

The Transition to Adulthood and Prisoner Reentry: Investigating the Experiences of Young  
Adult Men and their Caregivers

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# THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD AND PRISONER REENTRY: INVESTIGATING THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG ADULT MEN AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

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## ABSTRACT

The issue of reentry has become an important topic to criminal justice scholars and to law makers due to the sheer number of incarcerated individuals being released and the rate in which they cycle back to incarceration. Despite the attention reentry issues have received recently in the areas of policy and criminal justice and recommendations offered to ameliorate problems associated with reentry, the landscape of reentry remains largely unchanged in that many prisoners are released from prison and significant numbers of them return (Austin, 2001).

Approximately 700,000 inmates were released from prisons and jails to their families and communities in 2005 (Harrison & Beck, 2006). Of those inmates, roughly 1/3<sup>rd</sup> were young adults aged 24 or younger (Mears & Travis, 2004). The outcomes for young adults (age 18-24) incarcerated at such young ages put them at overwhelming risk of a life course trajectory that includes cycles of future imprisonment and poor life outcomes such as economic hardship, poor mental and physical well being and lower life expectancy (Mears & Travis, 2004; Uggen, 2000; Western, 2002) .

This study examined the meanings of formerly incarcerated young adult men and their caregivers made in regard to reentry, caregivers' ability to meet reentry needs, perceptions about reliance on family and the implications of a young adult child "returning home" within the context of release from incarcerative sentencing. This goal was achieved through conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with formerly incarcerated men between the ages of 18 and 24

and their caregivers for a total of 18 individual interviews that reflect nine young men-caregiver dyads defined as families for this study.

This qualitative study was informed using an integration of family life course perspective, symbolic interactionism and ecological theory. The theoretical amalgam provided the ability to examine the life course transitions of families impacted by incarceration, the perceptions and meanings made based upon the experience with incarceration while being imbedded within a socially stigmatized context of having a felony.

The findings from this study suggest that upon reentry young adult men and their caregivers experienced ambivalence, happiness yet anxiety in moving forward after incarceration. This ambivalence was a major theme that was found not only in reunification, but in relying on family and in fostering independence. Caregivers were emotionally distressed as they juggled their feelings of wanting to help the young men with meeting the multiple demands placed on the family system with their concerns that he might return to his “old ways.” Young men were particularly distressed as they negotiated transitioning from a state of independence (prior to incarceration) to dependence as a prisoner in the criminal justice system, to depending on caregivers upon reentry. The young men in this study reported achieving financial independence from their families prior to incarceration as adolescents through illegal means which gave them adult status in their families. These “off-time” transitions before and after incarceration fueled the ambivalence and ambiguity in the young men-caregiver dyads, specifically in terms of the meanings these families made when thinking about reunification, relying on family and in fostering independence.

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## DEDICATION

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## CHAPTER I

## Introduction

*Background and Significance*

The issue of reentry has become an important topic to criminal justice scholars and to law makers due to the sheer number of incarcerated individuals being released and the rate in which they cycle back to incarceration. Despite the attention reentry issues have received recently in the areas of policy and criminal justice and recommendations offered to ameliorate problems associated with reentry, the landscape of reentry remains largely unchanged in that many prisoners are released from prison and significant numbers of them return (Austin, 2001). The predominant criminal justice framework for reentry tends to extract prisoners from context, address them in a one dimensional way and emphasize the prisoner as the focal point of interest. In reality, most prisoners lived with a spouse, family member or girlfriend prior to incarceration (Visher, LaVigne, & Travis, 2004). Few policies incorporate an ecological approach, whereby prisoners are viewed as embedded within family contexts prior to their incarceration, and after their release, by which they have influence and are influenced. Further, criminal justice policy rarely takes into consideration the impact of incarceration on the prisoner and his family's life course trajectory. A focus on the ex-prisoner and his family relationships is where reentry research might uncover important details that lend insight to the process of reentry success.

Approximately 700,000 inmates were released from prisons and jails to their families and communities in 2005 (Harrison & Beck, 2006). Of those inmates, roughly 1/3<sup>rd</sup> were young adults aged 24 or younger (Mears & Travis, 2004). The outcomes for young adults (age 18-24) incarcerated at such young ages put them at overwhelming risk of a life course trajectory that

includes cycles of future imprisonment and poor life outcomes such as economic hardship, poor mental and physical well being and lower life expectancy (Mears & Travis, 2004; Uggen, 2000; Western, 2002) .

These negative outcomes not only affect the young adult inmate, but his family, community, and society as a whole. Little is known about the processes by which young adult inmates and their families experience reentry and the timing that reentry has on the transition to adulthood in shaping the life course trajectory. We do know from current reentry studies on adult inmates, successful reentry and post incarceration success is possible when the reentering inmate has the necessary familial, community, and social supports during imprisonment and after his release (Lynch & Sabol, 2001; Visser & Travis, 2003).

#### *Rationale of the Study*

There are several reasons why examining reentry issues with young adults are a significant course of study. Young adults age 18-24 are completing both physical and mental maturational tasks in preparation for self-sufficiency and independence training required in adulthood (Altschuler, & Brash, 2004; Almyer, 1989; Steinberg, Chung, & Little, 2004, Sullivan, 2004; Travis, Soloman & Waul, 2001). Research on development suggests a process of mental and physical changes by which young adults gradually move through a series of tasks throughout adolescence and early adulthood that prepare them for more adult-like roles and responsibilities (Almyer, 1989; Steinberg. et al., 2004; Sullivan, 2004). Two important tasks during this transition is the establishment of economic independence and independent living (Steinberg, et al., 2004; Sullivan, 2004). For young adults (age 18-24) who have spent some or this entire developmental period incarcerated, development takes place in an environment that may not

provide the necessary tools young adults need for transitioning into adulthood. Rather the prison environment is highly regulated, rigid and structured to deny individuals personal responsibility and independent decision making; skills found in normative experiences and interactions in the freeworld (Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Snyder, 2004). Similarly, young adults' time spent in prison may not prepare them for the self-sufficiency and independence needed for successful reentry. Young adult inmates have overwhelming difficulties with reentry due to risks associated with having spent time in prison. Some of the areas crucial to young adults' successful reentry can be evaluated in terms of areas critical to development and that could be address during incarceration: education, substance abuse and mental health treatment and the maintenance of relationships with family. Thus, the prison context can be seen as undermining the incarcerated young adult's ability at being independent and self sufficient upon reentry and as they transition into adulthood.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this study was to examine reentry perceptions and the transition to adulthood for young adult males (age 18-24) and their caregivers. Specifically, this study focused on the views caregivers and formerly incarcerated young adults have with regard to supports needed when the young adult comes home from prison, parents' ability to meet those needs, views about self-sufficiency and the implications of a young adult child "returning home" within the context of release from incarcerative sentencing.

### *Theoretical Framework*

Incarcerated young adults are nested within a multitude of contexts that shape their pathways and their life trajectories for life outside of prison, with their families and society.



Understanding how these individuals are embedded within these contexts can lend insight regarding processes of reentry and how their interactions with their families and broader social systems set the path for their life outcomes. The integration of family life course, ecological and symbolic interactionism theories provide a theoretical framework to consider incarceration, reentry, and the family support dynamics of young adults. Family life course (FLC) emphasizes interactions between individuals and context and is sensitive to the influence of experiences, transitions and time on the process of development over the life course (Elder, 1985). FLC takes into consideration the intersections of time with life events and developmental stage to understand life course trajectories (Elder, 1985). The interactional nature of family life course offers a unique vantage point from which to examine incarcerated young adult trajectories, their families of origin and reentry. Ecological theory focuses on nested systems and the interactions between those systems on explaining human behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Ecological theory situates incarcerated young adults and their families from a macro perspective and is sensitive to how family process works within the context of stigma associated with incarceration. Ecological theory's use of nested systems has been useful in understanding the phenomena of incarceration on families and reentry in previous studies with this population (Arditti, 2005). Symbolic interactionism focuses on the meanings and perceptions people give to their lived experiences and explains how they act based on their constructed meanings (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Therefore, the meanings these young adults and their caregivers make about their experience with incarceration will influence how they perceive their roles and lives as moving forward individually and/or collectively as a family. Integrating ecological, family life course and symbolic interactionism traditions one can conceptualize the reentry pathway sensitive to

developmental transitions, challenges within the unique context of reentry and the meanings these families make given their lived experience with incarceration.

*Incarceration/Reentry as a pathway.* According to family life course perspective, pathways structure the “direction that people’s lives can take and govern how strongly individual trajectories and behaviors are shaped” (Elder, 1985 P. 667). These pathways represent opportunities for individual social mobility that are reflective of multiple cultural and social influences. The experience of being incarcerated has been found to have negative implications on the inmate and his family not only because of the experience itself but from the stigma given through larger social systems and overarching social values. Incarceration has been linked to poor later life outcomes such as high recidivism back to prison and poor health outcomes (Mears & Travis, 2004; Uggen, 2000; Western, 2002). These negative outcomes are a result of the combination of the impact of “prisonization” on the individual while incarcerated and his family upon reentry as well as the difficulties – particularly the social and economic exclusion resulting from having an ex-felon status (Christian, Mellow & Thomas, 2006).

“Social exclusion” or “the process of being shut out of conventional society through economic, social, political and cultural systems” that comes from being a part of a stigmatized experience, incarceration, is crucial to understanding the pathways and trajectory options of young adults reentering the community from prison (Foster & Hagan, 2007, p. 400). The impacts of being socially excluded are manifested upon reentry in poor job opportunities, lack of social support systems, lack of marketable job skills, racism, class discrimination and with limited housing opportunities (Petersilia, 2003). These limitations create barriers and obstacles for successful reentry and shape the pathways of these individuals and their families that impact

their life outcomes and trajectories. Theory lends itself to the following questions: If these young adults are “socially excluded” at the developmental age in which they are transitioning into adulthood and are heavily influenced by society, what are the implications for their adulthood trajectories, the implications for the families that they return to and ultimately their life outcomes? Can those who are excluded from society so early on in life overcome and have success later in life? If so, what role does family support play?

*Reentry in young adulthood as a critical transition.* A cornerstone of family life course theory is the emphasis on transitions and the time in which they occur. Transitions and time shape pathways and life course trajectories of individuals and families depending on the meanings of the event and the time in which they occur (Elder, 1985). For incarcerated young adults, reentry comes at a developmentally important time in life for transitions: Transitioning to adulthood. One of the primary tasks for young adults at this transition is the separation from parents and establishing independence and self reliance (Snyder, 2004; Steinberg et. al., 2004; Sullivan, 2004). Young adults who are transitioning from being incarcerated to life in the free world face obstacles that coincide with having spent time in the criminal justice system away from family members. Particularly, many young adult inmates are prisonized. This prisonization is resultant of having spent time in a highly structured prison environment in which the young adult adopts the prison lifestyle and criminal values as an adaptive process to being institutionalized (Haney, 2002). Thus being prisonized can have a major impact on the transition from incarceration to life in the community with family where environments are unstructured and where adopted prison values may differ from community values (Altschuler & Brash, 2004).

Young adults being released from incarceration might not have the ability given their criminal history, skill level and time in confinement to immediately establish themselves by accepting their own emotional and financial responsibility, a major task for this transition (Mears & Travis, 2004). For example, correctional policies rarely take into consideration developmental stage or age of inmates in their administration policies (Mears & Travis, 2004). When available educational/skill training or rehabilitative programs that address social, mental and substance abuse issues are not a requirement in many prison systems for inmates and for various reasons, participation in programming is low (Austin, 2001). In fact, prisoners today are less likely to participate in rehabilitative programming than in the past due to lack of program availability (Austin, 2001). Therefore, many leave prison without having obtained any skill training or received treatment for any substance use or mental illness (Austin, 2001).

*The Boomerang effect.* A critical transition affecting both the family of origin and the young adult is what is known as the “boomerang effect” or “re-nesting” (Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995). The boomerang effect is inclusive of the family life cycle concept of “launching” in which young adults are launched into independence for a period to time and then return to the family of origin for various reasons, many of which are economic (Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995). Specifically, boomerang and “re-nesting” have traditionally been used in reference to college students or divorced adult children who return to the family of origin home but rarely used in other diverse contexts such as a return home due to release from prison. Most young adult inmates lived with family members prior to incarceration and most will return to these same residences once they are released (Visher, LaVigne, & Travis, 2004). The significance for the boomerang effect for young adult inmates is that unlike their college or divorced counterparts,

they “boomerang” home without the benefits that are symbolic of obtaining a degree or that characterize failed attempts at more socially acceptable life transitions like marriage. Thus, the returning of home of a child with a stigmatizing criminal history might be very different in terms of family process and family functioning than would be a child returning home with a more socially positive normative reason such as inability to find viable employment after obtaining a baccalaureate degree.

