

How to Become a Superhero: What Epiphanies Lead Regular Teresas to Become Mother

Terasas ©

By Nicholas Dighiera

Senior Project

Alaska Pacific University

December 1st, 2009

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research probes comparatively into fictional superheroes, from broad categories of literature, and the application of their attributes on real people. It also explores the motivations and backgrounds of real superheroes, thoroughly canvassing the traits of selflessness and altruism fostered from the emergent themes of parenting, spirituality, satisfaction, and continuance, in pursuit of unraveling the mystery behind the formation of these individuals for replication. Full narrative interviews portray the real and humbling stories of five interviewees along with three biographical references written from multiple sources which call the reader to action. Further research into this nearly untouched and vastly important subject is recommended.

Table of Contents

Introduction	6
Overview of the Topic	6
Statement of the Problem	7
Potential Significance of the Research	8
Purpose of the Research and Research Question	8
Literature Review	10
Introduction	10
Characteristics of Fictional Superheroes	10
Research into Real Superheroes	13
Definitions for this Research	14
Modern Non-Fiction Superheroes, Their Epiphanies, and Their Boons	16
Introduction	16
Greg Mortensen	16
J. Michael Fay	19
Sir Earnest Shackleton	21
Summary	24
Methodology	25
Introduction	25
Research Method	25
Research Approach	26
Research Design	27
Population	28

Criteria for Selection	28
Instruments	29
Individual Interview Process	30
Researcher Statement	31
Data Analysis Process	34
Validity and Reliability	35
Findings	36
Introduction	36
Demographic Data	37
Narratives	38
Sandie Andersen	38
Gordon and Bonnie Lange	42
Catherine Miller	47
Jordan Thomas	53
Themes	56
Introduction	56
Parenting	56
Spirituality	58
Satisfaction	59
Continuance	60
The Call to Adventure	61
Boon	62
Superheroes: Interviewees vs. Literature	63

Demographics	64
How to Become a Superhero	65
Limitations	68
Recommendations for Further Research	69
Conclusion	70
References	71
Appendix A: Letter of Consent	76
Appendix B: Interview Schedule	77
Appendix C: Demographic Survey	78

Introduction

Overview of the Topic

A man stands alone; thick legs spread almost awkwardly far apart, nonetheless sturdy, anchored, with his arms akimbo, hands curled in powerful, block fists. His rippling, sinewy muscles are more than evident through his brightly colored, constricting, lycra uniform, accented perfectly by the diminishing sun. He looks west, jutting his square jaw into the blusters that kick up as the last of the day's warmth is burnt off, just before the blue-black duvet is laid gently upon the city. Strewn around him are heaps of stereotypical bad guys, all black apparel, ski masks still clinging tightly to their faces, lying together in an unconscious dance. His stature, his accomplishments, his entire being, radiate...good. Not good in the basic or simple sense of the word; but raw, unadulterated, unshakable good; core, quintessential, and gut-wrenching good. As we look upon him, breeze breathing life into his silken cape, almost in slow motion, we see ourselves; rather we see everything we want to be. Good. This is only one of many conjured images from the word superhero.

Merriam-Webster's (2008) defines superhero as "a fictional hero having extraordinary or superhuman powers" (Superhero, para. 1). Utilizing this definition of the word, the possibility of an actual "superhero" existing are miniscule. The terms *superhuman* and *extraordinary* effectively eliminate any likelihood of superheroes outside of fiction; both eschewing normality in favor of the unattainable or divine. But where a simple conglomeration like the dictionary fails is where history and society coalesce, imbuing life into what was once considered purely fictitious.

Before the chronicling of history, around the dawn of man, fictional superheroes became the unattainable archetype. In doing so, they developed common characteristics recorded and

recognized throughout history. A good heart, the search for justice, an indomitable spirit, and willingness to help others, represent a small sampling of the many traditional attributes of superheroes (Kuchinsky, 2007). Employing these characteristics, the possibility of real superhero existence surpasses mere myth settling firmly in the plausible realm.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is us, the human race, and the predicament in which we have placed ourselves. Generations of human beings have come and gone, each producing a sprinkling of superheroes from the selfish, unmotivated, apathetic, or blissfully ignorant masses. For every benevolent act there exists a multitude of quashing antagonists. There is no better example than today's entrenchment of greed and monetarily based social status. With leaden emphasis on the pursuit of financial achievement standing proudly as the human equivalent of glory, timeless values like selflessness, altruism, charity, and good have been replaced by the modern ideals of avarice, covetousness, jealousy, and consumptionism. Our entire society, especially in the United States, is built on the foundation of *it's never enough*; and our fixation to this end has blinded us to the atrocities committed upon every biological system on this planet, regardless of importance, and has drastically altered our innate and deep-seated empathy towards others.

As we lay waste to our home, all of its occupants and the fragile and intricate bonds connecting the network of life, there are individuals who have, for whatever reason, thrown their own personal brakes on a situation and stated, "I have had enough." Regardless of whether the weight of these decisions was known, or whether each hero possessed a conscious awareness of his or her status, there are those throughout history and living among us on this earth who have taken that crucial step, thrown clear the shackles of fear and self-doubt, embraced a cause, to become unsung icons, dedicated righters of wrongs. Superheroes exist; and certainly there are

plentiful opportunities for said superheroes around the globe. It is no secret that the world craves not only the work of these superheroes, but also the dangling carrot, the unrealizable striving for perfect good. We need these people to exist as representation of that which we admire and long to be; but also to champion all manner of causes, helping to ensure that the majority does not trample or snuff out the minority.

Potential Significance of the Research

The potential significance of this research is peeling back the myth that mortal man cannot ascend to the ranks of super-heroism. Only the strongest and most persevering are trailblazers, especially those voluntarily cast in the thankless role of a superhero. If their path to super-heroism can be revealed, replication becomes continually more manageable. By showing that superhero attributes created in fiction live and breathe in human champions of good, this research could bridge the gap between fiction and reality, hopefully enkindling the superhero flame within. Humanizing perceivably unattainable traits and providing key real examples of heroic proportions may have the power to blow down the doors stifling mankind's potential. In the very least, this research identifies a cavernous void for exploration into defeating the multiple plagues of the human condition through application of generationally exalted morals and values once thought only personified by fictional icons. A little known superhero named Mother Teresa once stated, "If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one" (Teresa, 2009, para. 1). Hopefully this research can locate those hungry for inspiration or motivation; those on the tipping point.

Purpose of the Research and Research Question

The purpose of my research is to dislodge the bulwark of mystery surrounding the origins of modern-day superheroes, entwining fictional definition with real accomplishment, exposing

the hardship and bliss, and hopefully inciting a revolution of the soul. This is accomplished by ascertaining what monumental or subtle events have led to the formation of current non-fiction superheroes for the benefit of future heroes. By revealing these events and proving real individuals have achieved super-heroic feats, regardless of social magnitude, this research may engender generations bursting with potential to become the non-fictional superheroes of tomorrow. The research question is: What life altering event, if singular, led to the epiphany and follow-through of the superhero life or act? Angling questions towards the causality behind the heroic act allows the reader to compare his or her own experience to others further along a path that he or she may desire to traverse, unquestionably justifying this research through its potential significance. The world longs for superheroes, now more than ever, because the human race needs to believe and hope that we can be better than we are (Perry, 2009). We need changes not based on total accumulation, but on universal betterment. But it is difficult. If it was not hard, everyone would do it (Hanks, 1992).

Literature Review

Introduction

In order to analyze how real superheroes achieved such status, we must first build the foundations of that superhero. Most perceive superheroes to only exist in fiction and literature, believing those demonstrated values, morals, and superhuman abilities beyond mortal achievability. First, we shall examine the numerous and varying characteristics of fictional superheroes, harvested from the aggregate of available literature covering these demigods. Secondly, we must peruse the few sources daring this unheard of crossover between fiction and reality to round out our understanding. Next, we will establish the bedrock of this research, the definition of a superhero, and other paramount terms, necessary in weaving these two worlds. Finally, we will identify real humans that have manifested these defined characteristics or values in their actions by chronicling their story, cementing not only their position amongst other non-fiction heroes; but also fortifying the fact that certain humans can and have ascended beyond common folk and are deserving of super-heroic recognition and praise.

Characteristics of Fictional Superheroes

Psychological literature diagnosing fictional superhero psyches has a rich and thorough history. Many researchers have focused their careers on unraveling the mystery surrounding the similarities of hero lore and the unconscious human need for these heroes. Due to the breadth of the psychological field, and its minimal attention to real superheroes, my research is charting a new course with unfurled and billowing sails by elevating real individuals to an honored status; applying honed fictional formulae to a non-fiction world. Therefore this research will not cover the hows and whys of fictional characters, which have already been studied; instead opting for the all-encompassing definition assembled from heterogeneous and representative sources.

Regardless of the beginnings of fictional superheroes, or their powers, it is agreed that society needs superheroes (DuBose, 2007; Fingerroth, 2004; Lawrence & Jewett, 2002; Sayın & Özşen, 2003). In order to truly establish the term superhero for this research, though, one must see beyond the dictionary definition and search the previously mentioned tomes committed to unraveling and revealing the history and true nature of heroes in the human era. Within the differing books dedicated to analyzing the psychology behind heroes of yore, there stands a definitive standard. This standard, authored by Joseph Campbell (1973), establishes this traditionally accepted formula for creating a superhero and their tale, regardless of originating age:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (p. 30)

Campbell's research harkens back to heroic stories stemming from the birth of man. He has located and mapped milestones, consolidating these tales from Gilgamesh to Spiderman, into steps on a worn staircase. My research addresses two of these steps in non-fiction characters: the call to adventure and the ultimate boon (Campbell, 1973). The call to adventure represents the real or symbolic event at which our hero exchanges his or her mundane existence for a perilous journey into the unknown with little to no possibility of success. The ultimate boon is the gift(s) that each superhero bestows upon mankind following, or during, the harrowing saga; in the non-fiction world, it is the defining factor of the superhero title. A superhero cannot be without a boon. An important noted point by Campbell (1973) in another step states "often in actual life...we encounter the dull case of the call unanswered" (p. 59). This establishes where the majority of us lie; humble members of the village, awaiting their supernatural savior.

Still, other researchers agree that superheroes do not require supernatural powers. In the 1980s, two epic tales emerged from a failing comic industry: one revolutionarily new and one refreshingly retooled. They cast asunder the bounds of traditional four color comics, opting instead for thick, perfect-bound, high quality books that redefined superheroes using values and morals heretofore unseen (Reynolds, 1994). These titles are *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Watchmen*. Both of these volumes have been studied and commented on extensively for reinvention of the superhero, imbuing him with modern feelings, morals, and values; including the author of *Watchmen* who analyzed today's technological and fast-paced society, concluding, "We demand new themes, new insights, and new dramatic situations. We demand new heroes" (Moore, 1986a, p. 1).

These stories revolve around characters that do not possess the aforementioned supernatural abilities: Batman and Rorschach. Both have heeded Campbell's call to adventure, regardless of physical capabilities, with the unreachable boon of peace to bestow upon man. The two characters respond to, and are a product of their environment. DuBose (2007) discusses both Batman and Rorschach's particular style of heroics: vigilantism. Both characters continue crime-fighting, even after the government outlaws their actions. Rorschach's dedication towards betterment is fully displayed during questioning after his arrest: "We do not do this thing because it is permitted. We do it because we have to. We do it because we are compelled" (Moore, 1986b, p. VI 15). DuBose's (2007) research does present the negative side of real-life vigilantism, but the fortitude of the characters and their display of unbridled adherence to a singular task required for super-heroism are compelling.

Fingeroth (2004) also notes similarities between villains as heroes, marking their only differences as the final goal and its cultural acceptance. He states that, "villains can be seen as

having more well-defined values than the heroes. They have a desire to change the world” (p. 163). Lawrence & Jewett (2002) sees the superhero as a reactive-conservative rather than proactive, struggling for a return to the status quo. The two sides of the battle, both heroes and villains, display a devotion so great to their cause that it overrides their devotion to laws or traditions; it also transcends governments and societies (DuBose, 2007; Reynolds, 1994).

Research into Real Superheroes

Some research has shown that ordinary people can achieve the eminence of the superheroic, without Campbell’s (1973) supernatural aid. Fingerroth (2004) states that heroes can be individuals who rise above their fears and limitations and accomplish something extraordinary. He goes further, describing firemen, soldiers, teachers, accident victims, and third world physicians; noting their will to fight the odds and sometimes beat them. Lawrence and Jewett (2002) allude to individuals who heed the symbolic call for lifetime service to a community’s institutions, allowing for nearly everyone in public service. Dulce Pinzón, a 31-year-old photographer who lives in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, finds her heroes among the everyday folk, moving the world forward one day at a time (Murphy, 2006). Pinzón looked to her community when creating a photographic art collection for the Queen’s Museum of Art, personifying fictional superheroes by enrobing her everyday heroes in traditional comic garb. Among the numerous photographs of her local superheroes, only one man, in her eyes, exuded the upstanding characteristics to adorn himself in the uniform of the zenith of modern superheroes: Superman. Pinzón stated of her hero; a small, fragile man named Reyes:

He's been in New York 10 years and has put his siblings in Mexico through university with his earnings, but [he has] never so much as visited the Empire State Building, he's been working so hard. (as cited in Murphy, 2006, para. 8)

Human beings have been recording and regurgitating the lives of those they idolize, whether famous, infamous, overlooked, or overly exaggerated, since the dawn of man. Innumerable books and countless hours of research have been dedicated to reciting the lives of those key, and not-so-key, individuals who have influenced our world's societies for better or worse. With so many literary works committed to regaling us with different or greater lives than our own, it is difficult selecting which works ennoble real superheroes and which superheroes are deserving of rehashing. This problem is especially compounded by the extensively debated and very personal definition of the term superhero.

Definitions for this Research

Ultimately, the role of hero or villain, both in fiction and non-fiction, will be assigned according to Jung's collective unconscious; which is the reservoir of our experiences as a species; a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature that is identical in all individuals (Boeree, 1997; Jung, 1980). This unconscious exists outside of this or any writing and influences all of our experiences and behaviors, especially the emotional ones; but we only know about it indirectly. It lives within each of us, similar but unique. This guiding force binds us all, with similar values and morals, affecting literature and life alike, consistently producing both fictive and real superheroes for every generation. And the definitions of said superheroes are as varied as the collective that dreamt them up, as shown in this research, effectively placing superhero labels in the capable and influenced hands of every citizen of this planet to be applied how they see fit. From entirely dedicated lives to singular acts of complete selflessness, all actions fall within the scope of the beholder, all of us judging and being judged.

That being said, the definitions that will be used in this research, which have been assembled by Campbell as an amalgam from almost all of the available literature on fictional heroes and are the pinnacle of superhero study, are listed below:

Call to Adventure – The pivotal moment in a person’s life in which he or she is confronted by a situation, or series of events, which extend beyond said individual’s moral boundaries or physical ability. This moment’s prodigious nature is not necessarily recognized by the individual and he or she may only react instinctually with no cognitive forethought for the future. It should be noted that this event may not result in the formation of a hero, only that it exists as a fork in which the individual selects one direction or the other. This term may be substituted by just “the call” as well.

Boon – After the individual heeds the call to adventure, he or she is cast into a tumultuous world and subjected to sometimes hellish trials. The boon is the gift that the individual bestows upon humanity, which is the fruition of these trials. It is the struggling which propagates the gift, what he or she is fighting for. A boon may be a variety of things and is not limited towards the benefit of all mankind. The boon is selfless, and the individual should never conceal ulterior motives. In the tales researched below, each case is different, one for peace, one for preservation, and one case only benefiting a handful of men. The brilliance in reciting and identifying boons produced by real superheroes, though, is the secondary boon; the rallying of the audience, commanding more from each who is affected by the tale. The originating individual may likely never know the extent which their act will saturate society, proving further that their boon is selfless.

