ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals provided encouragement and support for me as I completed this research project. First, I am grateful to my participants for their time, candor, and positive response to their involvement. Those who helped me identify participants also deserve thanks. My committee, including Sandra Stith, Eric McCollum, and Jean Coleman, offered useful suggestions and guidance. Their frequent inquiries about my work, unflagging interest in it, and recommendations for specific procedures and questions enhanced this project immeasurably. Karen Rosen, my advisor and committee chair, maintained a fine balance between validating what I accomplished and pushing me to do better. I appreciate her wisdom, insight, and amazing ability to capture elusive concepts and to help me make sense of the “whole.”

Many friends, both from Virginia Tech and elsewhere, provided tremendous support and encouragement. Particular thanks are due to Michele Coleman, who assisted with my first focus group, and Jean Massie, who helped with my second group and proofread my manuscript. My parents, Pete and Beverly Lux, and my brother and his wife, provide a living lesson in healthy family cohesion for me, and I appreciate their cheerleading and interest in my thesis.

Finally, my husband Jeff has supported me throughout my Master’s degree program by being present and active in all aspects of parenting and family life. He has gone more than the extra mile as a father, particularly over the past year as I have completed my thesis. I am extraordinarily grateful for his steadfastness, perspective, and encouragement. Our children, Jonathan and Kristin, were a source of hope and joy throughout a long research process. They told me, with unerring accuracy, when I needed to pay more attention to them or take a break from my work. My anticipation of their fast-approaching preteen and teenage years energized my research and invested it with personal relevance.