

MULTIPLE COMMUNITY SERVICES: ONE FAMILY'S EXPERIENCE

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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November 16, 1999

Blacksburg, Virginia

Key Words: Multiple Services, Case Study, Family Support, Community Agencies,  
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### ABSTRACT

The family support movement in the United States has its roots in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when progressives like Jane Addams worked to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and their families. Family support today is provided by multiple public and private agencies. How families experience these services is not well known. Such information could help service providers give meaningful support to those in need.

This is a case study of how one family experienced the receipt of multiple community services. The family lived in Virginia, and four family members participated in the study. The family consisted of Elizabeth, the matriarch, age 39; Allen, third husband of Elizabeth, age 30; Bradley, middle son of Elizabeth, age 16; and Benjamin, youngest son of Elizabeth, age 14. Elizabeth's eldest son C. C., age 18, did not participate in the study.

The services received by the family were focused on Elizabeth, a childhood victim of parental abuse and a cancer survivor, and Bradley, who was identified with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Bradley was a resident in a wilderness program for at-risk boys. The wilderness program was partially funded by the Virginia Comprehensive Services Act.

The study had four purposes: (1) to inform policy makers about how families are affected by policy decisions on issues pertaining to families, (2) to influence the decisions of policy makers, (3) to add to the definition of quality family support, and (4) to provide information useful to educators and service providers in developing programs for at-risk children and families.

Data sources were observations of, and interviews with, family members. Data were analyzed with the constant comparative method as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). The analysis and findings are presented in a narrative report.

## DEDICATION

To:

My wife, my mother, and my sister without your collective-support and love this would not have been possible. Your beauty and strength enrich me and you make me complete.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am thankful to the many people who gave me support and help with this project. Dad, Doctors Parks, Thomason, and Inge, you have all been the best mentors. I have tried to take from each of you the qualities that you project each day. When you see me succeed and do well, know that I am able to grow and achieve because I am a composite of all of you.

Doctors Dawson, Jones, Crockett, and Parson, you are all master teachers. I have learned more on this journey than at any other time in my life. No higher compliment could I pay to people who have made it their life's work to improve the lives of others. I am thankful and proud that you all agreed to be my partners.

To all of my family and friends, I have been blessed because you are all part of my life, and I am thankful to have such wealth. I especially thank T. B. and family.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In this introduction I convey the topic of this study, why I studied one family, my reasons for doing the research, and the research questions. I end the chapter with a brief summary.

### The Research Topic

Some of the antonyms for the term care are disregard, indifference, and neglect; words used to identify the notion of care are concern, attention, regard, and watchfulness. The United States is a place where people care about one another. In our efforts to demonstrate that we do care about each other we seek to understand why there is such a disparity in the quality of life that some of our people live as opposed to others. We build whole organizations and pass laws with the expressed intention of diminishing inequalities in opportunity, freedom, justice, and quality of life.

Bronfenbrenner (1987) noted that since President Johnson's "war against poverty" many social scientists have focused their research on families believing that their efforts to understand the family would be the best approach in helping the disadvantaged. These efforts have provided good information for caregivers and legislators. Many policies and laws designed to improve family life have been based on this research (Weissbourd, 1994).

This research is based on the family, and the focus is on how the family experiences the receipt of multiple community services. One family's experience of receiving services designed to make life better is the story to be sought. This approach is not new in the field of family research. Bronfenbrenner (1974) related that careful observation of the family in "real life settings" has lead us to a better understanding of how complex the forces that operate in and on families are. Yin (1994) refers to this type of study as "unique case."

### Studying One Family

During the course of turning a bill into a law there is a common practice used by both houses of congress whereby a single constituent will be asked to give a testimonial because the bill in question has a direct impact on the life of that one constituent. There is an understanding that this one case does not tell the legislators how the passage of the bill into law will impact all other constituents. The assumption at work in this practice is that we seek to have a better understanding of "everyman" by knowing the details and intricacies of one man's experience.

A worthy analogy can be made to the study of single cases of families and their experiences with community service agencies. LaRossa (1984) contended that while quantitative research on family life gives a certain breadth to the information that can be gleaned, it lacks the depth that can be gained through the qualitative, observational, single-case study.

### Purposes of the Study

There are four reasons for conducting this study. The first is to give policy makers an informed view of how families who receive multiple services are affected by receiving assistance from a number of service providers. The second is to influence policy makers to provide sufficient resources to the family support system. The third is to add information about families receiving services to the definition of quality family support. The fourth is to provide information on families at risk that may be helpful to school

personnel and service providers who must develop programs to serve the needs of the children of such families.

#### To Inform Policy Makers

There is an advantage to informed progress as opposed to a hit-or-miss and let-us-see-what-works approach. Federal, state, and local officials who become informed about family services offered to those in need can make better decisions about how best to use limited resources. "States and localities are eager for additional information about family resource program approaches and policy initiatives" (Rice, 1994, p. 356). Information needs to be gathered and analyzed before it can be disseminated. Policy makers at all levels must be informed about the family support system so they can make effective decisions about children and families who are in need of assistance.

Information does exist about families in considerable measure, but the nature of society and social change creates a moving target for policy makers. Descriptive information about how families experience life is always needed to inform those who make the laws and rules governing services. "The field must soon generate more detailed knowledge about (and greater ability to communicate) the essential ingredients of effective family resource programs and community initiatives" (Rice, 1994, p. 370).

Dryfoos (1994) wrote about the urgency people working in the full-service movement feel as they ask policy makers to support efforts to bring many services together with the single overall mission of better service to all: "A sense of urgency drives this new movement because of the growing needs among disadvantaged families and their children" (Dryfoos, 1994, p. 16). Thus, to policy makers, few of whom have experienced such assistance or lived under the regulation for receiving these services, the growing needs of the disadvantaged are best explained by those who are in need. Policy makers should listen to their constituencies for guidance. The views of family members in a family who receives multiple services should prove to be insightful.

Van Manen (1990) explained that this type of research is phenomenological research: "From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings" (p. 5). A phenomenological study gives the researcher an opportunity to flesh out statistics with human accounts of real life. Policy makers get a better sense of the human condition that numbers can not portray.

#### To Influence Policy Makers

Informing the reader is one of the main purposes of a single-case study with a phenomenological perspective. Informing the reader only explains half of the reason why this type of research needs to be conducted. The other part of this purpose is to influence the reader. These two purposes are intertwined so that to inform the reader in all likelihood will influence the reader to action or inaction. In this case to inform the reader of what it is like to live in a family who receives multiple services may in turn move the reader to actively respond to the plight of at-risk youth and their families.

In Stephen R. Covey's (1997) book *The seven habits of highly effective families* he told the reader that the first habit is to be "proactive" and defined this notion as, "... the ability to act based on principles and values rather than reacting based on emotion or circumstance" (Covey, 1997, p. 229). Research data that moves change agents to proactively seek improvements in existing policy and laws is indeed influential.

### To Add to the Definition of Quality Family Support

In recent years, policy makers and service providers have moved to coordinate services and consolidate limited resources to improve effectiveness and efficiency of their work. Legislators want school and agency personnel to work together and improve services for young people and their families. The enactment of the Comprehensive Services Act in 1992 by the Virginia General Assembly was a step to consolidate resources by requiring schools and agencies to collaborate in the delivery of services. In compliance with the law local school divisions and state agencies have created Family Assessment Planning Teams to work with the highest risk children and their families. FAPT teams have been functioning since 1992. Any insights that can be gained by studying the impact of such policies on those that are most affected inform providers about how they should proceed. Trying to understand if providers are helping children and families by giving them a chance to speak about their needs and whether or not care providers are meeting those needs is essential for system improvement.

A better understanding of what quality family support should be is the goal. A single-case study of how a family who receives multiple services functions will add to our understanding, and help clarify what children and families need to move out of an at-risk posture and into a healthier mode of living. The data will add to a more precise understanding of what those who receive support consider quality support to be. Kagan (1994) believed that each new piece of information will fulfill, "...the primary need-that of adding precision to the definition of quality in family support" (p. 376).

### To Provide Information Useful to Educators and Service Providers in Developing Programs for At-risk Children and Families

Educators are central to the success of collaborative action. The family support movement is a movement that consists of many organizations not the least of which is the public educational system. The educational leader must assume a multi-purpose role in the network of service providers. The network of providers will be closer in proximity to the school, if not on the school grounds. Schorr (1997) listed four things that successful schools are doing as they progress to serve their communities: (a) linking to other services, (b) opening their buildings to the neighborhood, (c) becoming partners in service reform and community building, and (d) supporting families as partners in a unified mission. Such schools are the focal point for agencies and service providers to come together to provide a collaborative effort to help at-risk youth and their families.

The information gathered would add to what is already known about collaborative systems designed to provide services. As educators and service providers build new service providing systems one goal is to build a system that is sustainable and successful in fulfilling the system's mission, in this case helping children and families.

### The Research Questions

My research began in November of 1997 when I was the chairman of a conference held in Virginia. The conference title was the *New Era of Comprehensive Services: Leading the Way*, and it was sponsored by the Virginia Tech Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and The Danforth Foundation. The main goal of the conference was to strengthen interagency planning for children and families.

As chair of the conference I was able to move from one session to another. I was intrigued by the conversations between service providers from multiple agencies. I

thought the voices of service recipients were needed in the discussions. My research questions come from what I think service recipients would add to a discussion with a group of service providers.

I wanted to find the answers to the following three research questions:

1. What is the context of the family's receipt of services?
2. What are the types of services received?
3. What are the effects of the services received?

#### Summary

Kagan and Shelly (1987) informed us about the evolution of the family support movement and concluded that it is still an undefined entity. Kagan, Powell, Weissbourd, and Zigler (1987) found that while there are reasons to be optimistic about progress, in making the family support movement better, we must be watchful of complacency. Understanding how one family experiences the receiving end of what family support organizations provide will refine the definition of what meaningful support is. Creating a picture with descriptions of what it means to receive services from multiple agencies from those who experience those services will enrich that definition.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter I review a portion of the literature, which provides background and focus for my study. First, General Systems Theory is discussed. Then a conceptual framework based on Uri Bronfenbrenner's (as cited in Santrock, 1993) Ecological Theory of Development is outlined to present a systems mindset for the rest of the discussion. Second, the concept of family function is reviewed in a study conducted to determine the functional characteristics of healthy families. Third, a relatively new approach to helping people is reviewed: Clinical social work and psychology provide a strengths based model for use by the helping professions.

#### Systems Theory as the Conceptual Framework for the Study

In 1928 Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968) began his work in General Systems Theory which originated in the field of engineering. The problem presented to engineers was finding a way to control large amounts of energy. Directing great amounts of steam or electricity into smaller manageable units required development of low-power devices. The strategy that proved successful concerned elements within a contained system and how they interact within the system. This was a part of the mechanistic reductionism that preceded general systems theory. In Bertalanffy's definition of general systems theory he explained that studying the elements within the system was only a start. It is important to study the elements within the system, the system as a whole and the system in the context of its surrounding universe.

In its beginnings general systems theory became pervasive in all of the more technical fields, which fueled specialization and transfer to the softer sciences. "Politicians frequently ask for application of the 'systems approach' to pressing problems such as air and water pollution, traffic congestion, urban blight, juvenile delinquency, organized crime, and city planning" (Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 4).

As Bertalanffy studied and wrote about general systems theory scientists from other fields joined him in asking questions about the world with a general systems model for the monocle of their scientific eye. "In one way or another, we are forced to deal with complexities, with 'wholes' or 'systems,' in all fields of knowledge. This implies a basic re-orientation in scientific thinking" (Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 5).

#### The Movement of Systems Theory Into the Social Sciences

##### The Ecological Theory of Development

The complexities discussed by Bertalanffy did not elude social scientists. However, instead of complexities presented when following the course of an electrical charge, the social scientist is faced with one of the most complex occurrences found in the natural world. Because human beings are the most complex of all systems, social scientists have used the systems view to build theories regarding human interaction and development.

Bronfenbrenner (as cited in Santrock, 1993) developed a systems view of the individual and the family (see Figure 1). The model has five concentric circles. The center circle represents the individual with each of the four circles that encompass the center representing the world around the individual. The closer the circle is to the center, the more familiar the socio-cultural subsystem is to the individual. The mesosystem represents the relationships between the individual and the macrosystem or world. The chronosystem represents time.

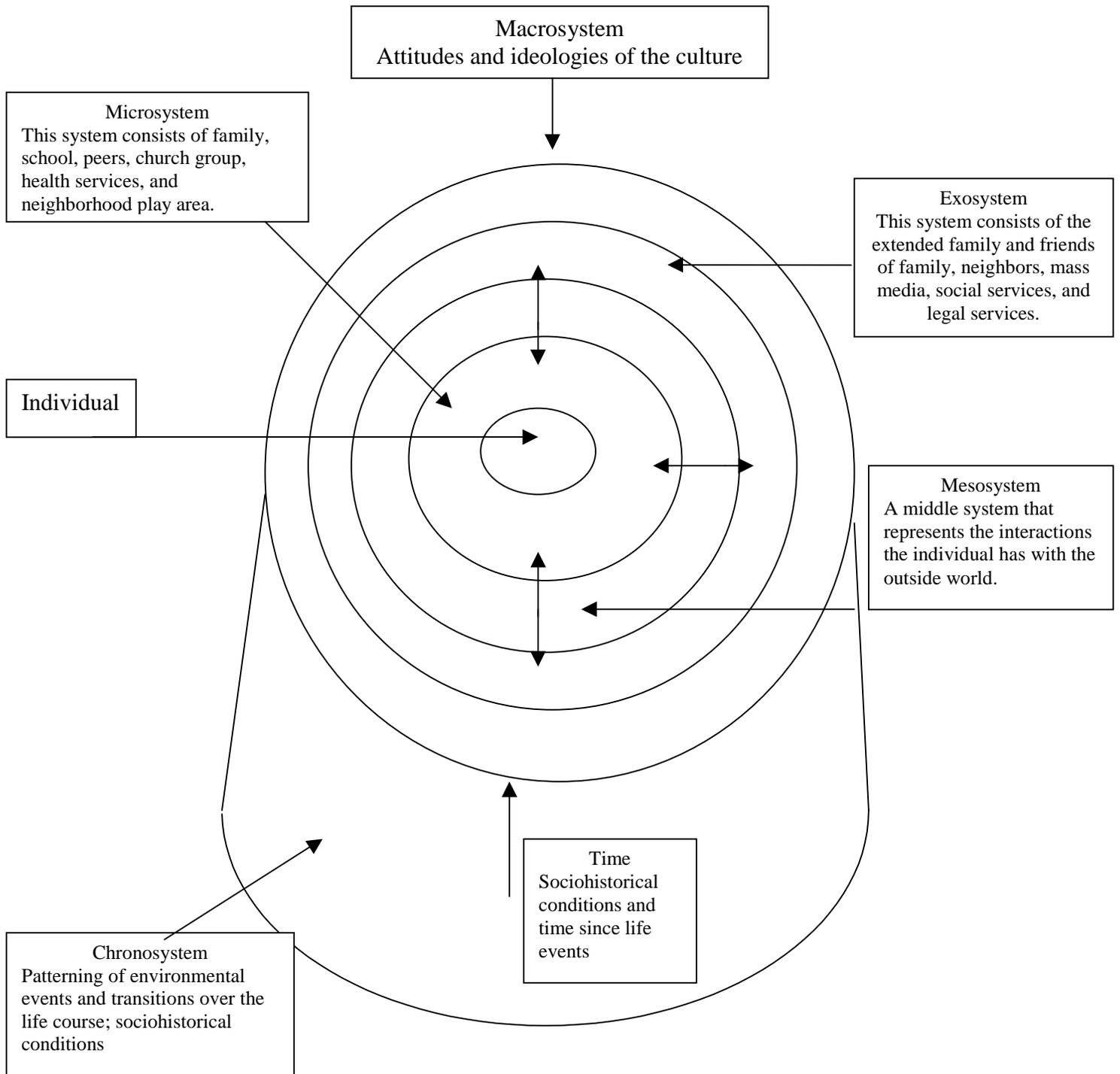


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development. Adapted from The Science of Child Development, edited by J. W. Santrock, 1993, p.51. Child Development, Copyright 1993 by Erlbaum Publishing Company.

It represents the birth of the whole system, and the system's aging process. Bronfenbrenner's model is a good conceptual frame for studying families.

Each member of the family can be examined from the point of being the individual at the center while other family members can be seen to function in an outer system. Whole families can also be placed in the center, which allows the researcher opportunities to make assumptions about how the outer systems affect either individual family members or the family as a whole. For example, if a family in receipt of many different services is getting an optimal response to their needs from many providers, one could assume that most of the field service workers function in the microsystem for the participating family. The microsystem is the second circle from the center. This subsystem includes the individuals and groups that are in the closest and most frequent contact with the individual or family.

Bronfenbrenner's model is useful in conceptualizing this study of a single family. The family is the unit to be measured and is anchored at the center of the model. The variables, many of which are unknown, are in the outer concentric circles representing the five environmental systems.

#### An Application of Systems Theory in the Social Sciences: The Study of Family Functioning

A review of one study conducted by the research team of Lewis, Beavers, Gossett, and Phillips (1976) follows. The study focuses on how healthy families work and is a good example of how social scientists applied systems theory to solving human problems.

This review will begin with a description of how the research team conducted the pilot study. The research team made few procedural changes while conducting the main study. There were two purposes for the pilot study. One was to devise five ten-minute tasks that a family could perform while being videotaped. An independent rater viewed the tape and based on the family members interaction, rated the family on a family functioning scale. The other purpose of the pilot study tested construct validity and the inter-rater reliability of the family functioning scale.

#### The Pilot Study

Lewis, Beavers, Gossett, and Phillips (1976) conducted a pilot study of 11 volunteer families and 12 families with an adolescent family member living as an inpatient at a psychiatric treatment facility. The 11 families that made up the control group mirrored the 12 families that made up the experimental group in areas of parental occupation, number and age of children, and children still living at home. After the sample was obtained, the protocol for each family was the same.

Each family member was required to respond with pencil and paper to the question, What are the main problems in your family? Then each family member responded to a 20-item family characteristics rating scale. The 20 items were statements, 15 were about psychological or emotional aspects of family life and five were about financial matters. Family members were to rate on a scale of one to five whether the characteristic applied to their family. A rating of one meant the statement did not apply at all and five meant the statement applied (see Figure 2).

Videotaped interactional tasks were designed so that the family could be videotaped while they performed certain tasks. All members of the family engaged in four out of five tasks. One task was designed for children only and one was designed for

## FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS INVENTORY

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The following statements fit some families better than others. Please circle the number that best describes how well each statement fits your family.

	Does Not Fit Our Family At All	2	3	4	5 Fits Our Family Very Well
1. We live in a good neighborhood.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Our family talks things out.	1	2	3	4	5
3. We have a sense of humor.	1	2	3	4	5
4. There is an opportunity for each member to express himself in his own way.	1	2	3	4	5
5. There are activities which we all enjoy doing together.	1	2	3	4	5
6. We respect each other's feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
7. In our home, we feel loved.	1	2	3	4	5
8. We have the right kinds of friends.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Discipline is moderate and consistent.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Educational goals are important to us.	1	2	3	4	5
11. There is a sense of belonging in our family.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Our family is a reliable, dependable family.	1	2	3	4	5
13. We establish reasonable goals for ourselves.	1	2	3	4	5
14. We encourage development of potential in all members of our family.	1	2	3	4	5
15. We express appreciation for what we do for one another.	1	2	3	4	5
16. We plan ahead.	1	2	3	4	5
17. We share experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
18. We live in a good school district.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Father is a good provider.	1	2	3	4	5
20. There is enough money for special things.	1	2	3	4	5

Figure 2. The 20-item self-assessment family characteristics inventory. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, Appendix A, p. 231. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

parents only. In task number one, the family was informed that they did agree on some issues as being the family's main problems, but not entirely. They were asked to discuss the fact that they disagreed.

In task number two the family was asked to plan something together. The plan should be something that the family might really do.

The third task involved a marital test. Only the parents participated in this task. Each parent was asked to choose one of six choices as being the happiest stage of their marriage. The choices ranged from courtship to children being grown and gone. The couple was asked to discuss their agreements or disagreements on marital happiness. The couple was then asked to discuss the greatest source of pain in their marriage.

During the time the parents were in the marital testing, the children, as part of task four, were asked to move dolls on a board to demonstrate how close they felt the family's members were to one another. Then the entire family was reunited to discuss what closeness meant to the family.

The fifth task was designed to leave the family with a positive feeling about themselves. They were asked to discuss what they felt their family strengths were.

There were twelve different raters. Eleven rated the families based on viewing one ten-minute videotape session of the families performing the five interactional tasks. One rater viewed the entire 50-minute tape. Each rater used a ten-point family health-pathology rating scale (see Figure 3).

Lewis et al. (1976) found this procedure and scale consistent for rating family health. Using the Spearman rank order correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ), the ordinal ratings of the scale were converted to rank orders. Each pair of raters who viewed the same segment of family interaction agreed with high reliability as to the relative degree of health of the families (see Table 1). Raters A and B viewed the family strengths interactional task and on a ten point scale rated the family health. One being the healthiest family score. There was a high degree of agreement by the raters on the family's health  $r = .75$  with  $p < .001$ .

The research team wanted to know if the raters could distinguish between patient-containing families and control families. Seven of the twelve raters were experts in family studies, coming from fields of psychiatry or psychiatric social work. There were seven sets of judgements available for each family based on pairing the ratings completed by these experts.

One of the seven raters viewed the entire hour of videotape to make the seventh paired set of ratings available. The seven ratings were totaled yielding a total family score from 7 to 70. Low scores indicated greater health and higher scores indicated more pathology in the family system. Lewis et al. (1976) found there was no overlap in the ratings. The nonpatient families scored from a low of 16 to a high of 42. The patient containing families scored from a low of 45 to a high of 62 (see Table 2). The Lewis team wanted to know how well the family members' self-ratings on the Family Characteristics Inventory correlated with the independent raters. The range of scores was 20 to 100 by each family member. An overall family score was gained by averaging the family members' scores. The nonpatient families' average scores ranged from 73 to 94 (higher scores signify greater health). The patient containing family scores ranged from 63 to 89. The raters' evaluations correlated with family self-appraisals from .36 to .68 ( $p < .05$  to  $< .001$ ), with a mean of .52 ( $p < .01$ ).

Pathological					Healthy				
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Extremely		Moderately		Mildly		Mildly		Moderately	Extremely

Figure 3. The 10-point family health-pathology rating scale. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 32. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

Table 1

Interrater Reliability

Raters	Test sections	r	p
A & B	Family Strengths	.75	<.001
E & B	Main Problems	.90	<.001
B & B	Strengths/Problems	.75	<.001
F & G	Main Problems	.65	<.001
H & I	Family Closeness	.78	<.001

From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 33.  
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Table 2

Rank Order of Families by Sum of Global Health-Pathology:

Ratings of Seven Expert Judges

Nonpatient Families	Health-Pathology Scores	Patient Families
N1	16	
N2	17	
N3	21	
N4	26	
N5	26	
N6	29	
N7	30	
N8	32	
N9	35	
N10	36	
N11	42	
	45	P1
	49	P2
	50	P3
	52	P4
	55	P5
	55	P6
	56	P7
	56	P8
	57	P9
	58	P10
	60	P11
	62	P12

From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 33.  
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Lewis et al. (1976) sought in the pilot study to develop a process that would enable independent raters to rate a family's health or pathology while yielding reliable and valid results. From the pilot study the research team felt that these goals were met.

### The Main Study

The purpose of the study. Lewis et al. believed that the main factors that contribute to a family's success were not available at the time they started their research. They also believed that this deficiency could be remedied so that a better understanding of families could be gained. The research team had three main goals. One was to conduct the research looking at the family with a "family systems" view. Another, was to identify the characteristics that well-adjusted families exhibit. The third was to use their results to teach families how to be healthier and happier.

The conceptual framework of the study. Lewis et al. thought that family health could be viewed on a continuum; the healthiest families would be found on one end of the continuum and troubled families would be found on the other end. This concept was given more relevance when Robert Beavers joined the research team and brought with him the family systems view.

W. Robert Beavers joined the Lewis team as a central team member after he was a rater in the pilot study. Prior to the main study, Beavers provided the team with a theoretical structure based on the family viewed as a system. With the infusion of the family systems perspective, the research team focused on five characteristics essential for optimal family functioning.

Beavers determined that the following qualities were important for a family in order to develop healthy individuals: (a) power structure, (b) the degree of family individuation, (c) acceptance of separation and loss, (d) perception of reality, and (e) affect.

Thirteen scales of family functioning were designed based on the five family qualities. This would allow raters to place a family on a family pathology-health continuum. All thirteen scales are nine-point scales from one to five increasing in one half-point increments.

Methods. The sample of the main study consisted of 103 families. Each family had one adolescent member. There were 33 healthy families designated as the control group, and 70 families of hospitalized adolescents were the experimental group.

The five family tasks in order were (a) family strengths, (b) threatened loss, (c) marital testing, (d) family closeness, and (e) plan something together. The five tasks were completed in the same way as they were in the pilot study. The order of tasks was designed to start the family off on a positive note and finish with a task that was not emotionally charged.

Based upon their experience with families who felt some emotional stress by completing the "main problems" task, the team elected to drop this task and replace it with the "threatened loss" task. The "threatened loss" task was designed so all family members would listen to an audiotape with a story about a family who had a male family member that was in danger of dying. Before the story ended, the tape would be stopped and family members were asked to make up an ending to the story.

Described below are the scales that measure the five qualities that Lewis et al. determined were important for the development of healthy families. The first three scales measure family structure.

The family structure. Power structures are imbedded in all social systems. Beavers et al. (1976) learned that the most adaptive families were led by generous benign leaders who share power. Three scales were developed to measure the family structure. The overt power scale measures the leadership in the family. A score of one represents a family in chaos where no member has enough power to structure activities. A rating of five indicates that the family had a shared leadership situation where parents shared the role (see Figure 4).

Another aspect of family structure is parental coalitions. Families with higher function exhibit a strong parental coalition, which would indicate that both parents were accepting of child input in a group decision, but children could not divide joint parental power on topics like discipline. A strong parent-child coalition that undermines parental power is an indication of low family function (see Figure 5).

The closeness rating scale is the last scale associated with the family structure. Lewis et al. (1976) indicate that this scale was difficult for raters to master because there are two variables present. Distinct boundaries and the degree of closeness are variables hard to determine with the idea of ego boundaries introduced. Ego boundaries carry the meaning of an individual being confident enough to be separate yet still be part of the family system, in essence ego boundaries involves being able to be apart in order to be close. On this scale, closeness with distinct boundaries among members is indicative of higher family function (see Figure 6).

Autonomy of family members. There are four scales that underpin Beavers' (1976) idea of family members being autonomous individuals who are evolving into healthy productive citizens: (a) self-disclosure, (b) responsibility, (c) invasiveness, and (d) permeability.

The self-disclosure scale is based on the premise that it is healthy for a family to encourage family members to communicate their true feelings and thoughts (see Figure 7). It is a sign of pathology when family members are unclear about their thoughts and feelings.

The responsibility scale measures the degree to which family members accepted responsibility for their actions and words (see Figure 8). If family members rarely voice responsibility for their own actions, Lewis et al. believe the family is less likely to be a healthy family system.

The invasiveness scale measures the degree family members would speak for one another. If family members did not complete sentences for one another and each member spoke for himself, the potential for individuation development was greater (see Figure 9).

The permeability scale measures the family's ability to allow all of its members to be heard with proper recognition and respect. A healthy family demonstrates a permeable style of communication when any family member can break into a conversation with relative ease (see Figure 10).

The affective characteristics of the family. There are four scales to rate a family's affective characteristics. The affective scales are based on the degree to which family members express their feelings within the context of the family. They include the overall tone of the family's interactive style, the degree of unresolved conflict, and the degree to which family members show their empathy toward one another.

The expressiveness scale was designed to allow a rater to determine whether or not a family system encouraged open communication of feelings. A score of one on the

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A. Overt Power. Based on the entire tape, check the term that best describes your general impression of power structure of this family.

1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
Chaos		Marked Dominance		Moderate Dominance		Led		Egalitarian

If 2 to 4, indicate:

Who is #1 in power: Father..... Mother..... Child (specify).....

Who is #2 in power: Father..... Mother..... Child (specify).....

1= Chaos: Leaderless; no one has enough power to structure the interaction.

2= Marked Dominance: Control is close to absolute. No negotiation; dominance and submission are the rule.

3= Moderate Dominance: Control is close to absolute. Some negotiation, but dominance and submission are the rule.

4= Led: Tendency toward dominance and submission, but most of the interaction is through respectful negotiation.

5= Egalitarian: Leadership is shared between parents, changing with the nature of the interaction.

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Figure 4. The scale of overt power. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 84. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

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## B. Parental Coalitions

Check the terms that best describe the relationship structure in this family.

1      1.5      2      2.5      3      3.5      4      4.5      5

---

Parent-Child  
Coalition

Weak Parental  
Coalition

Strong Parental  
Coalition

---

Figure 5. The scale for parental coalitions. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 84. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

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C. Closeness

1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
Amorphous, vague and indistinct boundaries among members			Isolation, distancing			Closeness with distinct boundaries among members		

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Figure 6. The family closeness scale. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 84. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

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A. Communication of Self-Concept: Rate this family as to the clarity of disclosure of feelings and thoughts. This is not a rating of the intensity of feelings, but rather of clarity of expression of individual thoughts and feelings.

1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
Very clear				Somewhat vague and hidden			Hardly anyone is ever clear	

---

Figure 7. The self-concept scale. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 87. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

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B. Responsibility: Rate the degree to which the family members take responsibility for their own past, present, and future actions.

1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
Members regularly are able to voice responsibility for individual actions				Members sometimes voice responsibility for individual actions but tactics also include sometimes blaming others, speaking in 3 <sup>rd</sup> person or plural			Members rarely, if ever, voice responsibility for individual actions	

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Figure 8. The responsibility scale. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 87. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

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C. Invasiveness: Rate the degree to which the members speak for one another, or make "mind reading" statements.

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1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
Many invasions				Occasional invasions		No evidence of invasions		

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Figure 9. The invasiveness scale. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 88. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

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D. Permeability: Rate the degree to which members are open, receptive, and permeable to the statements of other family members.

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1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
Very open		Moderately open			Members frequently unreceptive		Members unreceptive	

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Figure 10. The permeability scale. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 88. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

scale would indicate family members were open and direct with their expressions of feelings. This would also be an indication of family health (see Figure 11).