Transitions for young adults back to their families of origin create ambiguity within family systems due to uncertainty in the roles and duties for both young adults and parental figures upon release, particularly after a period in which the young adult has lived independently from the caretakers (DaVanzo & Goldscheider, 1990; Glick & Lin, 1986; Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995). Family role ambiguities that result from the boomerang effect can be found in the literature regarding college students and adult divorced children (DaVanzo & Goldschneider, 1990; Glick & Lin, 1986; Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995). For smooth adulthood transitions, parents of boomerang children are encouraged to be flexible in their boundaries and in permitting independence (Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995). Being flexible may not be possible for families with a young adult who has been incarcerated because of restrictions associated with having an adult child with a felon status or with restrictions associated with being on probation (e.g. unannounced visits by probation officers, random drug screening, etc.) thus independence may be thwarted by demands of parole and having a felon status.

Young adults might find themselves in a “double bind” situation where they are striving for independence but find themselves unable to fully exercise their independence while still being supported by cautious parental figures and under the auspices of criminal justice

monitoring (probation). Thus the boomerang effect may create the same ambiguities regardless of context, as well as unique challenges for families given reentry challenges and the demands of parole and acquired felon status. As a theoretical guide, symbolic interactionism can frame how these families perceive the return home of their incarcerated young adult and the actions parents take in assisting them in the reentry process based on the meanings made given their experience with incarceration. The meanings these families make and the symbolisms based on their interactions with each other and with the criminal justice system can aid our understanding in how these families foster independence during the transition to adulthood.

*Interdependence and family.* In addition to the concepts of pathways and transitions family life course theory emphasizes the concept of interdependence which highlights the role of significant others in the shaping of individual life trajectories (Elder, 1985). This interdependence is created when individuals “initiate or experience” life transitions that create a rippling affect in producing transitions in the lives and roles of significant others (Elder, 1985). In other words, families move in sync with each other and their lives are embedded in the activities and actions of other members. Interdependence is manifested with incarcerated young adults as their families experience the effects of imprisonment and reentry and having a relationship with the criminal justice system (Christian et al., 2006). Upon reentry, incarceration exerts its influence via supervision in the form of probation/parole rules and regulations and other limitations that stem from having been incarcerated (e.g. effects of stigma on job and housing options).

Families are also interdependent with one another as they experience the social stigma and marginalization that comes with being involved with the criminal justice system and by

having an incarcerated family member (Arditti, 2003). This stigma persists long after the incarcerative sentence is over and after the family member has been released through the effects of marginalization (e.g. loss of personal rights, discrimination, ability to obtain employment, re-incarceration, etc.). Difficulties in establishing themselves upon reentry are not only faced by reentering young adults but the families that support them as well. Young adults who have problems supporting themselves remain dependent on family members until they are able, if ever to take care of themselves (Austin & Irwin, 2001). The experience of the young adult's incarceration and reentry efforts impact the family's resources, the family's ability to thrive as a whole as well as the actions of the family members as they navigate reentry obstacles together (Christian et al., 2006).

Thus, the boomerang of young adult inmates back home to their families can create situations where the return of the young adult challenges the family structure, roles, responsibilities and expectations of the future. Caregivers and their young adult children remain in a state of close interdependency as they navigate reentry together while simultaneously transitioning to independence and adulthood.

The integration of ecological, family life course and symbolic interactionism informs this study by situating the meanings families give to the return of young adults from incarceration back home while taking into consideration the developmental transitions for understanding the pathways that form their adult life course trajectory. In addition, all three theoretical frameworks are sensitive to the meanings families make given their unique experience with incarceration, the interactions of relationships within the family as well as outside influences that guide and shape the family pathway. From this lens, the process of how

these young adults and their caregivers negotiate reentry and the transition to adulthood after incarceration for their young adult inmate can inform our understanding of how these young adults reenter home during this critical stage of life.

### *Research Questions*

The purpose of this study is to examine perceptions of reentry and independence of formerly incarcerated young adult men (age 18-24) and their caregivers after release from incarcerative sentencing. The research questions proposed in this study are:

1. How do young adult men feel about their reentry transitions in terms of being independent (self-sufficient) and being reliant on caregivers after being incarcerated?
2. How do caregivers feel about self-sufficiency and independence in their boomerang young adult?
3. In what ways do caregivers foster self-sufficiency in their young adult?

### *Operational Definitions of Frequently Used Terms and Concepts*

- Boomerang effect- Contemporary term to describe the phenomena of young adults or adult children who leave and return to the family home for a period of time following a period of independent living.
- Caregiver- Consists of the person identified as the main caretaker of the family
- Prisonization – the adaptive process of the prison environment, structure and values; the negative psychological effects of imprisonment (Haney, 2002)
- Young Adulthood- defined for this study as ages 18-24



- Youth Reentry – “The reintegration of juveniles and young adults ages 24 and under who leave secure juvenile correctional facilities or state and federal prisons and return home” (Mears & Travis, 2004).
- Freeworld- Term used by prisoners to describe life beyond the prison walls

## CHAPTER II

## Review of the Literature

*Prisoner Reentry*

According to Petersilia (2003) approximately 600,000 state and federal prisoners were released back home to families and communities in 2002. The complexities of prisoner reentry begin long before the prisoner is released. Individuals being released from prison have been found to have several risk factors that will impact their ability to successfully reenter into the freeworld. These risk factors may be exacerbated by the prison experience or in exceptional cases ameliorated through targeted treatment and program efforts. The risks that prisoners face are important for understanding the issues that are present during reentry and ultimately in shaping the life trajectory of the prisoner, specifically whether or not they return to prison or remain in the freeworld.

Prisoners often have long histories of criminal activity, histories of substance use, lack of marketable skills and have significantly more medical and mental health problems than the general public (Petersilia, 2003). Prisoners also come from and return to communities that face enormous disadvantage in terms of economics, job availability, access to mental and physical care, access to criminal activities, etc (Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Mears & Aron, 2003; Mears, 2001; Sullivan, 2004; Synder, 2004). Despite this knowledge, the literature on reentry reveals the time spent while incarcerated is least likely to be spent on rehabilitative efforts that address the above stated risk factors (Petersilia, 2001; Travis & Petersilia, 2001). These issues, taken together result in prisoners who are ill-prepared for returning and contributing in pro-social ways to their

families, communities and ultimately for helping themselves. Thus, these risks and how they affect the prisoner's life trajectory prove to be a significant source of investigation due to the large numbers of prisoners who return to prison for probation/parole violations or for committing new crimes. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2005), approximately 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of those released from prison and back to communities and families return to prison within 1 year of release; 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s returning to prison by year 3. Thus, failed reentry or a return to prison life is a real consequence for families and prisoners particularly given the risks associated with being incarcerated.

At present, more than 200,000 inmates who return home are young adult men and women (Harrison & Beck, 2006; Mears & Travis, 2004). Like all inmates, young adult inmates experience recidivism at a high rate. For several reasons young adults experience unique challenges with reentry that are different than their older prison mates. Young adults aged 18-24 not only face the challenges that come with the process of reentry like finding housing, employment, and reestablishing family networks, but do so at a developmentally critical period in life: Transitioning to adulthood (Mears & Travis, 2004). The transition to adulthood as a life stage incorporates the expectations and responsibilities that come with leaving adolescence and emerging into adulthood like establishing economic and physical independence from family via self-supporting employment or moving out on one's own. According to research on emerging adulthood, this can be a time-consuming, financially ambivalent and stressful process for most young adults and their families (Greenberger, 1984). Thus, by compounding the developmental transitions with the challenges of reentry makes young adult inmates more

susceptible to failed reentry given their physical and maturational development, lack of real world experience, and varying levels of support from family and community due to their time away from normative experiences (Spencer & Jones-Walker, 2004; Sullivan, 2004). Given their age at incarceration, they may not have been able to establish networks of friends or spouses to support them once released like their older incarcerated counterparts. Consequently, many young adult inmates return home to their families of origin who provide emotional and tangible support and guidance until the young adult is able to take care of himself; a crucial step in establishing adulthood and in successful reentry (Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Steinberg et al., 2004; Sullivan, 2004). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, almost 60% of young adults return home to kin after incarcerative sentencing. Thus family, particularly parental figures are not only a salient source of all support, but a crucial factor in understanding and uncovering the reentry process of young adult inmates during their transition to adulthood and how together they influence the life course trajectory.

#### *Prisoner Reentry and Young Adults*

Of the 600,000 or so prisoners that experience reentry annually, approximately 200,000 are under the age of 24 (Mears & Travis, 2004; Mears & Aron, 2003). As with an adult population, many young adults are plagued with problems prior to incarceration: substance abuse, mental health issues, family problems, educational deficiencies or disabilities, lack of employment history, lack of employable skills and histories of criminal activity (Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Mears & Aron, 2003; Mears, 2001;

Sullivan, 2004; Synder, 2004). And like their older counterparts, young adults return to prison at extremely high rates (Mears & Travis, 2004).

Few studies have examined the intersections of reentry and young adulthood. Studies that have focused on young adult prisoners conclude that reentry may be significantly different than that of adult prisoners. According to a theoretical analysis conducted by Mears and Travis (2004) reentry differences lie in the developmental differences between younger and older adults. The developmental challenges both mentally and physically for young adults intersecting with incarceration and reentry provide specific challenges for this population and their families. Studies of juveniles, incarceration and reentry point to developmental challenges as the key factor to understanding outcomes of reentry (Grisso & Schwarz, 2000; Steinberg et al., 2004). Areas like psychosocial development and social competence have been utilized as concepts for understanding and improving reentry processes and policies for understanding juvenile populations (Grisso & Schwartz, 2000).

Sullivan's (2004) analysis of interviews of young people released from prison show a broad range of needs that often come from environments that lack appropriate supportive networks. These findings are resultant of field studies that examined employment programs and neighborhood influence on young offenders conducted in New York City. Specifically young men had difficulty obtaining employment, were educationally delayed, had poorly or untreated mental health problem and difficulties in establishing and maintaining social networks (Sullivan, 2004). Sullivan's analysis also highlights the complexities of reentry for this population and the various influential

dimensions that contributes to continued criminal activities or desistance for these young people like, varying levels of maturity and life experience. In a similar vein, Spencer and Jones-Walker (2004) emphasize the community's influence on participation on desistance in criminal activity. In their analysis, communities that differ in views about incarceration/reentry or the availability of opportunities for pro or anti social outlets influence the outcomes for these returning young adults.

Sporadic times in and out of the criminal justice system can be linked to poor educational attainment for incarcerated young adults. Youth in confinement were found to have a history of problems in school prior to incarceration (e.g. special education placement, behavioral problems, etc) and to have experienced disruptions in their education (e.g. attendance problems) (Snyder, 2004). Incarcerated youth lag behind their freeworld counterparts in education level and attainment. Most youth who are released from confinement do so without a high school diploma, GED or any marketable skill or trade (Snyder, 2004). In addition, some studies have indicated that young adults are least likely to continue their education once they are released from confinement if they feel they are "too behind" educationally (Snyder, 2004). The lack of educational attainment has direct consequences on employment opportunities once the young adult is released from confinement (Mears & Travis, 2004; Snyder, 2004).

Due to their limited skills and abilities acquired before as well as during incarceration young adults are not able to market themselves in the workforce, making them poor candidates for employment. This inability to obtain employment is not only due to their educational level, skills and abilities, but also from the stigma attached to

their felon status. According to Altshuler and Brash (2004), employers are unlikely to hire an ex-felon regardless of the skills or abilities he or she may have.

The ability to obtain employment is an important milestone for young adults in making the transition to adulthood and in establishing economic independence. If young adults are unable to secure employment they remain dependent on their families or turn to socially unacceptable ways to earn money to support themselves. Young adults who are engaged in illegal money making activities, particularly young adults who have already intersected with the criminal justice system are likely to be arrested or rearrested, contributing to reentry dilemmas.

Incarcerated young adults experience more problems with mental health and substance abuse than their freeworld counterparts. They are also more likely to be diagnosed and to be treated for mental health problems while incarcerated and have a history of mental health problems prior to confinement (Altshuler & Brash, 2004; Synder, 2004). Although accurate information on the prevalence of mental disorders among incarcerated young people are inadequate, some studies estimate anywhere a 60% to 80% range in diagnosable mental health disorders for the given population (Cocozza & Skowyra, 2000; Teplin, Abram, McClelland, Dulcan & Mericle, 2002). The prevalence of substance abuse problems among incarcerated young people is also a concern for this population. Studies conducted on incarcerated youth reveal varying accounts of drug use and abuse prior to incarceration with most studies suggesting anywhere from 1/3<sup>rd</sup> to 3/4<sup>ths</sup> having problems with illegal substances (Brook, Cohen, & Brook, 1998;

Dembo, Washburn, Wish, Yeung, Getreu, Berry, & Blount, 1987; Mason & Windle, 2002).

