purpose in life. When talking about health it is necessary to address what is meant by the term. Historically, health referred to a lack of illness. However, in 1948 the World Health Organization introduced a new definition that suggests health is not only the absence of illness, but also the presence of well-being.

Studies examining the relationship between purpose and health have found that individuals who report higher levels of purpose also report a variety of indicators of good health (Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004). For instance, compared to older women with low levels of purpose, older women with high levels of purpose show flatter diurnal slopes of daily salivary cortisol. More specifically, in this study older women who were purposefully engaged in life started the day with lower cortisol levels that stayed lower throughout the day, and this is significant because higher levels of stress hormones have been found to be associated with a variety of health problems. Researchers also found that these highly purposeful older women had lower cholesterol, were less likely to be overweight, and had lower levels of inflammatory response (Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004). Another study found that compared to others, individuals who reported higher purpose scores were less likely to be diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment and even Alzheimer's Disease (Boyle, Buchman, Barnes, & Bennett, 2010), and yet another study found that older adults with purpose were less likely to suffer physical disabilities (Boyle, Buchman, Wilson, & Bennett, 2010). Taken together, these findings suggest that having a purpose in life is associated with a wide range of physical health indicators.

It is important to note that these studies are primarily correlational in nature, meaning they examine naturally occurring relationships between purpose and indicators of health but do not explain the causal nature of these relationships. This means that although purpose is related to positive health, it is not yet clear whether individuals who pursue a purpose in life consequently have better health or if individuals with better health consequently pursue a purpose in life. It is also possible that there is something else that people with purpose do that contributes to their physical health. For instance, research finds that the presence of purpose is associated with positive social relationships (Bronk, 2013), and it could be that the social relationships that accompany purpose also contribute to improved physical functioning.

Academic Benefits

Not only is a purpose in life associated with enhanced psychological and physical functioning, but it is also associated with indicators of success in the classroom. For instance, purpose is related to grit (passion and perseverance for one's goals), resilience (the ability to bounce back from setbacks), and academic self-efficacy (the belief in one's academic abilities; Benard, 1991; Hill, Burrow, & Bronk, 2013; Pizzolato, Brown, & Kanny, 2011). More recently, a series of four studies concluded that even just inducing a temporary purpose-mindset improved academic outcomes, including self-regulation, college persistence, grade point average, and the amount of time students were willing to spend studying for tests and completing homework (Yeagar, Henderson, Paunesku, Walton, Spitzer, & Duckworth, 2014). Research clearly suggest that compared to others, adolescents with a purpose in life perform better academically and report that their schoolwork is more meaningful (Benson, 2006; Pizzolato, Brown, & Kanny, 2011; Yeagar & Bundick, 2009). One explanation for this has to do with the sense of intrinsic motivation associated with pursuing a personally meaningful aim. Some have argued that young people who know why they are working hard in school are less likely to feel stressed and more likely to feel excited by the effort; consequently, they are more likely to excel at school (Damon, 2008).

IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF PURPOSE

Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it.

–Viktor Frankl

By definition the pursuit of purpose is a long-term endeavor. The seeds can be sown early in life and can bloom and grow for decades. However, in spite of the benefits associated with leading a life of purpose, drawing on findings from several studies suggests the experience is relatively rare. Only about 1 in 5 high school students and 1 in 3 college students reports having a clear purpose in life, and from here, rates drop slightly into midlife and more precipitously into later adulthood (Bronk, 2013). This section outlines the development of purpose across the lifespan, starting in childhood, continuing in adolescence and midlife, and extending into later adulthood.

Childhood

From birth to early adolescence, children are not yet ready to develop a purpose in life. Not only are their brains not fully developed enough to engage in the kind of hypothetical and deductive reasoning required to seriously consider an enduring aspiration, but they are also not prepared to make decisions that impact their lives in the long-term. They are- and should be- still exploring interests and options.

However, while it is not developmentally appropriate for children to pursue a purpose in life (VanDyke & Elias, 2007), retrospective studies with young people who later in life develop particularly clear aspirations highlight some antecedents of purpose that can emerge during childhood (Bronk, 2012).

For instance, children can readily identify the things they really enjoy doing. Peter Benson (2008) referred to those things that animate children as sparks. Studies find that creative arts, athletics, and learning are the most commonly reported sparks; others include volunteering, reading, spending time in nature, and engaging in spiritual practices (Benson, 2008). Children who can identify their spark and who can point to adults who recognize it show enhanced signs of physical and psychological well-being, excel in school, and are more likely to strive to contribute to the world beyond themselves, which is an important element of purpose (Benson, 2008). In this way, nurturing children's sparks can set the stage for purpose development.

Another important antecedent includes the regular practice of gratitude. Children who habitually reflect on the blessings in their lives are not only more likely to feel satisfied and have better relationships with their friends and family, but they are also more likely to consider ways they may want to give back to the world beyond themselves (Damon, 2008; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008). Practicing gratitude predisposes individuals, including children, to offering reciprocal contributions, which can take the form of a purpose in life.

Adolescence

Although people can discover a personally meaningful aspiration at any stage in the lifespan, if they are going to do so, adolescence represents a particularly likely time because this is the stage of life during which individuals are actively engaged in figuring out what they value, who they are, and what they want out of life. In other words, adolescence is the time most young people establish a sense of identity (Bronk, 2011; Damon, 2008; Erikson, 1968).

Erik Erikson (1968; 1980) was first to recognize the close relationship between purpose and healthy identity development. He proposed that during adolescence young people try out different roles and explore different personalities. They reflect on varied value systems and question political and religious orientations. Following an adequate period of exploration, young people form commitments. They commit to personality characteristics and a personal value system. They also commit to personally meaningful goals. In fact, a key sign of healthy identity development is fidelity to a set of far horizon aims, including vocational, personal, and relational aims. In other words, according to Erikson, discovering a purpose in life represents the healthy outcome of identity development.

More contemporary research has similarly explored the relationship between purpose formation and identity development. These studies have found that for some young people who they are is synonymous with what they hope to accomplish. For instance, a young woman who found purpose in following Christ's lessons identified herself first and foremost as a Christian, and an individual who found purpose in preserving the environment referred to herself as a tree hugger (Bronk, 2011).

Few studies have directly examined how young people develop a purpose in life, but research suggests that as young people explore who they hope to become, they also consider what they hope to

accomplish in their lives, and this process of exploration can unfold in one of three ways. Some young people discover a purpose for their lives after being engaged in an activity that over time they begin to recognize as personally meaningful (e.g. After volunteering on behalf of environmental causes, an adolescent realizes this work is important to her, and she decides to pursue a career that allows her to protect the environment; Bronk, 2012; Hill, Burrow, & Sumner, 2014). In other cases, adolescents decide that some aim relevant to their own lives is personally meaningful and set out to actively engage in working to achieve it (e.g. Following a series of shootings near his hometown, a young man gets involved in efforts to curb gun violence; Bronk, 2012; Hill, Burrow, & Sumner, 2014). In still other cases, seeing someone else engage in a personally meaningful activity inspires adolescents to do the same thing (e.g. After months of hearing how meaningful her roommate's work with children in an afterschool program is, a young adult decides she too wants to get involved in tutoring children from low-resourced communities; Hill, Burrow, & Sumner, 2014).

Given the close relationship between identity and purpose formation, it is not surprising that adolescence is an ideal time for exploring inspiring sources of purpose. An interesting study examined purpose development among adolescents, college aged youth, and midlife adults. It found that having identified a meaningful aspiration was associated with life satisfaction at each of these stages (Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Finch, & Talib, 2009). However, searching for a purpose was only associated with life satisfaction for adolescents and college aged youth. By midlife, the search for purpose was a less comfortable experience, and this makes sense. In our culture we expect young people to explore what matters most to them, but by midlife, we expect them to have sorted this out. This means that adolescents and college aged youth should be encouraged to consider the things that matter most to them.

Midlife

Just as a purpose in life can provide adolescents with an important sense of direction, it can provide adults with a valuable opportunity to contribute to future generations in meaningful ways (Erikson, 1968; McAdams, 1996).

Parenting can provide an important source of purpose for midlife adults (Damon, 2008). An interesting study discovered that though parents actually report feeling less happy than non-parents, they report a stronger sense of meaning in their lives (Hughes, 2006; Umberson & Gove, 1989). In addition to caring for children, many midlife adults also care for their aging parents. Like parents, caregivers report higher levels of distress and burden than non-caregivers, but at the same time they report their lives are more purposeful (Marks, Lambert, & Choi, 2002). These findings underscore the nuanced experience of purpose; though it is associated with feelings of satisfaction, it can also be difficult, discouraging, and stressful at times.

Work is another common source of purpose among midlife adults (Damon, 2008; Dik & Duffy, 2009). Perhaps not surprisingly, individuals who find purpose in their work report feeling more satisfied with

their lives in general and with their professional lives in particular (Bonebright, Clay, & Ankenmann, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1998).

Studies of purpose and meaning at work suggest that how people approach their work may be more important than the actual tasks they perform (Berg, Wrzensniewski, & Dutton, 2010). A recent study of a hospital cleaning staff, for instance, found that some people conceived of their work as the often thankless, regularly messy task of cleaning up after sick patients. Not surprisingly, they did not particularly enjoy their jobs; nor did they find them highly meaningful. On the other hand, other members of the cleaning staff, who performed the same tasks, conceived of themselves not as cleaners, but instead as part of the overall healing process. Working closely with doctors and nurses, they saw their role as a caretaking one, and consequently they reported that their work was highly meaningful (Dutton, Debebe, & Wrzesniewski, 2014). These findings suggest that many- if not all- jobs represent a potential source of purpose for midlife adults.

In addition to considering the types of purposes that are likely to inspire adults, researchers have also examined when during adulthood individuals are most likely to be interested in purpose. In a series of six studies, researchers (Alter & Hershfeld, 2014) concluded that compared to other adults, 9-enders, or individuals ending a decade of life (e.g. 29, 39, etc.) tend to focus more on aging and meaning, and consequently, they are more likely to report searching for purpose or experiencing a crisis of meaning.

Late Adulthood

A review of the research on purpose during late adulthood, the final stage of life beginning in the sixties, reveals that compared to others, older adults who report high levels of purpose tend to be more socially integrated and have stronger, more positive relationships (Pinquart, 2002). They are more likely to live in private homes and apartments than in nursing homes or institutional settings (Laufer, Laufer, & Laufer, 1981), and compared to others, older adults with purpose are more likely to be employed, have better health, have a higher level of education, and be married (Pinquart, 2002). Interestingly, consistent contact with family, as opposed to friends, is a stronger predictor of purpose among older adults.

In spite of the promising picture of older adults with purpose, relatively few individuals at this stage of life pursue personally meaningful aspirations. Whereas rates of purpose drop slightly into midlife, they drop more precipitously in late adulthood (Hedberg, Gustafson, & Brulin, 2010; Pinquart, 2002; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Ryff, Singer, and Love, 2004).

Researchers have argued that this may have to do with the lack of potentially purposeful roles available to older adults (Ryff & Singer, 2008). Adults who found purpose in working and raising children are likely in late adulthood to retire and launch their adult offspring, leaving them without a meaningful sense of direction to pursue. Sociologists refer to this as the "structural lag problem" (Riley, Kahn, & Foner, 1994), in which contemporary social institutions lag behind the added years of life that many now experience (Ryff & Singer, 2008).

Several innovative programs have been launched to address this problem. These programs engage older adults in work and volunteer activities that can inspire the development of purpose. For instance, SeniorCorp connects hundreds of thousands of older adults to volunteer opportunities, and AARP Experience Corp mobilizes individuals fifty years of age and older to work in under-served educational settings. Rather than retiring, the Encore Fellows program helps older adults find work that at once utilizes their skills and at the same time allows them to address personally meaningful issues through second-act or "encore" careers. The creation of an annual $100,000 prize for social entrepreneurs in the second half of life underscores the interest in finding and celebrating purpose in later adulthood.

