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The Construction of Adversarial Growth in the Wake of a Hurricane

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The Construction of Adversarial Growth in the Wake of a Hurricane

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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DEDICATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACTiv

CHAPTER 1: NATURAL DISASTERS AND ADVERSARIAL GROWTH..... 1

- Literature Review 4
 - Adversarial Growth..... 4
 - Adversarial Growth and Positive Psychology Studies 7
 - Emotions 7
 - Virtues 9
 - Self-Perception 10
 - Relationships 11
 - Stories 12
 - Adversarial Growth and Hazards Studies 13
 - Posttraumatic growth..... 14
 - Mental health..... 18
 - Preparedness 20
 - Adversarial Growth and Communication Studies 24
 - Crisis and emergency risk communication 25
 - Social support..... 28
 - Storytelling..... 35
- Research Questions 38
- Summary 39

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY 41

- Method..... 41
 - Participants 44
 - The Brown family..... 51
 - The Smith family 52
 - The Allen family 53
 - The White family..... 53
 - The Dean family 54
 - The Thomas family 54
 - Interviews 54
 - Narrative interviews 57
 - Family group interviews 58
 - Analysis..... 59
 - Narrative analysis..... 59
 - Thematic analysis..... 60

Summary.....	63
CHAPTER 3: NARRATIVES.....	64
The Brown Family.....	65
The Smith Family.....	81
Jane Smith.....	81
Chuck and Betty Smith.....	89
The Allen Family.....	98
The White Family.....	105
The Dean Family.....	115
The Thomas Family.....	126
CHAPTER 4: THEMATIC ANALYSIS.....	134
Hurricane Time Periods.....	135
Getting Ready Before a Hurricane.....	135
Physical preparation.....	137
Mental preparation.....	143
Emotional preparation.....	146
Surviving During a Hurricane.....	148
Continual emotional support.....	148
Keeping occupied.....	149
Religious faith.....	151
Up-to-Date information.....	152
Coping after a Hurricane.....	153
Government.....	154
Charitable organizations.....	157
Family.....	160
Friends.....	162
Religious faith.....	162
Stories.....	163
Life perspective.....	164
Music.....	165
Summary.....	166
CHAPTER 5: ADVERSARIAL GROWTH.....	168
Adversarial Growth Experiences.....	169
The Brown Family.....	169
The Smith Family.....	171
The Allen Family.....	171
The White Family.....	172
The Dean Family.....	172
The Thomas Family.....	174
Adversarial Growth Factors.....	174

Emotional Support.....	174
Family.....	175
Friends	177
Neighbors	177
Hurricane survivors	178
Stories	178
Support groups.....	179
Worldview	180
Appreciation	184
Religious Faith	188
Patience.....	191
Self-Reliance.....	193
Teamwork	194
Creativity	195
Relationships among Adversarial Growth Factors	196
Summary	198
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION.....	200
Summary	200
Potential Benefits.....	202
Limitations.....	205
Implications.....	207
REFERENCES.....	209
ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	END PAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study employed a qualitative approach to explore the factors that contribute to positive change and growth following a natural disaster. The qualitative methodology included narrative interviews and family group interviews that were conducted with six families in Florida that had experienced two or three hurricanes within six weeks in 2004. Narrative analysis and thematic analysis were used to discover what factors contributed to participants experiencing positive growth.

Participants described the experience of surviving and coping with the hurricane. Participants reported that preparation before a hurricane was a three-part process that involved physical, mental, and emotional preparation. Four actions were referred to as helpful to stay positive during a hurricane: (a) drawing on family, friends, and neighbors for continual emotional support; (b) keeping occupied with a fun activity; (c) leaning on religious faith; (d) and listening to up-to-date information. Families described nine sources of support that enabled them to cope after the hurricane: (a) the government, (b) charitable organizations, (c) homeowner's insurance, (d) family, (e) friends, (f) religious faith, (g) stories, (h) life perspective, and (i) music.

Participants reported eight factors that encouraged adversarial growth. Communicating emotional support within relationships was the most commonly cited factor in recovery and growth after a hurricane, followed by worldview, appreciation, religious faith, patience, self-reliance, teamwork, and creativity.

A holistic approach to disaster planning that includes consideration of those elements that contribute to positive growth for the survivor is recommended. Further research is needed to understand how to facilitate adversarial growth among disaster survivors through emotional support and interpersonal networks.

CHAPTER 1

NATURAL DISASTERS AND ADVERSARIAL GROWTH

In human society at all its levels persons confirm one another in a practical way to some extent or other in their personal qualities and capacities, and a society may be termed human in the measure to which its members confirm one another.

Martin Buber (1998, p. 57)

Natural disasters can be terrible. They can destroy homes, livelihoods, and communities. They can rip families apart. They can be costly and even deadly. Some natural disasters can be predicted to some extent. Hurricanes are one of these disasters.

Hurricanes are a threat to people every year. In the Atlantic hurricane season, which includes the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico, approximately 16 to 31 named storms occur every year with an average of 6 expected to be hurricanes (National Hurricane Center, 2010c).

Hurricanes can be deadly and financially draining. In 1900, the unnamed hurricane that hit Galveston, Texas, caused 8,000 deaths (Gibson, 2006). Hurricane Andrew left 6.5 billion dollars of damage in the United States in 1992 (National Hurricane Center, 2010a). In 2005, Hurricane Katrina killed over 2000

people and cost an estimated 75 billion dollars (National Hurricane Center, 2010b).

Most people assume that after a devastating natural disaster everyone who is affected suffers and that few people, if any, end up better in some way than they were before. Stories of loss and tragedy have been told often and rightly so. Still, there is another postdisaster story, a story of positive change and growth, one that has not been told as often, but one that should be heard. At a Project Hope “celebration of recovery” event a year after Hurricane Katrina that was “designed to provide a bit of relaxation and fun as well as act as the beginning of a support group for Katrina victims,” Anne Lindberg, a reporter for the St. Petersburg *Times*, reported discovering that some Katrina survivors were strengthened and grew from the experience (2006, pp. B1, B4). Rue Boggs, 41, explained how the experience had changed her and her children: “They appreciate everything,” she said. “They look at the world differently. Every day there’s something and they laugh. I love that. They’re accepting people (as they are). I love that” (Lindberg, p. B4). In another case, Lindberg quoted Linda Pendleton, 50, as saying that the storm and its aftermath taught her how strong she is.

The comments of Boggs and Pendleton indicate that they experienced positive change and growth after the disaster, but what do we know about how they reached this point? How do people get through a natural disaster and experience positive growth? What keeps them from giving up? To what extent do they rely on personal relationships and family for social and emotional support?

Is it one word, person, touch, scene, attitude, or experience that supports or provides the vehicle for positive growth after disaster? How might we confirm people in the growth process?

Adversity can be the springboard to change and growth. Henderson Grotberg (2000) reported that natural disasters can encourage positive growth in people. Further, adversarial growth is not a new idea. Throughout history, positive growth has been experienced by people and studied in the social sciences. Still, we often undervalue the human capacity not only to survive but even to grow from adversity. Positive growth has been documented in individuals who have experienced a life crisis, but few studies exist about interpersonal communication and positive growth following natural disasters. This study examines the nuances of how hurricane survivors experience adversarial growth through interpersonal communication.

The Natural Hazards Center, a national and international center to share social science and policy research regarding disasters, contains few studies of positive growth in disasters. Existing studies of the experiences of disasters and the recovery from them have noted the importance of social support (Norris, 2001), but few studies have examined the place of interpersonal communication in positive growth among survivors of natural disasters.

I suggest that we must consider disaster from a holistic perspective and conduct research on not only the negative aspects of disaster but the positive aspects as well. I argue the need for qualitative studies that investigate the place of interpersonal communication in adversarial growth in survivors of natural

disasters. In the next section, I define adversarial growth and then review studies in positive psychology, hazards, and communication that contribute to our understanding of adversarial growth in natural disasters. I discuss why it is necessary to conduct qualitative studies on the place of interpersonal communication in positive growth in natural disasters.

Literature Review

In the literature review, I first examine the definition of growth and discuss why I chose to use the term “adversarial growth” for this study. Then, I explore studies of emotions, virtues, self-perception, relationships, and stories relating to adversarial growth in positive psychology. Next, in the section on hazards studies, I discuss studies of posttraumatic growth. Then, I explore studies of mental health and preparedness that relate to natural disasters and adversarial growth. Finally, I discuss studies in crisis and emergency risk communication, social support, and storytelling that correlate with adversarial growth and interpersonal communication in natural disasters.

Adversarial Growth

We know that, in some cases, people not only survive traumas but even experience a “higher level of functioning than that which existed prior to the [traumatic] event” (Linley & Joseph, 2004, p. 11). Trauma may reveal strengths that bolster survivors, causing them to regain a sense of normalcy and even to become better than ever (McClay Borawski, 2007). Joseph and Linley (2008) suggested that “growth following adversity is about psychological well-being and changes in assumptions about the self and the world” (p. 350). This is often

called *adversarial growth*. Other terms that have been used to describe positive growth after adversity are *thriving*, *blessings*, *posttraumatic growth*, *stress-related growth*, *capacity to thrive*, *perceived benefits*, *positive by-products*, *positive adjustment*, *resilience*, and *positive adaptation* (Linley & Joseph, 2004).

Joseph and Linley (2008) suggested that the terms surrounding adversarial growth are still being debated because “no single term is used consistently and systematically” to describe growth after an adverse situation (p. 339). Each term suggests slightly different meanings. For this dissertation, following Linley and Joseph (2004, 2008), I have selected as my key term *adversarial growth*, but consider the similarities and differences between adversarial growth and other related terms that are often applied to positive growth.

The term “thriving” is often used to describe growth but doesn’t encompass trauma as does the term adversarial growth. “Blessings” has religious undertones, which adversarial growth does not. Further, religion is not considered part of the concept of adversarial growth. Joseph and Linley (2008) argued that the term “posttraumatic growth” is associated with illness, but often growth after adversity is a part of life for many people who do not suffer from posttraumatic symptoms. The term “stress-related growth” is more closely attuned to adversarial growth because it includes stress and growth, and does contain a suggestion of positivity, but it doesn’t contain the scope of adversarial growth. “Capacity to thrive” is an interesting term because the phrase evokes an

inherent ability to survive and grow, but it doesn't suggest an association with trauma.

"Resilience" replaced the discontinued term "hardiness" in the PsychINFO articles database in 2003 and is often used interchangeably with adversarial growth (American Psychological Association, 2006). But resilience has been used to imply "bouncing back after something bad happens" rather than growth or positive change (Longstaff, Mergel, & Armstrong, 2009, p. 2). Resilience studies appear to be concerned with building resilience to adversity so you can come back to a "better place" (Longstaff et al., p. 2). By contrast, adversarial growth involves growing through exposure to adversity.

Adversarial growth is the preferred term for this study because it is a collective term that suggests positive growth after experiencing adverse or life challenging events such as, to borrow a list from Linley and Joseph (2004), "chronic illness, heart attacks, breast cancer, bone marrow transplants, HIV and AIDS, rape and sexual assault, military combat, maritime disasters, plane crashes, tornadoes, shootings, bereavement, injury, [and] recovery from substance addiction" (p. 11). The term adversarial growth was introduced in the literature in Linley and Joseph's 2004 article, "Positive Change Following Trauma and Adversity: A Review," in the *Journal of Traumatic Stress*.

Adversarial growth also appears to be linked to the study of positive psychology introduced by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000, pp. 5-14). In the next section, I examine studies associated with adversarial growth in positive psychology.

Adversarial Growth and Positive Psychology Studies

In this section, I first discuss a series of studies that have explored the role of emotions in adversarial growth, and then I consider several other studies that have explored growth through virtues, self-perception, relationships, and stories in various disasters.

Emotions. Studies of emotions in positive psychology are promising to the study of adversarial growth. People often experience positive and negative emotions in natural disasters. These emotions affect adversarial growth.

Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, and Larkin (2003) reported that people may use positive emotions to grow positively after experiencing adversity. In contrast, negative emotions can often affect growth adversely (Joseph & Linley, 2008).

Joseph and Linley (2008) suggested three ways positive emotions may influence adversarial growth: (a) an “undoing effect” on negative emotions, (b) a “broadening” of people’s repertoires of thought and action, and (c) the development of resources, physical, psychological, and social (p. 345).

Frederickson (1998) reported the “broaden-and-build” theory may explain why people experience positive emotions in adverse situations (p. 315). This theory considers the connection between positive emotions and our thoughts and actions:

Positive emotions broaden (rather than narrow) an individual’s thought-action repertoire, with joy creating the urge to play, interest creating the urge to explore, contentment the urge to savor and integrate, and love a recurrent cycle of each of these urges. In turn these broadened thought-

action repertoires can have the often incidental effect of building an individual's personal resources, including physical resources, intellectual resources, and social resources. (p. 315)

Frederickson and Joiner (2002) suggested that positive emotions contribute to an increase in thoughts and actions and therefore improve people's emotional well-being (p. 172).

Positive emotions may contribute not only to an "undoing effect" regarding negative emotions and "the broadening of thought-action repertoires" but also may build resources such as physical and mental health (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p. 345). Wood, Joseph, Lloyd, and Atkins (2009) found in a sleep study that the positive emotion encouraged better and longer sleep patterns. Frederickson (2004) reported that positive emotions both "fuel psychological resilience" and build "social resources" (pp. 1375, 1369).

Joseph and Linley (2008) found that interpersonal relationships grew as people experienced positive emotions through an "increased sense of valuing and appreciation" when people gave and received help from one another after adversity (p. 346). They reported that encouraging positive emotions as soon as possible after a trauma situation may enhance positive growth in the long term. They suggested that people who have experienced positive emotions may be more creative and flexible in their behavior, which leads to more positive emotions. Metzl (2009) reported that originality and flexibility predict well-being in a natural disaster (p. 112).

Negative emotions are often experienced after adversity and may snowball into more negativity. Joseph and Linley (2008) explained that this negativity results in appraising even more events negatively, thus “reducing effective coping strategies, and isolating potential sources of support,” which results in a downward or negative spiral (p. 345). Negativity influences people to take actions that result in things not going well which makes them feel more negative. They suggested that negativity may be counteracted through positive emotions (e.g., humor, gratitude, appreciation, interest, love, curiosity) and that this is helpful in recovery and growth (p. 345).

Virtues. Peterson and Seligman (2003) found that not only do positive and negative emotions surface after people have experienced trauma but also that traumas often bring out the best in people. They reported that after the September 11th terrorist attack on the United States “virtues such as faith, hope, gratitude, and teamwork increased” among people (p. 383). Clark (2006) offered evidence of the social world after disaster through comments from a weblog on Hurricane Katrina:

In talking to relatives who had to bail ahead of Rita, they found the same kind of rolling community that we discovered ahead of Katrina. It's a bitch when you're forced to be on the road, but it's pretty cool in some ways too. By and large, folks show their best sides and not their worst. (p. 101)

In his study using video ethnography with Hurricane Katrina survivors, Shrum (2007) found that people living in Baton Rouge generally exhibited goodwill toward the people who had been forced to evacuate to Baton Rouge:

People opened their homes to evacuees, the displaced; interpersonal communication channels that were nonexistent or inactive were opened. Structural relationships were no longer good predictors of communication flow: complete strangers discussed important matters as though they were lifelong friends The desire to “do something” was palpable throughout the city, as it doubled in size. (pp. 98-99)

Shrum (2007) suggested that not only was goodwill in effect for survivors but the most common theme among survivors was that they were the “lucky ones,” which was prompted and followed by a description of their losses (p. 100).

Shrum (2007) reported that three months after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, rescue and recovery workers experienced less of the goodwill:

Rescue and recovery workers describe a sequence of phases in the public response, moving from appreciation to indifference to hostility. By December 2005, when residents finally returned to the Lower Ninth Ward, security was increased due to the threat of violence. (p. 100)

On the other hand, Shrum’s (2007) own experience three months after the hurricanes was “amazing” and far different than that reported by the rescue and recovery workers (p. 101). He reported continuing to receive “helpfulness, affability, and human companionship under conditions of duress” (pp. 101-102).

Self-Perception. In the studies that led to the development of the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory, Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) found that “new possibilities, personal strength, spiritual change, relating to others, and appreciation” were parts of positive growth after adversity (p. 460) (see also

Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006). Positive growth was reflected as changes in self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and philosophy of life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996)

Calhoun and Tedeschi (2006) defined positive growth in self-perception as “vulnerable yet stronger,” meaning that the individual experiences the world as “more dangerous, unpredictable, a world in which one’s own vulnerability becomes clear and salient” and finds that they survived, met the test, and have become stronger (p. 5). Positive growth in self perception can lead to new possibilities, perhaps a significant change in a career or new interests (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006). Janoff-Bulman (2006) reported the situation of the survivor who has experienced growth: “Their palpable awareness of vulnerability and loss coupled with their re-built, generally positive assumptive world creates the climate for meaning, value, and commitment” (p. 95).

Relationships. Adversarial growth may involve interpersonal relationships (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). People may feel more compassion for their fellow human beings after having experienced a trauma. Calhoun and Tedeschi (2006) explained the elements of growth in relationships following adversity:

A greater sense of intimacy, closeness, and freedom to be oneself, disclosing even socially undesirable elements of oneself or one’s experience are also reported by persons who have struggled with traumatic events. This increased sense is sometimes viewed as a double-

edged sword—you find out who your real friends are and those that stay get a lot closer. (pp. 5-6)

Families have described becoming closer after having gone through a trauma together (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006; see also children, Cryder, Kilmer, Tedeschi, & Calhoun, 2006).

Calhoun and Tedeschi (2006) reported that positive growth after experiencing trauma may result in a changed philosophy of life, including priorities, appreciation, and spirituality. They found that people may grow in what they view as important in life and experienced gratefulness for their lives. People valued what they had and found new meaning and contentment in life.

Adversarial growth encourages appreciation for relationships and an understanding of what is important in life. The stories people often tell in relationships may play a role in adversarial growth.

Stories. Meichenbaum (2006) found that to grow positively after a trauma, more is needed than just not thinking negatively. He suggested we look at the use of narrative and how people construct stories of survivor and victim:

Whether the form of trauma exposure is due to intentional human design (e.g., some form of individual or group violence) or due to exposure to natural disasters (e.g., my having recently lived through four hurricanes in Florida over a short period of time), the need to tell “stories” to others, as well as to oneself, about what happened and the implications is rather pervasive. As a result, an individual’s (or groups’) sense of self and the world are established through the “stories” they tell others and

themselves. As the adage goes, “Beware of the stories you tell yourself and others for you will be lived by them.” (p. 355)

Meichenbaum (2006) reported that the stories that people tell themselves can act as an avenue to stress or to growth. He suggested that concentrating on the positivity in a situation and the future was important to individual and group narratives to experience growth (p. 356). The conclusions of Meichenbaum suggest the importance of looking at trauma narratives as one way to understand how narrative plays a role in growth.

In summary, studies in positive psychology link positive and negative emotions to adversarial growth. Adversarial growth may result in positive changes to virtues, self-perception, and relationships. The stories we tell ourselves and others may encourage adversarial growth. In the next section, hazards studies, I discuss how we study adversarial growth in natural disasters and what we need to consider when we study people’s responses to disasters.

Adversarial Growth and Hazards Studies

In this section, I first discuss studies of posttraumatic growth. Next, I consider studies of mental health and preparedness that involve adversarial growth following natural disasters.

Hazards studies include social science investigations of disasters and research regarding the policy aspects of disasters. Numerous social science studies focus on the trauma side of natural disasters, but few study adversarial growth and interpersonal communication from natural disasters or consider introducing policies that might encourage adversarial growth. Like Norris (2001), I

believe that we are not in need of “more research that establishes only that severely exposed disaster victims develop psychological disorders or worse than barely exposed disaster victims do not” (p. 12). What we need are more qualitative research studies that explore how people recover from disaster and experience positive growth through interpersonal communication. We need a holistic perspective of natural disasters. Only then can we provide the best information about preparation, survival, and recovery for disaster survivors.

Posttraumatic growth. Existing studies of posttraumatic growth in hazards studies lack focus on adversarial growth and interpersonal communication in natural disasters. In the article, “50,000 Disaster Victims Speak: An Empirical Review of the Empirical Literature, 1981-2001,” Norris (2001) reviews the range, magnitude, and duration of the effects of disasters. She documents risk factors and psychosocial resources after disaster and concludes that we need more information about diverse populations, mechanisms and protective factors, family systems and community level processes, representative samples, longitudinal designs of short-term and long term-effects, action research on risk and protective features, and collaboration among researchers and practitioners. Studies of disaster survivors document posttraumatic growth in terms of psychological stress but do not explore the nuances of growth. As Norris suggested, more studies on recovery and growth in disasters are needed that do not document what we already know about survivors.

Adversarial growth and interpersonal communication are understudied in hazards studies because our focus has been on documenting psychological symptoms, loss, and problems after a disaster. The Natural Hazards Center (NHC) was founded in 1976 to serve as a national and international center to share research on the social sciences and policy features of disaster. The NHC reflects the research literature surrounding disasters. The NHC's mission is clearly stated on their University of Colorado website:

Our mission is to advance and communicate knowledge on hazards mitigation and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Using an all-hazards and interdisciplinary framework, the Center fosters information sharing and integration of activities among researchers, practitioners, and policy makers from around the world; supports and conducts research; and provides educational opportunities for the next generation of hazards scholars and professionals. (Natural Hazards Center, 2010a)

By including "recovery" from disasters in their mission, the NHC can provide a vehicle for studying adversarial growth if researchers include adversarial growth as part of recovery. However, in a search of the studies available through the NHC website, I did not find any qualitative or quantitative studies that specifically explored adversarial growth, and only a few studies of posttraumatic stress and growth.

One study listing posttraumatic growth as a key term discussed the impact of Hurricane Ivan and was conducted through a mail survey (Picco & Martin, 2006). They examined the economic, social, and psychological effects on the

residents at Orange Beach, Alabama after Hurricane Ivan. Picco and Martin (2006) concluded that high levels of psychological stress and social difficulties were still being experienced eight months after Hurricane Ivan made landfall, even though residents were highly satisfied with the help they received from local, state, and federal organizations in recovering from the hurricane. This study documents understandable loss and tragedy after a hurricane, but it is not helpful in understanding adversarial growth.

Another study examined psychological functioning among students at the University of El Salvador following two earthquakes within two months (Sattler, 2002a). Questionnaires were distributed four weeks after the second earthquake. This study mentioned the importance of understanding how culture may impact findings of natural disaster studies from different countries. Understanding culture and disasters is important but no mention of growth was made in this study.

A study of terrorism looked at resilience, psychological distress, posttraumatic growth, and social support after the September 11th attacks on the United States (Sattler, 2002b) through a questionnaire administered to 414 college students attending one of three colleges in Manhattan, Queens, and Garden City, New York. Sattler examined symptoms of acute stress disorder that typically affect survivors for two days to four weeks after a trauma. He noted most of the people in the September 11th study described posttraumatic growth or resiliency in self, relationships, and life view. This study focused on the psychological aspects of stress and growth. What is missing is a look at the place

of interpersonal communication in adversarial growth. We need studies that document how growth might occur within a communicative context.

In the published proceedings of a Natural Hazards Center workshop session, Sattler, the author of the two studies mentioned above, noted that positive responses to natural disasters are frequent (Natural Hazards Center, 2001). He reported that these reactions include “increased self-respect; a greater sense of resiliency; new friendships; and a reassessment of values, priorities, and life goals” (Natural Hazards Center, 2001, p. 1). However, suggestions made at the workshop proposed assistance only for individuals experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Natural Hazards Center, 2001). No provision was made to encourage individuals who did not exhibit PTSD symptoms in positive responses to disasters, even though one participant stated “no one is untouched during a disaster” (Natural Hazards Center, 2001, p. 1). The concentration in posttraumatic studies appears to be on helping those people with PTSD. People without PTSD symptoms are left to deal with disasters as best as they can without any guidance.

The research studies currently listed on the NHC Web site cover important problems of disaster that need to be addressed but few contain any mention of aspects of positive growth after disaster. A perusal of the 204 quick response grants that were issued from 1986-2009 by the NHC (Natural Hazards Center, 2010b) reveals a number of interesting topics, including social capital (Ritchie & Gill, 2007), healthcare professionals (Banks, Richards, & Shah, 2006), pets

(Irvine, 2006), children (Peek & Fothergill, 2006; Fothergill & Peek, 2006), and looting myths (Barsky, Trainor, & Torres, 2006).

These studies are important and contribute valuable insight into hazards studies and considered together provide a broad view of the issues that have been studied regarding disasters, but they are only pieces of a natural disaster. The lack of studies in adversarial growth at the NHC highlights the issue that adversarial growth is understudied in hazards studies.

Existing studies of posttraumatic growth outside of the NHC are similar in nature. The focus is on PTSD and psychological symptoms (see Acierno et al., 2007; Aderibigbe, Bloch, & Pandurangi, 2003; Cieslak et al., 2009; Cryder et al., 2006; Galea, Tracy, Norris, & Coffey, 2008; Jeney-Gammon & Daugherty, 1993; La Greca, Silverman, & Vernberg, 1996; McLaughlin et al., 2009; Neria, Nandi, & Galea, 2008; Sattler et al., 2002; Weems et al., 2007; Yesilyaprak, Kisac, & Sanlier, 2007). A holistic perspective of natural disasters that includes a focus on adversarial growth and the place of interpersonal communication does not exist in hazards studies. We need studies that examine how adversarial growth can be experienced in a natural disaster and what might be done to encourage it.

Mental health. Studies in mental health and natural disasters suggest a relationship between adversarial growth and mental wellness. Kessler, Galea, Jones, and Parker (2006) compared suicidal ideation in Hurricane Katrina survivors who had experienced adversarial growth with those survivors who did not experience growth. They found that survivors who had experienced growth

had less suicidal ideation because of an increased faith in their capability to reconstruct their lives and newly found personal strengths:

It is noteworthy that the indicators of post-traumatic growth were not strongly related to our estimates of mental illness, which means that a great many survivors of Katrina are, understandably, depressed by their losses and anxious about their future despite experiencing post-traumatic personal growth. However, the suicidality often associated with these syndromes in the general population is much lower among people in the post-Katrina sample who were able to develop a belief in their ability to rebuild their life and a perception of inner strength in the wake of the hurricane.

(Kessler et al., 2006, p. 936)

They also found that suicidal thoughts among the survivors who had experienced growth were counterbalanced by protective factors such as “self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and perceived social support” (p. 936) (see also Acierno, Ruggiero, Kilpatrick, Resnick, & Galea, 2006). Finding these protective factors is encouraging to the study of adversarial growth because Kessler et al. noted that the causal processes that underlie this finding presumably involve “positive orientations towards the future that provide psychological scaffolding that protects against the suicidality often associated with extreme distress” (p. 936).

Understanding that a natural disaster may encourage positive emotions that in turn may encourage mental wellness is important to adversarial growth. Kessler et al. (2006) suggested we examine how public media might support

positive emotions. Although using public media is important, it is disappointing that interpersonal networks are not considered for research in this area. Still, Kessler et al. suggested exploring what role personal growth may play in offsetting suicidal thoughts.

In a later study of Hurricane Katrina survivors, Kessler et al. (2008) found that mental illness as a result of the hurricane remains widespread among the affected population nearly two years after Katrina. Kessler et al. (2008) suggested that “unresolved hurricane-related stresses” accounted for increases in serious mental illness (89.2%), post-traumatic stress disorder (31.9%), and suicidality (61.6%) (p. 374).

Mental health is a serious issue in natural disasters. We need to understand how adversarial growth may encourage mental wellness in natural disasters. Studies indicated that the impact of mental health following a natural disaster is greater for some people than for others. Protective factors can encourage growth and mental wellness after a disaster and further research is needed in this area. Knack, Chen, Williams, and Jensen-Campbell (2006) suggest that studying disasters may provide answers to important questions about survival and recovery.

Preparedness. Studies of emergency preparedness suggest the importance of studying the role of interpersonal communication and adversarial growth in preparation for and evacuation prior to natural disasters. We know that disasters can tear apart the network of support from families and friends and that social support is important to adversarial growth (Adeola, 1999; see also social

networks, Kaniasty & Norris, 1995b; Sattler & Kaiser, 2000). Our emergency preparedness programs do not offer a method to protect our social resources even though, as Norris (2001) suggests, social and emotional support networks are essential to recovery after disaster and must, as much as possible, remain in place.

Some recent qualitative studies have reported on preparedness and hurricane evacuation, and the role of emotions and social support. Elder et al. (2007) explored evacuation before Hurricane Katrina in a population of African Americans. The findings indicate four major themes in participants' decisions to evacuate or not:

- (1) perceived susceptibility, including optimism about the outcome because of riding out past hurricanes at home and religious faith;
- (2) perceived severity of the hurricane because of inconsistent evacuation orders;
- (3) barriers because of financial constraints and neighborhood crime;
- and (4) perceived racism and inequities. (p. S124)

Elder et al. concluded that disaster preparedness organizations need to take these issues into account when preparing the community for a disaster. In our desire to protect people, we often overlook the existing network of beliefs and values that people rely on that could be tapped for social support, including religious faith.

Understanding the connection between evacuation and interpersonal networks is important to emergency preparedness programs. Eisenman, Cordasco, Asch, Golden, and Glik (2007) found that social support played a

strong role in the decision to evacuate. They report that participant's "strong ties to extended family, friends, and community groups influenced other factors affecting evacuation, including transportation, access to shelter, and perception of evacuation messages" (p. S109). Interpersonal networks both helped and delayed evacuation choices. They concluded that offering transportation and shelter would not help low income people or minority communities make better disaster plans because of the significant connections between families and interpersonal networks. Social networks could be used for support if we knew more about how people relied on them and how to encourage social networks.

Studies of preparedness suggest there is a need to understand how adversarial growth and interpersonal communication influence coping styles in preparedness. Hendersen, Roberto, and Yamo (2010) studied older adults and their preparedness before a disaster and their coping styles after the disaster. The findings of their study indicate that "positive thinking, modified thinking, staying busy, and spirituality" helped them cope with preparing for a disaster (p. 48). Benight, Ironson, and Durham (1999) suggest that "hurricane coping self-efficacy" was related to optimism and social support (p. 379) (see also, collective efficacy, Benight, Swift, Sanger, Smith, & Zeppelin, 1999; posttraumatic growth, Cieslak et al., 2009; coping, Glass, Flory, Hankin, Kloos, & Turecki, 2009).

Adversarial growth and interpersonal networks are overlooked in preparedness programs. A new development in preparation for natural disaster and emergency preparedness is the program TsunamiReady, "a voluntary, community-based" program that derives from the National Weather Service's

StormReady project (Natural Hazards Observer, September 2005). Florida's first TsunamiReady community is Indian Harbour Beach on Florida's east coast. This program appears to be an excellent example of emergency preparedness except for one missing ingredient, concern for interpersonal communication. The plan does not offer preparation for interpersonal networks before disaster strikes or a plan for safeguarding fragile social resources after disaster. Thus the program does not sustain interpersonal networks that may offer support for adversarial growth.

Sattler and Kaiser (2000) describe what could be done to maintain and develop interpersonal networks before and after disasters:

Disaster preparation programs might encourage citizens to develop informal neighborhood groups that can be prepared to offer assistance in the aftermath of disaster. Intervention efforts might encourage survivors in collective self-help efforts, whereby families, neighbors, and others in the community help one another. Social support networks also may allow survivors to share their disaster-related experiences with others and serve as a useful means of stress management. (Discussion section, para. 4)

Understanding how to encourage and preserve social networks is important to preparedness programs and adversarial growth.

