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Exploring the Connections and Tensions Between Sacrifice and Self-Care as Relational Processes in Religious Families

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ABSTRACT

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The relational processes of sacrifice and self-care both influence every human relationship and as such, every human has to learn how to engage in them. Families are one of the many communities in which one must address sacrifice and self-care. This study provides a qualitative exploration of the relational processes of sacrifice and self-care among a sample of 198 highly religious (Abrahamic faiths) families. In-depth analyses explored motivations, types, and related family processes among family relationships. Five themes from the data about how families perceived and addressed the relational processes of sacrifice and self-care are discussed: (1) tensions between sacrifice and self-care, (2) motivations of sacrifice and/or self-care, (3) types of sacrifice, (4) types of self-care, and (5) processes in faith and family relationships. The ways that participants discussed struggling to address these processes are discussed along with why these ideas are important for marriages and families.

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Exploring the Connections and Tensions Between Sacrifice and Self-Care

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In every human relationship, persons face tensions between the relational process of sacrifice and self-care. Persons must learn to address these tensions for the good of the self, the other person, and the relationship—particularly in familial relationships. Religion is one of the most powerful forces in helping people care for their own personal wellbeing (as the growing literature that links religiosity to a host of positive outcomes demonstrates). Religion is a powerful force in motivating people to make significant personal sacrifices. Literature about sacrifice or self-care within family settings is limited and theories struggle to explain the relationship between sacrifice and self-care. Little social science research has carefully explored the relationships between sacrifice, self-care, and family relationships. However, interdependence theory assumes that relationships are worthy of study and suggests that the self (or individual partners) are somehow not lost in the study of relationships and associated processes (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993).

Negative connotations still seem to be associated with sacrifice in contemporary culture and there is a lack of discussion about the need for self-care in moderation. Can sacrifice and self-care co-exist? How might religion and family life promote a healthy approach to the tension between sacrifice and self-care? Studies exploring these connections are sparse, so literature about sacrifice and literature about self-care will be reviewed separately. Connections and tensions will be discussed and explored using data from transcripts of qualitative interviews with highly religious parents and children (of Abrahamic faiths) to begin to look at how families struggle to integrate sacrifice and self-care to benefit their family relationships.

Much of the psychology literature based in feminist theory involves discussions of what

acceptable expectations of sacrifice among women includes (Duarte & Thompson, 1999; Impett & Gordon, 2008; Neff & Harter, 2002) as well as arguments for the importance of self-care among women (Barkin & Wisner, 2013; Radina, Armer, & Stewart, 2014), which demonstrates that gender is an important issue to address when discussing the relational processes of sacrifice and self-care. This study will determine if gender differences exist in this study between how often males and females discussed issues relating to sacrifice and self-care.

Positive Family Psychology Approach

This study uses an integrative positive family psychology approach to explore the tensions between sacrifice and self-care where faith and family life overlap, as well as the potential positive influence these relational processes have. I define an integrative positive family psychology approach as relying mostly on positive psychology literature that explores sacrifice and self-care in relational contexts. However, existing literature on the integration of sacrifice and self-care focuses more on romantic relationships and less on family contexts (Ruppel & Curran, 2012; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). Existing literature on these processes individually also tends to focus on negative outcomes in relational and work contexts (Impett et al., 2012; McGarrigle & Walsh, 2011). To learn more about sacrifice and self-care in family contexts as well as the possible potential benefits of these processes, literature from various disciplines is used. To help bridge the literature, the discipline of the scholars will periodically be referenced (when the scholar(s) is first mentioned). Conceptual and grounded theory approaches will be used to explore qualitative data about the intersection of faith and family life.

Although most psychology research focuses on the potential individual negatives of sacrifice and self-care (Hawk, Bogt, van den Eijnden, & Nelemans, 2015; Impett et al., 2012; see review by Impett & Gordon, 2008; McGarrigle & Walsh, 2011), each relational process can

individually be valuable in positive ways in family relationships. Sacrifice can help increase a sense of family identity (Burr, Marks & Day, 2012; Dollahite, Layton, Bahr, Walker, & Thatcher, 2009) and relationship commitment and satisfaction (Ruppel & Curran, 2012). Taking care of the self can help one be physically and mentally healthy and can indirectly influence relationship satisfaction (Skovholt et al., 2001). Integrating the use of both sacrifice and self-care in a relationship may also be beneficial. For example, when both partners beneficially incorporate the use of sacrifice and self-care within their relationship, the relationship satisfaction can increase beyond what could have previously been possible (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Ruppel & Curran, 2012; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). Literature regarding sacrifice in a family context will be reviewed next, followed by literature regarding self-care.

Sacrifice

Although existing research discusses sacrifice between partners in a romantic relationship (Ruppel & Curran, 2012; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993) and why one might be willing to sacrifice for a relationship (Impett, Gable, & Peplau, 2005), the current amount of research is not enough to give a full picture of sacrifice in family life (Bahr & Bahr, 2001). Much of the current literature relies on daily diaries to come to an understanding of how sacrifice works within a marriage (Impett & Gordon, 2010; Ruppel & Curran, 2012). To better understand the ways that families struggle to integrate sacrifice into their relationships, methodologies need to include more than the use of daily diaries.

The scholarly definition of sacrifice throughout research has been relatively consistent while types, purposes, and motivations for sacrifice have greatly varied. This study focuses on sacrifices made for family members or for faith/religious purposes and will use a definition of sacrifice given in *Webster's New World Dictionary* as a reference: "to give up, destroy, permit

injury to, or forego (a valued thing) for the sake of something of greater value or having a more pressing claim." Family scholars Bahr and Bahr (2001) referenced this definition as they called for more research about sacrifice "in contemporary thinking and writing about families" (p. 4). Literature regarding many types of sacrifice, motivations to sacrifice, as well as benefits and harms of sacrifice will be briefly reviewed next. For a more in-depth review see *Appendix* A.

Types of sacrifice. The types of sacrifices encountered when faith and family life intersect seem to have changed across time. Ancient sacrifices often consisted of sacrificing animals as an act of worship and thanksgiving to God (Keenan, 2005). The God of the Old Testament often asked people and families to sacrifice portions of their livelihood (e.g., animals and crops; Romerowski, 2007). These people could either eat the meat of the animal or sacrifice it. Some sacrifices asked of contemporary religious families could be classified as material goods and possessions in some ways, similar to ancient animal sacrifices. These material sacrifices may include money and property. Other sacrifices asked by religion may include time, energy, social comfort, prestige, relationships, convenience, or safety (e.g., when asked to serve missions or to give service in dangerous locations).

Some sacrifices occur only once; some are repeated. An example of a sacrifice that may repeat regularly for parents is choosing to attend a child's sporting event instead of spending time with friends—or a child running errands for a family member instead of spending time with his/her friends (Impett et al., 2005; Impett et al., 2012; Kogan et al., 2010). An example of a sacrifice that may repeat over long periods of time is choosing to sacrifice time at work to spend in family pursuits (Impett et al., 2012; Van Lange et al., 1997). Because sacrifice is "a fluctuating aspect of daily life" (Impett & Gordon, 2010, p. 310), frequencies of acts of sacrifice may also fluctuate. Ruppel and Curran (2012) found that the frequency of sacrificial acts within a

romantic relationship was an important influence on long-term relationship satisfaction. One may sacrifice friends, recreation, errands, chores, favors, school and work, health and lifestyle, family, communication and interaction, gifts and money, appearance, intimacy, or more significant things such as relocating (Impett et al., 2005). Motivations for sacrifice vary and literature about these motivations will be briefly reviewed next.

Motivations to sacrifice. There are many reasons that one might be motivated to sacrifice. Akhtar and Varma (2012), in a review of psychoanalytic literature, theorized that categories of motivation may include personal desires, societal rules or expectations, and religious ideals. Outcomes of sacrifice can be impacted by the associated motivations (Akhtar & Varma, 2012). Positive motivations may help the sacrifice be healthier in nature while negative motivations may cause it to be more pathological. Motivations can also fluctuate across time and situations (Ruppel & Curran, 2012). Motivations appear to be helpful in getting people to act, but they are one issue to consider. Research regarding personal, relational (approach or avoidance), and religious motivations—similar to Akhtar and Varma's (2012) categories for motivations to sacrifice—will be reviewed next.

Personal motivations. Individuals may sacrifice out of a motivation to please themselves or obtain something they do not already have. These motivations may include narcissism, masochism, or love (Akhtar & Varma, 2012). Acts of sacrifice may be a means of affirming self-perceptions, otherwise known as self-verification theory (Kogan et al., 2010), or may result from a desire to obtain something greater than what one is sacrificing (Whitton et al., 2007). Dollahite et al. (2009) found that one reason youth sacrificed was to feel affective benefits such as "feeling good" about doing "the right" thing. Some people may not always see themselves as being motivated by the possibility of personal gains, but could be motivated by relationship goals.

Relational motivations. In relationships, people often try to become closer to another person or, conversely, try to avoid someone or distance themselves. In the interdependence literature (Impett et al., 2005), which draws from attachment theory (Impett & Gordon, 2010), approach motivation refers to acting in hopes of experiencing a positive relational benefit and avoidance motivation refers to acting in a way that one hopes to avoid a negative consequence (Impett et al., 2005). Several studies and reviews have examined approach and avoidance motivations and how they relate to acts of sacrifice (Burr et al., 2012; Impett et al., 2005; see review by Impett & Gordon, 2008; Impett & Gordon, 2010). Although Dollahite et al. (2009) did not use the terms "approach" or "avoidance" in their exploration of youth sacrifices, they found that youth sacrificed to connect to a higher meaning or purpose, to connect to God, to connect to a faith tradition (these could be interpreted as approach motivations)—or to fulfill expectations and avoid problems (these could be interpreted as avoidance motivations).

Social psychologists Impett et al. (2005) found that the benefits of sacrificing due to approach motivations include increased positive emotions, life satisfaction, and relationship quality, and decreased relationship conflict. Consequences of sacrificing due to avoidance motivations may include increased negative emotions and relationship conflict, and decreased life satisfaction and relationship well-being (Impett et al., 2005). Using an attachment theory lens, psychologists Impett and Gordon (2010) found that dating partners who had anxious attachments were more likely to sacrifice for avoidance goals and less likely to sacrifice to promote intimacy. Participants who had an anxious partner also sacrificed for avoidance purposes. Other motivations might be in play as well, such as religious motivations, discussed next.

Religious motivations. Sometimes religious families place a sacred quality on acts of sacrifice

(Burr et al., 2012; Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, 2003). When family members sacrifice from a sacred religious perspective, they may see these as acts of dedication, love, or charity. Burr et al. (2012) suggested that "the greater the sacredness of sacrificing the more unique, powerful, and salient the effects of the sacrificing on other family processes and valued family outcomes" (p. 82). Researchers have suggested that when sacrifices include a sense of sacredness, the power of the sacrifice is increased (Frankl, 1984; Krumrei, Mahoney, & Pargament, 2009). The power resulting from the sacred perspective of a person can enhance both positive and negative effects of sacrifice (Burr et al., 2012; Mahoney, 2013; Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). Because sacred motivations can have a powerful impact on the outcomes of acts of sacrifice, it is important to better understand sacrifice when faith and family are combined. Acts of sacrifice, no matter the motivation, can either be beneficial or harmful in family life. Some of these benefits and harms will be reviewed next.

Outcomes of sacrifice. Most of the research on sacrifice has focused on romantic relationships, but there is some literature about sacrifice in a familial context. An act of sacrifice may help increase a "sense of transcendent, social, and familial connectedness" as well as promote an increased sense of family identity (Dollahite et al., 2009, p. 717). Other potential benefits of sacrifice in family relationships include increased relationship quality (Impett et al., 2005; Stanley et al., 2006), increased positive emotions towards a partner (Impett et al., 2005; Kogan et al., 2010), increased life satisfaction, decreased relationship conflict (Impett et al., 2005), and decreased emotional distress over time (Stanley et al., 2006). In their review, Impett and Gordon (2008) found that both the person sacrificing and the person receiving the sacrifice may benefit. Those who sacrificed for their partner maintained an image as a good partner, felt good when they were able to make their partner feel good by doing something they normally

would not do, and were able to promote long-term relationship goals. Those who received the act

of sacrifice benefited by having their desires fulfilled, perceived their partner as caring and

responsive as they recognized the sacrifice, and developed increased trust in their partner, all of

which helped promote relationship satisfaction and stability.