V. FOSTERING PURPOSE

The tragedy of life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach. It isn't a calamity to die with dreams unfulfilled, but it is a calamity not to dream… It is not a disgrace not to reach the stars, but it is a disgrace to have no stars to reach for. Not failure, but low aim is sin.
– Benjamin Mays

Leading a life of purpose is associated with a variety of positive psychological and physical benefits, and yet the experience is rare. As a result, researchers have become increasingly interested in understanding how a purpose can be intentionally cultivated. In this section, efforts to foster purpose at home, at work, at school, through mentoring relationships, and in counseling settings are discussed. Because the development of purpose commonly coincides with adolescence and emerging adulthood, the following discussions focus primarily on strategies for nurturing purpose among young people in the second and third decades of life.

At Home

Surprisingly little research has focused on strategies for fostering purpose at home. Perhaps this is because it is difficult to capture the kinds of informal purpose-fostering conversations that likely take place, at least among some families, in the car and around the dinner table. Regardless, it seems likely that supportive relationships and inspiring mentors at home spur a life lived in pursuit of a personally meaningful aspiration. There exist at least three ways theory and related research suggest parents can help foster purpose among their children.

First, parents can help cultivate a sense of gratitude in young people, especially among children (Damon, 2008). Children who habitually reflect on the blessings in their lives are not only more likely to feel satisfied with their lives and have better relationships, but they are also more likely to consider ways they want to contribute to the world beyond themselves (Damon, 2008; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008). Parents can model gratitude, and they can encourage children to practice gratitude. Having children write and deliver letters of gratitude can be especially effective. Regular discussions about what parents and children are grateful for effectively cultivates gratitude as

well. Practicing gratitude predisposes individuals, including children and adolescents, to reciprocate, and "pay it forward" activities can take the form of an enduring purpose in life.

Second, parents can introduce their children to potential sources of purpose. One technique that can be used even in childhood is to ensure youth are engaged in a few potentially purposeful activities such as volunteering in the community, helping in the home, engaging in the arts, or participating in faith related activities (Bronk, 2013). Developing new skills, or talents can be meaningful for children or adolescents, and engagement in them for the good of others can help young people recognize their potential to contribute in useful ways to the world around them. Of course, a purpose cannot be forced on a child or adolescent; it must emerge naturally from within. However, these kinds of activities increase the likelihood that a sense of purpose will develop.

The third way parents can nurture the growth of purpose is by engaging children in conversations about the things they hope to accomplish in their lives. Surprisingly, adolescents are rarely encouraged to have these kinds of conversations. Instead, most discussions focus on decidedly short-term objectives. Additionally, they should be encouraged to consider the ways they can apply their talents and skills to contribute to the world in a meaningful way (Damon, 2008; Fry, 1998). These conversations should not represent one time events, but instead a regular way of interacting with youth.

Through Mentoring Relationships

While parental support is important to the development of purpose, it turns out that adolescents are often more attuned to feedback from outside the family (Parks, 2011). Accordingly, mentors can be essential to fostering purpose among adolescents. Mentors can use many of the same strategies that are effective for parents. Modeling purpose, spurring reflections on purpose, and providing practical support are all important ways mentors can foster purpose (Bronk, 2012). However, because mentors see young people in contexts outside the home, they are particularly well positioned to help young people recognize talents, interests, passions, or sparks that parents or other adults may miss. Mentors in school, community, and other settings can be spark champions who help young people recognize their special skills and interests and pursue personally meaningful, long-term goals.

Compared with parents, mentors are often better positioned to have formal discussions about potentially purposeful aims and to counsel young people about potential professional paths (Dik, Steger, Gibson, & Peisner, 2011). Mentors can serve as important sounding boards. In this role, they can offer advice about how to pursue meaningful career paths, and they can recognize, support, and even challenge young people's purposeful ideas and plans (Parks, 2011).

Enduring, long-term mentor relationships can be particularly helpful in fostering purpose (Bronk, 2008). When a mentor and mentee build a relationship that lasts over an extended period of time there is more opportunity to share passions, interests, and even sparks of purpose. Mentors can share their own purposes with mentees while encouraging and facilitating engagement in potentially purposeful

activities (Bronk, 2012, Shamah, 2011). The more often discussions occur the larger the effect they are likely to have in the development of personally meaningful long-term goals. The key is to give young people the "opportunity to articulate, discuss, and reflect upon the things that matter most" (Bronk, 2012, p. 96).

The important role of mentors became evident in a study of young people with particularly highly developed forms of purpose in life (Bronk, 2012). The study featured, among others, a young man interested in enacting political change. This young man found a mentor in his high school politics teacher, who recognized his interest, and challenged his thinking in regular political discussions and informal debates. He also encouraged the budding politician to read widely on the subject of politics and to get involved in political efforts locally. Without the support of his high school politics teacher, it is possible that this young man's interest in politics would have sputtered and died, but with his teachers support, it took shape and flourished. Years later, after majoring in political science in college and working on a presidential campaign, this young man was leading an active and influential political think tank.

At Work

Work provides an obvious domain for the expression of purpose (Dik & Duffy, 2012). Although some people consider their work to be nothing more than a means to a paycheck, others consider their work to be enjoyable, satisfying, and meaningful. Individuals who derive a deep sense of purpose and meaning from the work they do can be said to have found a calling. Interest in pursuing callings has increased dramatically over the past five years, and accordingly, career and vocational counselors have becoming increasingly interested in helping people find purpose in the work they do (Duffy & Dik, 2013).

One way of experiencing meaning in the workplace is to find work that utilizes one's strengths (Dik, et al., 2014). Signature strengths are virtues all people possess, and the Values in Action (VIA) classification system (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and Clifton's Strengths Quest/Strengths Finder (Clifton, Anderson, & Schreiner, 2006) are tools employees can use to identify their particular constellation of strengths. Studies find that workers prefer and derive more meaning from jobs that allow them to utilize their strengths (Dik, et al., 2014).

Another way to experience meaning at work is through flow. Flow refers to a state in which individuals feel completely focused and immersed in a goal-directed activity (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Flow states occur when workers are highly engaged and challenged by their tasks. When workers experience flow regularly, the experience comes to be personally meaningful because of the enjoyment derived from it and the personal investment in it. Meaning derived from flow experiences is referred to as vital engagement (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). Helping workers experience flow in the workplace is largely the responsibility of the organization (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). It requires providing workers with clear goals, challenging them with new tasks, and providing constructive and immediate feedback.

Yet another way individuals can experience meaning at work is through job crafting. Job crafting refers to a process through which workers shape their work experience to best meet their work-related needs (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Most jobs involve at least some latitude in how they are completed, and this allows workers to shape the tasks they do, the relationships they maintain, and their own conceptions of their work. Through crafting, people can mold their jobs in ways that maximize the meaning they derive from them.

A recent study of hospital cleaners clearly illustrates the power of job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Researchers learned that some hospital cleaners considered themselves janitors while others thought of themselves as part of the overall healing process. These groups of individuals largely performed the same basic tasks, but they thought very differently about their purposes. Not surprisingly, the workers who viewed their role as having a healing function were more satisfied with their jobs, spent more time with patients, worked more closely with doctors and nurses, and found more meaning in their jobs (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzensniewski, 2013). Job crafting is a skill people can cultivate, and it can represent a valuable way of finding purpose in the work place (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Wrzesniewski, LoBuglio, Dutton, & Berg, 2013).

At School

Interventions designed to foster purpose in school settings have been relatively rare (Koshy & Mariano, 2011), but as more research highlights the benefits of purpose, they are becoming more common. One such study approached purpose through the lens of career counseling (Dik, Steger, Gibson, & Peisner, 2011). In this study, some students participated in a set of purpose-fostering activities tacked on to a more traditional career counseling program. Students who completed the purpose-fostering module interviewed a parent about their own purpose in life, engaged in a values-identification activity, and played a board game designed to encourage them to think about the social function of various occupations. Compared to students who did not complete the purpose-fostering module, those who did reported having a stronger sense of direction and a better understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, and interests. Perhaps one reason this program was successful has to do with its focus on values. Recent evidence suggests young people are motivated to pursue goals that align with their values (Bryan et al., 2016). An intervention more directly focused on "values-harnessing" represents a theoretically-promising, if as of yet untested, approach to fostering purpose.

Another purpose-fostering intervention at school targeted students from low resourced communities (Pizzolato, Brown, & Kanny, 2011). In this study, students participated in an intervention designed not only to foster purpose but also to enhance a sense of control over their own lives. The intervention consisted of bimonthly small group sessions that took place on the school grounds over an 18-week period. During the small group sessions, students were encouraged to identify their goals and develop plans and skills for achieving their aspirations. Compared to other students, those involved in the intervention showed significantly higher scores on purpose following the program.

Finally, third study surveyed young people two times, approximately nine months apart (Bundick, 2011). Between these two survey sessions, a subset of young people also participated in a semi-structured interview, in which they were encouraged to reflect on the things that mattered most to them. Compared to the youth who did not participate in these structured discussions, these young people reported significantly higher rates of purpose months later.

Taken together, it is clear that intentional efforts to foster purpose can be effective. While they differed in important way, each of the effective programs helped young people (1) identify their personally meaningful values and (2) focus on ways of enacting them.

In Clinical Settings

Viktor Frankl (1959) believed that most people who sought counseling did so because they lacked a sense of meaning and purpose in life. He believed therapeutic settings could be effective places for nurturing the growth of personally meaningful aspirations. In this section, we discuss three empirically-based strategies that mental health professionals can use to foster purpose among adolescents in clinical settings.

The first approach involves encouraging adolescents to focus on the blessings in their lives. A purpose in life is motivated by a desire to contribute to the broader world in a productive and meaningful way. To inspire this kind of beyond-the-self motivation, it can be useful to encourage young people to engage in the practice of gratitude. Practicing gratitude requires adolescents to recognize that (1) the benefactor incurs some cost, (2) the recipient receives some benefit, and (3) blessing are intentionally bestowed to help the recipient (Froh, Sefich, & Emmons, 2008). Encouraging adolescents to focus on each of these components is critical to building the beyond-the-self mindset that predisposes individuals to want to give back. Other strategies mental health professionals can use to cultivate gratitude include encouraging adolescents to record at least three good things that happen to them each day (Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008) and to write and deliver a gratitude letter to someone who has blessed them (Froh, Kashdan, Ozimkowski, & Miller, 2009). Adolescents often report being inspired to contribute to the world beyond themselves by some experience for which they feel grateful (Bronk & Mangan, 2016).

Goal setting represents another avenue through which purpose can be fostered in a clinical setting. Mental health professionals can encourage adolescents to identify personally meaningful, long-term aims. They can ask adolescents to envision what their lives would look like if things went according to plan. Who would be in their lives? What would they be doing? What would be important to them? Research finds that envisioning one's future self decreases delinquent behavior (van Gelder, Hershfield, & Nordgren, 2013) and encourages purpose development (Bronk et. al., under review). To maximize the effectiveness of these kinds of interventions, Socratic dialogue, in which the mental health professional takes the lead, can be used to help adolescents reflect on how to progress toward their optimal future selves. In short, goal setting discussions help youth identify and form plans to make progress toward their most meaningful aims (Bronk & Mangan, 2016).

Finally, a purpose in life blooms when adolescents are able to apply distinctive talents to address personally meaningful issues in the broader world (Damon, 2008). Therefore, the third approach to fostering purpose involves helping young people identify their special skills and their personally meaningful values. To do this, mental health professional can help adolescents reflect on the values that matter most to them and identify their personal skills and talents. This approach to fostering purpose capitalizes on the normal process of identity development, in which young people naturally reflect on the things that matter most to them. However, by helping to make the process of interest, value, and skill identification more intentional and by linking young people's emerging beliefs and talents to personally meaningful career and extracurricular pursuits, mental health professionals can help young people discover a productive purpose for their lives (Bronk & Mangan, 2016).