Adversarial growth in hazards studies is understudied. Most studies of posttraumatic growth appear to be linked to PTSD or loss. Existing studies of experiences and recovery indicate that maintaining interpersonal networks may be important to mental wellness and preparedness. In addition to the quantitative

and qualitative studies that suggest social support is important to recovery, I suggest we need more qualitative studies to discover the nuances of the place of interpersonal communication in recovery and growth in a natural disaster.

Adversarial Growth and Communication Studies

Many interpersonal communication studies name supportive communication within interpersonal networks as critical components to getting through traumas, but there is a gap in the literature about interpersonal communication and adversarial growth among natural disaster survivors. The gap in the research literature is uncharted territory. I could not locate even one study about interpersonal communication and adversarial growth in natural disasters by a communication scholar. Existing communication studies involving natural disasters are mostly concerned with crisis communication, media, and organizational communication and have not explored adversarial growth within an interpersonal communicative context.

However, there is a new-found recognition of the value of involving communication scholars in weather-related scholarship. For the first time, the National Communication Association (NCA) and the American Meteorological Society (AMS) co-sponsored a workshop on “Integrating Communication, Weather, and Climate: More Than Just ‘Talking About the Weather’” in January 2011. The goal for the workshop was to initiate a partnership between the AMS and the NCA to explore how they could help one another with the complex issues of climate change and natural hazards. In addition, three conferences on weather and communication or social science have solicited papers for 2011. The AMS is

sponsoring a conference on Weather Warnings and Communication that is organized by the AMS Board on Societal Impacts and the Committee on Severe Local Storms. The Natural Hazards Center is planning a graduate and undergraduate student workshop on social or behavioral aspects of hazards or disasters. Finally, the National Center for Atmospheric Research Societal Impacts Program is holding an interdisciplinary Summer WAS*IS workshop as part of its efforts to integrate social science into meteorological research and practice.

In this section, I first discuss studies of crisis and emergency risk communication and the need for more studies in interpersonal communication. Next, I explore studies of social support and examine how conducting this type of study in a natural disaster may be helpful to survivors and to promoting adversarial growth. Finally, I discuss studies of storytelling that may be useful to survivors in developing adversarial growth.

Crisis and emergency risk communication. Understanding adversarial growth and interpersonal communication may be important to crisis and risk communication studies. Crisis communication is concerned with public relations and limiting damage to organizations (Seeger, 2006). Risk communication is primarily concerned with health communication and notifying the community about risks to their safety (Seeger, 2006). Crisis communication and risk communication were merged into an area now often known as crisis and emergency risk communication in recognition of the significance of

communication as a continuing process that involves aspects of both risk and crisis communication (Seeger, 2006).

Cole and Fellows (2008) explored risk communication failure in a case study of Hurricane Katrina postdisaster. They studied what was known about the risk, what was communicated about the risk, and what was the response to that communication. Thousands of people in the city of New Orleans lost their lives because they did not heed the message about risk that disaster planners and others attempted to convey to them. Cole and Fellows reported that risk communication must be accepted by individuals in order to be acted on to save lives. Perhaps an understanding of the role of interpersonal communication and adversarial growth would provide insight into how people discuss risk communication messages among themselves.

Venette (2008) conducted a study of risk communication through an examination of emergency communication messages about Hurricane Katrina that appeared in the Biloxi *Sun Herald*, the most widely read newspaper in the area. He wondered why people didn't evacuate after reading the articles in the paper about the forthcoming hurricane. He found that they didn't think Hurricane Katrina would be a problem. The *Sun Herald* had compared Hurricane Katrina to Hurricane Camille in 1969, which was one of the worst storms ever to hit their area. Why didn't they heed the message to evacuate? Because the *Sun Herald* mentioned that Hurricane Camille had caused few deaths and quoted people who did not evacuate and had survived Camille. Therefore, people thought that even though Camille was bad people were okay who had stayed, and based on

this understanding, many did not evacuate out of the path of Hurricane Katrina. Understanding how people talk about evacuation among one another is important to crisis communication. Although existing hazards studies of evacuation have described the use of interpersonal networks to make the decision to evacuate (Eisenman et al., 2007; Elder et al., 2007; Taylor et al., 2009), we don't know the nuances of the interpersonal communication when discussing evacuation.

Lachlan and Spence (2007) developed a psychometric instrument to measure hazard and outrage after Hurricane Katrina. Hazard and outrage are generally used when composing crisis and risk emergency communication messages. Hazard refers to the risk involved, either high or low, and outrage is the fear level, either frightening people or reassuring them depending on the situation. They reported that using pleas associated with alarm or fright were useful to encourage a community to take action against a hazard but the most important factor was to keep the outrage and fear at manageable levels so people could still function and take action. No suggestion of positive growth was included in crisis and risk emergency communications.

Crisis and risk communicators employ a taxonomy of disasters that indicates what type of communication is effective for a specific situation such as a hurricane, tornado, food borne illness, etc. It makes sense to have a strategic plan for communication in a disaster but these plans need to provide for interpersonal communication networks, which may be helpful to get to the heart of the decision making process about safety and adversarial growth.

Understanding interpersonal communication and adversarial growth may contribute to crisis and risk communication studies. Crisis and risk communication messages are meant to secure the safety and survival of people in disasters. What is missing from these studies is the focus on adversarial growth and the nuances of the interpersonal relationship and supportive communication within that relationship that may contribute to hearing and acting on the public message engendered by crisis and risk communications. Thus, it makes sense to examine studies of social support within interpersonal relationships in a natural disaster.

Social support. Social support in a disaster may be important to recovery and adversarial growth. Social support is constructed through interpersonal communication and specific behavioral actions (Segrin, 2003). Social support includes emotional support through supportive communicative messages (Burleson, 2003). Supportive communicative interactions are characterized as communication in the form of listening, sympathy, and affection by individuals that want to help other people that they have identified as needing help (Burleson, 2009; Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002). Understanding social support is important to planning for natural disasters because Norris (2001) found that families and friends are more often used to soothe and console than are medical professionals. Often there is a stigma involved with seeking help from mental health professionals, which increases stress.

Studies of social support are also important to disaster planning because the use of social support encourages people to work through and perhaps find

some relief from stress-provoking situations (Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998). Social support provides psychological, mental, and physical benefits. Burleson (2003) reported that people with compassionate societal systems are healthier physically than individuals who do not have support (Burleson, 2003). Social support is important to individual health and interpersonal relational welfare (Burleson, 2003).

Communication scholars have not focused on social support in natural disasters; most of the research has been done in hazards studies. However, communication scholars have conducted many studies of social support (e.g., Albrecht & Adelman, 1987; Burleson, 2003; Burleson, 2009; Burleson, Albrecht, & Sarason, 1994; Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998; Feng, 2009; Goldsmith, 2004; Goldsmith & Brashers, 2008; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; Motley, 2008; Segrin, 2003; Vangelisti & Perlman, 2006) that may suggest some of the nuances of social support and that may provide a background from which to study interpersonal communication and adversarial growth in conjunction with natural disasters.

Segrin (2003) reported that the usefulness of social support from friends and family can differ over a life span. He suggested that age and psychosocial problems play a role in social support and that generally older adults may not receive social support from as many sources as younger people do. Social support from friends was important to all ages. Family support was critical to young adults experiencing psychosocial problems. Segrin found that older adults

were able to maintain well-being despite having fewer sources of social support than younger adults.

Social support is important not only for adults but also to children and adolescents. Not everyone understands how to offer social support, but it can be a learned behavior and can be improved. Clark, MacGeorge, and Robinson (2008) suggested that adults can help children and teenagers understand how to support their peers. Adults such as teachers, parents, and others should:

Encourage offers of companionship as a response to distressed peers, suggest sympathy and advice as alternative or supplemental strategies, help children and adolescents understand why minimization strategies are not particularly comforting (and why optimism may not be viewed as caring), and, perhaps, facilitate companionate interaction when alerted to child or adolescent distress. (Clark et al., 2008, p. 340)

These are valuable strategies to encourage social support that may be useful in a natural disaster and may nurture adversarial growth.

Studies of supportive communication are promising to the study of adversarial growth. Supportive communication often includes advice (Feng, 2009). Understanding the components of advice and why it may be accepted or rejected is important in a natural disaster and to adversarial growth. Feng (2009) reported that offering advice included the following (in this order): providing emotional support, engaging in problem inquiry and analysis, and offering advice. Feng suggested that advice was evaluated to be of more value when preceded by emotional support and problem inquiry and analysis. However, there are

problems in soliciting, getting, and offering advice. Goldsmith and Fitch (1997) found that advice can be considered supportive or intrusive as well as truthful or helpful, and looking for and accepting advice may encourage a high opinion of the person offering advice and thankfulness to that person.

Giving emotional support is a key step to having advice accepted.

Therefore, it is important to understand how emotional support is given and received within the context of supportive communication and adversarial growth. Burleson (2003) defines emotional support as a demonstration of attention, involvement, affection, and awareness of people when they are upset. Emotional support is often the support most sought after in a close relationship and without this support, some relationships flounder (Burleson, 2003).

Burleson (2003) also suggested that emotional support involves assisting others when they are stressed through empathic listening. He reported that listening validates a person and is helpful in bolstering him or her through difficult times. It makes sense that if people are adequately supported emotionally in a close relationship then they are able to handle difficult issues and be optimistic in their viewpoint (Burleson, 2003). Encouraging positive emotions is important to adversarial growth and may be fostered through emotional supportive communicative interactions.

In addition, communication scholars have conducted several studies of social support and interpersonal communication within the context of natural disasters. Honeycutt, Nasser, Banner, Mapp, and DuPont (2008) examined coping in Hurricanes Katrina and Rita by studying the diverse ways college

students experienced negative emotions. In a survey of 2881 participants, they found that this often depended on gender, ethnic background, whether students were transferred to Louisiana State University from New Orleans, and whether they had a functioning cell phone and were able to use email within their social networks. Honeycutt et al. concluded that students who felt negative emotions often reported a higher level of anxiety when cut off from their social networks. These students used imagined interactions to reduce stress (p. 229).

MacGeorge, Samter, Feng, Gillihan, and Graves (2007) studied emotional support in 511 college students after the terrorist attacks on 9/11. The students were from an eastern university outside of New York City without direct exposure to ground zero. They explored whether emotional support received from communication with others would be helpful to lessen the effects of stress from terrorism and on psychological health. The students completed questionnaires regarding the amount of stress (defined as “goal disruption”) experienced as a result of terrorism, the amount of emotional support they received, and their degree of psychological health in the first 2 weeks of December 2001 (p. 11). MacGeorge et al. found that receiving emotional support tempered the association between goal disruption, depression, and stress symptoms in people with a lower exposure to disaster. They suggested that providing emotional support should be considered a basic communication skill necessary to recovery from disaster. The findings in their study provide a basis to study interpersonal communication and adversarial growth in natural disasters.

In a qualitative study of 114 people conducted within weeks of their evacuation of New Orleans due to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Taylor, Priest, Sisco, Banning, and Campbell (2009) looked at how people used communication within their interpersonal networks to decide whether to evacuate from the path of the hurricane. Their interviews revealed that people had “extensive storm-related information,” which they obtained from various sources as well as what they called “background knowledge” that they obtained from experiencing previous storms. In addition to media reports, Taylor et al. noted that people often relied on information obtained from interpersonal sources (p. 2). They reported that interpersonal networks most often encouraged people to take steps to evacuate from Hurricane Katrina:

When asked directly about the moment they decided—or were asked or even ordered—to evacuate, most . . . specifically cited interpersonal sources (such as a telephone call or a visit from a neighbor or someone from the family coming into their bedroom) as the deciding factor, and an additional 17% . . . reported responding to a combination of media and interpersonal sources. Less than one-third . . . cited the media alone.

Friends, neighbors, and family often told one another when it was time to evacuate. As one interviewee said, “Just neighbors that was hearing like, the same thing we was hearing: come to the porch, it’s time to leave.” Although the person could see water coming in under her door and through the walls of her home, it was the comments of her neighbors that made the difference in her

decision to leave (Taylor et al., p.12). They conclude that evacuation is often a collective behavior and relies on interpersonal networks:

Conventional media reports, while they can communicate crucial and effective markers of storm severity, including the statements of official opinion leaders, are clearly not enough to activate behavior in all cases. We also need to consider whether organized efforts to alert people on an individual basis—whether through old-fashioned telephone trees, knocking on doors block to block, acting through churches or neighborhood associations, or issuing emergency instructions through new media like Twitter to immediately contact friends, family, and neighbors—should be explored. (p. 19)

Interpersonal networks and social bonds may help people negotiate the decision to evacuate prior to a natural disaster; they may also be related to adversarial growth.

Seeking encouragement and assistance through interpersonal networks may be universal, and those networks may be the first sources of support sought after a disaster. Therefore, it is important to understand how people use social support in relation to recovery and adversarial growth in natural disasters. What we need are communication studies that examine the relationship between interpersonal communication and adversarial growth in a natural disaster. Social support factors and interpersonal networks in natural disasters have implications for survivors in recovery from disasters. We need to contribute to the studies of social support in disasters through the lens of interpersonal communication.

Storytelling. Studies of family storytelling are promising to recovery and adversarial growth in a natural disaster. Storytelling is often useful as emotional support to uphold the family during a disaster. Telling and listening to stories of how the family survived tough times in the past may contribute to the persona of a victim or survivor in a disaster. Family storytelling is often used to connect the family to the past (Hoffman, 1981). It is the “social glue” that holds the family together during adversity (Hoffman, 1981, p. 40). Bylund (2003) believes family stories can educate, motivate, amuse, and recall events.

Stories about family members who have survived hard times and even grown from the experience can inspire and encourage individuals through the mental, emotional, and physical trials a natural disaster brings because family stories communicate the essence of “esteem, blueprints, ideals, warnings and probabilities” (Stone, 1988, p. 5). Storytelling can be beneficial both psychologically and physically (Koenig Kellas & Trees, 2006). Stories can also offer a tactic used in the past to carry on through difficult times (Stone). Thus, family storytelling can encourage family members through difficult times. One tornado survivor told me that her story of survival was related by her sister to their niece who was hunkered down in a bath tub with her cell phone during a tornado. The niece said the story helped her cope with the tornado because she thought that if my aunt can survive a tornado then I can too. Shellenbarger (2005) suggests that self-worth and hardiness in children may be related to the family past and that children may learn what they need to do to survive hard times from family stories.

Talking to family members during difficult or stressful times such as waiting out a tornado in a bath tub is important to recovery after a disaster. This important communication can calm individuals during a storm. From my own experience of seeking refuge with my husband and two small children in a shower stall during a tornado while camping, I know that communicating with one another helped me stay calm. Lyons, Mickelson, Sullivan, and Coyne (1998) suggest that “communal coping, a cooperative solving process, is endemic to notions of social integration, interdependence and close relationships, and may underlie the resilience of families and other social units dealing with stressful life events” (p. 579).

A natural disaster may disrupt communication within the family, but this does not mean the family doesn't have the potential to discover new or existing connections to one another. Hoffman (1981) suggests family chaos and turmoil offers the chance within the family to realize its own curative powers. Storytelling may help because stories can construct the uniqueness of the family for family members (Langellier & Peterson, 2006a). And therein lays the power of family storytelling—creating the family's identity through their strengths and values. Maguire (1998) suggests that “personal storytelling has the power to invest our lives with more meaning, connect us more vitally with others, develop our creativity, strengthen our humor, increase our courage and confidence and render our lives more memorable” (pp. 13-30).

Koenig Kellas and Trees (2006) believe that family teamwork in storytelling leads to more contentment in family relations. This is not always true,

as families may disagree about the story and conflict can arise. Families or some family members may also have an agenda that is hurtful to one or more family members, whether through subconscious intent or purposeful design.

Family stories can be positive or negative but storytelling is one way of “*doing family*,” as Langellier and Peterson (2006a, p. 100) put it. Listening to family stories about postdisaster recovery may provide insight into adversarial growth:

Narrative performance theory provides a way to understand both the empirical and the eidetic variability of family communication practices. Empirical descriptions of family storytelling locate variations in what particular stories are told, how they are told, and what identities they constitute. Eidetic descriptions of family storytelling locate variations in the normative and normalizing context that regulates what kinds of stories, types of storytelling, and possibilities for identity and agency can be realized in a particular situation. (p. 100)

The performativity in storytelling exposes participants and researchers to the continuous flow of story within the family—a story that is in constant flux and dependent on the family identity outside of and within the story.

Family stories affect family members in one way or another. Stone (1988) says, “Those who say America is land of rootless nomads who travel light, uninstructed by memory and family ties have missed part of the evidence” (p. 6). Family ties are encouraged or discouraged by stories important to family members. Family stories may have a healing nature, but it is also true that family

stories have the power to hurt, whether deliberately or not. More qualitative studies need to be conducted to understand what a healing story might be in a natural disaster.

Studies of family storytelling suggest that stories may be a powerful tool to help families navigate recovery and adversarial growth in a natural disaster. Constructing a postdisaster family story of recovery and growth may encourage adversarial growth. More studies are necessary to understand how family storytelling may provide a vehicle for some families that will help them on the road to recovery and adversarial growth.

Research Questions

Studies in positive psychology, hazards, and communication provide fertile ground to begin a study of adversarial growth following a disaster. Current studies contain pieces of adversarial growth but more research is needed to understand the nuances of how adversarial growth might occur during and following disasters.

Qualitative studies of adversarial growth related to interpersonal communication in natural disasters are lacking in the research literature. Therefore, it is important to conduct a qualitative study to understand the place of interpersonal communication in adversarial growth in natural disasters. A qualitative study may unfold the story of adversarial growth.

I examine the factors that encourage or confirm people in their capacities to grow from disasters. I investigate three research questions:

1. What is it like to experience a hurricane?

2. How do people cope with a hurricane?

3. What factors contribute to adversarial growth after a hurricane?

Assuming people can experience transformational growth from a natural disaster, this study examines how we might support people in this process.

Summary

This chapter discussed the importance of and the need for studies of adversarial growth through an examination of studies in positive psychology, hazards, and communication. I reviewed the development and the viability of adversarial growth through studies of emotions, virtues, self-perception, relationships, and stories in positive psychology. I discussed studies of posttraumatic growth and the need to focus on adversarial growth and examined studies of mental health and preparedness in natural disasters. I described the lack of studies in adversarial growth and interpersonal communication in natural disasters and the need to look through the lens of communication in qualitative studies to discover the nuances of adversarial growth. I examined studies of crisis communication, social support, and storytelling in various traumas and disasters and discovered a connection and the groundwork for a study in adversarial growth.

Adversarial growth is an important topic to study in connection with natural disasters because world wide more than 1-billion people have survived natural disasters (Cossetta & Brackett, 2005, pp. A1, A6). Survivors of natural disasters not only often suffer the loss of their homes but this trauma can also affect their

physical and mental health (Neria, Nandi, & Galea, 2008). Thus, it makes sense to study how people can recover and even grow from natural disasters.

In the next chapter, I explain the methodology for this study, including participants, interviews, interview questions, and analysis. Chapter 3 presents the results of my narrative analysis and describes each family's experience of being in a hurricane. In chapter 4, I report the thematic analysis of the interviews with the participants, organized into time periods: before, during, and after a hurricane. Chapter 5 explores the factors that contribute to adversarial growth. In chapter 6, I describe the potential benefits, limitations, and implications of this study.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe the method, participants, interviews, interview questions, and analysis of this study.

Method

I employed a qualitative approach in this study, which Lofland (1971) says is appropriate for research questions such as “What kinds of things are going on here? What are the forms of this phenomenon? What variations do we find in this phenomenon?” (p. 13). I studied what it is like to survive a hurricane, how to cope with the aftermath, what worked well and what didn’t, whether the possibility of growth was experienced or not, and where interpersonal communication fit into this mix.

In this study, I hoped to discover the nuances of how hurricane survivors might experience adversarial growth. Thus, I chose to use two types of interviews: (a) the narrative interview and (b) the family group interview. The narrative interview was used with each participant. The family group interview was offered to each family, following the conclusion of the narrative interviews.

Most interviews obtain “stories, tales, gossip, anecdotes, and parables,” but what distinguishes narrative interviews is that they get the “whole story” as compared to “other types of interviews, which take stories apart and reassemble

the parts for their own analytic purposes” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, pp. 179-180). Lindlof and Taylor continue: “Narrative is absolutely central to art, spirituality, community, and a sense of self, and thus encodes human desire at the deepest levels. Narrative interviews are the earliest known form of in-depth interviewing in the social sciences” (p. 180). The narrative interview is considered the best form to allow as much of the story as possible to emerge when an understanding of the entire experience is desired (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Thus, the narrative interview was necessary to derive the nuances of surviving a hurricane.

The narrative interview comes from the spoken traditions in civilization and uses dialogue as a way of yielding thought-provoking stories (Langellier, 1989). Consisting of an interactive dialogue between the interviewer and the participant, the object of the narrative interview is to elicit the participant’s story (Langellier, 1989; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The interviewer asks the participant open-ended questions in an informal manner so the participant may choose to answer or not without any penalty. The participant’s story emerges through the conversational interaction between the participant and the interviewer. The narrative interview gains and depicts the participant’s story through storytelling (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The stories resulting from the use of the narrative interview are generally complex with many layers, which allows the researcher to study the stories for similar and discordant discourses (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Van Maanen (1988) suggests that some stories can be similar to impressionist paintings and can be called impressionist tales. Stories as impressionist tales may capture a scene that depicts a particular event in so

lifelike a way that readers are drawn in to take part in the experience and, as Van Maanen says, “work out its problems and puzzles as they unfold” (p. 103). In the *Healing Art of Storytelling*, Richard Stone (1996) says, “story may be the one thread that connects us to more expansive realities” (p. 26). The narrative interview allows stories to unfold that, when written by the interviewer, may connect the reader not only to the experience of the hurricane but also lead the reader to draw conclusions on the best way to cope with a hurricane. Stories and dialogue are necessary to connect us to the experience of surviving a natural disaster and adversarial growth.

Narrative interviews are less ordered, and, as an interviewer, my role was to allow the story to be told rather than to direct the story (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). I received from my participants a series of narratives that were unguided and unstructured, and that teach us “something about a particular scene, person or event” with a vocabulary of “ambiguity, change, adventure, improvisation and process” (Ellis, 2004, p. 360). I hope that the stories gained from the narrative interviews provide a format for the reader to understand what it is like to survive a hurricane.

Following the narrative interview, I intended to offer the family group interview to all six families but two of the participants were singles, one family declined, and another family was unable to participate due to location. Only two families were interested in participating in it and only immediately after the narrative interview. The family group interview was an informal group interview that allowed the families to give specific recommendations about how to survive

and cope with a hurricane. The family group interview is important because it encourages information and ideas that are shared as a result of a group of people talking with one another (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In the family group interview, I was looking for a “complementary interaction” in which participants agree on and interpret their viewpoints, while, perhaps, adding observations and recollections to the topic (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 182). Generally, the interviewer in the family group gently encourages group members to express their opinions while maintaining a friendly atmosphere of goodwill (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002), and I attempted to do this in these family groups. I provided the family group interview as an opportunity for family members to clarify issues together and to offer advice to families coping with the aftermath of a hurricane.

Participants

The participants in this study are survivors of hurricanes and their extended family members. Initially, I conceived of families as involving two or more people, but I found my description of family changed to allow the inclusion of some single individuals who wished to participate and who drew their families into the interviews through their narratives. Hurricane survivors are people who lived in a geographic area that was affected when a hurricane came ashore. This study was open to participants regardless of race, gender, age, ethnic background, health status, or occupation. I was pleased with the variety and range of race, gender, age, ethnic background, health status, and occupation of the participants in this study.

The participants are from Polk County in central Florida, Palm Beach County in southeast Florida, and a barrier island in Martin County on the southeast coast of Florida. I interviewed six families totaling thirteen people. I interviewed members of what I will call the Brown, Smith, Allen, White, Dean, and Thomas families. The participants ranged in from age 14 to 76 years at the time of the interviews in 2008. All of the participants experienced at least two and some even three hurricanes within a 6-week period in the fall of 2004.

Finding participants was challenging. I include information about finding the participants, as the nuances of surviving a hurricane began to be revealed to me during the process of identifying appropriate research participants. I contacted Bob Nixon, the Active Leader for Katrina for the Red Cross, and met with him at the Tampa Bay, Florida Chapter of the American Red Cross to discuss participants for this study. Mr. Nixon indicated that due to privacy issues, the Red Cross is unable to identify their clients. However, he directed me to outreach groups that assist the American Red Cross, such as Catholic Charities and the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Both groups advertised in the St. Petersburg Times ("Help," 2007) as being available to help people displaced from Hurricane Katrina through the Katrina Aid Today Program. I made an initial contact with Sheila Lopez at Catholic Charities to determine their openness to this project. Although they were in general open to participating in this project, unfortunately, the files were closed and archived at Catholic Charities and due to budget restraints, Ms. Lopez did not have enough people to retrieve and re-open the files. Ms. Lopez offered two names but the phone number for one was

disconnected and the other participant, although perhaps willing to participate, spoke Spanish fluently not English. In a phone call with the potential participant, I realized language would be a barrier, as I do not speak fluent Spanish.

I then contacted the Florida Long Term Recovery Organizations, an umbrella organization that includes over 50 groups that are involved in helping hurricane survivors in Florida. Formed to help Floridians with long term recovery from disasters, it is overseen by the Volunteer Florida Foundation, which is a nonprofit organization that follows the mandates of the Governor of Florida regarding community service and volunteerism. The list of the Florida Long Term Recovery Organizations can be found at the Florida Disaster Recovery Fund (2005).

I began calling the groups on the Florida Long Term Disaster Recovery list. Each phone call was met with an enthusiastic response to my query for participants for this study. The responses ranged from “Great idea but I don’t have any active cases; call this person or group” to “Don’t you want someone who really suffered or lost everything?” I began to learn that people place stock on how much they think a person has suffered according to their standards. After twelve phone calls to individuals and groups in central Florida, each phone call leading me from one locale to the next, as if on a treasure hunt, I spoke with Ms. Alice Spivey, director of Rebuild Polk County After Disaster (RPAD), who was very interested in the project.

RPAD is a part of Rebuilding Together of Polk County. Rebuilding Together of Polk County began in September 2004 as the Long-Term Recovery

Committee in Polk County, Florida and became incorporated in 2005 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports low income homeowners in Polk County (Rebuild Polk County After Disaster, 2010). Generally, RPAD provides education and recovery programs for disaster in Polk County, and in this case, RPAD provided repair and re-building services to homeowners whose homes were damaged in the 2004 hurricanes.

RPAD is connected with the Volunteer Florida Foundation and Florida Disaster Recovery Fund and is the Florida Department of Financial Services' official community organization in Polk County for the My Safe Florida Home (MSFH) program for low-income homeowners (Rebuild Polk, 2010). The MSFH program provides the installation of hurricane shutters for free to qualified homeowners (Rebuild Polk, 2010).

In my telephone conversation with Ms. Spivey, I explained my doctoral project on adversarial growth and natural disasters with an emphasis on interpersonal communication. Ms. Spivey saw a need for more qualitative studies on hurricane survivors, and requested that I send her a letter explaining the study so she could check out my credentials and this study.

After receiving my letter and engaging in more discussion with me, Ms. Spivey assigned Ms. Laurie Davis, Recovery Program Coordinator from RPAD, to find participants for this study. Initially, Ms. Davis, an enthusiastic individual, began to read case histories to determine who might fit into my study guidelines. This took more time than I might have wished because she was busy with other work and had to read through the files that were thick with papers. She gave me

the name of an individual that had been helpful in the past for newspaper interviews. I was concerned that the potential participants might be too handpicked. I discussed this with the chair of my committee, who suggested I ask Ms. Davis to pick possible participants randomly.

In the mean time, I called the potential participant she had identified and explained the study in as much detail as the person was interested in, and asked whether she wished to be included in the study. My plan was that if a person indicated that he or she wanted to participate in the study, I would attempt to arrange a meeting at the person's convenience. The phone call was not encouraging, as the person responded, "I'm near 80 years and I'm not talking no more. I read the Bible and my family takes care of me. I'll pray for you and you pray me." I began to learn that not everyone wants to discuss surviving a hurricane or adversarial growth.

Due to time constraints and my request to pick the files randomly, Ms. Davis began to select files without extensively reading the client's case history, contacting them for permission for me to call them. I verified with Ms. Spivey that Ms. Davis picked the files randomly and did not describe the project as adversarial growth. Ms. Spivey told me that Ms. Davis asked the potential participant if they would be willing to have me contact them. During this time, I contacted a potential participant that I was referred to when calling one of the Florida Long Term Recovery Organizations. Because I am protecting this participant's privacy, I prefer not to name the organization, though I shared this information with my committee chair. This individual was a hurricane survivor in

Florida to whom I have given the pseudonym, Jane Smith. Ms. Smith was enthusiastic about participating in my study and asked to be included. Although single, her parents, who were also hurricane survivors, lived a few hours away from her in Florida. She agreed to contact her parents for permission for me to get in touch with them. After a few weeks without hearing from Ms. Smith, I e-mailed her. When I didn't receive a response, I then called her and left a message. Six weeks later, I received a phone call from her. She had been ill but was now fine. Her parents were willing to participate and were waiting to hear from me.

Over a period of 5 weeks due to her work load and limited time for my project, Ms. Davis identified eight families that had given her permission for me to contact them. One family, although willing to participate, had to bow out of the study the day before the interview due to health reasons. Another family never returned my calls. That left me with six families from Ms. Davis willing to participate in the study. I set up interview dates with each family.

Of those six families, one was an elderly couple in Polk County that agreed to the interview, providing I got permission from their adult daughter. The daughter gave permission, and when I arrived on time for the interview, the couple was not at home. I called their daughter, who advised me that her father was a nice person and wanted to please everyone and this was his way of telling me that he didn't really wish to participate because, she explained, he had only recently recovered from a nervous breakdown that he suffered due to the hurricane. She then told me that she worked in an assisted living center and that

they had found an increase in senility and dementia due to the hurricanes. She advised that I wait as it was beginning to rain and said, "They'll be home soon because Mama gets nervous when it's raining and Daddy is driving." Sure enough they pulled in and invited me into their home. I explained the IRB paperwork and said the interview was voluntary and if they had changed their mind that was fine. The gentleman said "I don't believe we will participate." I thanked them for their time.

This left five families from RPAD willing to participate in my study and the Smith family that resulted from the referral from one of the organizations in the Long Term Recovery Group Organization. Ms. Davis and the referring agency, RPAD, do not know which participants agreed to participate in this study. The person who referred Ms. Smith to me from the Florida Long Term Recovery Group Organization does not know that Ms. Smith and her parents agreed to participate in this study. Participants in this study are known only to the principal investigator.

All participants willingly and freely participated in this study. The participants seemed happy to share their views and hopeful that someone would be helped by this study. Although most participants allowed me to use their real names, I changed all of their names to protect their identities and privacy, as the Informed Consent document approved by the IRB said I would. I explained the study and the Informed Consent form to each participant, and the form was signed before each interview proceeded.

The hurricanes that hit these participants occurred in 2004. All of them had been hit by two and some of them even three hurricanes within 6 weeks. Most of the participants could not name the hurricane(s) that affected them, understandably so, as I was interviewing them four years later. After studying the 2004 Atlantic Hurricane Season (National Weather Service, 2010d), I was able to ascertain that the hurricanes involved were Hurricane Charley on August 9-14 (Pasch, Brown, & Blake, 2005), Hurricane Frances on August 25-September 8 (Beven II, 2005), and Hurricane Jeanne on September 13-28 (Lawrence & Cobb, 2005) making landfall in their geographic area within such a short time period.