Superhero – An individual who has heard the call to adventure, chosen to act, followed the treacherous path into the unknown for a cause greater than himself or herself, and produced a

boon whose direct benefit is solely for others. The decision to follow the call is usually against the advice of the multitude, renouncing common knowledge or practice, and opting for a personally fundamental divining rod for guidance.

Modern Non-Fiction Superheroes, Their Epiphanies, and Their Boons

Introduction

Using Campbell's guide and the established definitions, I have selected the following three superheroes. Through one way or another, each of their stories has infiltrated the deepest recesses of my mind, changing the way I define super-heroic acts, demanding more from me. Also, each has had an epiphany, or epiphanies, and a boon; of which some are continually striving for change. Again, regular individuals must achieve a boon to be considered superheroes; without it, ordinariness persists. Therefore, the only campfire legends here are real, drawn forth from the ranks; silently humbling and emboldening. No matter the simplicity of the epiphany, or the complexity of the boon, each superhero's epic is laid forth whole; pieces placed exactly.

Greg Mortensen

Some superheroes work towards peace. Greg Mortensen is a frumpy, genial man from Montana who has dedicated the last 16 years to fighting terrorism throughout Pakistan and Afghanistan with schools instead of missiles (Kristof, 2008). His story is the quintessential superhero saga. Like many of Campbell's legends, Mortensen's call to adventure came unexpectedly. For over two months, he had been attempting to summit the second highest peak on earth, K2, when a menacing storm scattered the 12 person ascent group just 600 meters shy of the pinnacle leaving him with only an empty water bottle and a protein bar (Blake, 2008). Suppressing both the frustration and sadness of failing to deliver his recently deceased sister's

amber necklace to the apex, Greg deliriously descended the immense precipice to find himself in an extremely remote Pakistani village named Korphe. The village members shared what little food and warmth they possessed, nursing the exhausted and underweight climber back to health. During this time of recovery, Greg witnessed school children scratching out their lessons in mud with twigs. A girl approached him and asked if he could help her build a school. In that moment, the children's struggling reminded him of his epileptic sister's constant struggle with everyday normality, sometimes taking an hour in the evening to arrange her clothes and pack her lunch to avoid being a burden on the family. Their struggles made him, "feel as if [his] heart was being torn out" (Blake, 2008, para 28). He said yes. After three years, selling his beloved climbing equipment and car, 580 fund raising letters of which only one produced a check, from Tom Brokaw, Greg Mortensen built a school in Korphe (Kristof, 2008). Since then his charity has constructed 78 schools for 18,700 current students in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Central Asia Institute, 2008).

Mortensen's epiphany is easily noticed in hindsight, but his continually bestowing boon is more subdued. After research, he was informed by a professor and senior statistician with the UN that educating the girls in these war-torn regions to at least a fifth grade level would drastically improve the quality of society (Gross & Mortensen, 2002). The goal became to educate girls who, when they became mothers, would teach tolerance to their sons, thus reducing their chances of becoming Taliban (Blake, 2008). By educating girls there are increases in hygienic and sanitation awareness as well (Gross & Mortensen, 2002). Also, world development trends are showing men and boys move away from villages, especially the educated ones, leaving the women behind. When you educate a girl in the village, that education remains in the village and the *value* of the education is passed to the next generation. Essentially Mortensen's

boon has two parts: short-term and long-term. The short-term effect is improving sanitation and hygiene as well as increasing the educated members of society in third world countries. The long-term effect is creating peace in a terrorist hotbed by teaching global society awareness, providing children and adults alternatives to terrorist funded schools or employment in these regions, and empowering the communities to reject the terrorist cancers within their communities. The Pentagon tends to agree. Lt. Col. Kolenda stated, "I am convinced that the long-term solution to terrorism in general, [in] Afghanistan specifically, is education" (Kristof, 2008).

The uphill battle that Greg Mortensen continues to fight greatly magnifies what truly groundbreaking accomplishments have been made. He has taken the issue of girls' education to the highest echelon of the Islamic religion, eventually receiving not only permission but the encouragement of eight esteemed mullahs (Gross & Mortensen, 2002). For eight days he was held hostage after a kidnapping in the wild, tribal Waziristan region of Pakistan, subsequently returning to assist in the development of a new school. Upon his return home following the September 11th attacks, Mortensen was welcomed by a pile of hate-mail and threats from American citizens, accusing him of being a traitor and helping the enemy. Through all of the adversities, he shrugs off any notion of being a hero; instead citing the Afghani and Pakistani children and their heroic battle to receive an education along with their daily struggles to attend these schools, some trekking as many as 15 miles one-way (Blake, 2008; Gross & Mortensen, 2002). Indifferent to Mortensen's opinion of himself, there are countless individuals who hold his accomplishments above most others, eternally grateful for every super-heroic act performed.

J. Michael Fay

Other superheroes fight for those that cannot defend themselves. In the case of J. Michael Fay, he fights for conservation. The slightly built, scruffily bearded Fay is a Los Angeles born veteran of the mountains (Curry, 2001). During his childhood, he developed a passion for the outdoors; this very same passion drove him to Africa after graduate school, eager to earn his doctorate studying the western lowland gorilla. It was in the late 1980s while working in the Central African Republic that Fay began brainstorming his revolutionary idea (Quammen, 2000). Field biologists often use line transects to estimate the population of flora and fauna of entire ecoregions by sampling conveniently small swatches of that area, generally on paths carved from one point directly to another (Quammen, 2000 & 2005). Fay incessantly worked in and out of the field performing these surveys, drawing out each trip and slowly building towards the first elongated transect. During his first lengthy 12-day stint in the field accompanied by his trusted Pygmy tracker, Fay's positive experiences not only provided the final fuel for his dissertation, but precipitated a shift in his ecological study practices. It is unclear from current research whether his call to adventure occurred before he came to Africa or during the 12-day transect, but from this point forward his method changed.

In 1991, Michael Fay began working with the Republic of Congo and the Wildlife Conservation Society, addressing the need for conservation of the jungle (Quammen, 2000). He began lengthening his transects, sometimes disappearing for two or three weeks; whenever necessity or the excuse arose. During these smaller, bare-bones jaunts into the jungle, the Megatransect was born. The Megatransect was a 15-month, 1,200 mile trek through jungles no human in known history had ever crossed (Curry, 2001). During this slog, the 44-year-old American's engine chewed through one cup of coffee, a granola bar, a handful of rice, and some

smoked fish everyday while traversing some of the world's densest jungles. The purpose of this study was to systematically survey all forms of life in vast uninhabited regions and explore the dynamic between humans and species in the wild (Royte, 2001). Fay and his rotating team recorded all sightings of animals, animal behavior, every species of tree for 10 meters on either side of their freshly gouged path, and every single dung pile, of which there were 40,000 (Curry, 2001). Fay is quoted with saying, "It's unbelievable how intense and abundant life becomes when you reduce human impact down to zero" (Curry, 2001, para 12).

After completion, Fay reluctantly flew to the United States, eager for the return to Africa and continuing towards his goal of conservation; urged on by cities he found insane (Royte, 2001). His dedication to this pristine wilderness was reflected in the massive amount of data collected, studied, analyzed, and processed; strongly effecting the creation of 13 national parks covering 11% of the county of Gabon (Fay, 2004). Fay continually works with these parks, instilling solid management and inspiring private investments. The boon Fay has bestowed ensures gargantuan tracts of land, abounding richly with life, are preserved for every human's future and saving the lives of countless plants and animals otherwise doomed to manifest human expansion. As if this grueling, hard-earned gift was not enough, team Fay also conducted the Megaflyover. This unbelievable task involved low altitude flying over the entire continent of Africa, taking digitally enhanced, GPS marked, photographs every 20 seconds (Quammen, 2005). There are 104 enormous African ecoregions, all in the crosshairs of Fay's lens. The data collected during this, and other Fay adventures/collections continues to prevent the destruction of jungles untouched by human existence, firmly establishing J. Michael Fay as a superhero; a champion to the millions of species affected by his devotedness and a preserver of wonders for earth's children.

Sir Earnest Shackleton

Yet other superheroes are defined by acts of greatness in the face of terrible adversity. In the case of Sir Earnest Shackleton, this act was spread over a nearly two-year period amidst an utterly and completely failed expedition; where 28 men refused to die at the hands of one of the most inhospitable environments on earth (Alexander, 2000). Shackleton was a great explorer who discovered his true bent almost by chance (Fisher, 1957). After discussing a career at sea with his family, he committed himself to a life of seamanship, working for several merchant marine outfits from 1890 to 1901. During the year of 1901, there was a perfect run on the Antarctic, promising fame and fortune to those successful in their endeavors. For this very reason, Shackleton began the daunting and potentially lethal career as an Antarctic explorer. For Shackleton, Campbell's call to adventure, in the heroic sense of the term, did not arise until later.

On December 5, 1914 the *Endurance* set sail from Grytviken's Cumberland Bay, freshly provisioned for Shackleton's most ambitious expedition to date: to cross the Antarctic continent on foot (Alexander, 2000). The 28 men onboard, including Shackleton, were prepared for hardships aplenty, but what transpired would test the fortitude of every person present. Within two days, the *Endurance* encountered the pack ice and by late January of 1915, she was beset in it, hopelessly bound in the slow clockwise currents of the Weddell Sea. It became apparent by March, 1915, that the expedition would winter over in the Antarctic ice pack, and Shackleton's concerns turned to establishing comfortable winter quarters for his men. It was not until late October, 1915, that Shackleton had given the order to abandon ship for fear of his men being crushed in the hull of the ship by the immense pressures generated within the ice pack, and a very disappointed and disheartened crew departed. Shortly after, the *Endurance* was dealt an

unplayable hand; she was conquered by nature, finally succumbing to her wounds and vanishing into the deep on November 21, 1915 (Alexander, 2000).

Two days after the *Endurance* sank, Shackleton's call came. After realizing the Antarctic expedition was lost, he pledged himself to return the whole party to civilization (Fisher, 1957). This was his call to adventure, which he accepted without hesitation. As the Weddell Sea continued its agonizingly slow and crushing turn, the crew approached the islands off of the Antarctic Peninsula (Alexander, 2000). For five months on the barren ice, Shackleton watched over his crew, acutely aware of every change in morale. Three lifeboats were salvaged, sledged, and dragged by the men; the largest and most seaworthy of which, the *James Caird*, was a 22 foot long whaler. These boats were saved in preparation for the inevitable ocean journey. During this time on the ice, all the dogs were shot, the last of the carbohydrates were eaten, and the outlook seemed bleak. But their situation worsened and improved simultaneously on April 9, 1916 (Alexander, 2000).

Finally, Shackleton gave the long-awaited order to launch the boats (Alexander, 2000). For seven days, the three open boats sailed in the South Atlantic during the beginning of the Antarctic winter. Shackleton did not sleep for fear of losing a single man or boat in the horrendous seas. This journey was their most treacherous yet, and after 497 days adrift on the ice pack or at sea, every single member of the crew disembarked the dinghies on Elephant Island. The crew rejoiced, feasting on the first drink and hot food they had seen in days. Four days later, Shackleton's determination for total survival manifested itself again, announcing that a six-man party would sail the *James Caird*, a 22 foot boat, across 800 miles of the most formidable ocean on the planet, in the winter. Alexander (2000) appropriately writes:

They could expect winds up to 80 miles an hour, and heaving waves—the notorious Cape Horn Rollers—measuring from trough to crest as much as sixty feet in height; if unlucky,

they would encounter worse. They would be navigating towards a small island, with no points of land in between, using a sextant and chronometer—under brooding skies that might not permit a single navigational sighting. The task was not merely formidable; it was, as every single sailing man of the company knew, impossible. (p. 132-133)

On April 24, 1916, Shackleton's six-man party departed Elephant Island for South Georgia Island and the Grytviken whaling station (Alexander, 2000). For 17 days, the crew of the *James Caird* endured an indescribably miserable sea voyage, barely making landfall with their lives; that, when carefully weighed against the judgment of future authorities, would be ranked as one of the greatest boat journeys ever accomplished. No words can describe their harrowing crossing; even the crew discontinued journals during the voyage. On May 10, 1916, all six members staggered out of their waterlogged and leaking boat on the western side of South Georgia Island.

While their sailing was heroic in itself, Shackleton was restless (Alexander, 2000). Elephant Island still held 22 men captive, with no hope of escape. So on May 19, 1916, Shackleton and two companions began a 36 hour sleepless trudge through the desolate, uncharted, and unexplored mountainous and glacial landscape of South Georgia Island with the destination of Stromness whaling station a scant 22 miles as the crow flies from camp. Again, Shackleton and crew triumphed over certain doom, arriving in Stromness late the next day. The *Samson* was immediately dispatched to collect the remaining three crewman of the *James Caird*, while Shackleton and Stromness personnel plotted to rescue the marooned 22.

On August 30, 1916, after 22 months of hardship and peril, Shackleton made out 22 figures on the shore of Elephant Island through his binoculars from the arriving rescue ship, and years literally dropped from him (Alexander, 2000). His steadfastness and devotion to the men saved *every single person's life*. One of the crew stated:

Shackleton's popularity among those he led was due to the fact that he was not the sort of man who could do only big and spectacular things. When occasion demanded he would

attend personally to the smallest details....Sometimes it would appear to the thoughtless that his care amounted almost to fussiness, and it was only afterwards that we understood the supreme importance of his ceaseless watchfulness. (p. 193-194)

The boon that Shackleton bestowed was courage, optimism, fastidiousness of morale, and ultimately, life. Although he died a little over five years later, many of his crew did very well in their post-expedition lives (Alexander, 2000). The invaluable nature of the boon Shackleton gifted to these men will probably never be known to those not subject to the harsh environments he guided them through. But his legend outweighs his life, and this, his super-heroic act, overshadows every other of his life's accomplishments.

Summary

Each hero, defined by the eyes of others, accomplished acts great and wondrous, with little regard for his own needs. But these three men are a menial sample of the ocean of human beings throughout history achieving superhero status within their families, communities, nations, and internationally, most of whom will never, or have never, received literary recognition, nor any other form of notoriety for acts so amazing they make the heart swell. Rorschach might be right, heroes do it because they have to, because they are compelled (Moore, 1986). Whatever the internal driver, all have accepted the call to adventure, regardless of subtlety, and bestowed boons unnumbered.

Methodology

Introduction

The following section covers the game-plan for data collection and interpretation. Prior to embarking on the monumental undertaking of defining and nailing down real superheroes for data amassment, sculpting a strategy was necessary; hence, the research method, approach, and design. Without blueprints, one can expect to encounter numerous preventable obstacles normally sifted, sorted, and dealt with during conventional brainstorming sessions. The research design should demonstrate the project's soundness and the author's competency, capability, and enthusiasm for the topic (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The agenda below, as well as the aggregate product, I hope, satisfy the reader's confidence, on at least the item of unbridled enthusiasm for a super-heroic uprising.

Research Method

Before I chose what broad style of research would be implemented, I first needed to conceptualize the purpose and subjects of this research. I wanted to extract, from literature and live subjects, stories of human greatness, digest them for content and similarities, and regurgitate them as a holistic collective that would allow the reader and me to better understand the steps trodden to become a real-life superhero. For this very reason, I have chosen the qualitative research method. Marshall and Rossman (1999) describe qualitative research as a broad approach to the study of social phenomena. Qualitative research strives to find the hows and whys behind human existence by crosscutting disciplines, fields, and subject matters; but, most importantly, the research is exploratory, delving into the murky waters of existence and dredging the alluvium for clues to understanding human nature (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2006). Further, while conducting the interviews, the researcher is educated by each participant,

understanding the meaning of their lives, enabling the author to pass that knowledge on to the reader (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). After comparing these facets of the qualitative research method against my research concept and my perceived end product, I concluded there could be no greater fit.