Treatment for mental illness and substance abuse within prison walls has been found to be an area of great need for all inmates. As with older adults, young adults are least likely to get the types of mental health and substance abuse treatment needed due to the lack of programs and continuity of treatment within the criminal justice system to address these issues (Altshuler & Brash, 2004; Synder, 2004). Even when programs are available, they may be ineffective for this age group in that they are not appropriately modified to address the issues as they pertain to developing young adults (Altshuler & Brash, 2004; Spencer & Jones-Walker, 2004; Synder, 2004). Of most concern is that these mental health and substance abuse problems if left untreated worsen and can result in serious complications in adulthood (Moffitt, Caspi, Harrington, & Milne, 2002). These untreated mental health and substance abuse issues compound other problems the young adult can have while making the transition to adulthood and in the return back to his family (Steinberg et al., 2004)

Taken together, lack of education, treatment for mental health or substance abuse issues prior to and during incarceration has a substantial impact on the young adult's ability to successfully reenter from prison to home and in transitioning to adulthood. Specifically, these obstacles undermine the possibility of self sufficiency and independence on the part of the young adult- essential features of successful reentry and the transition to adulthood.



*Family Salience Upon Release*

Incarcerated young adults age 18-24 many have spent some if not all of their adolescent and young adult years within the juvenile justice system (Snyder, 2004). These ebbs and flows of life in and out of the community and with their families create relationship dynamics that are symbolic of families operating within the criminal justice system. Strained family relations have been found in families involved with the criminal justice system as families navigate the criminal justice system, try to maintain relationships with their loved ones, and cope with having a loved one incarcerated (Braman, 2004; Martinez, 2006). These economic and emotional strains result from families trying to maintain contact with their loved one through prison policies such as harsh visitation policies, expensive telephone rates and locations of prisons, to name a few (Braman, 2004; Mears & Travis, 2004) . In addition, families also experience the stigma attached with having an incarcerated loved one in their daily interactions with prison officials and as they interact with broader social enterprises (Mears & Travis, 2004). These experiences with the criminal justice system by the family and inmate shape the level of family involvement and ultimately shape family relations between the young adult inmate and his family. Thus, family relations are an important factor to consider upon reentry.

While most prisoners report positive relationships with family during incarceration and high expectations of support from them during that time, how families meet those expectations after release contributes substantially to success or failure at reentry (Austin, 2001). The literature documents several areas of significance that

families play in the reentry process like providing emotional and instrumental support upon reentry, (La Vigne, Naser, Brooks, & Castro, 2005; La Vigne, Visher, & Castro, 2004; Nelson, Deess, & Allen, 1999; Visher, Kachnowski, La Vigne & Travis, 2003).

A comprehensive study of prisoners and their families as they navigate the reentry process was conducted by the researchers at The Urban Institute. In 2000, the Urban Institute launched “The Returning Home Study” a multi-stage, multi-state longitudinal study in which male prisoners and their families were tracked prior to release, shortly after release and one year later. The study utilized self administered surveys, one on one interviews, and focus groups with community residents to add to the wealth of significant findings regarding prisoner that has been distributed in several reports. The data collected from these studies sought to understand prison reentry pathways and identify factors that contribute to successful or unsuccessful reentry experiences. Among the many important findings in their study were the data collected on the role families play in prisoner reentry specifically in providing emotional and instrumental resources to the young men upon reentry.

Visher, Kachnowski, La Vigne and Travis (2003) and La Vigne, Visher, and Castro, (2004) interviewed prisoners prior to release about their views on family support during incarceration and their expectations they had of family once they were released. In both studies, over half of the respondents reported that support from family would be important to helping them to remain in the free world. In addition, the respondents also reported expectations that their families would provide the emotional, tangible and financial support needed upon release (La Vigne et. al., 2004; Visher et al., 2003). One

year after release in both studies, findings indicate that the expectations prisoner had of their families were met and often exceeded (La Vigne et. al., 2004; Visher et al., 2003). In the other studies published from the Returning Home Study, similar findings for family expectation and support were also found (La Vigne, et al., 2005).

The families in the Returning Home study also reported on the financial support provided by families. Overall, the majority of released prisoners reported favorably in their family's financial support. Specifically in the Chicago sample, 92% of their sample reported having someone in their family provide them with financial support (Visher, et al., 2003). In Cleveland, 78% of the sample received at least one month of support (La Vigne et al., 2005). Other studies examining the financial support of former prisoners found family members to be significant financial contributors to their loved ones during the process of reentry (Braman & Wood, 2003; Christian et al., 2006).

Lastly, from the Returning Home Study, one of the most significant findings was that after 1 year of release, the majority of former prisoners reported that family was the most influential factor for staying out of incarceration (Visher et al., 2003; La Vigne et al., 2005). Families were found to assist former prisoners upon release in terms of emotional support, and being emotionally responsive and encouraging in their attempts to be crime-free, drug free and in leading pro-social lives. in terms of emotional support, released prisoners report that their families were emotionally responsive and encouraging in their attempts to be crime-free, drug free and in leading pro-social lives.

Ekland-Olson, Campbell, and Lenihan (1983) in their qualitative analysis of family support networks found that released prisoners felt "welcomed" at home after

release. In their comparison of formerly incarcerated men with self reported positive family support and formerly incarcerated men with self-reported limited support from family, rates of depression and sadness were found to be significantly different in terms of reentry outcomes six months after release. For example their findings purported that prisoners with self reported positive family support had a positive effect in their becoming productive citizens in terms of employment and the development of interpersonal skills.

Other studies support the findings from the Returning Home study in that supportive families have been found to be one of the best predictors of individual success of formerly incarcerated prisoners. Nelson, Dees and Allen (1999) examined the experiences of returning male prisoners to their families in New York City. Families were seen as a major influential factor in the success or failure within one month of release. Those individuals with strong self defined family support were found to be more likely to succeed than those with weaker or no family support networks. According to the findings from Nelson et al., (1999) the available supports family members were able to offer in terms of financial, emotional and structural were able to contribute to the former prisoner's ability to regain pro-social connections and routines.

Other than emotional and financial supports expected and offered by prisoners and their families, providing housing is another important way that families participate in reentry. In the Urban Institutes Returning Home Studies, prior to release, 63% of Ohio respondents and 78% of Texas respondents reported that upon release between planned to live with a family member (La Vigne & Thompson, 2003; Watson, Solomon, LaVigne, &

Travis, 2004). Interviews after release showed that the majority of those prisoners were living with family members after release and a significant number of them remained with family at the end of the study one year later. For example, in Illinois, 88% of the respondents and 60% of the Maryland respondents were living with a family member and/or significant other (La Vigne et al., 2004; Visher et al., 2003). Other studies also examined the living trends of released prisoners and also found that a significant number of prisoners do have expectations of residing with family and do indeed live with family members upon release (Lynch & Sabol, 2001; Travis & Petersilia, 2001). Although the literature emphasizes the benefits of family to prisoners and the process of reentry, reentry can be costly to families and can hinder reentry efforts.

#### *Negative Family Influence*

While the literature on reentry supports the notion that family networks are beneficial for returning prisoners and the reentry process, there is also substantial evidence that points to families as being a source of negative influence (Breese, Ra'el & Grant, 2000; Christian et al., 2006). Many prisoners come from families where there are intergenerational cycles of criminal activity, substance use and imprisonment (Breese et al., 2000; Christian et al., 2006). Contact with these family members has the potential to impede successful reentry by providing experiences, exchanges and/or environments that enhance recidivism.

The research points to families as essential participants in the reentry of incarcerated individuals. This participation, however, often comes at a physical, emotional, and financial cost to families that are reported to already be strained in

multiple ways (Braman, 2002; Christian et al., 2006). The demands required of families to maintain prisoner-family relations can cause families to limit their support or sever ties with their incarcerated loved one during or after release (Braman, 2002; Christian, 2002). Wolf and Drain (2002) found in their study on families and reentry that prison reentry can be stressful on family systems and many families are surprised and disappointed at the amount of support and assistance needed by former prisoners. Christian (2002) explains that despite the difficulties families experience throughout the entire process, from arrest through incarceration and to release, families maintain contact because they feel responsible for making sure their loved ones are not mistreated by the “system” and that their role is to ultimately provide for their members’ needs.

### *Literature Synthesis*

The literature on prisoner reentry highlights the importance of considering family in the reentry of formerly incarcerated persons. The research, however, lags in understanding the process by which these families organize themselves to meet the needs of an incarcerated family member upon release and the meanings made from their experiences, particularly when examining the young adult prisoner. While there is a growing interest in the reentry phenomenon there is great diversity in how incarceration is experienced by various individuals given their diverse experiences; specifically for this study, age. Incarcerated young adults not only experience the challenges of reentry, but do so while also experiencing important developmental demands and challenges associated with developing independence in becoming adults. Young adults, unlike their older counterparts are least likely to have the experiences of spouses or partners or their

own family of creation paradigms in which life experiences given their age might bring. Lack of partnerships or created families makes their families of origin an especially salient factor in understanding how they experience reentry. Families of these young adults also have the additional task of guiding their young adults toward self-sufficiency which is critical to both reentry and transitioning to adulthood. Current reentry research fails to acknowledge the intersections of developmental challenges of these young adult prisoners and reentry. Understanding the process of reentry in these families can inform policy practices and programming efforts not only by improving reentry outcomes but for creating environments/exchanges for positive course trajectory changes for this vulnerable population and their families. Thus, we can stop cycles of failed reentry for young adults, increase their ability to contribute to pro-social activities in society and improve their chances for positive adult life outcomes. This research project adds to the existing literature by focusing on young adults (aged 18-24) return to their parents after a period of incarceration, their pathway to self sufficiency and independence and their parents' role during this transition.

## CHAPTER III

## Methods

*Study Design*

The utilization of qualitative research design methods lends itself to this study of young adult inmate families for several reasons. Qualitative research study designs are concerned about process and how people negotiate meaning (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990). Understanding how people negotiate meanings made from experiences is important in this study of ex-offenders and their families because little is known about the meanings made relative to their experiences with incarceration and subsequent reentry back home to family. The meanings these families make out of their experiences after incarceration can inform critical areas of reentry research, particularly for young men who are at high risk of returning back to incarceration and continued engagement with the criminal justice system later in life. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to highlight areas of family life such as reentry back to the family unit, and can create a picture of the process for further review and examination (Patton, 1990).

Qualitative methods are also sensitive to the perspectives of participants' viewpoints and to how participants frame their experiences. This sensitivity is critical to framing young adult inmates and their families as they describe their thoughts on how incarceration has shaped their lives. Qualitative studies are appropriate for use in analyzing concepts and themes that are derived from an exploration of a given topic (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990). In this study, the perceptions of formerly incarcerated young men and their caregivers with prison experience, reentry and transitioning to



adulthood was explored. From this qualitative study, family processes of young adult inmates and their families can inform future research and policy development in creating substantive efforts in rethinking reentry for this vulnerable population.

### Methodological Approach

#### *Phenomenological Approach*

Phenomenological approaches seek to understand lived experiences through in-depth exploratory methods (Creswell, 1998). In addition, phenomenological approaches are appropriate when the focus of the study is to “understand the meaning of events and interactions of ordinary people in particular situations” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; p 23). In using a phenomenological approach, I was able to explore perceptions and meanings that the young adult men and their caregivers had developed given their past experience with incarceration and its current residual effects like the consequences or benefits of having been imprisoned. The young men and their caregivers weave together their perceptions and meaning making to inform the study on how they cope with family reintegration and support based on their individual experience with the same phenomena of incarceration. The meanings and perceptions of the participants are critical to understanding how these participants interact as family members and as members of the larger society given their experience with incarceration. A phenomenological approach allowed the participants to tell their stories based on their reflections of having been incarcerated. Therefore, their stories comprised of meanings and perceptions about past experiences informed their current thought processes and perceptions about present life issues and interactions which were a key feature of this study.

*The Interview*

In this study of formerly incarcerated young adult men and their caregivers, I utilized face to face semi-structured interviews to explore how families (young men and their caregivers) perceived their experience with imprisonment, their outlooks on the future as a result of being imprisoned and on how the families help one another after the return home. Separate interview protocols were developed for the young adult and the caregiver. The interview protocol for the young adult contained two parts. The first part contained questions to gather the participants' demographic information like age, educational attainment and criminal history. The second part of the interview contained questions that were designed to illicit responses to inform the research questions and were organized under the following topics: Reentry, family, living situation, and self. The interview protocol for the caregivers also contained two parts. The first part of the caregiver interview protocol also contained questions to gather demographic information. The second part of the caregiver interview contained questions that focused on their participation during the young man's incarceration and the current living situation. Questions for the caregiver also focused on their thoughts about the young man's imprisonment as well as hopes and wishes for his future. The interview protocols for the young adult and the caregiver can be found in the Appendix A and Appendix B, respectfully.

The research literature, the research questions and the theoretical framework for the study guided the development of the interview protocols. The research team was utilized to evaluate the questions and to assess fit with the study's purpose and research

questions. The flexibility in utilizing semi-structured interviews allowed the interview protocol to be used as a guide and questions were modified throughout the interview process as probes were utilized and hunches were followed as the participants described and talked about their experiences.

Based on the qualitative nature of the study, interviewing provided the best tool for obtaining the information from the participants. The goal of interviewing is to understand how the person being interviewed thinks, understands and makes sense and meaning of their world; roughly their lived experience (Patton, 1990). Interviewing also allows the researcher to enter into the participants' perspective in an attempt to understand this experience (Patton, 1990). The meaning made out of these experiences has an affect on the way participants live out their experiences (Blumer, 1969). In addition, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher and participant to control, direct and explore areas of the lived experience that provide grounding for the study, but what could potentially be left out by using another method (e.g. structured interview) (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Thus, interviewing made a suitable method for collecting rich details about the perceptions, meanings and thoughts of formerly incarcerated young adults and their caregivers on reentry efforts and their transition to adulthood.