The National Hurricane Center (National Hurricane Center, 2010d) provides a synoptic history, meteorological statistics, casualty and damage statistics, and a forecast and warning critique that include wind speeds and tracks for each hurricane. These reports confirmed the participants' narratives about the impact of the hurricanes on their geographic areas.

The participants are described below, four years after the hurricanes, with their ages at the time of the interviews in 2008.

The Brown family. Mrs. Kathy Brown is a 44-year-old single mother of four children who lives in a mobile home in Haines City in Polk County, Florida. Her husband died in 2005, within a year of the storms. Her four children are Sue, age 16; Ann, age 14; and 10-year-old twins. Her home was hit by Charley, Frances, and Jeanne. When she came to RPAD for assistance, she had completed a lot of home repairs herself and had been through quite a bit. RPAD assisted her with replacing the front and back doors, patching a hole in the floor,

repairing a closet, painting, and adding trim work to the floor, walls, and ceilings. Twelve volunteers worked a total of 333 hours on this project (L. Davis, personal communication, March 10, 2008).

Mrs. Brown said that she was looking forward to participating in this project. She mentioned that her grandmother participated in an oral history project for a university in Kentucky and liked the thought that she was honoring family tradition by participating in this study. She felt she could contribute to this study and hoped it would help people.

The Smith family. Ms. Jane Smith is in her 40s and worked in resource management in Palm Beach County in Florida in 2004 when the hurricanes made landfall in there. She volunteered herself and her father, Mr. Smith, age 76, and her stepmother, Mrs. Smith, age 67, to participate in this study when I called the organization she presently works for looking for potential participants. She wanted to participate in this study because she felt that more studies were needed of hurricane survivors. Jane experienced two hurricanes and lost all of her belongings. She tells her story largely from the other side of disasters: working to help people recover from disasters as she copes with her losses and helps her family recover. Since the hurricanes, she has moved to another county in Florida and now works in disaster recovery.

Her parents are retired, and live seasonally in a modest condominium on a barrier island in Martin County in Florida. The inside of their condominium received water damage from two hurricanes. They lost their kitchen and the

carpeting in their living room due to the hurricanes, and they said they were happy to participate and tell their story of surviving the hurricanes.

The Allen family. Ms. Beth Allen is a 55-year-old, disabled, single woman, mother, and grandmother who lives in Winter Haven in Polk County, Florida. She has custody of her 12-year-old grandson. At the time of the interview, her grandson was living with his father and was unavailable for the interview. Her roof was damaged during the hurricanes, which caused water damage in her kitchen and to the carpeting in her living room. She applied for assistance with FEMA but received only \$1400, which wasn't enough to repair her roof, so she used it to replace her flooring in order to prevent mold from spreading. At the time of the interviews, RPAD had hired a contractor to replace her roof and was in the process of scheduling a volunteer to patch the damaged ceiling in the kitchen. The repair of her roof was completed in early April 2008.

The White family. Ms. Carol White is a 62-year-old single woman who lives in Eagle Lake in Polk County, Florida in her family home that was built by her father in 1947. She evacuated to her friend's parents' house for the first hurricane. She stayed in her home for the second hurricane. Her home was severely damaged by the 2004 hurricanes. RPAD replaced her roof, repaired the structure, and replaced the ceiling and insulation throughout the house. These repairs were completed in early 2006. She is now under the RPAD mitigation program and is approved to receive free hurricane storm shutters. Ms. White lives with her cat Rose and is disabled from a recent car accident.

The Dean family. The Dean family consists of parents, Clay, age 46, and Lara, age 46, and their sons, Scott, age 19, and Tim, age 16. They live in Lake Wales in Polk County, Florida. Lara is disabled and is wheel-chair bound. The Deans evacuated to Lara's parents' house when the hurricanes arrived in their area. Their mobile home was destroyed by the hurricanes. Clay is building a 3,500 square foot cement block home with the help of friends and family on the site of their previous home. RPAD is helping with purchasing materials and providing a few volunteers occasionally.

The Thomas family. Ms. Kate Thomas, age 50, a single, disabled, divorced mother of three children, lives in her home in Lakeland in Polk County in Florida with her son Joe. Joe, age 19, was quite shy and preferred to send messages to me regarding surviving the hurricane through his mother. Her house suffered major roof, electrical, and window damage. She endured many trials and tribulations in having the damage repaired. RPAD provided her a new roof, which was completed in April 2008.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted at locations preferred by the participants. I discussed the interview locations with Ms. Spivey, Director of RPAD, and she felt the participants would be most comfortable and able to talk most freely in their homes. All of the participants preferred to be interviewed in their homes with the exception of the Smith family. Ms. Jane Smith opted for a conference room in the office building where she worked. Mr. and Mrs. Smith were interviewed by telephone due to their time constraints and their being at a more distant location.

Initial contact with participants was made by telephone. Most participants required several telephone conversations to decide to participate and settle on a day and time for the interviews. With the exception of Mr. and Mrs. Smith, who received and returned their informed consent by mail before the interview, each participant was given an informed consent form at the time of the interview that told the participants what the research study was about, what process would be used, and what the potential risks and benefits might be. The custodial parent of the children (age 12 and older) who were included in this study also signed the informed consent.

Most of the interviews were completed in one visit that lasted between one and a half and four hours. In this session, individual participants participated in a one-on-one personal narrative interview with me, which consisted of an interactive conversation of open-ended questions centered on their experience of the hurricane. I used both a cassette tape recorder and a digital audiotape recorder at once to record the narrative interviews and the family group interviews. I also took notes during these interviews. The interview with Chuck and Betty Smith was conducted by telephone because of their location. The interview was as similar as possible in length, topics explored, and interview questions as the interviews conducted in person. The interview was recorded with a cassette tape recorder and a digital audiotape recorder through the speaker on the telephone.

Unfortunately, only two families participated in the family group interview, the Browns and the Deans. The Thomas family declined to participate because

Kate's son Joe was too shy and felt he didn't have anything to say. The Smith family was unable to get together to participate as a family due to their location. Beth Allen's grandson was no longer living with her and her children declined to participate because they were too busy. Carol White lived alone and her friends and neighbors were not available. Both the Brown and the Dean families asked to conduct the family group interview immediately after the interviews because the information was fresh in their minds.

The limited number of families participating in the family group interview plus having it immediately after the narrative interview may have been limitations to this study because there wasn't time for them to reflect on the interviews or for me to review the transcripts to identify areas for further questioning. The participants felt as if they were on a roll and were enthusiastic to continue talking within the family group. I found that having the family group interview immediately after the individual interviews to be satisfactory and a natural follow up because the interview was fresh in their minds and mine. The participants and I had talked at length about adversarial growth and recovering from a hurricane in the narrative interviews so the family group interview immediately following was an opportunity for the families to interact with one another regarding these issues. In the family group interview, I brought the family members together to ask them the family group interview questions. Then, I asked if there was anything they would like to clarify or add as a family. Families eagerly answered my questions and introduced stories they had not previously mentioned as individuals.

I left the families with their permission to call them if I had any questions and encouraged them to call me if they wanted to add anything. During both the narrative interview and the family group interview, the participants were told they could choose to answer only the questions they wished without any penalty whatsoever.

Narrative interviews. I engaged each participant in an interactive narrative interview centered on the hurricane, adversarial growth, and interpersonal communication with the following questions:

Hurricane

1. Tell me your story of surviving the hurricane.
2. Where were you when the hurricane hit?
3. What did you do immediately after the hurricane?
4. What did you lose as a result of the hurricane? Home? Job? Family?
Friends? School? Neighbors? Community?
5. If you own(ed) a home, are you rebuilding in the area affected by the hurricane?
6. If you did move, are you planning to stay in the new location?

Adversarial Growth

1. Describe yourself before and after the hurricane.
2. In your opinion, what good emerged for you and your family in the aftermath of the hurricane? What bad emerged?
3. Did the hurricane disrupt your path or goal in life? Good or bad?

4. Can there be personal growth after a disaster? If so, in your opinion what is the best way to recover and possibly grow in the aftermath of a natural disaster?
5. What advice would you give people recovering from a natural disaster?

Interpersonal Communication

1. Describe your relationships before and after the hurricane.
2. What coping strategies have helped you the most in the aftermath after all of the volunteer help and government have left? Friends? Family? Communication? Stories? Isolation? Social support? Emotional support?

The questions were dictated by the ebb and flow of the conversation between the participants and me, but the above areas and related questions indicate the issues that I wanted to understand when the narrative interview was finished.

The responses to the questions in the interviews have provided a complex story. I don't believe that I led the participants in the interviews. I was sensitive to that possibility and asked neutral questions as neutrally as I could. Although I acknowledge that it is possible, when I reviewed the transcripts, it did not seem to me as though I was leading them.

Family group interviews. In the family group interview with the family members, I asked the participants the following questions:

1. As a family, is there anything that you would like to add or clarify regarding surviving a hurricane?
2. As a family, what do you think is the best way to cope with the aftermath of the hurricane?

3. What advice would you give to families going through similar circumstances?

Analysis

I had planned to transcribe the interviews myself, and I did so with a portion of the Smith interview. But a fall left me with a broken elbow, and being unable to type for 12 weeks. Not wanting to delay the transcription process, I employed a transcription service that transcribed the remaining interviews. The entire transcription process resulted in 420 pages of transcripts.

Once I received the transcripts, I checked them for accuracy by listening to each taped interview, comparing it to the transcript, and correcting each one as necessary on the transcript. All quotes used from the transcripts have been re-checked for accuracy with the taped interviews.

The tapes and transcripts for each family were treated as one unit. First, I listened to the tapes and then read the transcripts in order to conduct a “narrative analysis” to understand what it is like to experience a hurricane (Ellis, 2004, p. 195). Second, I conducted a thematic analysis in order to identify emergent themes in their descriptions of events and feelings before, during, and after a hurricane and to determine whether adversarial growth was experienced. I elaborate on each of these below.

Narrative analysis. Narrative analysis allowed me to understand what it is like to experience a hurricane and through this understanding to begin to identify how survivors coped with the hurricane. The narrative analysis of the transcripts provided awareness as to why hurricane survivors made specific decisions or

acted in a certain manner. Thus, my goal in using narrative analysis was to understand the scope of surviving a hurricane.

In writing the individual family narratives, I set the stage with the hurricane survivors as actors placing them within the context and time frame of their experiences of the hurricane. The narratives were written as stories that have stayed true, as much as possible, to the interview transcripts, so the reader could gain a sense of what the family was thinking, doing, and feeling before, during, and after the hurricane. Using literary license, I combined the two or three hurricanes that each family experienced into one hurricane in order to make the story flow more easily. I incorporated specific quotes from the transcripts whenever possible. The quotes added “concreteness” to the narratives (Nicol, 2008, p. 320). When necessary, some of the quotes from the participants were edited slightly for readability and grammar.

Weather observations, such as wind speed and destruction, were researched for each family’s location with the National Hurricane Center, and I added these occasionally to lend authenticity to the narratives. I researched programs that participants mentioned using but about which they could not recall specific information, including the Federal Food Stamp Disaster Relief Program. I re-created, as much as possible, a story that describes the experience of surviving a hurricane. The family narratives can be found in Chapter 3.

Thematic analysis. Boyatzis (1998) suggests that “thematic analysis is a process of encoding qualitative information” (p. vi). Thematic analysis is the content analysis of the descriptions of the events and feelings through the study

of the interview transcripts, audio-taped interviews, and field notes (Ellis, 2004). Similarities found in the data are grouped together to form themes. Boyatzis (1998) describes a theme as “the pattern found in the information that at a minimum describes and organizes possible observations or at a maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (p. vii). Thematic analysis is similar to grounded theory where researchers assemble their findings into customary groups (Ellis, 2004; regarding grounded theory, see also Charmaz, 2003; Giske & Artinian, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thematic analysis is important to this study because it can provide an understanding of the nuances in adversarial growth during and following natural disasters

To conduct the thematic analysis, I followed the guidelines of Miles and Huberman’s (1984) qualitative data analysis, which includes “data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification” (pp. 23-24). First, I used data reduction to select the data for the analysis by listening to the audiotapes for each interview as I read the transcript. I listed the similarities and differences of their experiences in a notebook. Then, I created questions and labels to represent the participants’ descriptions of their experiences within the context of the hurricane. For example, if the description was of the preparation for the hurricane, I correlated it with a question about preparing for a hurricane. Then, I labeled the description *preparation*.

In the second step, data display, I numbered the labels and considered them as topics. I listed 37 topics in common among the participants. Then, I re-read each transcript assigning a number line-by-line on the transcripts when one

of the topics was introduced. In addition, I re-examined each answer to specific interview questions for similarities and differences making notes on which answers corresponded to a numbered topic.

In the narrative interviews, the questions were (a) tell me your story of surviving the hurricane; (b) how did you survive during the hurricane; (c) what coping strategies have helped you the most after the hurricane; (d) describe yourself before and after the hurricane; (e) in your opinion, what good or bad emerged for you and your family after the hurricane; (f) did the hurricane disrupt your path or goal in life, good or bad; (g) can there be personal growth after a natural disaster? If so, in your opinion, what is the best way to recover and possibly grow after a natural disaster; (h) and what advice would you give people recovering from a natural disaster? In the family group interview, two of the questions were asked with an emphasis on the family as a unit: (a) as a family, how did you survive during the hurricane, (b) and as a family, what is the best way to cope after a hurricane when all the help has left.

In the third step, I used conclusion drawing/verification to draw emergent themes from the descriptions of the events and feelings that I observed as topics from the analysis of the transcript, audio recordings, and field notes. Miles and Huberman (1984) suggest in the conclusion drawing/verification step that “particulars are subsumed into the general” (p. 27). I re-examined the topics and the answers to the interview questions for themes, regularly checking my notes, the transcripts, and the audio tapes for verification. I continually moved back and forth through the three processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusion

drawing/verification to arrive at reoccurring themes. Miles and Huberman (1984) explain analyzing qualitative data is an “interactive cyclical process” that generates rigorous inquiry of the data (p. 24). I report the findings of the thematic analysis in chapters 4 and 5.

Summary

In this chapter, I have provided the basis for using a qualitative approach to this study. I have included information about the narrative interview and the family group interview, and why I chose to use these types of interviews. I have reviewed the selection of the participants and have explained the interviews and interview questions. I have described the narrative analysis and the thematic analysis. In Chapter 3, I present the narratives of what it is like to experience a hurricane.

CHAPTER 3

NARRATIVES

Their story, yours, mine – it's what we carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them.

Robert Coles (1989, p. 30)

In the most rigid epochs of ancient kingdoms the family preserved its separate structure, in which, despite its authoritative quality, individuals affirmed one another in their manifold nature. And everywhere the position of society is strengthened by this balance of firmness and looseness.

Martin Buber (1998, p. 57)

In this chapter, I present a narrative for each family that describes their experiences of surviving and coping with the hurricanes. The narratives have stayed true, as much as possible, to the interview transcripts, so the reader could gain a sense of what the family said they were thinking, doing, and feeling before, during, and after the hurricane. Weather observations and information on hurricane recovery programs available during that time from outside sources were included in the narratives. Specific quotations from the participants were used whenever possible and are indicated by parenthetical citations to the interview transcripts T1-T6 with the page number indicating the location of the

specific quotation in the particular transcript. Other quotations, though consistent with what the interviewees told me, are the result of the use of literary license in constructed dialogue.

The Brown Family

The students were restless and chattering in the Haines City, Florida, 5th grade classroom, as substitute teacher, Kathy Brown, age 40, following the recommendation of the principal tried to catch the Hurricane Charley update on the television. At lunch, the principal had advised all of the teachers to keep the television on for the latest news on Charley, an unpredictable hurricane, in case they had to close early. Blocking the students' ever increasing noise levels was becoming difficult for Kathy. The students were just too excited and perhaps anxious, she thought.

Using her best stern teacher voice, Kathy said, "Quiet down." The class immediately stopped talking. Only 30 minutes to go until school is over for the day, she reassured herself, as she turned up the volume on the television. Outside the windows of the classroom, the wind was kicking up debris on the playground, in the hot late afternoon sun.

"Hurricane Charley is expected to arrive in Polk County, late tonight or early tomorrow," said the weary looking television anchorman. As the school cancelations rolled across the bottom of the television screen, the students erupted into a low cheer, as they saw their school listed. Just then, the intercom in the classroom came on. The principal announced that school was officially canceled tomorrow.

Kathy, brown-haired and tough, turned to focus on the class and said, “Yes, school is canceled tomorrow, so we better take out our science books and review the pages for homework. We don’t have much time before school is out,” she said as she eyed the clock.

The class groaned, as they dutifully pulled their books from their backpacks and prepared to write down the homework assignment. As Kathy directed the students in a no-nonsense voice regarding their homework, her mind drifted to her four children and husband, David. What am I going to do with David if we have to evacuate? God knows, I’ve tried to ship him out of town, she thought. Just then, a hand was raised, Kathy, resilient, as always, gave her attention to the question.

With school over for the day and canceled for tomorrow, Kathy was driving home from her substitute teaching job with her four children in tow, having picked them up from their schools, when her cell phone rang.

Turning the radio off, she said to her children, “Quiet, it’s my boss at the restaurant.” The children, Sue, age 12, Ann, age 10, and twins, John and Missy, ages 6, were silent immediately. Working as a server at the restaurant was their mother’s second job. It helped pay the bills because Dad couldn’t keep a job.

“Hi Kathy,” said Sam, the manager of a local restaurant that employed her for the evening shift five days a week. “I wanted to catch you before you came to work. I’m closing the restaurant early tonight and tomorrow because of Hurricane Charley, so you don’t have to come in.”

“Okay, Sam. Thanks, I appreciate you calling. I hope we’re not closed too long because I can’t afford to miss any days.”

“I understand. I’ll call you and let you know when the restaurant is opening for sure. I only expect to be closed tonight and tomorrow.”

Kathy closed her cell phone and said to her children, “The restaurant is closing early because of Charley so I don’t have to go in. I’m going to watch the weather tonight, to see if we have to evacuate. If we do, maybe, we’ll go to Aunt Sally’s apartment. But right now, let’s go home and see what Dad is doing. Maybe he can cook you something for a snack, if he feels okay.”

“Yeah,” said Sue who was dressed gothic in all black clothes. “I want him to cook some hot wings, like he did last week.”

“Me too,” said Ann, a slim brown-haired child with a wide grin. “I love those wings.”

The twins, John and Missy, didn’t say anything. Cherubic looking, brown-haired children; they were lost in their own worlds, whispering and giggling about something.

Kathy nodded, twisted the radio dial on, and focused on the road, but she couldn’t help letting her mind wander a little. I sure hope David hasn’t had a drink today, she thought. Still, alcohol, I can deal with but not when he becomes violent. He was never violent before these last few months, she reflected. What in the heck is wrong with him? How many times have I had the sheriff out? David and I are not getting along in the least, that’s for sure. If we have to evacuate, what I am going to do with him? He’s not welcome at my parent’s house. Our

mobile home isn't safe in a hurricane. Oh well, I'll deal with it if we have to evacuate, she thought, as she turned resolutely onto the street leading into their neighborhood.

David, tall and lanky, with brown hair, was home and had not had a drink. He was having coffee on the wood porch of their mobile home and was drawing in a sketch book. He was sketching an image of a skeleton, beset by demons, in rainbow colors, with syringes floating in from different directions, surrounded by four stars. As the children greeted their dad, Kathy leaned over and studied his sketch. The stars, she thought, must be our children.

Delighted to see his children, he smiled, and in answer to Sue's query for a snack, he said, "C'mon, let's go to the kitchen, and you can help me."

"Okay, Dad. I just have to put my stuff in my room," Sue said, relieved that her dad seemed to be okay today.

Ann went in to turn on the television in the living room. She wanted to catch the music show. She loved music.

Kathy helped the twins settle in and then went to the kitchen to talk to David.

"Hurricane Charley is supposed to be coming here to Haines City late tonight or early morning, so school is closed. We'll know tonight if we have to evacuate. I'm going to call my sister and see if we can all evacuate to her apartment."

"I'm not evacuating," David said as he took out a frying pan from the bottom cupboard.

“You know our mobile home isn’t safe. They’re expecting winds over 60 miles per hour with tornados,” said Kathy.

“Charley is going to be nothing. I’ll stay here with the dogs. You know, you can’t take them to your sister’s apartment. You take the kids, and I’ll stay here. Besides, you know, I’m not welcome there. Your family is all sitting in judgment of me.”

“I know, and it isn’t right, them judging you, but I don’t want to leave you here,” said Kathy, as she opened up the freezer and pulled a box of frozen wings out. “How about if I get a motel room for you?”

“No, I told you, I’m staying here. I’ll be fine. I’m staying with the dogs, and that’s it,” David said, as he opened a bottle of vegetable oil.

Kathy decided to let the argument go because David was probably right. Charley wouldn’t be anything. How many times had they evacuated and nothing had happened? Besides, coming up with money for the motel room was hard. Money is tight, but I’d find it if I had to, she thought.

Seeing David was in a good mood, she decided to not ask him about job hunting. It would be nice for the children if they didn’t fight. The last thing I need before a hurricane is a big scene, she thought. Besides, she had a lead on a third job. She knew she better check it out, but she was supposed to enroll with the local college down the road to complete her teaching degree. How could she handle three jobs and school? Maybe she had better forget about that third job and concentrate on school. I’ll deal with it after Charley, she thought.

David wasn't drinking today, but Kathy didn't trust him when his friends started calling him to go out. He needed to hold down a job longer than a few months, she thought, as she left the kitchen calling for Ann, who was singing at the top of her lungs, to quiet down.

That night, after the children went to bed, Kathy packed for evacuation and then took pictures of everything in her house, as she listened to the television. The update on the news confirmed what she feared: Charley was heading for Haines City. Evacuation was suggested for all mobile homes in her area. Moving to the telephone in the kitchen, she called her sister, Sally, who lived in north Polk County, out of the path of Hurricane Charley.

"Can David and me and the kids evacuate to your place?" she asked Sally.

"Yes, you can, but why you want to bring David is beyond me. I don't really want him here." said Sally.

"Stop judging. Besides, I don't think I can convince him to come. He knows he's not welcome," said Kathy.

Sally held her tongue, and Kathy said goodbye and hung up. Kathy went into the living room to talk to David.

"David, my sister said we could all evacuate to her house," she began.

David interrupted her, "I told you, I'm not going to your sister's place. I'm staying with the dogs here, and that's it." Kathy gave up on him and went to wake the children, for the drive to her sister's apartment.

Sue was worried about her dad being by himself in the hurricane.

David said, "I'll be fine. Charley will be nothing. I have to stay and take care of the dogs."

Kathy reassured Sue that her dad could take care of himself and had lots of friends to help him. Sue comforted herself thinking that the hurricanes "wouldn't completely destroy our house being that [is] where we lived and everything" so her dad would be okay (T1, p. 43). Besides, Sue joked with herself, "manly men stay in the house" (T1, p. 37). Her dad wasn't afraid of anything.

Ann was confident her dad would be fine but worried that she couldn't take anything with her because there would be five of them in the car. Kathy had packed the bare minimum because of the car space, and she didn't tolerate complaining. Ann grabbed her favorite stuffed animal. The twins were so sleepy when Ann and Sue helped Kathy put them in the car that they didn't question anything.

When Kathy and her children arrived at Sally's apartment, there was a party going on in the neighbor's apartment next door. Loud music was playing; people were banging on the walls, and spilling out of the apartment door with beer bottles in their hands, all liquored up. Sally's kids were up, so Kathy's children joined their cousins and ran around the apartment chasing one another. The noise from the party made it impossible to settle the children down. Besides, everyone was excited to see Hurricane Charley.

There wasn't much to see with Hurricane Charley because it came through fairly quickly. One minute there was a lot of wind and rain and then the

next minute nothing. The noise from the wind was deafening. Charley sounded like a freight train to them. Charley reminded Kathy of the movie, "*Independence Day* when the UFO comes down and you see all the clouds coming up around it" (T1, p. 82).

During Charley, Kathy kept in contact with her parents to keep tabs on them. In the middle of the hurricane, her parents called her and held the telephone outside, so Kathy could hear the winds. She told her parents, "Get back in the house" (T1, p.156). She tried to call David, but their home phone was out of order.

After Charley passed through, it was only 11 at night, and Kathy wanted to check on David. She was nervous because the local news had said that some areas of Haines City experienced wind gusts of 67 miles per hour and the remnants of a tornado on US Highway 27 (Pasch et al., 2005). So Kathy left her children at her sister's apartment and began the drive home. But her car broke down on the way. Roads were closed and littered with debris, the traffic lights were out, and the police were busy. She called her sister, and they left her car where it was, and drove to Kathy's house where she found David, safe and sound asleep. She woke him, but he just grumbled at her. She couldn't see much of anything in the dark because the power was out, and her small flashlight died just as she entered the house. Reassured he was okay, she went back to her sister's house.

The next day, driving over to their house in the late morning, Kathy tried to calm the children. They had heard stories on the news of alligators being blown

into yards, and they were afraid to step outside of the car. They also saw stuff that had been wedged into trees on the drive. They had heard on the radio that in another part of their county “a canoe actually was blown up in-between two trees” (T1, p. 157). They were worried about their house, but Kathy reassured them that it wasn’t anything that they couldn’t handle together as a family.

“If we work together as a team, I know we can get the yard cleared up in no time,” she said to them.

As Kathy turned into her driveway, she was shocked to see her house and the yard. In the daylight, the damage was more than she had expected. Her whole yard was covered with boards, shingles, and debris. The roof on the front half of her home was lifted up. The children were silent when they saw their home but when David stepped out, they surrounded him, hugging and smiling.

“What was it like?” Kathy asked David.

“It sounded like the whole military landed on the roof,” he said (T1, p. 83).

Kathy found that the dogs had fared fine. There was a lot of rain damage inside the living room, kitchen, and two of the three bedrooms. David said there had been 6 inches of water in some of the rooms. The damage to their home, they would find out, was caused by the winds from a tornado spawned by Charley. The Brown home was the only house severely damaged in her neighborhood.

Sue was upset when she saw her home. Everything was “drenched, ripped up, and nasty” (T1, p. 41). She knew her parents would need help. I better grow up fast, she thought. She had always dressed in black and scared people

with her black clothes and mouthy attitude, but now she knew she had to leave that behind. Being the oldest, she understood more than Ann and the twins. Her dad was an alcoholic, she knew, even if her mother wouldn't say it. Her grandparents didn't respect him. He couldn't keep a job for long. Her mother worked two jobs to pay their bills. Her dad's behavior in the last few months had been crazy. No doubt about it, she thought, she would have to grow up and help her mom.

It was impossible for Kathy and the children to stay there because their house was so damaged, and the water and electricity were off. David refused to leave their house because he still wasn't welcome at Kathy's relatives' homes. He also wanted to begin repairing their house.

David and Kathy sat down and made a plan to deal with their insurance, FEMA, and the repair of their home. He and Kathy had worked construction at one time, so the work was not new to him. David's first priority was to get the wet stuff out, then attack the roof, as soon as he got clearance from their insurance company. Kathy had taken photographs before Charley, and now she took more pictures to document the damage. David also had a line on a job resulting from the hurricane, so he needed to be in their area for it.

He told Kathy, "I'm pitching our pup tent in the yard and staying here."

Kathy knew he wouldn't change his mind, so she didn't try to talk him out of it. Besides, she knew he needed to be available for the possible job opportunity.

The day had been brutally hot at their house, and the children were quiet and a little down, as Kathy drove to Sally's place, so she made a stop at a RaceTrac gas station for a frozen carbonated drink. The kids perked up immediately. There were so many different kinds of frozen drinks to choose from that the children promptly nicknamed it, Slushy World. Reveling in the coolness of their drinks, the children seemed to perk up as Kathy told them, "Don't worry. We can handle everything by working together as a family. Material things don't mean anything. They can always be replaced. As long as you have your life, your health, and your family, you are fine. We have that so we'll be fine."

Back at her sister's apartment, Kathy began the task of getting the insurance company and FEMA out to her property. She ran back and forth from her sister's home to her own house and her two jobs. School was out temporarily, so her sister watched the children. The children loved having their cousins to play with and had a ball playing inside and outside with them. Still, tempers flared between Kathy and Sally because Sally felt Kathy was doing too much and not spending enough time with her children, so Kathy moved into her parent's house with her children.

Kathy's parents entertained the children with games. The children especially loved a game they invented with candy bars. Grandpa kept separate jars of Musketeers, Snickers, and Heath bars. Their grandma decided to mix the candy bars together.

Grandpa pretended to be mad and teased grandma. He said, "I don't mess with your pots and pans. Why are you going to mess with my chocolate? Don't mess with my tools either."

Everyone laughed. So the children with their mother and grandma decided to play a little joke. They "took a whole bunch of chocolate bars and put them around the table on the edges. When somebody moved one a certain way, someone would yell at that person for moving it" (T1, p. 30). It was a stupid childish game, Ann thought, but she had the best time playing it.

Kathy and the children had been at her parent's home for almost two weeks when on one of her frequent visits, she stopped between jobs to check on David who had been without electricity and water the whole time. Greeting David with a hug, Kathy immediately stepped back. Boy, do you smell ripe, she thought. She immediately called her parents for permission for David to shower at their home. They gave an unenthusiastic okay, so she broached the subject with David.

"David," she said. "My parents say you can shower at their house. Will you do that?"

"No, I won't go to their house. Take me to a lake," he said.

No amount of talking could convince him, so Kathy drove him to a lake. David and Kathy got out of the car and walked toward the flat sandy slope of the lake, so David could walk into the water. Kathy stood with a towel, as David walked into the water, bare-chested in cut-off jeans. Before he could immerse himself completely, an alligator came up on the surface of the water. David and

Kathy saw the alligator at the same time. She screamed his name, as he high-tailed it out of the lake. Kathy got her wish. David showered at her parent's house. Later that night, the children laughed hysterically as Kathy told them about their dad bathing with the alligator.

Meanwhile, in the Brown's neighborhood, without water and electricity for almost two weeks, their neighbors were losing heart. The temperature and humidity were brutal. Everyone was suffering from heat and no water. One neighbor joked about sitting by a fire hydrant with a gun until the water was switched on. Kathy confided to her parents, "You can't find water, you can't find ice, but you sure can find Budweiser. There are more beer trucks. There are so many people intoxicated" (T1, p. 140). The only way to get ice and water seemed to be to go where President Bush was going to show up or drive to other locations in cities mentioned on the radio as having ice and water. Feeling abandoned, the Brown's neighbors banded together and became closer. Everyone in the neighborhood realized that without electricity and water they were in a disaster. Still, Kathy was worried about David, but he had gotten a job, and, with their home to repair, he seemed to be doing okay.

Finally, after two weeks, the water and electricity came on in their neighborhood, and school was re-opened. The house still wasn't fit for the children and Kathy to move back in, so they stayed at her parents' house. But Kathy dropped them at the house after school as much as she could, so they could see David when he was home. He cooked hot wings or steak for them.

David wasn't around too much because his job was demanding. The hurricane had opened up new possibilities for him, and he wasn't drinking as much.

Finally, after months of fighting with FEMA, Kathy was finally able to get a trailer from them. She and the children moved back home, and the Brown family was reunited. The insurance money came in, and Kathy and David decided to handle the new roof themselves. Roofers couldn't be found for a decent price, and the quality of their work was shoddy. David and Kathy were well-versed in construction work so they felt confident they could do it and do a better job to boot.