Acts of sacrifice may also be harmful (see review by Impett & Gordon, 2008). Negative

consequences of acts of sacrifice may include increased negative emotions and relationship

conflict, and decreased life satisfaction and relationship quality (Impett et al., 2005; Impett et al.,

2012). Sacrifice may become harmful, especially for females when one has suppressed one's

emotions (Impett et al., 2012). In their review, Impett and Gordon (2008) found that there are

dangers associated with sacrificing. These dangers can occur when sacrifice in a relationship

becomes one-sided. When partners are not mutually dependent on each other, the burden of

sacrificing falls to one partner (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). The one who carries the weight of

sacrificing may feel that she/he is experiencing a "'silencing' of her/his own thoughts, opinions,

and desires in [the] relationship" (see review by Impett & Gordon, 2008, p. 88). This imbalance

of sacrifice may cause the one sacrificing to feel increased depression, hopelessness, and

decreased self-esteem. Harm can also be a result of sacrifice when a partner does not recognize

or appreciate the sacrifice made by her/his partner (Rusbult & Curran, 2012; Totenhagen et al.,

2013; Young & Curran, 2016). Along with sacrifice, self-care is influential in faith and family

life, as discussed next.

Self-Care

Many social psychologists are interested in the self. In one review, a cursory search of the

terms used in studies of "the self" returned a list of over 40 terms (Baumeister, 2010, p. 141).

Self-care was included in this list, but when used in a PsychINFO search, "self-care" did not

return as many articles and book chapters as other terms included in the list. Self-care is defined as "physical, social, psychological, and spiritual activities related to both illness and wellness" (Berman & Iris, 1998). Much of the existing literature about self-care discusses narcissism and the extremes of self-care (Hawk et al., 2015), as well as burnout, partly due to inadequate self-care (Killian, 2008; McGarrigle & Walsh, 2011; Skovholt, Grier, & Hansen, 2001). Research regarding the types of self-care and benefits of self-care will briefly be reviewed next.

Types of self-care. There are many possible ways for one to take care of the self. Research has explored four different categories or ways one could engage in self-care processes to achieve a balanced wellness: (1) physical, (2) spiritual, (3) emotional/psychological, and (4) social (Berman & Iris, 1998; Skovholt et al., 2001). These dimensions of balanced wellness may not only help one avoid professional burnout, but may also help one avoid burnout in one's family and religious roles (Skovholt et al., 2001). The processes one may engage in for each of these dimensions may be different because each person has different needs. Examples of what may be considered physical self-care may include exercising and healthy eating (Vidler, 2005). Examples of what could be considered spiritual self-care may include praying and reading scriptures (Hamilton et al., 2013). Emotional self-care processes may include a reconstitution of the self-image while social self-care may include managing reciprocity, exchange, and convenience processes (King & Ferguson, 2006).

Self-care is often carried out by the person, but sometimes receiving help from others can be a part of self-care (Furlong & Wuest, 2008). The definition or meaning of self-care for an individual can change based on time and circumstance (Berman & Iris, 1998; Ide-Okochi et al., 2013). Self-care can vary as one ages (Sundsli, Espnes, & Soderhamn, 2013) or vary from one-time need that stands to be fulfilled, a need that is recurring, or a long-term need (Radina et al.,

2014). Research about the possible outcomes of self-care will be reviewed next.

Outcomes of self-care. Much research has been done about self-care as a prevention

tactic for professionals to avoid burnout (Gutierrez & Mullen, 2016; Killian, 2008; Malinowski,

2014; McGarrigle & Walsh, 2011; Skovholt et al., 2001), but it is possible that these principles

apply to family life. As family members take steps necessary to take care of themselves while

still helping family members, they may be less likely to experience burnout in their family roles

and responsibilities. Self-care may strengthen relationship satisfaction (Skovholt et al., 2001).

Self-care processes have been found to comfort, relax, or distract individuals from problems

(Hamilton et al., 2013) and can contribute to one's recovery from depression (Vidler, 2005).

Social psychologists Hixon and Swann Jr. (1993) found that the beneficial effects of

introspection were not linear, but rather curvilinear. Introspection may lead to self-insight, which

can be a form of self-care. However, when introspection lasts too long, one's actions may no

longer be congruent with one's disposition (Hixon & Swann Jr., 1993). This suggests that the

benefits of self-care can be found within a central range, and that there is a threshold for these

benefits. If one should not focus only on self-care processes to receive the most benefit, then that

benefit might be enhanced by integrating sacrifice and self-care processes.

Integrated Sacrifice and Self-Care

There are a couple of ways that one might perceive the relationship between sacrifice and

self-care. When interpreted through social exchange, the relationship can be perceived as a zero-

sum relationship. The two processes are viewed as being at odds with one another with the

processes associated with the greatest reward and smallest cost "winning" (Collett, 2010;

Emerson, 1976). However, one could perceive the relationship between sacrifice and self-care as

more integrative and mutually beneficial (Kelly & Thibaut, 1978). Interdependence theory

attempts to explain how sacrifice and self-care could be mutually beneficial in romantic

relationships (Kelly & Thibaut, 1978). Studies exploring sacrifice have gathered that tension may

exist between these two relational processes (Rusbult & Arriaga, 1997; Whitton et al., 2007).

It can be difficult to integrate sacrifice and self-care where the most benefit is possible.

Barriers to self-care, especially the difficulty associated with learning to balance one's own

needs and the needs of others, can make it difficult to integrate the processes of sacrifice and

self-care (Barker & Wisner, 2013; Radina et al., 2014). Few studies have examined the

relationship between the needs of the self and the needs of others. Therapists King and Ferguson

(2006) suggested self-care techniques to help Black women better address the processes of

sacrifice and self-care in their lives. The goal of these techniques was to help women redefine

their roles so that their levels of sacrifice could be more manageable. King and Ferguson (2006)

proposed that as Black women used these techniques they would sacrifice less, and family

members would step up and sacrifice where these women no longer chose to sacrifice. These

techniques may be useful to women of other ethnicities as well as men with similar struggles.

Many people come across situations where they need to sacrifice to care for others

(Dollahitte et al., 2009; Impett et al., 2005); if we can understand the importance of self-care

amid responsibilities that require sacrifice, familial outcomes may be more positive and

beneficial. An integrative approach to sacrifice and self-care may be helpful to understanding

how these processes influence family relationships.

Limitations of Existing Research and Theory

Existing research and theory contribute to our understanding of sacrifice and self-care,

but are limited in the information they provide. Although interdependence theory has tried to

explain the relationship between sacrifice and self-care in intimate relationships, it is not broad

enough to apply to all familial relationships (Impett et al., 2005; Impett & Gordon, 2010). Other theories address only sacrifice or self-care.

The existing research on sacrifice focuses mostly on dating or marriage relationships, rather than on the family as a whole. Many studies conducted examining sacrifice in relationships have used self-report or diaries to obtain data; few have involved in-depth qualitative interviews. Studies exploring religious influences on familial sacrifices are scarce. Religiosity, or the degree to which one is engaged in a religion of choice (inside and outside of the home), is often mentioned as something that can impact sacrifice (Burr et al., 2012; Wilcox & Dew, 2016), but is rarely considered when obtaining samples, and is not often discussed in the self-care literature. Most existing research about self-care has been conducted about health problems (Ide-Okochi et al., 2013; Navidian, Yaghoubina, Ganjali, & Khoshsimaee, 2015) or in relation to avoiding professional burnout (Gutierrez & Mullen, 2016; Skovholt et al., 2001). Self-care is rarely discussed in a familial context, and lacks a dialogue about the impact of religiosity. This study seeks to address these limitations as explained next.

The Current Study

This study will strengthen the literature about sacrifice and self-care by: (1) exploring sacrifice and self-care at the same time, (2) using parents and children in the sample, (3) employing open-ended qualitative questions targeting the intersection of faith and family life, and (4) using a highly religious sample. This study seeks to explore the ways that members of religious families (of Abrahamic faiths) struggle with and address both sacrifice and self-care processes.

Reflexivity

Daly (2008) argued the importance of scholars reflecting and reporting about how their

personal experiences, prejudices, assumptions, and other forms of bias may have influenced the

research, and what was done to counteract these biases. The author agrees with this practice and

will share relevant information. She is an active participant in her faith community. She has

struggled with the tension she has often felt between sacrifice and self-care. Please see *Appendix*

B for a more detailed personal reflexivity statement. To counteract biases from life experiences,

the author employed the help of a diverse group of students. Students who helped with analyses

ranged in age from young adult to middle-aged adult, consisted of both male and female

students, and included a student of African American descent. This diversity allowed the

secondary analyses to be conducted with a broader perspective that kept the author from using

tunnel-vision that sometimes occurs when qualitative analyses are conducted by a single person

(Marks, 2015).

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of interviews with 198 families (N = 476 individuals) from the

three Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) from all eight major regions of the United

States (Silk & Walsh, 2011). More than half (51%) of the families interviewed were from racial

and ethnic minorities (see Table 1). On average, couples in the study were in their mid-40s, had

been married an average of 20 years, and had an average of 3.3 children, with all couples having

at least one child. There were 84 children in this study (40 males and 44 females). Their average

age was 16 and ranged from 6 to 25. Families were purposively sampled (Denzin & Lincoln,

1994). First, clergy were contacted and asked to identify marriage-based families with children

who were committed to and involved in their faith. Second, recommended families were

contacted to determine willingness to participate. Among more difficult-to-access faiths (e.g.,

Islam, Orthodox Judaism), participant referral sampling was sometimes employed. The final

sample included 20 denominations of Abrahamic religions. Thus, the sample is characterized by

(a) a generally high level of religious commitment (as reported by referring clergy and the

participants), (b) religious diversity, (c) a wide range of socioeconomic and educational levels,

(d) racial/ethnic diversity, and (e) geographical diversity. The characteristics and scope of this

sample differ from most other qualitative studies (Dollahite, Marks, & Young, in press). This

sample has reports from multiple family members, instead of only one family member. The

sample consists of almost 200 families (476 individuals), which is much larger than the number

of participants common in qualitative studies. Interviews with participants were conducted in 17

states throughout the United States, instead of within a limited geographical area. Participants

also varied ethnically. Because of these differences, this study has increased validity, reliability,

and scope, beyond the scope of most extant qualitative studies (Dollahite, Marks, & Young, in

press).

Interviews typically lasted about two hours. Questions focused on connections between

religion, marriage, and family life. Questions relating to sacrifice were asked of youth (parents

also gave input) and included:

Are there ways that you have been asked to sacrifice for your faith?

Why do you feel you are willing to make these kinds of sacrifices for your faith?

What would a non-religious person say that your family sacrifices for your faith?

Although no questions asked specifically about how families took "care" of themselves,

questions were asked about stress, coping, and the meaning of religious beliefs, practices, and

traditions. It was inferred that if the ideas of sacrifice and self-care were important to the families

interviewed, that they would talk about these ideas when answering questions about stress,

coping, and the meaning of religious beliefs, practices, and traditions.

Measures and Coding Process

A team-based approach to analyzing qualitative data was used (Marks, 2015).

Advantages of team-based qualitative analyses as compared to qualitative analyses conducted by

one person include: (1) providing a check and balance against potential blind spots and biases,

(2) data reports become more valid, reliable, and replicable, and (3) allowing the study to be a

step closer to a being considered a scientific study as compared to journalism (Marks, 2015).

Data went through two phases of analysis. The primary analyses were conducted by one group of

four coders and secondary analyses were performed by a different group of eight coders. Coders

consisted of students enrolled in a semester-long research course. The author oversaw the

research course where coders were taught the coding process, including how to use the NVivo 10

or 11 software used for analyses, and the overarching ideas to be coded. Meetings were held at

least twice a month (over 14 weeks) to check on coders' progress. More detailed description of

the primary and secondary analyses will be provided next.

Primary analyses. The four coders involved in the primary analyses read through

transcriptions of all 198 interviews using NVivo 10 and categorized what participants said into

examples of sacrifice and self-care processes. Coders were trained in the use of a detailed

codebook (see table C2) to use to help them determine when they could categorize what a

participant said as an example of sacrifice or self-care. The codebook was created following

formats described by MacQueen et al. (1998) and Bernard and Ryan (2010). The definition of

sacrifice included caring for others that required some degree of self-denial or moving away

from one's comfort zone while the definition of self-care included caring for the self, in a

familial or religious context.

Coders were first assigned transcripts to read through and identify possible examples of sacrifice and self-care, based on the codebook. Coders were then given copies of another coder's work to read through and make notes of any disagreements (for purposes of establishing inter-rater reliability). Coders were then given another file where they reviewed why another coder had disagreed with a code and decided about whether or not the identified account should be kept as an example of either sacrifice or self-care. Reports and feedback about progress were exchanged through in-person meetings and email correspondence. The author went through these decisions and made appropriate changes in the coding files so that secondary analyses could be conducted, as described next.