Seidman (1998) suggests a 60-90 minute time length for interviews in that it allows enough time for a beginning, middle and end of the interview. In addition, the time is not too short so that participants' are unable to reflect on their experiences or too long as to become exhaustive resulting in participant and researcher fatigue (Seidman, 1998).

The use of an audiotape in interviewing presents both positive and negative challenges. On one hand, participants may feel intimidated or fearful of being audiotaped and withhold information crucial to their experience (Seidman, 2006). On the positive side, audio taping allows for accurate descriptions of the interview for analysis, preservation of the participants words and typically are often forgotten about during the course of the interview by the participants (Seidman, 2006).

Field notes were utilized in this study throughout data collection. Field notes are descriptive and reflective data that assist the researcher in accounting for events, observations and feelings that occur throughout the research process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Field notes are important supplemental data to taped interviews in that they captured the “sights, smells, impressions and extra remarks said before and after the interview” (Bogdan, & Biklen, 1998; p. 108).

### *Role of the Researcher*

I sometimes make jokes about myself by saying that I was an inmate in my former life. For as long as I can remember, I have had an interest in prisons and prisoners. My interest was piqued during my Master’s studies as a Marriage and Family Therapy student, when a colleague and I devised an anger management program for ex-offenders who needed the course as a requirement for their parole conditions. We met with the ex-offenders weekly to talk about their anger issues and to develop plans to help them to “stay on the streets.” We encouraged them to bring in their families and many of them scheduled individual family sessions to work on stopping the anger cycles in their families. Each of them, from all walks of life, from different backgrounds and different

reasons for being imprisoned brought the most fascinating and interesting views on life, prison, and family and on how they thought their lives would play out given their prison experience. My interest in prison life was intensified by their graphic and sometimes horrific stories and examples of life on the “inside.” After graduation, I postponed doctoral studies to test out my therapy skills in the real world. During my job search, I came across a fabulous opportunity: mental health counselor; location: PRISON!

My adventures as the youngest mental health counselor staffed at this particular facility began in a very hot and humid Georgia during the summer of 2002. My first 3 months were mentally and physically draining and exhausting; the needs of the inmates were so great. And even though I was responsible for approximately 20 inmates, my status as a young African American female meant that there were so many more inmates who attempted to seek my assistance. After all, at the age of 24, the prison population most resembled my age and racial cohort. In essence, the majority of the inmates at the prison and many of whom I was supervising could have been my classmates, friends, or potential mates. I recall being so emotionally drained from working with the inmates and handling the demands of prison work (e.g., being alert at all times, constantly watching hands to see if they were being “inappropriate”, being mindful of what is said around other inmates, etc) that I would fall asleep during my 15 minute drive home.

Despite the mental exhaustion, there were two reasons that drove me to be the best counselor there. One reason was the sheer number of young people. I diagnosed myself as depressed the first 3 months on the job as I witnessed dreams deferred, wasted natural talent and ability and future husbands and fathers being eaten away by the time

they had to do. Some of the smartest people I've ever met were at Phillips State Prison; many of whom I wouldn't challenge intellectually on a good day. Physically they were strong and healthy young men and appeared like they were capable of anything. As far as their maturity level, they resembled adolescents. If I asked them to balance a check book or where they saw themselves in 40 years, they could not do it. Life for them, in their minds ended at age 35 and statistically, they were probably right on target. So I used what I knew about life and tried to pass it along as much as I could given that I was there to be their counselor and not their parent. But that's what it felt like working there to me: Parenting my classmates, so that when they went home they at least knew a little more about life than when they came in.

The other reason that inspired me to be an exceptional counselor came during some of my most favorite times when I would spend time observing during family visitation. I would spend hours in the visitation area observing the families who had come to visit their loved ones. The bags of quarters for vending, the strategically placed chairs and tables to help the officers watch out for contraband or inappropriate touching, the sounds and smells of families trying to be... well family (despite the environment) piqued my curiosity. I routinely looked for the families of my inmates so that I could talk to them face to face and so that they could meet me in person. I wanted to tell them all of the good things that their loved one had done (e.g. completing a class) and about the grief they were causing me (e.g. not reporting for work detail). Out of all of my duties, working with the families was one I took most seriously. After all, I believed parenting was best done when there is good communication. Some families were receptive, others

could care less, and many wondered why I even cared at all. The most memorable moments came with an extraordinary family who had a young man who had been sentenced to 5 years and had been incarcerated from age 18-23. His parents were amazing. His mother would call with a particular request on Monday (e.g., Grandma from New Jersey was coming to visit and if special arrangements could be made for her) and by Wednesday, his father was calling in order to follow up! They were constantly updating their medical repertoire of his medications, side effects and learning about the latest in behavioral techniques to help once he was released. I called them the “Tag Team” and when I added myself we were a TRIO. Although his parents were divorced and lived in different states, they worked together almost harmoniously to ensure that plans were in place once he was released so that he could have the best care possible and to create the best possible support network. The day he got out was so emotional for me because I had really bonded with this family and I wanted to see this young man succeed. I remember walking him to freedom, through all of the gates that had kept him away from society for five years and giving him all of the last minute advice those minutes could allot me. I could see his teary-eyed mother waiting beyond the gates to take him home. When we got to the last gate, he just froze and refused to continue through the last gate. Then he muttered that he was scared and he didn’t know if he could make it. Holding back all tears, I stepped outside of myself as his counselor and just like a mother would encourage a son, I gave him a little more advice, a little push and out the door he went to his mother and into the world. I don’t know what happened to that young man and his family; if they were successful and if he is a “productive citizen” or back in the

clutches of prison life as are so many young men. But that young man and his family and the many other families and young men that I worked with cemented in me and taught me that families and guidance do matter and many reentering young adults require much more support than is available from their families, communities and from the criminal justice system.

In approaching this research project, I acknowledge the benefits as well as the limitations of being the “instrument of use” for this project. I acknowledge my experience working with inmates and their families in a prison setting, my experience as a therapist, my racial background (African American), my age (young adult) and gender (female) benefits the project in my ability to relate to the participants based on racial similarities, age cohort familiarity, being able to interview them with skill and in understanding the “prison culture”. On the other hand as a college educated, single never-married, childless, law-abiding African American female who comes from a lower middle class income family with a conservative value system, I understand how these could be potential obstacles in many of the same ways as the benefits. For example, growing up in a strict, disciplined, lower middle class income family with both biological parents, I was not exposed to the harsh realities that come with a drug/crime infested environment, having immediate family members with criminal justice histories or having to get a job at a young age to provide resources for my family. My life experiences have shaped my lens for viewing situations, problems and the solutions to those problems which may differ from that of my target population and could impact how I view and present their experience. I also bring an outsider’s perspective to something I have never had to



experience directly by having myself been or someone in my family of origin be incarcerated. While I have had an uncle and a male cousin who have had experiences with prison time, my personal experience with prison has been limited and includes being in a position of power, as a paid employee of the prison.

Despite those limitations, Allen (2000) informs us that our experiences contributes to who we are as researchers and help us better examine the lives of our participants. From my experience working with inmates and their families, I know that their stories are more than just the crimes that they committed or the time that they served. These ex-offenders represent a complexity of life and circumstance that are all too often are forgotten once they commit a crime, serve time and then are released back to their families. Each participant family has their own experiences, thoughts and perceptions about the impact that incarceration has had and will have on their lived experiences. This study sought to give voice and credence to their experience by elucidating family processes central to young adult reentry and the establishment of independence from caregivers (transition to adulthood).

### *Sampling*

The recruitment of participants used in working with and obtaining a sample of formerly incarcerated young adults and their caregivers followed very closely to approaches used by Arditti and Few (2005) in their study of incarcerated mothers' and reentry. In their study, the utilization of probation/parole officers was important in facilitating the research process (e.g., recruitment, making contact, facilitating follow-up) with their study participants. The use of institutional gatekeepers in accessing participants

can facilitate the research process by informing the researcher of potential subjects and setting the tone for the research project (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). As a former employee of the Department of Corrections in the state of Georgia, I was able to connect with gatekeepers in the research department who provided me with helpful information about past experiences with conducting research with parolees as well as guidance in regards to my project. The primary institutional gatekeeper, the manager of community services for the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles served as my parole liaison and selected the parole office site (Site A) for the study. She also facilitated introductions between the chief parole officer and me at Site A.

After being approved by the Institutional Review Board at Virginia Tech and with the assistance of the parole staff at the Site A, participants were identified through purposeful sampling procedures. Purposeful sampling is a procedure in which participants are selected based on their ability to provide insight on the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1998). The participants were selected based on the following criteria: gender (male), age (18-24) and willing participation from an identified caregiver with whom they currently live. Initially, one of the criteria for the study required participants to have lived with caregivers prior to and after incarceration. However, after meeting with parole officers and learning more about this population, this criterion was removed due to many individuals who are eligible for parole must live in pre-approved housing situations. Virtually all of the participants in this study who were eligible to participate would have been eliminated based on not being able to return to previous residences given their parole status. Thus, the criterion was removed to obtain

sufficient number of participants. As a result, I worked with the staff at Site A to secure participants who met the research criteria (age 18-24, living with a relative who would participate in the study, and male) for participant selection. With the help of the institutional gatekeeper, a list of age eligible participants was developed to guide my selection process. Unfortunately, as problems in the field arise, the list was not made available to the staff at Site A and the selection of participants resulted in parole officers manually going through their case loads to provide a pool of participants. Also, upon arriving to Site A to begin data collection, the pool of eligible candidates had been reduced to due various factors common to working with parolees (e.g., parolees absconding and being rearrested). For this reason, Site B was recruited to increase the pool of eligible participants.

The number of participants in qualitative research requires strategic and careful considerations that are guided by the specifics of the research design, the research questions and the amount of resources available (Merriam, 1998). Seidman (1998) proposes two criteria to consider when deciding the number of research participants: sufficiency and saturation. When there are enough participants to describe the phenomena so that “outsiders” to the phenomena can understand the experience, sufficiency has been met. A total of 9 dyads (male parolee and their identified caregiver) participated in the study for a total of 18 individual interviews. Given the research question, the study design, time and resource limitations, 9 dyads (young adult males and their identified caregiver) were sufficient in obtaining rich information. In addition, constraints in working within the criminal justice system and with ex-offenders under community

corrections supervisions, placed limitations on the sample population as ex-offenders were re-arrested or absconded each day. Upon interviewing 9 dyads, saturation was reached when no new information about reentry, fostering independence and reliance on family was being reported by the participants. For example, during interview number seven, the young man reported similar information that the previous participants had reported in their interviews. The last two interviews substantiated the previous six interviews by retelling the same kind of information that had been revealed by the other participants. Saturation occurs when redundancy is reached and no new information is being received from the participants (Seidman, 1998).

#### *Data Collection*

As recommended and arranged by my parole liaison, data collection began on the first Tuesday of the month, specifically November 4, 2008 (for Site A) and then again on Thursday, December 7, 2008 (for Site B) for mandatory report day. On mandatory report day, the parolees are required to physically appear at the parole office to meet with their parole officer. The office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., two hours longer than normal to accommodate those parolees who have to work. Since the young men would be showing up on that day to the office, I was advised by the chief parole officer that I could meet and recruit them myself lobby while they waited in the lobby to meet with their parole officer.

Prior to data collection, I arrived on the day before to meet with the parole officers, build rapport and to familiarize myself with the research site (Site A). I was able to meet with the assistant chief parole officer who introduced me to the other parole

officers and staff, gave me a tour of the building, and cleaned out the “interns” office so that I could utilize the office as a private space for conducting the interviews. The assistant chief parole officer was essential in participant recruitment in that he talked about my project with the staff and asked his officers to provide me with any help in recruiting participants for my study. I found that building and maintaining rapport throughout the data collection was easy as everyone was friendly, interested sharing details about their profession as it pertained to my project, and thoroughly enjoyed the “snack basket” and hot Krispy Kreme© donuts I brought to the office.

On data collection day, when age appropriate parolees arrived, parole officers would bring them to my office where I would screen them for the project. Participants who did not meet the criteria were allowed to return to the waiting area until their parole officer was ready for them or if they had already been seen they were allowed to leave. All interviews with the parolees were conducted at the parole office in the intern office that was designated for the study. Due to safety concerns, the parole office hours, work schedules and timing, and recommendations by the chief parole officer, interviews with caregivers were done over the telephone if the caregivers indicated, once initially contacted by telephone, that they were unable to come to the parole office for a face to face interview during business hours. One caregiver was able to come to the parole office for a face to face interview. The other 8 caregiver interviews were conducted over the telephone.