Research Approach

By selecting the qualitative research method, various corridors were presented for choice of approach; each with distinctive pros and cons. Again, reflection on perceived end-product was required. I am passionately dedicated in conveying each superhero's origins and boons. More importantly, especially when evaluating the utmost accessibility for the reader to further propagate non-fiction superhero replication, it is the meat and marrow of each research subject's life that must be portrayed. The reader needs to know the whole story. Apotheosis cannot be achieved by presenting superhero keystones alone; all the brick, mortar, and significant builders and architects which constitute the foundation upholding those keystones are of equal or greater importance. By that token, their life story is required in order to elevate not only their accomplishments, but also the reader's accessibility to their super-heroic story; ultimately allowing the reader to draw correlations between the research subjects' and his or her life. This act will satisfy the purpose of this research, which is to show the reader that real people can, and have, become superheroes; and that it may be easier or different than he or she perceives. Upon consideration of these issues, I have chosen the narrative approach.

Chase (2008) refers to narrative inquiry or approach as an, "amalgam of interdisciplinary lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them," (p. 45-46). Simply put, the narrative approach looks at the researcher's subject through the eyes

and words of the interviewee; it is the study of how human beings experience the world (Gudmundsdottir, 2006). This approach surpasses the simplistic aim of retelling a story though, by openly expressing emotions, thoughts, and interpretations (Chase, 2008). Moen (2006) states that, “The richness and nuances cannot be expressed in definitions or abstract propositions,” but only by being demonstrated or evoked through story-telling (p. 5). This allows the researcher to assume the role of curator rather than exhibit, deftly guiding the reader through the works of others, offering guidance and interpretation where needed. The importance of stories should not be underestimated. Stories can furnish the reader with a broader cultural lens with which to explore the world (Mello, 2001). The tradition of storytelling extends beyond historical documentation while continually being recognized as an important teaching tool despite an increasingly technological and intellectual society (Mello, 2001). The features of this research approach allow me to communicate to the reader stories of real superheroes, enriching their understanding of the prerequisites of superhero-dom. These tales are delivered in first person perspective, using the almost entirely original interviewee words, minimizing my influence.

Research Design

With the terminal outcome of increasing the quantity of superheroes as my goal, the pertinence of humanizing real superhero stories cannot be overlooked. To this end, I contacted and interviewed real superheroes in order to synergize the contents of the research. For this approach to produce quality information though, time and care was invested into the process before the harvest could begin. First, I defined the research question and purpose as a navigation point in the horizon. Second, I defined criteria for selection of storytellers using existing literature and identified subjects from within the population. Third, I gathered stories from each individual. Fourth, I relayed each story to paper, sorting for order and necessary edits. Fifth, I

offered the story to the teller for a validity check and collaboration, of which two participants responded. Sixth, I assembled all pieces together, added the findings found utilizing the techniques in the data analysis section, and presented, with a closing argument, that heroes are real, and how to become one.

Population

Due to the lengthy nature and emotional investment of personal narrative collections, a local population within Anchorage, Alaska could be considered the solitary option. Argumentatively though, superheroes are worldwide. Not to discount the efforts of Anchorage-ites at world boon-age, but the world population contains more superheroes, greatly increasing the intensity and magnitude of accomplishment, than that of Anchorage, Alaska. For this reason I chose to split my population in equal parts. For every hero extracted from outside of Anchorage, Alaska, I included a local superhero; of which one hero was a married couple. This ensured that local and non-local heroes were represented, each contributing an equally unique perspective on heroism.

Criteria for Selection

The criteria for hero selection came directly from the definition of a superhero established in the previous literature review. Each real life superhero must have heard the call to adventure and produced a boon. Obviously, a minimal amount of background research was conducted prior to the interview in order to determine that individuals met the criteria before they began narrating their lives. For this reason, the selected heroes were from snowball, convenience, or opportunistic samples; the latter being the originator of all the samples on a long enough timeline. My knowledge of their accomplishments prior to exposure, whether first hand or through an intermediary, hastened the groundwork behind selection. All three types take

advantage of current and chance encounters that can lead to information rich sources (Miles & Huberman as cited in Marshall and Rossman, 1999).

Also, and almost more importantly, each interviewee agreed to contribute her or his information, including both the name and the events encompassing the story, to this research, helping fully illuminate the experience. This criterion was the crux of interviewee acceptance for this research. If confidentiality was offered, two probable scenarios could play out, mainly because of the detailed nature of the narratives. First, if the individual were completely adamant on confidentiality, the story suffers due to fact obfuscation. I would not be able to fully display her or his call or boon without risking exposure through events or names. Secondly, if only a light disguise was requested, then the reader has the opportunity to surmise the identity through the circumstantial narrative. The interviewee also may not wish any of the story to be printed either, whether or not it will be read. This is why I chose non-confidentiality as a criterion. When the interviewees agreed, their stories were allowed to flourish, adding richness to the research. For those that disagreed, their status was not diminished in the slightest, it only removed them wholly from the research, protecting their interests and complying with their requests.

Instruments

Firstly, an informed consent and non-confidentiality agreement was issued to each individual chosen from the population to participate. Not one iota of information from an individual was recorded or employed in this research until the agreement was signed, which is entirely for the protection of the participants. As stated in the agreement, non-confidentiality is a condition of participation. This pact was authored with the transparency for the interviewee in mind, providing each with the total control to cease this process immediately upon request, at

which time all collected works are destroyed and confidentiality kept. The Alaska Pacific University Institutional Review Board approved this research. This agreement is Attachment A.

The second, and debatably the most important instrument in this research was the interview schedule. While utilizing the narrative approach, the researcher must stimulate and encourage the interviewee to recount their entire tale while interjecting as infinitesimally as possible. Therefore, the questions must be perfect and very few. By lessening intervention or steerage, I stood to reap the greatest rewards from the storytellers, allowing them to recite continually; completely immersing in their epic. Trust, though, must be established before the tale unfolds to bolster the narrators' confidence, enhancing their story with a natural richness. Cicourel cites that the interviewer must establish some level of trust with the respondents (Fontana & Frey as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). In this pursuit, the first questions were specifically designed to initiate a bond while eliciting less private but still useful information. This method proved effective in each case, yielding exceptional data. The interview schedule is Attachment B.

Also, a demographic questionnaire was constructed and administered to obtain some monochromatic information. This information, although subtle, revealed anomalous or similar traits, or characteristics not covered during the narrative. These questions provided the final ingredients to create a well-balanced, mini-biography for each individual, increasing the content approachability for the reader. By delicately spicing each narrator's entrée with these facts, a greater understanding of her or his life was achieved. This questionnaire is Attachment C.

Individual Interview Process

All interviews occurring within the Anchorage Borough were performed face-to-face. The other individuals residing outside of Anchorage were contacted by phone prior to the

interview for preferred method of conducting long-distance communication. Options such as telephone and internet were presented to them; telephone was the choice of both participants. Each interview was conducted on the interviewee's terms. Although, the ideal location for a life recital should be a peaceful and uninterrupted locale, this did not dovetail with the any of the subject's requests. In each case, during initial contact, I informed the participants of the thorough and complete data I desired to achieve and also how the previously described serene location represents the greatest chance for fruition. For the Alaska-foreign participants, I suggested this type environment as well; as I listened from such a place. For the Anchorage residents, I recommended a private room in the Consortium Library, a neutral and excellent locus. This counsel was not taken by any participant as each interviewee requested that the verbal transaction occur at/from each individual's place of residence. Acquisition of information was paramount, so compliance was necessary.

The meeting began with paperwork completion. Upon commencement of the interview, I began recording the story with a small, digital recording device for accuracy purposes. Again, I interjected minimally, only hoping to coax the story onward if it ceased. I did not attempt to steer the story, instead opting to listen to the treasures being presented. If, by the terminus of the tale, each had not enlightened the information necessary for the blending of her or his story into the superhero research, I inquired at information regarding the points on the interview schedule. I then thanked each one for offering time and provided each with my contact information if anyone wished to contribute additional material. These interviews lasted around 30 minutes.

Researcher Statement

For as long as I can remember superheroes have been changing my life. Whether it was Technicolor comic book web-slingers, biblical giant slayers, or bronze-skinned near-superhuman

übermen, everyday my brother and I would devour the super-heroic tales of the ages, attempting the total embodiment of unreachable powers. We would swordfight for Spain, put on our tux and grab our Walther PPK for England, strap on our jetpacks and spacesuits for planet Earth, and go to war for the good ole' U.S. of A.; always bent on defending the simplistic ideal that good is better than evil. As I progressed through life, I never stopped hero worship. Give me your oppressed, your downtrodden, or your hopelessly godforsaken and there stands an individual or group willing to defend them or make things right. I continue to voraciously gorge myself on hero epics, but have slowly ambled my way into the realm of real. If a fictional story was outlandish, a true story was mindblowing-ly unbelievable. It is the way the non-fiction superheroes manage their campaigns of good, though, that intrigues me. Real superheroes tend to do battle with villains, be they inhospitable environs, hate, indifference, ignorance, apathy, or a host of others, by picking what may be the exact right neutralizing agent for their dilemma, sometimes by pure happenstance. Once entranced though, the hero's sole dedication becomes the task, essentially turning the volume down on all other issues. Of this, I cannot get enough, and will continue to squish tiny morsels of saga grandeur into the nooks of my brain; delightfully fat with hero-tastic pleasure.

But with heroic satiation comes longing; a longing to be better, do more, and give myself completely to a benevolent cause; a longing that begins subtly, only to be subdued by the logic that there is a lifetime of accomplishment ahead while currently wallowing in mundaneness. But as the years increasingly speed by with the force of a juggernaut, the longing once easily calmed now creeps like a burglar into my mind as I deposit myself beneath the covers each night. Sleep has now become a desired commodity. This longing builds and builds, some days instigating a heightened level of anxiety punctuated by a line Kevin Smith so poignantly penned, "When

Lord? When? When's gonna be my time?" (Mosier, 2001, 7:36 min). While the ensuing frustration threatens to vibrate me apart, I am always left with the question, "How do they do it?" How do these rich, poor, and middleclass people laugh in the face of what I perceive to be certain failure and jump into the deep end, shackled like Houdini, hoping to pick that lock? I am dumbfounded by their ability to stay the course regardless of all but death. Even then, long after a true superhero is dead, their legacy supports their cause. When presented with the opportunity to engage in a research project, I assumed there were others chomping at the bit for the right motivation to affix a cape and jump headlong into the night. I could not pass up the opportunity to explore how super-heroism is done with the basis for replication.

I do recognize my biases surrounding this topic. My heroes are generally those not fighting for highly publicized causes. AIDS, Cancer, Healthcare, Politics; these are not my bag. While I am sympathetic to their causes and do not want to undercut their importance; for me, they do not ignite the fires within. I understand others are not ignited by my heroes. But, I can only write what I know; and I am enthralled by those silently abolishing poverty, hate, bigotry, and the world ecologies based entirely upon greed. For me, their silence is their siren's call. I am also drawn to those accomplishing tremendous feats of Herculean endurance or fortitude while being assaulted by dizzying bucketfuls of pain. Ultramarathoners, expeditionists, and adventurers hold a dear place in my heart. But for what I do not bring to the heroic banquet, the reader shall. Where I miss the mark, hopefully the reader will, if only for a brief moment, reminisce about his or her Dean Karnazes, Eric Schlosser, and Michael Reynolds; emboldening each one with a powerful fervor.

Data Analysis Process

After the interviews were conducted and recorded, lengthy and arduous work began. Mello (2002) states that the, "...problem with the urge to divide data into discrete fragments is that we run the danger of diminishing or misinterpreting the nature of the narrative as a whole" (p. 235). As previously stated, I will avoid this pitfall by presenting the stories as a whole, in a narrative format, constructed almost entirely of the interviewees' words to allow the reader greater access to the material. But in doing so, careful reconstruction of the material happened between the recording and the final product. For this, I have established a sequence which I adhered to for each interview.

First, each interview was played back whilst I spoke it into the computer, exploiting Windows Vista's speech recognition program. This generates a punctuation-less, nearly unreadable document. Second, this document was then edited, minus the recorded interview, for clarity, continuity, and to correct grammatical chaos. Third, this rough cut was reintroduced to the original recording for comparison between the spoken word and the manuscript. Once authentication was verified, the most challenging step began.

Riessman (2000) states that, "Narration is distinguished by ordering and sequence; one action is consequential for the next." (p. 7). For this reason, I arranged each story in chronological order. Periodically, the interviewee would forget a large piece of the story only to return to it later. By aligning the separate pieces into a fluid, linear, and contiguous narrative, I took what the reader may have perceived as a disjointed mess and blended it into familiar and relevant data. Once all four tales were prepared, they were distributed to the interviewees for validation. I only received two of these narratives back with interviewee comments and the remaining participants never responded. Then they were combined with the existing research.

The findings follow after all four stories. Utilizing this method, I have not intervened upon the stories as a whole. All four data are compared only after they have all been presented, allowing the reader to begin assembling personal opinions of each epic. Comparisons between data assess commonalities. First, emerging themes were identified that appeared throughout the interviews; unforeseen and unplanned congruencies that naturally surfaced from the data, binding the participants together. Only themes which arose in the majority of the interviews, three out of four, five when considering the married couple separately, are addressed unless the absence of a trend exhibited an area of interest. Secondly, I scoured the data for themes identified in the definition section of literature review, call to adventure and boon. After these themes were identified, I addressed similarities between the three subjects contained within the literature review and the five live interview subjects, affirming sound characteristics and life events of real life superheroes or the absence of such. Finally, demographic information was analyzed, identifying themes that crosscut the whole dataset. With this method, I was able to answer some questions concerning the originations of superheroes.

Validity and Reliability

The trustworthiness of narrative accounts cannot be evaluated using traditional methods because there is no canonical approach to validity with interpretive work (Riessman, 2000). Consequently, it falls upon the reader to assess such judgment. I can only offer these stories and my word that the interviewees and myself have approved them to go forth as a representation of a small portion of their life. Rest assured that each story has been labored over to present to the reader a narrative as close as possible to the original verbal recital.

Findings

Introduction

In this section, the interviewee's stories are presented one after the other. First, a table provides the demographic data on the participants. After, each story commences with a short prologue encompassing minor identification and other germane information which acts as an introduction to the individual. There are two parts per story; one being the gist of her or his tale and the other dedicated towards each interviewee's heroes. After all the stories have been unveiled, common themes are identified followed by a discussion on each. These themes are first compared between participants; then comparisons are made between heroes in the literature review and interviewees. Subsequently, a section is dedicated towards examining similarities between demographic data, providing a well rounded picture of this small sample's accomplishments and motivations. Finally, a summary binds the research fully, compiling and professing a path toward becoming a superhero.