VI. PURPOSE AMONG DIVERSE GROUPS

There can be no purpose more inspiring than to begin the age of restoration, reweaving the wondrous diversity of life that still surrounds us.
– E.O. Wilson

While the body of theoretical and empirical research on purpose is growing, there has been relatively little research dedicated to understanding what purpose looks like among individuals from diverse ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds. Most studies of purpose have featured participants from middle class backgrounds living in industrialized, Western cultures (Jonsen et al., 2010). This means that many of the lifespan trends that have been identified to date likely only apply to individuals from these kinds of backgrounds. In this section we discuss the relatively small body of research conducted among individuals from different ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds.

Purpose among Individuals from Different Ethnic Backgrounds

Where individuals find purpose and how they even conceive of purpose is significantly influenced by their cultural and ethnic background. A global study of purpose has revealed, for instance, that in Korea youth view purpose not as an individual pursuit but instead as a collective experience, and in China purpose represents a threefold concept consisting of professional, moral, and social purposes (Mariano et al., 2014). As a result of these different conceptions, it is challenging to compare purposes across cultures.

In spite of this, some studies have sought to do just thing. For instance, researchers administered the Chinese Purpose in Life Test to Chinese adolescents, and they discovered that rates of purpose were lower among Chinese than Western youth (Shek, Hong, & Cheung, 1987). Similarly, a study of meaning in life concluded that Japanese participants were less likely than Americans to say their lives had meaning but more likely than Americans to report that they were searching for meaning (Steger, Kawabata, Shimai, & Otake, 2008). While these findings are interesting, it is difficult to know exactly

what to make of them given the stark differences between the cultures under comparison. The differences may have more to do with the way individuals in these cultures conceive of purpose and meaning than with real differences in the presence of these constructs.

Purpose among Individuals from Different Socioeconomic Backgrounds

Research on individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds is also limited. A small handful of studies suggest that individuals from more challenging backgrounds are likely to have a difficult time discovering and pursuing personally meaningful aims. For instance, compared to others, incarcerated individuals and high-school drop-outs report lower levels of purpose (Black & Gregson, 1973; Maton 1990), and individuals who lack access to education may have more difficulty pursuing personally meaningful aims (Ryff, Keyes, & Hughes, 2003).

However, other theoretical and empirical work suggests that a purpose in life is likely available to all people, regardless of their socioeconomic background. In fact, Viktor Frankl (1959), in his extensive work on the topic, argued that experiencing adversity might actually contribute to the development of a purpose in life. As a concentration camp prisoner, he noticed that some inmates found purpose in comforting fellow prisoners and offering them support and aid. A more recent empirical investigation of purpose supports Frankl's theory. A study on the prevalence of purpose concluded that compared to well- educated White adults, well-educated ethnic minorities were more likely to report having a purpose in life (Ryff, Keyes, & Hughes, 2003).

This more recent finding appear to be at odds with Maslow's (1943) theory of the hierarchy of needs, which proposes that individuals are unlikely to be concerned with such self-actualizing efforts, such as the development of purpose, until basic needs, such as securing access to food, shelter, and safety, have been met. More research is needed to gain a fuller understanding of the circumstances under which adversity and challenge can nurture and deter the development of purpose. This line of work is warranted, however, because leading a life of purpose appears to convey special benefits to individuals living in low-resourced communities. Researchers have found, for example, that having a purpose in life buffered African-American youth from the negative experiences associated with growing up in more challenging environments (DuRant, Cadenhead, Pendergast, Slavens, & Linder, 1994).

Purpose among Individuals from Different Religious Backgrounds

All major religious traditions provide direction regarding the purpose of life. Religious doctrines provide members with a perspective on what purpose is and on how it can be obtained. Following is a brief description of purpose by faith tradition. Here we attempt to briefly, and without sectarianism, highlight the way different religious traditions view an individual's purpose in life. We say briefly because each of these religions is based on thousands of years of history of thought, and each religious tradition features numerous books written on this very topic.

It should be noted that religious groups, like many other social groups, tend to exhibit more differences within traditions than among traditions. For instance, Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants are all Christians; however they have different perspectives on the way individuals should interact with Christ. Similarly, although Hindus may believe in no gods or in one or many gods, Hindus and Buddhists both believe in the laws of karma and achieving enlightenment. In this section, when discussing religious traditions, we have tried to refer to rules that apply to most Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

Hinduism. Hinduism is one of the world's oldest religions. It draws its doctrine from ancient Indian beliefs (Gaer, 1963). The tenets of the faith conceive of purpose as working to break the cycle of reincarnation so that one can find union with the Highest Reality, usually called Nirvana. Nirvana, a term that is notoriously difficult to translate into Western terms (Ross, 2008), roughly refers to a state in which individuals are complete, fully realized, and free from desire and pain. Leaving the cycle of reincarnation removes one permanently from the otherwise constant state of birth, death, and rebirth (Johnsen, 2009). Individuals escape the cycle of reincarnation by building up good karma and training the mind to know how to seek pleasure and wealth (Kama and Artha) while remaining true to one's duty in life (Dharma). Dharma requires people to act morally and ethically throughout life, as a means of repaying the debt of blessings one receives, particularly from the gods but also from parents, teachers, guests, other people, and other living things (Johnsen, 2009). The Hindu sense of purpose is related to this idea of Dharma (duty).

This perspective on purpose highlights a sense of duty to the world beyond the self. Committing to one's Dharma is one way of gaining good Karma. The law of Karma, borrowing the words of St. Paul from the Bible, means, "You reap whatever you sow" (Galatians 6:7-9 New Revised Standard Version). In other words, good deeds will lead to good deeds and bad deeds will lead to bad ones. Feeding a homeless person means someone in the future will feed you in a time of need. In addition, Hindu sages have a saying, "Love God and serve others selflessly, and your bad karma will have no more power than a cancelled check" (Johnsen, 2009, p. 101). Good karma and honing the mind through yoga leads people closer to the goal of attaining enlightenment (Moksha; Gaer, 1963). Once individuals have built up "enough" good karma and have fulfilled their Dharma, they have the potential to attain enlightenment (Moksha) and in so doing break the cycle of reincarnation (Ross, 2008). Hindu believers may find purpose in seeking to perform moral deeds by contributing to the world beyond the self as a way of cancelling bad karma. This course of action allows them to at once repay debts of blessings and increase their good karma. Accordingly, a purpose in life for Hindu believers might consist of performing moral deeds.

Buddhism. Buddhism is a historical and cultural relative of Hinduism; both originated in ancient India (Gaer, 1963). Buddhism conceives of purpose in relation to ending suffering and pain, and, similar to Hinduism, in breaking the cycle of reincarnation (Anderson, 1999). Buddha's example and the Three Baskets of Wisdom (Tripitaka) serve as a guide for Buddhists (Anderson, 1999; Gaer, 1963). The Tripitaka describes the conduct required of monks, teachings of the Buddha, and stories and

poems about the Buddha's lives. Modeling one's life after the Buddha and adhering to one's moral duty (Dharma) represent important means of fulfilling one's Buddhist purpose.

Buddha attained enlightenment, broke free from his cycle of rebirth and death, and shared his knowledge with others. His knowledge, or truth, in Buddhism, has been distilled into the Four Noble Truths. The first suggests that life is suffering; the second that suffering comes from desire; the third that the end to suffering is attaining enlightenment; and the forth that the end of suffering is accomplished by following the Eightfold Path (Anderson, 1999). The Eightfold Path suggests that people should seek to avoid extremes, including devotion to pleasure and deprivation. This path to purpose has been called the middle way. It describes the ways to do the "right" thing (e.g., right view, right aim, right speech, etc.; Anderson, 1999). Having the right view requires accepting reality for what it is without imposing one's beliefs on it; this is in contrast to making reality fit one's own perception. Right speech refers to speaking with pure intentions, not lying, not slandering, and being honest (Ross, 2008). In doing right things, the believer accrues good karma. Right in this instance does not necessarily mean the opposite of wrong but is in contrast to incomplete activities and actions not completed to the best of one's ability (Ross, 2008).

Good karma is important because it represents the means by which believers break the cycle of reincarnation and reach Nirvana. Performing deeds the right way, that is, free of jealousy, anger, or desire, is an important means of accruing good karma (Ross, 2008). Buddhists train their minds through meditation to better understand how to do things the "right" way, as this sets them on the path to wisdom and enlightenment (Gaer, 1963). Understanding and living according to the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path represents a central way for Buddhists to lead a life of purpose.

Judaism. Distinct from Hinduism and Buddhism, Judaism is an ancient religion founded in the Middle East. Judaism conceives of purpose as fulfilling the Law, or Torah, in one's life. The Jewish concept of Law, Torah, or Teachings is captured in the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy). The idea of Torah is the same for everyone; these books explain how all people should lead their lives (Gaer, 1963). Rabbis (Jewish teachers) argue that the purpose of the Torah is to teach people how to connect their everyday actions with God. The revelation of the Torah is viewed as a gift and manifestation of God's love, for it reveals how people should treat one another, emphasizing compassion and love (Exodus 22:21).

Because all life comes from and is loved by God, followers of the Jewish faith may pursue their purpose by seeking to re-enact God's love (Devenish, 1984). There is an inherent focus on positively influencing the world beyond the self. This expression of love is so central to Jewish thought that Rabbis teach, "The world stands upon three things: upon the Law, upon worship, and upon showing kindness" (Dubov, n.d.). Spreading God's love is equivalent to sharing the Torah with other people. The believer's actions become the vehicle by which the Torah is made known to others. By sharing the Torah, believers are fulfilling a desire to help others live Godly lives (e.g., feel a connection to a loving God and living according to God's will). In other words, according to Judaism, one's purpose is

achieved through leading a life in accordance with God's will (i.e., living by the Torah) and helping others do the same.

Christianity. Christianity is a direct descendant of Judaism, and as such, it conceives of what purpose is and how it is achieved in similar ways. Christianity regards an individual's purpose as having faith in and loving God and also spreading the Gospel, Good News, of Christ's power of salvation. Adherence to the teachings of Christ is for Christians what adherence to Torah is for Jews (Devenish, 1984).

A defining feature of the Gospel is its emphasis on grace. Jesus teaches that God sent him to die for the sins of many, even when people were not asking for salvation [this distinction is important to Christians as they conceive of God as a three-part unity (e.g., Trinity), with God, the Father; Jesus, the Son; and the Holy Spirit]. God's grace, choosing to save an imperfect humanity, is then reflected in believers' acts. The greatest commandments for Christians come from Matthew 22:17-20: Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself. Christians must love their neighbors as themselves because God took the first leap and loved them, indicating that while no one is perfect—and that is okay—faith in Jesus requires more than just belief. Faith also requires action and can involve moving to a new country to found an orphanage or forgiving a friend who has betrayed a trust. Jesus embodied these commandments perfectly, serving as an example for all to follow; he consistently loved the sick, poor, and needy while also spreading the news of the Gospel (Matthew 9:35).

There is an inherent focus on helping others because Christians believe acts of love are re-enactments of God's love (e.g., Matthew 25:40, Luke 10:25-37; Devenish, 1984). Acts of care and compassion demonstrate God's love in the present and prepare people for an afterlife in heaven. Many Christians understand Matthew 28:18-20 as the "Great Commission," wherein Jesus calls people to go and spread the Gospel about his birth, death, and resurrection and what that means (e.g., salvation) for all humanity. Christians understand this call in both a literal and metaphoric sense. Some choose to conduct mission work (e.g., building churches) while others strive to live out Christian values in their everyday lives (e.g., establishing a non-profit and raising caring and compassionate children). In short, Christian believers find purpose in acting in ways that reflect the love God has shown them (e.g., James 1:27).