The mood and tone scale asks the rater to make a judgment about the overall mood of the family while engaged in the interaction tasks. The health end of the scale uses descriptors like warm and affectionate, while the family with more pathology would have a mood and tone described as hopeless and pessimistic (see Figure 12).

There were two factors of family function associated with the conflict scale. The first factor that the rater had to consider was whether any unresolved conflict was present in the family. The second factor was for the rater to make a judgment about whether or not the unresolved conflict impaired the families ability to complete the task (see Figure 13).

The fourth scale of family affective characteristics is the empathy scale. The empathy scale is designed to allow the rater to make a judgment of whether or not family members were aware of each others' feelings and how empathetic family members were toward one another (see Figure 14)

Mythology of the family. The Lewis research team uses the mythology scale to determine how the family views its own behavior. How realistic was the family in terms of how they saw themselves as a family as opposed to how raters saw the family.

Congruency is the term used on this scale. If the family was quiet about its relative normality and the rater saw minimal conflict, pain, and despair, the rater would rate the family mythology as being congruent with reality (see Figure 15).

Goal-directed negotiation. Goal-directed negotiation for a high functioning family is an exercise in allowing family members opportunities to learn interactive skills like conflict resolution and collaboration. When the power structure is organized so family members do not observe a strong pattern of dominance-submission then goal directed negotiations are more efficient (see Figure 16).

Global Health-Pathology. The global health-pathology Scale is a tool to tabulate a total health score. The participating raters were asked to circle a number from one to ten, with ten indicating the healthiest family function (see Figure 17). The raters were also asked to write down any observations that were used to determine their judgments on the global health scale.

Lewis et al. (1976) provided data to demonstrate the correlation between independent measures of global family health-pathology and the family system rating scales (see Table 3). The high correlation between the sum of scales and the global scale support the research team's effort to cover the relevant domains of family function.

This research does not point to a single decisive characteristic of optimally functioning families, but it does provide a valuable tool for recognizing how a healthy family functions. There is also value in how these findings transfer to the field. "Our findings have implications for the treatment of the individual, the marital couple, and the family system" (p. 219).

I reviewed the Lewis et al. (1976) study because I wanted to understand what the research team's findings meant in terms of healthy family function. I assumed the family that I would study would exhibit dysfunctional characteristics. The Lewis team provides an outline of family function on a continuum. I believe families, service providers, and policy makers would benefit from understanding the Lewis team's idea of family function.

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A. Expressiveness: Rate the degree to which this family system is characterized by open expression of feelings.

1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
Open, direct expression of feelings		Direct expression of feelings despite some discomfort		Obvious restriction in the expression of some feelings		Although some feelings are expressed, there is masking of most feelings		No expression of feelings

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Figure 11. The expressiveness scale. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 89. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

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B. Mood and Tone: Rate the feeling tone of this family's interaction.

1      1.5      2      2.5      3      3.5      4      4.5      5

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Unusually warm, affectionate, humorous and optimistic	Polite, without impressive warmth or affection; or frequently hostile with times of pleasure	Overtly hostile	Depressed	Cynical, hopeless and pessimistic
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Figure 12. The mood and tone scale. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 89. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

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C. Conflict: Rate the degree of seemingly unresolvable conflict.

1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
Severe conflict with severe impairment of group functioning		Definite conflict with moderate impairment of group functioning		Definite conflict with slight impairment of group functioning		Some evidence of conflict without impairment of group functioning		Little, of no conflict

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Figure 13. The family conflict scale. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 90. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

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D. Empathy: Rate the degree of sensitivity to, and understanding of, each other's feelings within this family.

1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
Consistent empathic responsiveness		For the most part, an empathic responsiveness with one another despite obvious resistance		Attempted empathic involvement, but failed to maintain it		Absence of any empathic responsiveness		Grossly inappropriate responses to feelings

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Figure 14. The family empathy scale. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 90. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

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E. Mythology: Every family has a mythology; that is a concept of how it functions as a group. Rate the degree to which this family's mythology seems congruent with reality.

1      1.5      2      2.5      3      3.5      4      4.5      5

---

Very congruent	Mostly congruent	Somewhat incongruent	Very incongruent
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Figure 15. The family mythology scale. From *No single thread: Psychological health in family systems* by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 86. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

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F. Negotiation: Rate this family's overall efficiency in negotiation and problem solving.

1      1.5      2      2.5      3      3.5      4      4.5      5

---

Extremely      Good      Poor      Extremely  
efficient                inefficient

---

Figure 16. The goal-directed negotiation scale. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 86. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>
<b>Most Pathological</b>										<b>Healthiest</b>

Figure 17. The global family health-pathology scale. From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 239. Copyright 1976 by Brunner/Mazel, Inc. Reprinted with permission from J. M. Lewis.

Table 3  
Relationship<sup>a</sup> Between Beavers-Timberlawn Evaluation Sub-Scales and the  
 Global Family Health-Pathology Scale  
 (N= 103: 70 Patient Families, 33 "Healthy" Families)

I.	Sub-scales that measure the family power structure.	
	Style of Leadership	.77
	Coalition	.70
	Closeness	.60
II.	Sub-scales that measure autonomy of family members.	
	Self-Disclosure	.52
	Responsibility	.74
	Invasiveness	.30
	Permeability	.68
III.	Sub-scales that measure the affective climate of the family.	
	Expressiveness	.63
	Feeling Tone	.69
	Conflict	.78
	Empathy	.75
IV.	Sub-scale that measures the family's perception of self- function.	
	Mythology	.79
V.	Sub-scale that measures the family's task efficiency.	
	Negotiation	.67
	Sum of the Sub Scales	.90

From No single thread: Psychological health in family systems by J. M. Lewis, W. R. Beavers, J. T. Gossett, & V. A. Phillips, 1976, p. 93.  
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<sup>a</sup>Pearson product moment correlation coefficient; level of significance for each sub-scale was  $p < .005$ .

### Extensions of the Lewis et al. Work

Two extensions of the Lewis et al. work are described here. These were studies by Sawin and Harrigan (1995) and Beavers and Hampson (1993). They have been chosen for a brief review because they describe current use of the Lewis et al. 1976 study.

Sawin and Harrigan (1995), in a study of family functioning measures, cited the Lewis et al. (1976) work as a foundation for continued family function scales development. The observational methodologies developed by the Lewis team and self-report assessment tools of the Beavers System Model have been used for developing intervention strategies.

Beavers and Hampson (1993) refined and updated the model. Family functioning style is a newly developed component of the Beavers System Model. The functioning style component focuses on how family members relate and interact with one another and the world outside of the family. This concept is also applied to the family as a system.

Well-functioning families exhibit a range of relationships and interactions over the course of an individual and family system's life span. The terms used for measure are centripetal and centrifugal. When a family shows a centripetal nature, it would be inclined to interact mainly within the family. A family showing a more centrifugal interactive style would be inclined to have more interactions outside of the family. Families that show a strong tendency for either of these styles are considered to be dysfunctional.

Nine family types have been developed. They are optimal, adequate, midrange centripetal, midrange centrifugal, midrange mixed, borderline, borderline centripetal, borderline centrifugal, and severely dysfunctional families.

The global health scale is a continuum that ranges from a one (dysfunctional) to a ten (healthiest). Sawin and Harrigan (1995) reported that the family type scale is displayed as a vertical curvilinear axis. An optimal mix of centripetal and centrifugal interactive styles meet at ten on the horizontal axis. The horizontal axis is the global health scale.

Beavers and Hampson (1993) worked with 1,847 families and continue to develop scales for measuring family function based on healthy family characteristics. Healthy family characteristics as viewed by Beavers and Hampson are seen by other social scientists as family strengths.

Beavers and Hampson (1993) provided more information on healthy family characteristics and thus, provided me with more background information for my research. This background information gave me an idea of how some service providers may view families whom they serve.

### The Study of Family Strengths

Strengths-based assessment and intervention strategy require the evaluator or service provider to ask positive questions about what is working in the lives of family members being provided services. From this collaborative recognition of familial strengths a helping strategy based on real outcomes is built in mutual cooperation and respect between the parties. If we seek to find deficits in family function, our search will be colored by that beginning notion, but if we seek to find what makes a family strong, this would also color our search.

Clinical social workers have assisted in developing the strengths-based model of assessment and intervention (Moxley, 1997). The strengths-based model is an important strategy for social skills development (Saleebey, 1992). Before hearing what a family said about service providers I wanted to have an understanding of how service providers approached their work. I like the notion of seeing the glass half full when it comes to helping people.

Epstein (1998) gave a strong argument for strengths-based assessment as the approach to help children receiving specialized services. Many service providers focus on what is wrong with an individual or family and then build strategies to fix or remove that which makes things wrong. While Epstein focused on the individual namely children from the ages of 5 to 18, he supported the notion that whole families would be served well by the approach if used by family service planners.

Moxley wrote, "A strengths approach counters this negative framework and offers a positive frame of reference for understanding the personal, community, and systemic strengths that can be operating in any situation" (1997, p. 631). This idea if applied to the vision of the family researcher makes room for a more positive approach to a familial situation that is bleak.

There are four beliefs about strengths-based assessment (Dunst et al., 1994; Rapp, 1995; Saleebey, 1992), that use the words child or children to denote who the beliefs are about. Change those two words to family and families and the four beliefs would read as follows:

1. All families have strengths. If professionals focused on identifying and building upon strengths, families would be better able to address their challenges.
2. A family is motivated by how others respond to it. When others dwell on the deficit areas, this may result in lowered motivation; however, when others emphasize a family's strengths, this may lead to heightened motivation.
3. Failure of a family to master a strength does not mean a deficit on the part of the family; rather, it means that the family has not been given the opportunities to learn specific strengths. Given sufficient experiences, instructions, and opportunities by the family's service providers, educational system, and community, a family is capable of learning and demonstrating many strengths.
4. Family service plans need to be strength based. A strength orientation assumes that when a family's positive skills and resources are identified and supported, the family is more likely to make use of its strengths and resources.

Rapp (1998) gave a thorough review of the strengths-based model and how mentally ill patients make progress using the method. In explaining how the strengths-based model is applied, Rapp outlined the major principles involved. The second principle is finding the needed resources to help bolster the already identified strengths found in the individual patient. "The strengths model attends not just to the strengths of the individual but the strengths of the environment" (Rapp, 1998, p. 47).

Transferring the model to the family system and looking at the part of the environment that is composed of the service providers, an assumption could be made that

a strength could be found only if the family and providers were on the same page. If each of the service providers is working to help the family without an understanding of what the others' goals are, the possibility for a meaningful change in the family's condition could be diminished. If one provider is approaching a given case based on needs alone and another provider manages the case only from a crises intervention approach, situations could arise for the family whereby one provider's strategy counters another's (Rapp, 1998; Syx, 1994; Sullivan, 1994).

Rapp (1998) provided a description of an environment that is most conducive to making the strengths-based model work for the individual. The name given to the network of helping people is "Community Service System." This network of helping people provides life-affirming experiences that have a positive impact on the quality of life for those whose lives need a better quality. Improving the quality of life for children and their families is the pronounced goal of many comprehensive service programs, and in some states this goal has been made official by legislative mandate.

#### The Comprehensive Services Act In Virginia

Virginia service providers are working together to control cost of services by collaborating to help at-risk youth and families. High-risk students, in the Virginia school system, have a good chance of being served by a team of service providers. Service providers in Virginia began building a system of collaboration in 1990.

Following is a review of the history of how multiple services for at-risk families has evolved in the state of Virginia. This section is divided into four parts. First, a 1990 report made by the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget is discussed. It is considered because it was a catalyst for the Governor and General Assembly to respond to the ever-increasing cost of children's residential services. Second, the response of the Governor and the Virginia General Assembly is presented. Third, a 1998 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee report about the fiscal status of the CSA is reviewed. Fourth, a recent study focused on Family Assessment and Planning Teams in Virginia's CSA system is recounted. The study provides a connection between the concepts of families as systems, the strengths model for family assistance, the CSA in Virginia, and a study of one family receiving multiple services.

#### A Review of the 1990 Report of Children's Residential Services by the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget

In 1990 the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget conducted the Study of Children's Residential Services (Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, 1993) and found that state and local expenditures on residential care in four child-serving agencies was increasing at a level that would be difficult to sustain. The four child-serving agencies considered in the report were the Department of Education, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Youth and Family Services, and the Department of Substance Abuse Services. Based on the findings of the study, the Department of Planning and Budget recommended that policy and program changes be made. The Department of Planning and Budget recommended that community-based nonresidential services be expanded, interagency collaboration and service delivery be improved, and Virginia's funding policies and management systems be adapted accordingly.

The Department of Planning and Budget outlined three issues that the findings of the study supported. The first was little or no coordination among agencies supported by

the fact that of the 14,000 cases of reported children in residential care only 4,993 children could actually be counted in residential settings. The second issue was a 22% annual growth rate of the cost for public and private services for children in residential and nonresidential settings. The Department of Planning and Budget pointed out that while the cost of services was growing the number of children being served remained relatively stable. The third issue was based on a report made to the General Assembly in 1991 by the Council on Community Services. The report indicated that in the 1992-94 biennium the state of Virginia would have to allocate \$42 million in new funds to maintain services, and that this rate of expenditure growth would continue through the year 2000 (Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, 1993).

#### The Governor's and the General Assembly's Response

For fiscal years 1991-92 the Governor and General Assembly appropriated 2.4 million dollars to begin to address the issues outlined in the Department of Planning and Budget report. The 1990-92 Appropriation Act included a section that required the three cabinet secretaries to report to the Governor and the chairman of the house Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees in November 1991 (Council on Community Services for Youth & Families, 1991).

In an effort to find a program plan that would bring about the needed changes to improve service delivery for children and families and stem the high rate of growth in spending, the Council on Community Services awarded almost \$3.4 million in grants to five communities. The five communities were: (a) RADCO Planning district, comprised of Fredericksburg City and the Counties of Caroline, King George, Spotsylvania, and Stafford; (b) Lynchburg and Bedford Cities, Bedford County; (c) Norfolk City; (d) Richmond City; and (e) Roanoke City. An evaluation was to be conducted; therefore, \$97,000 was allocated for the two years of 1990-92 biennium so the council could contract with the Commonwealth Institute for Child and Family Studies to evaluate the five demonstration projects.

The five grants were awarded to communities based on high or medium-high use of residential care. The grants totaled \$3,365,864 to be given to the communities over an 18 month period starting in January 1991.

The Commonwealth Institute for Child and Family Studies evaluated the five grant locations based on the following evaluation questions:

1. What are the characteristics, strengths, needs, and service outcomes of targeted youth and families?
2. Are the demonstration systems able to identify and intervene with younger children at risk of developing emotional and behavior problems?
3. What is the community's capacity for providing nonresidential services?
4. What is the nature of interagency communication and collaboration?
5. What are the patterns of use and costs of residential care?
6. What are the provider and consumer perceptions of the impact of services and the interagency process? (Council on Community Services for Youth & Families, 1991, p. 13)

After reviewing the five grant projects for the first nine months of implementation the Commonwealth Institute for Child and Family Studies reported its findings to the Council on Community Services for Youth and Families. The Council on Community Services for Youth and Families reported to the Governor and the General Assembly. The

Council on Community Services for Youth and Families made recommendations based on the following nine components:

1. Encourage viewing children as a family and community responsibility, not an agency responsibility.
2. Create a system that is child-centered, family-focused, and community-based.
3. Expand community, early intervention, and prevention services.
4. Create services that are sensitive and responsive to cultural differences and special needs.
5. Encourage a public and private partnership in service delivery.
6. Increase interagency collaboration and family involvement in service delivery and management.
7. Control state and local costs of residential care.
8. Direct decisions, authority, and accountability to communities who know best the needs of their youth and families.
9. Permit flexibility, since communities are demographically and geographically diverse with differing needs and problems. (Council on Community Services for Youth & Families, 1991, p. 19)

Based on the report by the Council on Community Services for Youth and Families the Virginia General Assembly enacted the Comprehensive Services Act in 1992. By passing this law, the Virginia General Assembly had taken a step to consolidate resources by requiring schools and agencies to collaborate in the delivery of services.

#### The JLARC Report on the Fiscal Status of the CSA in Virginia

In January 1998 the Joint Legislative and Audit Review Committee (JLARC) released a report to the Governor and the general assembly. The report was focused on determining whether or not the enactment of the Comprehensive Services Act (CSA) helped service providers become a cooperative group providing efficient and effective service. Since the establishment of the CSA, the cost and caseloads have risen at rates that justified this full review of how the CSA was being implemented.

Full implementation of the CSA began late in fiscal year 1993. The JLARC staff reviewed 1,100 files of young people being served by the agencies associated with the CSA. Caseloads have increased from a statewide total of 10,214 to 13,453 in 1996. The total cost of the CSA has jumped from 104.6 million dollars to 144.5 million dollars in 1996. I attended a state management team meeting where the director of the Office of Comprehensive Services gave a report to the assembled team. He stated that the CSA cost for fiscal year 1998 might have exceeded 175 million dollars.

There are eight major points made in the JLARC report concerning the overall implementation of the CSA. The major points are summarized as follows:

1. Caseloads are increasing and this is the primary factor for the expansion of the CSA. Policy decisions must be made to limit the number of children eligible for CSA services. The statute places an emphasis on serving only those children with the most serious emotional and behavioral problems.
2. The findings show that nearly half of the at-risk children served had little or no risk for serious behaviors. This may be a good faith effort on the part of localities to provide early intervention. Many of these cases are an indication of misuse of the CSA.

3. Almost half of the children who were supported for treatment by CSA funding were given access to the program without a multi-agency review.
4. In about half of all placements whether community based or residential the JLARC staff found them to be unjustifiable.
5. Local CSA staffers do not negotiate with service providers for lower rates. Few localities have a system in place that allows for close review of cost of contracted services.
6. Seventy percent of the parents of children being served by the CSA report that the program has helped their children.
7. Because of the demands of the CSA program, the state oversight and management teams can not provide adequate supervision.
8. Commonwealth officials should pursue a plan for funding the CSA in part by use of Medicaid funds.

After the issues were brought out in the JLARC report certain recommendations were made that range from changing the state code of Virginia to devising standardized forms for program evaluation. All of the recommendations have merit for getting at what the JLARC report focuses on which is cost effectiveness.

I reviewed this report prior to my study, because from it, I was able to make some assumptions about the service-providing network in Virginia. I assumed that if there was a network of providers it was loosely woven. I assumed that early intervention and prevention programs were in short supply. I assumed that interagency collaboration and parent involvement was sporadic. These assumptions helped frame some of the questions that I would later ask the participants of my study.

#### The Nexus Between Family Systems, Family Strengths, the CSA of Virginia, and One Family

Nexus is a term frequently used in a legalistic setting and it carries the meaning of a connection to or with. The word serves well in this discussion because there is a connection between family systems, family strengths, the Comprehensive Services Act, and a single case study of one family. This connection comes in the form of previous research.

In a recent study on the Comprehensive Services Act that focused on the Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT) Spear (1996) noted that the driving concept for the FAPT is one anchored in the strengths based model. The Lewis et al. (1976) study is cited early in Spear (1996) to clarify the notion that family strengths have long been a topic of research. The Lewis research team's terminology for their research focus is "healthy family function". Spear correctly held that "healthy family function" has a causal relationship with family strengths.

"A family intervention plan must not only address the strengths of a family, it must also recognize the application of the family strengths within the dynamics of the family system" (Spear, 1996, p. 46). This study provides a convergence of thought in the sense that the family is seen as a dynamic system, every family system has certain strengths, and Virginia through the CSA provides services with these ideas as common beliefs.

Spear's research gives us a better understanding of how FAPT works by identifying some common family strengths incorporated into FAPT family planning strategies. This work provides a view of CSA from the service provider's lens. Spear

wrote, "Conducting research face-to-face with families and involving families in the study could help provide insight into the application of family strengths and how the family strengths component of the intervention plan works" (1996, p. 32). Each family is unique and if we ask to hear that unique story from one family we will increase our understanding of all families.

Spear's (1996) research and the other studies reviewed in this chapter indicated the value of telling one family's story about their experiences with multiple service providers. In the chapters that follow I tell such a story as it was told to me.

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The main goal of this study is to provide a description of how one family experiences the receipt of multiple services. This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part I write about my background in education and relate it to my perspective of at-risk students and their families. I give the operational definition of what a family at-risk means in the context of this research, and I outline the criteria that I used to identify the participating family. I report the plans used for gaining access to the family. In the second part of the chapter I describe the work of Bloom, Engelhart, Hill, Furst, and Krathwohl (1956), and Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964) and how I used their research as a frame for developing my interview questions. I write about how the data was collected and how I organized and analyzed the data.

### My Bias: A Pedagogic Perspective

I feel that the word bias is like a double-edged sword. For a qualitative researcher the term carries the meaning that the researcher has an inclination or a predisposition to view a subject from one outlook. I think that this is only one side of the blade. The range of experiences the researcher brings to the research determines the other side of the blade. The wider the range of experiences that the researcher has the more likely the lens that he sees the world with is a segmented lens. This segmented lens allows the viewer a chance to see the subject from multiple perspectives.

I have been an educator for 21 years. I am biased in that my view of how people behave is from a pedagogic lens. My years as an educator in the public schools of Virginia have provided me with a multitude of experiences regarding teaching and learning. These experiences, gained in teaching and coaching at elementary, middle, and high school levels, and as an administrator in middle and high schools, have influenced how I see the problems encountered by at-risk youth and their families.

I have an inclination to see social interactions from a teaching or learning viewpoint. I am inclined to seek solutions for human problems by seeing them as problems most often generated by a person's lack of awareness or knowledge. People behave in accordance to what they know. Coping skills are the tools of awareness and knowledge. Artisans of the trades often say how easy a job is with the right tools. I am convinced that the best way to help people overcome problems presented to them by society is by allowing them the opportunity to have the experiences to heighten their awareness and build their knowledge, and in so doing, give them coping skills.

I state this perspective up front, because it is what I believe. My study is built on my experiences in working with people and this view of how best to help them.

### Identifying the Family

As I began my search for the participating family it was important for me to define a family. Geismar and Camasso (1993) wrote: "Within the framework of our efforts at evaluation, a family is structurally a group of two or more people, living together over an extended period of time, and related by blood, marriage, adoption, or a long--term commitment" (p. 30).

In related literature I have found that this definition of a family was the most inclusive response to what I was looking for in this study. I made one amendment to the definition by saying that the family must have at least three members in the nuclear family system.

The unit of study was one family that received services from service providers both public and private, that fell within the Virginia Comprehensive Services Act. Subunits of study were identified during the research, but the focus remained on the family as a system. The subunits of study were individual family members.

I selected a family that met the following criteria:

1. The family resided in Virginia.
2. The family system had no less than three nuclear family members.
3. The family was in receipt of multiple services from public and private service providers.
4. One family member was an adolescent youth in danger of being placed in, or in a residential care facility that used Comprehensive Services Act funds.
5. All family members were willing to participate in the study.

My final selection of the family was based on the willingness of all family members to participate in the study, the rapport that I had with the family as a whole, and the accessibility of the family in the home.

#### Gaining Access to the Family

I worked with many families and students at-risk as a school administrator. In doing that type of work I became familiar with the Comprehensive Services Act of Virginia. In some instances I worked with families who had a child who was expelled from the local school system. Expulsion at that time meant that the child could not attend any school in the school system for no less than one year. In Virginia no school system has to accept a child who has been expelled from another system within or out of the state Education Act (1998).

Finding alternative educational settings made me aware of residential care facilities that provide an educational component. Based on the needs of the child and family, and other factors like court orders and social service department recommendations, I have recommended placement for children in such facilities.

I have made many contacts with service providers who implement the Comprehensive Services Act in Virginia. The educational director of a residential placement center is one such contact. Through discussions about the CSA, this director and I have discovered our mutual interests in research, children, and families at-risk. Because of these common interests, my colleague provided special access for me to the center. After discussing the intent and purposes of my study, he found five families associated with the center that agreed to preliminary interviews. The five families were ranked, by my friend, based on the selection criteria and his judgment of the most suitable family, for participation. I began the process with the family that had the best potential for participation. This approach saved valuable time, because the family that I started with became the participating family. A schedule was arranged through a social worker for me to meet with the family for the screening to begin.

The preliminary interview was conducted in a family meeting when I described the study and how the family would contribute to the research. How much time the family members would be involved in the study and what would be expected from the family members was conveyed at the family meeting. Informed consent forms were distributed to the family members and I reviewed them.

The preliminary interview went well with the first family selected. The family met all of my criteria, so the selection process did not have to be repeated.

I followed some important steps to ensure that the participants were protected from any harm. Prior to conducting the preliminary interviews I had the study reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects. I made it known, by forms and statements, to the participants, what the central purpose of this study was, and they had the right to voluntarily withdraw, from the study, at any time. They were asked to sign informed consent forms.

#### Data Collection, Organization, Analysis, and Presentation

In this section I write about the theory that served as a frame for my interview questions. I describe the type of information collected and how the information was recorded and stored. I outline the method of analysis and presentation used along with the time schedule for the study.

#### The Theoretical Frame for Building Interview Questions

##### The Cognitive Domain

In 1948 Bloom, Engelhart, Hill, Furst, and Krathwohl began a project to develop the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. The term taxonomy comes from the biological sciences. It is a system for naming plants and animals. Bloom et al. (1956) organized their taxonomy around the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The general purpose of developing the cognitive and affective domains of the taxonomy was to communicate the processes of learning, by organizing and naming the concepts, that describe cognition. The Bloom research team published the first of four manuals about the taxonomy of educational objectives in 1956.

The cognitive domain of the taxonomy is organized into six major classes that move from "simple to complex" and "concrete to abstract." The six classes of the cognitive domain are:

1. Knowledge
2. Comprehension
3. Application
4. Analysis
5. Synthesis
6. Evaluation

Bloom et al. feel that the objectives from one class are more than likely to be used to operate in the next order of class.

Bloom et al. have divided each of the six classes into subcategories that are specific to that class, and like the six classes the subcategories are arranged in an order from low level abstraction to highest, and from simple to complex in terms of structure.

Knowledge. Knowledge is divided into twelve subcategories. Knowledge as defined by Bloom et al. centers on the cognition associated with memory. Remembering and relating what is remembered to the problem requires an order of signals and cues so that the individual can be informed by the memory. The twelve subcategories of the class knowledge are:

1. Knowledge of Specifics
2. Knowledge of Terminology
3. Knowledge of Specific Facts
4. Knowledge of Ways and Means of Dealing with Specifics
5. Knowledge of Conventions
6. Knowledge of Trends and Sequences

7. Knowledge of Classifications and Categories
8. Knowledge of Criteria
9. Knowledge of Methodology
10. Knowledge of the Universals and Abstractions in a Field
11. Knowledge of Principles and Generalizations
12. Knowledge of Theories and Structures

Bloom et al. liken the twelve subcategories of the class knowledge to that of an office filing system. When an office worker needs specific facts, principles, theories and structures about a topic he would go to the filing system and pull out the information about that topic. For human cognition the office worker represents a person's memory that retrieves the information needed to solve the problem. My assumption is that the more knowledge stored on the topic the better equipped we are to deal with any problems concerning said topic.

Abilities and Skills Associated with Knowledge. The Bloom research team indicated that it was only a step in the learning process to remember things. If the office worker who retrieved a file brought it back to his desk and sat down to do nothing more than to stare at it, there would be little or no value in the content of the file. Bloom et al. developed the remaining classes and subcategories of the cognitive domain to communicate what might happen in the cognitive process after memory is triggered and the learning experience nurtured.

The learning process is extended when knowledge whether given or remembered is made useful. The cognitive domain is completed with terms that describe abilities and skills that make knowledge useful. What follows is a list of the remaining classes and the subcategories for the cognitive domain:

2. Comprehension
  - a. Translation
  - b. Interpretation
  - c. Extrapolation
3. Application
4. Analysis
  - a. Analysis of Elements
  - b. Analysis of Relationships
  - c. Analysis of Organizational Principles
5. Synthesis
  - a. Production of Unique Communication
  - b. Production of a Plan, or Proposed Set of Operations
  - c. Derivation of a set of Abstract Relations
7. Evaluation
  - a. Judgments in Terms of Internal Evidence
  - b. Judgments in Terms of External Criteria

Bloom et al. (1956) recognized that the subcategories work well for researchers who wish to use the taxonomy as a framework for "...viewing the educational process an analyzing its workings" (p. 3).

It was important for me to organize my interview questions using the Bloom et al. taxonomy because I assumed that in the process of receiving services one must learn the language that service providers use. Learning a language to the point of fluency requires

an individual to be able to function in all of the classes of the cognitive domain. I think that my line of questioning revealed how each family member learned the language of service providers.

Using the cognitive domain of Bloom et al. (1956) I developed the interview questions that provided the family background information. I began the first interview with each family member by making the statement, "Tell me about yourself."

All four family members required little prompting after this simple statement was made. Beginning this way generated a substantial amount of data. Many times I prompted family members by using this same technique to get more specific information. To find out about what types of services the family received I would say, "Tell me about your positive experiences with service providers."

Family members' responses to these prompts would often dictate what the next question or prompt would be. Many times a response to a single prompt would render data that would overlap the taxonomy domains.

#### The Affective Domain

If I used only the cognitive domain as a framework for the interview questions I would have been able to find out what family members knew and remembered about receiving services, but I would not have gotten an understanding of how they felt about receiving services. The affective domain of the *Taxonomy* communicates the process of how learners develop attitudes about phenomena.

In 1964 Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia published the last of the *Taxonomy* handbooks. It was devoted to the affective domain. The main objective of the Krathwohl research team was to place the different kinds of affective behaviors on a continuum for order and relationship.

The "simple to complex" and "concrete to abstract" construct used to build the cognitive domain could not serve for the same purpose in the affective domain. The terms used to identify objectives in the affective domain are interests, attitudes, values, appreciation, and adjustment. Because of the wide range of definitions for these concepts Krathwohl et al. decided to use them as sliding anchors along a continuum for the classification system of the affective domain.

The characteristics are listed in five classes and the subcategories as follows:

1. Receiving (Attending)
  - a. Awareness
  - b. Willingness to Receive
  - c. Controlled or Selected Attention
2. Responding
  - a. Acquiescence in Responding
  - b. Willingness to Respond
  - c. Satisfaction in Response
3. Valuing
  - a. Acceptance of a Value
  - b. Preference for a Value
  - c. Commitment
4. Organization
  - a. Conceptualization of a Value
  - b. Organization of a Value System

5. Characterization by a Value or Value Complex
  - a. Generalized Set
  - b. Characterization

Receiving. Krathwohl et al. argue that though this may be the first class for the domain it would be improper to assume that a potential learner is starting out at square one. Previous experience with a phenomenon may help or hinder a student's development in the affective domain.