David and his father-in-law came to an understanding, and he helped David with the roof. Kathy's dad couldn't do much because he had health problems, but he helped as much as he could. They took the shingles off, intending to put the new roof on the next day, but then David was called into work. While he was gone, a storm headed their way, so Kathy called her father to help secure tarps on the roof. As Kathy held on to a tarp up on the roof with her father holding it below, the wind picked up.

Soon she yelled down to her father, "I'm windsurfing." She laughed, as she attempted to secure the tarp with it billowing out behind her in blue plastic folds (T1, p. 146). Her neighbors gathered, laughed, and joked with her as she rode the wind on the top of her roof.

The roof was completed in the next few days, with all of the Brown family helping. Missy and John helped bring the shingles and the nails to the ladder. Ann and Sue carried as many shingles up the ladder as they could, and Kathy

assisted David with the nailing. Working together, Kathy and David became closer and started to heal their relationship.

As soon as the roof was done, David began repairing the inside of their mobile home when he wasn't at his job. Their house was basically uninhabitable because of the water damage. But soon, David started to complain of dizziness, headaches, and numbness. Kathy carted him off to the doctor. The news was bad. He had a large tumor in his brain that was cancerous. A cure was iffy, but radiation and chemotherapy were necessary if he was to have a chance to survive. The children were told of his illness. Upset and worried, the children rallied around him, wishing and hoping for a recovery.

Humbled by his illness, he threw himself even more into working on the house for his family. He grew closer to his children and Kathy. During radiation, he moved out of the FEMA trailer and stayed in the bedroom with the least amount of damage, so he could be isolated from germs when his immune system was down.

As David became sicker, Kathy was contacted by FEMA and told to prepare for the removal of the FEMA trailer even though their home wasn't completely finished. A big obstacle to moving into their own home was having no beds because they had been destroyed by rainwater during Charley. The insurance money they received wasn't enough to repair their home, let alone get new beds, so Kathy sought help from community organizations. She brought all of her paperwork into an organization who offered her a voucher for \$100 dollars, but the woman on the floor said she couldn't give her anything because she

could make more selling the items to other people than giving them to Kathy for the voucher. Kathy found another organization that was able to help her so she could get her beds.

Moving back into their house, even with bare floors and the insulation showing from the walls where drywall hadn't been put up yet, was the best gift to the Browns. They could live together. David was becoming sicker and sicker but somehow he found the strength to continue to work on the house. The week before he died, he summoned his last bit of the strength to get the kitchen window fixed and in place.

David told Kathy, "I'm going to fix that window before I die," and he did.

Four years after Hurricane Charley, Kathy found Rebuild Polk County After Disaster (RPAD). RPAD paid for materials and collected a crew of twelve volunteers to finish the Brown's home. The volunteers helped replace the front and back doors, patched a hole in the floor, repaired a closet, painted, and added trim work to the floors, walls, and ceilings.

After her home was finished, Kathy quit one of her three jobs and enrolled in course work to finish her college degree, to realize her dream of becoming a teacher. Sue got a job to help out with expenses and plans to go to college after high school graduation. Ann ran into some trouble at school, which the Browns are sorting through with her. John plays video games when not at school, and Missy talks to them about seeing ghosts. In their living room, the Browns have created a shrine to David.

The Smith Family

Jane Smith

Arms draped around her boyfriend, Jim, Jane Smith eyed the boxes from her move a week ago from Georgia to his Florida condo. She had intended to move into the home that she had tried to purchase before moving to Florida, but there was a hold on the contract, so here she was with her stuff at Jim's place. Nestling her head sideways into his chest, she said, "I'm so sorry, Jim. The county thinks Hurricane Charley will be a category 4, so they asked all the charitable organizations to send a volunteer to the emergency operations shelter. I am the only one in our department certified in mass shelter operations, so my boss asked me to volunteer to stay at the shelter. I hate to leave you with this mess, but I am supposed to go there tonight."

Jim gave Jane a tight squeeze and said, "It's okay, honey. It's your first week on the job. I know you have to volunteer. Hopefully, Charley will be a big nothing, and you'll be back by tomorrow night. We can tackle these boxes and getting your belongings from storage when you're back for your move into your new home if the contract works out."

Jane, blond-streaked hair, trim and fit, looking younger than her 42 years, held onto Jim, and looked him in the eye, as she laughed and said, "Charley better be nothing." Then, letting go of Jim, she said, "I better get packed for the shelter."

Later, that night, Jane settled into the emergency operations shelter, a "bunker-like environment" and tried to find a place to sleep (T2, p. 3). It was a

madhouse. There were over 200 women in the bunker and not enough beds. Women slept wherever they could find a place to put their heads.

Moving through the crowd of women, Jane walked down a hallway and opened an office door. The office was empty. Thank heavens, thought Jane, as she unrolled her sleeping bag on the floor and plumped up her pillow. At least it's quiet in here. I guess I'd better get used to this because I'm here until Charley shows up, she thought, as she lay down. The door opened, and she welcomed five more people to the space. As people stepped over and around her, Jane began her nightly prayers.

Hurricane Charley took forever to make landfall—four days to be specific. During that time, Jane didn't shower because there were only two showers and not enough hot water for everyone. Meals were hit and miss, and the coffee was terrible. Jane barely slept because it was impossible to find a comfortable spot, let alone a private place to sleep. To make matters worse, her realtor called her about the contract—the deal was off.

Jane called Jim to complain, "It's terrible here but worst of all my contract on the house fell through," she said.

Jim replied, "Too bad, but I know you'll find another house. It's not so great here either because we're in a hold pattern. All activities have been canceled." After commiserating with one another, they hung up.

Jane made a friend, Kathy, a volunteer from another charitable organization, during her four days and nights at the emergency operations building. After the hurricane passed and it was safe to leave, she told Kathy just

before they left for their homes, “What a relief it will be to go to Jim’s condo, and take a few days off. I’m so tired.”

“Jane, didn’t you hear the latest? The director just announced that all the volunteers here will get a few hours off, and then will be sent to Arcadia to work out of their emergency operations shelter. They were the hardest hit by Charley,” said Kathy.

“You’re kidding,” Jane said.

“No, unfortunately, I’m serious. They are sending a ten-passenger county van driven by a county employee to pick us up at our homes. I saw your name on the list for the van I’m in, so I guess I’ll see you in about four hours.”

After more discussion with Kathy, Jane took off to check on Jim because she hadn’t been able to reach him. She knew the cell phone tower was down, and Jim didn’t have a landline. Still, she felt alarmed. When she arrived at the entrance to his neighborhood, she found trees were blocking the road, so she couldn’t get to his condo. The county hadn’t cleared the trees because Jim’s condo was in a gated community. Jane joined a group of bystanders in the road, and together they organized volunteers with trucks and ropes to clear enough of the trees to make the road passable.

She found Jim unhurt but scared from the storm. Jim wasn’t too thrilled that Jane was leaving again, but knew Jane had to do her job. After seeing Jim for a few hours, she was picked up by the county van containing Kathy and eight other volunteers. After saying hello to the occupants of the van, Jane took a seat,

and leaned her head back to think about how they would help deal with the aftermath of Charley in Arcadia.

The windows on the van were down, and the droning sound of chain saws filled the air as Jane and Kathy arrived in Arcadia.

“Who is managing this recovery?” Jane said, as the driver of the packed county vehicle they were riding in slowed down to skirt debris in the road.

“I heard that the director of the recovery is here, but it doesn’t look like anyone is in charge, and that’s a problem. Because I was briefed before I left, I can say that if people move trees and try to help people before they take photographs of the damage then the homeowners will have problems with their insurance. I hope the homeowners took pictures before they let the faith-based groups help them,” said Kathy.

Just then, the van drove by a “chainsaw wielding” faith-based group proudly wearing their religious affiliations on their t-shirts (T2, p. 2). Jane knew from her brief training that if a recovery wasn’t managed properly, with collaboration between all groups working to help disaster survivors, that there would be chaos. Save me from these groups, thought Jane, as she saw people lifting branches off of a shed.

“How can we get some collaboration going between our disaster recovery group and these faith-based groups?” asked Jane.

“I’m not sure, but it is sorely needed from what I’ve heard,” replied Kathy.

Jane and Kathy were let off at the emergency operations center in Arcadia, another bunker like building. The directory of recovery was there and

quickly briefed them on their duties, noting that they could be reassigned at any time based on need. Both were to oversee case managers helping people get the food and water they needed.

Jane lived at the emergency shelter for two weeks. During this time, she ate peanut butter sandwiches, canned tuna, and whatever people brought back from the points of distribution. Working 17-hour shifts was exhausting. Mostly Jane missed “coffee and showers,” and other stuff she previously took for granted. She tried to make the best of the situation, telling herself it was only temporary (T2, p. 33).

There was no time to contact Jim for longer than a moment or two. Besides, the cell phone tower reception was sketchy. But the news heard over the static on the line was bad. Jim’s parents’ condo, located an hour from Jim, had been damaged in the hurricane and was unlivable. His parents needed help desperately and had to be moved immediately. Jane’s parents’ condo on a barrier island, four hours away, had minor damage. During this time, Jane couldn’t do anything to help her or Jim’s families because she had to live at the shelter. The responsibility fell to Jim. Not being able to help their families was taking a toll on Jane, draining her mentally and emotionally.

One day, Jane ran into Kathy after a particularly emotionally and physically exhausting shift. Trying to take a respite from their work, they talked about movies.

“Remember the movie with the gorillas and the mist? What was the name of that movie?” Jane said.

“I know that one. The movie with Sigourney Weaver? What was that name?” replied Kathy.

Suddenly, they looked at one another and said in unison, “*Gorillas in the Mist.*” Jane and Kathy laughed uncontrollably, tears running down their cheeks, “punch drunk” with exhaustion (T2, p. 33). Wiping her tears away, Jane said good night to Kathy and tried to find a comfortable spot to sleep.

The next day, Jane’s eyes were opened to families that wouldn’t lift a finger to help themselves and were trying to take advantage of the system.

Jane’s case manager got a call in the early evening. “I have seven children, and we haven’t eaten in four days,” said the mother.

The case manager, her sympathies aroused, immediately contacted Jane and asked for help to get the family food, since the distribution center was closed for the night. Jane rallied more volunteers and received access to a food supply.

When Jane and the volunteers arrived later that night, they found the seven kids were mainly teenagers. They were sitting outside with beers in hand waiting for free food.

“If you can get to the store to buy yourself this beer, you can get to the store to buy yourself some food. Don’t cheat another family out of what they rightfully need and deserve,” Jane said to the father of the family (T2, p. 14).

“We need the food,” he protested.

“No sir, I don’t think you do. I am sorry, but we are going to move a little further down the street. We know there are some seniors who haven’t eaten in

days. It would be nice if you could help us go door to door to deliver some of this food to the people that haven't eaten," Jane said (T2, p. 14).

Finding they didn't care to participate in handing out food to the seniors, Jane moved on to people in need, becoming more cautious and savvy to the seamy side of disasters—the abuse of the system (T2, p. 18). That night as she prepared to say her prayers, Jane thought over the day. Outraged, as she relived the scene with the family of seven teenagers, Jane made up a name for them. I'll call them, "system milkers," she thought, because that's what they are, people that milk the system for free stuff when they don't need it. They give a bad name to people that want to be self-sufficient, but need a help up not a handout (T2, p. 19).

But that wasn't only the abuse that got to Jane; she also heard stories from her case managers of people using their FEMA money to buy big screen televisions but not planning how or where they would live after the FEMA housing ran out. She knew there was a lack of education on what to do with the money, and some of her seniors couldn't grasp the reality of the situation no matter how much explanation was given.

Jane didn't work around the clock but it seemed that way. When she was allowed to leave the shelter and move back to Jim's condo, she still didn't have any time to rest. There was no time to relax with Jim or even to begin looking for a home to purchase. She and Jim helped his parents settle into a new place. So it was a constant packing, and moving of everyone's possessions. Finding a vehicle to rent for moving was next to impossible.

Bone tired and emotionally stressed, she didn't give her belongings another thought until a few weeks later when driving by the storage facility that her possessions were in. Unconcerned, she glanced at the building, and then looked again, hard. She slammed on her brakes in shock. The roof had been blown off. Security was tight. No one was being admitted to the building. The security guard gave her a phone number to call to receive permission to enter the building.

Upon receiving approval, she entered the facility and was shocked. Every corrugated box had collapsed. Mold was growing over everything. The boxes were standing in 3 inches of water. Tears running down her face, Jane surveyed her boxes, trying to block the overwhelming smell of rot and mildew from her nose.

Luckily, Jane had insurance. Her insurance company asked her to take a picture of every item in her boxes. So she loaded the items into garbage bags, took them to another facility, cataloged each item, and then threw them away. Teary eyed, as she sat and itemized her clothes, she spoke sternly to herself. It's just clothes. I'm healthy. I didn't lose a home. Jim still has his home.

Knowing she was fortunate because she hadn't lost a home, she tried to contain her emotions. Still, certain outfits would trigger her feelings. Looking at one dress, she thought, I wore this to my brother's wedding. Breaking down, crying as if her heart would break, she was ashamed for crying over her possessions. These are just things. They can be easily replaced, she thought. I

have the memory. But it was the memory attached to her possessions that bothered her even though she knew she still had the memory.

Still, Jane didn't have much time to grieve because there was a community that needed her help. She knew there were people out there who had no means to replace their homes or possessions. She mustered up her faith in God, yet wondering why He allowed things to happen. She embraced the fact that all she had lost were things that could be replaced.

Then one day, everything became clear to Jane. It was her charge to help people. A client came into the office, desperate for help. Jane helped her and met her needs. When they were done, the woman started to cry.

"Thank you for helping me. Without you, I wouldn't have anything. God bless you," she said.

Putting her arms around the woman and giving her a tight hug, Jane said, "You're welcome. It was a pleasure to help you."

In the four years since Hurricane Charley, Jane accepted a position in disaster recovery and moved to a different county in Florida. Jane and Jim remain friends but are no longer together.

Chuck and Betty Smith

The wind was picking up, ruffling the palm leaves and creating a din, as retirees Chuck and Betty Smith conferred with Deputy Sheriff Banks in the parking lot of their condominium complex on Jupiter Island, Florida where they lived seasonally in a modest unit.

Hurricane Jeanne was coming. The Smiths had heard on the news that evacuation was ordered for their island. How many times had they evacuated, and then nothing had happened? Too many, by their count, that's for sure.

Packing and shutting down their condominium was tiresome. Plainly, it was just too much work. The Smiths knew they were down to the wire, waffling about evacuation. Should they go? The news seemed threatening about Hurricane Jeanne. Deputy Sheriff Banks would help them make a decision about evacuating from their unit. He was a good man. They had known him for years.

"Let me put it this way, Mr. Smith," said Deputy Sheriff Banks, raising his voice to be heard over the wind, as small debris whipped around them in the gray early afternoon light. "The water and electricity will be shut off to the condominium complex. The hurricane shutters will be bolted from the outside, so you will not be able to get out of your unit. No one will be on the island to help you, and the bridge to the mainland will be shut down for who knows how long, depending on the severity of Jeanne. Do you still want to stay?"

Chuck Smith, age 72, and father of Jane Smith, looked ruefully at his wife, Betty, age 63, stepmother to Jane, and said, "I guess we better call Shelly and Joe and ask if we can stay at their house. If they say yes, we'll call Jane and your children to let them know we are evacuating." Betty, trim and fit from playing tennis every day, sighed and nodded her head to her husband and then turned to look at Deputy Sheriff Banks. "Thanks, Sheriff. We'll be leaving. How long do we have before they close the bridge to the mainland?"

"You have three hours, ma'am," he said.

Taking her husband's arm, Betty said, "C'mon, Chuck, we better call Shelly and Joe and start packing." Thanking Deputy Sheriff Banks once again, they turned and walked hurriedly through the parking lot by the tennis courts and the pool, skirting twigs and small bromeliads in their path.

"I guess we won't be playing tennis for awhile," said Chuck as he took one last glance at the tennis courts before ducking into the first stairwell on the building, letting Betty go first up the stairs.

"I guess not. No more swimming either," said Betty as she started quickly up the stairs to the third floor and began thinking about all the work she had to do to get ready to leave. And in only three hours, she thought. Thank goodness, we have good friends to stay with. Chuck, able-bodied and robust, followed Betty, thinking along the same lines.

He said, "I'll call Joe and Shelly. Boy, are we lucky to have them for friends. We'll be better off at their house because they're a mile inland, so we should miss the brunt of the storm there. We better bring as much as we can from our refrigerator because, with the electricity off, it will spoil."

Mentally, making a list, as she climbed, Betty answered, "Let's pack the food last. I wonder how many changes of clothes we'll need."

"No telling," said Chuck. "But, we better be prepared because Jeanne might be the real thing. I have our insurance and documents in the safe. I better pack those first. I hope we don't have to make a claim, but I've been with the insurance company since 1956 with never a claim, so it shouldn't be a problem."

“I sure hope we don’t have a claim. We better write a list, so we don’t forget anything,” said Betty, as she reached the third floor landing.

“Good idea,” said Chuck as he unlocked their door and immediately headed in to the phone in the kitchen. “I’ll call Joe, and then we can write the list together. We can call Jane and your kids as soon as we get to the Grays.”

Two hours later, the car packed to the hilt, Chuck and Betty sat in their car maneuvering the best they could in heavy traffic. Everyone on the island had waited until the absolute last moment to evacuate, so traffic was horrendous. Hours later, shaken by the traffic, exhausted from packing and loading their car, the Smiths were welcomed into the home of their dear friends, Shelly and Joe Gray, just in time for a late dinner. Joe’s specialty, baby back ribs, was just coming off the propane grill in the garage as the Smiths arrived to candlelight. The Gray’s electricity had been shut off.

The Smiths and the Grays made the best of it without electricity. Forced to eat from the Gray’s well-stocked freezer plus the food the Smiths had brought, they enjoyed ice cream the next morning for breakfast. They took pleasure in eating shrimp and steak cooked on the grill in the garage. They had enough bottled water stored for their needs. Candles were used at first, but the ventilation was bad with the house closed up, so they moved a card table to the master bathroom, where a skylight provided enough light.

There, they played cards, listened to a portable television that ran on batteries, and used the landline phone. They tried to keep their spirits up. They laughed and joked, as Betty and Chuck marveled at all the great food and the

wonderful setup they had with their friends. They also comforted one another when the noise from the wind and the flying debris penetrated the house, and the news on the television was ominous. Wind gusts at Jensen Beach in their county had been reported at 91 miles per hour just before the anemometer failed (Lawrence & Cobb, 2005). Rainfall was estimated to be between 8-13 inches (Lawrence & Cobb, 2005). They felt helpless, trapped inside wondering whether the house would stand up to the impact of the hurricane. This went on for four days.

During this time, Betty and Chuck kept in touch with family and friends. Chuck called his daughter, Jane, on the landline phone and talked to her new boyfriend Jim, who assured him that Jane and he were fine, at least for the moment. Betty called her friend Ann, who had just turned 100 years old and lived by herself. Ann was evacuating to her neighbor's house for the hurricane. Betty worried about her friend because it was hard to deviate from a routine at Ann's age especially a change in diet. Ann was doing okay but longed to be home.

Emerging from the Gray's home in the early morning after the fourth day, the sight was shocking. The pool was filled to the brim with debris, and the trees that were still standing were like bare sticks, stripped of their leaves. The Smiths helped clear the debris in the driveway, so they could get their car out of the garage, and then, anxious to check on their home, they left immediately. The television news anchor had reported that homeowners would be allowed on the island for only a few hours because the water and electricity were still shut off.

Driving home was a nightmare on highway Florida A1A. The highway was deluged with sand and saltwater (Lawrence & Cobb, 2005). Fences were down left and right. Debris, tons of it, was everywhere. People were just starting to pile wet furniture and carpeting on the sidewalks.

When the Smiths arrived at their home, they found that some water had made its way under the sliding doors and had wet their carpeting and kitchen cabinets. Their carpeting and cabinets were damaged beyond normal repair because the water had been there for four days. After inspecting their home, Chuck, an optimist, turned to Betty and said, "Fortunately, it isn't damaged any worse than it is. It's just an inconvenience," that's all it is (T2, pp. 38, 41).

Nodding her head, Betty said, "I know but what a mess."

Putting his arm around Betty and giving her a comforting squeeze, Chuck said, "We can't stay here until this wet stuff is removed. I'll call the insurance company and find out the process for getting this fixed, and then I guess we'll go back to Shelly and Joe's. Before we go, I want to check on our neighbors to see how they fared and if they need any help." said Chuck.

"Okay, I'll start packing more clothes, and then I want to call Ann, to see how she is. She didn't sound happy about evacuating from her home," replied Betty.

The news from their neighbors was generally okay although one unit had three sliding doors that had blown out. Not many people were in the complex because it was out of the season, and the few that were there were, like Chuck and Betty, starting the repair process by calling their insurance companies. The

news regarding Ann was bad. She had been admitted to the hospital because her digestive system was off. She was so weak that she couldn't get out of the hospital bed by herself.

Fearing the worst for her friend, Betty resolved to visit her as soon as she and Chuck got back to the mainland. Dragging a suitcase out from the back of the closet, Betty tried to figure out how long it would take to get the insurance resolved and the wet stuff removed so she and Chuck could move back in. Two or three days, she thought, as she lifted the suitcase onto her bed.

Arriving back at the Gray's house, the Smiths were welcomed again with open arms. Chuck made contact with his insurance company, but after many phone calls of trying to find workmen to remove the carpeting and the bottom kitchen cabinets, Chuck realized they would have to rely on themselves and their friends. He enlisted the help of Joe and another friend, Bob, to go back to his home with him, the next day, to help remove the carpeting. Joe had plenty of tools and high-powered battery operated lights to help them. Chuck's unit was small, so the three men were able to remove the damaged carpeting, some furniture, and clean the floor in a day.

The next day, Chuck and Joe went back with another friend, Ned, who was a retired plumber. Ned advised Chuck and Joe how to remove the bottom kitchen cabinets, countertop, and the kitchen sink. The kitchen was small. So, with Ned's tools and help, the process went smoothly. The men saved the countertop, sink, and some kitchen appliances. Luckily, the water hadn't reached the refrigerator.

Chuck and Betty weren't able to go home, because the water and electricity to the island were still off. So, they continued with card games and grilling outside, and helped the Grays remove the debris from their pool. Chuck and Betty called Jane and the rest of their family to assure them that they were safe and that their unit, although damaged, was still standing.

Betty and Shelly canvassed the area for more food and water. They went together to visit Ann in the hospital. Ann wasn't doing well, and both Betty and Shelly were alarmed. Shelly offered for Ann to come to her home, but Ann couldn't leave the hospital. She could no longer walk.

Within a few days of their visit, Ann died. Betty knew that at 100 years old, Ann's time on earth was limited, but still she was furious at Ann's death. She told Chuck and the Grays:

I just feel very, very strongly that, you know, if she had not had to endure that hurricane that upset her balance, that upset her routine, and upset her medication that she was so careful about doing, she would have lived longer than that. (T2, p. 53)

Everyone was very sympathetic to Betty regarding the loss of her dear friend. The hurricane was changing all of their lives, even of people they didn't know. On the television news, they saw people without resources losing everything they had. The news from the Smith's daughter, Jane, was painful. Jane had just discovered that all of her belongings, which she had in a storage facility, were ruined several weeks ago as the result of a previous hurricane.

Jane said, "I know what I lost is nothing compared to all the losses I've

seen in Arcadia. People have lost their homes and everything in them.

They don't have insurance or any money to replace their clothes even."

"But, it still hurts, doesn't it?" said Chuck.

"Yes, I hate to admit it. I am so emotional. When I think that I lost the dress I wore to Peter's wedding, I feel so sad. Even though I know, it's just a thing and not the memory. But, I'm trying to put my faith in God," said Jane.

"Yes," said Chuck. "Remember, honey, if you need us to help in any way, we will."

"I know, Dad, but you have enough to do to replace the carpeting and kitchen cabinets in your place. I feel bad even complaining about losing my stuff," said Jane.

The hurricane had not only caused loss but affected how people were treated. The Grays and the Smiths had witnessed firsthand that more affluent neighborhoods received water more easily than other neighborhoods. In one of their many discussions of the inequities in the world and life in general not being fair, Chuck observed, "Financial things are one of the worst things" (T2, p. 42). Everyone agreed.

Five days, later, when the electricity and water were turned on in their complex, Betty and Chuck moved back into their home. Their previously carpeted floors were now concrete, the windows were barricaded with plywood, and the kitchen wasn't functioning. They ate out and only slept at their home, often joining the Grays and other friends for early bird dinner specials at local restaurants. As soon as the tennis courts were functional and the swimming pool

re-opened at their complex, Chuck and Better resumed their tennis games and their daily swims. Repair on their unit was slow. It took eleven months for their unit to be restored.

Four years after Hurricane Jeanne, the Smiths put their condominium unit up for sale. Chuck assured his daughter, Jane, that his motive for selling had nothing to do with the hurricane. He and Betty wanted to be more centrally located, so all of their children and grandchildren can visit them more often for the day, rather than just once a year for a week.

The Smiths bought a cabin on a lake in Alabama that they would move to when their unit sells. Much to his chagrin, the insurance company Chuck has been with since 1956 canceled his policy. Unhappy with the cancellation, he and Betty discussed it with the Grays.

He said, "I think they're chintzy. They make enough profit as it is" (T2, p. 45). Everyone agreed. Betty is still angry at the loss of her friend, Ann. She blames Hurricane Jeanne.

The Allen Family

A tropical wave surfaced off the coast of western Africa on August 4th and caught the attention of the National Hurricane Center as Beth Allen, 51, did her weekly cleaning in her already spotless home in Winter Haven, Florida. Moving slowly due to an illness that affected her joints and a car accident that crushed her ankle and put her on disability, Beth picked up a dust cloth and hovered over a small draped table with crystal vases and framed family pictures in the living room. Deciding the vases were perfect for now, she turned to the kitchen

counters for one last swipe as she hummed a song praising the Lord. Moving back to the living room, she lowered herself gingerly onto her velvety brown sofa, and pushed the remote control for the television to check on the weather.

The young man on the weather channel mentioned the tropical wave, but Beth didn't think too much about it. A tropical wave was nothing. Certainly not a hurricane and Africa was so far away from Polk County, Florida. Besides Beth had her prayer group on her mind and the need to pray for her grandson. The weather man intoned on about the tropical wave saying the satellite images were "not particularly impressive just after passing the coast, since it had only a small area of associated deep convection" (Pasch et al., 2005, p. 1), "whatever that meant," Beth thought as she clicked off the television and then picked up her Bible from the immaculate side table and opened to her favorite verse.

Hurricanes always seemed to miss Polk County so it was hard for Beth to take them seriously. It was even harder to prepare for them, as her only income was her Social Security disability payment. She had a couple of gallons of water and some canned food. Her adult children tried to help her but they had their own problems. Beth did not intend to be a burden to them. If they only knew, she thought, that her homeowner's insurance on the house was canceled because she couldn't make the payments due to the car accident bills. The Lord would protect her, she prayed fervently.

Eight days later on August 12th, Beth came home from a church supper that broke up early because that tropical wave—now a hurricane named Charley—had reached category 2 on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale (Pasch

et al., 2005). It was strengthening and appeared to be moving towards Cuba and Florida. When she walked into her home, Beth immediately turned on the television and watched the predicted paths.

The telephone rang, and she went to the kitchen to pick it up. It was her daughter. "Momma," she said. "Charley's supposed to come to our area. Won't you come and stay with us?" Beth watched the silky drapes behind her television set as she told her daughter, "No, I don't want to leave my home." Beth's daughter was furious with her, "Momma you're stubborn," she said. Beth told her, "I may be stubborn, but I don't want to abandon my home. The Lord will protect me."

The telephone would ring many times through that night and the next day with Beth's three adult children beseeching her to come to them. Each time, she told them, "This is my home. I don't want to leave my home." She tried to reassure them, "If I go, it's just my time. It's just my time to go. And, if it's not my time to go, God is gonna take care of me" (T4, p. 15). Finally in exasperation Beth told her children, "I'm grown and that's my decision" (T4, p. 9, 15).

Beth's children knew it was useless to try to convince their mother to leave her home, so they began to pray with her on the telephone as Charley increased to a Category 4 storm with winds of 125 mph. They prayed with her as Charley made landfall the next day on August 13th, sweeping near Cayo Costa, an island north of Captiva, snapping trees in half and destroying everything in its path (Pasch et al., 2005). They prayed with her as Charley, with winds near 130 mph, devastated Port Charlotte, and began to advance rapidly toward Beth's home. As

day turned into night, Beth spoke with her next door neighbor, Judy, who was also staying in her home. They prayed together until the winds were fierce, the sky black, and the telephone lines went dead. Electricity cut, Beth was in total darkness in her beloved home as Charley swirled into her neighborhood with wind speeds of 41-54 mph (Pasch et al., 2005).

Alone in her home and afraid, Beth tried to rest as the night grew late but could not. She heard the rain and debris pounding her windows. Worst of all was that Beth could not see what was happening outside in the dark. So, to calm herself, Beth limped from the bedroom to the living room and then the kitchen and then started back again. Over and over, feeling her way in the dark, Beth wore a path across her house as she prayed to God to protect her. Sometime in the early morning, when Beth was in the kitchen trying to see something, anything from her back kitchen window, a fiery explosion lit up the sky, like the "fourth of July" (T4, p. 2). A transformer in the church parking lot backing up to her property had exploded. A big fire started with sparks flying everywhere. Beth got to her knees and started to pray, "Please God, don't let the fire spread to my house."

Within 30 minutes, Beth's prayer was answered, as a heavy rain drowned the fire. Thanking the Lord, she took inventory of her house at sunrise. Three windows had blown out and the roof was leaking water through the ceiling and onto the floor in her hallway. Hurrying as much as she could, her joints and ankle hurting her terribly, she tried to cover the windows with garbage bags and blankets. The wind and rain subsided briefly. Beth looked out of a cracked

window and saw to her horror a huge tree in her front yard beginning to fall toward her house. The tree was so big; it had shaded her entire house. Surely, it was going to destroy her home. Frozen with only her faith to calm her, Beth watched as somehow “God blessed, shifted the wind so the tree fell in the road” (T4, p. 3). Relieved, Beth thanked God and prayed to be kept safe and her house from further damage. Still, the relief was short lived, as without insurance on her house and no money, Beth “didn’t know what she was going to do” to repair the damage from Charley but knew with certainty that God had a plan for her (T4, p. 4).

After Charley passed completely by midmorning, the first thing Beth did was pray. Then, she went outside to survey the damage and find her neighbor, Judy. When she saw Judy, they hugged and continued hugging as they walked around the neighborhood and said, “Thank God no one was hurt,” and marveled that they had survived the hurricane (T4, p. 13). Looking around, they were shocked by the damage. Some of her neighbors had trees in the middle of their houses and carports. Looking back at her house, thinking about the tree that almost fell on her house, Beth felt lucky and said a silent prayer of thanks to the Lord.

Later that day, reality set in: She had no electricity or water, a situation that would continue for almost 2 weeks in the hot August sun. Without power to keep it cool, all the food in Beth’s refrigerator rotted within days. Food was a big issue as she couldn’t cook a hot meal. It was awful for Beth, who had always insisted on a proper dinner and prided herself on setting a nice table. She stayed

in the house for a few days until the Red Cross offered some help, then she moved to a hotel with Judy. The hotel room was hard to get to and not up to Beth's standards, but there at least she had lights and water. Beth's children were also without power and had experienced damage in their homes, so she wasn't able to go to them. So Beth and Judy became one another's families, trying to help one another cope in the hotel. After a few days in the hotel, they both returned to their homes to deal with the cleanup.