Secondary analyses. Secondary analyses were conducted by eight coders enrolled in a semester-long (14-week) research course. Two types of secondary analyses were conducted, each using two groups of two coders (four coders conducted each type of analysis). Each type of secondary analysis evaluated all 556 accounts selected as examples of "sacrifice" and/or "self-care" from the primary analyses. Accounts representing "sacrifice" and "self-care" from the 198 transcribed interviews were divided between the two sets of coders per group, so that each partnership was responsible for analyzing half of the data. Within a pair of coders, each coder individually analyzed the data allotted to his/her partnership, ensuring that two individuals coded the data. Then each coder individually reviewed the secondary analysis decisions made by his/her partner and recorded any disagreements. Partners then met together to discuss these disagreements and decided which secondary analysis examples should be kept or deleted. Notes of these decisions were made. Inter-rater reliability was high in both secondary analysis coding groups. For the conceptual coding group, inter-rater reliability was high, $\alpha = .86$. For the grounded theory coding group, inter-rater reliability was also high, $\alpha = .89$. The author then

made the appropriate changes based on the decision notes from each partnership. The two types

of secondary analysis will be discussed in further detail next.

Conceptual coding. One of the secondary analysis groups made up of two partnerships (four

people total) was assigned to code the 556 data accounts using a set of predetermined

codes/ideas. The author selected these ideas based on a review of literature. A list of questions

was compiled for the coders to ask as they reviewed accounts previously identified as examples

of "sacrifice" or "self-care" for coders to use to determine how to categorize the accounts into

sub-themes. A table of the sub-themes coded for sacrifice and self-care in the conceptual coding

group can be found in *Appendix C* (Tables C3 and C4).

Grounded theory coding. The other secondary analysis group, also made up of two partnerships

(four people total) was assigned to code the 556 previously selected accounts of "sacrifice" and

"self-care" using a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These coders were given

interviews to read and identify sub-themes within the accounts previously identified as

"sacrifice" or "self-care" examples that seemed to be found in multiple accounts. Weekly

meetings (over 14 weeks) were held to discuss these ideas and come to an agreement on a

codebook for the group. After an original codebook was agreed on, the author divided up the rest

of the data between the two partnerships. Adjustments were made to the codebook throughout

the semester as needed. A table of the sub-themes for the ideas coded by the grounded theory

coding group can be found in *Appendix C* (Tables C3 and C4).

Findings

Although questions were not directly asked about the possible tension between sacrifice

and self-care where faith and family come together, this issue nonetheless appears to have been

addressed by participants in many interviews. Families more often discussed matters relating to

sacrifice as compared to self-care. However, 56 families (28%) discussed both of these concepts within their interview without being specifically prompted, suggesting that the relational processes of sacrifice and self-care are important processes to consider where faith and family are concerned. Five themes will be discussed: (1) the tensions associated with trying to implement sacrifice and self-care among family relationships, (2) the motivations for engaging in sacrifice and/or self-care, (3), types of sacrifice, (4) types of self-care, and (5) processes in faith and family relationships. Additional findings are presented in *Appendix D*.

Theme 1: Tensions Between Sacrifice and Self-Care

When discussing the connections between faith and family, many participants discussed what they did to care for others as well as what they did to care for themselves. In these discussions, many participants mentioned or alluded to a struggle that existed for them when trying to decide what was most important—caring for their own personal needs or for the needs or wants of others. Although many participants shared how important it was for them to sacrifice for and serve others, they also expressed thoughts and feelings when struggling with tensions between sacrifice and self-care. Abby, a White Congregationalist mother, shared her struggle:

> I've been trying to figure out a way to say, of all the people I'm taking care of, I need to be included in that class of all the people who need their fair share of attention and time and love and . . . I don't want more than my share . . . So in that sense, justice. 'Cause I used to operate from this perspective of . . . taking care of everybody else, but not seeing that I needed to be taken care of.

Some participants seem to have looked to religious teachings and doctrine to try to address the tension between meeting their personal needs and caring or sacrificing for others. Ubayd and Baseema, Arab-American Muslims, had a conversation during their interview

regarding the tension between caring for the self and caring for others, specifically family members, as inspired by the Koran:

> U: There's a saying in the Koran that says: "Take good care of your children."
>
> B: But now, in the Koran you have to take care of yourself first . . . but you are responsible for your children how are you going to raise them, but first you have to take care of yourself.
>
> U: It's common sense, but also for a man, there's a Koran saying: "You should take good care of your wife . . . you are responsible for her."

For Jerome, an African American Methodist father, it seemed that being able to work through sacrifice and self-care tensions was important for himself and for those around him:

> Before you love someone else, you gotta love yourself. Now it's not being selfish. But in order for you to reach out and love somebody, you gotta learn where YOU stand, be comfortable with where you're at. If you're not, you need to change, get rid of the junk, get rid of all that mess. Then you can reach out and help someone else. Build on yourself, you gotta get that right first. Then the other stuff will follow.

These participants were not alone in expressing the struggle they often encountered in deciding how to care for what they needed as well as figuring out how to care for others.

Some of those who were interviewed expressed what could be considered a lack of tension between the pull to care for themselves and the pull to care for others. This occurred when participants expressed how they were happiest when serving others, or felt that they were better able to be healthy (spiritually, mentally, or physically–depending on the situation) because of their efforts to serve others. Anoki and Lulu, a Native American Methodist couple, shared how they felt they were taking care of themselves by caring for others:

A: I think we would agree that it's an investment, that we are richly rewarded.

L: Yeah, because no matter what you do, a lot of times you think you're doing it to help

others, but you end up getting so much more for your time.

Eric, a White Presbyterian teenager, shared his thoughts about what he considered healthy when

discussing how his religious beliefs influenced what activities he participated in with his peers:

I'd say also that falls into taking care of yourself and understanding that hurting yourself

is somewhat like hurting another person. Taking care of your spirit is just as important as

taking care of other people's spirits. From that understanding of keeping yourself healthy.

To better understand this tension between sacrifice and self-care among the families

interviewed, and what may help this integration be healthy for relationships, motivations, types,

and related family processes. Findings from these explorations are presented next.

Theme 2: Motivations

Several types of motivations for sacrifice and self-care processes were identified in the

analysis process. Throughout the interviews, participants described various types of motivations.

Types of personal motivations included self-gratification, health, or personal desire. Types of

relational motivations included family, love, feeling forced, and fear. Types of religious

motivations included faith, religious customs/traditions, and spiritual duty. Personal, relational,

and religious motivations often overlapped within the interviews, but for conceptual clarity these

will be discussed separately.

Personal motivations. Some of the motivations that participants explained as reasons

that they chose to care for themselves as well as what motivated them to sacrifice fall into the

category of personal motivations. Thomas, a White Presbyterian father, shared how he and his

wife alternated between sacrificing and taking care of their own desires for personal

improvement:

> I have two master's degree[s] and she has a master's degree and we've had to change our careers. . . . When we first got married, [she] said, "Okay, I want to go to graduate school. . . get an understanding of what it's like to live in the business world." So I put her through graduate school at UCLA. She went through a Master of Public Health program and a dual internship as a clinical dietician so she became a registered dietician. So there were sacrifices there. I didn't see her a lot. She was studying a lot and I was working a lot. So when it was time for me to go to seminary, that was the whole purpose so she could put me through seminary. So she could have more flexibility and make more money so we could pay off our graduate school.

David, a White Christian Science father, explained something he realized he had to do for himself instead of relying on someone else for happiness: "I was at a point where I realized I needed to be whole and complete and happy on my own and not dependent on anybody else for my happiness." Although other participants shared their beliefs that it was important to take care of themselves, some expressed thoughts about being careful to not act in such a way that they would be considered selfish. When discussing how selfishness was perhaps one of the biggest problems he and his wife dealt with in their marriage, Lyndon, a White LDS (Mormon) father, shared, "And that's probably what the biggest thing that we struggle with is just selfishness. I need time for me. She needs time for her." His wife, Heidi, shared her motivation for participating in couple scripture study: "It is a time to be spiritually selfish and to fill up our bucket and whenever I get frustrated or drained, at least I know we are gaining knowledge together."

Several participants expressed that they sacrificed for others because when they

sacrificed, they knew that, at least afterward, they would feel good. Some suggested that their

own problems would diminish and that "all would be right in their world" if they sacrificed for

others. Gabriella, a White Jewish mother, shared multiple motivations for her sacrifices for the

Jewish community in her area:

> That's why I have worked to build the Jewish community in this area—the programs, the
>
> facilities, and the agencies, the things like that—because those things are the glue that
>
> helps bind the [faith] community together. I do it for different reasons. Selfishly, I am
>
> hopeful that if we remain here that our kids will remain here, and that they'll want to
>
> have families here, and stay here. That this will make it easier for them to do that because
>
> there will be more things for them to be involved in, because I had certain opportunities
>
> and I want them to have those opportunities. So that's the personal reason. And then
>
> there's the sense that's the right thing to do . . . work for the Jewish community. That's
>
> straight from my father. He devoted his life to helping to strengthen the Jewish
>
> community. . . . If you work to strengthen the community, it comes back to you with the
>
> community supporting you. If no one did it, everything would fall apart; if everyone did
>
> it, [it] would be incredibly strong.

Gabriella suggested that personal, relational, and religious motivations might have worked in

conjunction with each other to spur her to sacrifice for her community. Other examples of

relational motivations for sacrifice and self-care will be discussed next.

Relational motivations. Several participants alluded to taking care of themselves to

better a relationship with someone they cared about, or sacrificing for the benefit of a

relationship. Some of the examples that were identified as examples of relational motivations for

self-care will be discussed later in theme five about related family processes. However, one

example of someone taking care of herself in order to be able to meet needs of her future family

came from Jameela, an East Indian Muslim young adult woman:

>Well, I don't want to prolong it too much, but I think the ideal age [to get married] would
>
>be after I finish up my schooling. I don't know if that means graduate school, but at least
>
>my undergrad, and that's three years or so. So I can be committed to a family, because a
>
>marriage and a family is such a big responsibility, that I want to have as much of my
>
>attention that I can dedicate to my husband and ultimately my children.

Bafansha, an East Indian Muslim mother, also discussed her desires to be around for years for

her children and the necessity that brought for her to make sure she could be around for many

more years:

>At the same time, I do feel that I do need to worry about myself, because . . . I`m older
>
>than them, they are still young. I do pray for each one of them, but I do worry about
>
>myself from that point of view that they need me. I want to see that they are all settled, in
>
>the basic requirements, so that they can go on [from] that foundation.

>For some participants, the needs of their family members outweighed their own personal

desires and needs. Emily, a White Baptist mother, also discussed how caring for family members

was a responsibility that either she or her husband had to fulfill:

>I guess what it boils down to for me is that someone needs to care for the kids and the
>
>family and the household. And if you're going to take that responsibility on as a couple,
>
>then you gotta work it out somehow. That people are being cared for and loved. . . . I feel
>
>very strongly that that is much more important than me having a career. And I have lots
>
>of interests; there's a lot of things that I would like to do. But I do find myself making
>
>decisions on a regular basis, it's a priority thing, to take care of the needs of the people in

the family . . . I'm not going to just go off and get myself a career and ditch [my family].

Brent, a White Jehovah's Witness father, discussed with an interviewer how his familial responsibilities were a priority in his life and how he chose to spend his time:

On that level, it works. Me being conscious of providing emotionally and physically, spiritually for the family, prevents me from spending too much time watching sports on television, or going out with the guys, or spending too much time at work. It's definitely a grounding.

Often, relational motivations seemed to stem from a desire to make someone else happy or comfortable. However, Catrina, an African American LDS mother, suggested another perspective:

Whatever the need is, we do it all, we serve each other . . . whenever somebody have a baby or something, and we all just get together and serve them and make sure that her family have meals. Or she might be ill, or she need to be hospitalized, or her husband maybe out of work, and have no support, whatever the need is, I mean, we all go to church, we all have each other, and I feel like, that my husband and I, we would be empty if we didn't have that support from the church.

Participants often experienced meaning within their relationships when they engaged in acts of sacrifice. LeeAnn, a White Catholic mother, explained how her religious beliefs encouraged and gave meaning to her motivations to sacrifice for her family members. She said:

He [Jesus] came to teach us how to live as Christians and to live in love for each other and I think that that really helps our family. Because of his sacrifice sometimes maybe we might sacrifice an angry moment or something and keep it to ourselves and be kinder to each other.

Like LeeAnn, many other participants suggested both relational and religious motivations for acts of self-care and acts of sacrifice in their family relationships. Religious motivations will be discussed in further depth next.