The class of receiving is divided into three subcategories that represent a continuum that starts with awareness of the stimulus and moves to selective attention to the stimulus. The notion that an individual is aware of a counseling service is a lower state of receiving than the same individual having a willingness to look into the use of counseling services. The mother of the participating family demonstrated a high level of receiving.

Responding. The natural progression for an individual to move from selectively attending to the counseling service is to responding or what Krathwohl et al. call "compliance" to the suggestion of the stimulus. The individual is willing to go to counseling at this point. Deciding to accept the responsibility to go to counseling is the next step.

There is a chance that the emotional aspect of the affective domain starts to gradually take hold when the individual moves beyond simple awareness. The Krathwohl team points out that the emotional aspect may come in at any time during the sequence of affective development, but that during the internalizing phase of affective development is when emotion may play a larger role.

The individual goes to counseling services and is satisfied with the experience. Satisfaction may turn into the individual taking pleasure in the reduced stress in his life provided the counseling is associated with reduction in stress.

Valuing. The term value does mean that something has worth. It means the same thing in this case but this class is as concerned with the internalization of a belief or attitude about the worth of the stimulus. The individual experiences less stress and associates going to counseling for the stress reduction and places a value on a less stressful lifestyle.

Now the individual starts to desire a less stressful lifestyle and sets a preference for counseling because of the association of the two phenomena. The desire to live a less stressful lifestyle becomes more deeply internalized and becomes a commitment to living with less stress.

Organization. As the internalization process is extended the individual finds himself in situations where more than one value becomes pertinent. Now the individual must find a place to put this new value in a system of values.

The individual is committed to a life with less stress, and he has identified that lifestyle as a value. The individual makes this judgment and begins to conceptualize the value. Once conceptualized the value is placed in the value system that already exists. The individual develops a plan to maintain the valued lifestyle with less stress and orders his activities accordingly.

Characterization by a Value or Value Complex. When the individual has placed a value in his system of values he begins to cluster the values that are related to one

another. The individual will then make judgments about the world around him using a "generalized set" of values.

The individual has lived with less stress successfully for a period of time. He becomes exposed to a person or situation that stimulates a sense of high stress and makes the decision to avoid people and situations that evoke that feeling.

The final step to internalizing a value is characterization. This idea has two meanings, one is that the individual develops a philosophy of life based on the characteristics of his value system, and the other is how people characterize the individual by the behaviors he exhibits. The objectives contained within this category span all of the dimensions of the *Taxonomy*. Krathwohl et al. believe that this is the peak of the individual's level of awareness and philosophy of life. The Krathwohl team wrote, "A value system has as its objective the whole of what is known or knowable" (p. 185).

Constructing the interview questions. I have described two of the dimensions from the *Taxonomy* because I used them to organize the interview questions for this study (see Table 4). The psychomotor domain has been left out intentionally. Krathwohl et al. (1964) informed us that the objectives associated with this dimension emphasize neuromuscular co-ordination. This level of specification is not necessary to answer my question.

Many of the behaviors associated with objectives in all three dimensions have a good deal of overlap (Bloom et al., 1956; Krathwohl et al, 1964). Since I was most interested in how family members think and feel about the receipt of services, and I wanted to know what actions and reactions they had concerning services, I felt that the two dimensions discussed were sufficient for this inquiry.

I organized the questions that I asked into the general classes of the *Taxonomy* that Krathwohl et al. believed to have the closest relationship. The questions used here are related to both dimensions because of the overlap that exist in the *Taxonomy*. In table four, the two dimensions of the *Taxonomy* are represented in the left-hand column, and the three research questions are represented as the column headers context, services, and effects. Each question is placed in the row and column where it fits best. Each question in the table is one that was actually used in the study. The letters that follow each question represent the family member or members who had an opportunity to answer the question.

#### Data Collection

Interviews. The main sources of data were the members of the participating family. I conducted eight interviews (see Table 5), the first, with Elizabeth the matriarch of the family, on June 23, and the last with Elizabeth, Allen her husband, and Benjamin her youngest son, on October 1. I contacted Elizabeth by phone before each interview and on occasion to I would speak to other family members by phone to clarify a response.

During a preliminary interview with the family on June 9 I discussed the study and asked if they would consider participating. I made two informal observations prior to the preliminary interview.

Observations. Two observations were made prior to the preliminary interview. I kept field notes in a pocket-sized notebook. I never took the notebook out at the observation sites. I did write details down immediately following the events.

I made my first observation on May 15 at a walk-a-thon and cook out at a residential care facility fund-raiser. The educational director, of the facility, pre-screened five families. The five families were potential candidates for participation in the study.

Table 4

## Distribution of Interview Questions by Domains and Interviewees Across Research Questions

Research Questions			
Taxonomy Domains	What is the context of the family's receipt of service?	What are the types of services received?	What are the effects of the services received?
Cognitive	<p>Tell me about yourself, your personal background, things like, where you were born and raised, how you were brought up, school experiences, and so on. (M, 1S, 2S)<sup>1</sup></p> <p>Did your great grandparents own the farm you lived on?(M)</p> <p>Was your father's family from Alabama? (M)</p> <p>Did you grow up in a traditional southern Baptist home? (M)</p> <p>Tell me about the places you have lived. (1S, 2S)</p> <p>Have you ever been in trouble? (1S, 2S)</p> <p>Did the trouble start at home or at school? (1S)</p> <p>Why did your first stepfather not allow you to talk to your mom? (1S)</p> <p>How did you and your wife meet? (SF)</p>	<p>When did you first seek counseling services? (M)</p> <p>Do you remember anything about your great grand parents ever receiving any kind of services? (M)</p> <p>Did your first husband resent it when you went to get counseling? (M)</p> <p>What is a <i>One Step</i> program? (M)</p> <p>What other services does the family receive? (M, SF)</p> <p>Did you ever hear about budget restraints among service providers? (M)</p> <p>How did you learn about the wilderness program? (M)</p> <p>What kind of services do you receive now? (M, SF, 1S, 2S)</p>	<p>When did your child start to have problems in school? (M)</p> <p>What will happen to your family if services are cut back? (M, SF)</p> <p>Tell me about your encounters with juvenile court. (M, 1S)</p> <p>Did you have positive experiences with service providers? (M, SF, 1S, 2S)</p> <p>What would you tell policy makers about the service-providing network? (M, SF, 2S)</p> <p>What would you tell school officials? (M, SF, 2S)</p> <p>What would you tell other service providers? (M, SF, 2S)</p> <p>What would you tell families that seek services? (M, SF, 2S)</p>
Affective	<p>Did your mother resent it when you told her you wanted to leave? (M)</p> <p>How did you feel about your first stepfather? (1S, 2S)</p> <p>How did you feel when your oldest brother left home? (2S)</p> <p>Where do you get your inner strength? (M)</p> <p>How would you describe your relationship with your stepsons? (SF)</p>	<p>How did you feel when you first sought counseling services? (M)</p> <p>How do you feel about school services? (M, SF, 1S, 2S)</p> <p>What do you think about the wilderness program? (M, SF, 1S, 2S)</p> <p>What do you think about boot camp? (M, SF, 1S, 2S)</p> <p>How did you feel when you were in boot camp? (1S)</p> <p>Were you ever afraid of your moms second husband? (2S)</p>	<p>How did you feel when you watched service providers work with your son? (M)</p> <p>Did you feel a sense of partnership with service providers? (M, SF)</p> <p>Were you ever able to voice your true feelings with service providers? (M, SF, 1S, 2S)</p> <p>How did you feel about group counseling? (M, 1S, 2S)</p> <p>How did you feel about being incarcerated? When your son was incarcerated? (M, 1S)</p>

<sup>1</sup> Note. M=mother, SF=step father, 1S=first son age 16, 2S=second son age 14

Table 5  
Timetable for Conducting the Research

1999	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Feb.	Prospectus preparation Professional seminar. (2/4/99)	Prospectus preparation meeting with chair. (2/9/99)	Prospectus preparation.	Prospectus preparation.
March	Prospectus preparation Seek a prospectus exam date	Prospectus preparation Prepare human subjects forms.	Prospectus preparation.	Prospectus preparation.
April	Search for participant family continued. Meet with chair (4/6/99)	Search for participant family continued.	Search for participant family continued.	Search for participant family continued; Meet with chair. (4/27/99)
May	Search for participant family continued.	Search for participant family continued.	Data collection: First observation of potential participants, at a walk-a-thon for residential facility: (5/15/99); Theme observe five pre-selected families after walk-a-thon, during fishing and cook out.	Search for participant family continued.

(Table Continues)

Table 5 (cont.)

1999	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
June	Data collection: Observation of graduation at wilderness program: (6/4/99); Themes: Observe one graduate and family, meet family to arrange preliminary interview.	Data collection: Meet with family for lunch and preliminary interview: (6/9/99); Themes: Explain study, hand out permission forms, arrange second meeting.	Data collection: Phone conversation with Elizabeth to set new date for first interview: (6/21/99); Themes: All family members signed permission forms. Data collection: First interview with Elizabeth: (6/23/99); Theme: Family background, current services received, account of family life. Data collection: Second interview with Elizabeth: (6/28/99); Theme family background, Bradley's connection to services.	
July	Begin transcribing interviews: Data collection: Talked with Elizabeth on the telephone to clarify data, and arrange third interview: (7/5/99); Data collection: Third interview with Elizabeth: (7/9/99); Theme: Feelings about receiving services. Data collection: First interview with Bradley: (7/9/99); Theme: Family background, current services. received, account of family life; Transcribe interviews.		Data collection: Take Bradley to lunch for second interview: (7/13/99); Theme: Return home from boot camp, life with first stepfather, wilderness camp. Data collection: Take Benjamin to lunch for only individual interview: (7/27/99); Theme: Earliest memories of home life to present situation at home; Transcribe interviews.	
August	Data analysis: Constant comparative method: Write.	Data analysis: Constant comparative method: Write.	Data analysis: Constant comparative method: Write. Data collection: Phone conversation with Elizabeth: (8/24/99); Theme: Clarification of illness, age, current services; Data collection: Phone conversation with Allen: (8/24/99); Theme: Arrange interview.	
Sept.	Data analysis: Constant comparative method: Write; Data collection: Interview with Allen (9/3/99); Theme: Meeting Elizabeth, relationships with stepsons, opinions of service providers.			
October	Data collection: Take Elizabeth, Allen, and Benjamin out to dinner for final interview: (10/1/99); Theme: What would family members tell policy makers, school officials, service providers, and families seeking help about receiving services?			
Nov.	Defense preparation.	<b>Final defense November 16.</b>	Revisions to dissertation.	Revisions to dissertation
Dec.	Job search begins.	Job search begins.	<b>December 18 Commencement Ceremony.</b>	Merry Christmas and Happy Y2K.

My friend the director invited me to come and participate in the fund-raiser so I could observe these families.

#### Recording and Storing Information

I recorded data by keeping detailed field notes, and audio recordings of interviews. I transcribed each audio recording and every line was numbered. Each audio recording was labeled by which family member was interviewed. Each audio-tape had a number and was dated.

Data storage was maintained in secure areas and containers, and I was the only person with access to the information. Data would be made available to committee members upon request.

#### Data Analysis and Presentation

I used the *Constant Comparative Method* of data analysis as described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). The main idea behind the *constant comparative method* is coding all of the data while continually comparing each piece of information with previously categorized data. The themes that emerged from the categorized information were regrouped as they related to the three research questions.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) outline the *constant comparative method* in a four step process:

1. Inductive category coding and simultaneous comparing of units of meaning across categories
2. Refinement of categories
3. Exploration of relationships and patterns across categories
4. Integration of data yielding an understanding of people and settings being studied (p. 135)

After I transcribed all of the interviews, I put a piece of chart paper on the wall for each family member. I reviewed each transcription separately. When one theme emerged from the data I would write it on the appropriate chart. Common themes emerged and would appear on two, three, or all four charts. The final step was to transfer the findings into a narrative report.

In the next seven chapters, I present a narrative report that describes one family. Family members told the story of what life is like while being in receipt of multiple services.

## CHAPTER 4 FINDING A FAMILY

In this chapter I will describe in detail the steps taken to find a family to participate in this study. To close this chapter I will give a profile of each family member.

### The Search Begins

In the fall of 1997, I began my search for a family to participate in this study. I knew that I wanted to conduct research on children and families at-risk, but my research format had not been formulated. I knew that I wanted to gain a better understanding of what at-riskness meant in terms of families. I thought that getting the perspective of family members about how they felt when working with service providers would move me toward answering my question.

On November 14, 1997, I was the chair of a conference conducted in Abingdon, Virginia. The conference was sponsored by the Danforth Foundation, the Virginia Tech Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, and the Service Learning Center at Virginia Tech. The title of the conference was *The New Era of Comprehensive Services: Leading the Way*. The purpose of the conference was to strengthen integrated efforts that serve young people and families.

As the primary organizer of the conference I made contact with providers of different services and researchers who study families to bring them together to talk about how we could help each other do a better job. All of the contacts that I made helped me to understand more about the care-providing network that exists in Virginia and the nature of at-risk families.

On February 24, 1998, I had an opportunity to go to Tampa, Florida, to make a presentation at the Eastern Educational Research Association annual conference. Many of my colleagues who attended the conference were interested in multiple services, and Diane Gillespie program director of special education administration at Virginia Tech made special arrangements for our contingency to visit some full-service schools in the Tampa public school system.

The evening before we went out to visit the full service schools one of the researchers from special education administration at Virginia Tech approached me, introduced himself, and asked me why I did not invite him to the November conference on comprehensive services. I begged his pardon, and he went on to explain that he was the educational director of a residential care facility for high-risk children. We spoke at length about our interests and research. On many occasions since then we discussed the problems that young people encounter and the services that would provide the most relief for their families. In one such discussion my colleague spoke about his interest in gaining a better understanding of how the Comprehensive Services Act (CSA) of Virginia affected the service-providing network. I told him about my research pertaining specifically to the CSA. Later we decided to attend a state-level meeting together.

On November 5, 1998, we went to a state CSA team meeting and made contact with committee members. This meeting would prove to be a fruitful one for both of us. My colleague's research was focused on the structure of the service-providing network, and my research was focused on how one family who received services perceived the service-providing system. On our trip we came to an agreement about lending each other assistance on our studies. He agreed to help me locate a participating family for my study.

As researchers we are always on the job. We want to know something that is unknown or we want to see something in a different light. The process of revealing the unknown is a convergent one. Though I began by wanting to know more about the nature of at-risk families, I have narrowed my inquiry to wanting to know how one family experiences the receipt of services. Making contact with a family that met my criteria was the next step.

### Observing Families

On May 8, 1999, my friend invited my family and me to participate in a walk-a-thon to help raise money for his residential care facility. My friend and I agreed that this would be a good opportunity for me to observe the families that may serve as participants in my study.

It was a beautiful day early in spring, and I arrived at the campus of the residential care facility with my 11-year old daughter and my 5-year old son just after the walk was completed and the awards ceremony began. Under a large tent there were several tables set up, and families sat drinking soft drinks and eating apples, candy bars, and chips. At the front of the tent an announcer was calling the names of participants who each in turn received an award for how much money he or she raised. By the end of the award session it seemed as though all of the participants had some sort of a prize. They even gave my two children coupons for free food at a local fast-food restaurant. The idea was that everyone was a winner in the effort to support the facility.

After the awards presentation was over many of the families, my children, and I started to walk over a grassy knoll toward a four-acre lake that was on the property. We walked down a gentle slope toward the lake. The director had told me when he invited me to bring some fishing rods. He had the lake stocked with 700 trout a week before the event. Being a fisherman I knew to bring a hand net just in case my five-year old hooked a trout. It turned out to be quite useful to many of the people fishing, and my son loved going from one person to another helping them bring in their catch, more so than fishing himself.

A large grill made of a steel drum was fired up and all of the summer cookout goodies were unwrapped and placed on the grill top. The aroma was familiar to all of us who have enjoyed this American family tradition, and it was a smell that triggers fond memories of how a family could spend a beautiful day together.

The five criteria for selecting my family were well known to the director, and he had given me the description of five young people who came from families that might serve as my participating family. I watched the people around the lake as I cast my fly rod, and I spotted one young man who had been described to me as a potential subject in my research. He was standing next to another young man who had just hooked a fish. My son went to help the fisherman net his catch. The young man I recognized stood and watched. He smiled at my son and congratulated his friend. Later the director confirmed my assumption about the non-fishing bystander. He told me, as he pointed the young man out, that his family was the first family that I would meet.

The director and I agreed that this would not be a time for formal contact with the first family. We also agreed to move slowly, because I was a complete stranger to these people.

I watched the young man, who was identified by the director, interact with family members. I thought an advertisement firm promoting family values could use the scene to promote some product.

The food was great, and most of the people fishing caught at least one fish. We mingled during lunch, and the afternoon went by as quickly as all good times do. On my way home I thought that if all of the care providers associated with the family assistance system could have been at that picnic, the turf issues found in the system would not loom so large.

#### First Contact

On June 4, 1999, I drove to meet with my friend the director of the residential care facility for at-risk youth. At 10:30 a. m. I arrived. We talked briefly about how the day would go, and then we drove to a wilderness camp. Male juvenile offenders are placed in the camp for an intensive program of work, sports, school, group activities, and adventure trips. The goal is to restore them to the home and community.

The reason for going to the camp on this day was to meet a prospective family to participate in the study. The family that I was to meet was pre-screened by the director who understood the criteria that had already been set. After a tour of the facility I met the mother of the family who was about to see her middle son, age 16, graduate from the wilderness camp. The introduction was cordial, and the mother was cheerful.

The commencement ceremony was held in an outdoor amphitheater. The amphitheater was located in a stand of mixed broad-leaf and pine trees on a bluff overlooking a beautiful stream surrounded by rolling green hills.

The ceremony was dignified, and two of the three graduates spoke from the podium. The first student who spoke was the son of the mother I had just met (the prospective participant family). He spoke off the cuff and his words were largely directed at the young men who were still working through their programs, his friends. All of his words were encouraging and hopeful. He spoke thankful words to the many that were gathered there, and he singled out a counselor, a social worker, a teacher, another camper, and his mother, and he thanked them for not giving up on him.

Except for the circumstances that brought all of these people together, the ceremony could have been held for any graduation of high-school-aged people in the country. All of the positive emotions of pride, joy, and love were right there in that place. The sense of accomplishment seemed to be as strong for all of these people as it was for me during any of the many commencement ceremonies that I have participated in or presided over.

After the ceremony was over I was introduced to the camp social worker, counselors, and one of the teachers. Following lunch in the dining hall, we had cake and ice cream to celebrate the event, a new beginning for the three graduates, and I met the rest of the prospective family. A date was set for our second meeting, a luncheon to be held the following week.

#### Gaining Acceptance and Earning Trust

The director and I had a conversation about how well the first encounter went with the family. I suggested that earning the family's trust and gaining their acceptance would be important for my data collection. He agreed and came up with the idea that the next meeting I should have with the family should take place during another positive event in the family's life. He told me that a meeting would be held to place the young

graduate back into the public school system and that a luncheon after that would be a good time to explain my research and ask them to participate.

I went to meet with the mother and her son for lunch on June 9, 1999. I waited at the restaurant for ten minutes before my friend the director came in with the mother and her son, and the director reintroduced us. He excused himself because he had to report back to work.

We were seated, and we all chose the buffet. We filled our plates and began eating. I asked them to eat heartily and informed them that it was my treat. I began by telling them to call me Paul. They each in turn told me to address them by their first names. Elizabeth, the mother, and Bradley told me that they went by Liz and Brad. The ice had been broken; gaining acceptance was now crucial.

Food is always a good icebreaker. Buying a meal for a stranger is one way to get closer to the individual. The food does help to facilitate friendliness. How we shared the time as we ate was the important part of learning to trust one another. I told Bradley that he spoke well at the graduation. Elizabeth smiled, and I said, "I know that you are very proud of Brad."

As we ate I told Liz and Brad that I was a researcher who was interested in telling a story about how people experienced receiving services from more than one provider. I told them how important it was for their voice to be heard by policymakers, service providers, and educators. I explained how I would collect the data for the study and asked them to be partners in this effort.

Liz and Brad were attentive and receptive while I spoke about the research project. Liz informed me that her eldest son did not live at home, and he was the only one in the family that may be cool to the idea of telling a stranger his story. She told me that her 14-year-old son, Benjamin, would be glad to participate, and Brad echoed the same sentiment for both his younger brother and himself. I told Liz and Brad that I was thankful that they were so open and receptive.

Liz told me about a significant other in her life who would be moving into the home at the end of the month and asked me if this would be a problem. I asked if she thought that he would mind if she and her sons participated in the study and if he would consent to being a part of the research. She told me that she was sure that her boyfriend would be glad to participate and that he would not mind at all.

I gave Liz enough consent forms to go around, and we chose a date for the first interview. I told her that I would like to start with her because she was the matriarch of the family and that she would have the most information about her family's history. She seemed to be pleased about this, and we parted on positive terms with a date for the first interview.

I think that the researcher who seeks the trust of others must apply unconditional positive regard for all people. Rogers (1983) wrote about how to prepare people to become teachers. He contended that one of the overriding ideas, behind a good teacher preparation program, is a person-centered approach that is anchored in self-awareness for the teacher. One of the important skills that Rogers believed could be developed is what he termed unconditional positive regard for others. In the case of the teacher, it means seeing all students as people whom deserve respect. This idea is important in building trust with anyone.

For me, the idea of unconditional positive regard means to see people without judging them. Moses brought the Ten Commandments down from Mount Sinai, elaborated on the meanings behind the Commandments, and told the people, "...judge your neighbor fairly" [(Leviticus 19:15), Thompson, 1983, p.120]. After Jesus spoke the Beatitudes during the Sermon on the Mount he spoke to the people about judging others, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" [(Matthew 7:1), Thompson, 1983, p. 991]. The common thread between Rogers' idea of unconditional positive regard and what Moses and Jesus were telling people is to see people without any preconceived notions of their negative characteristics. Seeing people we do not know as beings of worth and not judging them based on our own experiences and prejudices is a skill and a good goal for researchers, teachers, and care providers. Moses and Jesus wanted people to work on building trust with one another. A person who sees all people as people of worth and dignity is one who is worthy of trust. I combined a nonjudgmental view with common courtesy and kindness to earn the trust of Elizabeth's family.

#### The Family

The family that I selected to participate in this study consists of four members (see Figure 25): Elizabeth, the mother; Bradley, the 16 year old son of Elizabeth; Benjamin, the 14 year old son of Elizabeth; and Allen Elizabeth's new husband.

#### Elizabeth

Elizabeth is the 39-year-old matriarch of the family. She is petite by any standard. At five feet tall and 100 pounds her frail appearance hides an inner strength unseen by the casual observer. When she speaks, her voice projects with gentle force and clarity. Her words are toned by a soft raspy timbre that you would hear in a good lady blues singer. When she speaks with you, she looks straight into your eyes; hers are steel blue. There is a quiet calm in her demeanor that hides a more turbulent manner just below the surface, and when topics close to her heart, like her children, are discussed she is inclined to show some agitation and anguish.

Elizabeth is the leader of the family. When I described what my research was about and asked if she and her family would be interested in participating she told me that if telling her family's story might help someone else, they would be happy to help.

#### Bradley

Bradley is Elizabeth's 16-year-old son. He has a slender, muscular, six-foot-three frame. His likeness has been carved into the walls of ancient Roman temples in the forms of gods and hero warriors. His chin is strong and prominent, his eyes are large and a warm brown, his face is encircled with curly, golden-brown locks of hair that drop below his collar. Smart athletic coaches would look at Bradley in a high school hallway and strike up a conversation in hope of getting him to agree to consider trying out for the sport they coach.

When Bradley is having a conversation with you, he speaks in short bursts of words. His eyes are never focused on any one thing for more than a few seconds; they dart back and forth no matter what visual stimulants are in the room. He makes eye-to-eye contact from time to time, but the only way to know if he is engaged and thinking about what people are talking about is his commentary on the topic of discussion. At the first meeting I had with Elizabeth and Bradley I explained what I was doing and why I

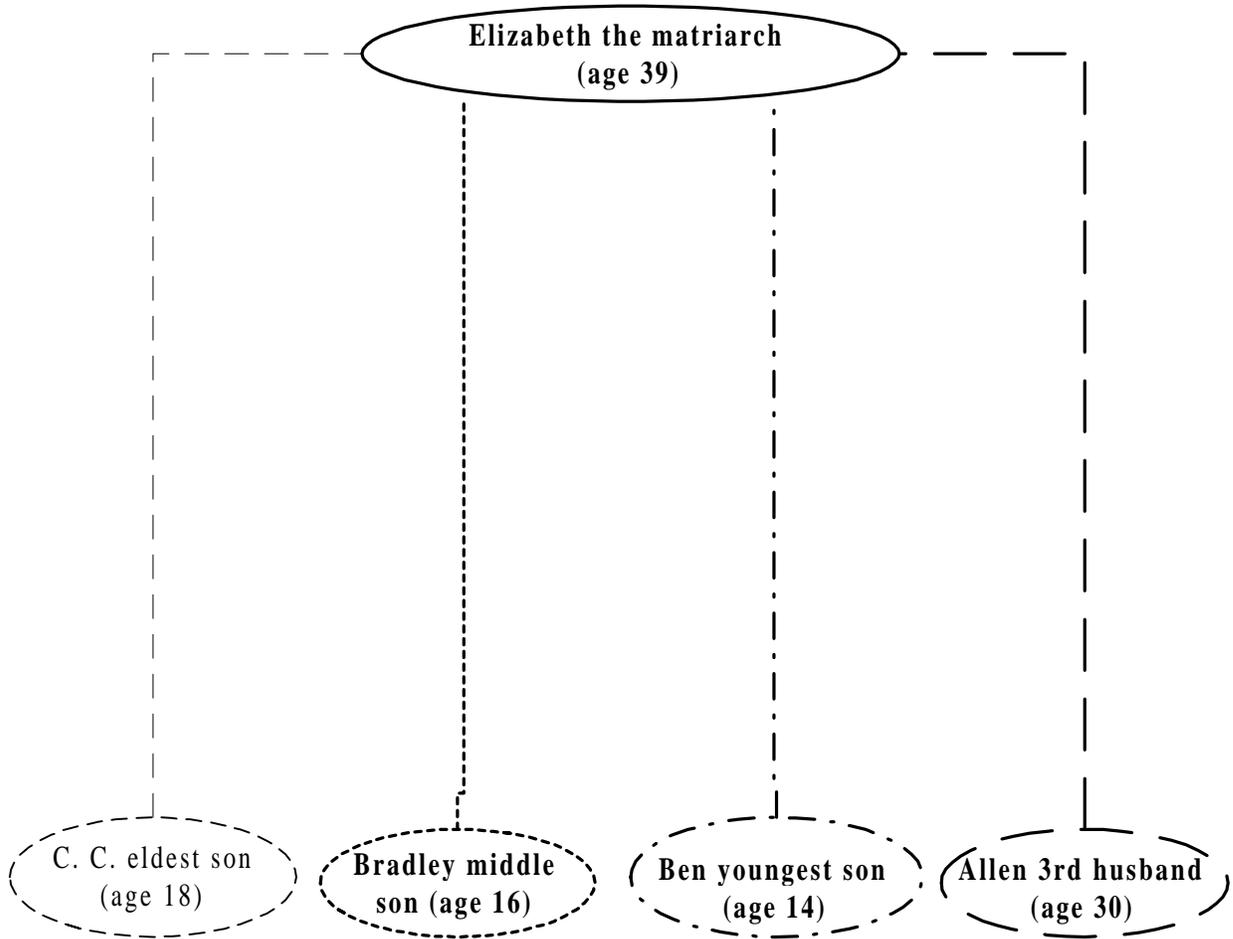


Figure 18. Family members. The different line patterns are used to identify each family member. The line patterns are consistent for figures 19-24.

was interested in their family. There was a pause in my speech, and Brad told his mother that talking about their lives together would be good for all of them.

#### Benjamin

Benjamin is a stocky 140 pound 14-year-old who is Elizabeth's youngest son. As the baby of the family his physical appearance is a combination of man and child. He is five feet three inches tall and has a child's face with baby-smooth skin. He has his mother's steel-blue eyes, and his face is capped with straight dark-brown hair. His shoulders are broad, and his arms, chest, and thighs are filling with muscle.

Benjamin carries himself with a shy quietness. He rarely makes eye contact, and when he speaks, he often looks down and answers questions with one or two words. When he signed his consent form, he asked me politely for a pen, signed the paper, and handed the paper and pen back to me all the while looking down at the ground with a hushed thank you.

#### Allen

Allen is the 31-year-old husband to Elizabeth. He and Elizabeth are newlyweds of two months. Allen is five feet ten inches tall, and of medium-build. He wears dark-rimmed glasses, and has collar length straight blonde hair.

Allen is quiet and unassuming. When I first met him, he was at Bradley's graduation ceremony. He smiled when we shook hands and nodded his head. Later, at his home while I was waiting to talk with Elizabeth, Allen and I talked briefly about my study. When I asked him how he felt about participating in the study, he was cordial and positive in demeanor and willingness. Allen informed me that he would be a full-time student in college during the coming fall semester. I asked him what he would study; he told me that he would be a physics-major.

Allen is soft-spoken. We spoke about our common interest in music and studies. Allen told me that he was a student of the bass guitar. I told him that I played the six-string guitar, and we discovered that we both like Jimmy Buffett's music. He excused himself and said that he had to go study.

#### C. C.

C. C. is Elizabeth's oldest son. He is 18 years old. He went to live with his father when he was 15. C. C. did not get along with Liz's second husband. He also had a serious problem at school. Because he took a gun to school, he was involved in the juvenile court system.

Elizabeth told me that C. C. would not agree to participate in the study if he were in the home. Liz told me that he was a very angry young man. C. C. is represented in the family chart with a broken line. He did not participate in this study.

#### The Remaining Chapters

The next four chapters are the story of Elizabeth's family. Elizabeth, Bradley, Benjamin, and Allen tell the story. Each family member talks about his perspective in consecutive chapters starting with Elizabeth. Two chapters focused on placing the story in the context of services received follow the family story.

Chapter nine is about the themes that come from the family story. I describe the intersecting themes, and I associate how these themes link to service providers.

Chapter ten is an epilogue in which the family speaks to policymakers, school officials, service providers, and at-risk families seeking services.