Table 1: Demographic Data

Participants:	Andersen	B. Lange	G. Lange	Miller	Thomas
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Female	Male
Age	53	58	61	Withheld	20
Years of "hero" work	A Lifetime	36 years of foster care. 39 years of being a	36 years of foster care. 39 years of being a dad.	11 years	4.5 years
Race or Ethnicity	Other	Caucasian	Caucasian	Withheld	Caucasian
Are you a role model?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you have children?	Yes	Yes/ 9	Yes/ 9	Yes	No
Marital Status	Married	Married	Married	Married	Not Married
Does "hero" work affect your relationships?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
If so, what kind?	Positive, hopeful. If you get a chance, take it. If it changes you, let it. How do you create beauty in a broken world, you change the world you find.	Given them a role model to follow in our footsteps. Also, it has made our married children better parents.	Same as B. Lange	I travel to unsafe areas of the world	
Parent's income range	0-\$25,000	\$25,000-\$50,000	0-\$25,000	> 100,000	> 100,000
Current income range	\$50,000-\$75,000	\$50,000-\$75,000	\$50,000-\$75,000	> 100,000	0-\$25,000
Highest level of education	Some College	Vocational/Technical School	Associates	Bachelor's Degree	Some College
Are you satisfied with your accomplishments so far?	Resoundingly Yes	Yes	Yes	Resoundingly Yes	Resoundingly Yes
Do you feel you have made a difference in the world?	Resoundingly Yes	Resoundingly Yes	Yes	Resoundingly Yes	Resoundingly Yes
Do you feel you could have made more difference in other areas?	Yes	No	No	Resoundingly Yes	Yes
Motivation level	Very High	Very High	High	Very High	Very High

*Narratives**Sandie Anderson*

Sandie Anderson is a middle-aged woman residing in Tacoma, Washington. Recently, she was able to help an individual with a unique medical issue that required equally unique assistance. This story was told during an interview occurring on September 14, 2009.

When I was younger, I had a lot of bad things happen to me. Something deep inside me always knew I was worth more than what was happening to me. There was a lot of abuse and things like that, but I always knew that somewhere along the line there was more to this thing that was happening. This was happening for good reason. I do not know why I knew that, but I knew that I was going to be able to use this later on. I was going to be able to do something great. I felt like because things were so bad as a child from 2 to 13, that age group, that something great was going to come out of it. I think it just made me the person I am; and that was great enough.

We were very poor but my mother raised us that we always had extra for everyone; we were never without, ourselves. Even though we had nothing, we still felt like we had something. Everyone else was always invited to have what we had, even though it was very little, so it was kind of a part of the way we were raised. You talk about kids that share; well we did more than share. We made sure that others had; sometimes more than we did. I pretty much was raised like this. It was very much part of my life to be that kind of person. If somebody needed a ride home from a grocery store, if I saw them struggling with groceries, it would be no problem just to offer them a ride. In this day and age I know that does not happen a lot because people are so untrusting, and have every right to be, but I still did. Someone needed food, someone needed groceries, someone needs a coat, we could always find some way to give that little extra if we needed to give it. It was, I think, just kind of a normal way of thinking.

Besides being raised like that, I also believe that there is a higher power. If I am willing, I am going to be used in many, many ways. I think most people just have to be willing. As long as you put no limits on yourself, I think you will be used in a lot of different ways; and that just happened to be one of them. I tell everybody that it was a way bigger than me and I am not that big hero. I am just a person that is willing, and if you are willing the opportunities are going to come up. It is really up to you to walk through them. What we do not realize, I think, when we walk through them is how amazing it is to be used for another person's gain. It is just awesome. We get way more than we ever give. We think we are giving sacrificially, but the outcome outweighs, really, what we are given back. But you have got to learn that concept. It is just like gravity, you know. It is the same kind of concept. If you sit down on a chair, you will stay there. You are not going to go up in the air. If you fall down, you are going to fall down; not up. If you give, it is going to be given back to you. That is just...it is part of life. But a lot of people just do not get that lesson. It is pretty automatic to me and our family; part of that is because of our faith I am sure.

When Annamarie came through my line and needed something, it was not that I was trying to be a big hero, it was that she needed something and I could fulfill that need. I put myself in her shoes and it only took 30 seconds to figure out that I would hope someone would step up for me. That is how I talked to my family about it. We would want someone to step in our family and say, "Hey, we are going to help you guys out." How can we expect that if we are not willing to go that far? So it was pretty easy to make that decision to say, "Hey, I'm willing to do this for you." It was pretty automatic.

This story starts where I work; at Starbucks. I am a barista, but I work register a lot because I love to talk to people and because of that they put me on the register. She came through my line every morning for a couple years. She comes at a time that is very, very busy so there is no chance to say hi, or what's your name, or my name. All I know is what she orders, which is a short drip double cup. So I would have it ready for her. She always counted out her change. And because she counted out direct change in a busy line, it took a little longer, and that would give us maybe 30 seconds to exchange information: she is a grandma, she is very excited about it, she has been married a long time, and has a couple kids. We could exchange a few little facts about our lives, but I still knew her as short drip double cup, and I was just her Starbucks barista. Then a couple days she did not come in; I did not see her for about a week. When she did come in, she just was down, and she is a very outgoing person. I asked her what was wrong.

I said, "How're you doing?"

She said, "Okay."

That is not her; she was always pretty upbeat. So I said, "What is going on?"

She said, "Health issues."

She did not want to tell me. How do you tell somebody that you need a kidney? I said, "Well, what kind of health issues?" because that is the kind of person I am. I am thinking, "Well, maybe I can help."

She said, "Well, I am going on dialysis; my kidneys are failing me." It still touches my heart. At that moment, I knew. I thought, "Oh my gosh. She is grandma. She is a mom. She is a wife. I have got to help."

I said, "Is anybody being tested?"

She said, "My family has. None of them are capable of giving."

I said, "Well I am going to test for you." She handed me a hospital business card with the hospital's phone number on it and walked out the door. So I still had no name.

She wrote her blood type because I said, "What do I need to do?"

She said, "You need to have your blood tested."

So I called up my Physician and said I needed to order my blood work. It took about five days by the time I got in there and got blood work done. I found out I was a blood match. Now I have got to wait a couple more days because I do not her name.

I am asking everybody in the store, "Does anybody know this lady's name?"

"No, she is short drip double cup. We think she works at the college."

That is, I think, why the media got hold of the story; because we did not know each other's names. So then I waited. Then finally, she came in. I was so excited and so anticipating because I am a match. I do not know what to do next, but I know I am a match and it is going to go somewhere from there. There is a line to the door, she walks up, and I grab her hand before she can order. I say, "Guess what? I am a blood match." We both started bawling. The line is to the door, everybody is getting kind of upset

because they want to hurry up and get through. Yet they do not realize that life is changing at this very moment for two people.

We finally said we needed to exchange names. We introduced ourselves. I wrote down our phone numbers and we talked to each other a little while later. We met for coffee in a couple of days. Then we sat for three and a half hours and talked over what was going to be needed. We found out we had a lot in common.

Her husband did not want to meet me because he did not believe that I was going to follow through, which is understandable; I am a total stranger. My husband, he had a hard time because she was a stranger. He did not understand that I wanted to do this for a stranger because he thought, "What about our family?" We went through some research and health issues of our own family. We really researched what it is a going to take and am I taking any risks for our own family, that type of thing.

After meeting with them a few times, I decided to follow through with all the testing. I just started going through the tests and going through the tests. They test you for three months straight. As I went through each test I would call her and say, "This one works. This one is a match. We are a match. We're a match. It still works." After three months of testing, us meeting once a week just to talk things over, and getting to know each other's families, we finally got a surgery date.

I knew the first two weeks after surgery were going to be rough because I went in the hospital well. She went in the hospital sick, and all the sudden she is feeling good. I went in feeling good, and was all of the sudden feeling, you know, "I'm not feeling too hot." They just did major surgery on me. That first couple weeks, I never regretted anything. But it was a little rough just not being able to do anything, the healing process and the pain. I kind of knew that too...I knew that if I could get through that two weeks, it was OK. That was the only part and I had lots of support around me so I was OK. I would say what was probably the worst, and that was when everybody wanted to do interviews. There was no way. Even Starbucks wanted to take me to their big board meeting and honor me. I said, "I cannot leave my house you guys. I cannot even walk downstairs." That was a little rough because I felt like I was disappointing some people. Once I got through that, it was totally fine. Totally. Now we have become great friends.

What was really neat about it is that it really paid forward more than just Annamarie gaining good health and getting a good kidney. We have had so many stories of people coming in and saying, "I got a kidney because of your story" or, "I am giving a kidney because of your story." Every time someone came up, the story of a kidney being donated, something happening to that effect, or bone marrow, the hospital would call me and say, "You know they are doing this in honor of you." That alone was amazing, to know that more than one life was saved because of this.

When I went to the hospital one day for some testing, one of the young girls that was waiting on me just started crying and she said, "I need bone marrow, and I am getting bone marrow because of you. Your story was in the news and someone stepped forward. I have been waiting for two years."

Stuff like that, it is just amazing. For my grandchildren to think that I am a hero because I am showing them this way of life; to carry this on. You have got to sacrifice to give to other people. They saw how well it came back to me, as far as the goodwill, and I did not lose. I lost a couple months of work. Whoopee. I am really healthy. I found out that I was very healthy. I am taking better care of myself because of it. I have gained

great friends. The goodwill of just seeing what other people are doing has just been awesome. It was a win-win for everybody involved.

The news kept saying, "What kind of person are you?"

I was like, "You know what? If you really look into it, I am pretty typical."

Just because this happened to get the news and this happened to be the thing that I did, most people, there are exceptions of course, are very open to help and to other people. It is pretty typical, I think, of mankind...especially in the United States. You think about all those other countries and how we are when we pull together for something. If you read the news, you would think that everything is tainted ugly. When you see what happened down in hurricane Katrina and how many people just stepped up to the plate. When things go on, hurricanes and all kinds of other stuff, we are a very giving country.

It has always been that way. This is just another. The year before that, I took two weeks off, went down to hurricane Katrina, and mucked out houses for two weeks. I took my grandson and my daughter with me. I was almost looking forward to, "Ok, what am I going to do next." Some things are really big, and some things are really tiny that no one even notices. This just happened to gain a lot of attention, which kind of blew me away. It does not matter the size, I was just always looking for something.

It is kind of neat because once you do it, you do get addicted to doing goodwill. It is like, "Okay, what is going to happen next?" I almost feel like I am kind of along for the ride. I think, "Okay, what are we going to do next? What is going to happen?" My husband just goes, "Oh Lord." His thing was, "Okay, you can do whatever you want, but no more body parts."

I just think there is more to life than just living your day to day routine. Family is very important to me and I take good care my grandkids and my kids, but there is more. The world is bigger than just your little family. I always...I want to make an impact, even if it is picking up trash on the beach or it is mucking out a house. I went to the mountains of Mexico for two weeks to minister to some children, and that was a big thing for me. I also volunteer at an old folks on a couple days a week to read to them, and that is a really big thing to me. I have taught my kids that even if you are walking down the street, and you kick a piece of garbage, you better pick it up and put in the garbage because that is your responsibility. You saw it. You touched it. You take care of it. If you see the need, do not say, "Well, somebody should be taking care of that." You need to take care of it. You are the one that saw it. You are the one that needs to be responsible. Sometimes that is a big burden, especially my grandchildren. They do not want to. They are young and they just want to play. But they are learning, and I think it is going to make them great people when they grow up. If we all do our part, how easy would life be? I am kind of a dreamer, fairy tales, all the good stuff, and happily ever after. It is not what happens to you, it is how you handle things.

I feel I give back to people the ability to believe that they can do it too; that we are all capable of doing whatever it is that needs to be done. That we can all do it. That my belief is a system. That belief in people. The hope for mankind type of thing. I just feel like I give that back to people by my actions and my words, but mostly by my actions...hopefully. I do not know what you call that. I just want people to be more open to help other people to whatever that need might be. It could be as small as buying them a cup of coffee to as large as giving a kidney. You do not know, until you have done

something like that, how amazing the opportunity to give is. That would be, I think, the ultimate thing I would want people to know.

I would say in the next five years, I am trying to help raise grandchildren. They have parents, but we live real close to them and we are very involved in their lives. I feel that grandparents are really pivotal in children's lives. For the next five years I will be helping raise them. They come to my house after school, and just being there, being a role model for them, is really important to me. If there are opportunities along the way to do something else and extra, that is great.

Once they are raised and kind of off on their own a little bit then, me and my husband would do some things together, be able to travel a little bit. My dream is to maybe get a motor home and just head out. We have got some friends that do this. There are places that need help, and they stay there for a couple of months. Then they come home for a couple of months. There are other areas that need help in the United States. Whether they are building a community center or they are helping somebody in a flood, they just kind of go where they are needed. I would like to free up to do something in that nature; to be free to just kind of go wherever we are needed.

As I am lying on my deathbed, I want to know that I have touched as many lives as I possibly could in my lifetime. It is not because I had a lot of money or because I had a lot of prestige or because I did something great and wonderful. It is that the people that came into my life every day, on a daily basis, I was able to touch in some way. Knowing that, I think, would be a great accomplishment; that I did not waste one life that came in front me.

Also, I asked about who her heroes were. She responded with this information.

In my life [my hero is] probably my husband. He is kind of a silent type that does not talk a lot about what he is going to do, but he always follows through with action. He sees the need, goes to take care of it, and never says a word about what he did; but I watch it happen. He does it with my grandchildren, my family, and with just anybody. It can be a stranger. I watch him, I see that, and it makes me very proud.

Gordon and Bonnie Lange

Gordon and Bonnie Lange are a middle-aged married couple who reside in Anchorage, Alaska. Prior to their current residence, they were located in Washington State. They have been nationally recognized for their dedication as parents and foster parents. This story was told during an interview occurring on September 11, 2009.

Bonnie: I got involved with children probably when I was younger, babysitting. I used to baby sit, like, six or seven kids at once for 50¢ an hour. It was not so much the money; it was that I liked working, doing things, being with kids, and playing with them. I think getting into foster care, that came from a cousin that I had that was a foster parent. I saw what she did and all the children that came into her home. I also had a cousin that

had a Down's syndrome child and I was really interested in children with special needs. I enjoyed watching him and working with him. I always thought I wanted to work, be a nurse, or work with disabled children. I had the opportunity to babysit him a lot. Then we got married and I got pregnant right away. So I thought, "Do I want to work or do I want to stay home and raise my family?" I really wanted to be a stay at home mom. Gordon did not have a really good paying job, but we managed and I was able to stay home. We did not get in foster care right away, when we first tried. We had been married, but just probably a year when we inquired about it, I think. They told us, "Give yourself a little bit more time." I think it was three years after that that we got into Foster Care. I think it all stems back from working with kids. In school I always tended to seek out the ones who did not have a lot of friends and that had disabilities. It has always been my nature to help them, to feel sorry for some of the ones that did not have the opportunity to do what the others did.

Gordon: I just sort of followed after her. It was natural to take care of other people. She wanted to do Foster Care and I did not have a problem with it because every kid needs a home. I probably did not really understand what Foster Care was about back then. I can remember as a child though, we had some friends, my mom's and dad's, that were foster parents. I could never understand how every time I went over there, half the kids would be gone. I would say, "I can't understand. Where are these kids?" And mom would say, "Those are foster kids." I did not know what foster kids were so I just supported my wife and entered foster care. I do not think there was a real defined moment. There has been defining times in our life that we just sat back and looked at, you know, "Do you want to keep going on, doing this?" You come up to different things, but to start, I do not think there was really a defining time.

Bonnie: But you have always been the one that was wanting to help people out, even back when we were dating. When we first met, he was there to take a bunch of the kids that had to go back. We both went to a Christian guidance school, but at different times. He actually graduated in 65'. I went to the same school in 67' and 68'. He came home on leave, there was a bunch of us that needed to go from Oregon to Seattle, and he volunteered take us all up. So he was always there to help people.

Gordon: Well, all children need a family and need love and support. The Lord says, "Do unto others as you would have done unto you." And he said, "If you do unto of the least of these, you have done it unto me." We are Christians and we feel like we are doing it for Him. All kids need a family and somebody to love them. As foster parents, we are not there to replace their parents. But when they are not in their home, for whatever reason it is, it is traumatic. It is one of those things that we try to minimize. We just try to be there to support them; and help. We tell them mom and dad are OK, they are OK. You get two-, three-, and four-year-olds that, all of the sudden, the police pick them up from wherever, or whatever happened, a social worker picks them up, and puts them in a strange home. They do not know you and they cannot understand what happened to their mom and dad. So we try to be supportive of them and love them; make them feel safe and comfortable until they can work it out and go back home.