      Religious motivations. Most religious motivations to care for the self or to sacrifice for others stemmed from religious beliefs and doctrines. Calvin, an African American Baptist father, shared, "I think that part of that is what we're taught in our religion is giving of yourself." Other participants appeared to share this point of view. Jimmy, a Charismatic Episcopalian father, explained how his religious beliefs taught him to give of himself:

> From my perspective, because I have to stand in front of God for what I did and did not do for my family. . . my job is to lift her burdens. Her job is not to lift my burdens. Not to increase them, but it's not like it's 50–50. My job is to take on a lot of the heat so that she doesn't have to and deal with these heavy hard things so she can deal with the important stuff of raising kids.

Rozene, a Native American Christian mother, shared an experience in which she and her husband had sacrificed because of what they felt God had told them to do:

> We went to God-forsaken reservations across the United States. This isn't what I [was] raised for. Why am I here? What are we doing here? But . . . God sent us here for a reason and I know that my husband provided much-needed care to these people and we had roles even as young as we were. John provided medical services to these people along with counseling.

      A White Lutheran young adult woman shared how from her religious convictions she found strength to mentally care for herself:

> I think specifically for me is probably confidence and I guess I really struggle with self-

consciousness and not being confident in who I am. Having a faith and having faith in the

Lord Jesus and knowing that he's there always, and he has this purpose and he has this

plan, and I just need to go with it and he's going to help me through all of it, definitely

provides confidence and I couldn't accomplish a lot for the things I've already

accomplished and want to accomplish.

Several participants expressed their excitement about caring for themselves in spiritual ways as

well as excitement about serving members of their congregations. Adelaide, an African

American Baptist mother, shared:

I remember one time somebody told me this when my kids were little, and I'd be every

week at Bible study, "God's gonna bless you for your faithfulness!" I'd say, "It's a

blessing, just to come," especially when my kids were little. To me, it was fun for all of

us, they went and they loved it, enjoyed it. And I went and I loved it and enjoyed it. So, it

wasn't a matter of sacrificing to say I'm faithful in going, it was something I looked

forward to going to.

Although Adelaide recognized that others might see her actions as falling under the category of

sacrifice, she appeared to have seen them as a way to care for her spirit and found enjoyment in

strengthening her spirit with her family members. Benton, an African American LDS father,

shared how he recognized how not only he, but other members of his congregation, found joy in

serving and sacrificing for others:

I'll tell you, come spend a month with me at the church one Sunday [or] every Sunday,

just for a full month, sacrifice full Sundays and come visit . . . and you'll see some

people, you'll see a humble people, [a] people that just really wanna work, and do the

things that the Lord has asked them to do, without pay, without notice . . . and you'll see

the people that really love Heavenly Father, that's what you see.

The motivations that participants expressed for engaging in the relational processes of sacrifice and self-care varied across families and across individuals. So did the types of sacrifice and self-care that participants were found to engage in, discussed next.

Theme 3: Types of Sacrifice

There were many types of sacrifices that participants expressed making for their faith and for family members and relationships. Some of the types of sacrifices discussed in the interviews included food, time, school activities, social expectations, vacations, work, finances, and even sacrifices associated with moving several times for religious reasons. Shawn, shared how his family moved often for religious reasons:

The reasons we've moved so many times have been related to our work in the ministry. So in some sense, [we] sacrifice stability in terms of a long-term place . . . we don't own this home, we're renting here. We'd like sometime to have a place . . . that's our place. So those have been sacrifices. Actually when we moved here, we'd been in one place for a year, the kids were in public schools and the girls especially were starting to form some friendships. That was a sacrifice to leave there and come here. I think they would say they're glad that we're here, and they're glad for maybe the opportunities they have here now, but I think at the first glance it felt like a sacrifice.

Not all participants were able to see benefits from engaging in acts of sacrifice right away. Scott, a White Catholic teenager, shared how he had to trust others to feel better about the sacrifices he was choosing to make:

I've been the one to, known on my soccer teams that's missed a lot of games. I lost lots of games over church or CCD [Confraternity of Christian Doctrine]. And right then, I

really hate it, I don't want to go to church or CCD. But then I think [of] the people I've

talked to, they actually say, it's going to be good for you. And I guess I kind of trust that.

But, I think some of the things that I have done have been sacrificial.

Many of the teenagers who were interviewed shared how they sacrificed fitting in with

their peers at school. Sometimes this was in the form of not being able to participate in sporting

activities, like Scott. Other times, these sacrifices were made when the youth had decided to not

participate in partying or engage in impulsive behaviors with their peers. Eric, a White

Presbyterian teenager, said:

> I think the biggest things that I've had to give up is the temptation of when you're my
>
> age, of just going out and having a good time and not caring what other people think
>
> about you and just doing what your impulses tell you to do. I mean I do that sometimes,
>
> but it's caused me to really think about my actions and to really consider things. And
>
> sometimes that can be a hard thing because it's so tempting just to go out and party and
>
> have a really good time with friends and not really care about the repercussions of what
>
> you might be doing. And so it's guided me in that sense. But I would say it has sacrificed
>
> that sort of instinct to go out and have a good time.

Occasionally participants shared how they saw other members of their families

sacrificing. Raven, an African American Christian mother, said about her husband:

> He loves to cook and he's always telling people he's going to cook for them and he does.
>
> He barbecues and cooks for them. So he's really good about [it]. For instance, recently
>
> we had a death in the family. He went out of his way to make sure that there was enough
>
> food, so he's going to spend time barbecuing to make sure there's going to be enough
>
> food to feed all the people that will be coming. He's one that looks after the needs of

others so and he's willing to sacrifice to do that. It shows his character in that.

Many types of sacrifices were mentioned throughout interviews. Additional examples will be presented in theme five. First, a few examples of types of self-care will be discussed.

Theme 4: Types of Self-Care

Not as many participants discussed types of self-care as types of sacrificing. This is likely because no specific questions were asked about self-care whereas questions were asked about sacrifice. However, it appeared that self-care was important to many families. Analyses identified examples of physical, spiritual, social, and mental ways of caring for the self. Spiritual self-care was the most common (which is not surprising given the nature of the sample and questions asked), followed closely by emotional and then mental self-care. Often, participants described how they engaged in multiple types of self-care to feel better about themselves or what was going on in their lives. Rhonda, an African American Non-Denominational Christian mother, shared how she often found herself engaging in multiple types of self-care:

> I seek the Lord. I pray. I ask God to direct me, and show me what to do, daily.
> Sometimes, moment by moment, I ask Him to give me directions. I also have people that
> I call who are prayer partners who I ask them to pray for me, to pray for guidance. I
> spend time with my friends that I know are very supportive and that I can talk with. I talk
> to my husband a lot during stressful times. I also exercise a lot. In times of worry, those
> are things that I do, normally when I'm stressed.

For many participants, it appeared that they took care of themselves when things became stressful and they realized that they needed to change something. When talking about how he tried to sustain several responsibilities that he found could take a toll over time, Russell, a White Catholic father, said, "We had to change our priorities. In life, you change your priorities

according to what you can handle, because you can go way overboard." Manuela, a Latina

Catholic mother, expressed how she was constantly battling to keep a balance between being

stressed and taking care of herself spiritually:

> Spiritual time, which you do on your own, it's not something that you say you're going to
>
> do. Rick has a lot of time at work, that he's by himself, and so he has a lot more time to
>
> do that than I do. I'm at work with people all day. Employees ask me questions. I have to
>
> literally go hide, from children and him and the whole world, to be able to have any
>
> peace of mind, to talk.

> Jerome, an African American Methodist father, shared how his religious beliefs colored

his perspective about being overwhelmed and what was acceptable self-care in those situations:

> Sometimes I've just had to break away and say, "I just need a break." Sometimes you
>
> have to back off, you don't want to end up being angry with people. Sometimes you do
>
> have to back off and when you do, it gives you a different perspective. I mean, I'm burnt
>
> out, overloaded, and sometimes you feel like people don't appreciate you . . . But we
>
> serve a great God who sits back and lets us know, "It's okay. It's okay. If you are tired,
>
> don't be ashamed to tell somebody you're tired."

For many participants who expressed examples of what could be considered self-care processes,

some examples included the support of other people. Sometimes God was involved in the self-

care, like for Jerome and Rhonda. Other times friends or family members were involved. A few

participants expressed self-care in terms of caring for an important relationship. Abaan, an Arab-

American Muslim father, shared some ways that he and his wife took care of their marriage:

> It [doing religious things together in our marriage] has helped it (the marriage) because
>
> having common things that we do together is helpful for marriage. It could be religious

practice, or it could be some hobbies that we have, that we can share.

The ways that participants expressed engaging in self-care processes varied across individuals, families, and religious beliefs, demonstrating that self-care is an individualized process. Although there may be categories (e.g. mental, physical, spiritual, social), the ways of engaging in each are diverse. Related processes in faith and family relationships will be discussed next.

Theme 5: Processes in Faith and Family Relationships

There were many ways that engaging in sacrifice and self-care processes appeared to influence faith and family relationships. For some participants, these processes affected their family relationships. Zhin, an Asian Presbyterian Christian mother, explained how taking care of herself spiritually influenced her mentally and emotionally:

When I'm closer with God, again, I'm more aware of the things I say, and I'm more able to control my emotions. All the patience and moodiness, and I think it is very important, as a woman, especially.

Alma, a White LDS husband, appeared to have recognized the impact his mood and subsequent actions would have on his family. He shared what he did to avoid negatively impacting his family:

I get a chance to drive home, and take in a scenery, and calm down a little bit [after] having a bad day. Getting home, there are times that I really need a little bit of space, I really need to maybe to sit down, and get on the Internet, and do my own thing for a little bit, because I have the personal flaw [of] having a pretty quick and hot temper. I recognize that and I don't wanna lash out at my wife or my kids just because I've had a bad day at work.

Shing, a Chinese Christian father, shared how taking care of himself spiritually directly influenced relationships in his life:

> When I had a good relationship with God, near to God; I would be nicer to her [my wife] naturally. When my spiritual life was not stable, I found that my behavior would not be that good. This reflects that when we had a good relationship with God, we would have a good relationship with others.

Miriam, a White Jewish mother, expressed how sacrificing to observe religious practices was beneficial for her family:

> Although it's hard in this day and age and we're not Orthodox, but we're trying to do more around Shabbat (Sabbath) observance. . . . We are trying to be more observant of Shabbat by spending time together as a family, and I think that's strengthening for a couple to sort of put everything else aside for an entire day, which is hard, and spend that time together.

Sometimes participants shared how their own actions influenced family relationships and other times they shared how the acts of other family members impacted the family. Jennifer, a White Jehovah's Witness mother, said:

> When the Bible talks about the husband loving his wife as Jesus loved the congregation, it's self-sacrificing. I know many, many times, Mark does what we, the family, wants. That he would prefer not to do, or to not do as much of something, because he knows it's good for the family. I mean that's amazing to me.

When discussing sacrifice or self-care at the intersection of faith and family, most participants discussed the positive influences from such processes. However, occasionally a participant shared how these processes negatively impacted family relationships. When talking

about how her conversion to Islam had affected her relationships with her family-of-origin, Lamiah, an East Indian Muslim wife, a second-generation immigrant who was significantly more observant than her parents, said:

> I`m from [a] New Orleans family and the drinking is a part of life in that community, and I don't drink anymore, which at first was very difficult for them to accept, much less appreciate. Mardi Gras requires [drinking] and so [do] crawfish boils and BBQs, and weddings, and deaths, and funerals and everything else. It's a social bond as well, not just a physical bond, but it's a social bond, so I think in giving up that, in some cases, you give up social bonds—it broke social bonds.

Rhonda, an African American Non-Denominational Christian mother, conveyed how she struggled having to sacrifice more than expected for one of her children. Although the experience was difficult, she chose to not focus on how hard it was:

> [My child] really changed me and changed my life. She was a challenge. It was a good thing. It taught me how to accept people, regardless of who they are, unconditionally. It also showed me that I could rise to the occasion, and how much life is a sacrifice. You can go much further than what you think you can go. You can do much more than what you think you can do. It was a challenge, but in the midst of all the ups and downs, there was still joy and there was still love. It really did teach me a lot of things in a logical way, how life truly is, and how through all of that, you can live above your circumstances, if you truly depend upon God, truly trust God for everything.