## CHAPTER 5

### ELIZABETH: THE MATRIARCH

Elizabeth is a true matriarch. She is a mother who is the head and ruler of her family. I chose to interview Elizabeth first because I knew that her story anchored the family's story.

The questions that I asked Liz were designed to flesh out the details of life in an at-risk family. With the first set of questions I wanted to get a profile of how Liz grew up, so I asked for a description of her personal background, kinds of family relationships, economic conditions when she was growing up, and school experiences.

#### My First Visit to the Home

After Liz and Bradley told me that the whole family would consent to participate in my study I set my first interview date with Liz for June 21. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June I found a message on my answering machine. It was Liz. Her voice was weak, and she told me that she was ill and asked if I would call her. I called her; she answered the phone with a weak voice.

She informed me that she was sick and asked if we could reschedule our meeting. I told her that would not be a problem and asked what would be a good time. We set a date for June 23<sup>rd</sup> to give Liz time to recover. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> I called Liz before I visited with her at home.<sup>2</sup> She was feeling better and told me that our meeting was still on for 6:00p.m.

Elizabeth and her family lived in a trailer park. The park is situated at the center of a triangle formed by three small towns, the largest having a population of 25,000. The other two towns are smaller by some ten thousand people. Bradley and Benjamin attend school in the largest of the three towns, which is also the county seat.

There are two major thoroughfares that pass through the county, one is a four-lane state highway that runs east and west, and the other is an interstate highway that runs north and south. If you drive east on the state highway, there is a large commercial area with three shopping malls and two superstores. At the center of this commercial complex a two lane county road runs north and south. Five miles south on that county road is the turn off to the trailer park. The county road is one of the most dangerous in the district because it is a hilly area and the speed limit on much of the road is 55mph. There have been six deaths on the road in the last two years involving mainly young drivers.

The trailer park has 105 units, and the trailers are dispersed over a four-acre tract of land rounded by low-lying hills. A single-lane road runs through the park, some of which is paved. The graveled road begins a quarter of a mile inside the park. Some of the lots have individual gravel parking areas, and some of the trailers share four and five car parking areas. Liz and Allen's trailer is on the side of a hill at a bend in the road. Their lot is on a corner so it is larger than most of the other lots. They share a parking area with one neighbor. Old telephone poles and railroad ties cordon off the parking space that will accommodate four cars. On the first day I visited everyone was home, so I had to park my car on the side of the lot.

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<sup>2</sup> I made it a habit to call Liz before I conducted any of the interviews with her family, because I wanted to keep her informed and included in every step of the way. In our every day work with people we sometimes forget to extend simple courtesies in a polite manner. I felt that maintaining a high level of civility with this family was the best way to cultivate their trust and keep a high level of access.

Liz, Bradley, Benjamin, and now Allen live in a 16-foot wide, 65-foot long mobile home. There are two entrances, both of which are approached by a four-step walk-up with a four-foot by four-foot landing at each door. The steps and landings are made of treated wood that shows considerable age.

The floor plan is standard for a three bedroom two-bath manufactured home built in the 70's. The entrance that I used was 20 yards in front of the parking area. It opened into the kitchen and immediately to the right is a bedroom. The door to the bedroom completed the front wall of the kitchen when it was closed. The kitchen opened to the living room, which was carpeted and nicely furnished with a couch, coffee table, love seat-recliner, and entertainment center complete with a large screen TV. All of the furnishings were relatively new and well kept. The 1040 square feet of living space seemed to be ample for four people. In the most functional families member require space to call their own within the family dwelling. Bradley and Benjamin had a bedroom and Liz and Allen shared the master suite.

### My First Interview With Elizabeth

#### Setting

The first interview with Liz was conducted at the trailer. On that visit Benjamin answered the door, invited me in, and said he would get his mom. As soon as I stepped into the trailer I walked into the kitchen and dining area. There was a small square dinette table with four chairs in the middle of the kitchen area. Benjamin disappeared down the hallway of the trailer, and I sat down at the table.

Ben returned and told me that his mom would be right out. I took the opportunity to talk with Ben about what I was doing, and I told him that I would like to talk to him eventually. He responded by saying that would be fine and turned his attention back to the television. I caught a glimpse of Liz at the end of the hallway; she was on the telephone. After about ten minutes Liz emerged from the back of the trailer, apologizing for delaying our start. I told her that was not a problem.

It was June 28, 6:05 p. m. Liz sat across from me at the dinette table, and Ben continued to watch television in the living area. I placed my tape recorder on the table and told Liz she would not have to speak into the machine. I asked her to talk in normal tones, and I tried to put her at ease about the whole interview process. She informed me that she was fine and not a bit nervous.

#### Family Background

I started by asking Liz to tell me about herself, her background, where she was born and raised, how she was brought up, and her early school experiences. She began by telling me that she was the oldest of four children and that she was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. She lived on her great-grandparents' farm until she was 12-years-old and her parents, brothers, and sister moved to another state and lived in the city. At this point Liz seemed distant and was not looking at me as she said, "Once we moved from the farm into the city, ... I don't know. I think I kind of got lost."

She paused after she made the statement about being lost, then she began again, abruptly, as if she remembered what her task was and might have been off task. She spoke about being a new kid who was picked on and made fun of because of a deep southern accent. She told me that teachers called on her often so they could hear her accent. She had no anger in her voice when she spoke about these things. She was marking a change in her life by describing the circumstances that shaped her at that time.

She said, "I was picked on a lot in school, and my teachers use to call on me a lot, and from that I regressed and became withdrawn and shy. I wouldn't talk much and I kept to myself."

Elizabeth has two brothers and one sister. Liz is the eldest; her youngest brother is eleven years younger. Her sister is three years younger, and Tom, the brother who is eleven months younger, was her closest confidant while they were growing up.

Elizabeth's father came from Wisconsin. He was the third of seven children, and Liz thinks he had a good upbringing. She told me that her father had two brothers that were close to him in age, and they were the older sons who didn't get as much supervision as they needed.

Elizabeth's mother was the oldest of three daughters. She was raised on the farm in Alabama where Liz spent part of her early life. Liz's mother was raised in a loving, supportive family.

### Heroes

Children look for heroes to emulate. The type of hero they generally look for is one that is accessible, a live flesh-and-blood person with some interest in them. When Elizabeth told me about her family moving away from the farm, she told me that her great grandparents were the loving, supportive adults behind her early childhood. She said:

I don't even have bad memories of that time. I got in trouble one time when I got into the cottonseeds, and I smashed some watermelons once. We got a hickory switch on both of those occasions, but that was as bad as it got. I don't remember any family arguments. There was a great deal of communication, and we all felt loved. My great grandparents supported each other and all of us. No matter what you did, no matter what mistake you made, you were loved and supported, and they helped you through whatever it was.

During this part of the interview Liz spoke about the example of family life that her great grandparents set. She holds both of her great grandparents in high esteem for giving her an early view of what Liz believed were solid family values. She said, "My great grandparents were God's blessings on this earth. Both of them were my heroes." Liz recalled how her family would attend church and how her great grandfather participated in a special choir:

My great grandfather used to do what is called fa-so-la-sing. It comes from the old country. The men sing in church, and all they sing is fa-so-la, and they do it in harmony. I use to get chills up my spine in church. I am not a Baptist anymore, but going to church with my great grandparents we got to hear this. It is a cappella and they get their feet going like this [Liz tapped her foot in a four-count time]. They would have these books, and they would sing their songs. They went to Birmingham and did an album in 1976. My great grandmother had one set aside for me.

These early memories gave Liz her first impressions of her true heroes, she believes that her great grandparents knew how to conduct good family life.

### Demons

The first heroes for many children are their parents. With time this view may become tempered, and in some families events cause distrust. Through events some parents become demons in the eyes of their children. This was true for Elizabeth.

Elizabeth expressed a sense of loss when she spoke about leaving the farm: "When we moved away from the farm, we lost all of that." It is the first time that her nuclear family lived away from her mother's family and life-long home. The rural farm life of the south with a sizeable extended family of four generations surrounding her is the only life that Liz had ever known.

Moving away from the only home one has ever known is a traumatic experience. Elizabeth moved away from home, left her great grandmother behind, and suffered abuse at the hands of her father. All of this occurred in the twelfth year of her life. Liz never really recovered as evidenced by her account of her life after age twelve.

The whole time Liz spoke about this part of her life she did not mention her parents in a positive light. Only when prompted did Liz give background information about her mother and her father. When she began talking about her life after the farm, she talked about her parents. When I asked Liz about her relationship with her parents, she talked about her father first, saying, "My father was very dominating and domineering. He was a gambling addict and a sex addict. He molested me from the age of 12 to the age of 15." Elizabeth spoke about her mother during this part of the conversation only in terms of what she thought her mother knew of her father's behavior.

Elizabeth rationalized her mother's behavior. In connection with her father's misbehavior she said, "I think my mom knew deep down inside, but she was a mom of four kids. She had gone from my [great] grandfather's house to my father's house, she had never been alone."

Elizabeth began to make less eye contact with me as she talked about what her father did to her. Liz did not hesitate when she talked about the events that lead her to run away from home at the age of 15. Her voice remained strong, and she told in a matter of fact way the story of how her father molested her for three years. Elizabeth said:

I ran away from home when I was 15. It wasn't anything physical aside from the improper touching. There was the don't tell your mother, and don't tell anyone, the usual normal dynamics of being molested as a child. I had enough of my father doing that to me so I ran away.

At that point, as Liz recounted her story, her voice started to rise in pitch. Her speech became more rapid, and she made eye contact with me when her story brought out higher states of emotion. She looked right at me when she said:

Even after running away at the age of 15 the police brought me back home, and my father was there, my mother was there. In front of five police officers I told my father, "If you ever touch me like that again, I will kill you." The officers looked at me, and I think they thought this was not some rebellious 15-year-old. You don't just strike out at your parents like that without a reason.

Elizabeth's long-term relationship with service providers began on the night the police brought her back home as a runaway. It was the same night that she stood up in defense of herself to name her father as the demon that he had become in her eyes.

#### The First Service Provider

During the time I served as an assistant principal in the public school system, I saw my work as a public service. I wore many hats from an evaluator of faculty and staff to a disciplinarian of students.

I approached the important task of correcting student misbehavior as if it should be an instructive process for the errant student. I always considered myself to be

compassionate and empathetic. I tried to approach my work, with children and their families, remembering that I was there to help people who were in pain. Only after I embarked on this study, and Elizabeth's family story was told to me, did I realize that I could have been more compassionate and empathetic to the plight of those I was trying to help.

We can never walk a mile in anyone's shoes. We may be able to get very close to people, but knowing that we can never see the world through their eyes should act as a compelling force for each of us to be in tune with those we seek to understand.

I realize now that I was the first service provider for many of the children and their families. Though I feel I served the public well and acted in the best interest of people I served, I think my work with others would have been better had I this reminder on my wall: *Hold an **unconditional positive regard**<sup>1</sup> with compassion and empathy for all that walk through your door.*

After Liz disclosed that her father had been improperly touching her and said it in front of her mother and five police officers, none of the adults responded with further inquiry or reporting. Liz's mother and the five officers present on the night of Liz's emotional return home had enough information to become the first care providers to help the child Elizabeth.

The law in Virginia regarding child abuse is explicit. Virginia law requires that child care providers report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to child protective services regardless of the abuser or neglector's relationship to the child (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Social Services, Reporter Assistance Series, 1992). Sexual abuse is one of four categories of child abuse listed in Virginia's law. Of the nine types of sexual abuse fondling is one.

Elizabeth believed that her father's political position and popularity in the city where they lived enabled adults including her mother to look the other way concerning her cry for help. She described her father's position saying:

My father was a public figure. He was highly respected in the city. That is one of the reasons I knew I couldn't go anywhere publicly with what had happened at home, because I just thought too many in the community would be behind him. My father could charm the pants off a snake. My father was a pretty good chameleon. He could have you wrapped around his finger in a heartbeat, and like I said he had a lot of respect from people in the community. He ran the local parks and recreation department. He was on the city council, so he was a popular guy.

As I walk around a college campus and see young men and women that I worked with when they were in high school, I still see them as children even though most of them are twenty and older. I then think about a scared, alone, 15-year-old girl who had to deal with a serious family problem.

Liz sought help from someone she could trust. She told me that she first tried to confide in her brother Tom, who is only 11 months younger. She said:

My brother Tom and I were very close. One day I found the strength to tell him what had happened. He was angry at first. I didn't know if he was angry at my father or me. Tom didn't have anyone to relate to. So it got to the point where Tom withdrew from me. We kind of became separate; we didn't do things together anymore. We played in a garage band. We do have a musical family. We

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<sup>1</sup> This was adapted from an idea of Carl Rogers (1983).

tended to do well with the band, but when it came to any other activities with the family, we all drifted apart. I would try to force the relationship with Tom, but the more I confronted Tom with it the more regressed he became. He just backed away from me altogether.

Elizabeth looked for some help from her brother who was only 14 years old. Elizabeth's brother, a child himself, tried to distance himself from Liz. Jehu, Gazan, and Klassen (1988) wrote, "The victim is scapegoated rather than supported by other family members because she is 'rocking the boat' of an allegedly close family system, threatening its survival, and perhaps evoking guilt in its members for not protecting the victim" (p. 174).

Elizabeth looked for help in the wrong place and did not know that she was making her situation worse. The stress became so great that Liz sought help from a complete stranger:

I went to a school counselor and requested counseling. I needed to know how to deal with how I was feeling. I was 15 an adolescent, and at the same time I was growing away from the things that had happened to me. I wanted them to stop, and I didn't know how to stop them.

As Elizabeth told her story a theme of inner strength and toughness began to emerge. Liz sought help from the first service provider on her own, and it is the high school counselor.

Elizabeth explained how the school officials proceeded:

My parents were called in; charges were never pressed. They made me wait in the lobby of the principal's office while the principal, the guidance counselor, the youth counselor, and my parents had a meeting. When I was called into the office, I was told that I imagined all that had happened to me from the age of 12 to 15. So I guess at that time in my life I realized that I was pretty much on my own.

Elizabeth went on to say that her high school counselor was a good person whom she grew to trust despite the event of disclosure that left her feeling so alone. Liz said:

My high school counselor did follow up with me. For a while there, I don't know how long I went to her. I was in her office at least twice a week. She would call me down, but I guess at first I would go down myself because I felt the need to go. I wasn't afraid in the slightest. She believed me, and I trusted her.

Even though Elizabeth continued counseling with her school counselor, she still felt that she needed more. She said, "It wasn't in-depth counseling; she wasn't a psychiatrist or a psychologist. She helped me the best I think that she could as a person, as a woman."

School counselors are not trained psychologists. Elizabeth felt the need to get help and may have had a better opportunity to get through her difficulties if the school counselor opted to make a referral. When Elizabeth's case emerged, her age, the laws, or the school's administrators may have prevented the school counselor from referring Liz to a psychologist. Parental notification for consent to treat Elizabeth could have been an issue.

A trained psychologist can offer a high level of service to sexual abuse victims. A psychologist would have tried to determine if Liz was in a state of grief. When a person has been sexually abused, they have a sense of loss to overcome. They feel the loss of a normal childhood and a loss of a good relationship with their parents (Wooley &

Vigilanti, 1984). The victim needs help to get through this grieving process: "This grieving process is essential to the final task of separation/individuation. If it does not emerge, the victim is usually not able to relinquish her old identity" (p. 351). More expertise brought to bear on Liz's case could have had a positive impact. Since 1992 in Virginia, efforts have been made to encourage service providers to work together to help at-risk families.<sup>1</sup>

#### From One Crisis to Another

I have seen families that have required much attention from service providers. These families show little ability to demonstrate what Lewis, Beavers, Gossett, and Phillips (1976) called healthy family functioning. They have unhealthy characteristics and move from one crisis to the next.

Elizabeth finished her high school career and stayed at her parents' home until she turned 18. Her relationships with family members were strained at best. She described the tension, saying,

I did continue to live in the home, but my father never spoke to me again after the night I ran away. We would pass each other in the hall; he would never say hello, how are you, or good morning. I was in high school. My grades failed drastically. My brother was drifting away from me, and my mother was indifferent. I know that she knew the truth. She couldn't support me, and she had to support my father.

Getting out of the home and away from the situation is what Liz sought to do. She went on a three-week trip with her mother's sister after her high school graduation. Her aunt was a friend and confidante. They traveled back to Alabama to see family and friends. Liz felt good about being out of her father's home.

When Liz returned home, she found the family in another crisis. She returned from her trip in the dead of night and went right to bed. When she awoke, she found her seven-year-old brother home alone. Her mother, brother, and sister had all gone to work. Liz's baby brother asked her for something to eat, so Liz took him into the kitchen to feed him breakfast. As they entered the kitchen Liz saw a yellow stain on the wall. She asked her brother about the stain, and he said, "Daddy was mad at mommy. Daddy threw a mustard jar at mommy. The jar missed mommy and hit the wall."

Liz called her aunt and asked her what had happened. Her aunt Lana lived close by and was her mother's youngest sister. Elizabeth was told that her father left the family, taking all of the family's savings and emptying all accounts held by Liz's parents. Elizabeth recalled how she felt about her father leaving:

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<sup>1</sup> In 1992 the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Social Services Child Protective Services published *The Reporter Assistance Series*. The purpose of the handbooks was to assist educators and other service providers in the child abuse and neglect reporting process. The first step to reporting a suspected case of child abuse or neglect is notifying the local department of social services or the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.

Elizabeth's case preceded the Comprehensive Services Act (CSA) of Virginia and *The Reporter Series* publication. Her first experience with the service-providing network might have been different had she been born later. I have sat on many Family Assessment Planning Teams (FAPT) as the educational representative, and I have observed how people from all parts of the service network have a better chance of providing more meaningful help to people in need.

I never felt such resentment for any one human being in my life as I did him. So that afternoon my mother came home from work, and she said, "I guess you know."

I said, "Yes-em, I do."

So I went to work the next day with my mom. I had been working that job every summer. I am the one who had got my mom the job, so I went back to talk to the boss and said, "I need to help support my family, so I need to come to work."

So I worked that job for a year.

Three years passed between the time Liz confronted her father in front of the police and the mustard jar incident. Each incident created a family crisis. When Elizabeth's father left the family, he left them in a dire financial situation.

#### The Need to Break Away

Elizabeth worked and stayed at home for a year after her father left her mother. Her brother graduated from high school at the end of that year. Liz expressed an interest in getting out on her own. She spoke about breaking away:

When my brother graduated, just before I turned 19, I talked with him, and I told him that I really do want to try this on my own. I don't want to run out on any of you, but I want to live my life. I want to do my thing, and I have been under mom and dad's thumb for 18 and a half years.

While Liz was working, she met a man who was in the navy. They fell in love and wanted to marry. I asked Liz how her mother received the news about her wanting to marry and leave. She recalled how the conversation went, saying,

When I told my mom that I wanted to marry him, and that we could live there or we could live in our own home, and we could still help her, she wouldn't be suffering in any way, she didn't want that. She told me that I was just like my father. She called me a few choice names, and she told me to get out of the house and never come back.

I asked Liz if she could say anything to appease her mother during that conversation. She said:

She resented me for wanting to go forward with my life and not stay there and help, even though my brother and I both sat down and talked to her. My husband to be would say, "You know we could all pitch in. Just because you want to come and live with me doesn't mean we can't help. We would live in government housing; we wouldn't pay rent." What I made and what he made we could still help, and I sent money home.

Unlike Liz's mother, most parents want to prepare their children for life in the world away from home (Lewis, Beavers, Gossitt, & Phillips, 1976). Children who have been abused find it difficult to go out and make a life outside of their parents' home, (Jehu, Gazan, & Carole, 1988). Elizabeth wanted to start a family of her own, but she had little training to be successful at this undertaking. Families that do not function well do a poor job of preparing children to leave the home (Lewis et al., 1976).

Just after Liz was married she and her new husband sent money to her mother. The checks were returned. Liz found a way to get money to her family:

At first my mother returned the checks. She wouldn't take my money. I finally met my brother on the sly, and I told him to take this money and use it in whatever way he could to help mom. This went on for two years.

Elizabeth married her first husband and moved out. Nine months later she had her first son. She did all of this without her mother's blessing.

#### Unresolved Issues

Wiping the slate clean after a failed relationship is something we would all like to do. When we mistreat people, we can never undo what we have said or done to hurt them. Elizabeth's mother remarried, but Liz's opinion of the event was tainted because of how her mother treated her during her last few months at home:

My mom married my stepfather. That was strictly for convenience. She was tired of doing it on her own. My baby brother was getting older. My sister was 15 at the time of the separation and my parents divorce, and my baby brother was 7. My sister turned into a wild thing. She wouldn't stay at home: she wouldn't follow mom's rules. The baby was suffering constantly because mother was always belittling my father to my brother and then belittling me. She turned my molestation into an absolute farce. It never happened: she used it to [turn] my brothers and sister against me. Eventually my brother closest to me would have nothing to do with me. He would take the money. He would meet me from time to time to get the money, because my family needed it. He still wasn't communicating with me on a level the way we use to.

The anger issues that were harbored inside each member of Elizabeth's family of origin remained unresolved. Elizabeth was angry about the abusive situation she endured and was in a stage of grief about what had happened to her family, but she remained loyal. Liz's mother resented Liz; she blamed her for the breakdown of family relationships. Liz felt her mother's resentment but still wanted to help her family of origin. Family members do not want to stop exploiting the victim of the abuse, and they use the victim to explain the family's disintegration, while the victim remains loyal to the family (Jehu, Gazan, & Klassen, 1988).

Elizabeth and her first husband lived within 20 miles of her mother. Liz had two sons; their grandmother had never seen them. When Elizabeth had her third child, she was amazed at how the family came together, she said:

When Ben was born, my mother realized that she had three grandchildren that she had never seen. I only lived 30 minutes away from her. So, when I was in the hospital with Ben, she showed up the next day. She came into the hospital as if nothing had ever happened. She didn't say, I am sorry, please forgive me, can we talk about this, can we work it out? It was just like nothing ever happened. I was so bewildered and excited at the same time to have my family there I just let it all go. We never talked about the issue; we never brought it up.

Liz wanted her family to be together so much that she put her own feelings of loss and anger on a back burner where they would simmer.

#### The Need for Closure

Liz had limited contact with her mother and stepfather for a period of time after the birth of Benjamin. Elizabeth still wanted to find some closure to her molestation, she said:

As I got older I realized I was growing up, and I wanted closure. I wanted this situation to not be superficial anymore, because to me it was not superficial. It was very real, very deep, and very serious. I wanted an end to it. I tried to talk about it with my brothers, my sister, and my mom. They would clam up, or it

would turn into an argument. The main effect on me was I would feel guilty for trying to push the issue. For years it went unspoken. We never talked about it again. I went on about my life.

Elizabeth wanted closure, but she could not attain it. Family members have a distorted idea of how the family functions as a unit. They may see the family as a close knit cohesive unit, but this may not be congruent with reality. This idea is referred to as the "family mythology" (Lewis, Beavers, Gossett, & Phillips, 1976, p. 86). Though Elizabeth was a victim, she was threatening the family by raising the issue of her abuse (Jehu, Gazan, & Klassen, 1988). When Elizabeth sought to heal herself, her family of origin rejected her. Liz said, "I was pretty much blackballed. So I broke all strings. I didn't talk to my mom anymore."

#### Breaking Up and Physical Abuse

Elizabeth stayed married to her first husband for six years, and during that time she never experienced any physical abuse. Liz sensed that she was growing apart from her husband. She said:

As I grew older I grew up. I grew away from the protection of my husband. He was doing things in our marriage that were not acceptable to me. I saw a pattern. I saw my mom in me. I was accepting things that were not acceptable, but I had the fear of not being able to do it on my own with three kids.

When Elizabeth decided to get out of her first marriage, she experienced physical abuse from her husband. She said:

I went to a lawyer. I filed for divorce. My ex-husband wouldn't move. He got physical with us that last night. He attacked me. I called the police. I got an injunction. I had him removed from our home. When he was removed, I moved my children back in. I put the house up for sale. I used the money from my share of the sale to pay for the divorce.

Elizabeth had difficulties with her first husband and his violent nature even after she divorced him. She recalled the worst of his behavior, saying,

He was constantly coming over, calling, and stalking. On one other time, in particular, I had gone on a date. I was separated and divorced by now. I had the right to go out; I was on a date. The children were home with my sister-in-law. He came over and wanted to know where I was, and she told him that I was out. He waited for me in the bushes, and when I came home, he watched me come in. As soon I came in and changed into nightclothes, he kicked the door in. When he kicked the door in, he beat me to a pulp. He put me in the hospital. He ruptured my spleen, and I was in the hospital for four days. I pressed charges against him, and this time they put him in jail for 18 months.

Elizabeth did not become a battered woman until she wanted to leave her husband. This is not unusual. In 1983 three-fourths of the domestic assaults reported to law enforcement agencies were carried out after the couple had been separated (U. S. Department of Justice, 1983).

Hart (1993) believed that a husband who will batter his wife is more likely to become violent during the time of separation and that violence could be extreme. If the man holds the balance of power in the family, and he feels his grip on the woman loosening, his reaction may be to use brute force to hold his power over the woman (Harway & Hansen, 1993). Elizabeth had been in a cycle of abuse, but never at this level

of violence. After the physical abuse, Elizabeth recognized the cyclical nature of her situation.

#### A Fresh Start

Elizabeth wanted to leave the city where she had so many bad memories. She wanted to try the country setting again. She made arrangements to move in with her aunt and uncle with whom she was very close. Liz spoke of this fresh start, saying,

I moved away from the city. I moved up to the country in a beautiful valley. My aunt and uncle lived there. This is the aunt that is more like a mother to me than my own mother is. She has even made statements to the effect that I was born to the wrong mom. I moved up there. She gave us a place to stay. They redid their basement, and we lived in that. I got a job, maybe a month and a half after we got there. I worked that job for the entire six years that we lived there. We started over again.

Elizabeth had hoped that the change of setting would help her family get back a sense of peace. Liz worked the same job, and her aunt helped by watching her three sons. Liz met and fell in love with her second husband. Elizabeth remarried in July. She had time to move into a nice house with her sons and second husband. Her newly formed family did well until Elizabeth became ill.

#### Illness and the Ravaging Effects

In September, three months after Liz remarried, she began to feel ill. She had a difficult time doing her job and balancing family life. She went to a doctor and was diagnosed with cancer. After undergoing several tests her doctors determined there were cancer cells in her uterus, bladder, and a kidney. Elizabeth would have to undergo chemotherapy. Liz spoke about this episode in her life without hesitating, but her voice was softer, and her eyes were fixed on one point of the table where we sat. She looked like she was in a trance. She said:

I thought that this was right. We got along pretty well. Then I got sick. I got cancer. In September of that year I was diagnosed with cancer, and that started a three-year battle. My husband was good. He took care of the kids. I was too sick to know anything. I was too sick to know anything that was going on outside of the chemotherapy. My second husband was not there with me. He never came with me, and he was not there to support me with that. He did take care of the kids. He worked, and he made sure that the bills were paid. He made sure the chores were done and the kids were fed and clean. He did things with them from time to time.

Elizabeth went through a period of time when she could not concentrate on anything except getting well. She told me that the disease is a terrible thing, but the chemotherapy was what made her life difficult. For a three-year period, Liz did not have enough days of strength to juggle the daily tasks of a working mother. She said:

I started to get better, but my husband grew distant. He grew harsh with the kids. He became emotionally abusive to all of us. My 15-year-old ran away from home to go live with his father in Pennsylvania. He didn't like his stepfather. He couldn't cope with me being sick. I was too sick to intervene for him, or to be referee. I couldn't think about that. I was too sick doing what I had to do.

On the day that Elizabeth's oldest son C. C. ran away she recalled it to be one of her stronger days. She said:

In between, I had days of strength. On the day that C. C. left, my second husband was ready to call the police. I had this quiet calm, and I said, "No, I have a funny feeling that I know where he is."

It was on a Saturday. I waited calmly. By six-o'clock that evening I got a call from my ex-husband. He told me that I have C. C., and I have had him from about three-o'clock this morning. I had one question for him. I asked, "Why did you wait so long to call me?"

He told me that he and C. C. needed to talk; he needed to understand what was going on. He needed to know how to approach me with this. He said, "I understand you've been sick. I know that you have had cancer. C. C. doesn't like your husband, and I can't have this. C. C. is going to stay with me."

I said, "Fine, C. C. has accounts here at high school. He needs to finish. He needs to come here and close his accounts. I am not going to do it for him. Say goodbye to all his friends. Close out everything at school, and when he is done with that, he can come with you. He's got to stay here for one more week. You have to bring him back, and then when he is done with that, he can go back with you."

He said, "O K, fine."

Elizabeth felt that she had lost her oldest child. The circumstances that had prompted C. C. to run away were not of his own doing, but C. C. wanted to find someone to blame. Liz knew that C. C. would not be back; he blamed her for the unhappiness in the family. She said, "In my heart I knew that I had lost a child. I did, I lost him. There was a wedge put between us so wide; to this day he and I can't communicate."

#### From One Loss to Another

Liz's cancer was being treated aggressively. It went into remission. She began to feel stronger, and she hoped that her return to work would have a calming effect on the other family members. She still had a feeling that things were not right as far as her relationship with her second husband went. She said:

As I was healing, and getting better, and healthier I started noticing things with my second husband that were unacceptable to me. Again, I felt this superficial attitude. Nothing was real around me. Nothing was sincere. I felt the same thing that I felt back home when I was 15; it was just not real. There were no genuine feelings in my family. It was like we were going through the motions, and I wasn't happy with that. I wasn't going to live that way. It was too far out of whack for me.

Liz never mentioned any physical abuse in connection with her second husband, but when I spoke to Bradley about him, he told me that he would whip him with a vacuum cleaner cord. Elizabeth described the break up of this four-year marriage, saying, "In January I came home from work early one day. I saw his truck, and I thought 'Wow! He's home.' We needed a new dryer, and I thought that was why he was home. I walked upstairs, and he was with someone else in my room. I just stood there, and I calmly said, 'I will give you both five minutes to get out of my house.'"

Of course the looks on their faces would have been priceless to capture. I thought of my great grandmother immediately. I was not going to resolve to their level. I was going to be hard as a rock, like she was. I wanted to be strong and sturdy. I wasn't going to fall for it. Which is exactly what I did. This young lady ran past

me real quick, and she ran out the door. I went to the kitchen. A few minutes later he comes in and says, "I need to explain."