Clean up was difficult without electricity, and the heat and humidity were brutal. Beth tried to sop up the water in her house, kneeling painfully with a bucket and sponge. Using bleach to try to contain the mold, she recited Bible verses to comfort herself. She knew that surviving Charley was all part of a divine plan for her life, but it was hard because she had never gone through a disaster. She was frustrated because she could hear on the radio that help was on its way but no one arrived. Her neighbors were crying because they had lost all of their food. A week later, FEMA showed up and assessed the damage to her home and gave her \$1400.00 for repairs. FEMA also provided a place in Lake Wales to get food stamps on a card that worked like a Visa card. Beth and Judy sang hymns as Judy drove them to Lake Wales to get food stamps.

Three weeks, later, with the money from FEMA and with the help of her daughter, Beth found someone to remove her carpet to keep the mold from causing further damage and begin to repair some of the damage to her home. Beth felt blessed because people came and fixed things for a good price and did a good job. The FEMA money wasn't enough to repair all of the damage, so Beth

called different organizations and went to support groups to find out what agency could help her. Having gone through support groups due to her disability, Beth knew it was just a matter of time before the Lord led her to an organization that would help her. As Beth tackled her kitchen window with a vinegar solution, she thought, "I will not be a burden on my family with the Lord's help."

Beth's home was in disarray, which was hard, but more important to her was the emotional state of her children and grandchildren. Her telephone rang daily with calls from them. Even though her family had survived Charley, they had not been mentally prepared for it. Beth told her children, "Material stuff can always be replaced, but it is the emotional part that is devastating" so let's pray together and support each other (T4, p. 20). Beth's grandchildren asked their parents, "Why us, momma? Why us, daddy?" Beth told her children to answer, "We don't know why but we have one another and we will get through this together."

Communicating daily with her children and grandchildren and supporting them emotionally became the primary item on Beth's to-do list. She didn't worry about dust on her picture frames or even calling groups to find help with her roof. Being there for her family was her top priority because Charley had taken a toll on all of them. As she looked out her kitchen window at the old transformer on her back lot line, Beth offered her family support and hope as they talked through their emotions. Beth's family grew closer and stronger through their daily supportive contact with her.

Even Beth's neighbors began to bond with one another through supportive conversations. Beth and Judy embraced their neighbors and were always available to lend a supportive ear or to share information. Judy and Beth constantly went back and forth between one another's houses, so much so that Beth's children bonded with Judy's adult children. Together, Beth and Judy's families and their neighbors slowly recovered emotionally from Charley. Beth praised the Lord for extending her family and providing emotional support when they all needed it.

Four years later, Beth found RPAD, which was willing to complete the repairs to her home. RPAD engaged a contractor to replace her roof in April 2008 and scheduled a volunteer to repair the damaged ceiling in her kitchen. Beth gave witness and praise to the Lord at a church supper that night after receiving confirmation from RPAD. After arriving home from church, Beth settled on her couch and clicked the remote control on the weather channel on the television. A tropical wave was noted off the coast of Africa. Beth glanced back at the gallons of water that had been stacked in her kitchen by her children. Then she looked back at her new carpeting and thought, "The police will have to come and arrest me but I'm not leaving my home" (T4, p. 17).

The White Family

Feeling edgy, Carol White, age 58, sturdy and fit, smoothed her nonsense short brown hair, as she quickened her pace around the perimeter of the hospital construction zone checking for intruders in the hot September sun. As a security guard, she was used to noticing details, things out of place, but she

felt distracted because she had just received a call from her supervisor that Hurricane Jeanne was blowing into town.

Her supervisor, Tom, said “Take one last visual of the fence then head out so you can evacuate from your own home.”

It wasn't like Jeanne was unexpected, she mused, as she examined the temporary chain link. After all, in the last 12 days, Jeanne had slowly churned through Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and had caused “3000 or more deaths in Haiti from torrential flooding, then hit the Northern Bahamas,” and the latest information predicted landfall on the “central Florida east coast as a category 3 hurricane” (Lawrence & Cobb, 2005, p. 1). But evacuating from Polk County, Florida seems extreme, she thought, since it is in central Florida not near the coast. Wouldn't Jeanne be down to just a little wind and rain when it got to her?

Carol, single with a beloved cat, Rose, kept up on the weather, and spurred by a younger friend, Jill, who attended the same church as she did and tended to watch over her, she had evacuated to Jill's parents' house when Hurricane Charley came through. But Charley didn't damage Carol's cement block two-bedroom home. It was built in 1947 by her father, a year before she was born. They just don't build homes like they use to, she thought, as she tried to think how to tell Jill that she was not going to evacuate this time.

Leaving work, Carol thought she had better pick up some cat food for Rose, another gallon of water, and maybe some batteries. In the grocery store, Carol looked at the batteries, canned goods, cases of water, and the prices. She

complained to her favorite cashier, Sam, "Why, it would take \$40 to get all the stuff to prepare for the hurricane!"

"Yeah, it's crazy," said Sam.

"That's for sure," she said, as she thought about how tight her money was on her low salary. She barely had an extra \$5 let alone \$40, and Rose was her only indulgence. As Sam rang up her water, cat food, and batteries, Carol watched the prices appear on the screen and then the total.

Looking through her wallet for some more money and finding none, she told Sam, "I guess, I won't get the batteries. Probably won't need them for Jeanne anyway."

"Yeah," said Sam, as he removed the batteries from the conveyer belt. "Jeanne is going to blow over tonight."

Arriving home from work and walking into her living room where a large portrait of Jesus hung, Carol stopped, bowed her head, and said a silent prayer asking for help with Hurricane Jeanne but most importantly she asked for the right words to tell Jill that she wasn't evacuating. Carol wasn't worried about Jeanne. Just some rain and wind like Charley. Rose and I will be fine, she thought, as she dialed Jill's number, and surveyed her small comfortably cluttered home. Carol took a deep breath as Jill answered the phone.

After exchanging hellos with Jill, Carol said, "Jill, I know you want me to evacuate but I have decided to stay here because Jeanne will probably be nothing."

Jill took the news with surprising grace, and said before they hung up, “Carol, I’ll include you in my prayers tonight. Call me if you need any help.” After hanging up the phone in her kitchen, Carol fed Rose, filled every pot and the bathtub with water, and settled in for the night to wait for Jeanne.

Jeanne came roaring in with rain and winds still at 53 to 67 mph when it reached Carol’s home (Lawrence & Cobb, 2005). The power soon went out, and Carol was alone with Rose in the dark. Unable to see outside, the sounds got to her. Scraping, clawing things whipping around in the dark scared her badly. Shaking, she held onto Rose. She heard the 59-year-old timbers in her house creaking as the wind, and rain tore at her house. Drops of water started to come from the ceiling into her bedroom so she moved to the bathroom and huddled there with Rose. She prayed out loud, “Lord, protect me and Rose,” to drown out the noise.

Finally, the winds died down and the sounds stopped but the power was out, and it was pitch black. Carol left the bathroom, and gingerly inched her way in the dark to her dining room to look outside. She couldn’t see anything. She wanted to walk to the end of her driveway to look around, but it was so dark she was afraid to go out, and so she waited, with Rose in her arms, on the couch in her living room, a few feet from her dining room window.

In the morning, walking around her house, inside and outside, Carol saw the damage. It was bad. Shocked, Carol could hardly take in the destruction. Jeanne had ripped off her carport and porch, the ceilings in her home had dropped, and the roof was severely damaged. Carol now understood why she felt

like she was “living in a rainforest” last night (T6, p. 21). Tears dripped down Carol’s face as she realized how close she had come to having her house demolished and being killed. As she wiped her tears away, she marveled that the house was still standing and she was alive. Bowing her head, she said a silent prayer of thanks to God.

After assessing her situation, Carol checked on her neighbors who she hadn’t seen much of previously because everyone, herself included, was preoccupied with their own lives. Everyone was okay, but water was leaking into their homes, too. They were concerned about losing their food as they were also without electricity.

Her neighbor, Linda held back tears as she told Carol, “I heard on my radio that it may take a week or more to get power. I am going to lose all the vegetables I put up in my freezer if they don’t get the power on in the next few days.”

Within just a few days without power, with the neighbors pooling their food to eat before it was spoiled, the food was either eaten or discarded. As Carol carried her last garbage bag of spoiled food to the curb to join the mounting debris she had collected from her yard, she saw Linda, and they started to chat.

Pointing to the garbage, she told Linda, “That’s the last of my food. What am I going to do?”

Linda said, “Call the Red Cross. That’s what I’m going to do.”

Carol called the Red Cross and said, "I'm alone in my damaged house without food. Can you help me?" The Red Cross was sympathetic and directed her to call another organization.

Carol called the other group and a sincere sounding woman told her, "We'll send someone out to you. Where do you live?" After giving her address, Carol hung up, and felt relieved as she moved to the yard to wait for the person coming to help her. Everything will be fine, she thought, as she settled into her lawn chair to wait for help. Except, as the afternoon wore on and the night fell, no one came. Carol ate the last of her peanut butter and crackers for dinner that night.

Luckily for Carol, her friend Jill stopped by the next morning to check on her. When Jill found out that all of Carol's food was now gone, she said, "Carol, why didn't you call me? I told you to call me for help with anything."

Carol told her, "I didn't want to bother you."

As Jill took her car keys out of her purse and gestured to Carol's front door, she said, "Friends are supposed to help friends. Let's get in my car and get some food for you." Jill drove Carol half an hour to the only store open. She bought Carol a cooler, some food, and some ice for an exorbitant price.

A McDonald's was open, and Jill told Carol, "I'm treating you to lunch."

As Carol gratefully bit into a cheeseburger, she told Jill, "This tastes so good. You're the best friend I ever had. Thank you."

Jill smiled at Carol and said, "I'm here for you, Carol."

Looking into Jill's eyes, Carol said, "I feel so much stronger because of you. Just doing things together instead of being by myself makes me feel better. I feel like I can handle things now."

The ice, Jill bought, did keep the food cold for a day but soon melted in the heat and humidity from the September sun. Carol went with her neighbor, Linda, to find ice, but the price was ridiculous. Carol couldn't afford to replace all the food that had spoiled, let alone pay high prices for ice to keep the food cold. Linda was in the same situation. So Carol and Linda joined forces to find sources for meals and water that were free to hurricane survivors. They found churches and charitable organizations where they could be fed. But life was rough because, without air conditioning, sleep was impossible in the heat.

As the week wore on, Carol grew restless as she waited for FEMA to come and assess the damage to her home, particularly the roof. She piled debris on the curb. She tried to sop up the water in the house. She helped her neighbors. There wasn't much Carol could do to repair her home until FEMA came to look at it. She also managed with Linda to find a church about 20 minutes away by car that was giving out water, ice, and tarps.

Jill was in daily contact with Carol. She knew from working with Carol at their church that Carol always felt better when she helped people. So, Jill called Carol when she heard about a church in need, and asked her to help Jill bring supplies for the church members to use as they fixed their roof.

As Carol hefted food out of Jill's car, she told Jill, "I feel better helping people instead of being so self-oriented. Being self-oriented is what is wrong with people today."

Pleased that Carol was feeling better, Jill nodded her head and said, "I'm glad you're feeling better but I don't think of you as self-oriented. You're always helping people."

Later that day, Carol felt especially good when her neighbors invited her to go to the Salvation Army and sit at a table together to eat dinner. Carol was starting to feel better with the daily connection with Jill and interaction with her neighbors. She found that helping other people helped her feel stronger.

Finally, after a week had passed, FEMA came, but the amount of money they gave her to fix her roof wasn't nearly enough. Roof contractors were in high demand. Carol couldn't find a contractor that would fix her roof properly for the money FEMA gave her. In the mean time, she needed food and gas, so FEMA granted her permission to use the money for those necessities.

Without money to fix her home, Carol called another charitable organization for help. An anonymous voice told her they couldn't help her. She called another group. A nice man answered and told her, "I'll try to find someone to help you. I don't know how long it will take. I'll get back to you when I know something."

Carol hung up the phone and wondered what to do. With her house damaged, and no concrete plan, money, or people to fix it, she felt torn. Should she return to work so she could make some money or quit work to spend all of

her energies finding someone to fix her house? Doing something physical always cleared her mind so she decided to go outside to her front yard.

Carol was physically fit, she knew, but mentally she felt broken and fragile, as if she was tenuously holding on to life. Musing over what would happen without a job as she picked up debris and put it at the end of the driveway, she thought about what was real and important to her, her home. How would she feel going to work and coming home to her damaged house? Her house would not be fixed without her time and energy to find the necessary resources to repair her house.

Walking to the broom leaning near her front door, she thought how upset she was and decided to ask herself the toughest question. Can I work? She realized the answer with startling clarity. The answer was no. She couldn't. She was too upset to work. Her home was more important to her than a job. Carol decided her home needed her attention. She had to take care of it before anything else. But how would she fix her house without money, she wondered, but then immediately knew the answer. She would have to rely on the strength of the Lord because everything came from him. Carol headed inside to call her supervisor, Tom, and tell him her decision.

Tom had news of his own for Carol. Before Carol could tell him her decision, he said, "Security for the job you were on has been halted, but I found something for you about 20 minutes farther from your house." Carol told Tom she had to fix her house. Tom took the news okay, although he didn't understand how Carol could let a job go even if it was farther from her house.

The power finally came on after more than a week, but life resorted to day-to-day living for Carol, centering on finding resources to help her with her house and basic needs. Being single, Carol's friend, Jill, was her family. Jill called her daily to listen to her and offer moral support. Carol thought about how Jill's encouragement kept her going as she dialed number after number to find help for her house. Carol appreciated the willingness of Jill to concentrate on keeping her optimistic and not letting her focus too much on discussing tasks. Sometimes, Carol and Jill talked about Bible verses. Carol began to feel stronger knowing she was handling staying in her damaged house by herself.

Carol and Linda grew closer, as they sought support from local churches, and the Salvation Army for their needs. They began, as Carol called it, to "play" the "game" (T6, p. 17) of the organizations they went to for help. The game consisted of the organization requiring difficult time-consuming paperwork filled out with obscure details in order to receive resources from them. Most people didn't have the time, energy, or patience to fill out the paperwork and lost the game. Without completed paperwork, no resources were given out to anyone. But Carol and Linda mustered their patience and spent hours helping one another complete the necessary documents. They turned in their completed paperwork, won the game, and received the resources they needed to help them.

Reflecting on the latest game she had played with Linda, as they sat in lawn chairs in her front yard, Carol grimaced. They drove to the Lakeland Civic Center to receive food stamps from Florida's Disaster Food Stamp program approved for Hurricane Jeanne. Expecting the center to be mobbed with people,

they arrived at 3:00 a.m. to be the first ones in line when the doors opened at 7:00 a.m. They turned in their applications to the processor and were qualified for food stamps. Then, they were directed back to the line to wait for their food stamps. At 8:00 a.m., Carol and Linda were told to come back on Saturday. They went back on Saturday, and stood in line for three more hours, until a processor told them that the food stamps would be mailed to them. Carol leaned back in her chair as she thought about how she and Linda had persevered, and finally got what they needed. If they had given up, she wouldn't be able to have food.

She told Linda, "I don't care how long it takes or the ridiculous hoops they put us through; I am going to win this game." Linda nodded her head in agreement.

Two years later in 2006, Carol found RPAD, which was willing to help her. RPAD replaced her roof, repaired the structure, restored the ceiling, and installed insulation throughout the house. In 2008, she applied for RPAD's mitigation program and was approved for free hurricane shutters.

Carol never did go back to work. She spent her time and energy to find groups to repair her home. In 2008, she was hit by a car and was disabled from the accident. She receives disability payments from Social Security. Carol walks slowly now with a brace on her leg and a walker as Rose runs back and forth in her home. She thanks the Lord that she is alive.

The Dean Family

Dripping Spanish moss, the branches of the 40-foot Oak trees swung back and forth in the Lake Wales, Florida, yard of Clay Dean, age 42, as he wrestled

rope around a patio table, trying to tie it to the railing of the back porch of his 20-year-old mobile home. Looking up, he saw his sons coming toward him, and yelled above the wind to Scott, age 15, and Tim, age 12, "Go get Mom and take her to the truck. She's nervous about making it out of here. I should be ready in about 15 minutes."

The afternoon sun had disappeared completely as Scott and Tim entered their home to find their mother peering out the back window and listening to the radio. Scott immediately told her, "Dad said it's time to go."

Lara Dean, age 42, disabled from multiple strokes and in a wheelchair, painfully stretched her fingers to grasp the radio dial to turn it off as she said, "Okay, but go slow. The wind looks wild."

Scott and Tim each took a side of their mother's wheelchair, and, bit by bit, rolled her out the front door, down the ramp, and onto the dirt path to the red truck. Pulling the truck door open against the wind, Tim anchored his body on the door to keep the wind from slamming it shut. Shielding their mother from the brunt of the wind, Scott and Tim carefully lifted her into the truck.

Lara leaned back in the seat and said, "Thanks, boys. Tell Dad to hurry. Hurricane Charley is heading our way faster than they expected, so all mobile homes have to evacuate now. They're saying on the radio that before the wind sensors at Punta Gorda went out the winds were up to 97 miles an hour (Pasch et al., 2005). Charley is supposed to bring tornados when it comes through central Florida tonight. I called Grandma and Grandpa and told them to expect us soon."

As Scott and Tim hurried to give their dad the weather update, Lara, pale, and trembling, sought to calm herself. She closed her eyes and thought: You can always talk to God. God had been her source of comfort and strength during her many strokes. God helped her make sense out of life. God gave her a great family and a wonderful husband in Clay, who had stood by her side during her rehabilitation and quit his good paying job to become her caregiver. She started to pray, "God, please protect my family and my home." Just as Lara finished her lengthy prayer, Clay and her sons joined her in the truck.

Clay patted Lara's hand as he told her, "Don't worry, honey. Everything will be okay." Ever positive, Clay thought about how their mobile home was paid off, and they had no debt, because he and Lara didn't believe in it.

Pulling out of their driveway, taking one last look, he thought, yeah, everything will work out no matter what happens. As he turned on the highway and adjusted the radio, he said, "No sense worrying. We'll take it day by day, and thank the good Lord for what we got."

Lara said, "Amen." The boys nodded their heads in agreement.

Scott looked out of the window as his dad drove and thought about his friends and his new job making sub sandwiches. Scott is expecting to get his driver's license in a few months and needs to make some money for gas. He wasn't worried about their house; he knew his dad was a hard worker making money in landscaping, and he could fix anything.

"Man," Scott said, "Just when I was making some money."

"Don't you worry none." said Clay. "There's always a way to make money."

Tim looking out the opposite window from Scott said, “This storm is a wimp.” As he relaxed into the back cushion, Tim wondered how soon he would be back and when he could go over to his friend’s house to try out his new video game.

After arriving at Lara’s parents’ home in Winter Haven, Florida, Clay, Scott, and Tim immediately jumped into the warm pool. They played until the winds became so strong—and with the sky darkened to almost black—that Lara, afraid for their safety, called to them, “Get out now.”

Soon after, they all settled down to eat sandwiches, drink soda, and munch chips with Lara’s parents. Branches cracked outside and trees fell, taking out their power. Everyone was nervous about the trees except Scott. He was far more worried about what was happening to his home.

The news on their battery-powered radio was ominous. Two tornadoes had passed through Polk County near Lake Worth close to where the Deans lived. Polk County wasn’t the only county hit in Florida that day. The National Hurricane Center reported on the radio that “nine tornados across the Florida peninsula in association with Charley” caused injuries and deaths (Pasch et al., 2005, p. 2).

By midnight, Charley had passed through their area. The Deans wanted to see their home, so they left Lara’s parents’ home in the dark of night. Everyone was on edge, as Clay drove the truck slowly around chairs, and stuff in the road. They saw “trees, 40-years-old snapped at the roots,” and a whole house crushed by a tree (T5, p. 26). The winds were still high, and so many structures were

damaged by tornadoes that Clay began to prepare his family for seeing their home. He told his family, "So if it's there, it's there. If it's not, well, we'll just start over" (T5, p. 39).

When the Deans arrived at their home, it was a shock. People were going through their things looking for stuff to steal. Several people had the Deans' possessions in their hands. The would-be criminals dropped the items and ran off quickly as the Deans' truck's headlights illuminated them and Clay opened his truck door, yelling, "Hey!" at the top of his lungs.

The thieves gone, Clay and his sons, using high powered flashlights, took stock of their home. The front and back porches were gone, along with the ramp for Lara's wheelchair. There was structural damage to their home and obvious leaks inside. There was no electricity or water. One tree was down in the front of their property, and debris was everywhere.

After reporting the damage to Lara waiting in the truck, Clay told her, "It isn't anything we can't handle with the Lord's help." Reaching out for Clay's hand, Lara nodded her head and said, "We'll get through this."

As Clay directed Scott and Tim to clear a path for Lara's wheelchair, he unearthed his generator, giving thanks to the Lord that the thieves didn't get it. In the house, he set up a little camp in one room, using his generator to power a fan and a television, and all sleep there for the night.

Clay told Lara, "We'll be like peas in a pod," as he rolled her wheelchair along the cleared path.

Lara couldn't believe her first close up view of her home. She told Clay, "It looks like there is nothing left" (T5, p. 26).

Clay said, "I know, but with some work, we'll be okay." Scott and Tim joined them to look at the house. No one said anything as they lifted Lara in her wheelchair into the house.

Once inside, Lara drew comfort from the Bible verse that entered her mind, "And this too shall pass" (T5, p. 32). She managed a shaky smile when she saw Clay's little camp. "You've thought of everything," she said.

Later, just before they slept, Lara told Clay quietly, "It just proves to me that we have to trust God because as far as I'm concerned there is nothing too difficult for God to handle" (T5, p. 29).

Scott opted out of sleeping in the small room with his parents and brother. He told them, "This room is too small for me," and took a pillow to the truck. As Scott settled uncomfortably in the truck, he thought about the damage to their home, and how much effort it would take to restore it to a livable place. He told himself, I better step up and help out. I'm not a kid anymore (T5, p. 10). Scott knew the hurricane was a setback for his family but he tried to focus on what his dad had always told him, "It'll take just a few more steps. Don't focus on the negatives, and always focus on the positives, and things will look better that way" (T5, p. 13). Well, at least the house is still here, he thought, as he tried to stretch out on the backseat.

The next day, Clay, Scott, and Tim worked like a team to clear the debris from the yard, and set up a makeshift ramp, so they could get Lara in and out of

the house more easily. Then, Clay and his sons checked on their neighbors to see if they could help them. Clay also called the police to report what had happened the previous night and to ask them to place a squad car in his neighborhood to make sure nothing was stolen. The police arranged for an ambulance to stay at the entrance to the neighborhood to help people who might need oxygen. Clay was able to get water and had enough gas for the generator to keep the fan going, which Lara needed for her health. Later in the day, as the fan circulated, Lara listened to Clay's stories about the damage their neighbors had experienced from Charley.

After several days of hot, back-breaking work in the August sun trying to stabilize and repair their home, and eating mostly canned food, the Deans needed supplies. So they all piled into the truck, and went to Piccadilly to eat. After they were seated, Lara said a prayer of thanks for their blessings, as they held hands and bowed their heads before they ate.

Later, between mouthfuls, Clay smiled as he said to his family, "Oh man, we're in hog Heaven" (T5, p. 19). Clay thought about how thankful he was that he could rely on his family for support. Yeah, mused Clay, I found out when I became Lara's caregiver there's not a whole lot of help coming from Uncle Sam.

Scott loved eating out, too, but he was worried about what his friends would think when they saw his home. Plus, his job was gone, as the store had little business now due to Charley. But, he thought, as he reached for the catsup, I'm "smarter and more responsible" because of Charley (T5, p. 10). I know what

to do now, how to prepare mentally for a hurricane, and how to protect our home and property.

Tim ate potato salad as he thought about money. I wonder how we're going to find money to repair our home. Man, he told himself, life ain't no joke, and you better have money when something bad happens.

Lara appreciated the restaurant's air conditioning and working bathroom with running water. She missed the comforts of her home. Our living standards have dropped dramatically with Charley, she mused, as she tried to straighten her fingers on the cool smoothness of the napkin. How will I ever do my exercises and heal without air conditioning, she wondered.

Lara had been focused on healing from her strokes before Charley. She knew she would continue to heal but it would just take a little longer. She trusted God because she knew there was "nothing too difficult for God" to handle (T5, p. 29). She felt blessed her faith was growing stronger, and she thanked God daily. But Lara knew everyone didn't feel that way, especially some of her neighbors. She thought about her neighbors, all working class, who had difficulties before the hurricane, and now had been stolen from or ripped off.

Clay had told her, "That's the lowest of the low. To steal from people who don't have anything to begin with." Lara agreed.

Back at their home, the Dean family continued to work for the next two weeks to make their house more livable, and to help their neighbors. After Scott and Tim got back from helping to clear their elderly widowed neighbor's driveway, Clay told Lara, "I'm proud of the way Scott and Tim are working as a

team with me for ourselves and the neighbors, because it seems like everyone else is doing their own thing and not helping one another.”

Lara replied, “That makes me happy. Our sons are doing the Lord’s work.” Still, the Deans’ friendships changed. Some friends helped them, and some friends faded away because they were jealous that the Deans didn’t lose all of their stuff like they did.

Scott complained to his mom, “Boy, you sure find out who your true friends are, who’d break their back for you” (T5, p. 2). Scott and Tim learned from their parents that regardless of whether people helped them it is important to be nice to people and help them anyway.

Helping people was fine with Scott and Tim. That made them feel good, but appearances were another matter. They were worried about appearances. What would their friends think about them now that their home was a wreck? Lara just listened to them because she remembered what it was like to be a teenager when stuff and appearances counted.

Clay told the boys, “Don’t pay any attention to your situation, just move on. As long, as you got your health, you’ve got everything” (T5, p. 50).

Finally, after two weeks, the electricity was restored, and Clay was able to get Lara into air conditioning again, but a decision had to be made about the mobile home because it suffered so much structural damage.

Clay discussed the situation with Lara, “Lara, it doesn’t make any sense to repair our house because it’s a mobile home, and they don’t hold their re-sale value.”

Lara said, "You're right, but what are we going to do?"

After much discussion and prayers, Clay and Lara decided to build a storm shelter, a huge concrete room, on the back of their mobile home. They reasoned that a concrete room would provide a secure place not only for their family but for extended family and neighbors during a storm and provide a place for them to live until they could scrap their mobile home completely. Only one room of their mobile home was fit to live in.

Then, the Deans determined to think big. They wanted a home that would accommodate everyone, so they decided a 3,500 square home would be perfect. They reasoned that Lara's parents were getting older, and would eventually need a place to come to in a storm. Besides, Lara was nervous about being in a wheel chair, and not being able to run if a storm developed suddenly. The Deans envisioned a home that everyone could come to because "you don't want to be by yourself" in a storm and you do want to be where you can "help people" (T5, p. 22). But no organization would help them, even with their good credit rating because they thought the house was "too luxury of a home" (T5, p. 37).

The Deans began building anyway with what they had. But their good intentions fell under suspicion. Everyone started to question them on how they could afford it. Clay got tired of people asking, "Where do you get all your money from? You don't have a regular job. You don't have a big income coming in. What's going on here?" (T5, p. 23)

Clay told them, "I just took what resources I had and just went with it" (T5, p. 24). Clay had learned to do that early in life. His real dad was an alcoholic and

his stepdad was a bank robber. His brother is an addict who used to steal the family money for food. His grandparents raised him. He grew up on a dead end road and was poor.

So, he set goals for himself because he could see that robbing and stealing didn't pay. He told himself, I'm going to graduate from high school with my class, and he did. He knew without a doubt that if he set a goal, he would make it, especially with the love and support of Lara and their sons.

The hurricane just added to Clay's confidence. He told Lara, "I feel like Charley made me smarter. I never doubt what to do. I won't be standing, waiting on the tree to fall on me" (T5, p. 41). He felt stronger emotionally and mentally because he now knew what happened in a hurricane and what to be prepared for.

Lara understood how Clay felt about taking hold of life. She knew he was a self-made man. He had chosen early in life not to follow in the footsteps of his family. He told her frequently how happy he was that she had introduced him to the Lord. Together, they felt blessed to raise their sons in a Christian home.

Using their faith to bolster them, the Deans began constructing their home, paying as they built. Clay gathered resources and began his 18 by 52 feet concrete room in the back of their original home. They laid a foundation, framed the walls, put on a roof, and air conditioned the space. They installed electricity and water. The Deans moved into the concrete room.

The concrete room was livable, but their plan to build a 3,500 square feet home was stalled by their dwindling resources. Clay was considering

panhandling because he couldn't get support from any organization to build a safe house for Lara. Finally, he found RPAD. RPAD provided materials and volunteers to help build the house. With that help, the Deans' home started to take shape.

The house remains a work in progress, but the Deans plan to finish it within the year with 2,500 square feet of living space and 3,500 in total. The house is finished on the outside but the inside remains one huge unfinished room. They still live in the concrete room, and talk about the day Lara will have a wheelchair accessible shower, and plenty of space to focus on healing.

The Thomas Family

Kate, age 46, single, divorced, and disabled from a medical condition that induces terrible migraines, kept an eye on the weather channel as she held the telephone to her ear and listened to Joe, age 16, the youngest of her three children, on the telephone. Fluffing her medium length brown hair from her face, she leaned back in her well-used recliner in her spacious family room in Lakeland, Florida, and took in the cluttered comfort of her room when the dramatic music from the weather channel caught her attention.

Caught between listening to Joe and hearing the update, she interrupted Joe and parroted the weather information to him: "Joe, the latest update on Hurricane Charley just came in. Charley is strengthening to a Category 4 and has changed paths. It's not heading to Tampa Bay but making landfall near Port Charlotte and heading straight toward Lakeland. Winds might be as high as 90 miles per hour when it gets to us" (Pasch et al., 2005). Kate raised her voice to a

light hearted pitch, as she told Joe, "It's time for a hurricane party. Better call your sisters; tell them to come home now."

Kate paused as she listened to Joe and then said, "Of course, Joe. You can all bring your friends. You know everyone is welcome at your momma's house. We'll have fun."

Kate hung up the phone and then grabbed a pen and pad of paper and began to write a menu that would feed a crowd. Worried about Charley, but happy that her children and their friends would be coming, Kate thought about how everyone would feel safer at her house. It made her feel good to know that when something scary was happening, her children came to her. Really, though, Kate reflected, Charley will be nothing compared to what I experienced as a child. Funny, she thought, how the past comes back during stressful times.

Kate closed her eyes as she remembered being 8 years old and her daddy running hell bent for leather up the road to their wood frame house in Auburndale, Florida, where she and her four siblings were standing watching a dark funnel cloud whirl around and around.

Almost to the house, Daddy screamed, "Get in the house." They had never seen their daddy run and scream like that so they all ran into the house, except for her little brother who was so scared he crawled under the car. When daddy found that her brother wasn't with them, he ran back outside, pulled him from under the car, and carried him into the house. The whole house was shaking and everyone was screaming and hollering under the dining room table

until Daddy yelled, "Get into the bathroom." Moments later, after everyone was in the bathroom, half of the house was ripped off.

Kate shuddered as she thought what would have happened if they hadn't moved to the bathroom. "Oh well," she said aloud, "that was in the past and I survived."