A few families shared experiences where they simultaneously discussed relational processes of sacrifice and self-care. Desiree, an African American Methodist mother, shared one such experience:

> We share our role, so that whenever I'm not there, or I'm frustrated, my husband takes
> over. So we're complementary of each other, one can be stern, the other the comforter . . .
> I'm with my kids all the time because I work at home. So sometimes I get frustrated
> because I'm always here and they're always asking me questions. Because Jerome works
> at night, he sleeps. Sometimes I get up to the hilt and I have to call for reinforcement,
> backup and I say, "I'm just leaving" and he comes down. I come back thinking my house
> is going to be a wreck and my house is clean and my kids are clean, my kids are calmed
> down. So we just complement each other.

The relational processes of sacrifice and self-care can individually impact family life. However, perhaps finding a way to bring these two processes together may help families to have a more fulfilling family life.

Discussion

This study employed rigorous, team-based qualitative methods to explore the relationship between sacrifice and self-care as relational processes among in-depth interviews with 198 highly religious families from across America. Secondary analyses included conceptual coding and grounded coding methods to improve internal validity. Multiple pairs of coders were used for each phase and type of analysis to improve reliability. This study explored the tensions that families seemed to experience both sacrifice and self-care processes, as well as connections between sacrifice and self-care. Motivations and ways of engaging in sacrifice and self-care were explored, as well as related processes in faith and family relationships.

Conceptual Model

Figure 1 presents a conceptual process model illustrating how these findings may be connected to each other. The model is organized to illustrate the way that the relational processes

of sacrifice and self-care interact in family life using an interdependence theory approach. Types

of sacrifice and types of self-care are in boxes that would not perfectly fit together if they were

placed next to each other. This is to suggest that there is something about these two processes

that does not allow them to perfectly work together. The thick line between sacrifice and self-

care represents both the strong connections and the real tensions between these relational

processes that many participants expressed. Because participants reported different perceptions

of the connections and tensions between sacrifice and self-care at the intersection of their faith

and family relationships, there is a circle in the middle of this line of tension representing this

difference of perceptions. The perceptions of the connections and tensions between sacrifice and

self-care reportedly influenced participants' motivations for engaging in sacrifice and self-care as

well as related processes in their faith and family relationships. Some of the related processes

that were influenced by one's perception of the connections and tension between sacrifice and

self-care included: (1) how mutually beneficial sacrifice and/or self-care could be for those

involved, (2) how meaningful interactions were between family members, and (3) the extent to

which family members had correspondent goals, defined as goals from two people that become

aligned with each other (Impett et al., 2005). Participants also shared how their motivations were

often transformed from being selfish to being for the good of the relationship. This is illustrated

in the model by a direct connection from the motivations to the processes in faith and family

relationships. The feedback loop at the bottom represents a transformation of relationship

meaning, defined as the meaning one ascribes to his/her relationships being influenced by other

processes in faith and family relationships. Interdependence theory was used and referred to in

the model and further connections will be reviewed in more detail next.

Connections to Interdependence Theory

One assumption of interdependence theory is that relationships are worthy of study and exploration. This does not, however, remove the value of the self from the study of relationship processes (Impett et al., 2005; Impett & Gordon, 2010). Interdependence theory (Kelley, 1979; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) aims to explain close, romantic relationships by examining how partners interact and the influence of individual preferences and desires in the actions of each partner (Impett et al., 2005). These interactions between partners compose the relationship, but also establish the potential for tension between the self and the other. This illuminates the possibility for tension between sacrifice and self-care in romantic relationships (Rusbult & Arriaga, 1997; Whitton et al., 2007). This study extends this idea of tension between sacrifice and self-care to the family unit and explores how families interviewed in the study strived to address these tensions.

Addressing sacrifice and self-care tensions. Based on how many participants discussed caring for themselves and sacrificing for family members or for others, we can surmise that these families experienced tensions between sacrifice and self-care. These tensions were observed as some participants discussed how they struggled to realize that they could not only go about helping others, but they were also responsible to take care of themselves. Some participants seemed to struggle to figure out how much time they could set aside to sacrifice for others. The tensions experienced by participants regarding sacrifice and self-care in family relationships seem to have been personal experiences. Participants had different experiences, were brought up differently, and had different religious beliefs—even within the same religious congregation, or family.

Reasons for these tensions reportedly varied among participants. However, for some

participants, it appeared that some of the tensions they experienced came from religious

teachings. Many participants expressed religious teachings or beliefs that encouraged them to

sacrifice for others. A few participants shared their struggle to obey religious teachings about the

importance of caring for family members as well as caring for the self. Still, other participants

expressed how, because of their religious beliefs, they did not experience much tension between

sacrifice and self-care. Reasons for this expressed lack of tension were often due to participants

sharing a belief that when they chose to sacrifice for others, they would be blessed in a way that

would provide for their own needs to be met. It appears possible that one's religious beliefs may

both contribute to the tension between sacrifice and self-care as well as help one to overcome

this tension. It seems that the reasons one might have for experiencing varied degrees of tension

or connection between sacrifice and self-care are individualized.

        Because the tensions and reasons for the tensions appeared to be so individualized, it may

be hard to suggest general ways to help people manage these tensions. Some participants seemed

to provide some specific suggestions as to how they addressed these tensions and encouraged

others to do the same. Some participants shared a belief that by caring for themselves, in a

healthy manner, they were better able to sacrifice for others. Some research has also suggested

that sacrificing without consideration of the self may result in an overload of emotions and cause

more damage than good (Whitton et al., 2002). Some participants believed that God would bless

their needs to be taken care of as they sacrificed for others. In a study about generosity and its

effects, Smith and Davidson (2014) suggested that "by failing to care well for others, we actually

do not properly take care of ourselves" (p. 224). Smith (2015) also suggested that "the happiness

and flourishing of any given person is inextricably tied up with their promoting the happiness

and flourishing of *other* persons" (p. 10, italics in original). One Korean-American Christian

wife shared how difficult it was for her when they moved away from an area with lots of Korean immigrants:

> I was very happy there. They needed me and I needed them. . . . They were happy so I was happy. Here I [am not] needed [by] anybody. They are always busy with their job. I don't have the friends, I don't have the Bible study, I don't have anybody [to] serve. . . . I am here alone.

The optimal way for individuals to address the tensions of sacrifice and self-care may vary between individuals, but perhaps harmonizing sacrifice for others and self-care might be a more general positive way to address these tensions in faith and family relationships.

The tension one experiences within a family relationship may also be influenced by one's motivations. Interdependence theory draws on ideas from attachment theory to help explain how motivations are important influences of relational processes in romantic relationships (Impett et al., 2005; Impett & Gordon, 2010). Motivations for sacrifice in this literature are typically categorized as either approach or avoidance. In this study, approach or avoidance motivations were originally coded under relational motivations. However, approach and avoidance examples were also seen in discussions of religious motivations. Sometimes participants expressed a desire to be closer with God or more in line with religious ideals (approach) and other times they expressed a desire to avoid religious consequences or reprimands (avoidance). Approach and avoidance relational and religious motivations for sacrifice and self-care seem to be meaningful at the intersection of faith and family relationships.

A transformation of motivation, as explained by Interdependence Theory, may also be beneficial to understanding how participants addressed sacrifice and self-care tensions. A transformation of motivation occurs when one's motivation changes from being self-interested to

being focused on the good of the relationship (Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998; Rusbult & Arriaga, 1997). For one's motivations to be transformed to be for the good of the relationship, one must acknowledge one's partner and the partner's preferences. When these motivations are transformed, engagement in sacrifice and self-care becomes more meaningful in such a way that engagement in these processes becomes mutually beneficial for the family members involved (Kelly & Thibaut, 1978). When a family member is motivated to engage in sacrifice or self-care processes for the good of the relationship, all involved are more likely to benefit. Some family members discussed taking time to care for the self in order to be less stressed and more available for their family members. They were motivated by the good of the relationship and felt that not only did they benefit when they took time to calm down after a long work-day, but that their family members would also benefit. Because this sample was religious in nature, religious beliefs significantly impacted the ways that participants engaged in the processes of sacrifice and self-care, as discussed next.

Religion and Tensions Between Sacrifice and Self-Care Processes

Although connections and tensions between sacrifice and self-care are important for families to learn to address, religious beliefs can shape the way that families think about and address these tensions. Many participants seem to have categorized the relational processes of sacrifice and self-care as sacred. Other research has shown the power of making something sacred in family life (Mahoney, 2013; Mahoney et al., 2003; Volling, Mahoney & Rauer, 2009). The sanctifying power of religion was observed as some participants referred to sacred texts when sharing why they believed they should sacrifice. Others communicated that because of their religious beliefs, they were better able to address the tensions between sacrifice and self-care. Additionally, participants discussed how religious practices, (e.g., praying, reading sacred

texts, going to church) helped them when perceiving and managing these tensions. The potential power (positive or negative) of engaging in sacrifice or self-care is increased when the processes are perceived to be sacred.

A positive way that religion helped many participants address these tensions was through love. Many participants discussed how their love for God and for family members was a positive motivation. When participants engaged in sacrifice and self-care processes with love as a motivator, their experiences seem to have been more sacred, meaningful, and powerful. Many were reportedly happy to sacrifice when they could see others through a lens of love—a lens often derived from or reportedly influenced by religious beliefs. It is possible that religion may not only contribute to addressing sacrifice and self-care tensions, but may also contribute to the severity of the tension family members may experience between sacrifice and self-care.

Chi-square analyses were conducted to determine if significant differences existed between the number of times that males and females discussed issues relating to engaging in sacrifice and self-care as individual processes, as well as specific types, attitudes, and motivations of each process (see Tables 2 and 3). The only significant chi-square test was between the number of quotes found for sacrifice between sons and daughters included in this study ($p = .006$). All other chi-square difference tests were not significant. Research has shown that religion makes more of a difference for men than for women (Mahoney, Cano, & Petts, 2014; Salas-Write, Vaughn, & Maynard, 2014). Perhaps there is something about religiously-based marriage that teaches sacrifice to males in ways that are more heavily socialized to females earlier in life. Studies are needed that directly address how religion could positively or negatively affect the tensions between sacrifice and self-care in family life.

The Takeaway: How These Ideas Relate to All Marriages and Families

Although this study explored processes of sacrifice and self-care among highly religious families, these processes are not limited to impacting only religious families. Fundamentally, learning to address sacrifice and self-care is a core human challenge potentially affecting all human communities (e.g., marriages, families, friendships, schools, workplaces, local to national communities, etc). Thus, marriages and families are just two of the human communities that benefit when individuals learn to positively address connections and tensions between sacrifice and self-care processes.

Most new parents experience this tension in a powerful and time-consuming manner. When newborns come into the world, they are completely dependent on others—primarily their parents. New parents go through a major adjustment in a short period of time (Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Heinicke, 2002; Holmes, Huston, Vangelisti, & Guinn, 2013). Once the baby is born, they have to worry about feeding the new baby, at all times of the day and night, often sacrificing sleep. Because the needs of a new baby are so intense and never cease, new parents have to engage in many types of sacrifice (Bost, Cox, Burchinal, & Payne, 2002). They may not be able to leave their baby for the time it would take to participate in a desired activity, they may not be able to find someone to watch the baby, or they may have to change habits because they have a small child to bring along. Although having a new baby requires many sacrifices from new parents, new parents need to make sure to take care of themselves. New parents still need some sleep, although they may have to change what they consider an acceptable number of hours of sleep (Loutzenhiser, McAuslan, & Sharpe, 2014). They still need to eat healthy, exercise, and have some social interactions. Many new mothers even endure postpartum depression and need to find ways to care for their mental state in such a way that they can be able to provide what

their children need (Grote & Bledsoe, 2007). For some, this may mean accepting the help of family, friends, or nannies.

Families experience tensions between sacrifice and self-care throughout many phases of life. As children grow and the number of children in a given family increases, the way that families sacrifice and care for themselves vary. These processes also change when family members become ill or die. Although sacrifice and self-care can be fluid, it is vital to understand what these tensions look like among many different families and relationships. Through understanding a variety of experiences, we can better recognize how families positively address these tensions and potentially provide resources to help those who are unsure about how to address these tensions.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations. While the sample size of this study is particularly large compared to most qualitative studies, only highly religious families were sampled. Interfaith families, slightly religious, or nonreligious families were not interviewed. Examining the relationship between sacrifice and self-care among these other kinds of families would greatly add to our understanding of sacrifice and self-care in family relationships. Only 84 of the 476 participants were children (from 55 families). Future studies should also include more children to better understand these issues as children see them. While the families for this study were from 17 states throughout the United States of America, the findings are not generalizable. Although not generalizable, there is still information to be gleaned from exploring sacrifice and self-care in families among this highly religious sample.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations of this study, it may help shed light on the connections and

tensions that religious families experience when attempting to engage in caring for the self and sacrificing for others. Motivations may influence how one engages in sacrifice or self-care processes as well as the associated family relationship processes. This study demonstrates that many families of faith struggle with knowing when and how much effort to put into helping others and into caring for themselves. For the families interviewed for this study, the connections and tensions between sacrifice and self-care appear to have varied on an individual level. The specific ways in which these families and family members perceived the connections and tensions they experienced, how they sacrificed for others, and how they took care of themselves were varied. However, many seemed to find (or were striving towards positive and meaningful) ways of managing sacrifice and self-care. Being able to positively address sacrifice and self-care in family relationships may provide a promising way for families to build and strengthen family relationships.