What you were doing, I need no explanation. I know exactly what you were doing. You should leave. Get out of my house. That was the end of our marriage. We were married four years.

As I listened to her tell me about her cancer, her son C. C. leaving, and the demise of her second marriage, I thought how could she think she was not a strong individual. I told her that I thought that she was one of those *Steel Magnolias*<sup>1</sup> and that her great grandmother would be proud of how she had conducted herself.

#### Seeing the Need for Help

Liz placed blame for her family's situation on herself. She said:

I went through a phase of feeling that something was wrong with me. This was my second marriage, and both marriages failed. I thought it was my fault. It was my choice to marry these two men, so it was my fault that the marriages didn't work. I got myself back into counseling, and I talked at great length. I talked about the patterns I was repeating and why. I realized that it was the learned behavior from home. The fact that I didn't have enough self-esteem or confidence in myself, Oh yea, sure, I was 28 and starting over. I was kicking butt, but deep down within myself I wasn't happy with me. My mind was telling me what was right and what was wrong, and I was acting on that. I was still following those patterns. I was convincing myself that what was wrong was right, and comfortable, and that was where I needed to be.

Elizabeth saw the need to get help. She sought help first from the private sector. When the psychologists wanted to focus on her father's molesting behavior, Liz looked for help in other places. In her own words:

I tried the private sector. In the private sector when I went to a couple of psychologists, all they wanted to focus on was the molestation, and I felt like, yes that was a vital part, but there was still more to me than those three years of molestation. There was more to me than that. For some reason these two psychologists that I went to, I couldn't get passed that. I wanted to get passed that. I know that I didn't have closure, but I didn't want to talk about that all the time. I wanted to go further.

#### People Do Make the Difference

From the age of 15 to the age of 28, Elizabeth received services from many different service providers. She never evaluated the service providers or the work they did. When she did get some meaningful help from a caring person she said:

I went to community services. They worked with my insurance on a sliding pay scale. The lady that I worked with was wonderful. She was always there for me. She made me realize that no matter how stupid I thought it was, it was very important, and it was something that had to be dealt with. Through that I realized what patterns I was following. It was comfortable. It was comfortable because it was what my mom did. It was what I did the first time, and it was what I did the second time. The right things were uncomfortable to me. The wrong things were comfortable to me. Community services did a remarkable job.

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<sup>1</sup> The title of a play written by Robert Harling (1988).

Elizabeth had become a consumer of services. She started to understand how the service providers did their work, and she understood where to go for specific types of help. Like any good consumer she made assessments of the products she received. When I asked Liz about positive and negative experiences with service providers, she told me that it was all in the people with whom she worked.

#### Elizabeth Talks About Bradley and Service Providers

##### Working With Schools and Bradley's Problems

I asked Elizabeth to talk about how she got along with service providers that worked with her children. She told me she began to work with schools when Bradley was nine. Brad tied a string around his throat to see if he would pass out. The teacher called Liz and told her about the incident. Liz thought that something needed to be done to find out why her son would do this. She said:

I thought that this is not like one of my kids to try to harm himself. There is something behind this. I was working the substance abuse center at that time. So, I took him to the community services board in the city. I had him treated by one of our counselors there. Five minutes alone in a room with Brad and they could tell that he was a child with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). They put him on ritalin right away. He is on the generic brand of ritalin, and has been since he was nine. Brad has seen the ritalin as a failure. His friends at school would pick on him: "You druggie. You're not smart enough to deal without it. You have to have medicine to survive."

Elizabeth had been divorced from her first husband for six months when this episode took place. Liz was not pleased with school officials. She spoke about how they worked with her concerning Bradley. She said:

They didn't work with me. They treated it as a disease. Brad was mistreated in my personal opinion. He wasn't abused, but they wouldn't take the time or the patience. The school wasn't educated enough. I still felt Bradley had slipped through those cracks in the education component.

Elizabeth thought that school officials were, at the least, unsympathetic toward her child's plight, and, at the most, negligent of their duty. Service providers need to recognize behavioral problems early because the later the intervention process begins the less likely it will be effective (Kauffman, 1999). One of the reasons for this dilemma is that school officials do not see antisocial behavior in very young children as a precursor to more serious problems later in life (Kauffman, 1999).

##### Bradley and ADHD

After Elizabeth went through her second divorce, she moved to a mountain valley. It was a small town setting. There was no major metropolitan area in the county. The school division was small and served a rural population. Serious problems began for Bradley. Elizabeth remembered:

When we moved up to the valley, they too were uneducated on ADHD. They saw Bradley as a troubled child. It was a county school system. He spent a lot of time in the principal's office. The teacher called me. She was exasperated and completely frustrated. She said, "What do I do with your child?"

I said, "This is what works at home. I don't talk down to my child. I sit him down to where we are at eye level. I look him in the eye, and I say this is what you are

doing. Maybe you don't see this as what you are doing, but you are. We need to do something about this."

They weren't giving him his medicine properly. If Bradley doesn't get his medicine three times a day, like he is supposed to, he "wigs." He does not function like he is supposed to function.

I asked Liz if anyone suggested working through a child-study process with Bradley.<sup>1</sup> She said:

That wasn't brought up until the eighth grade. Bradley told the teacher to go to hell. Bradley was completely frustrated. We were in the county school system. He went to the office in tears, and he called me. They told him he couldn't use the phone. He used it anyway, and he called me at work. He was crying to the point that I couldn't understand what he was saying. I left work immediately, and I went to the school. Bradley was sitting on the curb. He couldn't catch his breath because of how hard he was crying. I said, "What's going on buddy?"

He huffed for breath to answer. Lets talk about this, so he told me what had been going on inside. His science teacher had put him on the spot and completely embarrassed him in front of the class. I couldn't have paid that kid to go back into the school. I gave him the keys. I told him to go listen to the car radio, and I would be there in a few minutes. Playing the stereo in the car was all that mattered to him, so he went to my car.

Liz continued talking about the episode, saying,

I went inside. I asked to speak to the principal, Mr. Goodwill. He was a big guy who wouldn't see me. He refused to see me. So I talked to the assistant principal. The only reason that I got to see him was because the adolescent in me came out. I was speaking loud enough that everyone could hear me. I wasn't being disrespectful, but I was talking very loud. There were other parents in that room. I thought, you are going to see me; we are going to talk about this. My son is a person; he is a student in this school. One teacher passed by, and he said, "Well, I tell you what, your son could get an Oscar for some of his performances. He ought to be an actor."

I said, "You don't know the first thing about my son. If you did, he wouldn't be sitting in my car listening to the stereo. He would be in here, and you would be working with him. So don't go there with me."

I went in to see the assistant principal, and I said, "You need to get his school records."

What set me on fire was they brought out his school records, and they wouldn't let me see them. I said, "I have a right to see what is in my son's folder."

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<sup>1</sup>In Virginia, the child study process is used by school systems to determine how best to help a child who is having chronic difficulties in school. When a referral is made for special education, Different service providers administer tests and make evaluations of the child. The child is given a complete physical and psychological exam, and mental and social assessments are made. A meeting is held after the exams are completed. The parents of the child along with a school administrator, school psychologist, teachers, and a special education expert meet to determine whether or not the child needs special education services.

None of the things that had happened in the previous schools, from the ADHD diagnosis on, had been transferred. None of that was in his file. They would not take my word for the fact that my son had ADHD.

Elizabeth talked about her discussion of what she thought should be done to help Bradley. When I asked her about Bradley's school files and what they contained, she said:

They transferred his grades, his shot record, and his birth certificate. From the fourth grade to the eighth grade nothing had been transferred. I went out, and used their phone and called the other schools. I asked them to send that information, and they did. In the meantime the assistant principal says maybe we can do a child study. I remember throwing my hands up in the air and saying its about time. I had been asking school systems to do a child study for the last four years. Find out what his limits are and put him in an appropriate class. From the age of nine to the age of thirteen my son was in mainstream classes and treated as a problem child. He was never put into appropriate classrooms growing up. I needed him in special education classes, because he couldn't stay on task. Teachers were not educated enough. They didn't have patience with him, because all they kept saying was I have 30 other kids; I can't concentrate on Bradley.

I asked Elizabeth if any of the school officials explained the child-study process to her. She told me no school official did at first, but she did come into contact with one special education teacher that made a big difference in the services that Bradley received. She said:

They didn't explain the child process at first. I can't tell you why they didn't, but when I asked questions, it was like well may I call you back? I thought O. K. fine. The school did not have a teacher to teach special education. They had to hire a special person to teach Bradley. When the child-study was done, and Bradley was placed in her class, she turned out to be a Godsend for Bradley. They still keep in touch. She was in karate, and Bradley went to a couple of her tournaments. They had a good relationship.

#### Bradley and the Juvenile Court System

Bradley continued to have problems in school. He did have a good special education teacher. She worked with Brad a few periods a day. For the remainder of the day Brad was bussed to an alternative school setting, where he would work on vocational skills. He started to skip school and make bad decisions about his behavior. He began to steal. Bradley was caught for stealing and was sent before a juvenile judge. Elizabeth thought that the service providers of the juvenile court system did not work in harmony. She said:

It seemed that the commonwealth attorney and the probation officer were in a power struggle with my child. The judge would lay down some ruling and the probation officer would question it. Then the commonwealth attorney would question what the probation officer was doing, and it turned into a struggle. I truly feel that Brad was lost in the cracks.

The judge placed Bradley on supervised probation. The probation officer was to visit with Brad once a week to monitor him. Liz did not feel good about what she saw in that effort. She said:

Bradley was put on probation, and he was not monitored. He was not supervised like he should have been. It was like, now we put him on probation, you take care

of your son. When Bradley bucked the system, he created a lot of friction and a lot of problems for us at home. When I would call the probation officer, he didn't want to make Brad responsible. The probation officer wanted me to make Brad responsible. Yet, Brad was a ward of the court while on probation.

Bradley would buck the system by staying out all-night and skipping school. Police officers would bring Bradley home and notify his probation officer that they had done so. Elizabeth could not control Bradley. She wanted help, but she felt helpless. She said:

I felt distraught and angry. I thought I was losing my child. I was fighting an endless battle of wits with all these people. That is what I truly felt. There was no way that I could win this battle. I couldn't fight it alone. I had to have the legal system, because he was in the legal system. How do I make the legal system work for me? I put a letter in the town paper, and the commonwealth attorney saw it, and he called me at my job. He wasn't hateful, but he said, "You said some pretty powerful things."

I asked him if it were your kid what would you do. He told me it wasn't his son. I said, "That is not what I'm asking you. If your child were in my child's shoes, what would you do for him? Would you give him every opportunity? Would you help him every way you could? Would you make the system work for you? Just because you are the commonwealth's attorney do you assume and take the system for granted? Become a single mom who's son is on a roller coaster ride heading for a brick wall so fast it would make your head spin. He is gonna bust if you don't do something to save him. You guys put him in the legal system when he started stealing. Now you guys have to help me."

He asked me, "Well what can we do?"

I felt absolutely helpless.

Elizabeth and Bradley had to appear before the judge again. The judge placed the family in a family preservation program. A mentor and a counselor were assigned to Elizabeth and her family. I asked Liz if she felt a sense of partnership with these service providers. She said:

No partnership, I encountered good people along the way, but it wasn't enough to make the difference. In the juvenile court there was a constant power struggle. They put us on family preservation services. Brad had a mentor, and he had a counselor who would come to our house. Bradley didn't trust them; they were both women. The court felt that since I was a woman, and since Bradley communicated with me, having a female mentor, and a female counselor, would be the right thing to do. Bradley manipulated them, and they didn't have patience with Bradley.

I asked Elizabeth if she could voice her opinions openly, during the family counseling sessions. She said:

No, it didn't go anywhere, the meetings were with the counselor, and I told her how I felt. The mentor and I had a better relationship. Everything that was said or done in the counseling meetings was all written down in a record, and it was given to the probation officer. The counselor was court ordered to do this. Everything that happened went on her say. If I didn't like something, I would call

the probation officer. He seemed sympathetic, but he didn't really do anything about it.

Elizabeth moved away from the school and court systems where the family was receiving services. There was no tracking or follow up, until Bradley caused problems at home, Liz said:

It had gotten to the point where I contacted social services. The upheaval in my home from what Bradley was going through was too much. I needed a rest-bit. I was about to lose my mind. I didn't want to lose Benjamin. I still had Ben to think about. Bradley was never home. He was breaking the rules. He was just turning so defiant it was unreal. The system wasn't working for me. It wasn't helping me help my son. I called social services out of [desperation], and I said, "Take me to jail for child abuse or whatever you want to call it, child neglect and abandonment; I don't want my son here. He can't follow my rules. I am not asking for his right arm. He is unruly and defiant. He needs help, and nobody will give it to him. Just come and get him."

He threw knives at Benjamin, and I told them what had happened. So, then, I ended up back at probation, and this time I talked to the supervisor of probation. We pressed charges against Bradley for intent to do bodily harm to his younger brother, and, again, he was brought up in front of the judge. He was arrested and brought up to the county juvenile corrections. The new judge said, "What do we do with your son?"

Elizabeth wanted to have Brad placed in a wilderness program for male juvenile offenders. When she made this suggestion to the court, she was turned down and told that there were budget restraints to consider. Liz said:

When I first approached them with the wilderness program, the probation officer said, "We don't have it in our budget. We can't send him there, so he is off to the boot camp."

The boot camp is a juvenile jail. There are murderers in that jail. That is where Bradley was sent. He was there for a total of six months.

I asked Elizabeth what kind of a relationship she had with the service providers at the boot camp.<sup>1</sup> Liz said:

As far as communications went, there wasn't any. Bradley was an inmate. He wasn't there to have fun. He wasn't there to have a family picnic; this was tough stuff. They wanted to teach him a lesson. He was two hours away.

Elizabeth clenched her jaw when she stopped speaking. I then asked how she felt about this placement for Bradley. She continued:

I already had a bad feeling before he left, but I was willing to give it a chance, because it was better than him being on the streets. As long as Bradley maintained his medication he would be fine. Nobody knew he had ADHD. When he was in that program they did maintain his medication. There was a lot of military corrections, and that kind of stuff. Bradley was still very immature and making immature decisions. He seemed to stay in trouble all the time. I was making visits for no reason, because he would lose his visitation privileges, so I would drive

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<sup>1</sup> Boot camps for juvenile offenders are a spin off of a rehabilitative approach used in the adult criminal justice system. There is a disciplinary element applied in boot camps that comes from the military form of indoctrination, thus the name "boot camp".

two hours for nothing. They didn't bother to call me and say, we want to save you a trip, because Bradley lost his visitation privileges. I wasn't pleased with that at all; it was very frustrating. At the same time, at home, my marriage was falling apart, and I was suffering through cancer. It was a real tough time. I felt better once I was diagnosed, because I knew Bradley was safe. He was eating three times a day. He was warm when it was cold, and cool when it was hot, and so I felt secure. I knew he wasn't going to be completely mistreated, but I knew he wasn't getting the help that he needed. His problem was not being addressed. He was not being treated for what was wrong with him. Learning anger control management, how to deal with ADHD, and setting goals, things like that. None of that happened.

At the end of six months Bradley returned home. He was being monitored by the juvenile court system through the juvenile probation office. Bradley told me about going to school one day and jumping out of the back of the bus. Bradley said:

We would skip school all day. The bus came all the way from our little town, and it would take us to a bigger town, to school every day. We would ride, and none of us felt like going to school, so one day we jumped out the back door while the bus was still in our neighborhood. The cops came and got us.

This incident brought Elizabeth and Bradley back before the same judge that sent Brad to the boot camp. I asked Liz what she thought of this judge. Liz said:

He did seem very concerned. There was a time or two where you could tell that he was tired of having Bradley in his courtroom. It seemed to be a never-ending battle. When the time came, I wanted the wilderness program for Bradley, but they put him in the boot camp military style detention. I told the judge at that time that this is a mistake for Bradley. It is not going to help my son. Putting him in a correctional facility like that is not treating the problem. It is [an] in your face [approach], it is going to make Brad mad, and he is going to toe the line. He is going to do what is right, because he is gonna want to come home. It is not going to help him maintain [a life] in the real world, because that is not the real world. It is not treating the problem. It is just covering it up.

I asked Elizabeth why she thought this judge was concerned about Bradley.

Elizabeth said:

I told him that my son needed help, and I had been trying for a year and a half to get you guys to help me help him. You're not doing it. If you are not going to help me help him; then you take him. I'm losing him, and short of death, something has to be done. He said he would take it under advisement, and in a few minutes he came out of his chambers, and he said, "You find the money in the budget to send this young man to the wilderness program."

Elizabeth saw her effort to get Bradley help as a struggle. She felt like she knew what the best placement for Brad would be. I asked her how she knew about this program. Elizabeth said:

I was in the community services board, and one of the ladies asked me if the services were for me, and I told her no. She remembered me and asked me about C.C. who had been through there, and I said he was fine. She gave me the number for the director of the wilderness program. I called them. I was looking at military schools, Christian camps, everything I could find. I was looking for something

away from juvenile corrections. They sent me information and an application, and I filled it all out. I thought, why can't I see if this would work? I couldn't afford the 11,000 dollars, or whatever it would be for Bradley. My insurance would only cover so much of it. It was an in-patient thing, so I took [the paper work] to the probation officer. He took it, and said he would see what he could do, and he never called me back. That is when I started hearing about no money in the budget, and I sat and cried. He said that this was not something to get so upset over. I told him it is not your son; you aren't watching your son deteriorate. You're not watching him lose his life right in front of you. Bradley was 14 and 15 at the time. He wasn't going through a normal freshmen year in high school. He wasn't going through normal milestones. These were things I wanted for my kids. It hurt, and I felt helpless. The system had him. I wanted the system to work for him. To me, it wasn't until this judge made the right placement. When we got him in the wilderness program, I knew he would buck it the first chance he got. He ran the first night he was there. I knew from what I saw that we were on the right track. This was the answer to my prayers. I did what I had to do to get him in there. I didn't stop pressing charges, I didn't stop barking, and I didn't stop yelling, until I got him in. They were sick and tired of me.

Bradley completed the wilderness program, and he participated in a graduation ceremony 12 months after he started. Elizabeth spoke highly of the program, saying, While Bradley was in the program, we had quarterly meetings. There was constant communications. We have all become pretty good friends, I think. Every three months I was there for a meeting, and I was as involved as I could be. There were times when we all got busy, and I would call to remind them we had a meeting. Whenever there was a problem, I was notified by teachers, counselors, and the secretary. We had once a month family counseling sessions. I would drive there on site. Now, we are in after-care sessions from the wilderness program. The counselor comes here twice a month for sessions. We only have these sessions until the end of August, and then Brad is free.

I asked Elizabeth about the high school that Bradley would attend, and how she was getting along with school officials. Liz said:

The new high school is wonderful so far. The guidance counselor is the greatest. She has treated Brad like he was hers. She has been very concerned, and he has a great schedule. He has so many options in front of him. He could finish school early; he could do so much more. She offered him all this. She was aware of where he had been and where he was coming from. She was aware of the ADHD. She knew that he has had mental overloads. She has helped me schedule his classes to where he is in mainstream. He wants this. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) to my knowledge has been done away with. It stopped at the wilderness program. We decided to treat him like a regular junior in high school. I asked Liz if Bradley would have an outlet to help him through a rough day, a place to go in the school, or someone to see. She said:

He does know that if he gets to the point where he is frustrated, he can't stay on task, the teachers know that he is ADHD, and he is to say excuse me Mrs. Jones I'm having a time, and he is to step out. I haven't met the teachers, but I hear nothing but good things about the school. The staff [members] that I have worked

with, so far, have been wonderful. The counselor came out to where I work to save me a trip on paper work. She brought them out to me. We sat down. She showed me what needed to be done and signed and how to fill them out. That has never happened to me before. That is going over the line to come and help. Bradley is comfortable with it. He has good positive feelings about the high school. I'm looking forward to working with the high school. We will see just what kind of positive experiences and feedback he gets. A lot of it depends on Bradley.

#### Benjamin and Service Providers

Benjamin is two years younger than Bradley. He is Elizabeth's youngest child. I asked how Benjamin was involved with service providers. Elizabeth told me that he was involved during the family preservation program. Liz felt that Ben was affected by what he saw his brother going through. She said:

Ben was involved when we got family preservation. He wasn't up until that point. When the mentor and the counselor came around, the whole family got involved. We all had days to talk, and we did things like go out for a fun night once a week. We would go out for pizza, go roller skating, or whatever. Benjamin was very timid and shy back then. He didn't want to talk to anybody back then. He didn't mind being there, but he wouldn't talk, and the counselor thought that I was coaching him.

I asked Liz how that played out with the counselor. She went on:

She raised that to the probation officer's attention, and I was called in front of the judge, and he said to make Benjamin see the counselor without being present. I told the judge you have seen me enough in the last two years to know better. I am not trying to coach my youngest son. My youngest son was still processing all of what was going on. He lost his older brother, and now he was losing his other brother. He was going to be an only child here. He knew that his brother was going up the river so to speak. He was not ready to open up to strangers. I don't care how many college degrees she had. To Ben she was still a stranger, and he was not ready to talk to her. The judge listened, and he got her off of me. We didn't have to force Ben to talk to anyone. Eventually, Ben would ask me, after she left, what was the counseling session about. He would listen. I would catch him at his door, and he would be listening. I knew he was feeling-out the situation. He wanted to gain these people's trust. He didn't trust them; that takes time.

Ben tells his own story later. I noticed, in Ben, a slowness to warm up. Once Ben became use to the idea that I wanted him to tell me about his life, and I valued his ideas and perceptions about service providers, he opened up.

My observation of Ben's unhurried approach in trusting strangers supports Elizabeth's characterization of her youngest son. Elizabeth's understanding of her sons' personal characteristics is one of many themes that characterize Liz.

#### Themes from Elizabeth's Story: A Chapter Summary

Elizabeth told her story in three sessions. We met at her trailer each time. Two weeks passed between the first two sessions. Ten days passed before I went for the third interview with Liz. I felt like some time between sessions was important for both of us. I

could call Liz at work or at home for clarification on any point. She was always helpful and never refused to answer any of my questions.

The themes that emerge from Liz's version of the family story are summarized here. There are 12 themes in Elizabeth's account (see Figure 19).

#### Early Family Stability

As soon as Elizabeth began talking about her early life she said, "I lived on a farm until I was about 11 or 12 years old. I think that living on the farm was the best part of my life." Her impression of her family stability and her extended family's unity were consistent through out her story.

Liz's great grandmother was her hero. She was a source of support for Liz. Liz said of her great grandmother:

My great grandmother, who lived on the farm with us back in Alabama, was my hero. She was the backbone of the family. She was on my mother's side of the family, and I wanted to be just like her when I grew up.

Living with a large extended family gave Liz an impression of family life that proved to be elusive for her in later life. She said of her extended family members: "I don't even have bad memories of that time...I don't remember any family arguments."

#### Help from Extended Family Members

Elizabeth has relied on the assistance and support of extended family members. She spoke of an aunt who was a strong supporter. Liz said, "My mom's youngest sister, who has been more of a mother to me than my mom, came in."

Other extended family members lent their support to Liz. Her sister-in-law watched Liz's children on different occasions. Liz's mother gave Liz and her children shelter when they were in a period of transition, and Liz's Aunt and Uncle remodeled their home to give Liz and her sons space to live.

Elizabeth's great grandmother helped Liz by being the example of a strong woman in Liz's most formative years. Though Liz relied on extended family members for support, she has also been on her own enough to become self-reliant.

#### Self Reliance

Liz sought counseling help when she found herself being abused by her father at the age of 15. After Liz divorced her first husband, she made a home for her family. She used the divorce settlement money to do it. When Liz was ill with cancer, she went to her chemotherapy and continued to work.

Elizabeth has been able to find vitality within herself to keep her head above water. She has done this many times on her own in the face of an advancing tide of hopelessness and despair. She has looked inward for this strength.

#### Elizabeth's Inner Strength

Elizabeth's inner strength is evident throughout her life. She stood up to her father at an early age for his abusive behavior. She had the strength to get out of two bad relationships with men who became abusive. She fought cancer. She stood up for her children when she felt like care providers were not doing their jobs. Elizabeth found the inner strength to try to build a new life and new marriage after two failures. She has the inner strength to be optimistic about life.

The last time I saw Liz, I took her family and her out to dinner. Though she faced formidable daily challenges, Liz maintained a calm demeanor that I would say came, in part, from her spirituality.

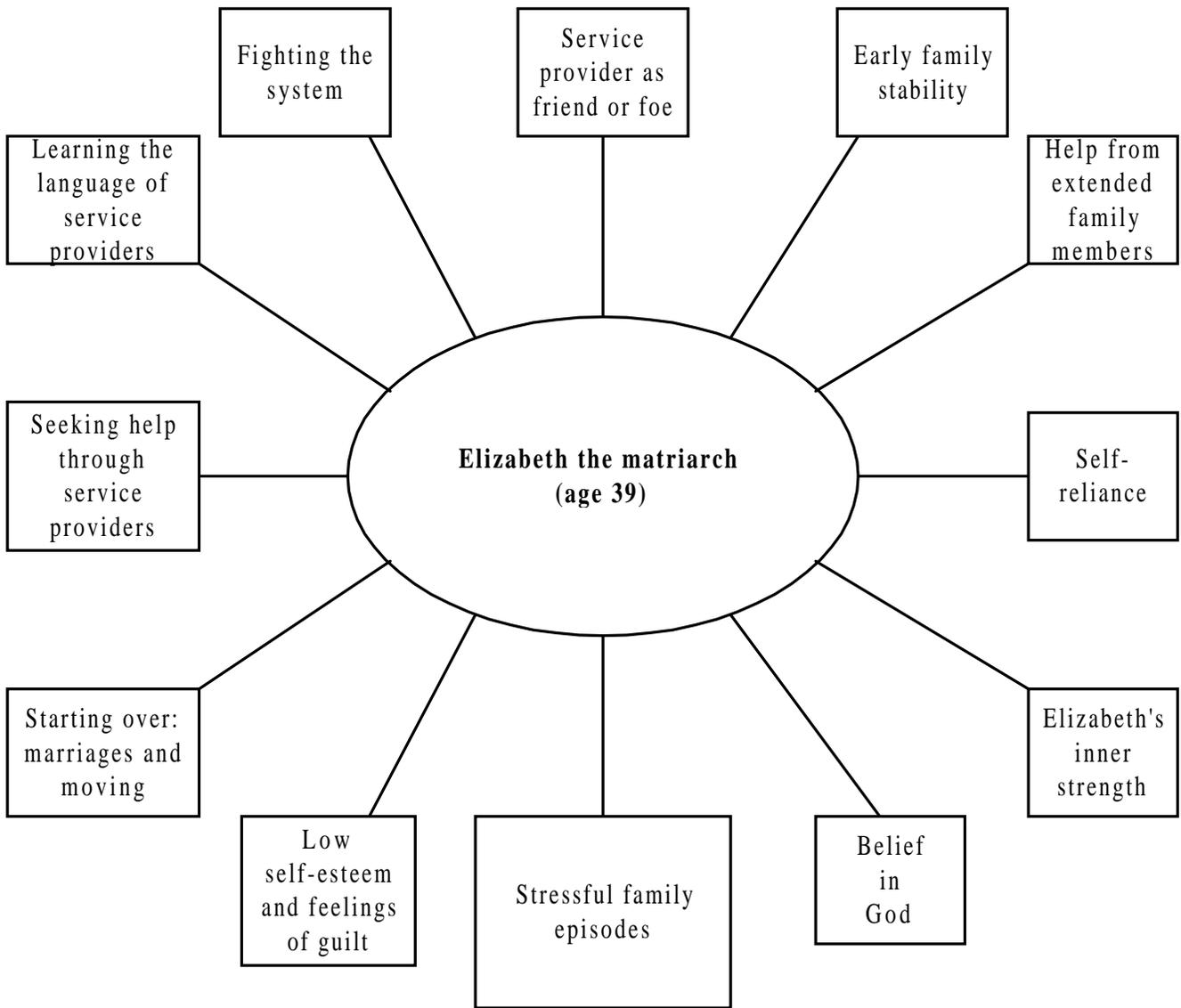


Figure 19. Themes from Elizabeth's story. The solid black lines are representative of Elizabeth for figures 19, 23, and 24.

### Belief in God

Liz spoke of her own spirituality five times. She mentioned her great grandparents as "...God's blessings on this earth," and she said, "I owe my strong faith in God to my great grandparents."

She mentioned her faith in God on three other occasions. Once she spoke of a special education teacher being a "Godsend" for her son Bradley, and once she was defending her faith to her first husband, who did not want her to seek counseling from the church. On one occasion Elizabeth said, "I am a firm believer in God."

I think that Liz's spirituality is important to mention, because she told me that she attends church on a regular basis. Liz does not make her sons attend church but takes them when they want to go. The other family members did not mention a belief in God, yet Liz derives an inner strength from her own faith. Without this strong faith Liz believes she would not have been able to get through the many stressful episodes in her family life.

### Stressful Family Episodes

Stressful family episodes began for Liz as soon as her parents moved away from the rural setting of Alabama. Her father's abuse began, and after three years she confronted him. Liz confronted him the first time when in front of police officers she said, "If you ever touch me like that again, I will kill you."

Stressful family episodes continued for Liz's own nuclear family. When Elizabeth tried to end her relationship with the father of her three sons, he became physically abusive toward her. Her son's were witnesses the night their father beat their mother so severely she had to go to the hospital.

Elizabeth was stricken with cancer. While she was fighting for her life, her second husband abused her sons. She ended this relationship when she discovered that her second husband was unfaithful to her.

C. C., Liz's oldest son, could not tolerate the conditions of his family life. He acted out by bringing a gun to school. He left Elizabeth and his two brothers to live with his father. Bradley, Elizabeth's middle son, was discovered to have a disability that needed special assistance from care providers. He began to act out and his behavior magnified stress factors for the family.

Elizabeth divorced her second husband. As a single parent working to make ends meet, she found herself in dire financial straits. The continual bombardment of stress took a toll on Liz's psyche.

### Low Self-Esteem and Feelings of Guilt

Elizabeth told of her shyness as a child. Her shyness became self-doubt, and her self-doubt manifested itself in low self-esteem. Liz tried to deal with her feelings by confronting family members. She tried to talk about how she felt with her mother, sister, and brothers, but she found no relief. Liz said, "I tried to talk about it with my brothers, sister, and my mom, but they would just clam up, or it would turn into an argument."

Liz found that she repeated past mistakes. She said, "I didn't have enough self-esteem, or confidence...." Elizabeth knew she needed to do something to keep her family together and protect her sons.