Data collection at Site A lasted approximately seven days and spanned two weeks. After declining numbers of eligible participants became apparent at Site A, the

chief parole officer graciously recruited the chief parole officer at Site B to assist in expanding the pool of eligible participants. On the last day of data collection at Site A, I met with the chief parole officer at Site B to talk with him about my project, the participant criteria and my timeline. As recommended, I returned to Site B on Thursday, December 7, 2008 for mandatory report day where I could meet and recruit participants as they waited to be seen by their parole officers for mandatory reporting. As with Site A, the chief and his staff were exceptionally helpfully in providing a secure private office to have the interviews and in suggesting possible candidates for the study. Data collection at Site B began and ended on Thursday, December 7, 2008 when saturation was reached and no new information was being learned based on the last interview.

#### *Description of the Data Collection Sites*

Data was collected at two parole offices within the metro Atlanta, Georgia area. The primary site, Site A, was the reporting center for 500 male and female parolees. This site had a chief parole officer as well as an assistant and 10 parole officers. There was one staff member who served as secretary and office manager. This site was located in an industrial area inside the heart of the city where there were several warehouses and office buildings. The parole office was situated in an office building complex next to the probation office whose main responsibility was the oversight of intensive probationers (sex offenders). Also in the same complex was the child support office, a branch of the county health department and the PRC. The PRC, the parole reporting center, is the substance abuse “outpatient” treatment program for parolees. The chief parole officer was

able to report that at least 85% of the parolees were African American, with 10% being Caucasian. In addition, roughly 90% were male and 10% were female.

The second site, site B was located approximately 25 minutes away from the Site A and supervised well over 1,000 parolees. Site B came as a result of expanding the sample population when the sample pool dwindled (due to parolee absconding and being rearrested) at Site A. The chief parole officer from Site A placed a call to the chief parole officer at Site B to solicit his support in the project and recruitment of participants. The Chief parole officer at Site B was enthusiastic about participating and welcomed the research project. Recruitment of participants at Site B proved to be easier than at Site A due to the larger number of parolees being supervised. Site B was also located in an industrial area of town in what appeared to be an all but abandoned office complex. This site had 15 parole officers, one chief officer and two assistant chief officers. Due to the number of parolees, this site offered two mandatory report days, the first Tuesday and Thursday of each month. This site reported being roughly 75% African American, 10% Caucasian, and 15% being Hispanic or Korean. In this area, there is a large population of Korean speakers; one of the assistant chief's assigned to this office speaks fluent Korean.

### *Interview Procedures*

Connecting with participants is important in conducting interviews in that participants begin the process of knowing the researcher and in establishing levels of comfort prior to the initial interview session (Seidman, 2006). I engaged each participant in "small talk" prior to the start of each interview. I found it to be quite easy as the

participants seemed eager to talk with me about my study and to talk about themselves and their families.

After discussing the project with participants and after they met the criteria, I read aloud the informed consent while the participant read along. After consent was explained and obtained, the participants were asked to identify a caregiver that would be available to interview. When appropriate (e.g., the caregiver was not at work), the participant was asked to call the caregiver to seek permission for me to call at a later time to schedule the interview. On four occasions when the caregiver was called in the presence of the young male participant, I spoke with them about the project, established a bond, and scheduled their interview. For the other five caregiver interviews where I was unable to contact them during the time of the young male participants interview, I called during the evening hours of the same day I conducted the interview with the young man. The informed consent was read aloud to all participants to ensure there was no coercion in participant participation and that participants were aware that their involvement in the study had no bearing on the terms of their parole through the informed consent. The young male participants were also informed by their parole officers about their right to participate (or not) in the study without any effects on their parole status. Caregivers who participated in the telephone interview gave verbal consent over the telephone to participant in the interview after being read aloud the informed consent. A copy of the informed consent was mailed to the caregivers after the interview was completed.

Upon being granted permission by participants in the consent form, all interviews were audio taped for accurate analysis after being transcribed verbatim. The participants



did not express any discomfort or reservation about being audio taped. The average length of time for the young men's interviews was 60 minutes and appeared to be adequate time for building rapport, conducting the interview and debriefing. The average length of time for the caregiver interviews were 45 minutes.

Field notes were taken throughout the duration of the data collection, from the first day of the site visit to the last day of the visit and after each interview to address observations, descriptions, feelings, thoughts, activities and conversations. Due to the time lapses between each interview, there was enough time to afford me to type field notes after each interview session and throughout the day as I made observations at the parole office and in conversations with the staff.

Paying participants for their participation must be strategic in that the amount dispersed should not be the basis for motivation for participation in the study (Creswell, 1998). Participants were made aware during the informed consent that they could discontinue the interview at any time and would still be compensated for their participation in the study. The amount of the compensation was determined by suggestions made by the gatekeeper in the research department. He suggested that in years past students have had difficulty obtaining participants if there was no financial incentive being offered. Thus, young adults were each compensated \$30 at the end of the interview session for their participation. Caregivers were sent a \$30 money order for their participation through the mail on the day following their telephone interview.

*Participants*

Participants for this study included 9 young men ranging between the age of 19 and 23 ( $M=21.3$ ). The average age at the time of incarceration for the participants was 17 years of age. Eight of the participants were African American, and one participant was Caucasian. Of the nine participants, five reported struggling with substance abuse issues, of these, two having had services at the PRC (outpatient substance abuse program for parolees). None of the participants reported having a history or any problems with mental health issues in the past or during the interview time. Only one of the participants returned to the same caregiver they lived with prior to being incarcerated. One of the participants was incarcerated in Wisconsin but had his community supervision “transferred” to the state of Georgia. At the interview time, two participants were enrolled in an educational program; one participant at Atlanta Fashion Institute and one in trade school for heating and air conditioning repair. Of the nine participants, three participants were working with only one of those working full-time. On average, participants reporting being arrested an average of five times with a range of time served in prison between 11 months and 60 months ( $M=36$  months incarcerated). Crimes for the participants included: Reckless endangerment, possession of marijuana, aggravated assault, armed robbery, battery and obstructing an officer, possession of cocaine with intent to distribute, trafficking cocaine, theft by receiving, theft by taking and criminal damage to property. The participant young men reported a range of time since their release from prison between one month and 11 months ( $M=5$  months home).

Caregivers included four mothers, one stepmother, one sister, one grandmother, and one uncle, none of which reported having been incarcerated themselves. Caregivers ranged in age from 25 years of age to 65 years of age. Six of the caregivers reported working full time outside the home, with one reporting part-time employment. Of the nine caregivers, five reported completing some education beyond high school.

Demographics on young adult participants and caregivers can be examined in Table I and Table II. There were two additional young men who met the criteria for the study and participated in the interview. However, because their caregivers were unable to be contacted for interviewing; their interviews were not used for this study. In addition, one young man who met the criteria for the study declined after signing the consent form but before starting the interview. His information was also not included in this study. In total I utilized nine young male participants and their respective caregiver for a total of 18 individual interviews that comprised nine dyad families.

Table I. Young Men Demographics

Name	Current Age	Age at incarceration	Race	Education	Employed	Relationship Status	Children	Length of incarceration	Caregiver relationship (age)
Jeff	21	19	Black	GED	Part-time & Student	Single-NM	1-daughter	19 months	Sister (25)
Carlito	23	20	Black	H.S. Diploma	No	Single-NM	No	26 months	Stepmom (48)
Anthony	18	20	Black	11th	No	Single-NM	No	24 months	Grandmother (67)
Darrel	19	17	Black	GED	Part-time	Single-NM	No	11 months	Mom (35)
Davis	21	17	Black	9th	No	Single-NM	1 daughter	48 months	Mom (49)
Peter	22	20	White	1 yr college	Yes	Single-NM	No	15 months	Mom (49)
Marcus	23	17	Black	GED	No	Single-NM	No	60 months	Great Aunt (46)
Dwayne	20	17	Black	9th	No	Single-NM	No	30 months	Mom (43)
Tom	23	17	Black	GED	No-Student	Single-NM	No	58 months	Uncle (43)

Table II. Caregiver Demographics

Caregiver Name	Corresponding Young Adult	Age	Race	Number of Children	Education	Employed	Relationship Status	History of Incarceration
Tameka	Jeff	25	Black	1	1 year college	Yes	Married	No
Rhonda	Carlito	48	Black	6 (3 step)	11 <sup>th</sup> grade	Yes	Married	No
Sheri	Anthony	67	Black	6	10 <sup>th</sup> grade	Retired	Widowed	No
Erica	Darrel	35	Black	4	2 years college	Unemployed	Married	No
Therese	Davis	49	Black	4	11 <sup>th</sup> grade	Disabled	Widowed	No
Mary	Peter	49	White	1	Nursing school	Yes	Divorced	No
Tracey	Marcus	46	Black	1	1 year comm. college	Yes	Single	No
Amanda	Dwayne	43	Black	3	11 <sup>th</sup> grade	Disabled	Single	No
Kenneth	Tom	43	Black	0	Associates Degree	Yes	Partnered	No

*Data and Coding Analysis*

Data analysis has been an on-going process, from the literature review to data collection to the organization and analysis of the transcribed interviews. In order to get a handle on what Creswell (1994) describes as overwhelming amounts of data involved in qualitative work, I transcribed all interviews and field notes collected for the study directly after the interview or within one day's time. All interviews were transcribed word for word and were inclusive of pertinent emotional expressions, pauses, and breaks as delivered by the participants. All field notes included a brief summation of the rapport building "small talk" that occurred prior to the start of the semi-structured interview and includes physical descriptions of each of the participants.

I immersed myself in the data, reading each interview, without interruption as suggested by Creswell (1998). All transcripts and field notes were examined multiple times for emergent codes with notations being made within the margins of the data that highlighted areas significant to the research questions and previous literature. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) describe the process of developing coding categories as "searching through the data for regularities and patterns and then writing down words or phrases that represent those topics and patterns" (p. 171). I developed the initial coding categories from the research questions, supporting literature and from numerous reading of the transcripts. The initial coding category draft was reviewed with my primary research advisor Dr. Joyce A. Arditti. After reviewing and discussing the initial coding scheme, we were able to adjust the coding scheme to more accurately capture the sensitizing concepts (reentry, transitioning to adulthood & fostering independence) from the

data. This meeting yielded a second coding scheme draft. I then returned to the transcripts to code the data utilizing the second coding scheme draft to see how well the new coding schemes fit with the data. I also utilized the assistance of my research team<sup>1</sup> who read the transcripts utilizing the second coding scheme to verify fit and determine if any adjustments needed to be made. After meeting with the research team, who independently read and coded the transcripts, I was able to further condense some of the coding categories for a final third draft of the coding scheme. I then coded all of the transcripts with the final iteration of the coding scheme. The initial and final coding schemes can be located in the appendix under Appendix C and Appendix D, respectively. The use of qualitative software Atlas.ti (Scientific Software Development, 2004) was used to organize the transcripts and to consolidate the data into the coding categories.

After the coding of the data with the final coding scheme, the various coding categories were examined for analysis. While codes are defined as target areas of interest, themes are defined as the emerging patterns that describe the perceptions/feelings/process as revealed by the participants. I wrote in the margins my thoughts, ideas and hunches about what the data was telling me. These ideas were presented to the research team who also read the transcripts organized into the coding categories to assist with the grappling of emerging ideas, theoretical formulations and explanations on my findings. As a result of examining the interview transcripts and field notes I identified three major content areas that spoke to the research questions and that were guided by the research literature: (a) Reunification (b) Reliance on the family and (c) Fostering independence. These three content areas were then used to further organize the data

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<sup>1</sup> The research team entitled “Young Adult Reentry” consisted of my primary research advisor and a second year human development doctoral student, with experience in qualitative research.

from which mini themes emerged and subsequently the major findings were discovered. The three major content coding schemes can be found in Appendix E, Appendix F, and Appendix G.

### *Credibility*

Credibility in qualitative methods refers to the legitimacy and integrity of the research study (Patton, 2002). In order to ensure the credibility of the study and that the findings are consistent with the collected data, triangulation and peer debriefing were utilized. Triangulation is a term used in qualitative methods that refers to the use of “multiple sources of data, multiple points in time, or a variety of methods used to build the picture that you are investigation” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p 69). This study utilized the interview data from two sources: The young adult and his identified caregiver. Each participated in separate interviews that focused on the research questions. Field notes, another source of data, were taken before, during and after all interview sessions to reflect on the words, thoughts and feelings from the participants as well as myself that occurred during data collection. These notes were used in the analysis of the interview data and helped to remind me about the context, points of interests and hunches given during the interview period. The field notes consisted of participant descriptions, impressions about the participants and about the interview, sights, sounds, smells and observations that I thought were important to the interview environment. The field notes also contained hunches and ideas that I had about the emotions and feelings expressed by the participants as they told their stories and shared with me their experiences with incarceration and the return to family. The field notes offered important examples that highlighted areas specific to the participants’ stories and are featured in the analysis.

The research literature was used as a reference point to guide the analysis given previous studies and theoretical assumptions established for the research topic. For example, research by Christian et al., (2006) on offender reentry revealed information about the importance of family participation (e.g. providing emotional and instrumental support) in promoting young men's reentry success.

I also triangulated data by utilizing the student member of my research team who independently examined and coded the data. Patton (2002) suggests utilizing triangulating analysts, or having more than one person independently analyze the same data and compare findings. With the use of the research team in coding the data, I was able to reduce potential bias and increase the credibility of the study (Patton, 2002).