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Table 1.

Number and Percent of Families by Religious-Ethnic Community

Religious-Ethnic Community	Number of Families	Percent of Families
Black Christian	**26**	**13%**
African American	26	13%
Catholic & Orthodox Christian	**21**	**11%**
African American	1	1%
Hispanic	7	4%
Native American	3	2%
White	10	5%
Evangelical Christian	**47**	**24%**
African American	1	1%
Asian American	24	12%
Hispanic	1	1%
Native American	6	3%
White	15	8%
Jewish	**31**	**16%**
White	31	16%
Latter-day Saint Christian	**28**	**14%**
African American	2	1%
Hispanic	3	2%
Pacific Islander	1	1%
White	22	11%
Mainline Christian	**20**	**10%**
Asian American	1	1%
Native American	1	1%
White	18	9%
Muslim	**25**	**13%**
African American	2	1%
East Asian	6	3%
Middle Eastern	17	9%
TOTAL	**198**	**100%**

Table 2.

Times Genders Spoke About Sacrifice and Self-Care

	Male		Female	
Process	Parent	Child	Parent	Child
Sacrifice	274	31	264	57
Self-care	37	1	39	3
Sacrifice + Self-care	12	0	24	0
TOTAL	**323**	**32**	**327**	**61**
	305		**321**	

Table 3.

Number of Quotes Based on Gender

Gender	Sacrifice	Self-Care	Combination[g]
Only female	190[a]	32[d]	15
Only male	178[b]	29[e]	6
Male and female	70[c]	7[f]	5
TOTAL	**439**	**26**	**68**

[a]152 of the 190 only female quotes for sacrifice were from mothers, 33 were from daughters, and the other 5 were from a mother-daughter combination.
[b]166 of the 178 only male quotes for sacrifice were from fathers, and the other 12 were from sons.
[c]54 of the 70 male and female quotes for sacrifice were between spouses, 14 were between any variation of parent-child interaction, and the remaining 2 were from brother-sister interactions.
[d]29 of the 31 only female quotes for self-care were from mothers, 2 were from daughters, and 1 was from a mother-daughter interaction.
[e]28 of the 29 only male quotes for self-care were from fathers, and 1 was from a son.
[f]All 7 male and female quotes for self-care were from mother and father interactions.
[g]All sacrifice plus self-care combination quotes were from parents.
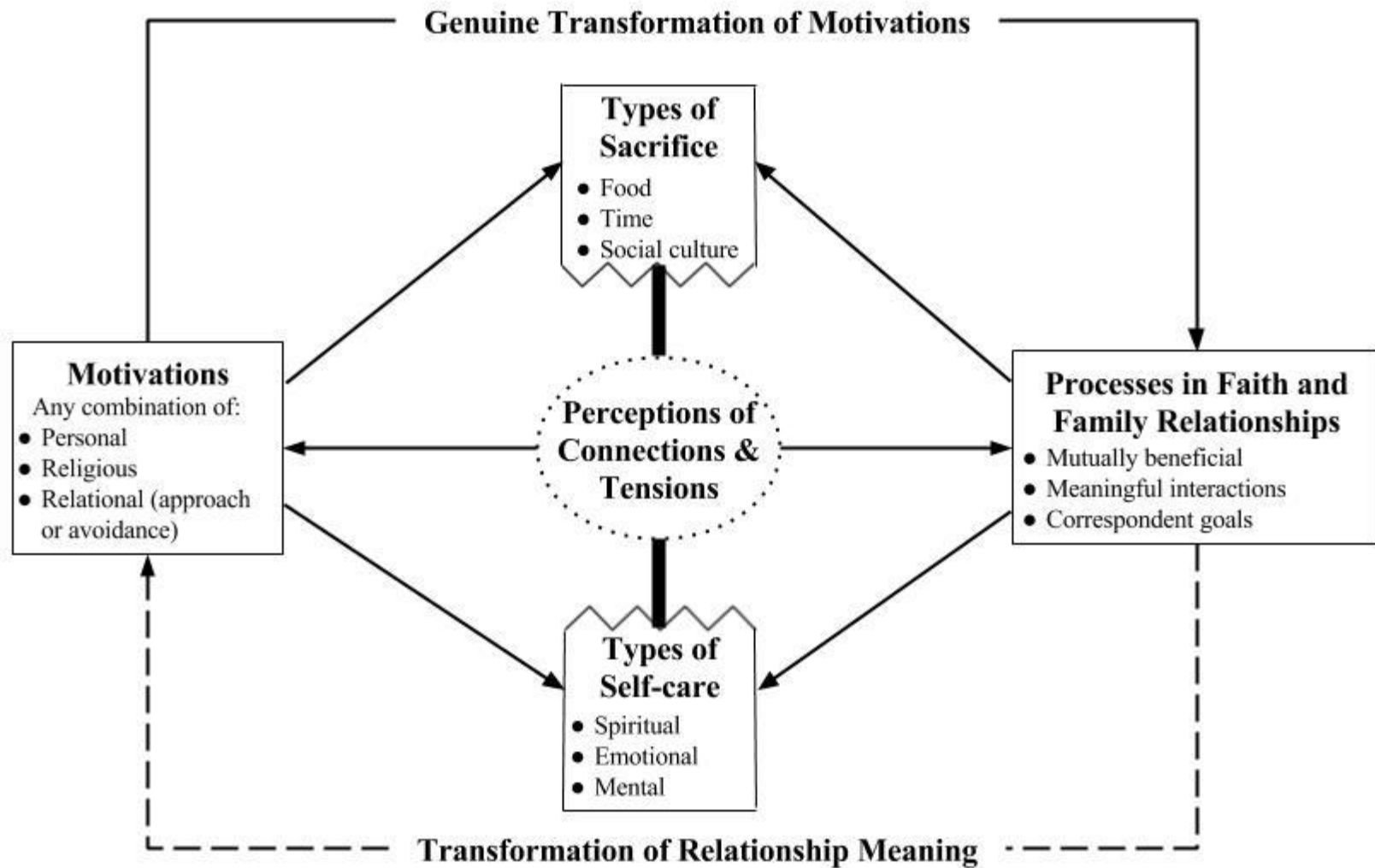
Figure 1. Sacrifice and Self-Care as Relational Processes in Family Relationships.
A conceptual model demonstrating connections between Interdependence Theory and sacrifice and self-care in family relationships.

Appendix A

Additional Literature Review

Types of sacrifice. Some may have sacrificed all they had before looking for how they would feed themselves or their families. Some Muslims sacrifice goats on occasion (e.g., during the Hajj – pilgrimage to Mecca – and the Aqiqah – celebration of a newborn child). In both cases the meat is typically given to the poor (Zakyi, 2013). Some Ultra-Orthodox Jews sacrifice a rooster or hen as a personal atonement the day before Yom Kippur–the Day of Atonement. Most Christians do not sacrifice animals, but believe Christ was sacrificed for them.

Family and religion scholars Dollahite et al. (2009) explored why religious youth sacrifice and found that youth sacrificed in five domains: societal expectations, popular culture, comforts and pleasures, time and activities, and peer relations. These domains may not be limited to youth. One can sacrifice any of these things actively or passively.

Active versus passive sacrifice pertains to a person's attitudes regarding the type of sacrifice being made (Impett & Gable, 2008). Active sacrifice refers to when someone chooses to do something they did not want to do. Passive sacrifice refers to when someone decides to forego doing something they wanted to do for someone else or for a relationship. Whether one passively or actively sacrifices might be related to one's motivation to sacrifice, which will be discussed next.

Motivations to sacrifice. Social psychologists Swann et al. (2014) found that there was a disconnect between believing in the morality of choosing to sacrifice for others and acting on these beliefs. Perhaps motivations play a part in determining whether one choses to act upon a thought to sacrifice. Additional literature regarding relational and religious motivations will be discussed next.

Relational motivations. Impett et al. (2005) conducted a "short-term longitudinal study" where they found that couples in a dating relationship who sacrificed for approach reasons increased the likelihood that couples would still be together three months later, whereas the couples who sacrificed because of avoidance motivations were more likely to have split up three months later.

Whether one sacrifices for approach or avoidance reasons can be influenced by situations, individual tendencies (see review by Impett & Gordon, 2008), and commitment levels (Whitton et al., 2007). Individuals that are more hopeful might be more likely to hope for affiliation and love whereas those who are more fearful might be more likely to fear rejection (see review by Impett & Gordon, 2008).

Perceptions of motivations have also been found to impact the influence of sacrifice in relationships (Impett et al, 2005; see review by Impett & Gordon, 2008; Rusbult & Arriaga, 1997; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). One may perceive that one's partner is sacrificing due to being motivated by love or a desire for closeness (approach). This recognition contributes to one's emotions towards his or her partner being affected in a positive manner (see review by Impett & Gordon, 2008). One may be more likely to reciprocate and sacrifice for one's partner if one feels like her/his partner is sacrificing for those kinds of reasons. Religious motivations could also play a part in whether or not one chooses to sacrifice.

Religious motivations. One's religious beliefs may influence one's motivations to sacrifice on a greater scale, but there are also specific beliefs and practices within religion that may influence one's motivations to sacrifice for family members. Dollahite et al. (2009) found

that religious youth sacrificed to connect with God and their faith traditions. These motivations to sacrifice seemed to stem from their religious beliefs and traditions. Family scholars and psychologists have found that prayer can help spouses to sacrifice in a way that benefits their relationship (Fincham et al., 2008). Prayer can help spouses to think of each other, can prompt them to be more loving towards each other, and can encourage willingness to sacrifice (Marks, 2008). A belief about an after-life may also influence one's motivations to sacrifice for family members (Hamilton et al., 2013). Motivations to sacrifice affect the outcome of the act, but so does one's willingness to follow through on the action.

Willingness to sacrifice. Willingness to sacrifice is influenced by many factors. The more committed one is to a relationship, the more likely one is to sacrifice for that relationship (Impett & Gordon, 2010). Commitment is marked by a higher dependence level to a partner, a long-term orientation when thinking about the future of the relationship, a communal orientation towards the relationship ("we" instead of "I"), and by one being psychologically attached to his or her partner (Impett & Gordon, 2010). Social psychologists Powell and Van Vugh (2003) found that along with commitment, one needs to consider the cost level of the potential sacrifice to determine one's willingness to sacrifice. Another factor that influences willingness to sacrifice is one's desire to reciprocate sacrifices that one's partner has already made (Impett & Gordon, 2010).

One's willingness to sacrifice is part of the idea of generosity within relationships (Dew & Wilcox, 2013). Greater generosity within a relationship is related to greater marital satisfaction. Stanley et al. (2006) found that one's willingness to sacrifice may induce feelings of safety and security which could aid the development of relationships. Whitton et al. (2002) also found a willingness to sacrifice to be related to stable and healthy relationships. Willingness to sacrifice could stem from the degree to which one may identify with the person or group for whom one is sacrificing (Swann et al., 2009), especially when one focuses on the shared characteristics with said group/individual (Swann et al., 2014). Swann et al., (2009) used the term "fused" to refer to cases when one deeply identifies with a given group while maintaining a strong personal identity. Gomez et al. (2011) argued that the measure of fusion is supposed "to tap familial sentiments toward the group" and that because this led to a "synergistic relationship of the person to the group, . . . fused persons do not merely know what they can do for other group members, they are highly motivated to do it" (pp. 930-931). The shared characteristics can be either positive or negative to influence one's willingness to sacrifice and thus the probability of following through on the thought to sacrifice.

Self-Care

Types of self-care. One may understand what self-care entails for him/herself, but engaging in self-care is different than thinking about it (Furlong & Wuest, 2008). Sometimes realizations of need for self-care come when it is "too late" and health or mental problems have set in; it is important to recognize one's need for self-care before it is "too late." Nurses Furlong & Wuest (2008) suggested a few ways to help one engage in self-care: (1) balancing— "restricting both personal sacrifices and caregiving commitments"; (2) creating routines; and (3) getting away—"partaking in activities that are meant to be enjoyed by [the] self" (p. 1668). Although one may know what self-care is and how to do it for her/himself, there may still be barriers keeping one from following through.