Bonnie: I just love doing it. I think, to keep going and everything, it was some of the children that were in home. Some of the first children or in our home is what keeps me going. I keep thinking there is one more child out there that needs a home. We started out with our first foster child. He was an eight-year-old, profoundly retarded,

schizophrenic child that had not even been taught to go to the bathroom or use eating utensils. It was a real challenge and we all took him on, our whole family did. That is one thing about what we do; our whole family is involved in what we do. We worked really hard with him for about six months, I think, and tried to keep him from going back into the situation he was in. But, unfortunately, he had to go back. That almost put an end to us doing foster care because we did not get the help and things that we needed from the caseworker. We felt like we did do this for him. Then they called us and there was another child, so it was just keep going. We have had different children as we went on. We finally got one child that was very medically involved and that is a whole different aspect of taking care of children. I had probably been a little bit more introduced to it than he had because of my cousin's Down's syndrome child and a couple other children we had been around that were handicapped. He was a pretty intense baby so the whole family really worked hard. He was 15 months old when he died. That was our first experience of losing one in care. We stopped then and talked to our children. At that time we had three. Everybody was in agreement to go ahead and take more children like him. That was sort of an encouragement to just keep going. We had often said we were going to quit, and we never have. We stopped for a month as we were coming up here from moving up from Washington State, and that was the longest break we have taken in 36 years I think. Every child that we have taken into our home is sort of encouraging to keep going on; do what we are doing.

Bonnie: I think we give a child a place, neutral; an environment where they feel like they are safe. Even though a lot of them they still want their mommy and daddy, even though maybe they have been the ones that hurt them, I still feel like we are giving them a safe place to be. We are giving them all we can while we have them. We know that when they come through the door, they are going to be leaving. We give them what we can while they are here; do what we can while they are here.

Gordon: We treat them as part of our own. We do not treat them any different. We treat them as part of our family. We have taken them on trips when we go on trips. In this state we have not gone on too many trips because we have a handicapped child who is bedridden pretty much. We try to include them and love them as a family and let them be part of the family. Some of the medical kids that we have had, we have had one for 20 years now, or almost 20 years (he just turned 20), we got him when he was three months old, we give them the best life they can have. We have had five now that have passed away.

Bonnie: Seven... We adopted one and he died.

Gordon: Seven. Sorry, I cannot count back. We give them the best life that we can while they are here.

Bonnie: I have always felt like it is our mission, our missionary. Missionaries go overseas and everything, but there is such a mission filled here to help the kids. I have always said we have a butt wiping ministry because we have had so many children. We had over 1,300 children go through our home now. We have changed a lot of diapers, taken care a lot of sick kids, and buried a lot of children. The medical children you get a little bit closer to because they are so hands on, daily, with them. We adopted one in 2005 and he died the day we adopted him. We felt like we gave him seven and a half months of a normal, real life even though he was handicapped. We have always treated our handicapped children like they are normal and given them as much normalcy as we

could. We have adopted several handicapped children so I think, just give them what we can while we have them. That has just been what our whole family has done.

Bonnie: We have had struggles, though. There have been a lot of occasions when I can remember. When our oldest was graduating from high school, I almost did not get to go to his high school graduation. It was at that point that I was like, "What are we doing?" Because if I cannot even be a parent to my own child, what am I going to do? It worked out. It was just one of those moments that you come up against, and we had come up against lots of moments like that. That was, I think, one of the biggest ones. I was like just taken back; it just hit me all the sudden, "Is this what we really need to be doing or do we need to concentrate more on our children?" But you know, it worked out. We were new here too, so we did not know a lot of people. It all worked out.

Bonnie: We have had lots of struggles, mostly dealing with the system, dealing with people not understanding what we want for these children. There are frustrations. We do not go on vacations like normal parents and families do. We have gone on vacations, but they are far and few between. Our family, this is what we have always done. Our children, our oldest was three and our oldest daughter was nine months old when we started foster care. So the kids have pretty well grown up in it. We have got three biological, we raised my niece, and then we have adopted five. Five? I have to stop and think. We have adopted five. They have, all of them, worked with the children and have seen what drugs do to babies, what drugs do to parents, and drinking and just abuse and everything else. It has been good for the kids, but I am sure that they would also say that we did not get to do this and we did not get to do that. Sometimes, I think back and wonder did we really hurt them by doing that? But then when I see what they are doing, and some of those things, they have followed in our footsteps. Two of our children have been foster parents. Our oldest child, our son, adopted a little one from Russia. They have sort of taken on to what we have done. And that just, sort of, wipes out my thoughts of, "Did we do right?"

Bonnie: There are times I wish we would have been able to do more. We have been trying to do more in the last few years, but when you have a medical child, it is a really hard to get away. The one we have we were talking about that is 20 years old now, is on a ventilator and has quite a few medical needs. We do not have the help; we cannot get somebody to come in and take care of him. So we take separate vacations at times or go out of town one at a time because one of us has to stay here with the kids. Sometimes there is something that we cannot do together. I still would not trade it. We have had some pretty amazing kids come through our home. Now we are getting older we are really stopping to think about what we want to do with the rest of our lives. But when there is always this one little one that gets put in our home it makes you stop and think, "Are we going to keep this one now, or what are we going to do?" It is hard to say what we are going to do now because we just got thrown into a monkey wrench here in February.

Gordon: I got laid off in February. I am still looking for work, but I do not know. We have got 10 year old daughter so we will continue on with life as normal. I do not know what, I do not know where. We might move out of state. We might stay here. It depends on the job situation. I might find a job. Pretty soon I will be old enough to retire and draw Social Security. Whether or not I find a job, we will be taking care of kids or

grandkids or somebody. We will be working in the church with kids or something. We will not quit working with kids.

Bonnie: We have always had children in our lives and had fun. After 36 years, I feel like I do not know anything else, so what am I going to do? I thought about doing daycare, but then I think, "Well then, they are not with us all the time and you have let them go." We just have not really thought about what we are going to do. We are looking at different things. We have got a little one right now that might be up for adoption and we are trying to make a decision if we want to go ahead and adopt her. Our children right now range from 10 years old clear up to 39 years old. We have grandchildren that are as old as our adopted children. There is just a lot, a lot of things out there that we can still do; just not sure where we will end up. I guess that is what makes life; it is not knowing where you will end up. So many things can change your life. You cannot predict the future because something might happen to change it tomorrow.

Bonnie: I want to have people look back and say that we did not do it for ourselves; that we did it for God and we did it for the children. I figure life is life, and what else are you going to do if you cannot give back; give to the children? They are the ones that are going to be our future. Some people say they do not have time to be a foster parent or they do not have time to work with the children. And I always think, "The children are our lives. That is our future. That is who is going to be taken care of us when we get older. That is who is going to make our world: the children."

Gordon: I think if they were to look at our life, look back 100 years from now, and see all the kids that we have had in our care, they would see that we value everybody's life. Everybody's life is valuable, not just the wealthy or the rich or the smart. We love and care for all of them: the handicap, the down and out, the terminally ill. It does not make a difference. They have a lot of love to give and they like love just as much as everybody else. It does not matter what, as long as they are breathing, they respond to love and care. I think that is the one thing that we have given. My ultimate goal is to hear God say, "Well done. You have been a faithful servant."

Bonnie: We have been role models. To have other people become foster parents that probably would have never even thought about it, that has given the opportunity to other children to have a safe place to go and be adopted and have a forever home of their own too. We have helped several with adoption and picked out parents for some of our kids over the years. It has just been really rewarding to see that; to see a child going to a home that they can stay at and never have to go through that again.

Bonnie: We do not feel like we are heroes or anything, but people say, "I would not be able to do what you are doing." I always say, "Well, what do you do?" Usually it is something that I say, "Well I cannot do what you are doing." Like his sister, she had a home for elderly people. I did work with the elderly when I was younger in a rest home and at that time, I said, "I do not think I could do what you are doing." She was dealing with a lot of really quite elderly people that were dying too. It seemed like that was something that, at that time, I could not do. But now, after dealing with the children, I could probably go and do that. I always, when people say, I always ask them what they do, a lot of them. I am just like, "I could not do what you are doing." I just feel like God put everyone here to do certain things. Some of us probably just do something that nobody else could do. Together we all just...that is what makes the world go round.

Also, I asked the Lange's who their heroes were. They responded with the following information.

Bonnie: Mine are my parents I think, because they have always been there for me. Anything that has every happened, they have always been there behind me and given me lots of strength. So, I think they are. And my husband and God.

Gordon: I know my parents were role models to me. They affect the way you live your life because you sort of model it after something you saw or something you did. They always cared for other people and tried to help other people. We lived on a farm. Dad would bring home people who did not have a job and he would put them to work. He could not pay them much, but he gave them something to eat and a place to stay for a few days. I remember a few of my school teachers that I would not say were role models but were really instrumental in helping me roll in life; just helped me along. I had trouble in school when I was in the first seven or eight grades. I was sort of struggling through school and a couple of them stood up and really took the effort and time to help me. Because of that, I think, I look back and try to help other kids, try to help, if I can be a role model to somebody. I do not think of myself as a role model. I just help them along and encourage them and let them see they are worth something.

Bonnie: My parents were a lot like that too. I remember my dad. When I was younger, we hardly had anything ourselves. I remember a lady in our church, she was a widow and she had several children. She did not have a car and did not have a washer or dryer or anything. I remember my dad went and got her to take her to a washer and dryer. I was younger but I remember that we did not have very much either and I felt he gave beyond what we had. I think that we both come from that kind of background of giving even though you do not have it.

Catherine Miller

Catherine Miller is a middle-aged for-profit business woman who converted to non-profit. Since the late 1990s, she has been involved in humanitarian efforts globally and has created her own organization primarily for orphans. This story was told during an interview occurring on September 9, 2009.

When we were kids, I was grew up in Delta and in Clear, Alaska. I thought back about it and I think it originally started when my mother had us have some small photos of kids in Africa. We each had a photo and you had to do your chores to raise money for that kid every month. If you did not cough up money then she would say, "Your kid is starving to death; that kid's going to die. You can't get out there and chop wood; but I am going to spot you this time, but you have some responsibility to the rest of the world." Even though I grew up in Clear, we didn't have a TV, there was no road across the Nenana River, my mom and dad gave us the sense that there was a larger world out there

and gave us a sense of responsibility. I think I have had it since I was a small child. I have always done small things within the community, but I was not one of those people who were just full tilt on every committee. I have a degree in nursing. I was a nurse for many years. I was a volunteer nursing in the schools.

I think the pivotal change was in 1998. About 10 years ago, I was working as a nurse in a hospital and a woman a friend of mine, she was German, had gone on medical missions with Northwest Medical Teams International to work in refugee camps. At that time, the Kosovo war was on and the situation was very unstable on the Albanian border. There were floods of refugees coming across and there were not enough people to respond. She talked me into going. My children were still young then. I went. I think that was the first time I had some sense of what the rest of what the developing world was up against; what the people were up against as far as they were at risk. But until I saw it and smelled it I had no idea.

So at that point I worked for about six weeks in a refugee camp. We had floods of people coming across the Albanian border; that had been escaping the genocide. It was the Christians at that time murdering the Muslims that were escaping. They had walked months, and you just saw these people coming across; flooding. There were thousands and thousands and thousands of people flooding across the border that had been hungry, starving to death, and had no shoes because they had worn out. They were just escaping the ravages of war. They were coming on old trains that had no windows. They had no money. That was pretty amazing for me. That was when it really resonated with me that there was this other side of the world that you just do not get on TV. You might see the images, but you just do not see it. You do not talk to people. You do not realize the depth of the conflict. At that point, that is when I really made a change mentally to what my goals were going to be in life.

I was a nurse for many years. I was an owner in a very successful business and I have done very well for myself financially. But, over the years, I kept going and kept going to refugee camps, mostly in Africa. I was in Liberia during the Liberian war, in Ethiopia several times in starvation camps for kids, and in Northern Uganda; different places. Each time it helped me resolute my resolve to which direction my life was going. It is a challenge because you come back to the United States, you try to tell people your story, and a lot of it is with these blank expressions. It is just hard to get. And it is hard to get because I do not think we have a good news media. I do not think it is that the people do not care; I think it is that they are not exposed to the trauma and to...I'll just tell you a story that happened to me.

In Liberia there was a civil war; it ended. I think I was there in 2003. The United Nations came in with peacekeeping forces. Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, had been under siege and there was no food in the country at all. There was a civil war and I think at that time there were eight different countries who had fighters in. It had just gone down into anarchy. When we came, there were refugee pockets of people that formed to try to protect themselves; to get out of the way of the fighters. It was a very unstable situation. When I first got there I thought, "There is something really wrong with this country." I couldn't put my finger on it, besides being no electricity because the capital was bombed out and people were running around with arms in the U.N. And then I realized there were no sheep or goats or cows or anything. They had eaten everything in the country; they had eaten everything. But you know, people, even though they come

out of this brutality, they are so kind to you and they are so thankful that somebody would show up. In all the refugee situations I have ever been in, people do not just generally ask you for money. All they would ask you to do is to come back and tell the world their plight. Tell the world was happening to them because they believe that if people really understood what they were up against, that they would react. It is kind of hard to get that information out.

In 2004 after doing a lot of refugee stuff, I flew into the country. I was only there a day. We break up into teams and nurses work as doctors. We just roll in and we work. I was with a team of one other nurse, a doctor, and myself from the United States and we were working with a team of Liberians. You just get in a Land Rover, or whatever, and you head out to a refugee camp. Usually those camps are only seen once a day. By the time you get there, when you roll in, you have got to make sure the roads are secure; that there are no fighters on the road. By the time you roll in usually there is a line of 1000 people; a queue. You have so much time before nightfall, before you have to pull up, so you are working as fast as you can.

I'd only been in the country two days. I was the team leader on this team and it must've been 10:00 or 11:00 in the morning. I was a midwife neonatal nurse. One of the other nurses came to me with this kid, must have been about 15 months old and she was really, really struggling to breathe. I listened to her lungs and I knew that she was not going to last the day. The kid was going to die in the next couple hours. I had to make the decision. If I decided that that kid had to go to the hospital, then what happens is the whole team pulls up because no one can be left and we roll out. We leave the 800 people in line that do not have any medical care for another week, with no access. So I decided to go. You do not know if it is the right decision or not anyway. We did roll out and it was traumatic because the people are just in this press around you until you are leaving. They are grabbing and you put your hand on people's heads and give them antibiotics while trying to get out. We made a run for the hospital. It was about 45 minutes. That kid, by the time we got there, was cyanotic; but she was still breathing. That child lived.

A week later, the same thing happened but I was not in charge, thank God. The same thing happened and we had another kid with respiratory distress. We pulled up, but thank God it was more like 3:00 in the afternoon. I was with a friend of mine, Ian Shanks, he is a doctor. We also had other people in the car. Everybody's going to the hospital. This kid was sick and it was about an hour out. The drivers are just running. There are people in the road; he's just running. That kid died in the car and her mother was sitting next to her. And Ian, I can remember he was breathing that baby, and finally I had to tell him and let go of that baby and give her to her mom. We have other people in the car but you turn around and you go back to camp. You go back to camp. You roll in and they already know the kid is dead. People come out and they say, "thank you so much for trying to save that kid."