Peer debriefing refers to the utilization of colleagues that serve as "intellectual watchdogs" during "modification design decisions, developing analytic categories, and assisting in building explanations for the phenomenon of interest" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 69). Throughout the process the coding scheme was examined by the research team for clarity and fit with the data. For example, the research team actively participated in reading the transcripts, coded the transcripts, refined the coding scheme, and provided an observer's reference point in examining all areas of analysis.



## CHAPTER IV

### Results

The results chapter is presented in two parts: Part one includes participant family descriptions and part two includes stories of the return which includes the results that emerged from the participant interviews. The participant family descriptions contain a brief description of the participants and their caregivers. Included in these descriptions are highlights about the participant families that offer details to shed light on the participant families as well as to set the stage for stories of the return. At the beginning of the interviews, the young men were asked to provide a pseudonym that they would be referred to in this document and all documents that result from their participation in the study. I assigned pseudonyms to caregiver participants after they were identified by the young men at the time of the young men's interview.

#### Participant Family Descriptions

##### *Carlito and his Stepmom Rhonda*

Carlito is a 23 year old young Black man who lives with his father and stepmother. Prior to being incarcerated for selling/distributing cocaine and serving 26 months in prison, Carlito lived with his paternal grandmother. The parole board would not allow Carlito to return to his grandmother's home after being incarcerated because she lived in a drug and crime infested area. Carlito reports being arrested seven times, and finally being incarcerated at the age of 20. For this interview, Carlito wanted his stepmother to participate in the study because he felt that they had a good relationship and that she has been encouraging to him since he has been home. Carlito's stepmother, Rhonda, a 43 year old Black woman is employed as a security supervisor. Rhonda has three children from a previous relationship (not with Carlito's father), one of whom

has spent time in prison. Carlito, a high school graduate, is currently unemployed and is not enrolled in an educational program. He does not have any children. Carlito has been home for approximately six months.

*Jeff and his Sister Tameka*

Jeff is a 21 year old young Black man who lives with his sister Tameka, her husband and their four year old daughter. Prior to being incarcerated Jeff lived with his mother. Because his mother lives in a gated-apartment complex, Jeff was unable to parole to her address because the parole officer could not make “surprise visits” to the location. Jeff began his incarceration at age 19 and served 19 months for possession of cocaine with intent to distribute. He reports that he has been arrested five times for drug related crimes. Jeff dropped out of school in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, but was able to obtain his GED in prison. He is currently enrolled in a vocational program for heating and air conditioning repair and works part-time at Burger King. Jeff reports that he has been told that he has a daughter who was born while he was incarcerated. He is awaiting a DNA test to confirm if he is the father. Jeff’s sister Tameka, is a 25 year old Black woman who works full time as a data entry clerk. She attended college for one year. Jeff has been home for approximately four months.

*Anthony and his Maternal Grandmother Sheri*

Anthony is a 20 year old young Black man who was incarcerated at the age of 18 for battery and obstruction of an officer. He served 24 months in prison. Anthony currently has an 11<sup>th</sup> grade education and is trying to get enrolled in a GED class. He is currently unemployed and has no children. Anthony’s grandmother Sheri, is a 67 year old widowed Black woman who is retired. Sheri earns extra money by working part-time cleaning houses. She takes care of her

daughter's three children (Anthony's mother) and has done so for most of their lives due to her daughter's substance abuse and incarceration. Sheri says that Anthony's mother is welcome to live with them when she is released from prison, within a few weeks, if she can stay off the alcohol and "live right". Sheri has a 10<sup>th</sup> grade education. Anthony lived with his father prior to becoming incarcerated but could not return due to the crime and drug infested neighborhood and his parole restrictions. Anthony has been home for approximately three weeks.

*Darrel and his Mother Erica*

Darrel is a 19 year old young Black man who was incarcerated at the age of 17 for possession of cocaine with intent to distribute living with his mother, stepfather and two younger siblings. He served 11 months and was able to obtain his GED while incarcerated. Darrel reports a long history of polysubstance abuse problems. Upon release from prison, Darrel was enrolled in the substance abuse treatment program for parolees from whom he did graduate. At the time of the interview, Darrel reported that he is still clean, but struggles everyday with his addiction. He does not have any children and works 5 hours a week unloading trucks. He is looking for employment. Darrel's mother is a 35 year old Black woman with two other small children, the youngest is 2 years old. She is married and has two years of college completed and stays at home with her small children. Prior to being incarcerated and against his mother's wishes, a 16 year old Darrel lived with his girlfriend and supported them both with money made from selling drugs. Darrel's biological father served time in prison for armed robbery. Darrel does not report having any children. Darrel has been home for approximately 10 months.

*Davis and his Mother Therese*

Davis is a 19 year old young Black man who was incarcerated at the age of 17 for aggravated assault on an officer/theft by taking and receiving, a crime he committed with his older brother who has an extensive criminal history. He served 48 months in prison. Davis reports that he dropped out of school during the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. He has a 4 year old daughter that his mother took care of while he was incarcerated. Davis is currently unemployed and is on an electronic monitoring system. Prior to being incarcerated Davis lived with his mother and siblings. Davis lives with his mother Therese, his sister (who just recently moved in) with her three small children. Therese is a 49 year old widower who lives on disability. She has four children, two of which have been incarcerated. She has an 11<sup>th</sup> grade education. Davis has been home for approximately three months.

*Peter and his Mom Mary*

Peter is a 22 year old young White man who was incarcerated at the age of 20 for possession of cocaine/marijuana with intent to sell or distribute and criminal damage to property. He served 15 months in prison. Peter does not have any children and is a high school graduate. He completed one year of college prior to being incarcerated. Peter reports a long history of polysubstance abuse and dependence. He was not enrolled in a treatment program upon release. Peter has a long history of substance abuse and legal problems since age 12. These issues, per Peter and his mom Mary affected the relationship between Peter's parents and they eventually led to their divorced while Peter was incarcerated. Prior to being incarcerated, Peter was asked to either stop selling drugs or to move out of his parents' home. Peter chose to move out and continue selling drugs until he was arrested within eight months of moving out. Peter works full

time as a waiter at a restaurant. Mary is a 49 year old White woman who works as a nurse. She had intended to move to Florida after Peter got released, but when his father did not step in to assist Peter, she stayed in Georgia to help her son get on his feet. Peter has been home for approximately nine months.

*Marcus and his Great Aunt Tracey*

Marcus is a 23 year old young Black man who was incarcerated at the age of 17 for armed robbery and obstructing an officer. He served 60 months in prison. Marcus does not have any children. He dropped out of school in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, but received his GED in prison. He reports a long history of aunts and uncles being incarcerated. He is currently unemployed, but was working and was made to quit by his parole officer to take a class for his parole requirements. Marcus is currently enrolled in the substance abuse treatment program for which he is doing well. He is on an electronic monitoring system. Prior to being incarcerated, Marcus lived with his mother. Marcus could not live with his mother upon release because of the parole requirement that he cannot live with someone who receives government housing assistance. Marcus lives with his great Aunt Tracey, her teenage daughter and his bed ridden great grandmother. Aunt Tracey is a 46 year old Black woman who maintains a child daycare center in her home. Tracey has one year of community college. Marcus has been home for approximately two months.

*Dwayne and his Mother Amanda*

Dwayne is a 20 year old young Black man who lives with his mother Amanda and his 19 year old brother. Dwayne was incarcerated at the age of 17 and served 30 months for aggravated assault. He is currently unemployed and has a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education. He reports that he did have a

job working at a fast food restaurant, but was fired after consuming a hamburger without permission. He is trying to get enrolled in a GED program. Dwayne reports that he lived with his mother and his two other siblings prior to being incarcerated. His mother Amanda is a 43 year old Black woman on disability. Amanda has an 11<sup>th</sup> grade education and is hoping that she too might be able to enroll in the same GED class as Dwayne. She is currently in a relationship with a 26 year old young man who is on probation for child molestation charges. Dwayne has been home for approximately 13 months.

*Tom and his Maternal Uncle Kenneth*

Tom is a 20 year old Black man who was incarcerated at age 17 for 2<sup>nd</sup> degree reckless endangerment and possession. He spent 58 months incarcerated in Wisconsin. Tom reports spending most of his 58 months in solitary confinement (23 hours in a single cell with one hour of recreation daily) by choice. Upon being paroled in Wisconsin, Tom was having difficulty living at home with his aunt, so his uncle suggested he transfer his parole supervision to Georgia. He is currently unemployed, but is a full time student studying fashion design. He obtained his GED while incarcerated. Tom does not have any children. Prior to being incarcerated, Tom lived with his maternal aunt who has had custody of him since he was an infant. Tom's mother has spent most of her life in and out of prison and has a long history of substance use/abuse. She abandoned him at the hospital shortly after giving birth to Tom. Tom lives with his uncle Kenneth and his partner Torrance. Kenneth is a 43 year old Black man, who works full time in the administration area of his company. He reports attending community college. Tom has been home approximately 16 months.

### The Return Home

As a result of examining the interview transcripts, a review of the literature, field notes and research questions, three major content areas guided the analysis of the data: (a) Reunification (b) Reliance on the family (c) Fostering independence. The findings in this section represent these major substantive areas of the interviews as well as the sub-codes and mini-themes that emerged from the data. Themes, the emerging patterns that describe the perceptions/feelings/process as revealed by the participants, are what emerged and give voice to inform the content area. The coding scheme for each major content area is presented in table format and can be found in the corresponding appendix. Quotes from participants will be included to illustrate the themes and were selected based on their ability to tell the participants' story as it relates to the specific theme.

#### *Reunification*

“It mean a lot really [to be back at home with family] cause I could have stayed in there until '09. I mean I got paroled out. I get to see Christmas with them and now I guess...I know it's a blessing and it felt good. I didn't even know it was going to happen. I just woke up and they told me I'm going home tomorrow. Then I got home just to see Obama get elected. And everything was straight” –Carlito

Reunification was a content area that reflected the feelings, emotions and thoughts associated with the young man's return home from prison and reunification with family. Reunification also captures the feelings, emotions and thoughts expressed by caregivers regarding the young man's return to their household. This context area is categorized into four subcodes that speak to reunification: (a) Family relationships after imprisonment, (b) Balancing family needs, (c) Caregiver concerns about young men's behavior and (d) Young men concerns about reentry. The coding scheme for reunification can be found in Appendix E.

*Family Relationships after Imprisonment*

*Theme: Ambivalence: Anxiety and happiness.* One of the major areas examined in this study was how young adult men and their families perceived the process of reunification. The decision to allow a loved one to come home was a process that started weeks prior to the young man being released due to their status of being granted parole. All of the caregivers in this study had to sign a form with the parole board that listed their responsibilities and role in allowing the parolee to stay at their residence. The caregivers also had their housing inspected by the parole board and had to comply with the Board of Parole eligibility criteria. For example, housing could not be government supported, located in a drug/crime infested area and must be easily accessible to the parole officer. If necessary the caregivers had to establish a land line phone if the parolee was required to be under electronic monitoring. The process of being granted parole can take as little as a few weeks or even span until the incarcerated person completes his time due to not being able to find a residence meeting the parole housing criteria. The relationships that the young men and their caregivers have upon release, becomes a three-way partnership that also includes the young man's parole officer. In examining reunification, the theme of ambivalence, defined as anxiety mixed with happiness, emerged as the participants described their anxieties about being reunited with their families (what will happen) and the happiness they experienced when reunification actually did occur. Caregivers and young men spoke of the happy emotions connected with the reunification but spoke of anxieties about being reunited upon further questioning. This paradox of emotion created the ambivalence that embodied the reunification. For example, the young men spoke about specific anxieties they had when they thought about coming home while they were still incarcerated Anthony, who reunited with his maternal



grandmother Sheri, reported feeling concerned about his family relationships and being back in society:

“How I’m gonna start back over...how people look at me. You know what I’m saying? My family like a different kind of relationship vibe, you know...knowing that I been to prison...I know they really wouldn’t look at me differently, but the worst case scenario is that they would neglect me you know what I’m saying...you know feeding me from a long handled spoon...”

Similar feelings were also expressed by Peter who returned to live with his mother Mary:

“If I was going to have a place to live... If my parents were actually going to let me come home because I wasn’t living with them before I went to prison, so that was my main concern if they were going to give me a second chance to come home”

Marcus reflected on his anxieties while he was incarcerated when he thought about returning home and the challenges he would face:

“ I was worried about not having my GED before I got home...well actually...I was worried about...like staying in the same neighborhood and hearing about all of my homeboys got killed so I ain’t want to get in no more trouble. And I worry just about staying out.”

Carlito voiced his worries about returning home from prison to the home of his father and

Stepmom Rhonda:

“I worried about finding a job...uhm...how I was gonna feel...just how I was gonna (long pause) get back into society...I thought a lot about that...just mostly trying to stay out of trouble.”