### Starting Over: Marriages and Moving

Each time Liz responded to a family crisis, she was trying to preserve the family unit. Making a move, in terms of a new relationship or location, was another way Liz responded to crises.

Elizabeth is now married for the third time. She believes she is meant to share her life with someone. Liz's youngest son Benjamin is 14 years old. He has lived in five different locations. Elizabeth and her family moved again before this research was completed.

Elizabeth reacted to family stress by trying to get a fresh start. Fresh starts came in the form of new relationships or relocations. Liz also reacted to stressful episodes by seeking help from service providers.

### Seeking Help Through Service Providers

The first service provider whom Liz went for help was her high school counselor. Each time Elizabeth was overwhelmed by her own feelings or bad experiences, she sought help from care providers. She sought help from the clergy when her first marriage was deteriorating.

When her second marriage failed, Elizabeth went to service providers. She said, "This was my second marriage, and both marriages failed. I thought it was my fault. I got to get myself back into counseling and I talked at great length."

Elizabeth went to the private sector. She saw two psychologists, neither of whom gained Liz's confidence. She did get counseling through community services.

Bradley encountered many difficulties, first at school and then outside of school. Elizabeth asked the school system and social services for assistance. When Bradley began to steal, Liz filed charges against her son to get help from the juvenile court.

Elizabeth learned from service providers. She became very familiar with the terminology of caregivers.

### Learning the Language of Service Providers

Liz used terms like dynamics of molestation, sex addict, and gambling addict to describe her father. She later used learned behavior, repeating patterns, and need for closure to describe her behavior. This is the terminology of service providers.

Through her many years of work with service providers, Elizabeth learned how to use their language to communicate her family's circumstances. Elizabeth felt so comfortable with the language of service providers, she told me, "I want to work with juveniles, whether it is with substance abuse, family counseling, or juvenile justice."

### Fighting the System

From Elizabeth's first encounter with the service-providing network, she believed that the system was working against her. She confided in a counselor at high school, who in turn convinced Liz to bring her parents in for a conference with school administrators. Liz's parents, school administrators, and her counselor held a conference. Liz waited in a lobby while her allegations against her father were discussed. Liz said:

When I was called back into the office, I got the impression, by what I was told, that I imagined all that had happened to me from the age of 12 to 15. So I guess at that time in my life I realized that I was pretty much on my own.

When Liz talked about the school system and how the system performed for her son Bradley, she said, "They didn't work for me. He wasn't abused, but they wouldn't take

the time or the patience; the school wasn't educated enough...." Elizabeth also said, "Fighting the school system has been my worst nightmare."

Elizabeth said of the juvenile court system, "I was fighting an endless battle of wits with all these people." Elizabeth's first encounter with the juvenile corrections system was also a battle. She told me that when Bradley was in the boot camp and he lost visitation privileges, no one would contact her to let her know.

Elizabeth did not always feel as though she was fighting the system. When Bradley went to the wilderness program, she felt like a partner to those working in Brad's interest.

#### Service Provider as Friend or Foe

Service providers who acted in an adversarial manner toward Elizabeth, initiated a fight response in her. Liz had an experience where a school official would not see her. She had another experience with a social services counselor who insisted that she was coaching Ben not to participate in family discussion sessions. This foe mentality on the part of the service provider made it difficult for Liz to let her defenses down.

Elizabeth did make friends along the way. She said, "I encountered good people along the way, but it wasn't enough to make a difference." Elizabeth thought highly of a special education teacher for Bradley. She said, "He had a wonderful teacher. She knew him like the back of her hand."

For every positive experience Liz had, there was a caring person extending the service. When Liz felt like she was an active partner, involved with care providers in helping her family, she felt the experience and results were positive.

## CHAPTER 6 BRADLEY'S PERSPECTIVE

Bradley is Elizabeth's middle child. He is 16 years old, and he has been the focus of many services. Bradley is a troubled young man.

Bradley received services from the educational system, the juvenile court system, and the juvenile corrections system. I feel Bradley's perspective is important. It is important, because in order to improve services we must hear from those whom we serve.

### Lunch With Bradley

I took Bradley to a New York style deli for lunch. Bradley has a healthy appetite. I told him that lunch was on me, and he could have whatever he wanted. He used the word cool when he was pleased with something. I was pleased to see him order an 18-inch steak and cheese super sub with a side of french-fries. He enjoyed his meal while he talked to me openly about his troubled past.

### Getting Into Trouble

I started by asking Brad to tell me about his life. His initial response surprised me, because he said, "As far back as I can remember is 14; that's about it. I can't remember any back before none of that cause when I was 14, I started getting into trouble. That's like basically all I can remember."

Bradley could remember more than two years of his past, but I had to ask questions that would trigger his memory. I asked him if he remembered any of the places where he lived. I asked him to tell me about his mom and dad. Bradley said:

I remember little tiny things but nothing real big about like when I was a little kid or whatever. I can remember one or two things. I don't remember nothing about my dad. I remember something about when my mom married her second husband. He was pretty cool. We lived in a different state. He was pretty chillin really. We like, chilled out, and did a bunch of work on the yard or whatever. I think we moved to my aunt's house. We were there for a little while. I played baseball, but that is all I remember about being there. Then we moved to a small town in the valley, I think. I loved the small town. I really didn't do nothing there but just chill around. We use to get into trouble, because we use to let people into our house when mom was at work. My mom was, like, I got somebody watching you, and it was my little brother Ben, and I didn't know it, and neither did my big brother. We use to get busted everyday. People would come into our house. We moved from there to a bigger town. That is where I started to get into all the trouble.

When Bradley talks, he moves from one subject to another without transition. He uses a lingo that I will try to clarify. When Bradley uses the term "chillin," it means a good thing. "We like, chilled out." This means, to just spend time with someone doing nothing in particular. "He was chillin." This means he was an OK person.

Bradley contradicts himself. He first says that his mother's second husband was an OK guy, and then he associates the same man with trouble. I asked Brad where the trouble started, at home or at school. He said:

At home mostly. It was my step dad. At the time I didn't like him. I use to start hating him. He would be running his mouth or whatever. Then, I'd come home and want to talk to mom, and he'd say, "No, don't bother your mom." All this bull-crap.

Bradley would show signs of anger by clenching his fist and banging them with moderate force on the table. Yet, during the times I spoke with him I never feared that he would lash out at me. I kept asking him questions to get clarification. I asked him why his stepfather did not want him to talk to his mother. He said:

I don't know. He was just a loser. I started not to like him, and I started to smoke cigarettes. My mom didn't like that, and they had a problem with that. I was doing stuff behind their backs, like smoking, staying out all night with my friends, skipping school, a little bit of smoking dope, but not a lot of that. They started yelling at me for all this. I would say, "Well screw this; I'm leaving," and then I would run away and get picked up by the cops. Then, I started stealing stuff from stores. I stole a bike, and I got caught. I ran from the cops, and then I stole a bunch of other stuff and kept going back and forth in detention. I was in detention six or seven times. Finally, they committed me upstate. I went upstate. I forgot how long it was.

When Bradley talks about smoking, he is talking about cigarettes. He makes the distinction between smoking "dope", which is marijuana, and cigarettes, but he didn't smoke marijuana often.

#### School, Alternative School, and Detention

I wanted Bradley to tell me about services he received. I was not sure he saw his dealings with the school system or juvenile corrections as being provided services. I asked him to tell me about school before detention. He said:

I got kicked out of the school I was at, because I took a B. B. gun to school. I tried to hide it from the cops, but I got kicked out of the school. I had to go to an alternative school, but that didn't help me any, because those people there were a bunch of trouble.

I asked Brad to tell me about the alternative school. He said:

I got into trouble at alternative school. Alternative school was like a regular school; it has got less people there. A lot of the people who have gotten into trouble and can't go to public school are in there. I went there with them. We would skip school all day. The bus came all the way from our little town to take us to a bigger town to school every day. We would ride, and none of us felt like going to school. One day we jumped out the back door while the bus was still in our neighborhood. The cops came and got us. The alternative school was dumb. I didn't learn anything at that school; I hated it. There were a lot of people who wanted to fight at that school.

I asked Brad if skipping alternative school and jumping out of the bus were the reasons for being sent to detention. I also asked him what detention was like. He went on, saying,

Yes, they sent me to a detention home. A juvenile detention home, and I went there a lot. I was in alternative school too. The kids that went to that school were trouble. I thought they were cool, but they weren't. All out, in every way possible, they were trouble. They would do things bad, and I would do it. I started getting into trouble with them, and I started going into detention. When I was in detention, the staff didn't like me. Actually, I was a little turd. I was a little punk. I thought I was really cool. I was running my mouth to everybody, and the staff didn't like me. I had a hard time when I was there.

Bradley's mood would change from calm resignation to anger. He showed signs of being angry when he talked about detention. I wanted to try to understand the source of his anger. I asked him if there were any people associated with detention that he was angry with. He said:

I was mad at my mom mostly then. Because she would get me put there. We use to go to court. My mom would say, "Put him in detention." Then I was mad at my mom. I would say, "What is my mom doing putting me in detention?" Now I know why she did it. She did it to help me out. What I was doing was wrong, and I needed to change it. The first time I went, it was for two weeks. Then I got out, and like, O.K. that sucked. Then I started screwing up again with the same people. I asked Bradley if he was screwing up back at school or at home. He said: It was everywhere, at school at home. I was just messing up everywhere. I went back in detention, and each time I went, it was longer and longer. Finally, I went too many times, and they committed me upstate.

#### Upstate: Boot Camp

Bradley was willing to tell me about the places where he received services, and he would speak of the conditions. I asked him to tell me about being upstate. He said:

It was boot camp, military school stuff, and I hated it. I really, really, really hated it! It was strict, and everybody was telling me what to do. One of my peers was my boss. I was in this platoon thing, and the platoon leader could tell me what to do, and I hated it. I couldn't stand being told what to do by my peers. I was thinking, "You can't tell me what to do. I had a hard time with that, and my medicine was another thing. I was supposed to be taking medicine, and I wouldn't take it. I was supposed to take Ritalin, and I wouldn't take it. They were trying to give it to me, and I wouldn't take it. I would refuse it and not want to take it.

I asked Bradley why he didn't want to take his medicine. He said:

I don't know. I didn't like it. Then I started taking my medicine regularly, and they got that screwed up. Then they wouldn't give it to me. I can't remember what it was, but they stopped giving it to me for some reason. My mom fought tooth and nail, and she got them to give it to me right.

I asked Brad if getting the medicine right helped him. He said:

When I got the medicine corrected, I started straightening up, and I went to this honor cottage and finally got out. Upstate was a boot camp, and there were a lot of fights, and a lot of the people were always messing with me. I fought there more than I ever have in my whole life. I got into a fight twice a week.

Bradley told me about the severity of his fights. He told me that there were adult staff members around all the time unless he was in his room asleep. He also spoke about his peers in boot camp. He said:

The fights weren't really bad. Most of them would get broken up. Some of the staff there would just let you fight for two or three minutes, if they didn't like you. The people were want-to-be thugs, it was, like, I am from the city. I'm hard core. Everybody was from different places trying to run the place. I was in there thinking this sucks. I'm locked up in a boot camp, and I'm not going to be going home for awhile. I ran my mouth, and people ran their mouths to me.

Bradley told me about what it meant to be hard core. He said, "People just think that they're tough, and they think they can beat everybody's butt, and they can't. I used to be that way."

I asked Brad if there was anything to look forward to while he was at boot camp. He said:

Mom only came and saw me once when I was in there. She called and wrote me a lot. I looked forward to mail every day. I wrote a lot of letters while I was in there. I wrote to family and friends. One of my good friends that wrote me a lot was Ellen [a previous special education teacher]. Even though I was screwing up, the whole time, she kept telling me I had to change. Even when I went to the wilderness camp, she wrote me to keep me going and try to get me to change. I really looked forward to getting letters from her and my mom.

Bradley mentions one service provider who helped him while he was in the boot camp. He also made some friends while he was there. He said:

I finally started doing what I had to do up there. I had a mentor [counselor] then, too. On December 19, I came back from upstate, and on June 12, I went to the wilderness camp. I was so happy to get out from being upstate. The night before people tried to mess with me. I started to write a letter, and this dude told me to give him the pencil. I told him to wait until I finished my letter, and he came over there and clocked me right in the head. I think the only reason they let me out was because my counselor-lady had a say that I could go or not. When that dude hit me, I fell to the floor, and I got back up and looked at him, and I started to write my letter again. The counselor lady saw me do that. She told me that she saw what I did, and she said that was good. I told her I just want to go home. I told my friends there that I would write.

#### Six Months at Home

When Bradley returned from the boot camp, he returned to a home in turmoil. His mother was on the road to recovery from cancer, and she was in her last year of marriage to her second husband. Bradley's oldest brother C. C. suffered abuse at the hands of his stepfather and left the family. Brad started to suffer under his stepfather and blamed his stepfather for a difficult six months at home. He said:

Mom told me the rules of the house were the same. My mom with her second husband told me, and he didn't really talk to me that much. When I got back to our small town, my friends had a party at church for me. I loved that small town. I told them that I wasn't going to get into any more trouble. I was chillin out for about a month. I started screwing up again. I started skipping school again.

I asked Bradley what he thought the reasons were for him going back to bad behavior. I also asked Brad if he understood how ill his mother had been. He said:

Oh, yes, and that is why I hated being at home. I never wanted to be at home. Ben took care of her all of the time. That was my chance to take advantage of her. I thought mom is sick, so I can go do what I want now. They told me how sick she was, but I thought that is my mom, she can't get sick and die. I thought people get sick, and people get better. I never got to do what I wanted to do. I never got to go out with my friends on Friday night. It was my mom's second husband and my mom. I would do stupid things like leave the toothpaste on the counter or something. They would go crazy.

Bradley told me about his older brother C. C. and why he left to go live with his father. Brad was in touch with C. C., and felt that C. C. did the right thing. Brad said: C. C. didn't like my stepfather. He was always breaking the rules of the house. So mom told him that he could go live with our dad. So, he chose to call our mom and go live with our dad. C. C. hasn't come back since then. He has been doing whatever.

C. C. would yell at my stepfather, and my stepfather would always beat him up. Then C. C. would always leave. Then he would come back, and the same thing would happen. If C. C. would break a rule, he would get beat up.

I asked Bradley what he meant when he said C. C. would get beat up. He said: My stepfather would hit C. C. with a freaking vacuum cleaner cord. That really hurts. My stepfather hit me with a vacuum cleaner cord once. He would beat the crap out of us though. I mean, man, it sucked. C. C. would never come home. C. C. took a real gun to school once. It was a little 22. His conscience got the best of him, so he told on himself. Mom couldn't just leave the gun somewhere, so she turned him in. C. C. got in trouble. He was put on probation. Then he started to get into trouble, and he just kept on messing up. He would get into a little bit of drugs now and then. Mom told him he could leave.

Bradley did well for a month after he returned home from boot camp. In January he started staying out all night, and he had clashes at home with his mom. His misdeeds put him before the judge that would have him placed in the wilderness program.

#### The Wilderness Program

My first encounter with Bradley was at his graduation ceremony from the wilderness program. I asked Bradley to tell me the difference between the wilderness program and boot camp. He said:

At the wilderness camp you got to do more things. You had an opportunity to look at yourself and look at what you need to change. Whereas, upstate they gave you one choice; that was to follow the rules there, and do what they said, or don't leave. In the wilderness camp, you got to go home once a month. I mean, it was like, wow, they trust me enough to let me go home and come back. You got to go home once a month unless you messed up. Mom came and got me once a month. I saw mom twice a month which was awesome Mom would come up there for a family visit, then I would go on a home visit. You only go on a home visit when you come up to the main camp.

I asked Bradley to tell me about his first impression of the wilderness camp. He said:

I ran the first night. I was on the Appalachian Trail the first night I was at the wilderness camp. Like, my first day I had to go on the Appalachian Trail and sleep out in the woods. I thought, well screw this man. I left, and I just wanted a cigarette. I was coming back. This dude told me that there was a store down there, and we would go get some cigarettes. I had every intention of coming back. I thought we would go down there, and get some cigarettes, and get back. It would be cool. We started walking, and he said, "There is no store."

I said, "What?"

I said, "Why did you tell me there was?"

He said, "I am wanting to run."

I said, "Well, like I am going back."

He said, "Well, maybe there is a store down here."

I said, "Look man, if there is not a store in the next hour, I am turning around."

He said, "Well, you don't know the way back." I thought he had me there. So we just kept on walking. We got to the city some how. There were three of us. There was a black kid named Sam, and a white kid named Daniel, and me. We had one backpack with a tent and stuff in it. Sam was carrying the backpack. They wanted to carry three backpacks. I told them, no, it would be better if we would only carry one with just the stuff we needed. I told Sam to act like he had a hurt leg. We would go up to a house and ask for a ride into the city.

We went to this one house, and this big dog came up and was barking. Daniel jumped over the banister. Sam started running through the yard, and I saw a truck coming up the dirt road. So I hid behind this tree. They went and hid behind some bushes, and the truck pulled right into the driveway. This dude got out, and I stepped out and said, "Excuse me, my friend has a hurt leg, and I was wondering if we could get a ride into the city?"

He said, "I'll give you guys a ride into the city."

He dropped us off by a community hospital in the city. Me, Daniel, and Sam went to a pay telephone to act like we were using it to call someone. We told that dude that my mom was coming to get us. That dude left. We went to this store and bought some cigarettes. We smoked them all in, like, half an hour man.

Daniel was supposed to know some people in the city. We went to where this person was, and he was asleep, so he didn't know which window to knock on. Daniel had all these excuses, so I was, like, screw this man. We started walking, and we thought about stealing a car. We thought, hey man, if we steal a car, we can go back to camp and ditch it, like we were never gone. We went into the parking garage of the community hospital, and we were checking it out. A white mini-van came; it was hospital police. I never thought I would see police in a mini-van. So, they stopped and started to ask us all these questions. I made up a bunch of lies. Sam ran, and they asked Daniel something, and he told them we were from a wilderness camp. They called the head honcho from camp at his home at two-o'clock in the morning to come get us. He was mad, man.

The cops started searching us, and Daniel had a flashlight in his pocket, and he started to reach for it. The cops started tripping out, saying, "Don't reach into your pocket." I thought, man it's just a flashlight dude.

They called the headman from camp, and he came and got us. The first question he asked us was, "So, did you all watch the basketball game?"

I said, "Shouldn't you be yelling at us man?"

He said, "No, I'm not going to yell at you guys."

I started feeding him all this bull crap, man. He said, "Man, you just shut up. You can not manipulate your way out of this."

He took us back, and I stayed in outpost. I did a bunch of time at the wilderness camp.

Bradley told me that he was in outpost for a long time but that he didn't mind it. Outpost was a form of isolation. There was no electricity at outpost, and the conditions were primitive compared to the main camp. Bradley said, "You are only supposed to be in outpost for two months. But, because I ran, I got an extra month in outpost. I didn't mind it though. It was pretty cool not having electricity."

Bradley told me that he was in outpost for five months for various infractions. Brad said:

When I was out there, I got into a fight. This kid pissed me off so bad. We use to have these groups. In group, it is your opportunity to discuss your problems. So, I raised my hand. The staff wouldn't call on me, and I was mad. So, I stood up and started cussing this kid out. His friend came across and, boom, hit me in the face. I rolled off of this stump. We got into a fight, and I got extra time in outpost for that. That made me have four months in outpost. I got two weeks for the fight, and I got two weeks for threatening.

I asked Bradley if this was the second time he ran away from the camp. He said: When we went to the cabin, we weren't really running. We were just going over there. They considered it [absent without leave] (AWOL). We hiked over the mountains to get to the cabin. I broke in. It was a nice cabin. It was really cool. It had this big stereo; it had everything. I didn't get the stereo. I didn't have anyplace to plug it in. So all together I was in outpost for five months.

I asked Bradley to tell me what life was like after he got to the main camp. He said:

When I came up to main camp, I got to go home. The day that I made my level mom came to take me home for a visit. At 7:30 I was sitting out by a campfire, and I couldn't wait till mom got there. I saw her lights come up, and from then on I did good.

All of the young men at the wilderness camp take part in running the camp. They cook, clean, and cut firewood, which is their only source of heat. They all go to school and have individual learning plans. If each student follows his plan and completes his chores and schoolwork he makes a new level. With each new level a student makes, he has more privileges. I asked Bradley to tell me how things went for him when he started doing well. He said:

When you first go into the program, you have goals. They ask you what you think you need to work on. I needed to work on anger management, my social skills, my self-esteem, and some others. They put them on a sheet, and every day you are at camp you are scored on that. When you reach a certain level, you get something for it. When we have a group, they talk about how you did, but the counselors leave it to your peers, in-group. So, if I got a problem with some kid, its, like, this is the problem we have to figure it out. So, I raise my hand, and I say, "Look, I got a problem with this", and a lot of problems get solved this way. Some groups lead into fights if people don't raise their hand to talk. Groups are cool though. If you have your peers telling you that you are screwing up and the staff telling you that you are screwing up, you stop and think, maybe I'm screwing up. I was really vocal in my groups. Now that I've left camp, I have called back a

couple times, and I have heard that people say you guys need to be as vocal as Bradley was. I set a precedent.

When I first went there, I thought that group was just for snitching. Finally, I started talking and telling people what I thought. I went through my levels, and your peers vote on you getting your levels. If your peers don't think you're ready for your levels, you don't get voted up. You kind of had to chill out with your peers.

Since Bradley graduated from the wilderness program, he has been back at home with his mother, her new husband Allen, and Brad's little brother Ben. I asked Brad how life was going so far, and how he liked the freedom he had now. Bradley said:

Things are pretty cool, but mom gets pissed off about things she shouldn't. I have more freedom now than I have ever had in my life. I have a job, and I work until two. Mom trusts me to get a ride home as long as I call her. She knows that sometimes I go out and chill before I come home, and she is OK with that. The camp helped me with all of that. It helped mom too. Like the day I smoked pot with my friend. Mom called the camp counselor and asked what she should do.

I went over to my friend's house to get a ride. They gave me a ride to the end of this road, and I smoked some pot with them. I felt crappy when they let me out. I just laid in the grass. They told me to get up, because it looked like somebody had an accident. I started to walk and got as far as the mall. I called mom. I told my mom that I screwed up, and she came and got me. Mom said if you ever screw up, and you can't get home, call me. I thought it would be cool if I called mom. I called and told her I couldn't make it home. Things have been going good since that day. The only thing mom has been mad about at home is some chores not being done. Nothing outrageous, she just lets me know. Mom has been doing her own thing, and I have been doing mine. Benjamin and I are just chillin. I took him to see a movie the other night; it was cool. We walked home and talked.

Bradley has been home for three months. He is scheduled to start school at the public high school at the end of August. His work record is good, except for one day missed.

#### Themes from Bradley's Story

There are eight themes that emerge from what Bradley says about his family in receipt of services (see Figure 20). He never complained about service providers or services. Each time that I saw Bradley he was friendly and cooperative.

What follows is a summary of the main themes that came out of Bradley's account.

#### Moving Around

Bradley started talking to me by saying that he could not remember anything before the age of 14. I kept prompting him to remember more by asking pointed questions about people and places. He mentioned four different towns in two states that he had lived in before his 14<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The stability of living in one place is something that Bradley has never known. The last town that Bradley mentions was his favorite place to live. He had friends. It was a small town surrounded by beautiful country. Bradley had experienced some stressful

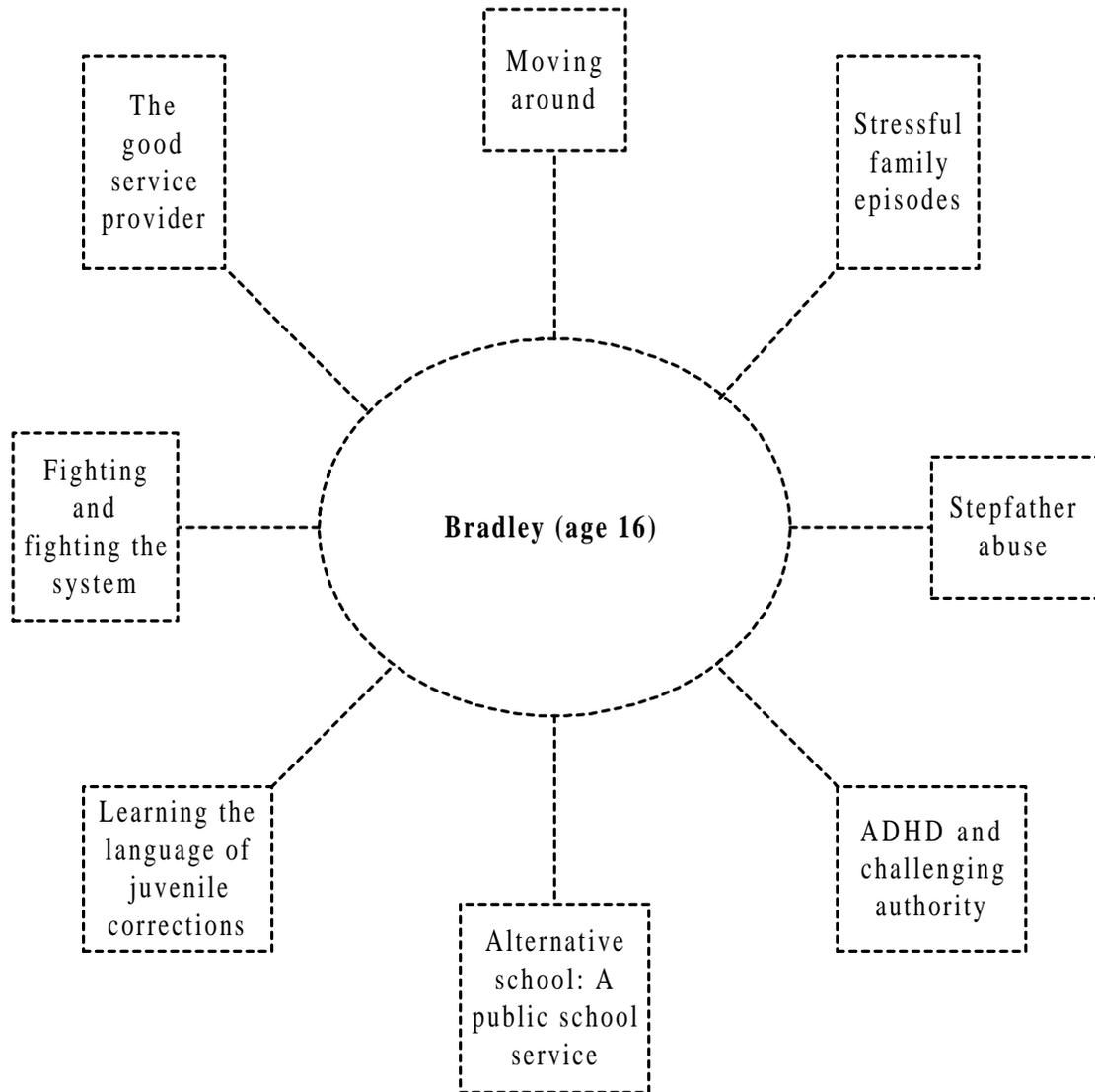


Figure 20. Themes from Bradley's story. The dotted lines are representative of Bradley in figures 18, 20, 23, and 24.

family episodes, like seeing his father become extremely violent with his mother, but he was only four years old.

#### Stressful Family Episodes

Bradley does not associate any stressful episodes with his family until his mother married her second husband. Brad said in reference to his home life, "It was my step-dad at the time, Ray, I didn't like him."

When Elizabeth became ill, Bradley could not talk about his fears with her. He said, "I use to start hating him [stepfather]. He would be running his mouth or whatever. Then I come home and want to talk to mom and he'd say, 'No don't bother your mom.'" Bradley's behavior deteriorates from this point on, and family stress is centered around the interactions between his stepfather and him and C. C. and his stepfather.

Bradley did not openly recognize his contribution to family stress. He did recognize many things that he did as being wrong. He never acknowledged that bringing a BB gun to school may have added to family stress.

#### Stepfather Abuse

C. C., Bradley's older brother, received the brunt of the stepfather's fury. Bradley said they both suffered, "My stepfather would hit C. C. with a freaking vacuum cleaner cord. That really hurts. My stepfather hit me with a vacuum cleaner cord once. He used to beat the crap out of us though. I mean, man, it sucked."

When Elizabeth told me about C. C. not being at home, she described him as being an angry young man. Bradley shows signs of anger when he speaks about his past.

#### ADHD and Challenging Authority

As long as Bradley worked with his special education teacher he had success and enjoyed being at school. His attention deficit hyperactivity disorder was a disability that was treated with the drug Ritalin. When Bradley missed a dose of medication, he became unruly and belligerent. Bradley's attitude about taking Ritalin, combined with a dosage schedule not well regulated at school, contributed to his behavior problems.

Bradley's anger control problems became an issue for school officials. He would skip school and act out when he would be in school. He challenged school personnel from teachers to administrators. Bringing a BB gun to school landed Bradley in the alternative school. Bradley would not return to a standard public school for three years.

#### Alternative School: A Public School Service

School systems have little choice but to remove dangerous students from the general school population. Bradley acted out in a way that left school officials no choice, but to place him in an alternative setting. Bradley's attitude about the alternative school put him on a track to encounter juvenile court services. Brad said, "That [school] didn't help any because those people there were a bunch of trouble. I thought they were cool, but they weren't."

Bradley's peers became very influential in his life. He learned the language of his peers. He learned the behavior of his peers.

#### Learning the Language of Juvenile Corrections

Snitch, upstate, want-to-be thugs, and hard core are all terms Bradley learned while being served by the juvenile corrections system. Brad also learned terms like anger control, group therapy, goal setting, and cooperation. The first four terms he learned at a boot camp correctional facility, and the second four Brad learned at a wilderness facility.

Brad did not like boot camp nor did he value the experience. He did not like the wilderness program initially, but he did value the experience. Bradley learned something about the language of success in association with the wilderness program, terms like respect, achievement, and graduation.

#### Fighting and Fighting the System

Bradley said that when he was in detention, he was, "...a little punk." Bradley saw the man who was married to his mother model violent behavior as a normal way for a man to act. Bradley would fight at the drop of a hat. While serving time in boot camp, he probably had to fight. Brad said, "I fought there more than I ever have in my whole life. I got into a fight twice a week."

Fighting the system was another way Brad reacted to his own frustrations. Bradley rejected the idea that people could have authority over him. Bradley "kept screwing up": He skipped school, he violated probation, he challenged the authority of each system designed to serve him.