So after that, that was kind of the pivotal change for me too. I decided to quit doing refugees. I decided to go into orphans; they were a lot safer. I had done some other stuff, but I think that my motivation is those people always said, "Thank you for taking us. Thank you for trying." It is always, "Thank you very much." I do not think the world realizes what people are up against. Even though that baby died, when we went back the next week, the people were just, "Thank you so much. Thank you so much." For me, after that, I was growing weary of refugee camps and seeing 110

patients in a day. You get sick because you touch everyone and there is no running water.

I decided on orphans and that is how I started working in Ethiopia. I had been in Ethiopia doing starving-feeding centers, and that is another tragedy. You have all these kids, little kids that die. I decided, in 2005, that I would sell my interests in my profitable business to my partner and that I would go back to school. I would start changing my life to work internationally. So, I started APU. I have a degree in nursing. I started at APU. I had been, I think, in Northern Uganda. I had stopped in Ethiopia to see friends because I had worked there. As you can see, my husband is Ethiopian.

He had said to me, "Catherine, I got this guy who is bugging me, bugging me. He has got all these kids living in his yard. He has got, like, 48 kids living in his yard. He is taking them off the streets. Some church group promised they would send money, and, of course, they never sent it. God, I do not know what he is going to do. He is making \$25.00 a month. These kids are in rags."

My husband has a degree in development. He is also an IT engineer. I was like, "Estiphanos, come on. What am I going to do?"

He is saying, "Please just, just come and meet him. Maybe you can do something."

I was reluctant. I went out and met Eyob and the kids. I had some money, small money, and I went to pharmacy. I treated them for worms and scabies and ear infections. I realized they were not in school because you have to pay a school fee. They did not have a school uniform and they were all out selling small items on the street to try to raise money. I just thought, "You know, what the hell am I going to do?" I had this thought I was going to go into development work; work for somebody else. I ended up going to South Africa. By the time I got back to the United States, I could not get those kids out of my mind. I kind of realized at that point that if I did not do something, those kids were probably going back to the street. There are five million kids on the streets in Ethiopia that are orphans because there is no social network system. If you and I are married, you die and I die, our kids go to our extended family. If they are impoverished and poor and they cannot feed another mouth, they go to the street. There are five million of them on the streets. So I started a nonprofit and people said to me, "You are crazy, you know. What are you going to do?"

I ended up starting this nonprofit, Children of the World, and some attorney that a friend of mine sent me to incorporated the nonprofit for me. Since 2005, I think we have raised well over \$250,000. We built an orphanage and I did some capacity building. The orphanage has found additional funding, they have running water, and the kids are in school.

Then I started funding projects in a remote area of Ethiopia called Shashamane. A lot of development workers like to live near the capital because it is really easy. I work in Shashamane, which is about a five hour drive outside of the capital and in area that is frequented by famine, I had worked there doing therapeutic feeding centers. That is the nice politically correct term. We do not call refugees "refugees" anymore; we call them "internally displaced people". It makes it sound a lot nicer.

This year, September, I have 400 kids in school. Yahoo! Four hundred, which is a lot. These are all kids that are orphaned that would otherwise not have the ability to go. Also, Children of the World, my organization, has 20 women who are all HIV/AIDS

positive. They started receiving some small vocational training to learn to sew; trying to help them improve their income generating capacity. They are ART [antiretroviral], but they have children. If those women die, those kids are going straight to the streets. It was my small effort to try to intervene before the kids went to the streets. I am going back because these women, out of all 20 of them, the most education that chairwoman has is the fifth grade. I am going back and doing a project to do business development schools training for them. There are some models out there that you can really improve their income generating capacity by teaching them business skills. There are ways to do it even if you are semi literate; to look at the marketplaces. Just because they are semi literate, it does not mean they are not smart. I will set them up some rotating credit and savings groups amongst themselves. So that is what I am off to do is fund my education project and work with the women. In Ethiopia, were having an 80% inflation rate. Today, the rolling average in the first 2 minutes was 68%. The money I have budgeted it is falling short and I am just...things are not good in Ethiopia these days. I am just kind of struggling today with how the hell I am going to pull this off; pull off all this money and get on the plane. But I know I will. There is no doubt about it.

I feel I am giving them hope and an opportunity. The worst thing is to be stuck with no hope. Every kid, all the kids in Ethiopia, absolutely know that if they do not go to school, what their life will amount to, which is nothing. Education is everything. They know and their parents know that is their only escape from this impoverished situation. Kids will come up to you on the street, and they will have these small little tattered notebooks in a little tiny piece of plastic. They will say to you, "I am a student. I am a student." They will beg money, no shoes, clothes in tatters, but they are trying to get enough money for their school fees. I always say, just to make sure they are not pulling my leg, "Bring out the book and you do this little math for me. Write this for me." And they can. They are not begging for dabo (bread), they are not begging for bread, they are begging for an opportunity. What I am giving them is an opportunity.

My husband grew up in a very, very, very impoverished family. Very, very impoverished family; in a remote area. He was a good student and his parents managed to scrape together the school fees. He was such a good student that he graduated third in his class and he got to go to university for free. He got a degree in development, which you do not get to choose in Ethiopia, and he started working with internationals. When I met him, actually, he was working for a partnering organization with my boss. He was the relief and development officer on the project I was working on and he told me over and over that everybody knows that your only hope to escape this life of poverty is to educate yourself and be able to work. Now for those kids, that is what I am delivering. For those women, I am delivering. They want their kids to go to school, they want to be able to feed their kids so that is just delivering some opportunity and some hope for the future. It is necessary for them.

To be honest with you, I do not think there are any heroes. I think there are so many people like me. I have a friend who takes medical supplies, donated medical supplies. I know so many people who are doing the small things to change the world. I think people everywhere do small things with small kindness every day. I think that we are all just plodding along and I really feel like I am the one who is lucky. I do not think I am exceptionally bright, I just think I was really blessed or really lucky or however you want to view it. It just clicked into place; I am lucky I get to live my dream. I show up in

Ethiopia, I have a very small little room I stay in with electricity maybe two days a week and not much running water; I live very low end. The nonprofit has no paid staff, we do not pay for anybody's travel. We funded child soldiers projects. If you want to do something through our organization, come up with your own flight ticket. If you are going to volunteer with us, come up with your own money. But we have raised funds. We are doing well with just a couple people.

I am going to graduate, 2010, in June. My husband and I are actually looking, so we want to go back to Africa and work. He has got a degree in development and he also has a degree from the United States IT engineering, so he is working at APU in their IT department. He was actually looking at...I think we will have to go somewhere where no one else wants to go, like Afghanistan, or somewhere that we can both go. So that is our goal. I might have to work. My job will be harder to get than his, so whether I have to start in the U.S. working U.S. nonprofit. But I really do not have any desire to work for...I have to be careful who I work for because the whole doing business. I have a long history of business for-profit businesses and nonprofit businesses should be run the same way: to make the bottom line. The bottom line is what you are doing in at the bottom. So that is what we will do; just start looking. Ethiopia right now is very unstable, I was almost thrown in jail for 3 to 5 years last time I was there. I do not know, we were thinking about going back, but things are very tough there these days. That is our goal.

I do not know if there is a higher power. The more I am involved with other religions, other groups, I have no idea. But what I do know is that if this world going to change, if we have a billion people at the bottom, then somebody has to step up. I used to get so overwhelmed with it, the refugee camps, like, "This is not enough." Then at some point I resolved myself to do whatever I could do: this is enough. So my driving force is: I do not want to come to the end of my life and say, "Man, you got a lot of money in the bank." I would like to come to the end of my life and say, "You know, you have made a difference," in however many people's lives I have. And it does not have to be huge numbers for me; it just has to be somebody. My mom is 83 years old and she is an IV therapist at a hospital. She works two 12's a week at the hospital and she works three days a week at the forensic accountant. I foresee that that I am a lot like my mother. I'm sure that it will meld into something that will not include sitting on the beach. I think that I will probably just keep marching along.

Also, I inquired about her personal heroes and this is the information I was supplied with.

My hero is Mother Teresa, and the reason is that if there's one thing that she's had that has resonated with me for forever is "We can do no great things, only small things with great love." For me, that means that we're all heroes; every one of us. It means that very few of us are going to grow up and be President Obama, or we are going to be Mahatma Gandhi, or we are going to be Bill Gates. It is in the small things that we are all heroes. There are so many people in the world that are just doing small acts of love and kindness that are really the ones who are going to change this world. So she has always been my hero.

You know my heroes have always been peacekeepers, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King; the people who walked the world that were opposed to violence,

who embraced change through nonviolent means, and who really work for the people that are in need. I also was brought up in a catholic religion. I am not catholic anymore, but in my faith with my parents and in their embrace of Jesus Christ was that he was the advocate for the poor and downtrodden, so I embraced him too.

Jordan Thomas

Jordan Thomas is a young man from Chattanooga, Tennessee. He is responsible for championing children with a particular affliction. His entrance into this field was life altering to say the least. This story was told during an interview occurring on September 29, 2009.

This story is when I really recognized how lucky I was. It starts when I was at the hospital; but before that, I think, it starts with my accident. I have two older brothers and my middle brother was there in Key West, and my parents were there as well. So it was us four down there and my other brother was in North Florida on vacation. My dad and mom and I went out one night, it was about 5:30pm, I guess, to do some spearfishing. We were going to scuba dive down and spearfish about five miles off the coast in the ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, and it was just my dad, mom, and I like I said. Being the impatient kid that I am, I jumped in the water first because I had all my gear on. There were really tall waves that day and I was pushed behind the boat. My mom did not want me to hit the boat so she bumped the boat into gear. I remember being underneath the boat, looking up, seeing the bottom of the boat, and hearing the engine just roar. And then something happened...I did not look down immediately. I knew what had happened. Right then and there, I knew exactly what had happened. My black...I looked down and my black fins were gone and I saw blood everywhere. I just saw red everywhere and I knew what had happened, like I said.

My dad jumped into the water. I remember looking him in the eye and saying, "Dad, my feet are gone. We have to go."

He just looked at me and said, "What!?"

And I said, "My feet are gone. We have to go now."

They did a great job. My mom came around with the boat and they got me into the boat. My mom did a great job of putting my legs of up, kept them propped up, so I did not bleed as much. My dad got on the radio, it happened to be on the emergency channel, he had an ambulance there we got back.

But the whole ride back, I mean we were five miles off the coast in the ocean, the whole ride back I just had this surreal experience. I had this sensation kind of come over my body and I just felt, like, this warmth. I felt like I was being held. I know I was not in shock because I was alert and responding to questions. Certainly that day reaffirmed my faith that God does have a plan. That is kind of the approach I have taken since my accident. I think this is all just God's ultimate plan for me. I have never really been a religious person, but my faith has always been important to me. I have kept it internally and it has driven me and allowed me to be what I am today I think, for sure.

From there, I was taken in an ambulance to a local hospital in the Keys but they could not handle the level of trauma that had experienced. So, I was airlifted to Miami

where I had three surgeries. I was in the hospital for about two weeks. When I was there, actually, one of the doctors that took care of me went to medical school with both of my parents. They had not seen him since med school and did not know where he was, but they obviously knew each other when they saw each other at the hospital. That is another one of those other coincidences that I do not really believe in anymore.

When I was down there, he kind of specialized in kids, and he took me to a wing in the hospital that was strictly for kids. I met so many kids less fortunate than myself. They were alone and by themselves and I know that they did not have the financial wherewithal to afford the health care. More importantly, they did not have the family and support around them that I had. I had so many people and so much support that it allowed me to get through the tough times. I remember just seeing all of these kids just wondering where their parents were. What was going on here? Nobody was with them doing anything.

That night, while I was still in the hospital, I started thinking. Initially I thought that it would be just a private donation that my family would make because they have always been involved in the nonprofits. Eventually, I thought that we had to create something that was more sustainable so we could help more people. So we came up the idea of the foundation in the hospital; it has really taken off since then.

That was the point where I kind of had the epiphany that I had to do something to help others. It did not really materialize until I was home and had a second to catch my breath from recovering; from fighting hard and working hard and physical therapy, learning how to walk and all that. As soon as that was all over, I never had a moment to sit down and take a breath because the foundation took off immediately; and it was media and it was a whirlwind. I would say that it certainly started there in the hospital.

The biggest struggle I have run into has been with “the system.” Prosthetics are something that a lot of people are not a very educated about. A lot of insurance companies will put a \$5,000 cap for a lifetime on prosthetics. A lot of plans will do that, or they will provide a kid with one prosthetic for a lifetime, which is like giving a four year old one pair of shoes for a lifetime. It just...it is not feasible. The hardest thing has been fighting “the system.” The insurance companies, obviously they say that they are not for profits, but it all comes down to money for them. They want to maximize their profits, so they skim wherever they can skim. Prosthetics happens to be one of those because there are only two million people in the country with a limb loss. Fighting the insurance companies and on the Federal level and at the state level, we are fortunate that there is a lot of change coming in the national health care reform bill that is coming through the house and senate right now so we will see how that turns out, but that has been by far and away the toughest aspect; fighting those insurance companies to pay for kids, not to deny them the prosthetics they need and deserve.

Another problem is people. That is what is so frustrating as a fundraiser, from my perspective, that people kind of have that the insatiable desire to have more more more material material material. You just want to shake them. That is the thing I think age does not really warrant exactly; that kind of process. I think so often as a kid I thought that adults knew everything and that they all have this perspective in life, but man, I am finding that that is just not that the common belief there. It is frustrating. It wears me out. I am so fortunate to have that perspective. My accident is something that has given me such a wonderful perspective on life. It has enriched my life. There is no question

that if I had any other option, there is no way I would change the direction that my life has taken.

My number one goal right now is to...I talked to you earlier about those \$5000 caps that companies will put on prosthetics. What is called a "cheating parity" would eliminate caps on prosthetics and it would always provide people with a base level of prosthetic that Medicare or Medicaid would provide. Seventeen states have passed that locally. Tennessee is not one of those states. My goal is to get parity in Tennessee, get it nationally, and then from there...I do not know. But my number one goal right now is to achieve parity in Tennessee and obviously continue to help people who would otherwise be wheelchair bound.

Then, I think I want to work with my brother who is in Nashville. He owns a construction company that builds new, green, eco friendly houses in a posh area in Nashville; East Nashville. That would be kind of a fun plan. But obviously, like I said, the foundation will always be a part of my life no matter what.

I think we so often minimize the impact we can have in the lives of others. I think a lot of people use the term superhero, but really I am just kind of a normal kid that was thrown into an abnormal situation. It was just about adaptation and keeping everything in perspective. It has taken a whole village to raise this child. I am fortunate that I have the greatest family in the world and I grew up in such a great community. I feel blessed with this perspective on life, and I feel like I am extremely fortunate to have that at such a young age because I that is all I ever grew up knowing. I was fortunate so I am very appreciative. I feel like I have been forced to grow up almost, to some extent; but still I am a kid and I still enjoy doing what normal kids do. Obviously, my whole life I am going to do something to benefit others. Obviously the foundation, that is going to be a big aspect of my life. It is something that just helps others. I just ultimately want to be happy, continue to help others, and raise awareness for the cause that I really believe in: to support kids and give them the benefit of the prosthetics that they deserve. Without that, I think, they will not be able to be productive citizens of society. So I am going to fight for that. I just want to give a voice to those that are underserved; raising awareness and fighting for people that could not otherwise fight for themselves. I would say I would hope that foundations like mine are obsolete; that foundations like mine never have to exist. My goal with achieving this parity on a national level would be put foundations like mine out of business. Until then, I do not know of where my life will go; but it sure has been a fun ride. You do not know what direction it will take, but I am looking forward to it.

Also, when questioned about his personal heroes, he was able to relay this information.