Tom talked about the feelings he had about his reunification with family and friends after his imprisonment:

“I worried about...uhm relationships I had with people. As far as family and friends...was wondering were they going to be the same. Were they going to progress or were they going to just keep fading away...like I was in prison for 4 years...um my relationships with a lot of people kind of drifted away. People started acting different and all that stuff”

After reflecting on their current situations with their families, most of the young men (n=8) were able to quell any anxieties they had previously held about their homecoming reception after being reunited and within months of living with their caregivers. Anthony, who returned to live with his mother, shared his thoughts about what really happened when he returned home despite his initial anxious thoughts on reuniting with family:

“Everything just really feel the same...And I never really been hard to get along with. I probably done some things in the past, you know what I’m saying. But everything...everything is alright. Everything is cool. Nobody treat me different or look at me crazy. Everything is alright.”

Darrel reflected on similar feelings of happiness upon reuniting with his family after recalling his anxieties of returning home:

“They good...they straight. I mean ain’t no arguing going on in that house. My mom and stepdad don’t argue at all...which is surprising. My little sister is doing good in school...my other sister just learn...trying to get ready to walk. So everything is ok. The bills are paid and ain’t nothing wrong...it is exciting”

Carlito, also reported anxiety about coming home made his positive report on being back at home with his stepmom and dad:

“No...everything was cool at home cause me and my family have good relationships. We had a good relationship before I went in so it’s really like...rekindling. Everything is good at home.”

Marcus also expressed his emotions on being home with family and on being out of prison despite his initial anxieties:

“It’s just great. Cause I thank GOD that I did not like being incarcerated at all...I mean I just hated it [really stresses this in voice inflection]. And I just thank GOD. I feel good, but I want to get me a job and I want to succeed and move forward.” –Marcus

As a group, caregivers reflected more precisely on the theme of ambivalence, anxious but happy about the young man’s return and gave their thoughts about the reunification. The

caregivers reported similar concerns as the young men in that they were anxious about how the affects of the prison experience, what would happen once the young man actually did make it home from prison and their feelings on the reunification. Marcus' great aunt Tracey reflected on Marcus returning home and voiced her anxieties about the reunification:

“I was just glad for him to come out. To make sure that he came out ok, you know because you hear horror stories about people being in prison. So at first I was scared for him because he was young and I didn't want anything to happen to him. So I guess that was my main concern.”

Davis's mom Therese reported her thoughts of prison life and how she is happy to have Davis home:

“Because once you go to prison and they slam them doors, that's it. And they take your freedom and there's nothing you can do. They say get up at 4 o'clock, 3 o'clock in the morning, you got to get up. And you can't walk in there going in the refrigerator and have what you want and have your fill. It's just like you in prison, but you in they hands and that's they house. When they say wake up then and you do what they want to do. So I'm blessed that he's out and he's doing good. He's doing a lot better. So I'm thankful for that but I hope he keep up the good work.”

Dwayne's mom Amanda shared similar thoughts on being happy but anxious about Dwayne's return:

“I mean I'm happy that he home but I'm just, you know like I say he like to run stuff and he try to tell his brother what to do...he like a lot of females to uh be around and to come to the house...and I'm not with a lot of company.”

In examining both groups, the young men and their caregivers both reported levels of anxiety about reuniting after imprisonment. The young men reported concerns that focused on relationships, obtaining employment and being under parole supervision. The caregivers were anxious about the effects of prison on the young man and how he would “be” once he was home. Despite reflecting on their anxieties about reunification, both groups reported positive emotions

about reunifying. Caregivers and young men report differing anxieties and fears about reentry home, many of which were overshadowed by being happy just to be home. For the young men and their caregivers, it appeared that, in the short period since the release, previously feared anxieties had been quelled and gave way to more positive and optimistic relations with family.

*Theme: "Prison made our relationship better."* Most caregivers (n= 7) reported that the prison experience had assisted the young man into being more mature and responsible which contributed to the positive emotions felt during the reentry. The perceived increase in maturity and personal responsibility (gained while being imprisoned) brought the families "closer" and contributed to improved relationships between the young men and their caregivers. The young man's going to prison; it seemed at the moment, to have been beneficial for the relationships due to new ways these families were communicating with one another. In examining their reactions to the prison experiences, the young men and their caregivers reported similar testimonies that they attributed to an improved relationship. Peter reported a long history of substance abuse and legal problems since age of 14. Prior to being incarcerated, Peter reported that his drug use and legal trouble with drug trafficking caused problems between his parents, particularly in how each parent thought it best to handle the situations with Peter. Peter's mom wanted to take a softer approach in handling Peter, while his father wanted to impose tougher sanctions at home. Prior to being released from prison, his parents divorced. Ultimately, according to Peter's mother Mary, his incarceration was a pathway for a better relationship between the two of them:

"I think that we have a really good relationship now. He can tell things. I don't expect perfection from him. I do expect him to obey the rules...to obey the law...He's got a good heart. We have a really good relationship right now. I really think that he's turned himself around." –Peter's mom Mary

“I’ve had a better relationship since I’ve been out of prison than before I went to prison...when you’re in prison and you don’t have your cell phone and everyone else’s phone number and you only know your home address and the only people that you really talk to are your parents...so for 15 months it was just me, my mom and my dad talking and we got to be a lot closer. And when they would come and visit for an hour...us talking and bonding and before I went to prison we never sat down as a family and talked. You know I would eat dinner somewhere else and they would eat dinner by themselves and we just weren’t a close family until I came home.”- Peter

Darrel reunited with his mother after living on his own at the age of 16 and after a long history of criminal justice involvement; both which Darrel attributes to a poor relationship with his mom.

Darrel and his mother Erica also talked about how their relationship has improved since reuniting:

“Uhm...it was good [referring to the relationship with Darrel before he was incarcerated]. He was headbanged and didn’t want to listen to me. But other than that we were really close. We were real close...We’re even closer now. Cause he’s opening up now that he’s older and he’s more mature.”- Erica

“[before getting incarcerated] “We didn’t really talk cause I didn’t say with her...I stayed with my girlfriend. Basically we just argued...[currently] cause see I guess since I’ve been out I’ve matured a lot and we talk...”- Darrel

Jeff who lived between his mother’s home and his friends’ home reported that he and his family were close even though “they knew what I was doing [selling drugs]”. He reports not being around them or limiting his contact with them while he was engaged in illegal activities. Jeff and his sister Tameka also talk about the improvements in their relationship since imprisonment:

“I’m not going to say she [sister] was happy that I got locked up but she prolly...but they was kinda happy about it because I grew up in there, you know. It taught me a lot of responsibility. It taught me a lot about life...we got a really good relationship you know.”- Jeff

“We was close brothers and sisters. We grew up in the same house and he was uh...the child right under me. He’s the second oldest. I’m the oldest. So we...so we were close. Yeah...He’s doing a lot better than what he was doing before he got locked up. He starting to distance himself from around people he used to hang with....but he’s...he’s

been doing good. He know that uh...this doesn't happen all the time...staying with somebody and you don't have to pay no rent, so he really appreciate me.”- Tameka

The time in prison spent away from family members seemed to improve the relationships between the young men (n=8) and their caregivers (n=8). The improvements in the relationship was attributed to better communication, being open and honest with each other, increases in the young man's maturity level and the young man behaving in ways that showed caregivers that past behaviors might be a thing of the past.

### *Balancing Family Needs*

*Theme: Adapting to multiple demands.* Balancing family needs was a major part of reunification for these families. When accepting the young men home from incarceration, caregivers not only dealt with the demands from the young men, but also the demands of the parole officers, as the young men in the sample were under parole supervision. The theme that emerged from balancing family needs centered around the multiple demands placed on the family system. Caregivers were not only concerned about helping the young men to meet his demands, but doing so while also taking care of other family members who lived in the house. All of the caregivers (n=9) expressed some feeling about how the young man's return had affected the entire family system. These thoughts were both positive and negative and reflected how the family changed their operations to accommodate the young man. For example, household bills were higher, transportation was needed (to get the young man to his mandatory meetings) and surprised visits from the parole officer had to be accommodated. Caregivers made the necessary adjustments and the family system continued to function as they needed it to with the additional demands. While caregivers had their perceptions of the demands they faced with the returning young man, the young men also reported sensitivities in the form of guilt about the

demands they brought upon reunifying with family. The guilty feelings, it seemed, symbolized the feeling they had about being dependent on caregivers and their inability to contribute to the family or to themselves in what they perceived to be a meaningful way which often meant through financial resources. In examining the how these families addressed these issues, caregiver-young men dyads were examined. Anthony's Grandmother Sheri, who is also the caretaker for Anthony's three other siblings, reflected on her neutral thoughts about the demands placed on the family unit since Anthony's return:

“Oh it's fine. He don't give me any trouble...nothings different. Everything still seem to be the same...He can do everything for hisself. I'm used to being here and when washing time come I just wash everybody clothes. I cook or either my older son cooks but he can if he want to come and fix him something, he does...”

Even though Sheri did not make a grand issue out of meeting the demands placed by Anthony's return, Anthony is aware of the multiple demands placed on the caregiver as a result of his reunification with them. Anthony expressed guilt that he didn't want to be a burden and wanted to be an active part of the family system. Anthony contrasted his Grandmother's “no problem” stance to with his thoughts on not wanting to overburden his family with multiple demands and how he wanted to contribute positively to the family:

“You know as long as I feel like they concerned you know what I'm saying, which they is, basically at least... you know, try to help me and not grab me by my hand. Just help me a little bit. ...Just not babysitting me and doing this and doing that and gotta get me to go do this and go do that, which I should just want to get up and by my own and do it.”

Darrel's mom Erica, who is also a mother to two other small children talked about the multiple demands as a result of Darrel's return and how she is coping with it. Darrel, the youngest participant at age 19 reflects on his awareness of the multiple demands his presence has on his caregiver:

“Well uh the bills have been higher. The bills have been higher. I have to cook for not one but uh two people now...uh you know...well actually a third because of my husband and my baby...sometimes I have to clean up behind him when I don't want to. But uh just staying on him and it has changed as far as me having my freedom around my house like I need to...encouragement...strength...sometimes finances. Just...I mean...any and everything. He calls me for EVERYTHING (stresses and sighs)...I don't have any feelings about that 'cause that's my child and I love him. I would do it for anyone...so I really don't have a feeling about that.”- Erica

“Well...she...well I'm basically doing everything by myself, but she's I guess...emotionally supportive...all she can do. Cause she got to take care of her household and you know I do what I can. It's not like...it's all that she can do it give me support.”- Darrel

Tom's uncle Kenneth revealed the multiple demands placed on the family upon Tom's return.

Unlike the other families, Kenneth initiated Tom's parole transfer from Wisconsin to Georgia to be more helpful to Tom in creating a positive atmosphere for Tom to get back on his feet.

Kenneth talks about how having Tom home have created demands, specifically the emotional demands that he had not envisioned by accepting Tom into his home. Kenneth later attributes the additional emotional demands created by Tom due to Tom's haven been incarcerated during his adolescent years and Tom's lack of maturity. In his interview, Tom talked about his awareness of the multiple demands placed in his uncle's home in the form of resentment he feels his Uncle has about opening his home up to him and how tensions are affecting their relationship:

“Well we have a three bedroom house and its been different in the fact that normally it's two adults and you know you've been in the house by yourself for five years and then all of a sudden there's this teenager who comes and you know, do what teenagers want to do. They kind of want to hang out. They don't want to...you have to ask them to clean up. You have to remind them to take the trash out. And you're not accustomed to that. It's been a test, but it was a sacrifice that I knew I had going allowing him to come and live with me. So that part of it I can accept.”- Tom's Uncle

“Uhhmm I think he looks at me as like...he don't look well he talks to me as if I'm a kid and by me being under his roof he feels he can say anything to me and if I wasn't under



his roof and I had a job and staying in my own apartment, I really don't think he's be talking to me like I was a kid."- Tom

Dwayne's mother Amanda is on a fixed income and seemed to be most affected by the multiple demands of welcoming Dwayne home, specifically when it came to financial resources. Amanda reported her frustrations in the form of the emotional demands of trying to maintain the household with Dwayne's return and his child like behaviors:

"He still hard head. He still act like a baby, you know even though he twenty and uh like I said...he wanna run things and he can't...he try to run stuff with me, with his brother, just to be honest but other than that I mean, he, you know we get along...but he just try to be too bossy...when he wasn't there it was smooth, you know? But since he's there it's like oooh...he wanna be grown...he wanna run things...I just pray to GOD. I just pray everyday and stay in church."- Amanda

Dwayne offers his thoughts and feelings by revealing his feelings on being replaced as the favorite child and on feeling like an outsider in his mother's home. He explains the contrasting family environment from before he was incarcerated and upon his return:

"Everybody got along,..it's just that me and my brother we always fight. That's a lot. He's a Capricorn and I'm a Leo. And we always fighting and arguing over crazy stuff and you know mostly that...I don't know...I think it's me [who is mom's favorite]. But now I think it's my brother. I think it's my brother...I don't know...he don't be home a lot...and when he do come home...I just feel this little vibe from when I was 16 about me and my mom. And I feel it with her and Eric you know...so I think it's my brother [who is now mom's favorite].- Dwayne

Finally, in thinking about the multiple demands placed on families as a result of the young man returning home, Marcus' Aunt, had a practical take on meeting the demands of the family while welcoming Marcus into her home from prison:

"I live in the West End and we have a lot of break ins and by it just being me and my daughter is 13 and my mom is disabled, she's uh 76...so really, I welcomed him here because you feel safer now that they know it's a man in the house, you know and so, I feel safer that he's here."