Barriers to self-care. Many studies have found that individuals understand self-care processes, but have a hard time carrying out these processes. . . . Being able to prioritize one's own needs while balancing the needs of others was also found to be a barrier to self-care (Barker

& Wisner, 2013; Radina et al., 2014; Vidler, 2005). Another possible barrier to self-care is a lack of self-care worthiness. Self-care worthiness has been defined as "the degree to which [an individual] believes that they deserve physical, emotional, social, and/or spiritual sustenance" (Furlong & Wuest, 2008, p. 1665). Although Furlong and Wuest are nurses and applied self-care worthiness to caregivers, this definition can be broadened to a wider population. If one does not believe that she/he is worthy of something, one may be less likely to act in a manner that will get her/him what was desired.

Religion may be viewed as a barrier to self-care. Studies have examined how having significant time demands may negatively influence how one is able to engage in self-care (Barkin & Wisner, 2013; Radina et al., 2014). Religious teachings and beliefs can place demands on people – time or otherwise – and one's feelings of obligation to these demands may keep one from engaging in self-care. However, religion may also be seen as a way of overcoming difficulties in life (Burr et al., 2012), including barriers to self-care. Religious beliefs may help one to change his/her perspective on a situation, which may influence one's willingness to engage in self-care. Being able to overcome barriers to self-care allows one to experience the possible benefits.

Appendix B

Personal Reflexivity Statement

As a human being, I feel that there are many things pulling for my attention. Among the many things vying for my efforts and attention, I feel a desire to care for myself (mentally, spiritually, and physically) as well as a desire to help those around me (friends, family members, an occasional stranger, etc). Knowing how to address these tensions is something that I have struggled with most of my life.

LDS Culture and Sacrifice

As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I feel a unique sense of obligation to care for others. We are consistently taught, encouraged, and asked to serve others. We make covenants to sacrifice for others and accept callings where we volunteer to continuously sacrifice in a given capacity for a period of time. We are taught to accept callings because they come from God—there is a sacred nature about our callings that makes them important. I see callings as opportunities to grow in the Gospel, to help others strengthen their testimonies, to serve others. I have had times in my life where I haven't had a calling and I have felt like I am missing something in my life – service opportunities. Although callings and the time required to fulfill them can be difficult, I am so grateful for the opportunity I have to hold and fulfill a calling. The adults of the church are also asked to complete home or visiting teaching assignments. Home and visiting teaching assignments are callings extended to ward members, although not always thought of in this way because individuals are not sustained nor set apart. Youth are asked to complete programs outside of church meetings to teach them gospel principles, including the importance of serving others.

Many of the lessons we teach or participate in, or talks we hear discuss the importance of service. Covenants are made in sacred places that more specifically reference sacrificing. We learn that under the law of Moses, followers sacrificed animals. We discuss how the way we sacrifice changed when Christ was resurrected—now we are asked to give a broken heart and a contrite spirit. I think many of us tack on "and time, and food, and money, and talents," and many other things. We talk about how Christ served others (I think service is very similar to sacrifice because service often requires a sacrifice of time and effort at minimum). We spend a lot of time focusing on Christ as the ultimate sacrifice – the scriptures use phrases such as "great and last sacrifice" and "infinite and eternal sacrifice" (Alma 34:10) to communicate the importance of Christ's sacrifice for us. I will come back to how the focus on Christ's ultimate sacrifice for us translates to our implementation of sacrifice a little later.

LDS Culture and Self-Care

Our religion focuses so much on sacrifice. What do we do to help people care for themselves? I think that we do a decent job talking about making sure that one is spiritually strong. We talk about how to gain, develop, and strengthen a personal testimony. We talk about making sure we are "in-tune" with the Spirit. We spend so much time and effort encouraging members to spend personal time praying and reading their scriptures in hopes that these processes will help them develop a relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, and therefore help develop their spirits so that they will be spiritually strong and immovable. We explain that this takes time and is a life-long endeavor. Once one has a testimony, one has to continually work on keeping it strong to avoid losing it, which could be stated as one has to continually care for his/her spirit.

However, I'm not sure we are superb at encouraging physical and mental self-care. Yes, we have the Word of Wisdom, which is to help us care for our bodies, but how many of us pull out Doctrine and Covenants 89 often to study what we are supposed to do to care for our bodies? If you do, kudos to you! The Word of Wisdom gives general guidelines, but it is still up to the individual to determine how to best implement this guidance. But even this guidance from scripture says nothing about physical exercise. We occasionally discuss how it's our responsibility to care for the bodies we have been given, but we do not have specific guidelines about how to do so (apart from the Word of Wisdom), and I'm not sure we need specific guidelines. We might encourage sports nights for youth and young adults. If you live where there is snow, you might be asked to shovel the snow on church property occasionally, but not many discussions revolve around the importance of about physical exercise. We are not very good at discussing mental health—although Elder Holland's recent General Conference address about mental illness has helped encourage a positive culture shift.

My Struggle

With the teachings of the church and the lessons I experienced growing up, I feel like I have been struggling to know just how much I need to do, and can do (yes, I feel like there is often an order—first there is the "should do" or "need to do" followed by the "what can I actually do?") to serve others. When can I or should I take time for myself? How do I take the time I feel like I need to care for myself spiritually, mentally, and physically when I'm supposed to be serving and sacrificing for my family, friends, and ward/stake members?

I have struggled with feeling like I am supposed to take care of everyone else and completely forget about myself. After all, we are taught "to forget yourself and go to work" in the service of others. We are taught that if we do what we are asked, it will all be ok. I feel like we are mostly asked to serve and sacrifice. How can it all be ok if all I do is sacrifice for others? How can I take care of myself if I'm always focused on helping others? How can I take care of myself without letting others, especially God, down? How can I care for myself and still be able to sacrifice for others in the way that I perceive I'm expected to sacrifice? Can I ever say no to sacrificing for someone? Is saying no a sin? Will I be looked down upon or perceived as not caring just because I say no, even if no is not my go-to answer? Can I say no to service/sacrifice and still be happy?

I continuously struggle with how to come to grips with serving others and taking care of myself – I believe that I'm not the only one who struggles with this. In talking about these struggles with my parents one evening, my parents shared with me a story about a friend of theirs. This friend had been asked to help plan an activity (not necessarily church related, if I remember right). She already had a lot on her plate and wasn't sure that she would be able to do what had been asked of her, but she felt like she could not say no so she said she would plan the activity. She then thought about a friend of hers whom she often relied on to help her and thought that with her friend, the two of them would be able to pull off planning this activity. She called the friend and asked for her help. This woman's friend responded something akin to "I feel so honored that you would think of me and trust me to help get the job done. However, if I were to help you with this, I would not be able to give enough time to my other responsibilities. Maybe next time."

My parents were trying to help me realize that they thought it was ok for me to say no when the cost to my other responsibilities/to others was too great. We all have many responsibilities. For some of us, saying no comes easier than others, but perhaps being able to provide the most beneficial service to others and ourselves, comes in understanding when to say

"yes, I will" and when to say, "I'm sorry, not this time." Perhaps this greater understanding comes from having a broader perspective as to who needs what and when. As humans, we may not be able to come to know of this broader perspective, but God does and we can be prompted via His Spirit about how to act in accordance with His perspective.

I still struggle with managing the tensions between sacrifice and self-care in my own life. However, I have found a combination of things that have helped me better address these tensions. Everyone needs to figure out what works best for them, as what has helped me may or may not help anyone else. I have found that as I learn from Christ—His life and His teachings—I can better address these tensions.

What We Can Learn from Christ

Christ experienced tension between sacrifice and self-care when he called out to his Father, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). He was being called upon to sacrifice for all of humanity in a way that none of us can fathom. He wanted to care for himself by not having to go through all of the pain that he knew was coming. However, he addressed this tension by turning His will to his Father's. I think this is a wise example. When Christ made his Father's will become his own, then the process he chose to engage in became powerful and meaningful. I think the same thing can happen for us.

When we turn our will to Christ's, the process that we engage in becomes more positively powerful and meaningful. I believe that often our Heavenly Father desires that we engage in sacrifice for our brothers and sisters. I also believe that Heavenly Father desires that we take care of ourselves spiritually, mentally, and physically. He understands context, timing, and situations better than we can in our imperfect state. He knows when we need to take time to care for ourselves. He knows when we need to forget ourselves and think about and serve others. When we turn our will over to His, we can be guided as to which process is best in any given moment. Yes, we need to make sure we are in-tune with His Spirit in order to be guided as to which process is appropriate in any given moment and this requires some spiritual self-care. However, once we demonstrate a desire to make our will align with Heavenly Father, we will be blessed with the Spirit and promptings about which process may be more important to engage in.

I think it is important to acknowledge that sometimes Heavenly Father may allow us to struggle through the tension between sacrifice and self-care and come to our own conclusions and decisions. I know this is hard because I have experienced it so often. These are times where the Lord shows His trust in us. I know it can be hard to made decisions, but I also know that the Lord will let us know when we make a wrong one and then we can course correct and know better for the next time. How grateful I am that Christ performed the great sacrifice of the Atonement which allows me to better address the tensions between sacrifice and self-care in my life as well as repent when I incorrectly address this tension.

An Eternal Perspective of Sacrifice and Self-Care

As I have pondered sacrifice and self-care and the tension I often feel, I started to ponder about what these processes might mean in the eternal scheme of things. By searching for an eternal perspective, I hoped that I could find a way to feel more confident with how to approach the tensions between sacrifice and self-care.

I think that we will always need to care for ourselves spiritually. We will still have agency after our physical bodies pass away and therefore we will need to continually build and strengthen our testimonies of Christ. I'm not sure that we will need to care for our bodies after we are resurrected. We need to take care of our bodies while on this earth for a few reasons: (1)

we need to show gratitude for the gift of a body, (2) by taking care of our bodies we can better enjoy the gift of agency, and (3) we can enjoy our earthly experience more when we have the use of a healthy body. These reasons to take time and effort to care for ourselves will no longer exists once we have died physically. When we are resurrected, our bodies and our minds will be perfected and we will not have to worry about taking time to care for ourselves in the ways that we need to while on earth.

I believe that sacrifice is a more eternal process that is very important for us to understand and engrave upon our souls. We do not know much about what to expect after we die and are resurrected, but we can learn from the tidbits we have been given about what life is like beyond the veil. We know that our Heavenly Father, an eternal resurrected being, sacrificed His Son for us. He sacrificed to provide a way for us to be close to Him for eternity. He loves us and wants to interact with us forever. There is obviously something powerful about sacrifice, even throughout eternity. Because sacrifice is an eternal, relational process, we have been given guidelines and covenants to help us learn how to engage in sacrifice.

When contemplating this eternal perspective, I find a peace that helps me address the tension between sacrifice and self-care. As long as my relationships are what I am focused on, the tensions will be much more manageable. I only need to care for myself enough to make sure that I will be able to care for others. To be able to care for others, I need to make sure that my mind and body are strong and working as properly as possible. My focus should be more on sacrifice than on self-care. As I look for how to help others and build relationships through sacrifice, I believe that because I will be practicing an eternal principle my efforts to care for myself will be magnified and I may not need to take as much time for myself.

Appendix C

Codebook and Coding Themes for Primary and Secondary Analyses

Table C4.

Codebook for Primary Coding

Name	[9a] Self-Care	[9b] Sacrifice
Description	Make sure to take care of self.	Care, for others, that requires some degree of self-denial and moving out of one's comfort zone and/or away from convenience.
Inclusion criteria	Taking care of the self for religious reasons.	Sacrificing for religion/ability to practice beliefs. Physical actions
Exclusion criteria	Taking care of others; ignoring one's needs.	Caring for self; ignoring others' needs.
Typical exemplars	"It is a time to just be spiritually selfish and to fill up our bucket" "Usually I focus on looking for Jesus Christ…that helps me to calm down and to feel better"	Driving several hours to attend church.
Atypical exemplars	"I think it will hurt marriage and family if someone devoted too much time to church. It's important to balance well between church and family"	Teenagers choosing to sacrifice social acceptance in order to fully live their religion.
When combined/ best of both	Channel sincerely offered personal effort into service that enriches the lives of *all* who are involved; it should leave *all* parties changed for the better.	

Table C5.