Shaking off thoughts of the tornado that almost killed her and her family when she was a child, Kate moved to the game cupboard to check for the Monopoly game. Talking to herself, she vowed, "I'll keep my kids and their friends busy with games, food, and music so everyone stays positive." Staying positive was the only way to beat Charley, she thought, as she heard Joe, her daughters, and their friends enter through the front door. She hurried to welcome them to the hurricane party, as the afternoon light became gray.

Soon the party was in full swing with 20 young adults and teenagers. Kate was pleased that even her niece and her boyfriend came to stay at the house. Everyone was laughing, and having a grand time with loud music, board games, and Kate's special taco dinner. The noise increased because hail balls started to come down outside. Some of the teenagers got a little wild and went outside "like idiots trying to catch hail balls until they started getting really hit by them" (T3, p. 21).

Kate opened the front door slightly and yelled, "Get in the house." She got them interested in the board games again. But hours later, after dinner, the board games were abandoned, and everyone was drawn to the windows as the winds kicked up and water flooded the street and into their yard. When bricks started

flying through not one but three windows and the power went out, everyone started to scream and then laugh. Laughing is good, thought Kate, as she supervised taping up the other windows with plastic bags to make sure no one got hurt and switched on the battery powered lanterns. Thankful no one was injured, Kate tried to stay upbeat and positive for her children's sake.

Still, this is scary, she thought. What am I going to do without money to pay the deductible on my homeowner's insurance? How can I afford it on my disability income? Kate's divorce had just been finalized, and the house had been signed over to her. Her house was all she owned. Trying to keep calm because the alternative was panic and not wanting her children to see her upset, she decided to get busy.

Handing out food and blankets helped, but when she had a moment to herself, she slipped away to the bathroom to cry at the thought of losing her house and what the future might bring. After crying, she said a prayer, and returned, acting as if everything was fine. I have to be strong for my children, she thought.

Kate concentrated on having a positive attitude as she smiled her way through the early morning hours before Charley stopped. She silently told herself, "Life is too short. Laugh about everything, no matter what damage you find. Life will go on." She gained courage by watching her children fearlessly play games and laugh while Charley swirled around the house. Even though Kate offered beds and couches, no one wanted to sleep. So, she continued trying to maintain a positive atmosphere.

She hummed the song her Christian grandmother taught her as a child, *Why Worry When You Can Sing*. In her mind, she heard her dad's words after the tornado demolished her childhood home, "It's okay, we're going to rebuild" and thought about the beautiful pink purple crepe myrtles he had planted next to her driveway years ago (T3, p. 33). Would the plants survive Charley?

No matter if the plants don't survive, Kate thought, as she passed out chips to her children. She reflected on what she had taught her children: be strong and be there for one another. Done with reflection for the moment, she dealt with practical matters. She told her children, "Eat the ice cream in the refrigerator because that will melt first if the power is off for long." When the batteries ran out for the lanterns, Kate lit candles and commented on their lovely scent.

Finally, Charley stopped a few hours before dawn, and everyone settled down for a short rest. In the morning, Kate ventured outside to assess the damage. Half of the enclosed side porch that ran the length of her house was gone, a chained grill had disappeared, parts of the roof of the house were laying in pieces in her neighbor's yard, and the piece attaching her electrical lines to the power pole had ripped off. Kate knew how the system worked: she would have to document everything for her homeowner's insurance. With Joe helping, Kate wrote everything down, as everyone left for their own homes.

Later that day, Joe helped Kate pick up debris and put it by the curb. Kate's daughters had gone back to their apartments to deal with their own problems resulting from Charley. As Joe, lean and muscled, energetically picked

up shattered glass, branches, and torn clothes from their yard, he told Kate, “Don’t worry, Momma, I’ll help you fix the house.”

I must look worried, thought, Kate. Replying to Joe, she said, “We’ll get through this together.” Good thing I have a family to support me, she thought. Her neighbors were friendly but involved in their own problems. That was fine with Kate. Kate always prided on being self sufficient in the 25 years she had lived in her neighborhood. She was so involved with her own family that it was nice to have friendly neighbors that she just waved to when she saw them.

A few days later, watching an electrical crew working in her neighborhood in the hot August sun, Kate cheered as each neighbor’s house was lit up with lights. Then it was time for her house, and when they attached her power to the pole, Kate thought with anticipation that perhaps she would have an impromptu party with her children and their friends to celebrate her electricity, even though her budget was maxed to the limit, and the food in her refrigerator had spoiled without the grill to cook it.

After they attached the power line to the pole, she tried her electricity, and nothing happened. She quickly went outside to catch the crew to find out what was happening with her electricity. The foreman tested her electrical panel and then gave Kate the bad news. Every electrical outlet and appliance in her house was burned out and would have to be replaced. As her heart sank with the news, she prayed silently to God, and asked for help. “What am I going to do?” she asked.

Taking comfort in her prayer, Kate knew she had to get busy fast. Using her neighbor's phone, Kate got in touch with FEMA. An anonymous voice at FEMA said, "Do you have homeowner's insurance?"

Kate said, "Yes, I have homeowner's insurance but it has a big deductible. I'm a single parent on disability from Social Security."

The FEMA representative said, "You have to contact your homeowner's insurance first. After you settle your claim with your insurance then you can contact FEMA."

Kate thanked the representative, hung up, and immediately dialed her homeowner's insurance company. Unfortunately, by the time her homeowner's insurance was contacted, receipts turned in, and a portion of the damage was paid, FEMA was out of money. Her insurance simply didn't cover all of the damage, so Kate looked for ways to stretch the money she had received. She asked contractors for bids and closely monitored their drawings for the repair of her side porch and the roof of the house. She asked questions, took notes, and reasoned that she and Joe could do some of the work themselves.

Kate and Joe spent over two years rebuilding her side porch. The contractor she hired to fix the roof did shoddy work and then went bankrupt. Her roof was leaking but her homeowner's insurance wouldn't cover re-doing it just because the work was inferior. No matter how positive Kate tried to be, she felt she was just "a single parent on disability fighting with her homeowner's insurance" (T3, p. 9). Even getting the money from her insurance to buy new appliances was a hassle. The insurance required that she buy the appliance and

then turn in the receipt. Kate didn't have the money on hand to buy anything so she had to work this out with the insurance company.

Talking with the insurance company and working with Joe on the side porch as much as her medical condition would allow, Kate realized that she was the same person despite Hurricane Charley. Sitting in her recliner after a particularly frustrating day, Kate reflected on her family's philosophy that "life is too short" so "you have to pull yourself up and keep going because if you don't, you'll end up like one of those people that never gets over anything and ends up going stir crazy" (T3, p. 22). She made a promise to herself and said it aloud, "I'm going to laugh, and see people, and be thankful I'm alive" (T3, p. 22).

Four years later, Kate found RPAD and was provided with a new roof that was completed in April 2008. Kate threw a party for her children and their friends to celebrate the new roof. As Kate passed out bowls of chips and glasses of soda, she chuckled when Joe, now age 20, told her, "Momma, Charley was funny. I laughed the whole time." Kate looked out her front window and marveled that the crepe myrtles planted by her dad 29 years ago were blooming profusely. She offered a silent prayer of thanks and marveled how life goes on as her children called to her to join them in Monopoly.

* * * * *

In chapter 4, I report the findings of the thematic analysis.

CHAPTER 4

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The disaster literature suggests three time periods within a disaster that may contain factors that play a role in recovery: *pre-disaster*, *within disaster*, and *postdisaster* (Norris, 2001, p. 5). In this chapter, I describe the reoccurring themes and topics therein that may contribute to adversarial growth, and I do so within the framework of the time periods, before, during, and after a hurricane. I note similarities and differences in the themes and topics that emerge across the three time periods. The themes that appear to be factors in recovery, and that may influence adversarial growth emerged from an analysis of the transcripts of the responses to questions asked individually of each participant during the narrative interviews and to each family in its family group interview.

In the narrative interview, the questions were (a) tell me your story of surviving the hurricane, (b) how did you survive during the hurricane, and (c) what coping strategies have helped you the most after the hurricane. In the family group interview, two of the questions were asked with an emphasis on the family as a unit. The questions were (a) as a family, how did you survive during the hurricane, and (b) as a family, what is the best way to cope after a hurricane when all the help has left.

Hurricane Time Periods

In my discussion of the first time period, before the hurricane, I explore getting ready for the hurricanes primarily from the responses to the question “Tell me your story of surviving the hurricane.” I examine the theme of preparation and the topics therein that emerged from an analysis of the participants’ responses. I consider how preparation before a hurricane may influence or contribute to adversarial growth.

In discussing the second time period, during the hurricane, I examine the theme of survival that emerged from the responses primarily to two questions: (a) how did you survive during the hurricane, and (b) as a family, how did you survive during the hurricane. I explore the topics introduced by the participants that contribute to survival and may influence adversarial growth.

In my discussion of the third time period, after the hurricane, I describe the theme of coping and the topics that emerged primarily from the responses to two questions, (a) what coping strategies have helped you the most after the hurricane, and (b) as a family, what is the best way to cope after a hurricane when all the help has left. I examine coping and topics introduced by the participants that may influence or contribute to adversarial growth after a hurricane.

Getting Ready Before a Hurricane

Each participant, individually, and each family were quick to tell me in the interviews that getting ready before the hurricane is not only the key to survival but a contributing factor to recovery. Preparation was the main theme that

participants discussed, albeit in hindsight. Participants consistently recommended preparation as a way to help speed recovery. Jane Smith said:

This is my new mantra—the best way to address your recovery is to better address preparedness. If you are smart and as possibly prepared as you can be, your recovery is going to be expedited by virtue of that. You can't plan for every contingency, but the more you prepare yourself and build in those contingencies the more quickly you are going to be able to recover.
(T2, pp. 19-20)

When participants were pressed for details on getting ready before a hurricane, a broad definition emerged. Preparation was more than buying batteries and water, though that is important. Participants included physical, mental, and emotional components as a three-part process that is important to preparation before a hurricane makes landfall.

Physical preparation was described as attending to such basics as food, water, light sources, and a safe shelter. Mental preparation was characterized as understanding the havoc hurricanes may wreak on shelter, landscape, and life and developing some ideas on how to handle it. Emotional preparation was identified as an awareness of the emotions that one might experience and having a social network of family and friends that can be summoned for support.

Without exception, the families in this study agreed that getting ready before a hurricane was the best way to survive one. All families pointed out that they were prepared in some ways but in others were not as prepared before the

hurricane as they needed to be. In the following section, I explore preparing physically, mentally, and emotionally before a hurricane.

Physical preparation. The families agreed that food, water, light sources, and a safe shelter were absolute necessities to getting ready before a hurricane. Each family had reasons specific to their living situations that influenced their decisions on these necessities. Generally, shelter was the first decision the families made, followed by food, water, and light sources, in no particular order.

Shelter was of utmost importance to the participants, but how each family dealt with this issue depended on the type of home they had, their location, and their relationships with family and friends, and on work-related issues. Location was a key issue, as coastal areas, especially barrier islands, receive evacuation orders first. In addition, regardless of location, occupants of mobile homes are one of the first to be issued evacuation orders when a hurricane is supposed to make landfall. Three of the families in this study were ordered to evacuate, but not everyone evacuated, even when other family members asked participants to stay with them.

The Brown family lived in a mobile home, and Kathy decided it was best to evacuate to her sister's home out of the path of the hurricane. But, her husband, David, could not be convinced of the severity of the storm and would not evacuate. He also wouldn't evacuate because of their dogs. The dogs didn't have anywhere to evacuate to, and he would not leave them behind. But, the additional factor in his refusal to leave their home was that he was not welcome in the homes of Kathy's relatives due to domestic violence issues.

Kathy offered to put him up in a motel, but he wouldn't do that because of their lack of money, and he wouldn't have been able to take the dogs to a motel. So, Kathy packed some of the children's clothes, took pictures of everything in their home including the weather channel on the television with the date on it, and reluctantly left David. There wasn't much room in the car, so the children weren't allowed to take much.

Kathy and the children worried about David during the hurricane. But, even though the eldest daughter, Sue, worried about her dad, she thought he would be okay because he had friends who could help him if he needed it. She also thought her dad refused to evacuate because he considered himself a macho man. "Manly men," she said, "stay in the house" (T1, p. 37).

The members of the Smith family also had to leave their homes. Chuck and Betty lived on a barrier island. The bridge from the mainland to the island was being closed due to the hurricane. So, they had to decide whether to stay on the island for an indeterminate length of time, probably without water, electricity, and emergency help, or to evacuate. They decided to leave after consulting with their local police. Then, they did the time consuming and dreaded tasks of preparing their condo for the hurricane. Luckily, they had close friends, Shelly and Joe Gray, who welcomed them with open arms. Their daughter, Jane, who lived a few hours away, had different reasons for having to leave the home of her friend, Jim, where she was living. In her case, the issue was work, as Jane's boss asked her to stay at the emergency bunker to assist during the hurricane.

The Thomas family not only stayed in their home but invited extended family and friends to join them. Kate reasoned that her house was sturdy enough to survive the hurricane. Because she feels safer with her children around her, Kate had them come to her house. Her three children know to come home if a hurricane is coming. The Thomas family has an open door policy with friends, so they were welcomed, too.

Beth Allen stayed in her home against the pleading of her children to evacuate. Even though evacuation would have been a good choice for Beth due to her disability, and perhaps, the lack of sturdiness of her small home, Beth refused to leave. She would not consider leaving, even if it meant she died. Her pride in her home and her firm belief that the Lord would take care of her reinforced her decision to stay in her home. As an adult, she thought it ought to be her decision to stay, and if she died, she said it was her time to go. She was adamant about not leaving her home, and she prayed for the Lord to protect her.

The Dean family lived in a mobile home. Clay deemed their home unsafe for a hurricane. So, they evacuated to Lara's parent's home. Another factor in their decision was Lara's disability. She is confined to a wheelchair due to strokes and cannot tolerate high heat, so Clay prepared the house, as best as he could, before the hurricane, and then they left for his in-laws' home.

Carol White stayed in her home against the advice of her best friend, Jill. Carol stayed because she had evacuated to Jill's parents' home several times for previous hurricanes. Hurricanes had bypassed their area, seemingly having made evacuation unnecessary. She didn't want to impose on her friend's parents

again, even though she knew they were willing to have her as a guest again. Also, her home had been built by her father and had survived many hurricanes. People had often complimented her on the sturdiness of her home, telling her, “They don’t build homes like this anymore.”

Once the decision about shelter had been made, the families decided on food, water, and light sources. Many of the families felt they weren’t as well prepared for these physical necessities as they should have been, and in hindsight, they stressed the importance of being prepared in these areas. They cited financial reasons, a belief that the hurricane wouldn’t make landfall, and a misconception regarding what constitutes adequate preparation for their lack of physical preparation. Of these three reasons for not being prepared, the most often-cited reason was financial circumstances. Many of the families said they did not have the financial means to buy extra food or to stockpile water and batteries.

Carol White was realistic about her finances and physical preparation. “Well, being prepared is wonderful, but like on television, they’ll say now you need batteries and you need this and you need that. [But] if you’re sitting here with no money,” you can’t prepare well even if you want to (T6, p. 19). Carol did not have enough money to buy water or extra food and spent the night of the hurricane huddled in darkness, while rain leaked through her roof, because she couldn’t afford batteries for a flashlight.

Kate Thomas found herself in similar circumstances, also due to finances. She said, “I wasn’t really prepared as far as storing up for food and water and

stuff like that because, like I said, I was on disability and still am, but you know your money don't—you can't buy it" (T3, p. 18). So, Kate, like many of the participants, made do with what she had during the storm. She learned that you have to be prepared and has been preparing slowly for the next hurricane. She said:

I've got two ice chests on hand—whether I use them or not right now, I've got them here. I'm in the process of buying me a Coleman stove because that's something else you really, really need. 'Cause I had a grill and I thought we'd just grill out. Well, the hurricane took the grill. Then what you gonna do? (T3, pp. 18-19)

The second reason the families mentioned for being unprepared physically was because they didn't expect the hurricane to make landfall in their area. Even though the reports on the weather channel warned of a possibility for Hurricane Charley to make landfall in her geographic area, Beth Allen didn't think it would. On the television, Hurricane Charley looked like it was heading to the Tampa Bay area, but in the early morning, before landfall, Charley turned to go in through Charlotte County and advance towards Polk County. Beth didn't expect the hurricane to come, because, in the past, hurricanes always veered off and went around them and she lived inland, far from the coast and far from Tampa. To her surprise, in this case the hurricane shifted to go toward her, unlike previous hurricanes:

This time [the hurricane] hit us straight forward and a lot of people as myself wasn't really prepared because, back in then, I didn't have a lot of

water. I had canned goods and stuff, I had some water—wasn't able to get a generator. (T4, p. 8)

Beth didn't have enough batteries for a flashlight, so when the electricity went off, she had to feel her way down the hallway of her house in the dark.

The final reason participants weren't as well prepared as they could be was because they had misconceptions of what adequate preparation means. Betty Smith thought she was prepared but found she didn't understand what was important to physical preparation. She had canned tuna and salmon, but realized, after staying with her friends, the Grays, who had batteries, flashlights, good food, and a portable television, that she was woefully under prepared. She said, "It would have been difficult if we had to live for those four days on what we had saved. We could have, but boy, it would have been very unpleasant" (T2, p. 48).

The Dean family was prepared physically and was quite proud of that fact. They had a generator that had enough energy to power a small television and a window air conditioning unit for one room. They had plenty of canned food and water. Being physically prepared helped the Deans return to a somewhat different, normalcy in their home late at night after the hurricane passed. Clay said, "That night we had the TV going and fans. We cut [out] one of the windows [to] put [in] the air conditioner. We made like a little camp" in one room of the house and slept there (T5, p. 18).

Being physically prepared before a hurricane is important to basic survival during a hurricane, and in some cases, as with the Dean family, after the

hurricane. But it is only one component of preparation. Some families found they were physically prepared, with enough food and water for the hurricane, but discovered they weren't mentally prepared for the devastation of their home. Other families had suggestions on how to prepare mentally for a hurricane.

Mental preparation. All of the families agreed in theory that it was important to be mentally prepared before a hurricane. But they disagreed about whether it was possible to be mentally prepared. Some of the families weren't sure how to prepare mentally for something you had never experienced before. Other families had suggestions for mental preparation.

The Dean family thought mental preparation was important but were unsure how to go about it. Clay Dean said, "I think when it comes to disasters, you're not really prepared. You can have money or water and plenty of food, but you're not prepared for the things that can happen, you know, your house getting totally wiped out" (T5, p. 35).

Kathy Brown, who sustained major damage to her home, echoed the same sentiment. Kathy was shocked to the core by her first look at her home in daylight. Kathy said, "I think we thought we would be back. I don't think any of us expected what we got" (T1, p. 152).

Jane Smith suggested education as the key to mental preparation before a disaster. Understanding what the community offers in terms of resources that a family can use if their home is damaged or destroyed is important to mental preparation. Just being educated about the possibilities for help can go a long way in helping a person prepare mentally for a disaster because it creates an

action plan for the family. Jane used the example of her home insurance and linked it to being mentally prepared. She said:

Understand exactly what you are covered for This is how I grew, I became better educated in how to protect myself personally and I shared this information with others I'll give you an example, insurance coverage. I had full replacement cost coverage, which means when I lose things, in my mind, they are going to pay me what it costs to replace it today. When I read the really really small print, got through to the meat of what my policy was—and so from that I learned educate yourself on everything on what your policy says. (T2, pp. 19, 20-21)

Jane not only encouraged understanding one's insurance but also knowing what resources a community offers and what you are entitled to receive. She said:

You know, if you need FEMA assistance, file for it. It's your tax dollars at work. And if they don't give you, you know, the financial you should be receiving in term of adjusted worth, you can appeal the process. There are free services available to walk you through, to navigate you, through the whole recovery process. I think there are so many people out there who don't get that, and that is a new passion that I have developed, and that is to educate these people, educate, educate, educate. (T2, p. 21)

Beth Allen reiterated what Jane Smith advised: "Get with support groups" (T4, p. 23). She thought it was important to stay "mentally focused and just ready" because "we don't know what the future's going to bring. We don't know what's going to happen between today and tomorrow" (T4, pp. 22-23).

Jane Smith wasn't the only one who advocated being savvy about insurance policies. Kate Thomas discovered that her porch, which spanned almost the entire back of her house and had been added over 20 years earlier to her house by a previous owner, had never been documented. It was a homeowner's nightmare for her:

It was never documented, and that's where my problems began because I'm living in a home. This is my house, but yet it's not documented. I had to pay to have it all documented, and then I had to fight with the insurance company, and that's why it's taking us so long to still rebuild because they are not going to cover it. They only covered the property damage that got damaged on the inside, but that was it, and so, I'm still having to fight for that. (T3, pp. 31-32)

But it wasn't just Kate's porch that was a problem. All of her appliances and electronics were wiped out by the hurricane. She had to produce the receipts in order to have them replaced. She found many of her receipts had faded with time. She laminates her receipts now to preserve them. She said:

Make sure you have everything documented and in a dry safe place in Ziploc baggies or whatever kind of seal proof, and laminate stuff if you have to so it doesn't get damaged. I have now got a laminating machine, and I laminate things. (T3, pp. 31-32)

Although the participants agreed that physical and mental preparation is helpful in recovery after a hurricane, most of them had some lack in those two

areas. But the third component, emotional preparation, was another matter entirely.

Emotional preparation. Each family drew upon a social network of family and friends to support them before the hurricane made landfall. Emotional support consisted of talking with one another, and in some families, praying together. Families relied on communication with immediate family members, extended family, friends, and neighbors. In addition, some families with strong Christian beliefs communicated with God through prayer. The communications centered on alleviating fears and providing a positive attitude towards the unknown future. Communicating with family, friends, neighbors, or God helped them keep their emotions on an even keel.

The Dean family reassured themselves that they could handle anything with the Lord's help after they had evacuated their home and were driving in their truck to Lara's parents' home. Clay said, "We just thank the good Lord, but we just take it day by day" (T5, p. 42). Clay and Lara also alleviated Scott's fears when he wondered out loud about his job and what he would do for gas money if he lost his job. Lara, Clay, and Tim listened patiently to Scott, and then Clay repeated their family belief. He said, "As long as you've got your health, you've got everything" (T5, p. 50). He added, "There's always a way to make money" (T5, p. 50). The Deans used conversation to bolster and support one another before the hurricane. They also encouraged their family to pray together and ask the Lord for help.

Beth Allen was in frequent contact with her children before the hurricane. She said, "My kids kept calling me, you know; they wanted to make sure I was near shelter or something in case, you know, it destroyed the house, you know, really bad. They wanted me to come to their houses" (T5, p. 2). But, although Beth refused to evacuate to her children's homes, she did not refuse their emotional support. She said, "We were just praying to each other" (T4, p. 9). She prayed with her family and with her next-door neighbor, Judy, until the telephone lines went down. And, then, she prayed alone.

Carol White connected with her friend Jill on the telephone. They prayed together, and Carol felt comforted. She said, "You know, relationships and communicating are so much more, you know. That's what we're here for" (T6, p. 32). Carol also prayed for strength to deal with whatever happened. She said, "Because everything I have is nothing I've done, it comes from the Lord (T6, p. 31).

Kate Thomas encouraged her three children to come home and bring their friends. Talking over things is important to the Thomas family. Kate said, "They all know to come to momma" (T3, p. 17). Kate told her children that they would get through the hurricane. She told them, "Just be strong. Be there for each other" (T3, p. 26). She reinforced the idea of maintaining a positive attitude by telling her children, "We'll have a hurricane party." She planned to keep them active, so they didn't dwell on the approaching hurricane.

The Brown family talked about the issues revolving around their evacuation and the decision of David to stay in their home. Kathy reassured their

four children that their father would be fine because he had plenty of friends to help him if there was a problem. Arriving at her sister's home with her children, before the hurricane, she found a party in full swing at a neighbor's apartment. The children ran around playing with their cousins while Kathy and her sister were glued to the television set, waiting for weather updates and sharing their concerns with one another.

Even though the families were not as well prepared physically or mentally as they might have been, most were prepared emotionally, which occurred by talking with friends and family members and through prayer. In the next section, I describe how they reported surviving during the hurricane.

Surviving During a Hurricane

Families described four actions that enabled them to survive during a hurricane, in addition to being in a safe shelter and having the basic necessities. The activities they said were helpful surviving during a hurricane were: (a) drawing on family, friends, and neighbors for continual emotional support; (b) keeping occupied with a fun activity; (c) leaning on religious faith; and (d) listening to up-to-date information.

Continual emotional support. The first action—drawing on family, friends, and neighbors for continual emotional support during the hurricane—was utilized without exception by all the families. Families, friends, and neighbors were sought during the hurricane for emotional support.

Jane Smith made a new friend, Kathy, when she was at the emergency shelter. Jane and Kathy actively supported one another as they shared the

experience of living at the emergency shelter. Jane also contacted her boyfriend, Jim, and her family, to give and receive emotional support when the telephone lines were available at the emergency shelter. Chuck and Betty Smith sought emotional support with their close friends, the Grays. The Smiths and the Grays comforted each other when the wind and creaking trees sounded ominous. Chuck and Betty also kept in touch with their family and friends on the landline phone.

Carol White talked with her close friend, Jill, when the phone worked. She prayed when the power went out and she found herself alone in the dark. She said, "You're okay by yourself, maybe, but you can be that much stronger with other people around you and doing it together" (T6, p. 9).

Beth Allen was in frequent contact with her family and her next-door neighbor, Judy, until the power went out. Kate Thomas drew her family to her house to ride out the hurricane. She let herself be drawn into the comfort of the fellowship of her family and friends. Kate also summoned family for emotional support through childhood memories. She hummed the song her grandmother taught her as a child to sing when she was worried. Kate even thought about how her father saved her and her siblings from a tornado when she was a child. She bolstered herself by thinking if "I survived that, I can survive anything."

Keeping occupied. The second action that families undertook was to keep everyone occupied with a fun activity during the hurricane. The Browns and the Deans each played games with their families during the hurricane to keep their minds and emotions away from dwelling on what might be happening to

their homes during the hurricane. The extended Brown family amused Sue, Ann, John, and Missy with silly teasing games, which Sue and Ann recall with laughter. Ann said, "My grandma and grandpa will just make you laugh" (T1, p. 29).

The Dean family reveled in the pool at Lara's parents' house until the wind became so strong they had to get out. Clay said, "We were swimming all the way up until it got bad, you know. They kept saying, 'Get out, get out'" (T5, p. 21). Scott and Tim Dean laughed during the interview when they recalled swimming in the pool.

The Smiths were kept busy by their friends, the Grays. They laughed and played card games, keeping the talk light. Chuck Smith said, "We passed the hurricane just playing cards and dominos" (T2, p. 38). When the candles became a problem because of the smoke and a lack of fresh air inside and the cordless phone became inoperable without power, they went to the neighbor's to play cards and make calls in their master bathroom because it had skylights and a hard-wired telephone that would work without power. Betty said:

This neighbor had one phone that was still hardwired, and it was in the master bath in the toilet. So we were sitting there and playing cards and making calls. Anybody who had phone service we could call out. (T2, p. 50)

The natural light in the bathroom helped dispel the apprehension that may come when being shut up in a house for many days with the only light coming from candles and flashlights. The fun didn't stop with the card playing in the master

bathroom. Their menu provided comic relief. Betty said, "I'll tell you we ate like kings because everything's melting. One morning, maybe it was Friday morning or Saturday morning, we all had ice cream for breakfast because it was melting like crazy" (T2, p. 51).

Kate Thomas created a party atmosphere for her three teenagers, her niece, and their friends, a group of 20 in all, through games, food, and positive conversation. Her goal was to keep them occupied and to retain a positive attitude. Kate thought that creating fun activities for her children and their friends not only helped them but also helped her stay calm. She said:

You've got to constantly think about who else is in the house and make sure they're okay. Make sure the blankets are all here, make sure the food's here, you know, and just keep everybody calm and laughing. Because, if not, then you're going to have panic and that's one thing I didn't want. (T3, p. 27)

Religious faith. The third action some families took was to lean on their religious faith for strength to counteract the fear of the unknown. Lara and Clay Dean centered their family through prayer, reinforcing their belief that there wasn't anything they couldn't handle with God's help. Lara said, "There is nothing too difficult for God" (T5, p. 29).

Carol White drew on her faith in God, as she cuddled her cat, Rose, and prayed in the darkness while rain dripped into her house. When Beth Allen's power failed, she relied on her faith in God to help her survive the night. She said:

The phone lines went dead, no one could get in touch with me, and I was just here in the house, just praying and asking God to keep me safe, and you know, and don't let anything happen to me or damage to the rest of my home. (T4, p. 4)

Jane Smith, also, drew on her faith in God and prayed nightly. Whenever Kate Thomas started to worry about her house, she retreated to her bathroom to have a good cry, pray, and then put a smile on her face when she re-joined the group. She drew strength from having been raised in a Christian family.

Up-to-Date information. The final action that families took was to keep the news on constantly. The Smiths were fortunate to have a portable television that ran on batteries when the power failed. Keeping track of the news comforted them because they stayed up-to-date with the hurricane. Betty said:

But, it's a pretty helpless feeling, though after it went through and, you know, that little TV was wonderful. We had a little radio with batteries, and as I said, we would have survived, but it was so much better to see that little TV picture and see the people and they show you pictures of what was going on where they could. So that was very, very helpful to have that little TV rather than just the radio. (T2, p. 50)

The Deans and the Browns had evacuated to their extended families' homes so they were able to watch the news. Looking at the news alleviated their fears to some extent and also prepared them for the possibility of damage to their homes. For example, the Browns knew from watching the news that hurricane

winds in their neighborhood were mild, but they also knew that a tornado had been sighted in their area.

Jane Smith was able to hear the latest information on the status of Jim's neighborhood and of her parents, Chuck and Betty Smith, on the coast through the emergency bunker's communication system. This helped her feel better when she was in the bunker with other emergency personnel during the hurricane. Carol White, Beth Allen, and Kate Thomas found their fears intensifying when the power failed, and they lost contact with the outside world. They all plan to have a radio or television that runs on batteries for the next hurricane.

The families reported using four actions to survive during the hurricane: (a) drawing on family, friends, and neighbors for continual emotional support; (b) keeping occupied with a fun activity; (c) leaning on religious faith; and (d) listening to up-to-date information. They explained that these actions served to keep them mentally engaged and their emotions in check. In the next section, I describe how they reported coping after the hurricane.

Coping after a Hurricane

Participants reported that coping strategies after the hurricane depended on the individual and the family. What helped them cope best might be different for someone else. They described nine sources of support that enabled them to cope after the hurricane: (a) the government, (b) charitable organizations, (c) homeowner's insurance, (d) family, (e) friends, (f) religious faith, (g) stories, (h) life perspective, and (i) music. Homeowner's insurance, which was discussed previously under preparation, is not discussed in this section.

Government. A financial support system was important to help participants cope after the hurricane. With homes severely damaged or destroyed, spoiled food, water in short supply, and jobs that might no longer exist, participants needed financial help. Generally, contacting FEMA was the first source of support that participants described they used to cope financially after the hurricane, unless they had homeowner's insurance.

Not one participant reported that FEMA helped them cope best after the hurricane, but everyone had something to say about FEMA. The participants described emotions from gratefulness to anger regarding their dealings with FEMA. All the participants reported that no matter how they felt about FEMA that FEMA's financial assistance, though helpful, was inadequate for their needs.