I really think of my parents when I think of heroes, initially off the bat. I know certainly my dad came from a big family. He did not have any sort of means as a child growing up. They were not wealthy at all. He graduated as the valedictorian of his high school, went on to college, went on to med school, and is now a doctor. My mom as well; she overcame so much to become a doctor and she now has her MBA. They are just wonderful people and I admire them. Someday I hope to be half the person that they are. I know that so common but...

Here is actually a story for you: So my mom, I told you was a doctor, when she was a kid, she was I think 12 years old, she grew up in South Florida. She was babysitting her brother, her little brother, who was five or six at the time and one of his friends. They were out the ocean and they were on a raft. The raft was capsized by big wave and my mom's brother drowned in the water when she was little girl and he was little boy. She had to drag him to the shore and she was trying to resuscitate him and help him. At that point she decided that she never wanted to be helpless ever again. So she became a doctor. Several years later, her son was dying in her arms and she saved my life. There is no question about it. I lost over half my blood that day. I see stuff like that and I admire her so much for all that.

Themes

Introduction

After meticulous examination, I discovered a handful of themes which crosscut the interviews. These themes emerged in at least three of the four interviewee testimonies, if not all. Each hero discussed: 1. Parenting. 2. Spirituality. 3. Satisfaction. 4. Continuance. Each of these keynotes deserves some rumination to unearth and align the similarities. Also, the two rudimentary, albeit key themes, the call and boon, which proclaimed these individuals as superheroes must be concentrated on and juxtaposed to flesh out their standings amongst each other and the standards of other fiction and non-fiction superheroes. Finally, demographic information is analyzed as well, theorizing on the similarities found.

Parenting

This one singular theme may be the defining principle of this research. Every single participant lavishly praised his or her parents and the upbringing which was bestowed. The Langes and Thomas appointed their parents to the esteemed position of personal heroes. Andersen and Miller, while neglecting to endorse their parents when reflecting on personal heroes, described a childhood laden with selflessness that provided a springboard to their current manifesto.

The participants all discussed an attitude or feeling that was inherent in their development. It seems as if these characteristics of generosity, altruism, sense of responsibility, and kindness were woven into the very fabric of their being, invariably laying the groundwork for a more impactful life. Each described instances of giving or helping, several times beyond family means and these actions ostensibly affected the direction of their lives. As parents, whether deliberately or not, wear these world-healing characteristics on their sleeves daily, they are sculpting the minds of everyone surrounding, especially their children. Children will develop characteristics regardless of input, but by becoming the person the parent would like their child to be, mothers and fathers can help mold heroic characteristics of tomorrow and accomplish heroic acts today.

The importance of parents, role models, and parents as role models was communicated thoroughly as well. All four heroes accredited the foundations of their current attitude toward the parenting in their early life, but, more importantly, through emulation. Each participant was impressed somehow by the character in one or both of her or his parents, subsequently imitating those ideals. Gordon Lange specifically discusses how modeling after parents affects the way you live your life. And this research has shown the influence assumed during the seemingly banal role of parenthood, or at least that seems to be society's current adjective for that role, has a massive impact. Bonnie Lange and Andersen go beyond one generation of parental influence, though. Bonnie debates openly over whether her life of dedication was appropriate during motherhood; ultimately settling in the affirmative as her children have begun to mimic her heroic actions. Andersen's instructional lessons extend one step beyond her offspring, affecting a second generation of potential heroes, exposing them to "the right" early and often. In fact, the Langes' and Andersen's stories present four generations of affected and affecting. Also, the

potential of parenting influence is incalculable in the case of Miller and the Langes due to their direct influence on thongs of children. These three people may be responsible for an asymmetrically large percentage of tomorrow's superheroes.

Finally, as Bonnie stated so appropriately, the children are our future. Admittedly, she may have been summarizing her motive for providing such humbling care for children, but synchronously she is summarizing the need for excellent, worldly parenting. According to this research, the primary factor affecting this small group of interview heroes was parenting and upbringing. Therefore, the importance of the correct input during those crucial character-forming years cannot be overstated when in reference to the future of mankind.

Spirituality

I have thus far managed to exclude spirituality from this research because of religion's potentially volatile nature. For some, spirituality and religion are inseparable; by speaking toward spirituality, I speak toward their religion. Religion and humans have such a personal and intimate relationship, differing wildly from person to person, with miniscule if any "fact" abutments. To introduce spirituality into this research which is dedicated to superhero engenderment by revealing the formation and motivation of credible, real life superheroes, regardless of religious connotations or labeling, may only be white noise to those whose beliefs are not exactly reflected in the subjects. Or worse yet, the very whisper of religion through spirituality may prevent full digestion and reflection of the research; in extreme circumstances shutting the reader down entirely. In an attempt to avoid inadvertent trampling of beliefs, spirituality was reserved as an intrinsic theme, plucked from the lobes of each reader and applied to individual circumstances. But, the data cannot be denied.

Consequently, this research recognizes that spirituality can appropriate the lion's share of motivation propelling a superhero. All five interviewees noted spiritual influence. Miller, although not contributing current definitive religious standing, embraced Jesus Christ as a personal hero. Thomas asserted the presence of God soothed during the accident and affirmed a divine plan. Andersen likened human beings to instruments of the Lord; whereby one's willingness becomes the Lord's identifier for use. The Langes both attended religious institutions. In addition, the canon, the ethic of reciprocity, which the Langes employ as framework for foster care, is a fundamental maxim in most religions. Also, Gordon's ultimate objective of a *well done* from God denotes total adherence to a higher calling. Regardless of personal religious beliefs, the research shows that spirituality beseeches acknowledgement, if only from a wholly motivational standpoint.

Spirituality may also strengthen the bond between Campbell's formula and real life, acting as the supernatural wonder. Initially dismissing supernatural intervention for lack of "proof" may have narrowed my assessment of Campbell's formula. If taken into consideration though, even sans proof, even if a Supreme Being does not exist, supernatural intervention is plausible. For those who believe, it is real. A supernatural being has affected their life substantially and I, nor anyone else, can disprove that.

Satisfaction

In each story, there arose petite, but conclusive statements of total satisfaction with the decisions, actions, interventions, or other catalysts conveying each hero down his or her avenue. Andersen stated she never regretted the surgery, entirely indifferent to the pain and discomfort experienced. Miller felt lucky and blessed to be living her dream; a dream outsiders would claim fraught with towering un-navigable emotional monoliths. Thomas professes, without question,

he would not change the direction his life has taken. This statement weighs heavy considering the involvement of an incapacity comparatively few share relation with. Bonnie also affirms fulfillment, relating that she would not trade her experiences because of the amazing children she has provided care for.

Superficially, their satisfaction may seem colorless. It would be a boiler plate response. When macerated within the context of their harrowing tales, our superheroes satisfaction with their lives becomes a gem. We are shown that attentiveness and commitment to others is reciprocated, and, according to Andersen, the outcome is greater, for all interested parties, than the deposit. This undertaking, while transpiring under what some would consider impossible situations, continues to provide satisfaction to every interviewee. The strength of this fact is undeniable when attempting superhero instigation.

Continuance

The satisfaction expressed by the interviewees was so resounding in fact, that each subject elaborated on continuance of superhero work. The Langes, openly in the face of job loss, are considering adopting another child. Gordon announces outright that he and his wife will not cease working with children, whether volunteering at church or caring for grandchildren. Thomas' determination for legislation should provide years of superhero work. His persistence is so prodigious that he insists on pursuing healthcare change until his foundation is nonexistent. Andersen fantasizes of a retirement spent migrating from location to location assisting where needed; like a mobile Mother Teresa. Miller, after completing her Master's Degree, brightly asserts the desire to go where no one else wants to, like Afghanistan. Each participant's future plan smacked of superhero continuance throughout.

Again, it would seem uncommon for these individuals to answer differently; but when adjoined directly to declarations of satisfaction amidst these stories of momentousness, one can draw conclusions regarding an awareness of purpose. Andersen describes this phenomenon best when she describes goodwill's addictiveness. Although the other participants never overtly announced the total addiction, I feel it can be surmised by their actions. Andersen clarifies further by identifying actions as the means which she demonstrates super-heroism is a viable system. By addressing continuance and satisfaction together, it can be seen abundantly that super-heroic work is rewarding and addicting.

The Call to Adventure

In review, the call presents a fork at which individuals are confronted by circumstances that extend beyond moral boundaries or ability. One path leads toward the ordinary or familiar, the other into the unknown region, for some, of the super-heroic. Contrary to my original theory, mixed opinions were communicated by the interviewees.

Two subjects happily shared pivotal moments. Thomas listed two separate but ordinal calls; the superlative being the epiphany in the hospital and the auxiliary being the boating accident. Miller listed the first pivotal change occurring in 1998; the initial refugee volunteer excursion. Sometime later, she credits the passing of a child at a refugee camp as the cardinal reason for launching an orphan campaign. Both Thomas' and Miller's stories are laced with forks and decisions gently nudging each along the super-heroic life path.

For the other two subjects, the call was somewhat ambiguous during their recital, so I intervened to question about specific or pivotal moments. Still, each reiterated a lifelong attitude substituting a call. Andersen professed living a life saturated with super-heroic deeds with the utmost humility. Besides the kidney, there were instances from minute to gargantuan spanning

her life. The Langes' experience was similar as well. Their story begins at childhood and gains momentum till the present. Gordon mentions defining moments, but directly refutes a defining moment tantamount to the call to adventure. Even Thomas and Miller mentioned a compelling attitude entrenched since birth and supported throughout life.

Initially, I acquiesced that this opinion was in direct contradiction to the definition which with I was labeling these individuals. Thankfully, I now believe the opposite. I believe these four subjects are superheroes. I have assigned each to the super-heroic role and am impressed by such admirable and respectable accomplishments. Without interviewing these participants, I would not be aware of their personal opinions on the call, ensuring my mental-superhero-image-bubble remained intact. The definition of the call to adventure addresses this very issue, stating the call's prodigious nature is not necessarily recognized by the individual. Coupled with the boon, to be discussed later, the definition of a superhero holds water. But the implications of this research transcend a ubiquitous definition, allowing every citizen of this planet the right to assign calls and boons to anyone. Where superheroes are unaware or shrug off external observation, others uplift them to champion status. The hero presumably is not aware of this status, nor is this enlightenment a requirement. The research subject's heroes created characteristics and drive within each person, awakening greatness within. I believe these four individuals are superheroes and that image, regardless of the technicalities of reality, arouses an excitability to act; a commitment to accomplishments greater than myself. Heroes hold personal significance to every one of us; generations motivating generations.

Boon

In contrast to the call, each participant pinpointed a boon. Curiously, each differed from my virgin concept of each superhero's boon. Miller burrowed beneath my straightforwardly

perceived boon, providing critically important hope and opportunity in a land barren of it. Thomas' boon supersedes prosthetics, vocalizing and fighting for the underserved. Andersen abstained from remarking on the donated kidney, focusing more on the impact of her impeccable example. She also discusses other human donations incited by her story. Bonnie Lange shares a similar opinion to Andersen concerning role models, attributing adopted children as her actions. Gordon's description of his boon ascends to ethereal levels of beauty few ever reach. He humbly speaks of love; a love so simple and so great, waves of tension cascade through the larynx while a sheen of saline commences shrink-wrapping the eyes. Whereas I underestimated the heroes' worth placed on their own call, I grossly miscalculated the heroes' perception of their boon. Their years hunkered in the trenches on the front lines have provided a deeper understanding of the human condition than I thought possible.

In conjunction with the call, the boon is left for each individual to identify. Conversely though, communication between the superhero and the protégé may yield a boon far more profound. Nevertheless, super-heroic titles ordained by laymen hold true if a call and boon are identified, even subconsciously. The call and boon may be entirely separated from the chosen hero's perception of his or her own call and boon, but meaning is still found by the assigner. The benefit to exhaustive exploration in a personal hero's boon has been revealed, though.

Superheroes: Interviewees vs. Literature

Mortensen and Miller share similar stories (Kristof, 2008). Each is dedicated to providing hope and opportunity to geographically separated groups of children. Their ceaseless drive toward supplying education, through different but equally important means, ensures upcoming generations are issued opportunities otherwise a gossamer dream. Mortensen's near

death climbing experience is reminiscent of Thomas' near-fatal accident at sea; both eventually resulting in a call to adventure.

Thomas' ever-present personification of the underserved is evocative of Fay's assumed role of angel of Africa, both actively championing a cause; acting as one for many (Quammen, 2000). Each works perpetually, acting on behalf of sufferers unnumbered, defending separate causes earnestly. Fay also shares the unclear call to adventure with Andersen and the Langes. Each has a story more reflective of chronic than acute. Correspondingly though, they have each risen to super-heroic prominence, some more publicly acclaimed than others.

Shackleton's complete devotion to sustaining lives under aberrant conditions is paralleled by the Langes zeal for the same (Fisher, 1957). Each accepted/accepts the responsibility of others and acted/acts accordingly. Andersen, like Shackleton, directly preserved life. Shackleton's 27 men exceed the single person which Andersen saved, but humankind benefits from the innumerable lives rescued from despair by those mirroring their examples.

Demographics

Various similarities can be identified within the demographic dataset. En masse, the data describes an assembly of commonplace individuals, revealing almost nothing of colossal human accomplishments. A few patterns emboss themselves against the aggregate though, worthy of noting. These micro-themes are: 1. Income Range. 2. Relationship affects. 3. Self perceptions.

Prior to conducting superhero research, I had assumptions about the effect complete dedication to humanitarian ventures would have on an individual's or family's monetary status. I perceived said work for the ultra rich and poor due to the risks associated with failure. Either financial position has nothing to lose. The dataset, contrarily, illuminates entirely opposite

economic information. The spread is pervasive; spanning all assigned quadrants dually in parents' and current income. This set of interviewees prove super-heroic action can be taken and followed through without utterly destroying nest eggs or careers; instead of usurping one's life, super-heroism can be an addition.

The demographics also show, with the exception of Thomas, super-heroism affects marriage and family dynamics. This affect, according to the table, was almost entirely positive. Information as substantial as this demands highlighting as it supports the beneficial ramifications of plunging one's family headfirst into a life for others; because the eventual collateral effect is planting the superhero seed in the budding minds of kin. This finding also shores up parenting theme.

Several questions were engineered at discovering and defining each hero's self perception. It appears the interviewees each felt similar about her or his quality as a role model, the success with her or his chosen hero work, and the differences made. This is strong data considering a life's worth and the ability to personal value in this world. This data may be strengthened further with comparison to those outside of super-heroic roles; possibly exposing a route to true satisfaction. It is important to note that each interviewee considers his or her motivational level elevated, most likely resulting in his or her towering, as opposed to mediocre, accomplishments.

How to Become a Superhero

Take a trip with me, back to the statement of the problem. As human beings cleave a schism wider and deeper between humanity, the progression of us all, and themselves, the progression of one, we create two things.

The first involves two classes. One is the proportionally micro-developed communities of people living exponentially beyond their means, with minimal regard or care beyond the borders of their inner circle. Disasters or catastrophes may unsettle this care, but it generally resides bottled. Coinciding with the unsustainable growth of this development, this class condenses and removes itself further from the masses. Everyone else, existing outside the shrinking elite bubble, inhabits a world of squalor, oppression, war, disease, and countless other conditions so horrific whereby only witnessing them through all of one's faculties paints vividly enough to permanently imprint this reality in one's mind. These two wholly divided sects cannot remain separate forever; reconciliation must be accomplished whether stormy or calm.

The second creation of the schism is opportunity. The mightier the cleave rendered, the more ample the opportunity for each person to commit fully toward counteracting the destruction caused by societies willing to demolish beings, both human and non-human, for their advancements. Each selfless act contains the ability to cancel out an act of selfishness or hate. By others' actions, our past has constructed one of the greatest eras in history for super-heroism.