Islam. Islam has roots as an Abrahamic religion (referring to Abraham, the first Hebrew, in Genesis 11) and shares similarities with Judaism and Christianity. For Muslims, the purpose of life can be found in pleasing and serving Allah (Ad-Dhariyat 51:56), the Islamic name for God. The reward for living a faithful live to Allah is eternal pleasure in the afterlife. In the Quran, Allah is the source of all blessings, and, as such, his precepts are kept in the hearts and minds of believers at all times (Gaer, 1963). This is reflected in the idea of worship. The Quran speaks to how worship should permeate all aspects of life and what it should look like: "Allah enjoins justice, kindness, and charity to one's kindred, and forbids indecency, abomination, and oppression" (An-Nahl 16:90). Charity is very important in the Quran, and indeed every act of kindness is considered charity (Gaer, 1963). These acts of kindness are shown to all people because human life is a blessing from Allah. Thus, the Islamic

sense of purpose is embedded in the command to serve Allah and is expressed in the world by participating in acts of charity.

The five pillars of faith, including belief, worship, fasting, donating, and pilgrimage, help faithful Muslims remember their duties. The five pillars support a sense of purpose by constantly encouraging acts of charity that involve justice, kindness, and sharing blessings (An-Nahl 16:90). This naturally leads to considering the world beyond the self. Muslim believers have freedom to creatively enact these duties in diverse ways (Gaer, 1963). This means that Muslim believers can find purpose in any number of ways. To the extent that Muslim believers live their lives following the guidance of Allah and strive to perform acts of charity to make the world a better place, they are fulfilling their purpose in life, and being faithful to this purpose is ultimately rewarded by eternal pleasure in the afterlife.

VII. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, C. (1999). Pain and its ending: The Four Noble Truths in the Theravada Buddhist canon. Richmond, Surrey, UK: Curzon Press.

This book examines the Buddhist doctrine of the Four Noble Truths as it has uniquely developed in the Theravada Buddhist canon, that is, the strain of Buddhism most common in continental Southeast Asia (i.e., Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka). Other strains of Buddhism exist throughout India, China, Japan, and beyond. Though its focus is on one strain of Buddhism, its understanding of the Four Noble Truths is likely to be acceptable to many Buddhists around the world. The opening chapter provides a well- grounded introduction to the overarching belief system of Buddhist thought in easy-to- understand language. The book's contribution to understanding purpose in Buddhism comes from its explanation and history about the foundational beliefs of Buddhism.

Andrews, M., Bundick, M., Jones, A., Bronk, K. C., Mariano, J. M., & Damon, W. (2006). Revised youth purpose interview. Unpublished instrument, Stanford Center on Adolescence, Stanford CA.

This paper describes the Revised Youth Purpose Interview, which is a semi-structured interview protocol that takes approximately an hour to administer and is commonly used with adolescents and emerging adults. The interview includes two sections. The first section investigates participants' general interests, and the second includes questions that further probe the things that matter most to participants. Analyzing responses reveals the degree to which purpose is present.

Alter, A. L., & Hershfield, H. E. (2014). People search for meaning when they approach a new decade in chronological age. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 111, 17066-17070.

Evidence presented in this article suggests that 9-enders (e.g., people ending a decade in their life, 29, 39, etc.) find themselves preoccupied with aging and meaningfulness. Across six studies, it was found

that compared to others, 9-enders engaged in behaviors that indicated individuals were more likely to be searching for, or be experiencing a crisis of, meaning.

Battista, J., & Almond, R. (1973). The development of meaning in life. Psychiatry, 36(4), 409-427.

This article discusses the development of the Life Regard Index (LRI), a survey that measures meaningfulness and the personal significance of one's life. Sample items include "I feel like I have found a really significant meaning for leading my life" and "Living is deeply fulfilling." The LRI includes two subscales and 28 total items. It has been used with both three- and five-point Likert scales.

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

In his book, Baumeister draws on evidence from psychology, history, anthropology, and sociology to explain how people attempt to find meaning and purpose in their lives. He discusses why people are motivated to seek meaning and how purpose, value, efficacy, self- worth, and meaning are related.

Benard, B. (1991). Fostering Resiliency in Kids: Protective Factors in the Family, School, and Community. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (ERIC No. ED335781)

In this book the researcher discusses the importance of fostering resilience among youth. One way to do so is through supporting the development of purpose.

Benson, P. L. (2006). All Kids Are Our Kids: What Communities Must Do to Raise Caring and Responsible Children and Adolescents (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

A leading expert on the healthy development of children and adolescents, Peter Benson outlines his theory regarding the relationship between young people and their communities. In this book, he lays out his widely-applied model of developmental assets, or the building- blocks of healthy growth. Purpose represents a key internal asset.

Benson, P. L. (2008). Sparks: How Parents Can Help Ignite the Hidden Strengths of Teenagers. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

In this popular book, Benson offers a straightforward plan for helping children discover the activities that allow them to be their best. Not unlike purpose, sparks, when they are ignited, provide children with a source of excitement, happiness, and direction.

Berg, J. M., Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2010). Perceiving and responding to challenges in job crafting at different ranks: When proactivity requires adaptivity. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 31, 158-186.

This qualitative study features 33 employees in for-profit and non-profit organizations. The researchers conduct interviews with the participants as a means of expanding upon their theory of job crafting. The authors are particularly interested in explaining how employees at different levels within an organization perceive and adapt to challenges associated with job crafting.

Bigler, M., Neimeyer, G. J., & Brown, E. (2001). The divided self revisited: Effects of self-concept clarity and self-concept differentiation on psychological adjustment. Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 20, 396- 415.

This study examined the relationship between self-concept and purpose. Purpose was negatively associated with self-concept differentiation (e.g., variation of self-concept across different roles) and positively associated with self-concept coherence (e.g., maintaining a grounded self-concept across different roles). In addition, purpose was positively associated with affect balance, self-esteem, and general contentment. Taken together, the findings from this study provide evidence for the importance of purpose in supporting positive outcomes.

Black, W. A. M., & Gregson, R. A. M. (1973). Time perspectives, purpose in life, extroversion, and neuroticism in New Zealand prisoners. British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 12(1), 50–60.

Thirty repeat offenders, 30 first-sentence prisoners, and 30 non-offenders completed surveys of purpose and other variables. Compared to the others, repeat offenders reported lower purpose in life scores.

Boehm, J. K., & Kubzansky, L. D. (2012). The heart's content: the association between positive psychological well-being and cardiovascular health. Psychological bulletin, 138(4), 655.

This study examined how specific aspects of positive psychological well-being, including purpose, might be linked to cardiovascular disease. The researchers found that because positive psychological well-being is a broad concept, different aspects affected cardiovascular disease in different ways. For instance, optimism was associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular events. Purpose interacted with many aspects of positive psychological well-being and cardiovascular health.

Bonebright, C. A., Clay, D. L., & Ankenmann, R. D. (2000). The relationship of workaholism with work-life conflict, life satisfaction, and purpose in life. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 47, 469-477.

This article examines the difference among enthusiastic and non-enthusiastic workaholics and non-workaholics. Compared to non-enthusiastic workaholics and non-workaholics, enthusiastic workaholics report greater life satisfaction and a stronger sense of purpose in life.

Boyle, P. A., Buchman, A. S., Barnes, L. L., & Bennett, D. A. (2010). Effect of a purpose in life on risk incident Alzheimer disease and mild cognitive impairment in community-dwelling older adults. Archives of General Psychiatry, 67, 304-310.

To test their hypothesis that having a purpose in life is associated with a reduced risk of Alzheimer's Disease, this team of medical doctors conducted a study in which they examined purpose in life among older adults who underwent ongoing medical evaluations. The researchers found that individuals who reported having a greater sense of purpose in life were substantially less likely to develop Alzheimer's Disease. In fact, it was determined that a person who scored high (90th percentile) on purpose in life was about 2.4 times more likely to remain free of Alzheimer's disease than a person who scored low on purpose (10th percentile).

Boyle, P. A., Buchman, A. S., Wilson, R. S., & Bennett, D. A. (2010). Purpose in life is associated with a reduced risk of incident disability among community-dwelling older persons. The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, 18, 1093-1102.

Interested in the association between purpose in life and disabilities, this team of medical doctors conducted a study with 970 older adults in which the participants completed ongoing risk assessments and health evaluations. The researchers found that individuals who reported greater purpose tended to report lower risk for disability. This suggests that a purpose in life may be related to the maintenance of functional status for older adults.

Boyle, P. A., Barnes, L. L., Buchman, A. S., & Bennett, D. A. (2009). Purpose in life is associated with mortality among community-dwelling older persons. Psychosomatic Medicine, 71, 574-579.

The researchers in this study were interested in examining the association between having a purpose in life and health and mortality among a sample of elderly adults. Higher levels of purpose were associated with a substantially reduced risk of mortality. Additionally, purpose was found to be associated with several psychological outcomes including a more positive outlook in life, happiness, satisfaction with life, and self-esteem.

Braver, T. S., Krug, M. K., Chiew, K. S., Kool, W., Westbrook, J. A., Clement, N. J., … Somerville, L. H. (2014). Mechanisms of motivation-cognition interaction: Challenges and opportunities. Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Neuroscience, 14, 443-472.

This article is divided into five different sections that focus on 1) recent developments in motivation-cognition interactions, 2) definitions of motivation from different domains, 3) relevant dimensions and distinctions present among the differing domains, 4) neural mechanisms recently implicated in neurocognitive motivation research, and 5) broad research questions for the field to address moving forward. The author's stated goal is to encourage cross-discipline collaboration in the study of motivation, cognition, and the interaction between the two.

Bronk, K. C. (2011). Portraits of purpose: The role of purpose in identity formation. New Directions for Youth Development, 132, 31-44.

About 60 years ago Erikson proposed that identity formation and purpose development were related, but he did specify how. To gain a clearer understanding of this relationship, this study explored the intersection of purpose development and identity formation among a small sample of adolescents and emerging adults with exemplary commitments to various purposes in life. Results reveal that for adolescent purpose exemplars, the process of identity formation and purpose development reinforce one another; the development of purpose supports the development of identity, and the development of identity reinforces purposeful commitments. Furthermore, in the adolescent purpose exemplars' lives, the purpose and identity constructs largely overlap in such a way that what individuals hope to accomplish provides a foundation for the kinds of adults they hope to become.

Bronk, K. C. (2012). A grounded theory of youth purpose. Journal of Adolescent Research, 27, 78-109. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0743558411412958.

This study recounts findings from a five-year longitudinal investigation of ten young people who lead exemplary lives of purpose. Case studies were conducted with the youth who were interviewed three times over the course of adolescence and emerging adulthood, and results trace the development of their purposes in life, including supports and obstacles to identifying and pursuing their personally meaningful aspirations.

Bronk, K. C. (2013). Purpose in life: A component of optimal youth development. New York: Springer Publishers.

This academic text offers a state-of-the-science review of the research conducted on the topic of purpose. It reviews definitions of purpose, discusses measures used to assess purpose, outlines the developmental trajectory of purpose, addresses the role of purpose among diverse groups of individuals, and examines empirically-based strategies for nurturing the growth of purpose.

Bronk, K. C., Hill, P., Lapsley, D., Talib, T., & Finch, W. H. (2009). Purpose, hope, and life satisfaction in three age groups. Journal of Positive Psychology 4(6), 500-510.

This cross-sectional study explored the relationship among purpose, hope, and life satisfaction among adolescents, emerging adults, and midlife adults. Results determined that having identified a purpose in life was associated with life satisfaction at all three stages of life, but searching for purpose was only associated with life satisfaction during adolescence and emerging adulthood. Aspects of hope mediated the relationship between purpose and life satisfaction at each of these stages.