The Brown family, who lived in a FEMA trailer for 6 months, had mixed feelings about FEMA. Kathy Brown was supportive of FEMA, saying "I felt FEMA did what they could do" (T1, p. 109). Kathy thought the people who complained about FEMA didn't realize how restricted FEMA was in 2004 and 2005 due to laws that limited the payout on a home. She said, "FEMA had their hands tied, and I don't think anybody knows that" (T1, p. 139). She explained, "I think people expected a lot from FEMA and they did work fair" (T1, p. 138). Because Kathy understands disasters so well, she jokingly said, "Maybe I will apply for [a job at] FEMA" (T1, p. 137).

Even though Kathy thought FEMA did what they could for her family, she described going to FEMA and getting the trailer as a "nightmare" due to the crowds at FEMA (T1, p. 93). The FEMA trailer ended up being a "fiasco" for the

Brown family (T1, p. 93). After 6 months of the Browns living in the trailer, FEMA asked for it back. It did not matter that the Brown home wasn't finished and David had been diagnosed with a cancerous tumor in his brain. Sue said, "FEMA really wasn't helping us at all" (T1, p. 48). Sue's sister, Ann, who was 10-years-old, remembers how small the FEMA trailer was and the fun she had playing games in it with Sue and her friends.

The Smith family discovered inequities with FEMA. Jane, in her professional role as a long term recovery manager, found her work personally rewarding to help people pursue what they rightfully deserved from FEMA. More than once, she had to speak to her FEMA liaison and demand that FEMA meet their obligations to her clients. Caught in the middle, she also became personally burned out when people tried to take advantage of the system.

Betty Smith noted inequities in the water distribution system. She explained:

When we heard about those trucks that hit the border, there were only so many, I think five, dispersed to this area carrying that water. We heard, after the fact of course, that the trucks that were supposed to go out to Belle Glade and some of those poorer areas didn't get there. They were at someplace else, and people were without water. So it really sort of put things into your head and heart that sometimes . . . the neediest people are the ones that don't get the help they need. (T2, p. 62)

Betty and Chuck had plenty of water and a car that they could drive to get more. They saw a story on the television about a woman with children who tried to get

water for other families from Belle Glade that did not have cars. The distribution center wouldn't give her the water because the rule was "two cases per car" (T2, p. 65). Betty said, "The rules shouldn't be so hard and fast especially when these people need water with children involved (T2, p. 65). Betty was upset. She said:

It's kind of shocking to reinforce what you basically really know, that in this world and in life generally, things are not fair. But, sometimes when you see it so close to home and how it happens, you think, wow. (T2, p. 62)

Kate Thomas was disappointed that she didn't receive FEMA assistance. Because she had homeowner's insurance, she was told to apply for that first. She said, "We had homeowner's insurance and that had to cover it first before they [FEMA] would step in. The homeowner's insurance paid only partially, but, by the time the homeowner's insurance got through, FEMA was out of funds" (T3, p. 36). To make matters worse, she reported using a roofing company that was suggested by FEMA to repair her flat roof. The roofing company did a poor quality job, and Kate's roof leaked. Unfortunately, the roofing company went bankrupt, and her insurance company wouldn't cover the roof because of the poor workmanship. Kate said:

I had to hunt these people [the roofing company] down. They're out of Texas and I finally found them, but they filed bankruptcy. So here I am, a single parent on disability and having to fight my homeowner's insurance. I finally found a program [Rebuild Polk After Disaster] in Lake Wales, but it took me from August of last year [2007] until the end of April this year [2008] to get my flat roof fixed. And they finally just got it fixed. (T3, p. 9)

Beth Allen was thankful for FEMA. FEMA helped her find a hotel room that she could stay in for a few days after the hurricane. The hotel wasn't up to her "standards, but at least they had lights and water" (T4, p. 5). She was also grateful to receive \$1,400.00 from FEMA to repair the damage to her home. The money wasn't enough to cover all of the damage, but she used it to fix what she could. She felt blessed that she was able to find people that "came out, did a good job, and didn't charge a lot of money" (T4, p. 7).

The Dean family had mixed opinions about FEMA. Lara felt the government just didn't do enough. Clay thought that the employees at FEMA just didn't care about other people. He said, "They were there for the money, and they didn't do their work properly" (T5, p. 35). He cited a situation where FEMA accused him of using their trailer when Clay had not used it. Scott felt good that FEMA came to his neighborhood and handed out water and ice.

Carol White received a small amount of money for her severely damaged home from FEMA. She was disappointed because the money wasn't even enough to repair the roof on her home, let alone the damage inside. She was frustrated because "people with trailers got a huge amount of money, and this structure is home to me" (T6, p. 23).

Charitable organizations. Participants reported they used charitable organizations as a support system after the hurricane in order to secure food, water, clothing, and furniture, and to repair their homes. This was generally the second source of support that participants used to cope financially when the government resources had been exhausted.

Five families reported using Rebuild Polk County After Disaster (RPAD) to repair their homes. RPAD is a nonprofit organization that aids volunteers and communities to help low income homeowners. The families explained that RPAD was instrumental to them in coping with the repair of their homes years after the hurricane. The Browns had the inside of their house repaired. The Thomas family had their flat roof fixed. Beth Allen had her roof replaced and was scheduled to have her kitchen ceiling patched. The Deans received materials for the new home they are building and some volunteer labor to help in that process. Carol White had her roof, ceilings, and insulation replaced and the structure of her home repaired. The families were grateful and thankful to have found RPAD, but they reported different observations about the volunteers that RPAD used to help them.

Kathy Brown had twelve volunteers work a total of 333 hours on her house. She thought the volunteers were great except they needed to be more careful with the supplies she had on hand. Some volunteers threw away a kitchen knob or a drill bit and didn't think anything of it. But to Kathy, every penny counted, and it was a big deal. She said, "That little drill bit costs \$2.39 . . . I was at a point where I had to itemize everything" (T1, p. 130). Sue Brown loved what the volunteers did to her home, noting that "they redecorated everything" (T1, p. 72).

Carol White was pleased by the work volunteers did in her home. She was so impressed by their beautiful plaster work on her ceilings that she took pictures. She was touched that the volunteers came from Canada. She said,

“The house came out for the better” (T6, p. 19). The participants described satisfaction with the repair of their homes, but food in the first few weeks after the hurricane was a problem.

Participants reported that food spoiled quickly without electricity. They had to turn to a food bank, the Federal Food Stamp Disaster Relief, and charities that were providing hot meals in order to eat. Participants explained that the hot meals and fellowship provided by the charities kept their spirits up, but the food bank was a problem. Kathy Brown received “twelve cans of cranberry sauce, six cans of black-eyed peas, and kidney beans, . . . sauerkraut, . . . and canned pumpkin” (T1, p. 134). She still has those cans in her cupboard for the next hurricane to use if her family is “starving” (T1, p. 133). She doesn’t feel right about giving the food away. Although she was appreciative of the food, she would have preferred something her children would eat and that would help them return to some semblance of normality after the hurricane.

Even the Federal Food Stamp Disaster Relief program was a problem because of the amount of paperwork to fill out. Carol White said, “That’s a lot of the reason that people sit home and do not get help. The agencies . . . have certain protocols that they have to go through first” before people receive food stamps (T6, p. 17). Paperwork requires time, and that’s what participants reported they didn’t have after the hurricane.

Another reason people don’t seek help is their pride. Beth Allen said, “Never have too much pride that you can’t go out and ask for help, because it’s out there. I thank God that the places [charitable organizations] were there for us”

(T4, pp. 26-27). Kathy Brown echoed the same sentiment: “You gotta be willing to accept it, willing to accept the need. You also gotta be able to lower your pride. That’s a big thing” (T1, p.124). She explained, “Because asking for help is not a nice place to be” (T1, p. 125).

Families found that many people wanted to donate clothes to them. What people didn’t realize is that the families didn’t have anywhere to put the clothes because their homes were severely damaged. Kathy Brown summed up the clothes issue best. She said, “They [survivors] don’t need clothes. They [survivors] need food. They [survivors] need money. Common sense says . . . where are they going to put the clothes?” (T1, p. 131).

Another issue with charitable organizations that sold furniture was the volunteers. The volunteers were often overly stringent and insulting. Volunteers behaved in this manner because they had been burned before by people taking advantage of their organization. Kathy Brown was given a \$100 voucher for a couch at a charitable organization. She reported that when she went to the floor to pick it out, “The lady that worked there informed me that there wasn’t anything on the floor that I could get . . . because they could make more money off selling it” (T1, p. 105). Kathy didn’t think it was the organization that was a problem just the individuals working there. She said, “But I couldn’t understand when I brought all the information why they didn’t understand my need” (T1, p. 107).

Family. Participants described emotional support as important after the hurricane. Some participants reported family support as the best source of support to use to cope after a hurricane. Family support was explained as talking

things over or helping one another. Scott Dean, who was almost 16 years old when the hurricane destroyed his family home, explained that family support helped him cope best. He said:

It's all the way I see it. It's all family support, you know. You know everybody says, "Uh, this happened when, and I did this." Well, you can't live by that. You weren't with them when that happened, so you just have to take in what you saw and what you know and go on. So, the biggest communications that are helping yourself get through it would be with your family that you spent that time with or went through that period of time with. Those are the people you can count on, you know. You need something, you can always ask them, or if you go and do something, you can always ask them—things like that. (T5, p. 14)

Scott wasn't the only participant that felt family support was important.

Sue Brown, who was almost 14 years old when her home was damaged by the hurricane, agreed: "Basically, the family helped us" (T1, p. 71). Aside from Sue's immediate family, her grandparents also helped. Neighbors and friends didn't do much to help the Brown family. Sue's parents formed a team within their family by involving their children in repairing their home. Kathy Brown said, "The kids are dealing with the same situation. But, if they're not allowed to help, it makes them helpless" (T1, p. 137). Kathy strongly advocates keeping children involved in the coping process after the hurricane.

Beth Allen thought talking with family was important to the healing process after the hurricane. She said, "Just be thankful for having family," and stay

connected to them (T4, p. 26). When Beth's telephone was working, she talked with her family many times throughout the day in the weeks following the hurricane. She said, "We gave each other hope It took a toll on everyone, so we just had to be up for each other" (T4, p. 33).

Kate Thomas thought emotional support from the family was important to coping. Emotional support in her family was encouraged through listening, talking, and a positive attitude. She said, "Try to keep the positive in you instead of all the negative and worry, because it's not going to help anything" (T3, p. 26).

Friends. Some participants reported talking with friends as the best source of support after a hurricane. Being in daily contact with her friends helped Carol White. She considers her friends her family. The "moral support" her friends gave her was the most helpful support she received after the hurricane (T6, p. 22). Her friends buoyed her spirits, and that helped her cope with her damaged home.

Tim Dean, who was 12 years old at the time of the hurricane, found his friends helped him the most even though he thought talking to family was important. He said, "It's always good to talk to your family," but his friends were most helpful (T5, p. 59). He explained, "You can talk to your buddy about" stuff that you don't want to talk to your parents about, and your buddy would "understand you" (T5, p. 58).

Religious faith. Some participants described their religious faith as the best source of support after the hurricane. Lara Dean has a supportive family, but what helped her to cope best was her religious faith. She explained that God was

always available. She said, "Cause, you know, I can always talk to God. He's always there" whenever I needed to talk (T5, p. 34). Lara used prayer as a means to provide strength and hope after the hurricane.

Kate Thomas also used her Christian faith to provide hope and strength for her family. Raised in a Christian household, she recalled memories of her grandparents' strong faith and their positive attitude. This strengthened her resolve to stay positive.

Beth Allen leaned on her religious faith to cope after the hurricane. She has a strong faith and is strengthened by it daily. She was thankful and grateful to God throughout the coping process. She said, "I thank God for the help and advice I got" (T4, p. 29).

Stories. Some participants considered listening to stories from friends, family, neighbors, strangers, and celebrities as the best source of support that helped them cope after the hurricane. Other participants did not find listening to stories helpful.

Chuck Smith liked listening to stories about the hurricane: "Everybody had a story to tell about their experiences during the hurricane" (T3, p. 43). He explained that they talked about "how they got through it and all the inconveniences they had to go through [and] if anybody was injured or hurt" (T3, p. 43). He found it interesting "to hear different things that people had to go through" (T3, p. 43). He also learned from the stories about how to handle different situations.

Chuck's daughter, Jane Smith, found the stories case managers told about their clients inspiring. After listening to the stories of families "who had the wherewithal to take the blue roof off the house and create a tent, and that is where they lived behind their house and, you know, opened up the grill and invited the neighbors over," she was inspired to continue with her daily tasks at work (T3, p. 24). The stories helped her avoid burnout and develop respect for her fellow human beings. She said, "It gave me a new and keen awareness of, and respect for, families who live that way every day, and . . . they don't fall apart" (T3, p. 24).

Kathy Brown found a support system in the lobby at FEMA as she exchanged stories with other hurricane survivors. She said, "You have all these other people who are going through the same thing" (T1, p. 129). Her daughter, Sue, however, found stories only minimally helpful after the hurricane. Sue has listened to her grandmother's stories, all her life usually from "Oprah or the news" (T1, p. 74). Her grandmother told her stories after the hurricane and, Sue found them "kind of annoying" (T1, p. 74).

Life perspective. Some participants reported that comparing previous experiences from their life to the hurricane put everything into perspective for them and helped them cope best after the hurricane. Betty Smith lost a dear friend to the hurricane. She mourns her friend and blamed the hurricane for the friend's death. The death of her friend put the hurricane into perspective for her:

I think you have to realize when it comes right down to the nitty gritty, I mean, life or death is the major thing. So, if you survive and you're alive,

then you have to be grateful for whatever benefits you have. Now, if you lost a lot of stuff, it's sad. Oh yeah, you don't want to lose your stuff but as long as you have your life. (T3, p. 74)

This perspective supported Betty in the coping process because she was grateful to be alive.

Clay Dean also drew on his life experiences to aid him in the coping process. He said:

I look back on my grandparents—they lived to be an old, old age, and they never worried [about] retirement. They never worried about saving money . . . I went, wow, that's pretty cool. You never worry about nothing and glad you had food on the table. (T5, pp. 42-43)

Clay's perspective on life enabled him to cope more easily after the hurricane. He emulated his grandparents and put worries aside.

Kate Thomas found that her perspective of the hurricane was tempered with her memory of the tornado that she survived as a child. The hurricane, with all its problems, was nothing compared to being inside a house that was ripped in half by a tornado. Compared to the tornado, Kate found the hurricane was “a piece of cake” (T3, p. 26).

Music. Listening to music was a source of support for one participant after the hurricane. Ann reported that listening to music helped her feel better. She said, “It [music] makes me happy” (T1, p. 21). She explained, “I love music. I love playing instruments. I love dancing and stuff like that. That's pretty much what

helps me” (T1, p. 21). Listening to music provided a therapeutic space for Ann that enabled her to cope better after the hurricane.

Summary

Each family contributed valuable insight regarding what influenced their recovery or adversarial growth. In the first time period, getting ready before a hurricane, participants reported that preparation was essential and affected survival and recovery from a hurricane. Preparation was a three-part process that involved physical, mental, and emotional preparation.

In the second time period, surviving during a hurricane, participants referred to four actions that were helpful: (a) drawing on family, friends, and neighbors for continual emotional support; (b) keeping occupied with a fun activity; (c) leaning on religious faith; (d) and listening to up-to-date information. In the third time period, coping after a hurricane, participants described nine sources of support that enabled them to cope after the hurricane: (a) the government, (b) charitable organizations, (c) homeowners insurance, (d) family, (e) friends, (f) religious faith, (g) stories, (h) life perspective, and (i) music.

Participants reported that different families may require different activities or strategies in order to get through a hurricane. No specific method or source of support is going to work well for every person, although communicating emotional support in relationships with family, friends, and neighbors was considered essential by each family before, during, and after the hurricane. In addition to relationships, some of the families boosted their emotional support through their strong religious faith. Each contribution added to a broad

perspective of handling a hurricane that may influence or contribute to adversarial growth. In chapter 5, I examine the factors that may influence recovery or adversarial growth among hurricane survivors.

CHAPTER 5

ADVERSARIAL GROWTH

In this chapter, I describe the findings regarding the third research question in this study, “What factors might encourage adversarial growth after a disaster?” The factors that appear to influence adversarial growth emerged from an analysis of the participants’ experiences of adversarial growth from the transcripts, audio-taped interviews, field notes, and the responses to questions asked individually of each participant during the narrative interviews. Each participant was asked to answer a number of questions about adversarial growth: (a) describe yourself before and after the hurricane; (b) in your opinion, what good or bad emerged for you and your family after the hurricane; and (c) did the hurricane disrupt your path or goal in life, good or bad?

Participants reported a range of adversarial growth experiences. Most reported experiencing some adversarial growth; some did not. Three participants said they experienced an even greater degree of growth, which I am calling *transformational growth*. Those that reported adversarial (or transformational) growth linked their growth to specific factors that they believed encouraged it. I report the factors that may influence adversarial growth that were mentioned by two or more participants.

Participants described eight factors in all that appear to encourage adversarial growth: (a) emotional support, (b) worldview, (c) appreciation, (d) religious faith, (e) patience, (f) self-reliance, (g) teamwork, and (h) creativity. Some participants reported that three or four factors were important to them and others reported even more. Each participant described a different combination of adversarial growth factors, but they defined them similarly. They provided explanations and examples of situations regarding how they used these factors to grow following the hurricane. In the first section, adversarial growth experiences, I report the participants' experiences of growth. Then, in the second section, adversarial growth factors, I discuss how the eight factors in adversarial growth contribute to positive growth. In the third section, I discuss the relationships among the various adversarial growth factors, showing how some of the factors may be in tension or even seem to contradict with one another.

Adversarial Growth Experiences

The Brown Family

Kathy Brown, age 44, mother and head of the Brown household with four children, Sue, age 16, Ann, age 14, and twins, John and Missy, age 10, said that she grew stronger as a person. She felt tougher and more confident. She also thought her family had grown stronger. As a result, Kathy said that she believed she and her family could withstand just about anything without falling apart, Kathy, who was 40 when the hurricanes hit, had always wanted to go back to college to finish her bachelor's degree. Four years later, she relied on her new-found strength and confidence and had enrolled in a program to complete her

degree. She credits her strength and that of her family's to appreciation, teamwork, emotional support, a positive attitude, determination, acceptance, worldview, self-reliance, creativity, and patience.

Sue Brown, who was 12 when the hurricane damaged their home, described her positive growth as being sufficiently great that I designated it as transformational growth. After the hurricane, she said that she decided it was time to grow up and help her family by getting a job, so her mother wouldn't have to pay for her and would have more money for the bills. Before the hurricane, she wore black clothes and dressed in Goth fashion, and she reported that people were afraid to talk to her because she acted so mean. After the hurricane, she said that she changed her clothes and her demeanor in a positive manner to encourage relationships. She assumed more responsibility at home and got a job. Now, at 16 years old, she holds a job, attends school, and focuses on helping her family. She plans to go to college. Sue said that she became what she calls "the good one" in the family instead of the bad one. She described appreciation, a positive attitude, teamwork, emotional support, and worldview as factors in her positive growth.

Ann Brown was 10 years old when the hurricane upset her life. She believes now, at 14 years old, she has grown, but not for the better. Ann went from doing well in school to getting in trouble. Still, she said that she doesn't think it was the hurricane that affected her growth but rather the death of her father. She credits a positive attitude for helping her family recover after the hurricane.

The Smith Family

Jane Smith, in her mid 40s, described her growth as “life defining” and what I call transformational growth (T2, p. 25). She said that she grew in her religious faith and changed her career direction. She said she considers religious faith, stories, worldview, and emotional support as helpful factors in her growth. Jane’s father, Chuck Smith, age 76, said he didn’t think he had grown much except in learning how to handle a hurricane and in his friendships. He credits emotional support, patience, and stories from other people as helpful to his growth. Chuck’s wife and stepmother to Jane, Betty, age 67, said she thought she grew in her understanding of the world. She described emotional support, stories, appreciation, and worldview as factors in her growth.

The Allen Family

Beth Allen, age 55, said she grew stronger mentally in knowing how to handle future hurricanes. She said that her family grew positively in emotional strength. Beth noted that she experienced growth not only within her relationships with family members but also in her relationships with her neighbors. She said, “Well, it definitely brought me and my family close, and it definitely brought me and some of the neighbors closer” (T4, p. 24). She said:

We have a closer bond, and, as you go through that and stand together, we had something that we can talk about and relate to, you know. It was really an experience that was just amazing, because I never went through that before, and then I could still talk about it together in what we went

through with, you know, the destruction, the bad part, and then what good came out of it. (T4, p. 25)

Beth said that she feels bonded with her family and neighbors because there was positive growth in their relationship. This is significant because traumas often rip families, friends, and neighbors apart. In contrast, it is common to feel a temporary closeness within relationships in a disaster. The growth Beth experienced in her relationships was not temporary.

Four years after the hurricane, Beth has stronger relationships with her family and neighbors. Since the hurricane, Beth feels as if her neighbor's daughter is like her own daughter. The growth in Beth's relationships appears to be linked to an increase in emotional support. She thinks her strong religious faith, hope, appreciation, and emotional support within her family and from support groups were factors in her growth.

The White Family

Carol White, age 62, said that she grew in her relationships with her friends and became mentally stronger in dealing with difficult situations. She believes she became more confident in handling life's tasks. She reported acceptance, patience, emotional support, and religious faith as factors in her growth.

The Dean Family

The Dean family, Clay, age 46, Lara, age 46, Scott, age 19, and Tim, age 16, experienced positive growth individually and as a family. Clay said that he grew stronger mentally in how to handle things. He used this mental toughness

to begin building a new house, an ambitious undertaking, after the hurricane. Always religious, Clay said that he found his relationship with God deepening as he talked with Him on a daily basis to help him manage the damage on his mobile home and the subsequent building of his new home. He believes religious faith, appreciation, teamwork, self-reliance, patience, worldview, creativity, a positive attitude, and emotional support were contributing factors to his growth.

Lara said that she grew in her religious beliefs and thought the hurricane was proof that God could handle anything. Growth in her religious faith strengthened her trust in God that she would recover her health. She found religious faith, emotional support, and patience helped her grow stronger in her faith.

Scott described his personal growth in ways that led me to call it transformational growth. Just 16 years old when the hurricane damaged his home, he said that he realized that he needed to step up to the plate and help his family. He decided that first night when he saw their damaged home that he needed to grow up. He said that he left his childhood behind and assumed more responsibility within his family. He believes emotional support from his family helped him grow as a person.

Tim was 12 years old when the hurricane shook his world. He said that he grew closer to his family and became more pragmatic. Tim believes appreciation, self-reliance, positive attitude, teamwork, worldview, and emotional support were helpful to his growth.

The Thomas Family

Kate Thomas, age 50 and head of the household, said that she felt she didn't necessarily grow as a person but saw the hurricane as building her family's emotional reservoir. The emotional strength of her family expanded as Kate used the hurricane to reinforce that her family could lean on and draw strength from one another during difficult times. Kate likes that her family knows they can seek one another out for emotional support for personal growth.

Her son, Joe, who was 15 years old when the hurricane damaged his home, thought of the hurricane as funny. I wasn't able to interview Joe because, Kate said, he is rather shy and felt he did not have anything to say. Kate credits religious faith, worldview, appreciation, positive attitude, and stories for building the emotional strength in her family.

Adversarial Growth Factors

Emotional Support

The participants in this study named emotional support as the most important factor in their recovery and adversarial growth. Participants defined emotional support as talking to one another in conversation. Talk was centered on emotional and practical issues. Emotional issues included but were not limited to emotions of happiness, joy, sadness, and anger revolving around their homes, keepsakes, relationships, and jobs. Practical issues centered on how to handle repairs or fill out paperwork. Participants looked for emotional support within the context of their interpersonal relationships, especially family and friends, who were turned to first for emotional support. Neighbors, support groups, and

strangers who were going through the same experience were also sources of emotional support. Some participants thought stories were supportive and others didn't find them helpful.

Family. Emotional support from the family was important to the participants. Emotional support consisted of talking over feelings and explaining how to do practical repairs on their homes.

Beth Allen and her family used emotional support to heal each other and grow as a family. In their communication throughout the day, they did not focus as much on tasks that had to be done such as repair windows but on supporting one another emotionally. Beth concentrated on her family, asking them, "Are you okay?" "How do you feel?" rather than "Did the window repairman show up today?" The primary concern for Beth was the emotional needs of her family not her windows. Beth said, "We just found the healing process, the whole family, because we all went through it. [Together] . . . emotionally, we just got through it" (T4, p. 33). The emotional support within Beth's family provided the energy to tackle the necessary tasks, and her windows were repaired in a timely manner.

It was important to Beth to help the children heal emotionally. Beth said, "Kids don't always understand. Why is this happening? Why did our home get destroyed?" (T4, p. 34). Beth thinks it's vital that "the kids can look at the family being all together, the importance of them kept together" and talking it out together (T4, p. 35).

Tim Dean, age 16, thinks that the emotional support exchanged in his family revealed the strength of his family. He said, "It showed who was who. It

showed how good the family was, how good we pulled together” (T5, p. 55) and, as a result, his family members grew closer to one another.

Tim’s brother, Scott, age 19, believes the emotional support in their family helped him grow personally. Scott received emotional support from his family to help him deal with friendships that had changed as a result of the hurricane. After the hurricane, Scott’s friends weren’t the same anymore:

People aren’t the same after that. People want to act differently. They want to respond to you differently. They treat you different by the way you responded to that hurricane. Like, if their stuff was destroyed and some of your stuff was fine, people tend to get jealous, you know, see what you got versus what they got now all of a sudden. (T5, p. 2)

Scott was dismayed that his friendships changed after the hurricane. Friends he thought would be there forever for him suddenly were jealous or weren’t

available. He said, “When you’re down and out, you see how people really act.

You see who’s really there for you, who’d break their back for you” (T5, p. 2).

Scott talked over his friendships with his family and received emotional support that helped him “laugh about it” (T5, p. 6). Scott believes after a disaster, families

may grow emotionally because they have to depend on one another. He said,

“You grow as a family having to depend on each other, you know” (T5, p. 11).

Scott considers the “emotional support” from his family as the most important factor in his individual growth (T5, p. 14).

Sue Brown, age 16, found emotional support from her grandparents very important. All her life, her grandparents have been “a real shoulder to lean on,” and they were there for her family after the hurricane (T1, p. 76).

Friends. Chuck Smith mentioned as valuable the “relationships with friends” (T2, p. 43). He said, “We were blessed that somebody had a house here in which we could go spend our time” (T2, p. 43). Receiving emotional support from his friends during the hurricane and after in the recovery phase helped him transition into repairing his home. Chuck’s wife, Betty, found emotional support from friendships important too. She considers them lucky to have friends that they can count on, and this made coping with the hurricane much easier.

Carol White considers the emotional support she received from her friends the most important factor in her growth. Her friends helped her through their encouragement to her to keep going and to find the agency that could help her.

Neighbors. Friends and family were not the only people important in providing emotional support for growth. Neighbors also provided emotional support by forming groups to help each other. This was especially true in Carol White’s neighborhood. Carol said:

My neighbor was sitting out on the front porch with her phone and I spoke to her and went over. I said, “I’m going uptown to a church. They say they have stuff up there.” She said, “My goodness, I’ve been on the phone and I can’t get a hold of any of my people that help me and—well, we’ll go together.” So, then we started going up to another church . . . where the Salvation Army had ice. And it was, like, if we could do that, we were

okay. We're getting somewhere. We can see some light at the end of the tunnel. (T6, p.13)

Not every neighborhood provided emotional support. Clay Dean lamented the lack of support in his neighborhood. His son, Tim, believes it is important to remember that relationships don't always change in a disaster. Tim said, "Some people pulled together. Most of the people, you know, pulled together, but people that don't like you still don't like you. They still make comments about you and everything. There's still going to be mean people" (T5, pp. 57-58).

Hurricane survivors. Not only did Kathy Brown find emotional support by communicating as a team within her family, but she found a support system outside of her family as well. She said, "And when you sit at FEMA three days a week or sit in these agencies. . . . So, my support system would be the people that were actually going through the same thing that I was" (T1, pp. 128-129). Kathy found support from people who had gone through the same experiences helpful because they could understand what she was going through. This understanding helped her grow stronger to tackle the tasks necessary to repair their home.

Stories. Participants reported that stories were communication from other people that were meant to inspire, give information, and provide emotional support. Listening to other peoples' stories helped Chuck Smith grow after the hurricanes. He not only learned how to handle different situations from the stories, but he empathized with other people through listening to their stories. Like Chuck, his wife, Betty, found stories helpful from people who were going

through the same situation or had experienced it. She said, “Someone else has gone through it. They certainly understand someone, even like me, who’s gone through it” (T2, p. 68). Jane Smith found stories from her clients inspirational. The stories inspired her to grow her career in a different direction.

Carol White found stories useful for their information. Carol used the information to help recover from the hurricane. Stories gave her an avenue to seek more help in the recovery process. Kathy Brown found that listening to stories from other hurricane survivors encouraged her recovery and provided a support group. She believes that only people who have been through a disaster truly understand what it is like for survivors.

Not everyone found stories to be an avenue to growth. Sue Brown’s grandmother often told her stories about people who had survived difficult situations, but Sue didn’t find them especially helpful. Sue suggested, “[Family stories were] “all over the place” (T1, p. 75). Scott Dean didn’t find stories helpful. He believes stories in the form of advice aren’t useful because the people relating the stories aren’t living in his situation.

Support groups. What the participants often called “support groups” played a part in growth and recovery. They used the term support groups to refer to groups such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, FEMA, and RPAD. Beth said, “Those support groups are really wonderful because, you know, when you really need that, they’re there, and I thank God for that” (T4, p. 28). She encouraged people to take advantage of every line of help they could possibly find. She said, “I have a lot more peace of mind, and I feel that I’m going to be a lot more safe in

my home because of a lot of help that I got through the state and through the county” (T4, p. 31). Beth became aware of support groups when she became disabled and couldn’t work anymore. She said:

I never knew these organizations existed that were out there to help people in my condition. They can point you to this place and that place . . . I don’t like to be a burden on my family. I like to be able to support myself, but when I got disabled, I wasn’t able to. (T4, p. 30)

The support groups provided emotional support so Beth could grow stronger mentally.

Carol White believes support groups played a factor in her growth. She said, “I was working as a security guard back then at [name withheld] under construction, and so I left my job at that time. My house was still broken. I just couldn’t get over it, and I left my job” (T6, p. 8). Without a job, Carol spent her time trying to get help from FEMA and the Red Cross, which eventually led her to Rebuild Polk County After Disaster (RPAD). She thought this process made her stronger. She said, “Well, I can see why you get stronger because it was reverting back and living day by day and having to depend on other people” (T6, p. 9). Carol found the hurricanes gave her a greater awareness of the value of bonding with other people, and she experienced positive growth through interaction with the support groups.

Worldview

Participants described worldview as a change in how they understood the world and their lives. Several participants found that their worldviews shifted

significantly, and this fostered their growth. Kathy Brown thought she had understood the world but realized that she didn't until the hurricane. Kathy said, "I would say that I didn't know what the world was really all about" before the hurricane (T1, p. 110). Kathy found her eyes opened to what was important in life.

Aside from feeling she had to grow up, Sue Brown said she found herself developing a pragmatic worldview. She said, "I realized that I'm not scared of death. I'm not worried about all that stuff. If something bad happens, then it happens. It's supposed to happen, and you just [handle] it [when it] comes" (T1, p. 66). She feels stronger and able to deal with what life brings.