#### The Good Service Provider

Bradley's first positive experience with a service provider was through the school system. He had a middle school special education teacher that he is still in contact with today. He calls her "a friend."

Bradley found a caring service provider in boot camp. Brad said, "I think the only reason they let me out was because my counselor lady who had a say that I could go or not." He still attributes his release from boot camp to her good will.

When Bradley spoke at the graduation ceremony of the wilderness program, he mentioned a teacher and a camp counselor in his speech. He attributed their work with him as being some of the reasons for his success.

## CHAPTER 7

### BENJAMIN'S MEMORIES

Benjamin is 14 years old. He is the youngest and Elizabeth's only son who has remained with his mother since birth. Benjamin's memories of growing up are filled with thoughts of play, and he remembers growing up in a tumultuous household.

Ben has not been the focus of services. He received services indirectly through the aid for dependent children (AFDC) checks and food stamps that his mother received after her second divorce. The family preservation service was extended to the entire family as a result of Bradley's involvement with the juvenile court system.

#### To the Cafeteria with Ben

Ben is a good baseball player. I love to talk about sports, and Ben, like his brother Bradley, loves to eat. If I took Bradley out to get a bite to eat, we would order something to go for Benjamin. Benjamin would always thank me for the lunch. I decided to take him to a cafeteria-style restaurant, where the choices seemed limitless, for a talk. We first talked about baseball, and I told Ben that I was a catcher when I played. Ben told me that he played center field, because he had a good arm. I told him that his shoulders were so wide that he probably had an arm like a cannon. Ben smiled and filled his plate.

#### Outside Playing

Because Benjamin was young, and I had an idea of what kind of life he had experienced, I thought it would be best if my questions were open and less intrusive to start. Unlike Bradley, Benjamin had vivid memories of his early years. I asked him to tell me about his earliest memories. Ben began by saying,

We lived near a navy base. My earliest memory, so to speak. When I was like three, I was in a baby walker, and my brothers were outside playing. I remember sitting in our garage-basement. I was sitting with my grandmother watching TV and eating peanuts. I remember one time me and my brothers were playing in this house that was being built across the street. The house wasn't finished, and we were playing in it, and we weren't supposed to be. The people that were building it came up, cause somebody told them, and we jumped out of the second story window into a pile of sand. I was only five.

I asked Ben to tell me about his father. His memory of his father is in the context of having a ride on a motorcycle. Ben goes on in a chronology of his past about places for play. Ben said:

I don't remember much about my dad. He used to come by with his motorcycle, and he would let us ride with him.

In my school they use to have this huge playground in the back. They would have this big wooden fort, and slides up high with fake cannons, and we played there. I was in kindergarten.

I can remember some of my pre-school years. I remember my teacher's name was Mrs. James. I thought that was pretty funny, because she had a last name that was a first name. I remember naptime. I remember on the playground, they had these little cars that had four seats in them, with two seats up front and this little bar that separated the seats in the back. I remember my first day, I didn't want to go. I was, like, wearing a jacket and a book bag. I was afraid. I ended up liking pre-school.

I asked Benjamin to tell me about home life during those years. He said: It was just me, my mom, my two brothers, my grandmother, and my uncle. It is hard to remember. My uncle was only like 17 years old. At first we lived in a house with just me, my mom, and my brothers.

One time, our house was at an angle, and there was a dirt hill next to it. We used to ride our bikes and jump this big old hill. One time my brother was riding his bike and he landed and his bike broke. He was still on the seat when he landed and he got hurt. I remember that. At that time my grandmother's boyfriend, or something, welded the bike back together. He was a welder or something. I use to call him uncle Rocky even though he wasn't my uncle.

#### Moving Away

When I asked Ben if he knew his grandfather, he said, "Kind of. I only know what he looks like. There are other parts that I remember, but that is later on." Ben told me that he played well with his big brothers, and he was a happy child. I asked him if he remembered moving away from the naval base and the city. Ben said:

I was six. I remember my birthday, and my mom's second husband bought me a building set and that was for my birthday. We didn't live in the city then. When we moved to the country, I had a lot of friends there. That was in another state, right on the line.

We lived in a trailer, and we lived near the street. My best friend lived in one across the street, and there was a little ditch. We would ride our bikes and jump the ditch. One time I jumped straight up and I landed on my back tire and the bike shot out from under me. That was pretty scary.

#### Stepfather and Drinking

Ben talked about things openly, but I had to steer the direction of his account with more prompting than Elizabeth or Bradley. I asked him to tell me about life with his mother's second husband. Ben said:

At first it was OK. We all got along. He started drinking, or whatever. Mom would tell him to stop, but he didn't. He never would drink around the house. One time at a super bowl New Year's party, he let me drink a whole wine cooler, and I was only eight. I thought I was drunk. I think my mom was with the wife of the guy that he drank with. I got away with it.

I asked Ben to tell me about when things were not going so well at home. He said: When we moved up to the Valley. Something happened, we lived with my mom's aunt. We moved to a house that was on the same street as the school. Bradley lived in the basement. It was big. Me and C. C. lived in a big room upstairs. We had a dog named Winston. I would have to get up at night to use the bathroom, but my mom's second husband wouldn't let me use the upstairs bathroom. It was his bathroom. That dog would bark at me and try to bite me when I would try to get out. My big brother would always have to get the dog.

Something happened where my mom's second husband got in trouble or something, and my mom kicked him out. My mom's aunt's husband was sheriff. He came by and said to mom's second husband, "If you come by here again, you

will be arrested." I don't know what my mom's second husband did. He got into trouble when he came banging on the door. That's when uncle Bill came. I call him uncle Bill, but he is not my uncle. He came and made him go away.

While we were there, mom's husband got a new t-top mustang G. T., 5.0 or whatever. He was drinking. Two months after he got it he wrecked it.

I kept prompting Benjamin to tell me more about his stepfather. He didn't hesitate to speak about these family issues, but he did not make much eye contact. Ben went on saying,

Most of the time he would be nice. He was real picky about stuff though. He wouldn't want anyone to drink his sodas. We would drink his sodas sometime. He would get mad about that and stuff. If we ate his snacks, like ice cream, we would get in trouble for that.

I remember when we had that big blizzard. We made snow forts. We had a big snowball war. One of the snow forts almost caved in on me. It was like four feet high.

#### Stepfather and Abusiveness

Benjamin spoke of play many times. It became clear to me that he would recall a memory of play after he spoke about a memory of unpleasantness. Ben went on,

One time my brother had some chewing tobacco on the window seal. They got into a big fight over that.

I remember having one birthday and one Christmas in that big house.

My mom and stepfather had a fight, and then we moved. We were only 45 minutes away from there. We were trying to get away from my stepfather. He was living with some guy, and they lived closer. We didn't know that. One time my stepfather came to the apartment, and I don't know what happened there. I was playing with some friends, and I saw him come over. I was out side.

Ben was very young when his mother was experiencing so many difficulties. He remembered things with detail. Ben talked about his family's past as if it plays in his mind like an episode in a story. The more he talked the more his time sequencing became skewed. I asked Ben if he stayed in the apartment long. He said:

I remember starting the school year there. I was almost there for like a whole year, but me and my brothers went on vacation to my aunt's in Missouri and Arizona. I was gone for like three months and my stepfather and mom got back together and moved to a small town. It was a great trip. We got a phone call or something, and they told us where to come. I liked it where we were.

I remember once mom threw a 38<sup>th</sup> birthday party for my stepfather, and we had a DJ and everything, music and all kinds of food. My stepfather got drunk. He, like, chased beer with soda or something, and he got really drunk. My mom told him not to do it. My mom took his keys and threw them out in a cow field. He found them somehow. The cops came, and he got in his car and drove away.

First, he was mean before the cops came at the end of the party. Then my stepfather got all stupid and funny like. He said, "I better get my keys and go, huh?"

### Good Bye Stepfather

I told Ben that his stepfather was intoxicated. Ben agreed and said they only lived there for six months. He told me that they moved to another small town up in the valley, and Ben said, "That is when Bradley got worse."

I asked Ben what he meant by that. He said:

He started not taking his medicine, and if he stops taking his medicine, he doesn't know what to do. He got in trouble and stuff. That's when my stepfather got mean. He picked C. C. up and shoved him into a wall, and it put a back print in the dry wall. It was a big old hole in the wall. My stepfather was pretty big. C. C. hated him. They had a lot of fights. C. C. moved out.

I asked Ben if he remembered anyone coming to the house to talk to the family. He said, "Yep, Bradley had a mentor. There was this counselor, too. I only talked to them when we would all go out to eat. We did that twice."

I asked Ben what he knew about his mother's illness. He said, "That was when we lived in the big house, before we moved to the valley. That was when my stepfather told us she was sick."

I wanted to know about Ben's awareness concerning his mother's cancer, so I said, "So when she started to have problems with your stepfather, she was sick." Ben answered:

That was why. She said that was why. She was really sick. Mom went to a lot of doctor appointments and stuff. She was always drowsy and stuff from the cancer and chemotherapy. When we lived in the valley, my stepfather was drunk a lot. He would work during the day. Sometime he would skip work, I think. My mom caught him sleeping around or whatever. She kicked him out.

Ben had seen his stepfather abuse his older brothers. I wanted to know if he had suffered any abuse. I asked, "Were you afraid of your stepfather? Did he ever do anything to you?" Ben said:

Yep, one time he spanked me, because I didn't put a chair back. It was either the chair or I didn't vacuum the floor. He spanked me with a belt. Mom got pissed at him. She said, "Don't do that again."

That was in seventh grade. After she kicked him out we stayed there another two weeks. The night she kicked him out we went up to New York and stayed with one of her friends. It was for the weekend. We didn't have much to do. It was way up there. My stepfather had a Nintendo 64, and we wanted to take it; so we did.

### Enter Allen

Ben and his mother were the only two at home while Bradley was incarcerated in a state institution for juvenile delinquents. I asked Ben to tell me about the time when Bradley was upstate. He said:

That was like real strict or whatever. It was like drill sergeants, like the army. It was just me and my mom. It was OK, but my mom had to pay off all her debts. We didn't have that much money left. Bradley was taken care for, and we weren't. We couldn't do anything. My mom was working, and she was making nine dollars

an hour. That still wasn't enough to pay off the debts. It started getting bad at the end of the school year. I was thirteen.

I asked Ben if things got better after his mom met Allen. Ben said:

We moved back to the town that we all liked, and that is when my mom met Allen. Allen helped us make that move. We only stayed the second time for three months, and I didn't want to leave. Allen offered to help with the bills before we got here. Things have been OK with Allen.

I didn't want to continue questioning Benjamin. At the end of the question about Allen, Ben said, "I like playing football. I like playing safety the most, because you can intercept the ball. I am fast, and I can outrun most people. I am big enough to hit em, too."

We were still sitting at the restaurant, and I picked up the conversation about football. I spoke to Ben each time I went to the house, but I only did one formal interview with him. I felt that I had enough data from the family. I also found Ben's interview to be the most difficult, because I am a father of a child who is close to Ben in age.

#### A Summary of Ben's Reminiscences

There are eight themes that come from Ben's memory of family life (see Figure 21). Ben has been at home with his mother. He has seen some of family life that his brother Bradley has not. Ben was the first family member to bring up the financial stress that he and his mother experienced.

Ben is quiet by nature. When I first met him, he rarely made eye contact with me. I went to see Ben's family enough that Ben became comfortable with my presence. When it was his turn to talk with me, he wove talk of games and play between his unpleasant memories.

#### Stressful Family Episodes

Benjamin talked about family stress. He always related stressful episodes to his stepfather. Picture a little boy of six sharing a bedroom with his older brother of ten years. The bedroom is upstairs where there is a bathroom. Down the hall on the same floor his mother and stepfather share a bedroom. His stepfather forbids the little boy to use the upstairs bathroom. The stepfather has a large dog that is unfriendly. The little boy wakes up one night needing to use the bathroom. He goes to the bedroom door, only to find a menacing dog blocking his way to the stairs. His big brother gets up and holds the dog so he can pass. He passes the upstairs bathroom and goes downstairs, and when he returns, he finds his big brother in a shouting match with his stepfather. They are shouting at each other about the snarling, barking dog, who should handle him, and how he should be handled.

When Ben told me about this episode, he didn't tell it like it caused him any stress. He went on to say that his mother kicked his stepfather out of the house, but Ben did not relate it to the aforementioned episode.

Even when Ben talked about what should be a happy time, he told how it becomes a stressful episode. Ben said, "I remember once my mom threw a 38<sup>th</sup> birthday party for my stepfather...My stepfather got drunk...First, he [stepfather] was mean before the cops came at the end of the party." Ben ties heavy drinking to all of the stressful episodes associated with his stepfather.

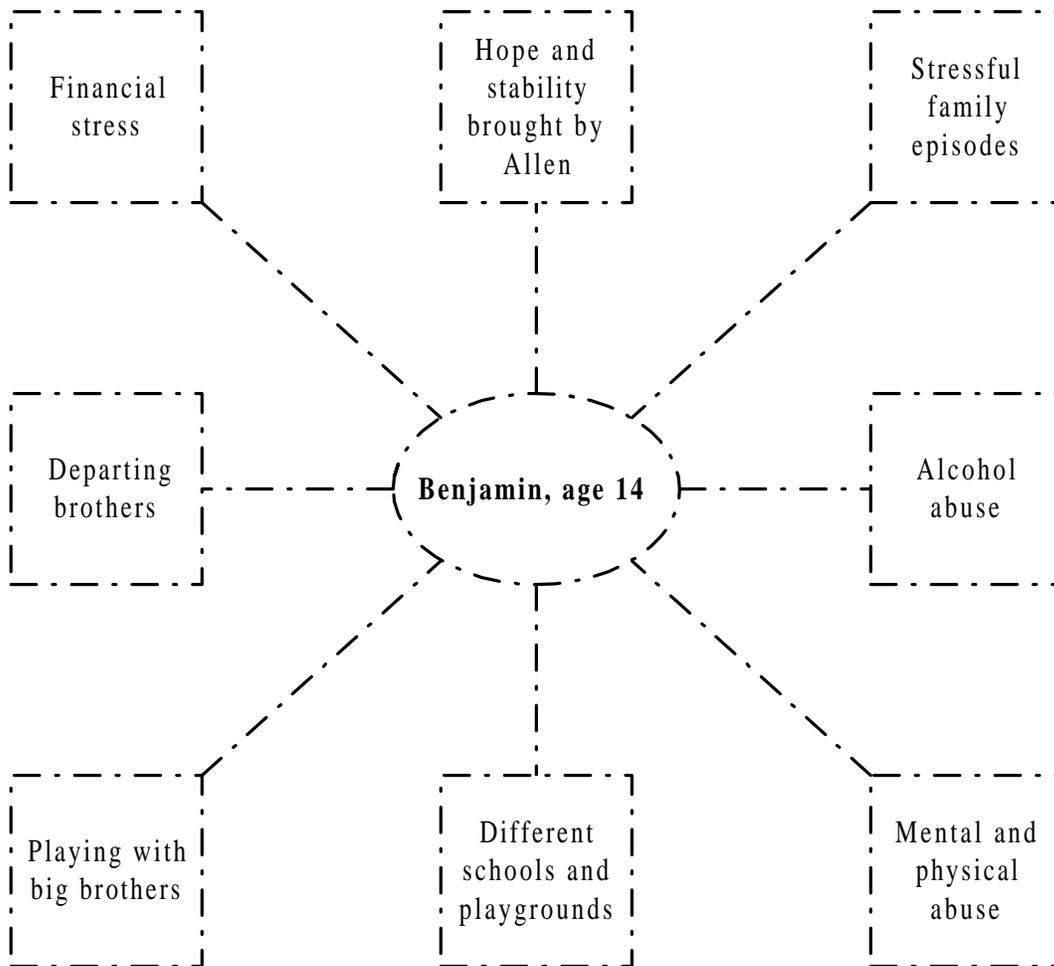


Figure 21. Themes from Benjamin's story. The dot-dashed lines are representative of Benjamin in figures 18, 21, 23, and 24.

### Alcohol Abuse

Ben never said my stepfather was an alcoholic. He said of his stepfather, "At first it was OK. We all got along. He started drinking or whatever. Mom would tell him to stop, but he didn't." Ben brought up his stepfather's abuse of alcohol concerning other unfortunate incidents. He said, "While we were there, mom's husband got a new t-top mustang GT, 5.0 or whatever. He was drinking. Two months after he got it he wrecked it."

Intertwined with his stepfather's alcohol abuse Ben talked about how he and his brothers were treated by the man. While Ben spoke about this, he never equated the drinking with his stepfather's behavior.

### Mental and Physical Abuse

Ben told of how he was spanked by his stepfather once with a belt. He couldn't remember why. He thought it was for not putting a chair back in its proper place. Ben did remember times he saw his stepfather become violent with C. C. and Bradley. Ben told of how Bradley was beaten. He said, "One time my brother [Bradley] had some chewing tobacco on the window seal. They got into a big fight over that."

Benjamin told of how C. C. was picked up and thrown into a wall. He said, "He picked C. C. up and shoved him into a wall, and it put a back print in the dry wall."

Some might debate whether or not mental abuse occurred in this family. I am convinced that it did. Ben said:

He was real picky about stuff though. He wouldn't want anyone to drink his sodas. We would drink them sometime. He would get mad about that and stuff. If we ate his snacks, like ice cream, we would get in trouble for that.

### Different Schools and Playgrounds

We all experience things differently. Ben experienced the transient nature of his family by the different schools he attended and playgrounds he played on. Ben said, "In my school they used to have this huge playground in the back." Of another playground and school Ben said, "I remember on the playground they had these little cars...." Ben said, "I can remember some of my preschool years." Of a public school Ben said, "I remember my first day. I was late. My mom dropped me off, and I went down a big long hallway, and I remember where my class was."

Ben's family relocations meant new opportunities. Through Ben's eyes moving to a new place meant an opportunity to play on a different playground.

### Playing with Big Brothers

Benjamin told me he was a happy little guy. He loved playing with his big brothers. He said, "When we were little, we would be different people. Bradley used to be Michael Myers, and C. C. used to be Loomis, and I would be two people. We would play that for hours."

Benjamin talked about many different memories of his brothers and him at play. He did not place blame on anyone for losing his playmates. He remembered his brothers leaving.

### Departing Brothers

Benjamin talked about C. C. leaving. He said, "My stepfather was pretty big. C. C. hated him. They had a lot of fights. C. C. moved out. Ben mentioned C. C. one other time after he made this statement. He told me that he got to visit C. C., and he spoke of how they played. I said, "You miss him?"

Ben said, "Yes."

Ben said about Bradley's departure:

We moved to another small town up in the valley. Bradley got worse. He started not taking his medicine, and if he stops taking his medicine, he doesn't know what to do. He got in trouble and stuff. That's when my stepfather got mean.

Ben went on to say how Bradley was sent off. Before Bradley left, Ben remembered the family preservation people. He said, "Bradley had a mentor. There was this counselor too. I only talked to them when we would all go out to eat. We did that twice."

#### Financial Stress

Ben remembered his mother divorcing his stepfather. He remembered Bradley being sent off. He also remembered the financial problems that followed.

Times were hard when there were only two family members left. Ben said:

It was just me and my mom. It was OK, but my mom had to pay off all her debts. We didn't have that much money left. Bradley was taken care for, and we weren't. We couldn't do anything. My mom was working, and she was making nine dollars an hour. That still wasn't enough to pay off the debts. It started getting bad at the end of the school year. I was thirteen.

Ben was very candid about his memories of past family life. He didn't give any indication that he felt hopeless about how things were going.

#### Allen Brings New Hope

Early adolescent people are resilient. Benjamin is no exception. He agreed that things were getting better since his mother and Allen met. Ben said, "Allen offered to help with the bills before we got here."

Early adolescent people live in the present. Ben was happy to eat a good lunch. He acted like a hopeful young man looking forward to the next game of ball, or whatever.

## CHAPTER 8 ALLEN'S OPINIONS

By the time I interviewed Allen, he and Elizabeth had been married three months. They had been together for almost two years. Allen has the perspective of a newcomer to the family. I value his viewpoint, because it is not shaded by a long history of dealings with service providers.

Allen told me that his family did not receive services associated with service providers. Allen did say that he was in the navy, and he received the benefits of the G. I. bill.

### Allen's Place in the Family Finding Someone

Elizabeth and Allen knew they would marry when I first met them at Bradley's graduation. I started my interview with Allen by asking him about how he and Elizabeth met. We sat in the trailer at the dinette set in the kitchen. Allen began by saying,

We were in a small town in the valley up north, and we met in a bar. I would get off work, but I had stopped going to bars. It was just one of those things where I wanted a beer one day after work. I was with a friend of mine, and we were sitting at the bar conversing. I wasn't in there looking for anyone. I was in there to wind down. Sure enough her and a friend were in the bar. She was just getting over a bad relationship with her second husband. She had had a bad night because of him [Elizabeth's second husband]. Her girlfriends had talked her into going out. So she ended up in the bar the same night, and she asked me to dance. It was some good exercise. We ended up dancing, and after that it was pretty much history.

We kept seeing each other. We took it slow, a little at a time, cause I was still going to school and working full time. So I would go up there on the weekends to see her. Our relationship just grew from there, essentially. We fell in love. It was strange, because I didn't think it would start in a bar.

### Plans for Work and School

Allen served his tour of duty in the navy, and he wanted to work for a while so he could return to college. Allen said:

I was a part-time student, and I was working full time. I was working as a mechanic at a distribution center. That was the first job I got out of the navy. I got out in 97. I got out on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March, and I was working on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March. It came as a quick change. It was a good opportunity, and they had a rotating shift. I was planning on working and saving money to go to school full time.

It was a little less money then other offers that I had, but the location was good for different colleges that I might go to. It kept me in the area, and Elizabeth and I got together.

### Allen's Relationship with Ben and Brad

Allen had periods of doubt about his relationship with Liz. He was aware of many of the problems that Liz had concerning Bradley. I asked Allen to describe his relationship with the boys. He said:

I think it is a good relationship. In the beginning it was hard getting used to, because Benjamin was so much in a shell. He has come out of it a lot. He

wouldn't talk to too many people. I was making wisecracks all the time, and he would be quiet.

I didn't get much of a chance to know Bradley, because he was in the wilderness program. During that very short stint when Liz and I were getting together he was gone. There was some tension about that during our development. It was like, should I stay with her? She has these kids who have problems. I would think, maybe I should just cut it loose, and be free, and go on my way. Liz has such inner strength. I could see the strength in her, and she took care of the problems. So I kind of stayed out of that mess for a while.

I wasn't the father figure, and I didn't even pretend to be. While we were first dating, she was still living in her place, and she took care of all that. We just dated and went out and did our own thing. Once we decided to live together, it changed a little. Benjamin was the only one here.

He got shuffled around a whole lot from school to school to school. I was surprised at what a tough little guy he is. He makes so many adjustments so fast. Most people wouldn't be able to do that. He has a good heart.

When Bradley was in the Wilderness program, I went down with Liz and Ben to visit him, maybe three or four times. School would keep me from going each time she went. Liz went every week.

#### An Opinion of the Wilderness Program

Allen had seen Bradley enough before he went into the wilderness program to have seen a change in him after he graduated. I asked Allen to tell me what he thought of the wilderness program and the services they provided. He said:

I think it is a really good program. I saw a lot when I went down there. I saw the consequences they get, like chopping wood. I thought that was completely different than what I expected. The living conditions that they were in, like the outpost, it was raw, all nature, out and exposed to the elements. It was no free ride at that place. I thought it was a good idea, the way they did it with the structure worked in for the kids.

There is an after-care program. The guy from the camp comes here. It is almost finished now for Brad. The appointments were set up for twice a month. He comes out and talks to Brad about how he is getting along. It did one thing for Brad. I don't think he will ever steal again. I'm pretty sure Brad wouldn't steal from anyone, which is a good thing. He has come a long way.

I'm not too sure about how Brad will do with the ADHD thing. He still has rapid mood swings. He is still quick tempered. I have seen that temper. We went for a picnic down to the river to swim, and when we came back Liz told him that he couldn't do something, because we had been out, and boom his mood changed from great and normal, to anger. I'm not sure where it comes from, but he says I want to do what I want to do. Here we have some rules, courtesy things that we

have set up. It was hard for me sometimes, because I was single so long. Bradley has a hard time with some of the rules.

#### Worried About Bradley

I asked Allen if he had heard anything about Bradley and the public school. Allen said:

Yes, he had trouble with some jock giving him a hard time at the football game. The guy was making fun of Brad, because he liked to skateboard. Brad did walk away; I was surprised. He handled it right. He left and rode his skateboard home. It is a long way, but that is how Bradley deals with some problems. If he can get off to his own, it is kind of good.

Allen is worried about Bradley. He is worried about services focused on helping Bradley adjust to the world outside, of juvenile corrections, coming to an end. Allen said, "Somewhere you've got to cut them off and let them go. It is a tough question. I don't know if it is the right time for Brad or not."

I asked Allen to tell me what he thought the most beneficial service was for the family. I also asked him to tell me what suggestions he would make to service providers. He said:

I think the aftercare was good. I would like the school system to keep closer touch with the family. Maybe the counselor at the school and the family should have a session together. Keep in touch with us and tell us where Brad is. I know you can't do that for all students, but Brad has been through a lot. He has taken this path; we need more contact with the school.

#### Themes of Awareness from Allen

Allen can only comment on the services that he has seen family members receive. There are seven themes that come from Allen's perspective (see Figure 22). When he first met Liz, he realized that her financial situation was not good. He was aware that she was receiving aid for dependent children (AFDC) and a food stamp allotment.

Bradley has been the focus of the services provided to the family since Allen met Elizabeth. Most of my questions for Allen were focused on finding out what he was aware of and what he thought of services that he had seen for his new family.

#### Awareness of Past Problems

Allen knew about many of the past problems Liz had. During their courtship she was honest with Allen when she spoke about her turbulent past. The first night they met she told Allen about her second husband. Allen said, "She was getting over a bad relationship with her second husband. She had a bad night because of him."

Allen said that he had some concerns about moving forward with the relationship. He said, "There was some tension about that [staying together] during our development. It was like, should I stay with her? She has these kids who have problems."

#### Awareness of Elizabeth's Inner Strength

Allen said, "I would think, maybe I should just cut it loose, and be free, and go on my way. Liz has such inner strength. I could see the strength in her, and she took care of the problems."

Allen made a choice to stay in the relationship. He got to know Ben first and then Brad. Allen began to play a part in the family.

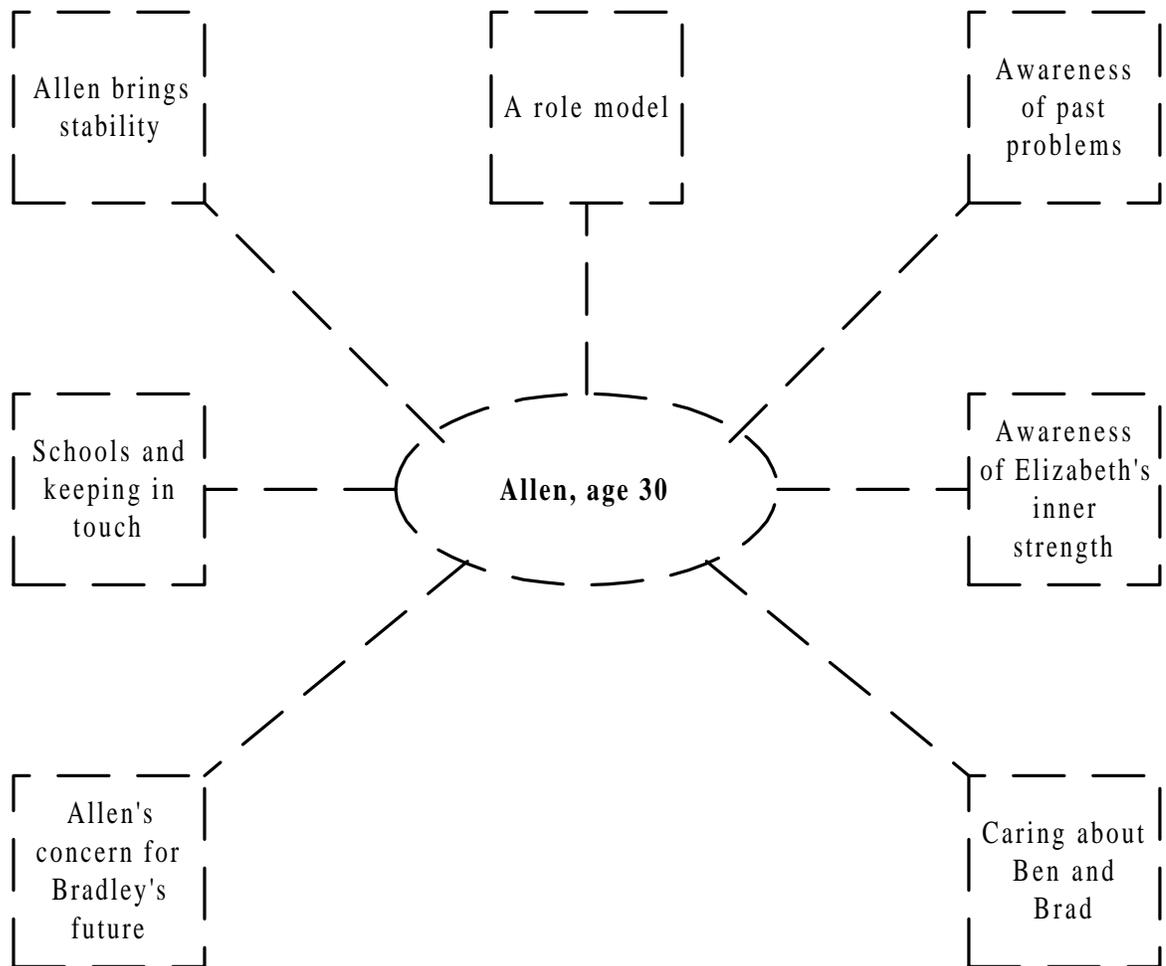


Figure 22. Themes from Allen's story. The dashed lines are representative of Allen in figures 18, 23, and 24 .

### Caring about Ben and Brad

Allen found himself involved in the lives of Elizabeth's sons. Allen described his relationship with Ben and Brad as being good. Allen took things slowly with the boys. He said, "I wasn't the father figure, and I didn't pretend to be."

I could tell that Allen cared about the boys. He said of Ben:

Ben got shuffled around a whole lot, from school to school to school. I was surprised at what a tough little guy he is. He makes so many adjustments so fast. Most people wouldn't be able to do that. He has a good heart.