Bronk, K. C., & Dubon, V. X. (2016). Approaches to fostering purpose among adolescents in educational settings. The International Forum for Logotherapy, 38.

The authors outline three educational interventions designed to foster purpose among adolescents. They explain how the terms purpose and meaning differ and discuss the importance of fostering purpose among adolescents.

Bronk, K. C. & Mangan, S. (2016). Therapeutic implications of developing a purpose in life during adolescence. In P. Russo-Netzer, S. Schulenberg, & A. Batthyany (Eds.) Meaning in Positive and Existential Psychotherapy. New York, NY: Springer Publishers.

This chapter explains why clinical settings represent appropriate venues for the development of purpose, and it outlines strategies mental health professionals can use to help nurture the growth of purpose among their young clients.

Bronk, K. C. & Riches, B. (2016). The role of purpose and moral development in hero formation. In S.T. Allison, G. R. Goethals, & R. M. Kramer (Eds.) Handbook of heroism and heroic leadership. New York: Routledge.

Using real life heroes, Miep Gies and Archbishop Romero, as examples, this chapter proposes two theoretical linkages between heroism and purpose in life. In the case of Miep Gies, heroic action inspired an enduring commitment to purpose, and in the case of Archbishop Romero, a long-term purpose in life prepared him to act heroically when the opportunity arose.

Bronk, K. C., Riches, B., Mangan, S. (under review, 2017). Claremont Purpose Scale: A new measure that assesses all three dimensions of purpose.

This manuscript introduces the Claremont Purpose Scale, which is the first survey measure to assess all three components of purpose, including goal orientation, personal meaningfulness, and a commitment to aims beyond the self. Psychometric properties of the measure are discussed in detail.

Bryan, C. J., Yeager, D. S., Hinojosa, C. P., Chabot, A., Bergen, H., Kawamura, M., & Steubing, F. (2016). Harnessing adolescent values to motivate healthier eating. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 113, 10830-10835.

The authors demonstrated the utility of a novel, brief intervention for changing adolescent eating behaviors, which they noted other researchers have had difficulty doing. Rather than emphasizing the future health benefits of eating nutritious food, the intervention was designed to align healthy eating behaviors with adolescents' values (e.g., social justice, autonomy). Results showed adolescents consumed fewer unhealthy foods and sugary drinks a day later and viewed unhealthy advertising efforts more unfavorably than a control group, albeit with small effect sizes. The authors suggest a "values-harnessing" approach is likely to succeed where other motivational efforts fail, with the potential for this approach to contribute to lasting change.

Bundick, M. J. (2011). The benefits of reflecting on and discussing purpose in life in emerging adulthood. New directions for youth development, 132, 89- 103.

This article describes how a guided discussion about young people's values, life goals, and purposes increased the young people's goal directedness and life satisfaction. The results suggest that reflecting on a purpose in life through one-on-one discussions may increase rates of purpose among young people.

Bundick, M., Andrews, M., Jones, A., Mariano, J. M., Bronk, K. C., & Damon, W. (2006). Revised youth purpose survey. Unpublished instrument, Stanford Center on Adolescence, Stanford CA.

This unpublished paper describes the Revised Youth Purpose Survey, which draws heavily from other existing measures of purpose and meaning including the Purpose in Life test and the Meaning in Life Questionnaire. The measure assesses the search for and identification of personally significant aims.

Clifton, D. O., Anderson, E. C., & Schreiner, L. A. (2006). Strengths Quest: Discover and Develop Your Strengths in Academics, Careers, and Beyond. New York: Gallup Press.

Grounded in empirical positive psychological research, this book defines human strengths and helps readers identify and develop their own talents.

Crumbauch, J. C., & Maholick, L. T. (1969). Manual of instructions for the Purpose in Life Test. Psychometric Affiliates.

This manual describes the Purpose in Life Test, including the design and validation of the measure. The Purpose in Life Test (PIL) was created with the assistance of Viktor Frankl. It is a 21-item scale that poses questions, such as "My personal existence is (1) utterly meaningless, without purpose to (5) purposeful and meaningful" and "In life I have (1) no goals or aims to (5) clear goals and aims." The PIL is the most widely administered measure of purpose.

Crumbaugh, J. C. (1977). The seeking of noetic goals test (SONG): A complementary scale to the purpose in life test (PIL). Journal of Clinical Psychology, 33(3), 900-907.

This article introduces the Seeking of Noetic Goals (SONG), a survey measure that assesses the degree to which a person is actively searching for a purpose in life. This article describes the SONG's creation, reliability, and validity.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Flow. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

In this book, psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi discusses "optimal experiences" or what he calls "flow." He presents research suggesting that people experience enjoyment and satisfaction when they are engaged in personally meaningful activities that are at once challenging and enjoyable.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2003). Good Business: Leadership, Flow, and the Making of Meaning. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Good Business outlines the components of "good work" in business settings. It also reveals how business leaders and employees can find flow in the work they do and in so doing contribute not only to their own well-being, but also to the broader society.

Damon, W. (2008). The path to purpose: Helping our children find their calling in life. New York: Free Press.

Written by a pioneer in the field of purpose research, this book outlines what a purpose is, details some of the benefits associated with leading a life of purpose, and highlights strategies that parents and others can use to help nurture the growth of purpose in the lives of young people.

Damon, W. (2009). The why question: Teachers can instill a sense of purpose. Education Next, 9(3), 84.

Purpose represents the ultimate source of motivation, and in this article, Damon explains how the motivation associated with pursuing purpose can be linked to academic activities that help young people excel in school. Fostering purpose among adolescents starts with helping them understand why they are doing the things they do in school.

Damon, W., Menon, J., & Bronk, K. C. (2003). The development of purpose during adolescence. Applied Developmental Science, 7, 119-128.

In this journal article, the researchers review the psychological literature on purpose, and based on that body of research, propose a working definition of the construct. They outline the three components of purpose (goal-orientation, meaningfulness, and beyond-the-self orientation) and explain the significance of each. Additionally, the researchers clearly distinguish the related terms of purpose and meaning. Finally, they discuss previous studies that highlight the importance of developing purpose among youth.

Devenish, P. (1984). Jews and Christians searching for God. Christian Jewish Relations, 17, 13-19.

This article provides both Jews and Christians with guidance in how to understand their relationship with God. Devenish argues that Jews and Christians alike are searching for a God of love, seeking to worship the one who unconditionally loves and created humanity. This idea of a loving God should inspire Jews and Christians to dedicate their lives to a larger, productive purpose. The concept of

purpose is eloquently alluded to in several places (E.g. "What is appropriate is rather our response to a commitment on God's part— an unconditional commitment particularly manifested in the Shekinah and Incarnation—to encourage all human efforts at concrete help and to re-encourage even, especially when they fail," p. 18. Devenish is saying that God would have Jews and Christians consistently look to help the world beyond themselves. He goes on to say, "God's love is social, not mechanical, a matter of unrelenting personal influence, not one of coercion . . . we shall rather look for ways of re-enacting this love in a responsible manner" p. 19). For both religions, the understanding of God's presence and his grace should lead believer to re- enact his love, in the form of purpose.

Dik, B. & Duffy, R. D. (2009). Calling and vocation at work: Definitions and prospects for research and practice. Counseling Psychologist, 37(3), 424-450.

This article outlines purpose, in the form of a calling or vocation, for counseling psychologists. It defines the term calling and explains how people can find meaning in the work they do.

Dik, B. & Duffy, R. D. (2012). Make Your Job a Calling: How the Psychology of Vocation Can Change Your Life at Work. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press.

This book defines the concept of a calling and reviews some of the relevant empirical research on the topic. It also features activities and questions readers are encouraged to address as they work to discover their own calling.

Dik, B. J., Duffy, R. D., Allan, B. A., O'Donnell, M. B., Shim, Y., & Steger, M. F. (2014). Purpose and meaning in career development applications. The Counseling Psychologist, 0011000014546872.

This article was featured in a special issue of The Counseling Psychologist focused on applied positive psychological approaches. As such, this article outlines theory and research around the importance of finding purpose and meaning at work and makes recommendations regarding how counseling and vocational psychologists can help clients engaged in the career development process.

Dik, B. J., Steger, M. F., Gibson, A., & Peisner, W. (2011). Make Your Work Matter: Development and pilot evaluation of a purpose - centered career education intervention. New Directions for Youth Development, 2011(132), 59- 73.

This article introduces and discusses the Make Your Work Matter intervention, implemented in schools to help adolescents find a purpose for their lives. Following the intervention, participants in the experimental condition better understood their strengths, weaknesses, and interests. They also reported feeling more prepared for the future and having a clearer sense of career direction.

Duffy, R. D. & Dik, B. J. (2013). Research on calling: What have we learned and where are we going? Journal of Vocational Behavior, 83, 428-436.

This article reviews the literature on callings, focusing in particular on findings relevant to college students and adults. It highlights the benefits associated with finding work that is meaningful, and it outlines areas in need of additional research.

Dubov, N. (n.d.). What is life's purpose? Retrieved from http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/108390/jewish/What-is- Lifes-Purpose.htm

This article provides an outlook on purpose through a Jewish rabbinic lens. The article explains Jewish thought on a variety of topics that relate to purpose in life. The article draws on many rabbinic sources of thought and is a good source for anyone wanting to understand Jewish ideas about the afterlife. It contributes to the understanding of purpose in Judaism by explaining how the Torah is meant to inform people's lives, how each person can serve as a vessel for serving God, and the importance of helping and loving other people as a way of glorifying God.

DuRant, R. H., Cadenhead, C., Pendergast, R. A., Slavens, G., & Linder, C.W. (1994). Factors associated with the use of violence among urban Black adolescents. American Journal of Public Health, 84(4), 612–617.

This article features a study that examines factors associated with the use of violence among African-American males living in communities with high levels of violent crime. Results of the study suggest that exposure to violence is associated with self-reported use of violence, but, compared to others, adolescents with a strong sense of purpose are less likely to engage in violence in spite of being exposed to it.

Dyck, M. J. (1987). Assessing logotherapeutic constructs: Conceptual and psychometric status of the Purpose in Life and Seeking of Noetic Goals tests. Clinical Psychology Review, 7(4), 439-447.

This study examined the validity of the Purpose in Life (PIL) and the Seeking of Noetic Goals (SONG) measures. It sought to determine if these measures properly assessed the identification of and search for purpose. The researchers concluded that the PIL was best described as an indirect measure of depression and life satisfaction, the PIL was only partially related to meaning, and the SONG was an invalid measure of the search for meaning. The article acknowledges that the complex concept of meaning in life is a difficult one to measure.

Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: an experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. Journal of personality and social psychology, 84(2), 377.

This article consists of three studies that examine the relationship between gratitude and well-being. In the first two studies, participants were divided into gratitude listing, hassles listing, and control conditions. Participants were asked to keep weekly (Study 1) or daily (Study 2) records of their mood,

physical symptoms, etc. The third study featured a sample that suffered from neuromuscular disease, and these participants were similarly assigned to one of the three conditions. Taken together, results suggest that focusing on the blessings in one's life has emotional and interpersonal benefits, and that individuals who adopt a grateful outlook are more likely to feel connected to and help others.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). Identity: Youth and crisis. New York: Norton.

One of Erikson's most well-known books, this text includes a detailed discussion of his theory of identity formation and of his broader theory of psychosocial development across the lifespan.

Fahlman, S. A., Mercer, K. B., Gaskovski, P., Eastwood, A. E., & Eastwood, J. D. (2009). Does a lack of life meaning cause boredom? Results from psychometric, longitudinal, and experimental analyses. Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 28, 307-340.