Jane Smith said she found "a different perspective on life and generally what really matters" (T2, p. 13). Jane also found a new "respect" for families that don't have the "internal infrastructure to bounce back and recover" but "the grace and fortitude to go beyond life's challenges like this [hurricane]" (T2, p. 13). She explained, "They do it with dignity, and they don't allow race or prejudice or lack of education or skills. They learn how to bounce back on their own using whatever they have" (T2, p. 13). Before the hurricane, Jane characterized herself as "a very accepting person," and after the hurricane, "cautious" (T2, p. 19).

In contrast to the families for whom she gained new respect, Jane also witnessed "families who wouldn't do anything to help themselves and just wanted government handouts" (T2, p. 13). One incident in particular upset and frustrated her, a family of two parents and mostly teenage children who were sitting in lawn chairs drinking beer waiting for someone to bring them free food. Jane thought

they were trying to take advantage of the system, and she coined the term “system milkers” to refer to them and others like them (T2, p. 19). So, for Jane, the shift in her worldview contained good and bad elements that fostered her growth in relationships with people.

No matter how good her situation during the hurricane, Betty Smith said she wouldn't choose the experience again, but it did open her heart to the inequity in the world. Her worldview was challenged by the inequities that she witnessed in water delivery. She said:

Well, I think, you know, I wouldn't choose that way—that experience again, but I think after you've been through it, you realize you can survive such things, or there are things you can do that will help, and you realize how vulnerable a lot of people are. (T2, p. 62)

As her heart opened up to the people in Belle Glade who weren't brought water, Betty realized her situation wasn't so bad in comparison. She said, “Boy, these people really had it tough. I thought I had it tough, but I had it much better than they” did (T2, p. 62).

As hurtful as the discovery was about his friendships, Scott Dean said he couldn't take time to dwell on it because his family needed his help with their home. This changed Scott. His family needed him. He said, “I had to be there to help out, so I had to step up too” (T5, p. 10). Scott needed to grow up quickly to be there for his family. He said, “It made me grow mentally and physically. It made me smarter and more responsible” (T5, p. 10). Scott feels that his growing

up has “mentally prepared” him for the next hurricane, so he will know what to do in the event that a hurricane is coming (T5, p. 10).

The hurricane encouraged Clay Dean to draw on his worldview learned not only as a child in surviving a difficult childhood but in working through trying times as an adult. When the hurricane damaged his home, Clay drew on lessons learned in handling adversity in the past. “We learned, even when our situation [his wife Lara’s strokes] happened to us. We learned it was a tragedy, but we didn’t pay no attention to it. We just kept right on moving on,” even though he lost his job in order to become Lara’s caregiver (T5, p. 36). He applied that same worldview to the hurricane:

Learning to survive and I’ve learned from it through this. I’ve learned from it. And that’s what I tell her [Lara]. I said, “We are truly blessed.” I said, “Yes, we’re going through some hard times,” and that’s what we tell the boys. (T5, p. 48)

Although Lara Dean’s faith was strengthened by the hurricane, her worldview changed. She was dismayed that looters were going through their things immediately after the hurricane. She said, “It was awful. People were already having difficulties from the hurricane, but, on top of that, they were stolen from, and to be ripped off—that was awful” (T5, p. 30). A person stealing was not easy for Lara to shrug off. To this day, that emerges as bad for her from the hurricane. That people would steal from other people in such a difficult situation was unthinkable to her. Her worldview changed negatively. She became aware of how some people take advantage of other peoples’ misfortunes. Her son, Tim,

found his worldview grew from the hurricane, and he became pragmatic. He said, "Before, I was, like, okay, then after the hurricane, it ain't no joke. Got to have money and always get on top of the" situation (T5, p. 55).

Kate Thomas said she found the hurricane reinforced her family's worldview. She said, "You know, we have the attitude, life goes on" (T3, p. 20).

She explained:

There are some things that you just cannot erase out of your mind. There are some things you can't . . . ever forget, but our philosophy is life is too short. You know, you have to pull yourself up and keep on going 'cause if you don't, you're going to end up like those people who cannot get over anything, and that's all they dwell on. And, if you do that, you're going to end up going stir crazy. You know, we're the kind of people who laugh about things because, if you don't, you know, it gets you in that rut to where you don't want to talk to people, you don't want to see people. Just leave me alone. Life's too short. You've just got to keep going. Yeah, things happen, but be thankful you're alive. (T3, p. 22)

Appreciation

Participants reported that appreciation involved being thankful for the little things and the big things in life. Appreciation encouraged a positive attitude in the present and in turn, fostered hope for the future. Kathy Brown said that before the hurricane "I would say that I didn't appreciate what I had" (T1, p. 110). Now she appreciates every little thing. She said, "There were things that you just learned to appreciate that just amazed you" (T1, p. 165). Kathy named slushes

from a nearby convenience store as one of those items. The slushes, cold icy drinks in different flavors, provided a wonderful treat in the hot weather after the hurricane. Kathy also appreciated people like the manager at the restaurant that she worked at who gave her ice when he could have made more money selling it. Appreciation fostered positive growth in Kathy.

Sue Brown developed a deep appreciation for what she has and recommends that people should “be thankful for what you got. Even if, I mean, bad stuff happens, good stuff happens, but, in the end, you’ve got family, you’ve got friends. Everything’s fine” (T1, p. 69). Sue found appreciation fostered thankfulness for the present moment, no matter what happened or how difficult the situation.

Betty Smith believed that recovery and growth after a hurricane entails a positive attitude and appreciation. She said:

I guess what I’m trying to say is, in a disaster, one has to look at whatever things you can be grateful for and then take the next step from that. I’m alive, some people didn’t make it. Okay, I’m alive, now what can I do? I don’t have a house, okay, let’s see. And then you start with the basics. Look around to see what you can do to pull yourself together and rebuild your life. Of course, I say that here, but I know in New Orleans they didn’t have jobs because the whole city went down. They didn’t have any jobs to go to. I’m sure I have no idea how serious and how difficult it must be for someone who has lost everything to say, “come on, buck up, be glad you’re not dead.” You know what I’m saying? (T2, p. 66)

Betty thought people would have to experience losing everything to a hurricane before they would know what to do in that circumstance. She said, "You don't know what you would do until you've been there" (T2, p. 67). Betty found that appreciation made her life sweeter in the present moment. Appreciation allowed Betty to shrug off the difficulties in the present and realize what mattered most.

Carol White also expressed appreciation for surviving the hurricane. She said:

Well, going through any kind of tragedy, you know, I feel, like, that if you live through it, if you make it through it, you know, even though your belongings may be damaged or whatever, you can still appreciate the fact that it wasn't any worse than it was, and you're still alive. (T6, pp. 11-12)

After being thankful for being alive, Carol found that appreciation bolstered her energy to assess her situation and find out what had to be done. Kate Thomas found that appreciation for life, in general, fosters a positive attitude within her family that bolstered their energy to work through difficult times.

Some respondents talked about appreciation more in terms of having a positive attitude. As they described it, this involved concentrating more on the good in a situation rather than the bad. Focusing on the good in their situation allowed participants to keep their energy high after the hurricane, which empowered them to tackle their hurricane-related tasks. Positive attitude and focusing on the good side entails having an appreciation for what you have in the present.

Ann Brown thought a positive attitude was necessary to experience growth. She said, "It depends on the way you look at life" as to whether you will grow negatively or positively (T1, p. 18). Ann suggests that, even if things are difficult when you are recovering from a hurricane, as long as you have faith that you will recover, then you will. She said, "Well, even if you're struggling that you'll be able to, you know, make it, just believe in it" (T1, p. 19). Ann thought it was helpful after the hurricane to play with other kids at her aunt's because it was fun and kept her attitude positive. She said, "[In the] summer, having the kids around at my aunt's house was kind of fun because you actually have something to do" (T1, p. 29) rather than sitting around. Keeping busy with fun activities appears to foster a positive attitude that encourages growth in the present.

Scott Dean found a positive attitude helped him grow after the hurricane. He advised:

Just don't focus on the negative stuff. There's nothing that I can partake and do with big pieces of advice, but I think you don't [grow] on the negatives and always focus on the positives, and all those things will look better that way. (T5, p. 13)

His brother, Tim, believes a positive attitude is essential for growth. He said, "Look forward to tomorrow" (T5, p. 57).

Kate Thomas used a positive attitude to laugh about situations. Laughing helped her to continue fighting with her insurance company over her electronics, appliances, and the documentation of her house.

Other participants described appreciation more as hope and optimism for the future. Hope was encouraged by appreciation and a positive attitude. Having hope encouraged participants to look towards and imagine a better future. Beth Allen found hope helped her grow by looking toward a better future. She said, "Well, as far as my experience is just hope, you know. Just be hopeful . . ." (T4, p. 23). With hope, she felt that the situation could get better. Beth believes having hope encourages people to seek out what they need to recover and grow. Tim Dean thought it was important to realize that there was always another day. He advised looking toward the future, keeping hope alive, so the present would look better. He said, "Tomorrow's a new day" (T5, p. 57). He believes hope helps people get through the present day when everything looks so grim.

Participants mentioned appreciation in conjunction with a positive attitude and hope. Those factors appeared to form a ladder of encouragement for positive growth: Appreciation led to a positive attitude and a positive attitude led to hope for the future.

Religious Faith

Participants described religious faith in different respects. Most participants defined religious faith as a Christian religion centered on God or the Lord. Another participant defined faith as a spirituality or a belief in a higher power. Many participants leaned on their religious faith to get through the hurricane. They grew positively in their religious faith as well as other areas in their lives.

Beth Allen credits her positive growth to her strong religious faith. She

believes that positive growth is fostered by the “state of your mind” (T4, p. 27).

Beth thinks that religious faith strengthens people and, in her case, has helped her become mentally strong. She said, “I have a strong faith, and a lot of people out there are not as strong as I am” (T4, p. 27).

Jane Smith relied on her religious faith when her clothes and household items were destroyed in a storage warehouse. She remembers clearly the day that she had to inventory her damaged possessions for insurance purposes at the storage facility. She said:

I just remember sitting there. It’s funny, it’s just clothes, I was healthy. I didn’t lose my home. I didn’t purchase one [house] yet, but certain outfits would just trigger certain things. I wore this to my brother’s wedding. I would have a moment that I would just break down and cry. (T2, p. 5)

Even though she knew that she was okay due to her insurance, she looked seriously at her faith. “Why does God allow this to happen?” She was ashamed that she had cried because other people had it so much worse, but there was no time for self-pity. She clarified:

I think I ended up taking 4 hours off while I was still being asked to go out and respond to my community’s need, but I think, by virtue of the fact that that was my charge, it forced me to muster up a lot of faith, a lot of faith in God, why he allows things to happen, and the fact that, in all reality, all I lost were things which could easily be replaced, and there were people out there that had no means of replacing the things they lost. So, my

perspective took a totally different twist, and somehow I was energized and inspired to . . . work 110 hours the next 2 weeks. (T2, p. 6)

She believes it was a strong growth in her “faith” and “a keen awareness of what the heck do you think you are doing crying at the loss of clothes, a sofa, washers, and dryers. I mean, you have insurance” that helped her recover (T2, p. 7).

Carol White found that her religious faith grew as people helped her after the hurricane. She credited the Lord for sending people to help her, quoting a Bible verse, “But, the Lord put it in their minds and in their will to do that. Their heart was softened. He softened their heart enough for them to do that” (T6, p. 31). She said, “He got me through, totally through everything” (T6, p. 32).

Clay Dean found that an essential key for recovery and growth in his family was to put stock in their religious faith. He thanked the Lord on a daily basis. Clay relies on his faith to help him through difficult times. When he, with friends and family, demolished their mobile home, in his prayer that day, he asked God to support him. He said, “I had a big talk. ‘God, I’m going to need some help’” (T5, p. 48).

Lara Dean immediately turned to her faith in God to recover and grow from the hurricane damage. She knew it would just take time and that there might be setbacks, but believed that God had a plan:

Well, before the hurricane, I was focused on my own just getting my, you know, getting back up on my feet. ‘Cause I had had some strokes, and this is what got me in the wheelchair. Okay? So, after the hurricane, that

just kind of took a little more 'cause now I had to deal with, you know. (T5, p. 27)

The hurricane-related delay in her healing strengthened her faith. Lara knows some people are uncomfortable hearing of her belief in her faith, but she feels strongly about it. The hurricane damage reinforced her faith in God. She said, "It just proves to me and, uh, well, had to trust in God, because as far as I'm concerned, you know, there is nothing too difficult for God" (T5, p. 29).

Kate Thomas also looks to her Christian faith to support her emotionally when the going gets tough. She said, "My grandparents are very Christian-oriented and that's the way we grew up, and I tried to, to this day, do it to my children and make them have a positive on anything" (T3, p. 35). She elaborated, explaining that religious faith was "important when I was growing up, and it's still important today" (T3, p. 35).

Patience

Participants explained that patience included understanding that everything won't be repaired in a timely manner and having the grace to wait. Having patience allowed participants to take things as they came and avoid being frustrated with delays. Having patience included acceptance of the situation.

To grow after a hurricane, Chuck Smith recommends, "You've just got to take things as they come" (T2, p. 42). With a damaged home, Chuck stressed "patience" (T2, p. 42). He said, "You know you're not going to get people over

here to do the repair work for you as soon as you would like to have it done because so many people are in the same set of circumstances” (T2, pp. 42-43).

Carol White’s patience and perseverance also helped her find the right organization for help. Because of her willingness to search out the correct agency for help and to fill out the paperwork, Carol’s home was repaired.

Lara Dean advises, “Just be patient, and know that it’s going to be over with soon. And this too shall pass” (T5, p. 32). She applies this to not only hurricane damage but her health.

Patience encourages growth in an expansive manner and includes acceptance of the situation. Some participants described patience in terms of accepting what had happened to their lives as a result of the hurricane. They believed it was important to acknowledge that their living situations, jobs, and some relationships were different. After patient acceptance, participants could begin to grow in their vision of the future.

Kathy Brown thinks it is important to have acceptance and face what occurred. She said, “Accept what’s happened” (T1, p. 114). She elaborated:

Build a future. Nobody can stop disasters from happening. You can’t bury your head and assume that it will never happen again. Things are gonna happen, just deal with it. As long as you have your life, your health, your family, you’re fine. (T1, pp. 114-115)

Acceptance helped Kathy envision a future for her family.

Carol Brown thought that acceptance was important if one was to grow. She believes with acceptance comes the ability to understand the situation and

to determine how to begin recovery. Carol thinks acceptance is a major step to recovery and growth. Carol accepted that she felt broken inside due to her damaged home. She then began finding the healing process to recovery and growth. Patience led to acceptance which in turn created a space for growth in the future

Self-Reliance

Participants were quick to point out that, although other people and agencies could be helpful, they had to rely on themselves. No support group, government agency, or other person was going to save them. If they wanted to have food or water or to get their homes repaired, they would have to do it themselves. Self-reliance brought the confidence that they could handle anything and, in turn, fostered their growth.

Kathy Brown said that she found self-reliance important. She said, “Don’t expect from the federal agencies and everything . . . don’t expect them to come pull you up. You have to pull your own self up. They will help, but don’t assume they’re going to do everything for you” (T1, p. 115). Self-reliance was a contributing factor to Kathy’s growth. Self-reliance encouraged her to become more confident that she could and would handle the hurricane damage to her home. But self-reliance wasn’t always easy.

Most people want to throw themselves on the floor and never get up to deal with the mess a disaster brings. Kathy felt this way many times, but then she got up and did what she had to do. She explained how she found the strength to get up:

Well, let me think of how I would describe this. If you lay there and wait, is anything going to change? You can't lay there and wait. You have to keep getting up and going. Sometimes it took me all my energy just to not want to give up. (T1, pp. 116-117)

Clay Dean wasn't just waiting for God to help him. He was self-reliant and creative in his approach in beginning the building of his new home, and this contributed to his personal growth. He explained: "The Lord says you just don't just stand there and crab. You step on your feet and move on" (T5, p. 49).

Tim Dean felt, like most of his family, that they had to rely on themselves to recover and grow from the hurricane. He said, "You see how people are. Nobody wants to help you" (T5, p. 53). Self-reliance fostered growth as an individual and as a family.

Teamwork

Participants noted that teamwork was working together to solve problems or help one another. Teamwork involved family, friends, or neighbors. Sue Brown said, "We started to work as a team more" (T1, p. 61). Teamwork drew Sue and her family closer as they emotionally supported one another in tackling the damage on their home together. Teamwork fostered growth in Sue's family.

Clay Dean formed a team with his family and had his sons help, not only their family, but the neighbors as well:

We more or less worked as a team. The boys, they went out and helped the neighbors pick up some of the debris in their yards and stuff. But it

was more or less us. It seemed like every family was doing their own little thing instead of working in a group and a team. (T5, p. 21)

Teamwork within their family was essential to the Deans to make headway on the damage to their property and home. Tim Dean explained:

Well, see, like we didn't have no water, no food—canned food, so we had to work together. Like my dad coming in to do something I'd have to do.

There ain't no "I don't want to do." You got to do. (T5, p. 55)

Teamwork helped the Deans grow closer as a family and become confident they could handle difficult situations together.

What Kathy Brown treasures the most is that she and her children are much closer after the hurricane, and she attributes this growth to teamwork. Kathy credits the hurricane for this growth because they had to work together to solve problems with their house. Kathy said, "We worked together. We fixed the problems. We, we did everything. We did it together, and the kids were included in it. We became a very tight team" (T1, p. 23).

Creativity

Creativity often meant that participants did not wait for someone to solve the problem or accept that things couldn't be changed or fixed. Participants described creativity as the unique methods they used to solve problems. They were quite proud of how they dealt with the hurricane-related damage to their homes. Creativity kept them focused on the process of solving problems rather than being bogged down by the problem itself.

Clay Dean said that he found creativity helped him grow in confidence in being able to solve problems in the building of his new house. Thinking creatively kept him from being mired in the present hurricane-related issues surrounding his mobile home and the building of a new home. Using creativity, he was able to grow a vision of his family's future in a new home.

Kathy Brown found the challenges of recovery demanded creativity. She delighted in her creative approach to juggling and solving problems. She grew in confidence as she handled each issue.

Relationships among Adversarial Growth Factors

Some of the adversarial growth factors might seem to contradict other factors. Some participants might even be seen as contradicting themselves by describing adversarial growth factors that seem to be contradictory. In other instances, the factors appear both to contradict and support one another.

One instance of seemingly contradictory factors was that participants mentioned being self-reliant and engaging in teamwork as important to adversarial growth. Participants mentioned that it was important to rely on yourself to pick yourself up or nothing would change. On the other hand, participants treasured the relationships that resulted from using teamwork within their families and thought it was important to growth. Sometimes they bemoaned the fact that neighbors weren't involved in working together and creating a team relationship to help one another. Both factors make sense in a disaster situation even if they might seem contradictory.

Self-reliance was in tension not only with teamwork but with other factors as well. Self-reliance could be seen as in opposition to religious faith by thinking of self-reliance as the view that “I will take care of myself” which might be thought of as contrasting with “God will take care of me”. In fact, participants reiterated their religious faith and said that God doesn’t expect you to stand there and wait. Perhaps, a strong religious faith supports people being self-reliant.

Religious faith and self-reliance were not the only factors that might seem contradictory and yet supportive of one another. A secular worldview and religious faith might appear to contradict each other, but participants often said both were factors in adversarial growth. A change in worldview, or clarity about life, was often mentioned by participants as stemming from God’s plan for them.

Patience and self-reliance might also be seen as contradictory. Patience implies waiting for things to happen in the long process of recovery and accepting the situation. However, self-reliance suggests that people not wait, not accept, and instead take care of things themselves. As a result of self-reliance, participants mentioned growing in confidence in their abilities to handle whatever life brings. However, on a practical note, taking matters into your own hands without waiting for insurance adjusters may be injurious to your claim. Patience suggests calmness about the situation that may lead to less stress on families.

Emotional support, the most commonly cited adversarial growth factor, might also be in tension with self-reliance. Self-reliance may imply an independence from the emotional support of family, friends, neighbors, and support groups. Although participants described both factors as helpful to

positive growth, the link between emotional support and self-reliance may be tenuous. Are people self-reliant without emotional support or do people become self-reliant because they receive emotional support? Emotional support may provide a vehicle for self-reliance through talking about emotional and practical issues.

Participants described a combination of factors that encouraged adversarial growth. Some of the factors were in tension with one another. Other factors might seem contradictory but may support one another. The relationships among adversarial growth factors may be one of flow and conflict at the same time.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the adversarial growth experiences of the participants and discussed eight factors that appear to influence adversarial growth. I described how some of the factors may seem to contradict one another and how other factors may both support and contradict one another. Most participants reported that positive growth had occurred within themselves, their families, or one or more family members. The growth that emerged for the families was an increase in emotional support among family members, and in some cases, with friends and neighbors. Five families mentioned that their religious faith had been strengthened.

The majority of the participants described themselves as being more appreciative of what they had after the hurricane. Participants found they were less focused on material things and more concerned, in their opinion, on what

matters in life such as family and friends. In every family, at least one person reported that his or her worldview had grown. At least three participants mentioned transformational growth. They experienced growth for the better in ways they had not imagined previously. Some participants reported both positive growth and negative growth.

Participants described eight factors that may influence adversarial growth: (a) emotional support, (b) worldview, (c) appreciation, (d) religious faith, (e) patience, (f) self-reliance, (g) teamwork, and (h) creativity. These eight factors were mentioned by two or more participants and emerged from the analysis of the participants' experiences of adversarial growth from the transcripts and field notes. Of these factors, emotional support was most commonly cited followed (in order of the frequency mentioned) by worldview, appreciation, religious faith, patience, self-reliance, teamwork, and creativity.

Participants agreed the best ways to recover and grow were to give and receive emotional support from family, friends, neighbors, and support groups, and to lean on religious faith. The participants mentioned as being helpful having a positive attitude and appreciating and being thankful for big things and little ones. Although not all participants agreed, some suggested that listening to stories to learn how to solve problems and to receive emotional support was important to recovery and growth. In chapter 6, I describe the potential benefits, limitations, and the implications of this study.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I provide a summary and describe the potential benefits, limitations, and the implications of this study.

Summary

This study employed a qualitative approach to explore the factors that contribute to adversarial growth for survivors of natural disasters. Adversarial growth is a collective term that suggests positive growth after experiencing adverse or life challenging events. Adversarial growth was considered synonymous with positive growth in this study. The qualitative methodology included narrative and family group interviews that were conducted with six families in Florida that had experienced multiple hurricanes within a six-week period in 2004.

Three research questions were studied in this dissertation:

1. What is it like to experience a hurricane?
2. How do people cope with a hurricane?
3. What factors contribute to adversarial growth after a hurricane?

Narrative analysis and thematic analysis were used to discover the factors that contributed to participants experiencing adversarial growth.

Participants described the experience of surviving and coping with the hurricane in terms of three time periods—preparation prior to the hurricane, surviving during the hurricane, and coping after the hurricane. They reported that preparation for a hurricane involved a three-part process—physical, mental, and emotional preparation—and that the preparation affected survival and recovery from a hurricane. They mentioned four actions as helpful in staying positive during a hurricane: (a) drawing on family, friends, and neighbors for continual emotional support; (b) keeping occupied with a fun activity; (c) leaning on religious faith; (d) and listening to up-to-date information.

Participants described nine sources of support that enabled them to cope after the hurricane: (a) the government, (b) charitable organizations, (c) homeowner's insurance, (d) family, (e) friends, (f) religious faith, (g) stories, (h) life perspective, and (i) music. In addition, they mentioned eight factors that may influence adversarial growth: (a) emotional support, (b) worldview, (c) appreciation, (d) religious faith, (e) patience, (f) self-reliance, (g) teamwork, and (h) creativity. Some of the eight factors appear to contradict one another and other factors may both support and contradict one another. Communicating emotional support within relationships was the most commonly cited factor in contributing to recovery and growth after a hurricane.

Findings indicate that positive growth is possible for the survivor of a natural disaster. Adversarial growth was influenced by preparation before the hurricane and activities during the hurricane. Participants experiencing positive

growth after the hurricane drew on sources of support and adversarial growth factors.

Potential Benefits

A holistic approach to disasters that encouraged the factors that contribute to positive growth among survivors might lessen the burden on the government to deal with disasters. Survivors would be encouraged to rely on one another and to support one another emotionally. This, in turn, might foster positive growth so that fewer government resources might be needed to help survivors work through the process of recovery.

Most survivors experience normal symptoms of stress from a disaster and are best supported by their families and interpersonal networks. Less time and money might be spent on disasters if we understood more fully how to foster positive growth. The overall effect might be one of survivors experiencing the thrill of positive growth instead of the perspective of loss and tragedy. Throughout history, people have grown positively from loss and tragedy. If we encourage this growth, the benefits might be significant for families, friends, neighborhoods, and communities, with less dependence on government resources and positive growth for survivors.

Disaster planners need to understand where measures to encourage positive growth fit among concerns for such essentials as food, water, and shelter. The participants in this study described the disaster preparation process as important to positive growth. In the preparation process, well before hurricane season, practical measures must be taken as well. Insurance companies should

be required to make clear to policy holders in terms they understand what is covered and what is not. Understanding insurance contributes to a proactive vision of the future if a disaster strikes.

Media outlets, including but not limited to newspapers, radio, television, and social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, should be encouraged to include information on the mental and emotional dimensions of survival, recovery, and positive growth along with physical survival. As an example, media could offer emotional support through lists of activities that people could do if they were feeling stressed out before, during, and after a disaster. The lists could suggest methods of giving and getting emotional support in interpersonal relationships. Encouraging people to call their family and friends to help them decide to evacuate to safe shelter could also be added. Although the primary concern of weather reporters is to give updates about the storm, I have noticed in Florida that there is plenty of filler time while waiting for the radar update, which could be filled with valuable information regarding emotional support. This, in turn, might reduce the phone calls to emergency services by scared or confused people who may only need to be supported emotionally.

Communities should plan to empower neighborhoods and families for positive growth through the encouragement of interpersonal networks and the inclusion of the factors of positive growth well before hurricane season. A specific plan designed by disaster planners that incorporates emotional support and other factors as well as safety and practical measures for neighborhoods groups should be offered to neighborhoods. The plan might include asking people to

form a specific group to deal with disasters in their neighborhood. The neighborhood group could incorporate plans for single, elderly, or special needs people, should the need arise. Individuals or small families, even if they have sturdy shelters, could be encouraged to stay together during the storm to provide emotional, mental, and physical support. Food could be pooled in neighborhoods and informal gatherings planned to keep people's spirits up after a disaster. Neighborhood resources, tools, and manpower could be assessed to create a proactive vision for the future. The neighborhood group could be trained in various ways to provide emotional support. A plan for communicative help that includes helping people understand the importance of emotionally supportive communication in relationships before, during, and after disaster should be implemented, well before hurricane season, and reinforced during and after a disaster.

This study contributes to the research literature because the current research in communication does not examine interpersonal communication and adversarial growth in natural disasters. I hope this study encourages more research into how we might use emotional support and other factors not only to grow after a disaster but in making decisions before and during a disaster that might improve people's mental, emotional, and physical health. Another area that future researchers might explore is how participants reframe the FEMA process as "games" that have to be learned and played correctly. Also, we need to investigate what role religious leaders might play with their congregations in all phases of a disaster.

Limitations

This is a small study of six families that was conducted four years after they experienced two or more hurricanes within six weeks. The time factor itself may be a limitation. In the passing of time, memory can often blur perceptions and retrospectively things can often appear better or worse than they seemed at the time. The reliability of recall is uncertain. People do forget what or how things happened. Causal statements by participants may not be reliable. Statements by participants should be considered from the stance that they said they remembered experiencing rather than exactly what happened four years earlier. However, memory often sharpens what matters most to people, and everything else fades away. Therefore, no matter how memory distorts as time passes, the story we remember and tell ourselves and others is the truth we live by.

A related limitation due to the time factor is that participants may have told their stories many times and embellished and changed the stories significantly from what they experienced and were saying four years ago. The original story may have been lost and the new one over time may have become reified. Perhaps, they forgot parts of their story or dramatized it to make it seem better. I don't believe I was told stories that were changed or embellished over time, but I acknowledge this limitation to their stories.

Another possible limitation to this study may be the lack of time between the narrative interview and the family group interview and that only two families participated in the group interview, the Browns and the Deans. These participants wanted to conduct the family interview immediately after the

narrative interview because they were excited to share their thoughts as a family. I was satisfied with the interaction in the family group interview, but I acknowledge this may have been a limitation to the study. Perhaps, with one or two weeks between the narrative interview and the family group interview, the participants may have had time to reflect on their answers and add more details about their experiences. Also, I did not have an opportunity to reflect, compare, and ask more questions that might have occurred to me. With no time between the interviews, and no subsequent interviews, I acknowledge that the participants may have had more to add to the stories or validated their stories if we had had more interviews.

Unfortunately, one of the realities of this sort of applied research is that getting participants is difficult and they don't always fit the categories we have in mind. Applied communication research, especially when it is qualitative research, is often messy, a point made explicitly by Ellingson (2009) in her chapter on ethnographic research in the recent *Routledge Handbook of Applied Communication Research* (Frey & Cissna, 2009). Query et al. (2009) also noted the unexpected difficulties of even securing research participants, especially in the case of populations that have suffered some kind of trauma.

There may be alternate interpretations of the data. For example, two of the participants, Sue Brown and Scott Dean, both of whom were teenagers, described experiencing transformational growth, which they explained in detail during the interviews. An alternative interpretation might be that they are teenagers and that they would have changed in these ways even without the

hurricanes. Perhaps, although I believe that my interpretation better fits what they told me. They explained their transformation in detail and gave evidence of it in the four years since the hurricane. Their explanations sounded convincing and believable. Teenagers are not exempt from transformational growth because of their age. In addition, a limitation to this study may be that the majority of the participants were low income, some were disabled, and most had experienced a great deal of adversity in their lives. Therefore, they may have better understood how to recover and experience positive growth based on past histories with adversity. Five out of six families had been referred by Rebuild Polk County After Disaster (RPAD) for this study. Most of the families were active Christians. However, one family with a middle-to-upper income level without disabilities experienced positive growth in much of the same manner. Perhaps a more diverse set of participants would have responded differently to the interview questions in this study.

Implications

Further research is necessary regarding interpersonal communication and adversarial growth among disaster survivors. We need to investigate interpersonal relationships and supportive communication in disasters to consider how to foster positive growth in survivors. We need studies on emotional support and mental wellness in a disaster within a communicative context. We also need to examine emotional support and creativity in a disaster. Current psychological studies on creativity in a disaster suggest a link between it and well-being (Joseph & Linley, 2008; Metzl, 2009). How might interpersonal

communication support this process? Few studies exist by communication researchers on natural disasters and adversarial growth; communication scholars need to join this conversation.

The participants in this study contributed valuable insight into positive growth and the place of interpersonal communication in natural disasters. The findings suggest that people need to prepare mentally and emotionally as well as physically in order to survive natural disasters. Physical survival often depends on the mental and emotional state of the individual, and mental and emotional well-being depends in significant part on the person's interpersonal networks and availability of emotional support within those networks. Thus, the results of this study suggest the value of supportive interpersonal relationships in surviving hurricanes and other natural disasters, and even in growing as a result of the experience. In turn, the findings suggest that disaster planners would do well to plan for ways to encourage the conditions that make adversarial growth more likely and hence to confirm people in their capacities to grow after disaster.

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