Allen did not have the same contact with Bradley that he did with Ben. Allen did visit him in the wilderness program when he could. Allen's care for Bradley shows up in his concern about Bradley's future.

### Allen's Concern for Bradley

Allen said, "I'm not to sure about how Brad will do with the ADHD thing. He still has rapid mood swings. He is still quick tempered. I have seen that temper."

Allen indicated that the after-care program, an extension of the wilderness program, was a good service. He expressed his concern about when the after-care would end for Bradley. Allen said, "Somewhere you've got to cut them off and let them go. It is a tough question. I don't know if it is the right time for Brad or not."

Allen believed the wilderness program was an effective service for Bradley. Allen said, "I don't think he will ever steal again. I'm pretty sure Brad wouldn't steal from anyone, which is a good thing. He has come a long way."

### Schools and Keeping in Touch

Allen thought that schools should take up the slack when Bradley stops receiving after-care. He said, "I would like the school system to keep closer touch with the family."

Bradley is not like other students. Allen said of this, "[Schools] Should keep in touch with us and tell us where Brad is. I know you can't do that for all students, but Brad has been through a lot. He has taken this path; we need more contact with the school."

### Allen Brings Stability

Allen plans to be in college to finish his degree. He worked and saved money to use with the G. I. bill to achieve his goals. He helped Elizabeth pay off debt, and now they are husband and wife.

Allen adds stability to the family unit. Elizabeth and Allen moved again. They bought their own trailer. It is larger, and everyone has more room. Allen sets an example for the boys.

### A Role Model

Allen is a role model. Ben and Bradley see Allen come home from class and study. Allen is an accomplished mechanic. He has served his country honorably. He treats Elizabeth with care and gentleness. Allen, is thus far, the kind of role model that Bradley and Benjamin have lacked.

The type of modeling that Allen exhibits may have a profound effect on Benjamin. Bradley is older, and it may have less of an impact on him. For the time being Allen has proven to be the type of a man that young men can look up to.

## CHAPTER 9 THEMES THAT INTERSECT

Elizabeth, Bradley, Benjamin, and Allen have their own sense of how family life goes. Bradley and Benjamin were witnesses to and victims of, abuse. Each brother gave an account of his experience; each account was different. Yet, a common theme emerged that these young men were victims of abuse.

There is an intersection of themes for Elizabeth's family (see Figure 23). If two family members gave an account of a common experience, I considered this to be an intersection of themes.

This chapter is about the intersecting themes (see Figure 24) that emerged from this family's story. Some of the themes are tied to the receipt of services. I report the family member's personal experiences in association with the services that have been extended. I close the chapter by arguing that Elizabeth's family is a system.

### The Service Providers

Elizabeth has been receiving services from various providers since she was 15 years old. Her 24 years of experience in working with service organizations gives her the most comprehensive view in her family. Elizabeth sought services for her family, because she recognized its dysfunction, and she was the only one able and willing to seek assistance.

Bradley and Benjamin have experience with different service providers. Bradley has been through more with services than Ben has, because Brad's need for help has been greater. Allen's short term in the family has only given him an awareness of past difficulties and services received.

Elizabeth spoke of six service-providing organizations. All six of these organizations have had a direct effect on Elizabeth's life. Benjamin has had direct contact with two service organizations and has been affected by two more. In the section that follows I will link the service organizations to family members and explain the association between the two.

### The Church

Elizabeth was the only family member that mentions a strong faith in God. She spoke of her faith early, and her devout nature showed throughout her telling. The church may have been the first service organization.

Elizabeth's first husband became more belligerent toward her and their sons. She sought help from her pastor. Liz said, "I wanted to know what to do to help my husband."

Liz's first husband was not in favor of her seeking help from the church. She said, "He was knocking the church saying things like, 'You can't believe in something that you don't see.'"

Elizabeth did not continue to get counseling from the pastor. He referred her to the private sector. Bradley is the only other family member that mentioned the church. He spoke of the church in reference to a party that was held in his honor.

### The Private Sector

Elizabeth was referred to a program called the *One Step* program. A volunteer psychologist from the private sector met with Liz. Her first husband was not pleased with Liz for attending sessions, and Liz was not sure they were helping her.

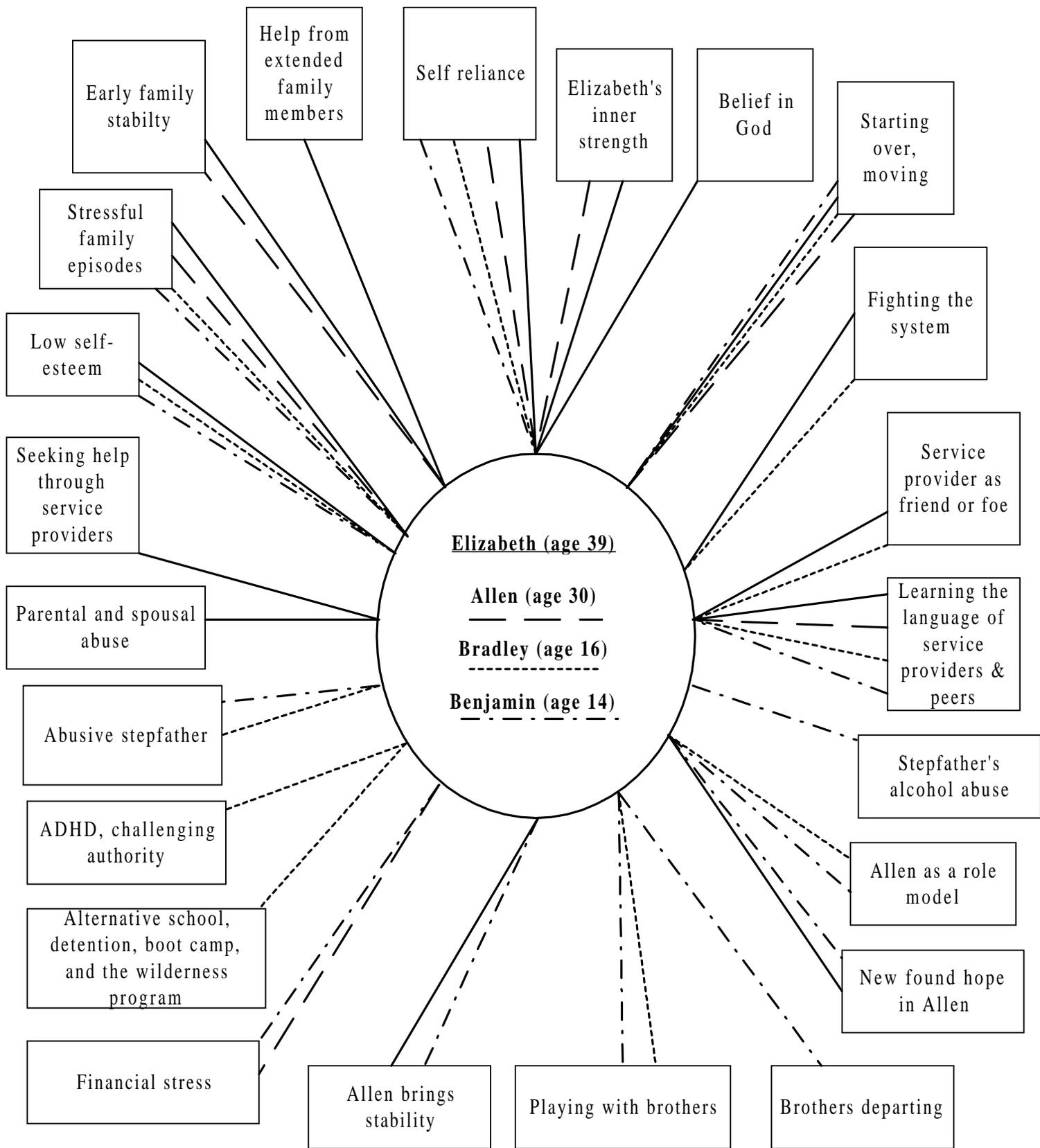


Figure 23. The intersection of family themes.

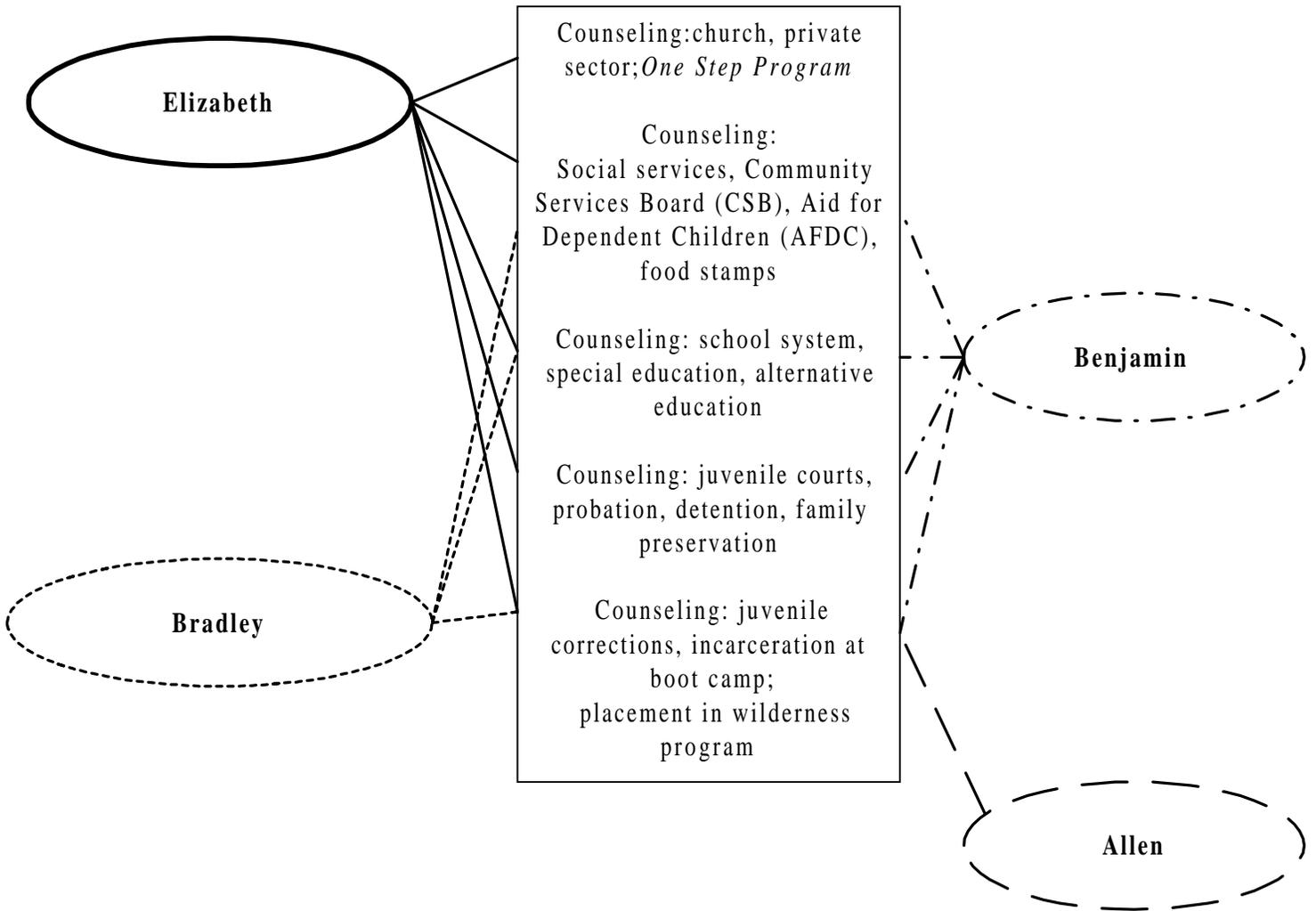


Figure 24. Family members' associations with service providers.

Elizabeth is the only family member to receive services from the private sector. She said of that program, "Eventually I got to believing that the service providers were trying to brain-wash me." Elizabeth sought help from social services.

#### Social Services

Under the umbrella of Social Services comes the Community Services Board (CSB). Elizabeth received counseling at the CSB. She was still interested in saving her first marriage.

Liz attributes her strength to leave her first husband to the CSB counselor. She said, "Through that counseling service I got the strength to leave."

Benjamin does not mention Social Services, but he spoke of the financial stress that he and his mother endured after Liz went through her second divorce. He mentioned food stamps when he spoke about that hardship. Allen corroborated Ben's statements when he told of the poor financial situation that Liz was in when they met. Allen asked me if I knew about the Aid for Dependent Children<sup>1</sup> (AFDC) and the food stamps that Liz was getting when we talked about his understanding of services.

Bradley was aware of his mother's financial problems. In conjunction with the AFDC program the Federal Government subsidizes a free breakfast and lunch program through the public school systems. Ben and Brad qualified for this program sporadically depending on the financial status of Elizabeth.

#### The School System

The first service provider who Liz sought help from was a school counselor. Her father's molestation of her precipitated Elizabeth's initiation into counseling. For a short time, early in Elizabeth's receipt of services, the school counselor was helpful. School administrators and faculty members, in general, would not prove to be Elizabeth's strongest allies.

Elizabeth has been in and out of school offices, in different school divisions, in different states. Most of her encounters with school officials are centered on Bradley's inability to function in the school, the school's inability to serve Brad, and a very late identification of his disability.

Elizabeth and Bradley have fought the school system. Elizabeth has fought the system out of frustration; her frustrations were brought about by her negative experiences with school officials.

Bradley fought the school system out of frustration induced by a difficult home life and an unrecognized disability. Bradley's frustrations manifested themselves in his rebellion against authority figures, including his mother. Bradley had seen the men in his mother's life model poor anger-control skills. Bradley emulated what he saw, and in so doing he struck out at anyone and everyone who would try to help him.

Benjamin has attended many different public schools. Ben remembered each new place that he lived by remembering the school playground. For Ben, the stress of moving to a new place was eased, because he always found that new place to play.

Allen is aware of the difficulties that Liz has had with school systems. He is concerned about how Bradley will adjust to a large public high school. Allen hoped, "I would like the school system to keep closer touch with the family."

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<sup>1</sup> Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC) and food Stamps are federally funded programs administered by state Social Services.

Elizabeth and Bradley have found a good friend in a school system along the way. Bradley is still close to a special education teacher he had in the middle school. Elizabeth praised school officials in the school system where her sons now attend. She spoke highly of a school counselor who came to see her at work to discuss where best to place Bradley.

#### Juvenile Courts

Bradley became uncontrollable. Elizabeth and the school system recognized that he was volatile enough to bring in the juvenile court system. Brad brought a gun to school, and he had begun stealing. A judge, district attorney, probation officer, school officials, and Elizabeth began the process of trying to help Bradley. It was not always a harmonious process. Elizabeth said, "[When watching the court system work] I felt distraught and angry, I thought I was losing my child."

Alternative school, probation, detention, and family preservation were the steps taken to help Bradley; he did not respond. Bradley committed an assault with a knife against Benjamin. Elizabeth filed charges. The judge sentenced Bradley to be incarcerated at a juvenile detention center for habitual offenders. The center was a military boot camp facility.

The juvenile courts, by necessity, are tied to the juvenile corrections system. Elizabeth, though often frustrated with the apparent lack of coordination in the court system, did find good service providers. A good mentor for Bradley, a sympathetic judge, and others often brought hope to Elizabeth.

#### Juvenile Corrections

##### Boot Camp

Boot camp is incarceration. Elizabeth experienced this service from the outside. She would not receive notice, by phone or any other method, that Bradley had lost visitation privileges. There was no partnership between the family of the incarcerated and the service provider.

Bradley fought his peers and the system. The military regime was so structured Bradley found himself with no points of reference for behavior. Elizabeth and Bradley were excluded from the decision-making process regarding how and what Bradley would be doing.

One rationale behind this approach to institutionalized individuals is to keep a person completely separated from his past so he can find a new role to play in the world (Goffman, 1976). Bradley was finding a new role. He learned the language of his peers, and he learned to fight in self-defense only.

Bradley found a caring service provider while at boot camp. He considered the counselor at boot camp to be a friend. Bradley thought that the counselor played a key role in getting him released from boot camp.

The boot camp made a lasting impression on Bradley. He did not like it enough to know that he did not want to return. Elizabeth argued that the boot camp would not help Bradley solve his many problems.

##### The Wilderness Program

Bradley said of the wilderness camp, "You had an opportunity to look at yourself, and look at what you need to change."

When Bradley came home from the boot camp he did well for four months. Brad started to make the same mistakes that he made before going to boot camp. Elizabeth had him charged for stealing a bike, and they were back in front of the judge.

A caring judge heard a mother's pleas for help. Elizabeth had pushed to have Brad sent to a wilderness camp. Now the system responded, and Liz knew it was the right placement for Brad.

Elizabeth believes that it was a partnership from the start. The educational director, program director, camp counselors, camp educators, Elizabeth, and Bradley all had a hand in designing and implementing Brad's individual education plan<sup>1</sup> (IEP).

Brad responded to the wilderness program by rebelling and running. The camp program director informed Elizabeth of Brad's initial response and the consequences of such misconduct. Elizabeth felt like the wilderness program coordinated services and communicated with her.

Bradley came around and became successful. His graduation marked an event in his life the likes of which he had never experienced. If someone would have asked me to guess what Brad had been through, I would not have been able to venture a guess.

#### Elizabeth's Family as a System

I place Elizabeth's family, as a system (see Figure 25), at the center of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Development model (as cited in Santrock, 1996). The service providers associated with Elizabeth's family are placed in the model.

#### The Family in the Middle

An important concept of the ecological theory is the individual (in this case the family) shapes the world outside, Bronfenbrenner's study (as cited in Santrock, 1996). Elizabeth, Bradley, Benjamin, and Allen exist as a family system. The survival of Elizabeth's family is based on how well the family members can maintain a structure and the family's flexibility to react to forces outside and inside the family unit (Lewis et al. 1976).

The microsystem is represented as the second concentric circle. The microsystem is the family setting where most of the direct interactions, with the outside world, take place. Elizabeth maintains a close relationship with extended family members, and her great grandparents influenced her view of family life. Two service providers, Elizabeth's high school counselor and one of Bradley's special education teachers, are placed in the microsystem, because they maintained a close relationship with Elizabeth and Bradley.

#### Service Providers as Buffers

The mesosystem is the third circle. For Elizabeth's family the service providers served as buffers between the outside world and the close world of the family in the microsystem. Service providers from the church, school system, social services, juvenile courts, and juvenile corrections served as insulators for Elizabeth's family during times of family crises.

Service providers worked to protect Elizabeth's family from disintegration. According to family members, some service providers offered more help than others. Some service providers seemed to work against keeping the family system united.

#### The Exosystem, Macrosystem and the Chronosystem

Elizabeth's first husband, C. C. (eldest son), her parents, and her second husband are all placed in the fourth circle. They are placed in the exosystem, because they do not have a direct influence on Elizabeth's nuclear family.

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<sup>1</sup> An individualized education program is a plan of study tailored to the specific educational needs of one student. IEPs are used by public school systems for students with special needs.

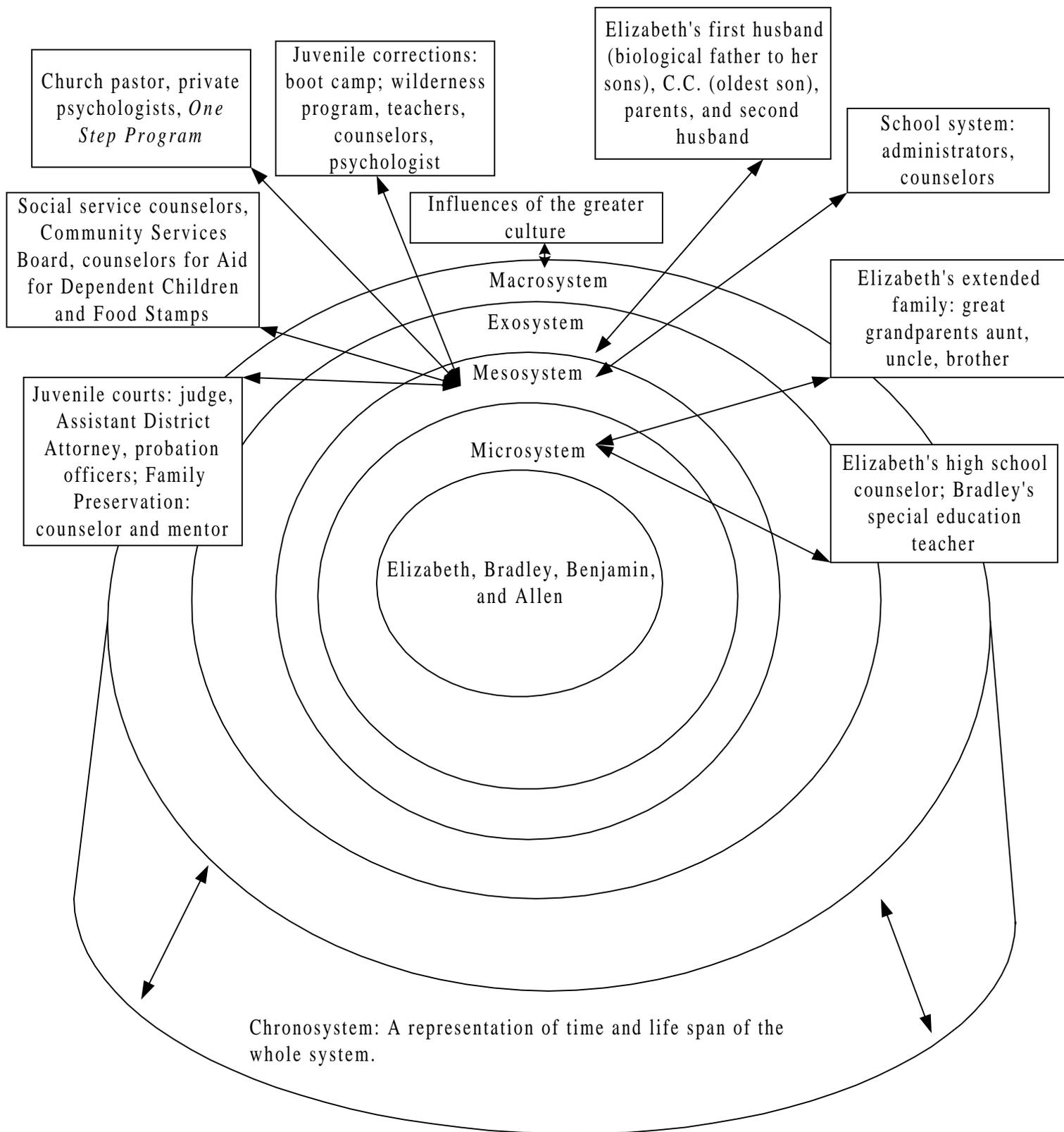


Figure 25. Elizabeth's family in Brofenbrenner's ecological theory model. Adapted from *The Science of Child Development*, edited by J. W. Santrock, 1993, p.51. *Child Development*. Copyright 1993 by Erlbaum Publishing Company.

The macrosystem is the fifth circle; it represents the greater culture that the family lives in.

The chronosystem adds a three dimensional element to the model. It represents the birth of the whole system and time passing, the life span of the system.

## CHAPTER 10 EPILOGUE

I called Elizabeth near the end of the study to make arrangements to see the family for a group interview. She told me that would be fine, but Brad would not be present. I asked her if everything was OK. She told me Brad had decided to go live with his dad. I asked her if it would be OK to talk about this when we met. She agreed.

We made arrangements to meet at the same diner where Bradley, Elizabeth, and I first had lunch, on June 9<sup>th</sup>. I wanted to ask a few questions that would bring some closure to my research. I also wanted to see how they were doing. Elizabeth, Allen, and Benjamin agreed to meet on a Friday evening, and I would treat the family to dinner.

### Dinner and a Few Final Questions

I arrived at the diner before the family, and I waited about ten minutes in my car. I saw them pull into the parking lot and went to greet them. We were all smiling. It was a beautiful fall evening. We all exchanged handshakes and walked in.

Benjamin walked beside me and told me that his baseball banquet was in this same restaurant. He told me that he got a trophy. I told him that was great and asked them if they were hungry.

There was a large food bar. We all decided to eat from the buffet. We were seated and took our places in the various lines to fill our plates. We talked of games and music and the various places that we had been since we last spoke with each other. We ate until we were full.

Elizabeth, Allen, and Ben were accustomed to my use of the tape recorder, and none of the family objected when I asked about taping our conversation for transcription. I was curious about Bradley, so I asked Liz to tell me about Brad.

Elizabeth told me that Bradley went to live with his father. She told me that he didn't give the high school enough of a chance, but he did not get into trouble. They had made a deal: for Brad to go live with his father he had to stay in high school. Brad's father agreed to the arrangement, and he informed Liz that the high school where he lived was small and it might suite Bradley better. Elizabeth said, "He is going to a smaller school where his father is. It is, well, less preppy. He has to be in school, and he has to finish."

Elizabeth spoke about this arrangement with a good attitude. She was upbeat during the whole dinner. She was happy with the trailer she and Allen had purchased. It has more room than the one they rented, and Ben said, "I get the master suite." They all seemed happy.

I told them that I had just a few questions left to ask about services. Elizabeth, Allen, and Ben agreed to do their best to answer any questions.

### The Most Beneficial Service to the Family

I had already asked Allen what he thought the most beneficial service to the family had been. He told me he thought the after-care service associated with the wilderness program was good. He also expressed his concern about when this service would end for Bradley.

Benjamin smiled when I asked him the same question. He looked like he was thinking about it, but he gave no answer. I told him he did not have to answer the question. I told him he could think about it and speak up any time. He seemed OK with that and excused himself to get another bowl of ice cream.

Elizabeth said, "The wilderness program for Bradley was the most beneficial. If Brad didn't get that, help there would never be peace in this family"

#### What to Tell Policy Makers

I asked, "What would you tell policy makers about the service-providing network?"

Elizabeth said:

I think, I wouldn't necessarily call it a network. They don't necessarily work together. I think they could be a little less prejudicial. They could be less judgmental of the people who receive services. There seems to be, in certain categories, some favoritism. If I could get somebody's attention that is what I would point fingers at.

Allen said, "I think more awareness among some of the services about what they all do. Policy makers need to know what they do."

#### What to Tell School Officials

I asked, "What would you say to school officials?"

Elizabeth said:

I think they need to become more involved with other service providers. They need to be more educated about where people can go for help. They need to target the high-risk kids and get them help--workshops for teachers, whatever, to help these kids.

#### What to Tell Other Service Providers

I asked, "What would you tell other service providers?"

Allen said, "They probably ought to work more in conjunction with the schools. There ought to be more overall involvement between the families, the schools, and other service providers."

Elizabeth answered:

If we have to stand up and defend what we need here and there, it is harder. Have everything combined. Have them all in a nutshell. Have the service providers, the schools, and the families all working together. They are not a network. There are too many going the wrong way. The main focus should be to have everybody working together on one goal. Now, it is. "He said-she said," and a lot of finger pointing.

I wanted to know what Elizabeth had to say about the confidentiality issue. I asked, "What would you say to service providers about the confidentiality of recipients?"

Elizabeth said:

My personal experience with Bradley has been, at the school level they never seemed to be worried about that. I don't think that should be a barrier for service-providers. The focus should be on getting the help to the people who need it.

#### What to Tell Families that Seek Services

For my final question I asked, "What advice would you give to families that seek services?"

Elizabeth said:

I would tell them to continue to seek the help. I would say don't give up. Continue to seek the services, because what services there are out there are better than none. With Bradley, we just kept looking for the right kind of help. I couldn't give up, because I couldn't do it alone. I couldn't give up on my family. If friends or family

came to me and asked what to do, I would tell them what problems I had, but I would never tell them to give up. Out there somewhere is the right facility, the right service, or the right person; you just have to keep looking.

Elizabeth was always hopeful, even in times when I would think that hope was hard for her to find. With her hopeful words on my tape, we all rose from the table and went to the parking lot. Elizabeth asked me if she could get a copy of my dissertation. I told her if all went well, I couldn't see why she shouldn't have one.

The air outside was cool. The sun had almost set, and the sky was deep blue. I shook Allen and Ben's hands, and I gave Elizabeth a hug. She said, "God bless you."

I said, "And you."

We parted company and went our separate ways.

#### A Few Suggestions from the Author

I have been a public servant for 20 years, providing educational services to young people and families. I have worked on multidisciplinary teams charged with the responsibility of finding an alternative placement for youngsters who are at-risk of not completing high school. As a member of such a team I would keep files on these at-risk students, and in each file there would be fragments of information about poor performance and troubled behaviors. The team would decide on a strategy or placement for one child and move on. I would often wonder what family life was like for that child.

I have walked a mile with Elizabeth, Bradley, Benjamin, and Allen. They have allowed me to gain a better understanding of what their lives are like. My suggestions are:

**To policy makers:** Listen to the details of these people's lives, direct more resources toward building a more responsive network of service providers, and know and try to understand one man so that you may help every man.

**To my fellow educators:** We work in places that are common grounds. Allow these grounds to be fertile for cooperation with other service providers. Invite them in. Let them help. They care about the same things that we do. They have expertise and ideas about how to serve children and families. Our grounds are common, so we needn't fight over the turf.

**To principals:** View yourselves as the educational leaders who are service providers. If true collaboration is to take place among service providers, and at-risk children and their families are to benefit from such collaboration, you could be one of the initiators. Promote an atmosphere of cooperation with other service providers.

**To school counselors:** Be information specialists and liaisons for school administrators and other service providers. Know about how other service providers do their work. Follow up on at-risk students and their families when you make referrals. Help building administrators understand what other service providers can do to assist in helping at-risk students.

**To trainers of educational leaders:** Build a curriculum that develops collaboration skills. Use problem-based learning activities that are realistic and meaningful for the student.

**To service providers:** Do all in your power to help policy makers build a true network. Hold all people who walk through your doors with an *unconditional positive regard* (Rogers, 1983). Meet and share information about what works. Keep doing the good work that you already do.

**To cooperative extension service providers:** Promote and facilitate meetings that bring all service providers together. Use current research to create thematic agendas for conferences, so practitioners may find their own uses for research findings.

**To family researchers:** Use qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodologies to do research on families. Keep working to reveal the details of how people experience the world.

**To family theorists:** Use less jargon to describe theories about children and families. Make research findings useful to a wide audience.

**To families that suffer:** Keep looking for help, be strong in your faith, and do not give up. You will find caring people who know how to help. You will find them in the schools, departments of social services, courts, churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues.

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