These five interviewees and three individuals from literature have displayed the attitude necessary to fight this evil perpetrated by their fellow humans and nature; an attitude considerably reminiscent of Odysseus, Batman, Hercules, and Frodo Baggins. Whether directly combating intolerance and ignorance, or providing the archetypical prime of selflessness, these superheroes strive for greatness beyond themselves; they consciously attempt to be good humans. This research reveals that indifferent to personal perception, superheroes dwell within. Every person on earth possesses role models, heroes, and mentors; but these heroes are not always aware of this. Superheroes operate independently of praise, recognizing the need for their good deeds; pursuing an addicting satisfaction axiomatic to those altruistic few. They may

be parents, Gods, fictional, rich, poor, black, white, yellow, or green; specific conditions not required. If the boon bestowed aspires to benefit others more than the hero, an example is presented. These superheroes, irrespective of their external perception, continually generate good works. Said works make world improvements, satisfy participants, and illustrate an essential benchmark for the majority. Each of these superheroes undertook such tasks because more satisfaction was extracted from life with selflessness than without.

The purpose of this research is to create new superheroes through reflection of accomplished superheroes. So, how does one become a superhero? It starts here. It starts this very instant. Rise forth and accept this call to adventure. Act. Action is the key to superheroism; one must act for a cause superior to oneself. The acts may be great or small, but acts they must be. Every deed, good or bad, is an example to someone. Follow the paradigm of the superheroes discussed within this research and make a difference, whether it is a planetary revolution or one single act of goodwill. Mohandas Gandhi said, “You must be the change you want to see in the world” (Gandhi, 2009, para. 1). This research proves that one quite literally can; and that by shouldering the responsibilities of a moral change, individuals are given the opportunity to ignite a wildfire of motivation. As Andersen states, if we all did our part, how easy would life be? If human super-heroic potential achieved realization through motivation, it would explode similar to a nuclear supercritical reaction, creating exponentially growing energy for greed; not the traditional definition of accumulation of wealth but the greed for the betterment of mankind, to create a better future together. To make this world better brick by brick, to build a future where our children, our children’s children, are not occupied by the worry of atrocities committed upon the planet and its inhabitants by their ancestors; because future citizens hold the ability to come together as one in pursuit of the betterment of everyone and

everything; and they will do this because they know of no other way (Neruda, 1986). They will all be the change we want to see because we showed them we could do it. We showed them right now, here, on this very spot. We made it happen today, and we did it with gusto. And that is why they will listen. Because we showed them what could be done. So seize up the shield of altruism, brandish the sword of selflessness, and step forth into this new world ready to change, ready to show the future we have it in us; that we are not going fail this time because we can do this, that we were made for this and that we are ready to take on the responsibility of humanity instead of the pursuit of one.

Limitations

There were two major limitations unfettered while conducting this research. The first was limiting the number of participants. When attempting to grasp a concept as whose basis is as profound yet foggy as superheroes, the depth of the research outcome increases along with the number of interviewees. By settling on handful of participants, I have constricted the possible results. This limitation was not wrought from an absence of superheroes; many humans have achieved heroic status. It was instigated by time, the second limiting factor. Time, or lack thereof, presented the single largest limitation when considering an exploration of the fathoms of the super-heroic. While this inquisitive research format benefits from structure, the scholastic restrictions on time did not permit a complete investigation, at least not to the extent to which I would have pursued this project. In defense of the University, the goal of the project is not a life's work though, and to unearth and compose a flowchart for real superhero formation is a lifelong enterprise, as it was in the case of Campbell (1973) in fiction. Boundless expansion of time would empower the researcher to introduce unnumbered superheroes, further coagulating a verifiable and true definition.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research allocates numerous pages to an attempt at relating fictional superheroes to real individuals. While I believe this relationship exists as based on the literature, it does not necessarily affect how real superheroes interact outwardly. For some real heroes, acquired inspiration may have been born of imagination; but for these participants all mentors were real or spiritual. The fictionally based portion of this research provides the foundations for application of the term superhero to real individuals. Further research could benefit from this work, circumvent the fictional step, and pinpoint precisely on motivations of real human beings. Removal of this phase liberates the author to actively engage more superheroes and emplace additional buttresses of true altruistic behavior. Each researcher voyaging across the emotional and expansive ocean encompassing super-heroic human behavior will have a homecoming enriched with treasure abounding; adding necessary details to an unfinished story. A story I would love to read.

Conclusion

Personally, this project is unrivaled by any other of my completion. Senior project alone promises a daunting task, but my chosen subject's difficulty shares commonalities with Will Hunting, a fictional genius. His abusive foster father would place a wrench, a stick, and a belt on the table and ask him to choose (Bender, 1997). We both chose the wrench. A smattering of projects were shortlisted on a yellow legal notepad, each far less difficult than this. The superhero project, on the contrary, spoke enticingly to me, barely visible behind a translucent chiffon shroud, arousing curiosity and unsettling the fear of one's self. Its arduousness was obvious to me, as well as an understanding of the benefit of the process. I grabbed a lance, donned a jerkin, and assaulted this dragon boldly; heedless of apprehension. Through an analysis of real and fictional superheroes, I faced lurking questions within head-on, which yearned for answers. Every source furnished illumination and self-reflection, coaxing additional digging. Each interview pried tears and bequeathed humility. Qualitative analysis provided a conduit for analysis of my own life, my future, and the future of my family. After thorough introspection, I have concluded that I will presumably never attain Gandhi-esque status, affect the multitudes as Mother Teresa, or champion animals equivocally with Jane Goodall. What I can achieve is to be the best human being I can be and I hope the reader can as well. I currently parent two young boys and I aim to outwardly demonstrate an existence for a purpose greater than oneself. To that end, I am wholly vested in changing everything I am able, peaceably and with vigor; for these things we do are the inheritance we leave. Our super-heroic legend is up to us. We each only have moments, and they are fleeting. From this day forth, I will strive for the eternal satisfaction that I did enough; that I made a difference. I only hope I can meet my own expectations.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, C. (2000). *The Endurance*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Bender, L. (Producer), & Van Sant G. (Director). (1997). *Good Will Hunting* [Motion picture].
United States: Miramax Films
- Blake, J. (2008, July 13). American mountaineer fights taliban with books, not bombs. *Cable News Network*. Retrieved on May 27th, 2009 from
<http://edition.cnn.com/2008/US/03/03/three.cups>
- Boeree, C. G. (1997). *Carl Jung, 1875-1961*. Retrieved on May 27, 2009 from
<http://webpace.ship.edu/cgboer/jung.html>
- Campbell, J. (1973). *The hero with a thousand faces*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Central Asia Institute. (2008). *Projects: Education*. Retrieved on May 27, 2009 from
<https://www.ikat.org/projects/>
- Chase, S. (2008). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. (2003). *Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Curry, A. (2001, August 20). J. Michael Fay. *U.S. News & World Report*, 131, (7), 60.
Retrieved on May 27, 2009 from EBSCO Host database
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln Y. S. (Eds). (2008). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- DuBose, M. S. (2007, December). Holding out for a hero: Reaganism, comic book vigilantes, and Captain America. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 40, (6), 915-935. Retrieved on May 27, 2009 from EBSCO Host database
- Fay, J. M. (2004, August). In the land of surfing hippos. *National Geographic*, 206, (2), 100-127. Retrieved on May 27, 2009 from EBSCO Host database
- Fingeroth, D. (2004). *Superman on the couch: What superheroes really tell us about ourselves and our society*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Fisher, M. & J. (1957). *Shackleton*. London: James Barrie Books LTD.
- Fontana, A. & Frey, J. H. (2008) The interview: From neutral stance to political involvement. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds)., *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gandhi, M. (2009). Quotation #27184. *Classic Quotes*. Retrieved on October 18, 2009 from <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/27184.html>
- Gross, T., & Mortensen, G. (February 7, 2002). Fresh air [Transcript]. *National Public Radio*. Retrieved on May 27, 2009 from <http://www.gregmortenson.com/Articles/FeaturedArticles/02-07-02NPR.html>
- Gudmundsdottir, S. (2001). Narrative research on school practice. In T. Moen, Reflections on the narrative research approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5, (4), 1-11. Retrieved on August 13, 2009 from EBSCO Host database
- Hanks, T. (1992). Quotation #39114. *Contributed Quotations*. Retrieved on May 3, 2009 from <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/39114.html>
- Jung, C. G. (1980). The collective unconscious. In D. S. Gochberg (Ed), *The classics of western thought: The twentieth century*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Kristof, N. D. (2008). It takes a school, not missiles. *The New York Times*. Retrieved on May 27, 2009 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/13/opinion/13kristof.html?ref=opinion>

Kuchinsky, C. (2007, July 31). Where have all the heroes gone? *Associated Content*. Retrieved on May 3, 2009 from http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/327717/where_have_all_the_heroes_gone.html?singlepage=true&cat=2

Lawrence, J.S., & Jewett, R. (2002). *The myth of the American superhero*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mello, R. (2001, July). Cinderella meets Ulysses. *Language arts*, 78, (6), 548-555. Retrieved on August 13, 2009 from EBSCO Host database

Mello, R. A. (2002). Collocation analysis: A method for conceptualizing and understanding narrative data. *Qualitative Research*, 2(2), 231-243. Retrieved on August 26, 2009 from EBSCO Host database.

Merriam-Webster. (2008). Superhero. *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. Retrieved on May 3, 2009 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/superhero>

Miles, M. S. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook (2nd ed.) In C. Marshall & G. B. Rossman (1999). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc

Moen, T. (2006, December). Reflections on the narrative research approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5 (4), 1-11. Retrieved on August 13, 2009 from EBSCO Host database

- Moore, A. (1986a). The mark of the Batman. In F. Miller et al (Eds.), *Batman: The dark knight returns*. New York: DC Comics
- Moore, A. (1986b). *Watchmen*. New York: DC Comics
- Mosier, S. (Producer), & Smith, K. (Writer/Director). (2001). *Jay and Silent Bob strike back* [Motion picture]. United States: Dimension Films/Buena Vista Films International.
- Murphy, T. (2006, September 24). Urban tactics; hombres of steel. *The New York Times*. Retrieved on May 27, 2009 from <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A0DE6DD1E31F937A1575AC0A9609C8B63>
- Neruda, P. (1986). *100 love sonnets*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Perry, E. (2009). The reason society needs superheroes. *Helium*. Retrieved on May 3, 2009 from <http://www.helium.com/items/1090873-the-reason-society-needs-superheroes>
- Quammen, D. (2000, October). Megatransect. *National Geographic*. Retrieved on May 27, 2009 from <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0010/feature1/fulltext.html>.
- Quammen, D. (2005, September). Tracing the human footprint. *National Geographic*, 208, 3, 16-35. Retrieved on May 27, 2009 from EBSCO Host database
- Reynolds, R. (1992). *Super heroes: A modern mythology*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi
- Riessman, C. K. (2000). *Analysis of personal narratives*. Retrieved on August 26, 2009 from EBSCO Host database
- Royte, E. (2001, May 14). Out of the woods. *The New Yorker*, 77, (11), p50. Retrieved on May 27, 2009 from EBSCO Host database.

Sayın, G., & M. E. Özşen. (2003, May). *Superheroes: The ideology hidden underneath the costume*. Retrieved on May 27, 2009 from

http://fef.baskent.edu.tr/amer/conferences/conference3/MelekEce_Gunes.pdf

Teresa, M. (2009). Quotation #4628. *Cole's Quotables*. Retrieved on May 3, 2009 from

<http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/4628.html>

Attachment A

LETTER OF CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Heroes and Role Models

I am currently a student at Alaska Pacific University (APU) conducting research for my senior project. I would like to secure your voluntary participation in my research. You may choose to stop your participation at any time without penalty. All information will be handled in a professional manner. I expect that your participation will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes, but could extend beyond these parameters. You will be asked to complete a demographic survey and answer a few interview questions.

I have decided to do a study on heroes and role models. The purpose of the study is to discover how role models achieved their status as such. I hope to achieve this by my use of qualitative method research. This method of research focuses on the lived experiences of individuals rather than numerical statistics and facts. In short, I want to hear your story. After you narrate your own story, I will do my very best to transcribe this story into my research, taking care to influence your narrative as minimally as possible. By interviewing you, I hope to gain insight into your life and how you became a role model for others, even if you are unaware of this fact. I hope to pass this information onto the reader, engendering greater motivation and morals.

I am aware of the potentially personal nature of the information that you may choose to share with me. For this reason, it is of the utmost importance that you understand **I will be using your name and the events in your story directly in my report.** Your story is vital to the research. The gifts which you have bestowed are almost impossible to share with others, though, without revealing the details of your story, especially when told by you. I cannot relay your story to the reader as accurately and with as much meaning if I attempt to mask events or names. Even doing so would not guarantee your anonymity. Therefore, the only way I can ensure that your story is uncompromised is by directly quoting you and your tale. If this is a condition you cannot meet, feel free to opt out at any time. If you choose to opt out of this process, all information gathered about you and your narrative will be destroyed and confidentiality will commence upon your cessation request.

You will have the option to read the final material produced from your interview as well as the final research paper to ensure that you are not misrepresented. It is my hope that you will. If you feel that what I have written does not fully express what you have to say or you feel that I have taken liberties with your ideas, feel free to express your opinion on the matter and I will work with you to adjust the text to meet your feelings.

A copy of this letter with the investigator's signature is yours to keep. If you have any questions about how this investigation is to be conducted please contact me: Nicholas Dighiera, 907-382-0282, ndighiera@akpac.com or if you require addition information please contact my Faculty Advisor: Carole Lund, clund@alaskapacific.edu, 907-564-8212.

I _____ (print name) agree to participate in the project as described to me.

_____ (signature of Participant) _____ (date)
 _____ (signature of Investigator) _____ (date)

Attachment B

Interview Schedule for: _____ on Date: _____ conducted via: _____

When you think of heroes or role models, real or fictional, who comes to mind and why?

At what point in your life did you recognize that you wanted to work for the benefit of others?

What were the guiding forces behind your aspirations?

What are some struggles you have had with this or any project?

Please describe your 5 and 10 year plan? Ultimate accomplishment?

Attachment C

**Demographic Survey for Role Models Research
Alaska Pacific University Senior Project
Fall of 2009**

I would like to ask some questions about you and your experience. Please fill out the information below. I appreciate you taking the time to answer these questions.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. What is your gender? Female Male
2. What is your current age? _____
3. How long have you been conducting "hero" work? _____
4. How would you classify yourself?
 - Arab
 - Asian/Pacific Islander
 - Black
 - Caucasian/White
 - Hispanic
 - Indigenous or Aboriginal
 - Latino
 - Multiracial
 - Would rather not say
 - Other: _____
5. Would you consider yourself a role model? Yes No
6. Do you have children? Yes No
7. What is your marital status? Not Married Married
8. Does your work/project have an affect on the relationships with your marriage/children? Yes No N/A

If so, what kind? _____

9. What was your parent's income range while you were growing up?

- \$0-25,000
- \$25,001-\$50,000
- \$50,001-\$75,000
- \$75,001-\$100,000
- Greater than \$100,001

10. What is your current income range?

- At or below poverty level
- Above poverty level
- I don't know

11. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Grammar school
- High school or equivalent
- Vocational/technical school (2 year)
- Some college
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree (MD, JD, etc.)
- Other: _____

12. Are you satisfied with your life and accomplishments so far?

- Resoundingly No Neutral Resoundingly Yes

13. Do you feel you have made a difference in the world?

- Resoundingly No Neutral Resoundingly Yes

14. Do you feel you could have made more of a difference in other areas?

- Resoundingly No Neutral Resoundingly Yes

15. Please rate your overall motivation level?

- Very Low Neutral Very High