This article reports findings from three different analyses designed to address one question. All analyses pointed to the same conclusion: boredom is distinct from depression and anxiety. Changes in meaning across time predict changes in boredom, and boredom is not affected simply by changes in mood but can be influenced by manipulating a person's understanding of their life's meaning. The authors conclude that meaning and boredom, although distinct concepts, share a strong bidirectional relationship, and changes in one lead to changes in the other.

Fishbach, A. (2014). The motivational self is more than the sum of its goals. Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 37, 143-144.

Studies of motivation often reveal seemingly inconsistent findings in terms of goal pursuit, which some researchers have taken as evidence that goal pursuit is randomly chosen with little conscious control over it. The author argued for the existence of a "motivational self," a conscious director of motivational efforts with supporting evidence drawn from three lines of research.

Fishbach, A., Koo, M., & Finkelstein, S. R. (2014). Motivation resulting from completed and missing actions. In J. M. Olsen & M. P. Zanna (Eds.), Advances in experimental social psychology (Vol. 50, pp. 257-307). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

This article addressed the way people monitor their goals and their goal-pursuit motivation. Evidence suggests novices, or people who are not yet committed to a goal, are more likely to be motivated by focusing on progress that has been accomplished. In contrast, experts, or people who are already strongly committed to a goal, are more likely to be motivated by focusing on sub-goals that have yet to be accomplished. Further, they argued that novices are motivated by positive feedback and experts by negative feedback. The research reviewed integrates findings from self-regulation and motivation research in novel ways.

Fishbach, A., & Shen, L. (2014). The explicit and implicit ways of overcoming temptation. In J. W. Sherman, B. Gawronski, & Y. Trope (Eds.), Dual-process theories of the social mind (pp. 454-467). New York, NY: Guilford.

In this article, researchers reviewed ways individuals exercise self-control and overcome temptations. They argued that self-control is not only a taxing process that results in failure for many, as past research has depicted, but they also present evidence supporting implicit, non-conscious ways individuals succeed in goal pursuit. They propose a model of overcoming temptation that highlights a variety of ways individuals become aware of self- control conflicts and ways of resolving them. The authors argued that self-control is best understood as a two-stage process where individuals first identify the conflict between temptations and goals, and then they draw on strategies to promote goal pursuit.

Frankl, V. E. (1959). Man's Search for Meaning, trans. Lasch. London: Rider.

Frankl recounts his experiences as a concentration camp inmate during World War II and how his experiences helped mold his belief about the importance of meaning and purpose in life. He also describes his psychotherapeutic method, called logotherapy, which involves helping individuals identify their purpose in clinical settings.

Froh, J. J., Kashdan, T. B., Ozimkowski, K. M., & Miller, N. (2009). Who benefits the most from a gratitude intervention in children and adolescents? Examining positive affect as a moderator. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 4(5), 408-422.

This article discusses a study featuring 89 children and adolescent participants who wrote and delivered gratitude letters. Results indicate that participants who had lower initial levels of positive affect and gratitude, compared to a control group, had significantly higher gratitude and positive affect after delivering the letter and as long as two months later.

Froh, J. J., Sefick, W. J., & Emmons, R. A. (2008). Counting blessings in early adolescents: An experimental study of gratitude and subjective well-being. Journal of School Psychology, 46, 213-233.

Interested in identifying potential benefits of practicing gratitude, a team of researchers engaged a group of early adolescents in one of three activity conditions: a counting blessings condition (in which early adolescents were asked to list 5 things they were grateful for), a hassles condition (in which children were instructed to list 5 things that bothered them), and a control condition (in which children completed unrelated activities). Young people in the counting blessings condition reported higher rates of gratitude and subjective well-being.

Fry, P. S. (1998). The development of personal meaning and wisdom in adolescence: A reexamination of moderating and consolidating factors and influences. In P. T. P. Wong (Ed.), The human

quest for meaning: A handbook of psychological research and clinical applications (2nd ed., pp. 91-110) New York: Routledge.

This book focuses on fostering meaning in clinical setting, especially as a means of alleviating the "existential vacuum" caused by a lack of purpose. This chapter highlights the development of meaning and wisdom, which is closely related to the beyond-the-self aspect of purpose. Findings suggest that discussions designed to increase meaning and wisdom in clinical setting should focus on what a young person feels in personally meaningful, their short and long term goals, and their personal values.

Gaer, J. (1963). What the great religions believe. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company.

Gaer's book briefly outlines the beliefs of some of the world's leading religions. It does so by examining the history, core tenets, and teachings of each religion. Gaer discusses a wide range of religions, including those discussed here but also others, including Taoism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, etc. It is a useful reference for anyone wanting to learn more about what people in different religions believe.

Hablas, R., & Hutzell, R. R. (1982). The Life Purpose Questionnaire: An alternative to the Purpose-in-Life test for geriatric, neuropsychiatric patients. Analecta Frankliana, 211-215.

This article introduces the Life Purpose Questionnaire, a survey of purpose based on the Purpose in Life test (PIL). The LPQ asks 20 of the PIL's items in statement format allowing an agree-disagree Likert scale to be used. This article describes the measure and its psychometric properties.

Harlow, L. L., Newcomb, M. D., & Bentler, P. M. (1986). Depression, self- derogation, substance use, and suicide ideation: Lack of purpose in life as a mediational factor. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 42, 5-21.

Researchers examined how purpose in life mediates (that is, serves as a link in the relationship between) depression, self-derogation, substance use (e.g., drug use), and suicide ideation. They found interesting differences between the way that males and females react to purposelessness. In response to a lack of purpose in life, females tended to turn to substance use, whereas males tended to react with suicidal thoughts. Depression was negatively associated with purpose in life, and purpose was negatively associated with substance use.

Hedberg, P., Gustafson, Y., & Brulin, C. (2010). Purpose in life among men and women aged 85 years and older. The International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 70(3), 213-229.

The study detailed in this journal article sought to shed light on the relationship among purpose in life, psychological well-being, social relations, and physical and psychological symptoms among individuals 85-years of age and older. Findings suggest that older adults' attitudes toward aging may be strongly related to their sense of purpose in life. Compared to younger adults, the older adults in this study reported relatively low purpose in life scores.

Hill, P. L., Burrow, A. L., & Bronk, K. C. (2014). Persevering with Positivity and Purpose: An Examination of Purpose Commitment and Positive Affect as Predictors of Grit. Journal of Happiness Studies, 1-13.

Ultimately interested in fostering grit among college students, this team of researchers set out to examine characteristics related to grit. Using a sample of college students, the researchers concluded that grit was related to positive affect and to having a commitment to a purpose in life.

Hill, P. A., Sumner, R. A., & Burrow, A. L. (2014). Understanding the pathways to purpose: Examining personality and well-being correlates across adulthood. Journal of Positive Psychology, 9, 227-234.

Relatively little is known about how people discover personally meaningful and productive purposes in life. To address this, the study discussed in this journal article traced individuals' paths to discovering meaningful purposes. Three routes emerged, including proactive engagement, reaction to a significant life event, and social learning.

Hsee, C. K., Zhang, J., Yu, F., & Xi, Y. (2003). Lay rationalism and inconsistency between predicted experience and decision. Journal of Behavioral Decision Making, 16, 257-272.

Lay rationalism is conceived as a three-fold construct (e.g., lay scientism, lay economism, lay functionalism) that influences individual decision-making. Lay rationalism is a sometimes-faulty emphasis on objective facts, perceived economic gains, and a tendency to weigh instrumental factors more than ethereal ones. The authors argued that individuals often rely on lay rationalism too much when making decisions that do not require them to consider lay rationalism to maximize benefits (e.g., when emotional benefits would be more enjoyable than potential economic gains) and rely too little on lay rationalism when making decisions in which reliance on lay rationalism would likely maximize benefits (e.g., when a higher earning job would be more immediately beneficial than a personally meaningful job).

Hsee, C. K., Zhang, J., Cai, C. F., & Zhang, S. (2013). Overearning.
Psychological Science, 24, 852-859.

The authors used a simple, but well-controlled experimental design in three studies to gauge how prevalent overearning is (e.g., accumulating resources above and beyond what is needed) and outcomes associated with it. Results suggest individuals mindlessly accumulate resources well beyond their needs. Overearning in this way was found to be wasteful and harmful to human happiness but could be ameliorated when individuals' earnings and needs were made salient. This could be accomplished by having participants predict their optimal resource level. The authors concede that the design used contrived procedures compared to real earning environments, but they conclude that these data offer a first step in understanding overearning tendencies.

Hughes, M. (2006). Affect, meaning and quality of life. Social forces, 85, 611- 629.

From a sociological perspective, this article examines instances in which individuals report lower levels of affect, but higher levels of meaning and life quality. For instance, parenting, caregiving, and living with family are associated with less positive affect than not parenting, not caregiving, and living with roommates. However, in each case, individuals are willing to put up with the situation because of the strong sense of meaning derived from doing so.
This article argues that meaning- not affect- represents people's ultimate source of motivation.

Hutzell, R. R. (1989). Life Purpose Questionnaire overview sheet. Berkeley: Institute of Logotheraphy Press.

This article describes the development and outlines uses of the Life Purpose Questionnaire (LPQ). It notes that the LPQ is positively correlated with life satisfaction and negatively correlated with depression.

Jacobs, T. L., Epel, E. S., Lin, J., Blackburn, E. H., Wolkowitz, O. M., Bridwell, D. A., & King, B. G. (2011). Intensive meditation training, immune cell telomerase activity, and psychological mediators. Psychoneuroendocrinology, 36(5), 664-681.

The medical study detailed in this article sought to examine the effects of a mindfulness intervention. Participants attended a retreat that successfully increased rates of mindfulness and perceived control and reduced levels of neuroticism. It also increased participants' levels of purpose in life.

Johnsen, L. (2009). The complete idiot's guide to Hinduism. New York: Penguin Books.

Johnsen's book provides a broad introduction to the Hindu religion. It covers history, cosmology and gods, and practices and festivals common among Hindu believers. The main chapter of interest to those wanting to learn more about purpose is chapter 7, titled "Born Again!" It is here that Johnsen explains the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth and how karma drives this cycle and can be used to break free of this cycle. According to the author, primary ways of building good karma include practicing self-discipline (e.g. through yoga and meditation), participating in rituals, offering charitable donations, and providing service to the world beyond the self.

Jonsen, E., Fagerstrom, L., Lundman, B., Nygren, B., Vahakangas, M., & Strandberg, G. (2010). Psychometric properties of the Swedish version of the purpose in life scale. Scandinavian Journal of Caring Science, 24, 41–48.

In this article, the team of researchers introduces and validates a Swedish version of the Purpose in Life (PIL) scale. They note that research on purpose has primarily been limited to Western participants from middle and high socioeconomic backgrounds.

Kalkstein, D. A., Kleiman, T., Wakslak, C. J., Liberman, N., & Trope, Y. (2016). Social learning across psychological distance. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 110, 1-19.

The authors examined individuals' tendency to learn at a high-level (e.g., abstract, decontextualized) from individuals who are psychologically or temporally far away and at a low-level (e.g., specific, contextualized) from individuals who are psychologically or temporally close. Evidence supporting this pattern was found across six studies. Results suggested that increasingly high-level construals of learning allow people to learn from increasingly distant others. With regards to purpose, this suggests that people may learn about this abstract concept from distant and diverse others. In fact, these studies suggest that exposing people to individuals and ideas psychologically and temporally far away could be an effective means of fostering abstract sources of purpose.

Kass, J. D., Friedman, R., Leserman, J., Caudill, M., Zuttermeister, P. C., & Benson, H. (1991). An inventory of positive psychological attitudes with potential relevance to health outcomes: Validation and preliminary testing. Behavioral Medicine, 17, 121-129.

This article introduces and validates the Positive Psychological Attitudes measure, which has two components: (1) purpose and satisfaction and (2) self-confidence during stress. Increases on these factors are related to reductions in chronic pain among patients.