Sub-Themes Used in Secondary Coding of Sacrifice Data

Grounded Theory Perspective	Conceptual Coding Perspective

Types of Sacrifice
    Spiritual, prayer, rituals, charity, selfless, health, food, time, prioritization, family, school, social culture, social, vacations, work, financial, places lived, sports or recreation
Discipline or Effort Involved
Challenges or Difficulties Involved
Roles and Identity Associated with Sacrifice
    Self, male, female, family, children, couple, parents, religious, peculiar
The Location of the Sacrifice
    Church, home, school, work, recreation
For Whom the Sacrifice was Made
    Parents, children, spouse, family, church, God, self, others
Outcomes of the Sacrifice
    Perceived disadvantages, emotions, different lifestyle, personal habits, political views, purified or sanctified, becoming selfless, benefits self, benefits couple, benefits children, benefits family, financial, benefits other people
Motivation or Reason to Sacrifice
    Faith, God, spiritual duty, religious custom or tradition, love, family, children, spouse, parents, social, health, self-gratification, social culture, others
	Who was Sacrificing
	    Person quoted, a family member, someone else
	What the Sacrifice Gave Meaning to
	    Relationship with self, relationship with family, relationship with church, relationship with God, other
	Perceptions of Sacrifice
	    Expected, observed, a burden, a privilege, demanded, willingly given
	For Whom was the Sacrifice Made
	    God, a parent, spouse, child, extended family member, friend, acquaintance, stranger
	Outcome of the Sacrifice (for person sacrificing and person who received the sacrifice)
	    Helpful, harmful
	Motivation or Reason to Sacrifice
	    Reasons of approach and love, reasons of avoidance and fear
	Sacrifice Recognized by Recipient
	    Recognized, Unnoticed

Table C6.

Sub-Themes Used in Coding Self-Care Data

Grounded Theory Perspective	Conceptual Coding Perspective

Types of Self-Care
    Spiritual, prayer, ritual, prioritization, social, health, time, financial
Discipline or Effort Involved
Challenges or Difficulties Involved
Roles and Identity Associated with Self-Care
    Male, female, family, couple, children, religious, peculiar
The Location of the Self-Care
    Church, work, school, home, recreation
Outcomes of the Self-Care
    Emotions, personal habits, political views, becoming selfless, purified or sanctified, benefits self, benefits couple, benefits children, benefits family, financial, benefits other people
Motivation or Reason to Self-Care
    Faith, God, love, family, social, health, self-gratification
	Types of Self-Care
	    Emotional, mental, spiritual, social, physical
	Whom the Self-Care was for
	    The person quoted, a family member, someone else
	Who was Involved in the Self-Care
	    God, family members, friends, the self, others
	Outcome of the Self-Care
	    Helpful, harmful
	Motivation or Reason to Self-Care
	    Feeling forced, personal desire, other

Appendix D

Additional Findings

Tensions

Sometimes the tension that participants seemed to experience between sacrifice and self-care in family life was influenced by personal perceptions of what was expected of them. Those expectations could have come from their own thoughts, from perceived expectations from others, or perceived expectations coming from religious beliefs. Joelle, an African American Christian wife, shared how she only cared about one point of view when confronted with this tension:

This new thing when they say you know do something for yourself, take time out for yourself. It's not very fulfilling I don't care what they say unless it is God ordained that you take that time off, not that you take it but that it be given to you. That's the big difference.

Motivations

Personal motivations. Several participants mentioned how when they chose to sacrifice, they would notice that they felt good afterwards. Sometimes this was a natural consequence of their actions, and other times participants sought out this feeling and sacrificed in order to feel good. Kay, a White LDS father, said:

[There] are definitely opportunities to feel good about what you do. I'm currently helping a young lady, a single mom, it's just kids and the mom. [I] go every week and take care of the yard. It's nice to go and do that.

Occasionally motivations were intertwined. Sometimes when this occurred, one chose to act for personal reasons that were founded upon religious convictions. Ibrahim, an Indian Muslim father, shared why he wanted to care for himself, and felt others should do the same:

Islam says that you, under all circumstances, you have tried to do your best, because Allah says, people who don't help themselves, I do not help them. So, you can accept everything, but if you're not helping yourself, you know that nothing is going to change, because the God is not willing to help people who are not willing to help themselves.

When Ibrahim said this, he connected it to feeling bad about those who are in poverty. He expressed desires to help them, but also believed that his efforts would not be able to pull these people out of their situations.

Relational motivations. At times participants expressed how they had chosen to serve family members or even members of their religious congregation because they loved these people and wanted to continue to build a relationship with them. Cassandra, a White LDS mother, expressed how love motivated her year-round service for youth members of her congregation:

I don't see it as a sacrifice personally because I love those girls that were up there . . . all those beautiful little girls from church that I know and seen grow up with my kids and have [a] relationship with and maybe women up there that I have great friendships with. It's a ton of work . . . The hours before, we plan it for a year and build it for a year. My dad just teases us because its constantly meetings for camp and this and that. But that whole week becomes kind of a labor of love.

Cindy, an African American Baptist wife, also participated in a labor of love. However, it seems that her efforts were more taxing than Cassandra's were. Cindy shared:

My mom lives in Virginia; I live in Georgia, and anytime that I can get to go there to help

the sister that's caring for her I can do it. It can be stressful because my immediate family here needs me as well, and I feel like I'm caught in between the families, and I know where I should be is with my family, but my mom needs the help too, and then I want to help relieve my sister who's the only one that's caring for her, and so that's kind of stressful for me, and I have a situation coming up in November where I already know that she wants me to come which means I have enough time that I can try to plan for it, but it's very stressful knowing that I have to go out and care for my mom.

Like Cindy, other participants appeared to have felt like they had several situations that called for their sacrifice, but that they were unable to sacrifice in every situation. It was hard for participants to determine which situation was most important at the moment to sacrifice for.

James, a White Catholic teenager, shared how his family sacrificed every week to be together:

It's a lot of family time like when you say grace with everybody . . . that time is time that you set aside to spend with your family. I think that, yeah, we're making it important or we make it central in that sense because it's kind of like the time when we just kind of sit back and really take a break from what you're doing in your busy schedule.

Religious Motivations. Some participants expressed their religious motivations in terms of how religious beliefs and convictions personally influenced their thoughts and actions. Others expressed how their religious beliefs prescribed what was expected of them. Hakim, an Arab-American Muslim father shared how his religious convictions influenced his thoughts about caring for himself:

Now when God told me in this life, "Don't do this," I fully believe that I don't do this, because it's not good for me. It's not because God wants to prevent me from enjoying something. Because I believe that God created me, and He knows what's good for me and what's not good for me.

Ibrahim, Indian Muslim father, shared what his religion prescribed for him to sacrifice during the month of Ramadan:

It's not just abstaining from food. The whole idea behind Ramadan is you try to live a pure a life, you stay away from anything that's not good. All the bad things. Even your behavior, you're not supposed to tell any lies, even unintentionally. You're not supposed to speak badly about anybody, the backbiting type thing. And all your behavior, you're supposed to go out of your way and help other people, your neighbors, the poor. Because a part of Ramadan is the concept of *Zakat*, which is charity. And two-and-a-half percent of your wealth has to be shared with poor people. So that happens during the month of Ramadan.

Types of Sacrifice

Malinda, a Charismatic Episcopalian mother, shared how hard it was for her and her husband to sacrifice time together for religious causes:

I think mostly time. Because then we'll have maybe one week we'll be really booked, like we'll have a home group and we'll have worship team and maybe we'll go to Wednesday night or he'll go to rector's council where he's doing seminary and they just can't believe, "Well he's gone once a month?" And I think that's where the enemy will try to set in. He sees that wedge and he'll try to make a wife ticked off. Oh your husband's gone so much. I mean even his own mother's tried that and the enemy really tried to work it. And I think time, because everybody cherishes time.

Malinda's husband, Jimmy, also expressed how he felt that they were to sacrifice their will or

their desires:

> What does God want? So we don't really talk about kids. I say kids are a blessing, she says kids are a blessing. If we're going to have more kids, it's up to God, but not "I want two" and "I want three." And our shared vision, "What am I going to do? Well I don't know, if I'm a priest someday, that's fine. If we live in this house, fine." There's things you'd like to do but they become second to what's God's will. I'd like to travel a lot, but that's not in God's plan, then obviously and I'm not doing anything to blow that by being rebellious, then the best thing for me is to do what God has for me. So your vision again becomes unified.

It appears that as Malinda and Jimmy strive to sacrifice their own will, they are able to come together as a couple. Perhaps this helps them when they struggle with how much time they feel they are asked to give up.

Types of Self-Care

The ways that participants engaged in acts of self-care were very individualized and varied. Randall and Bethany, African American Non-denominational Christian parents, shared what they did to make it through challenging times:

> W: I pray. I pray and I read my Bible. That's what I do. And call Christian friends that can give me an uplifting word.
>
> H: I just listen to music, praise and worship music, sometimes, I just get by myself, sit in the car and listen to music, and most times when I'm by myself, I pretty much get things under control and realize that you know, hey, everybody goes through things and life. It's not meant to be a struggle, but sometimes it is, and so you just have to deal with it and take it as it comes and that's what I do. Just live every day one day at a time and get up, go to work, go to school, do what you have to do and just keep on going, and everything else will resolve itself. Just don't try to put too much pressure on myself.

Elder, an African American Baptist father, shared how he enjoyed taking care of himself spiritually each time he attended church:

> I get something out of church. See, the song and praise, I love that part. I liked to be preached to, I like to be taught. So, I go to church for the praise, I go to church to be taught something, and I retain the message that the minister brings if he teach.

While some participants found attending church to be a way to care for themselves on a spiritual level, and occasionally a mental or emotional level as well, other participants found that they needed spiritual nourishment throughout the week. Janice, an African American Non-denominational Christian mother, expressed how she relied on God throughout the week:

> When I'm faced with challenges, I go to God first. I go to Him, to help me to understand. And just today . . . when you're in situations that you don't understand, I pray to God for wisdom. And I pray that He would help me to go through it, because I know that sometimes I have some lows. I expect other people to deal with me, and I can be a very difficult person. So, I just have to stand on His Word. . . . And that's what I believe, that, everything that I need I can find in the Word of God

Processes in Faith and Family Relationships

There are many ways that engaging in sacrifice and self-care processes can influence family life–for good or for bad. Some of the quotes identified as demonstrating related family processes included examples of specific processes. However, occasionally quotes set up a situation where family processes could vary depending on the situation. Ruby, a White Methodist wife, shared her struggle with how to sacrifice in different situations:

> How much are we supposed to really? Because we can always do more. That's something that he [my husband] has helped me along with. This is how much we're supposed to be giving the church, are we doing that? We're working towards it. But we are blessed with so much, that I just always feel like you can be doing so much more, whether it's through financial means, or mission work, having a passion about something, and then it comes back to me, "Wait a minute, those are all great things, but I also have 2 little children at home." I can go out and do a bunch of mission work, and a bunch of volunteer work, but God is that taking? Does He want me to be with my children right now? And being the best Mom I can be, maybe there's another time for that, later. But you get kind of caught up in that, "Oh, I could be giving so much more."

Ruby's family was impacted every time she had to decide between sacrificing for her family or for someone else. The impact on the family members and relationships is hard to truly measure with a qualitative study. However, Ruby suggests that perhaps there is a struggle that families face with which sacrifice to choose when presented with multiple choices.

Tara, a White LDS mother, shared how when she engaged in certain religious practices, her mood would be impacted:

> I find that I can get very tired and cranky and, but when I take time to say a prayer, or to think about spiritual things, or to go to a meeting, I think that influence of the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit, then calms me and helps me to be patient in situations where maybe I normally wouldn't be able to. It adds to, or augments my sort of . . . deficient patience . . . It helps give you additional patience and strength and love that maybe you wouldn't have been able to muster if you hadn't had that spiritual uplift or experience.

It seems that Tara needed to be in a certain place emotionally in order to be able to be the person she wanted to be. Malinda, a White Charismatic Episcopalian wife, explained how a simple change in which questions she and her husband asked themselves impacted their relationship:

> They're not going to bring you to the bigger picture. I think the main thing is that your focus is no longer on you as a person like, "How can he please me?" But, "How can we please God?" And I think that that is how God, how your relationship with God can bring the both of you closer. You're not focused on you.

A few participants, sacrificed differently for their family members because of their religious convictions. Tevia, a White Jewish father, said:

> I think it's affected it a lot. I think there are a lot of things we do. We send our kids to a Jewish day school. And that is a big sacrifice. It costs a lot of money. I think we prioritize that. And then in terms of our observance. If we didn't have kids, we wouldn't prioritize some of the things we do as much like Friday night services, Shabbat dinners, which we always make it a point to have. We sing certain songs with the kids. I say the Shemah with the kids every night. I wouldn't do that if I didn't have kids.