Klein, N., & Fishbach, A. (2014). Feeling good at the right time: Why people value predictability in goal attainment. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 55, 21-30.

Four studies examined the predicted or experienced levels of positive affect people felt after attaining a goal. Compared to individuals who did not have their goal attainment script interrupted (e.g. positive affect experienced after reaching a goal), individuals who had their goal attainment script interrupted made more recall errors and experienced less positive affect following goal-attainment. In short, interruptions mellowed positive affect, and this effect reduced motivation to attain other goals. The authors note such scripts likely only mellow positive affect for goals that follow a clear sequence of events, however.

Koshy, S. I., & Mariano, J. M. (2011). Promoting youth purpose: A review of the literature. New Directions for Youth Development, 2011(132), 13-29.

This article reviews literature on how purpose can be fostered, particularly among adolescents and young adults. The authors argue that educational contexts are important places for fostering purpose.

Laufer, W.S., Laufer, E.A., & Laufer, L.S. (1981). Purpose in life and occupational interest in a gerontological sheltered workshop. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 37(4), 424-426.

Relying on a relatively small sample of older adults (N=54), the study featured in this journal article examined the role of purpose in later life, the will to live, and occupational aspirations among a sample of older adults in a gerontological sheltered workshop. It determined, among other things, that individuals with a clear purpose in life were more likely to live in private homes and apartments than in nursing homes or other institutional settings.

Law, B. M. (2012). Psychometric properties of the existence subscale of the Purpose in Life questionnaire for Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong. The Scientific World Journal, 2012.

The existence subscale of the purpose in life test (EPIL) is a 7-item measure designed to assess purpose among early adolescents. Items draw heavily from the Purpose in Life test. They probe excitement about life and a conviction that life has meaning. This article describes the EPIL's creation and psychometric properties.

Lee, V., Cohen, S. R., Edgar, L., Laizner, A. M., & Gagnon, A. J. (2006). Meaning-making intervention during breast or colorectal cancer treatment improves self-esteem, optimism, and self-efficacy. Social Science & Medicine, 62, 3133-3145.

A team of researchers conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of an intervention designed to enhance the well-being of cancer patients. Using a sample of 82 cancer patients, the intervention featured sessions in which the patients engaged in meaning- making activities. The researchers concluded that the intervention effectively increased the patients' sense of meaning in life, self-esteem, optimism, and self-efficacy.

Lyubomirsky, S., Tkach, C., & DiMatteo, M. R. (2006). What are the differences between happiness and self-esteem. Social Indicators Research, 78, 363-404.

This study assessed a sample of 621 retired employees (ages 51-95) to gain a deeper understanding of the differences between happiness and self-esteem. Results suggest that higher rates of purpose may be associated higher levels of self-esteem. Additionally, findings suggest that having a purpose in life may be a strong predictor of happiness.

Maimaran, M., & Fishbach, A. (2014). If it's useful and you know it, do you eat? Preschoolers refrain from instrumental food. Journal of Consumer Research, 41, 642-655.

The article examined eating behaviors among preschool children. Across five studies, the authors found that emphasizing the instrumental (e.g., health, academic) benefits of eating food resulted in children perceiving the food as less tasty, which was associated with eating less of it. This was true for carrots, but also for crackers. The authors concluded that providing food options without emphasizing other instrumental benefits is likely the best way to encourage young children to eat healthy or otherwise desirable foods.

Malin, H., Reilly, T. S., Quinn, B., & Moran, S. (2014). Adolescent purpose development: Exploring empathy, discovering roles, shifting priorities, and creating pathways. Journal of Research on Adolescence, 24(1), 186-199.

In this study researchers interviewed a cross section of 146 young people in sixth, ninth, and twelfth grades, as well as a group of sophomores and juniors in college about their life goals. The researchers concluded that purpose developed in four phases, staring with an empathy orientation in middle school, a focus on engagement and their role in society in high school, a re-evaluation of priorities and values in twelfth grade, and the development of strategies and pathways to support their purpose through the college years. The authors acknowledge that purpose development may not always be as linear or straightforward as these four phases suggest.

Mariano, J. M., Moran, S., Araújo, U. F., Biglia, B., Folgueiras, P., Jiang, F., Kuusisto, E., Luna, E., Palou, B., Shin, J., & Tirri, K. (2014, October 29). Educating for youth purpose around the world [Webinar]. Retrieved from: http://youtu.be/GM_sziyLOAU

This webinar brought together experts from around the world to discuss their conceptions of purpose. Participants also discussed the way leaders in various countries address the development of purpose among youth. Although people in different countries understand and seek to foster meaningful aspirations in different ways, they generally agree schools represent an important venue for the development of purpose among young people.

Mariano, J. M., & Vaillant, G. E. (2012). Youth purpose among the 'greatest generation'. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 7(4), 281-293.

As a means of investigating purpose among the "Greatest Generation," researchers, using archival data, analyzed interviews conducted with 268 young men who attended an Ivy League University between 1939 and 1943. They found that purpose was positively related to positive childhood environments and that 38% of the sample demonstrated signs of leading lives of purpose.

Marks, N. F., Lambert, J. D. & Choi, H. (2002). Transitions to caregiving, gender, and psychological well-being: A perspective U.S. national study. Journal of Marriage and Family, 64, 657-67.

Guided by a life course perspective, the study discussed in this chapter examined the effects of transitioning into caregiving for a child, spouse, parent, other relative, or nonkin associate on dimensions of psychological well-being. Data were drawn from adults (ages 19–95), and results suggest the transition to caregiving for primary kin (e.g., a child, spouse, or biological parent) may be associated with an increase in depressive symptoms. However in certain instances, caregiving may be associated with more beneficial effects. For instance, compared to non-caregivers, women providing care for a biological parent reported higher levels of purpose in life.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). Motivation and personality. New York, NY: Harper.

Motivation and Personality lays out Maslow's famous theory regarding people's hierarchy of needs. According to this theory, people must achieve more basic needs (e.g. food, shelter, safety) before they are motivated to pursue loftier aims (e.g. self actualization).

Maton, K. I. (1990). Meaningful involvement in activity and well−being: Studies of older adolescents and at risk urban teenagers. American Journal of Community Psychology, 18(2), 297–320.

This study discussed in this article compares responses from college students and urban youth on a variety of survey measures. Among both samples meaningful activity was positively related to life satisfaction, independent of social support from friends and parents. Meaningful instrumental activity was also positively related to self-esteem to a greater extent for male than for female college students and for school-attending than for school- dropout urban black males. Finally, higher mean levels of meaningful instrumental activity were reported by school-attending than by school-dropout adolescents.

McAdams, D. P. (1996). Explorations in generativity in later years. In L. Sperry & H. Prosen (Eds.), Aging in the 21st century: A developmental perspective (pp. 33-58). New York, NY: Garland Press.

Generativity represents Erik Erikson's seventh stage (of eight) of psychosocial development. It refers to an adult's concern for and commitment to promoting the well-being of youth and future generations. Generativity shares with a purpose a desire to contribute to the world beyond the self.

McAdams, D. P. (2008). The life story interview. Retrieved from https://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/docs/Interviewrevised95.pdf

The life story interview is a semi-structured interview protocol that guides participants through creating a narrative life story. The interview structures the narrative into eight life chapters, including (1) a peak experience, (2) a low point, (3) a turning point, (4) an early memory, (5) an important childhood scene, (6) an important adolescent scene, (7) an important adult scene, and (8) one other important scene. After these questions, the interviewer probes stories participants tell about their personal ideologies and life themes. These last two sections are closely related to purpose, however purpose, or signs of purpose, may emerge at any point during the interview.

Merriam, S. B. (2014). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. John Wiley & Sons.

This easy-to-read textbook covers numerous qualitative research topics in great detail. The three main sections discuss the collection, analysis and reporting of qualitative data. They contain discussions of everything from the philosophy of science and logic behind the design of qualitative investigations, to specific computer programs frequently used in qualitative data analysis.

Nakamura, J. & Cskiszentmihalyi, M. (2009). Flow theory and research. In S. Lopez & C. R. Snyder (Eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology (pp. 195-2060. New York: Oxford University Press.

The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology outlines the aims and boundaries of positive psychology. It introduces many of the primary positive psychological constructs of interest. This particular chapter discusses what flow is, how it is relevant to positive psychology and purpose and meaning in life, and how it can be cultivated.

Nakamura, J., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2003). The construction of meaning through vital engagement. In C. Keyes & J. Haidt (Eds.), Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well-lived (pp. 83-104). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

This chapter focuses on the nature of flow and its various antecedents, including contexts that are particularly conducive to flow. Interest in an activity, which along with challenge is a key component of flow, increases with time and skill development, and when this happens, activities become increasingly important, or meaningful, to the individual. Engagement in personally meaningful activities is referred to as vital engagement, and vital engagement contributes to human flourishing.

Nicholson, T., Higgins, W., Turner, P., James, S., Stickle, F., & Pruitt, T. (1994). The relation between meaning in life and occurrence of drug abuse: A retrospective study. Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 8, 24-28.

Two groups (49 individuals receiving in-patient drug treatment for drug abuse and 49 matched, non-drug abusing individuals) participated in this study to examine the relationship between drug use and meaning in life. In-patient drug users reported significantly lower levels of meaning in life and reported emotions consistent with Frankl's conception of an existential vacuum (e.g., they felt they lacked authenticity and a sense of meaning in life). The authors conclude that in-patient drug programs should more intentionally work to foster meaning among patients as a means of increasing the effectiveness of addiction treatment.

Padelford, B. L. (1974). Relationship between drug involvement and purpose in life. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 30, 303-305.

This article features a study that explores the relationship between drug involvement and purpose in life among a diverse sample of 416 adolescents. Results support the overall hypothesis that drug involvement and purpose in life are inversely related. However, a more nuanced analysis reveals that this relationship holds for European-American adolescents and males, but not for Mexican-American adolescents or females.

Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2006). Methodological issues in positive psychology and the assessment of character strengths. Handbook of methods in positive psychology, 292-305.

This book reviews character, or signature, strengths. In addition to defining these constructs, it also outlines how they are measured. Purpose is categorized as a kind of religious character strength.

Parks, S. D. (2011). Big questions, worthy dreams: Mentoring emerging adults in their search for meaning, purpose, and faith. John Wiley & Sons.

This book provides guidance to mentors of emerging adults searching for purpose. In addition to defining what a mentor is, the author explains why mentors are particularly important during the emerging adulthood stage of life. According to the author, effective mentors recognize, support, and challenge young people's purposeful ideas and plans.

Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. (2004). Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification. Oxford University Press.

The VIA, or Values in Action, is a survey that assesses a person's 24 character strengths. Character strengths are characteristics that help people live an optimally satisfying life and contribute to the broader world. This handbook describes what character strengths are and summarizes findings from studies of the measure's reliability and validity. There is a version of the VIA for adults 18 years of age and older and another for young people from age 10 to 17. The transcendent character strengths include purpose as well as spirituality and gratitude. More about the VIA can also be found at http://www.viacharacter.org

Pinquart, M. (2002). Creating and maintaining purpose in life in old age: A meta-analysis. Ageing international, 27(2), 90-114.

This article features a meta-analysis that synthesized findings from 70 studies of purpose in life among older adults. Results suggest that purpose drops slightly in midlife and more dramatically in later adulthood. Conclusions also suggest that purpose is associated with social integration and good health.

Pizzolato, J. E., Brown, E. L., & Kanny, M. A. (2011). Purpose plus: Supporting youth purpose, control, and academic achievement. New Directions for Youth Development, 132, 75-88.

This chapter examines the effects of an intervention that sought to foster purpose and an internal locus of control as a means of enhancing positive youth development and academic achievement among a sample of adolescents from low-resourced communities.

Reker, G. (1992). The Life Attitude Profile-Revised (LAP-R). Procedures manual: Research edition. Peterborough: Student Psychologists Press.

This manual describes the Life Attitude Profile-Revised (LAP-R), a survey measure of purpose in life based on Viktor Frankl's conception of purpose. The LAP-R contains 48 items investigating one's purpose in life and one's motivation to find purpose.

Riley, M. W., Kahn, R. L., & Foner, A. (1994). Age and structural lag: Society's failure to provide meaningful opportunities in work, family, and leisure. New York, NY: Wiley.

This book addresses detrimental consequences of the structural lag problem, which refers to the mismatch between longevity and social structures.

Roos, C. R., Kirouac, M., Pearson, M. R., Fink, B. C., & Witkiewitz, K. (2015). Examining temptation to drink from an existential perspective: Associations among temptation, purpose in life, and drinking outcomes. Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 29, 716-724.

Researchers in this study tested the hypothesis that the Temptation to Drink (TTD), the degree one feels compelled to drink in the presence of internal or external alcohol-related cues, and purpose in life would be associated across time, such that higher TTD would relate to lower purpose, and that this relationship could be used to predict alcohol abuse behaviors. Findings suggest that higher levels of purpose are related to lower TTD, and this relationship predicts drinking frequency among those prone to abusing alcohol. Over the course of 15 months, as levels of purpose increased, TTD decreased.

Ross, F. (2008). The meaning of life in Hinduism and Buddhism. New York, NY: Routledge.

Ross' book explains how Hindu and Buddhist believers find meaning in their lives. It includes chapters on yoga, teachings from the Bhagavad Gita, and "On Finding The Way" in Buddhism. It discusses the cycle of incarnation, in both Hinduism and Buddhism. It also includes a glossary of terms to help readers understand Sanskrit, an ancient Indian language from which many Hindu religious terms derive, and other Eastern-culture religious terms (such as, dharma and moksha) that can be difficult to understand. It explains that Hindus and Buddhists find purpose by acquiring good karma and using it to break the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995). The structure of psychological well- being revisited. Journal of personality and social psychology, 69(4), 719.

This article describes a measure of psychological well-being called the Psychological Scales of Well-being. Among other variables, it features a Purpose in Life subscale. The article outlines the entire measure's psychometric properties as well as the psychometric properties of the Purpose in Life subscale. The Purpose in Life subscale focuses on the goal orientation aspect of purpose. It includes items such as "I live one day at a time and don't really think about the future" (reverse coded) and "Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them." A 6-point Likert scale is used in this initial validation of the study but other Likert scales have been used as well.

Ryff, C. D., Keyes, C. L. M., & Hughes, D. L. (2003). Status inequalities, perceived discrimination, and eudaimonic well−being: Do the challenges of minority life hone purpose and growth? Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 44, 275–291.

Using data from the Midlife in the United States survey (MIDUS), a national survey of Americans aged 25–74, plus city-specific samples of African Americans in New York and Mexican Americans in Chicago, this study examined ethnic minority status as a predictor of eudaimonic well-being, of which purpose is a significant component. Findings suggest that rates of eudaimonic well-being vary based on gender, socioeconomic status, ethnic minority status, and educational attainment.

Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. H. (2008). Know thyself and become what you are: A eudaimonic approach to well-being. Journal of Happiness Studies, 9, 13-39.

Ryff and Singer's highly regarded model of psychological well-being, which includes a central role for purpose, [Ryff, C.D.: 1989, Journal of Personality and Social psychology, 57(6), pp. 1069-1081] is undergirded by a eudaimonic approach to well-being. This article reviews life course and socioeconomic correlates of well-being to underscore the point that opportunities for eudamonic well-being may not be equally available to people from all socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. It also outlines biological and psychological correlates of well-being in general and of purpose in particular.

Ryff, C. D., Singer, B. H., & Love, G. D. (2004). Positive health: Connecting well-being with biology. Philosophical Transactions-Royal Society of London Series B Biological Sciences, 1383-1394.

In this article, the authors review two different approaches to well-being: eudamonic well- being, characterized by personal growth and purposeful engagement, and hedonic well- being, characterized by positive feelings, such as happiness. The article highlights links between physical health and eudaimonic well-being.

Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology. American Psychologist, 55, 5-14.

This article launched the positive psychology movement. It lays out the aims of positive psychology, which focus on optimal states of development. The authors argue that positive psychologists should focus on particular facets of well-being, including life satisfaction, hope, optimism, engagement with life, capacity for love, courage, forgiveness, spirituality, high talent, wisdom, and meaning in life.

Shamah, D. (2011). Supporting a strong sense of purpose: Lessons from a rural community. New Directions for Youth Development, 132, 45-58.

This article features a study of purpose among rural youth. It concludes that activities at school and in the community play an important role in supporting the development of purpose among young people.

Shek, D. T. L., Hong, E. W., & Cheung, M. Y. P. (1987). The Purpose in Life Questionnaire in a Chinese context. Journal of Psychology, 121(1), 77–83.

The Chinese version of the Purpose In Life Test was administered to post-secondary school students in China to compare rates of purpose among Chinese and Western youth. Results suggest that Chinese adolescents may have lower rates of purpose than Western youth.

Shen, L., Fishbach, A., & Hsee, C. K. (2014). The Motivating-Uncertainty Effect: Uncertainty increases resource investment in the process of reward pursuit. Journal of Consumer Research, 41, 1301-1315.

The authors provided evidence supporting an uncertainty-motivating effect. They argued when people pursue a goal with an uncertain reward (e.g., possibly receiving $1 or $2), not knowing which reward will be attained imbues the experience with greater positive affect (e.g., excitement). Support for this effect was found across four studies. The authors noted the uncertainty effect applies when focusing on the process of pursuing the reward, but decreases investment in goal pursuit when focusing on the outcome. They also noted that as the magnitude of the reward increased (as is likely to be the case in purposeful goal pursuit), individuals are increasingly likely to focus on the outcome and the effect diminishes.

Steger, M. F. (2009). Meaning in life. In S. J. Lopez (Ed.), Oxford handbook of positive psychology (2nd Ed.) (pp. 679-687). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

In this chapter, the author argues that meaning in life is an important variable to consider with regards to human well-being. The author proposes that meaning is comprised of two pillars: comprehension and purpose. These components are defined and explained in detail.

Steger, M. F., & Frazier, P. (2005). Meaning in life: One link in the chain from religiousness to well-being. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52, 574.

The researchers in this study were interested in examining the association between religiousness and well-being. They determined that that religiousness was associated with increased rates of meaning in life, which in turn were related to increased well-being. These findings suggest that meaning may play a critical role in well-being.

Steger, M. F., Frazier, P., Oishi, S., & Kaler, M. (2006). The meaning in life questionnaire: Assessing the presence of and search for meaning in life. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 53(1), 80.

This article discusses the creation and validation of The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ). The MLQ is a survey measure that assesses the search for and identification of the personal significance of one's life. The MLQ contains 10 items including "I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful" and "I understand my life's meaning." The article describes the MLQ as valid, in part, because it positively correlates with well-being and negatively correlates with depression.

Steger, M. F., Kawabata, Y., Shimai, S., & Otake, K. (2008). The meaningful life in Japan and the United States: Levels and correlates of meaning in life. Journal of Research in Personality, 42, 660–678.

This study examined the presence of meaning in life, a construct closely related to purpose in life, among individuals living in the United States and Japan. Results suggest that the presence of meaning may be higher among American than Japanese adults, but rates of searching for meaning may be higher among Japanese than American adults. Implications of these findings are discussed.

Touré-Tillery, M., & Fishbach, A. (2014). How to measure motivation: A guide for the experimental social psychologist. Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 8, 328-341.

This article reviewed dimensions along which motivation measures can vary. It highlights two primary ways of measuring motivation, including focusing on outcomes (e.g., accomplishing a goal) and focusing on the process (e.g., performing well on a task). It concluded with a discussion of strategies for and the importance of ensuring motivation measures are gauging the intended motivation effects rather than other effects, such as learning or physiological depletion.

Umberson, D., & Gove, W. R. (1989). Parenthood and Psychological Well- being Theory, Measurement, and Stage in the Family Life Course. Journal of Family Issues, 10, 440-462.

This article features a sociological investigation that determined parenting is associated with both positive and negative affect. Compared to non-parents, parents report lower levels of affective well-being and satisfaction, but higher levels of meaning in life.

VanDyke, C. J. & Elias, M. J. (2007). How forgiveness, purpose, and religiosity are related to the mental health and well-being of youth. Mental Health, Religion, & Culture, 10(4), 395-415.

This review of the resilience literature focuses on the role forgiveness, purpose, and religiosity play in helping young people navigate adversity. This article frames purpose as an effective coping mechanism that can emerge when young people reach the level of cognitive maturity associated with adolescence.

Van Gelder, J-L., Hershfield, H. E., & Nordgren, L. F. (2013). Vividness of the future self predicts delinquency. Psychological Science, 24, 974-980.

Two interventions concluded that compared to individuals in a control condition, those in a treatment condition, which had participants think about their future selves, were less likely to make delinquent choices or cheat. One intervention involved writing a letter to one's future self, and the other involved viewing an age-progressed, digital avatar of themselves in a virtual reality environment. The authors argued that enhancing the vividness of the future self is an important motivator in reducing delinquent behavior in the present.

Waytz, A. Hersfield, H. E., & Tamir, D. I. (2015). Mental simulation and meaning in life. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 108, 336-355.

The authors provided evidence that mental simulation, that is, imagining oneself in a different place or time, contributes to a greater sense of meaning. The authors conducted six studies. The first highlighted the neuro-circuitry implicated in mental simulation and noted that the relevant brain activity was positively associated with experiencing meaning in life. Two other studies determined that thinking about oneself in the past or future contributed to enhanced meaning, and three studies suggested that picturing oneself in a different location contributed to enhanced meaning. The authors pointed to the results as evidence for the generalizability of mental simulation to enhance meaning. In short, looking beyond one's here and now can be meaningful.

Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2001). Crafting a job: Revisioning employees as active crafters of their work. Academy of Management Review, 26(2), 179-201.

This article explores how people can think about the work they do in ways that best meet their work-related needs. It also presents a model of job crafting that explains (1) the motivations that inspire people to engage in job crafting, (2) how individual work orientations influence the form job crafting takes, and (3) the effects of job crafting on individuals and organizations.

Wrzesniewski, A., LoBuglio, N., Dutton, J. E., & Berg, J. M. (2013). Job crafting and cultivating positive meaning and identity in work. Advances in positive organizational psychology, 1(1), 281-302.

In this chapter, the authors present a thorough review of the research on job crafting. They propose a theory that explains how job crafting is likely to lead to positive change in employees' identities and their experience of meaning at work.

Yeager, D. S., & Bundick, M. (2009). The role of purposeful life goals in promoting meaning in life and schoolwork during adolescence. Journal of Adolescent Research, 24, 423-452.

This study examined the relationship among purpose, meaning, and schoolwork. Results suggest that compared to other young people, adolescents with more purposeful work goals find more meaning in their lives and schoolwork.

Yeager, D. S., Henderson, M. D., Paunesku, D., Walton, G. M., D'Mello, S., Spitzer, B. J., & Duckworth, A. L. (2014). Boring but important: A self- transcendent purpose for learning fosters academic self-regulation. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 107, 559-580.

Across four studies, the authors found that having students focus on purposes for learning (e.g., meaningful goals for learning directed beyond-the-self) increased academic self- regulation, college persistence, grade point averages, and time spent completing homework or studying for exams, even when the tasks were very boring. These results were found even when controlling for self-interested motives for learning and individuals' cognitive abilities. Samples across the studies included ethnically and socioeconomically diverse students. In short, inducing a purposeful-mindset was found to increase achievement motivation.