Meeting the multiple demands of having a loved one home from prison was an adaptive process for all of the families in the study. Young men were cognizant about the caregivers' ability to help them and were willing to take what was offered but were guilty about the demands created while living with caregivers. The young men reported positive feelings about receiving the support, but looked forward to when they could live on their own and provide for themselves and not be a contributing factor in the household demands of the caregiver.

*Concerns about Young Adult's Behavior*

Upon reunification caregivers concerns about the behavior of their family member were reflected in three different themes. These themes were also corroborated as concerns for the young men as well. Returning to old ways (theme 1), trying hard but getting no where (theme 2) and the effects of parole/having a felony (theme 3) were all themes that emerged as caregivers and young men negotiated life after incarceration.

*Theme: "Going back to old ways."* Caregivers reported concerns about how the young men's activities were (or were not) leading them to be a more productive and independent citizen. Activities related to finding employment were a primary concern for caregivers (n=9) and the young men (n=9). Lack of employment for caregivers was perceived by caregivers as a sign that the young men could "return back to his old ways" and engaged in activities that lead to his imprisonment and subtly that the young men would be dependent on caregivers much longer than they expected. Caregivers believed that having a job would promote responsibility, maturity and provide money in the pockets of the young men so that he would not feel it necessary to try to provide for himself illegally. A job would also symbolize a reduction in the demands that the young men were placing upon the family resources. Carlito's stepmom Rhonda voiced her

feelings about Carlito's need for a job in order to prevent a return to the street, where he became involved in illegal activities that resulted in his incarceration:

"I worry about that a lot. Everybody want some type of life. You know, he's growing up and he's here with us and if he don't get a job I know without a shadow of a doubt he gone go back to where he started from. I told him, I explained to him, you got to understand me, you not on probation, you on parole and you get caught out there again in them streets you gone be in a world of trouble, you know...and it's very important that you got to work..."

Tom's Uncle Kenneth echoed his concerns about Tom not having money being influenced by his environment and reverting back to old ways:

"And my fear is when he has too much time or when he gets discouraged or when he needs money and he doesn't think he can get it right away that he'll be...because anything you want in Atlanta you can find it...that he'll get hooked up with the wrong crowd and start to sell drugs or something. And that realistically is something I am always concerned about."

Collectively, the young men echoed these same concerns about returning to the old ways and behaviors that got them into trouble. They too were concerned about not having a "good job" (making \$10-\$15/hour) and returning to the streets, a place where they know how to make money and take care of their needs. They voiced concern over not being able to do what they had to do to maintain their parole supervision (paying of fines and fees) and having to rely on family for monetary help. In addition to employment concerns, young men reported cutting ties with "old friends" and avoiding old hangouts to decrease their chances of returning to old ways.

Carlito echoed his stepmom's concern about not having a job and going back to old ways:

"Like...ok...see if a person don't find a job, I mean nine times out of ten, nine times out of ten more than likely they're gonna go back to do the same thing that got them in. I thought about that a lot (long pause). Just mostly trying to stay out of trouble"

Being able to find a "legal" job was the main concern for reentering men and their caregivers. This issue of not having money leading to a return of old ways seemed to weigh

heavy on the minds of the participants and overshadowed all other activities performed by the young men (e.g., attending parole classes, obtaining additional education/training, or helping out at home). Caregiver-young men dyads were examined to show the similarities in thinking about finding a “legal” job and returning back to old ways. Marcus and his aunt Tracey reflected on employment and reverting back to old ways:

“I worry if he’s out past 6 and you know he calls or I may call and check up on him to make sure that he is where he is supposed to be. Which he normally is...But yeah, I be concerned cause I don’t want...my main concern is this following him throughout his life and I be saying can he even vote and stuff like that...so I guess that’s my main concern. I don’t want a repeat. I want him to stay busy you know...”-Tracey

“I think I need to get a job. Go back to school. And just stay out of prison. Get on with my life...cause it [a job] would keep me from like selling drugs, uhm robbing people, doin’ all type of sneaky things to get money. You know? So uh...keep me focused. If I just got to worry about getting up and going to work...that day I work is going to keep me out of trouble that day...”-Marcus

Similarly Anthony and his Grandmother Sheri also echoed the same fears about Anthony returning to the old ways and his need to find a job:

“No...not right now. If he was to start getting out, you know, I might be afraid that he might be getting back with the wrong crowd ...be around the wrong boys...with so much going on...I think he need him a little job...working...so he can learn responsibility.”- Sheri

“[I got to] stay away from the wrong people. Doin’ what I got to do...and just really handling my business...staying to myself. Basically doing what I’m doing...like the thing I wasn’t doing right, doing them now. Uh...finding a job.”- Anthony

Finding a job for most of the participants was a priority in their reunifying with their families and in staying out of trouble. This seemed to be the case for Davis, who lived with his mother and worried about finding a job so he would not return to his “old ways” of selling drugs. In his interview, Davis was motivated by his 2 year old daughter to do the “right thing” but was concerned that his inability to find a job might cause him to return to selling drugs in order to

take care of her. Davis's thoughts on the importance of finding a job were highlighted because he was one of two participant fathers; and the only one that had physical custody of his child.

Finding a job and staying out of prison seemed particularly urgent for him as were the consequences of failing to do so, given his responsibilities for his daughter. He reported he wanted to make better decisions for himself and for his daughter's sake. Here, he grapples with the pressure to "do right":

"Well basically I don't even try to look at the future. I just never know what could happen...A lot of things I need to happen. I can just look forward to basically doing what I got to do to survive...but if everything go down my route and my way, right...the right way, I can see me and my little girl doing alright...I mean [I need] a job because I've got a couple of months before I get off of parole. The streets calling you and the streets call you quick. True enough people dying out there, but it's a lot of money out there to be made...well I don't worry about it. I just dodge it. It say a lot like 'don't go to that job, they ain't gonna hire you'. The ego do. But if they don't see me or the people who I know where it's at, then I don't have to worry. The only thing that's worrying me now is if the person gone look at me and see if this is a working person or a dependable person."

Finding a "legal" job appeared to be a marker that was representative of responsibility, citizenship and the ability to avoid criminal activity. These concerns not only affected the caregivers, but the young men were also aware of the factors that they felt could bring them back to their old ways. The concern of "returning back to old ways" was thematic in all emotions expressed about returning home after being imprisoned by both caregivers and the young men.

*Theme: "Trying hard but getting nowhere"*. Another theme that emerged from caregiver concerns about offspring behaviors was the notion of "trying hard but getting no where". As a group, caregivers seemed to not only have concern over the efforts the young men were making to find employment and stay on the "straight and narrow", but also worries that in no one (employers) would give ex-offenders a chance. Subsequently, ex-offenders would be forced to

return to bad behaviors in order to make ends meet. Jeff's sister Tameka, discusses his attempts at doing something positive:

“That’s just like the biggest let down right there cause you know fresh out with a record it’s like almost impossible to get a job...it’s a recession...it already is. You know that’s the biggest disappointment, trying to find work. He trying to stay on the straight and narrow but you being straight up with people and they just close the door on you. So that’s the hard part. But like I said for the most part everybody makes mistakes and we just trying to see him get past this point...to get over this hump.”

Marcus's Aunt also reported on her observations of Marcus' efforts in trying to find employment and in being positive about his reentry challenges of not having a steady job:

“I think he just needs to keep pushing...don’t get sidetracked...just keep doing what he’s doing. It’s hard. And he’s trying to find a job. So it really is hard, but don’t let anything sidetrack hi, you know. I know now with the holidays he want to have money...stuff like this but keep doing what he’s doing, you know until he find a job...you know doing stuff on the side, cleaning the yard, painting stuff like that until you can find you know a nine to five or whatever. Just keep...keep...you know...I think he’ll make it.”

Darrel's Mom made similar reports about Darrel's attempt to find a job and the obstacles he often encountered when he interfacing with employers:

“Because now it’s hard for him to find...a decent job...and it’s hard...it seems like when someone tells you ‘no’ like when he goes to see about a job...or they do a background check and they tell him ‘no’ then he gets real discouraged.”

The young men in the study voiced similar worries as their caregivers about “trying hard but getting no where” in terms of set backs, optimism about finding “something” and enthusiasm about following job leads. In my field notes, I wrote about observations that I made as I sat in a group for parolees that was led by a former parolee who was starting a non-profit to help men on parole find jobs and in skill building. The group attendees talked about going to job fairs and reaching out to employers for employment (e.g. trying hard). Many of the men reporting being

“hired” but upon a background check being “fired” due to their felony status (e.g. getting no where). In the beginning, the atmosphere was filled with disappointment (none of the 9 attendees were working). Eventually the group members rallied together and the group turned into a networking meeting where they spoke openly about job leads, businesses that hired felons, and people to contact that would assist them in finding jobs (e.g. trying harder).

In another field note observation, while interviewing Anthony, I noticed that his attention was focused on his cell phone that kept vibrating during the interview. I told him that he could answer it if he needed to take the call. Upon answering, Anthony was talking with his friend (who also had a felony) who was calling him with a job tip. Among other things I noted, Anthony asked his friend if they were doing “background checks”. Upon getting off of the phone, I inquired about why he wanted to know about the background checks and if they were conducting them would he still apply for the job. Anthony reported that for most “good paying jobs” (jobs working in a warehouse making approximately \$10-15 per hour) a background check is often required. He reported that he would still apply for the job, but that he would not be optimistic about getting a call back. Unfortunately, Anthony, like 8 of the 9 other participants did not have transportation which also limited the scope of his employment search. Anthony’s friend was going to take him to the warehouse to apply for the job. He missed the opportunity because he had to stay at the parole office until he was seen by his parole officer. These observations taken the field notes illuminated this process of trying hard but getting no where.

Darrel, chronicled his employment journey and sums up his feelings “trying hard but getting no where”. His words embody the voices of the young men in the study:

“Cause I worked at the chicken plant when I first got out. Man...it was so cold in there it was like you couldn’t feel your hands...so I has to quit that job. Quit that job came back

and got me another job doing a little construction and then he kind of laid me off and said I wasn't made for the work, but he wanted me to work...se he was paying me cash...\$50 a day...but he want me to work 10 hour days...so I said no...no I can't do that...And then I got another job with the truck service...but now it's slow...I'm putting in every application in every fast food place in the world. None of them don't call you back. Then I went to an interview for Krystals...thought I had that job and they didn't call me back...But I try...but...everything ain't goin come like a drop of a hat...it take time for somebody to have to get back on their feet and get...well...cause before I got locked up I didn't do no type of work...until I got to a county camp. That was it. But I wasn't working. I wasn't doing nothing. I didn't know nothing about no hard working or nothing...I was selling drugs and doing what I wanted to do where I didn't think it would be that sweet.

The theme “trying hard but getting no where” had unfortunate consequences for the participants who were all under parole supervision. After speaking with parole officers at Site A, I wrote in my field note observations about the policy that if a parolee did not find a job within a certain amount of time (whatever timeframe the parole officer wanted to impose), despite his efforts, then he could be returned to jail for 30 days or be assigned “volunteer” duty to clean up the highways. The efforts placed in finding a job that did not pan out were real concerns reported by the participants. Marcus who must pay for his electronic monitoring, his parole supervision, and his substance abuse class talks about the ramifications of not having a job or money to pay his fines:

“So I just really been going out there looking for a job. I gotta have money to come andsee these people every week...every day or I'ma get throwed back in prison...”

Anthony's grandmother reports talking with Anthony about the consequences of not finding a job soon:

“Cause I been telling him, you got to go out...he on his probation thing since he got out and goin really have to find him a job anyway because they give you about 30 days or something and they take you out to find some kind of job. And if they don't...they put them to work doing little things...I think he'll find something cause he don't want



to...well he did ask me if they pay you to work and I say no, they do that because you haven't found a job."

Trying hard and getting no where represented themes that seemed to be beyond the control of the participants. Due to their parole status, all of the participant young men were required to work, yet only one participant was working full-time (as a waiter) and two were working part-time (at a fast food restaurant and as a laborer). All of the young men reported actively searching for employment and those that had a job, better employment. Caregivers acknowledged the efforts being made by the young men in trying to accomplish their goals as well as the factors that they felt attributed to their lack of finding employment success. The theme of trying hard and getting no where highlighted the way in which these families were making attempts at changing their life course despite the obstacles they reported finding in their way.

*Theme: Felony status as "institutional baggage."* The role of having a felony and past criminal behavior of the young men were always on the minds of the participants in this study, specifically on how institutional baggage, or having a felony would impact the young men's reintegration back into society. Caregivers (n=7) expressed great concern about how the experience of incarceration would affect the life of the young men in the short and long term particularly with regard to finding employment. Beneath the awareness of 'institutional baggage' were concerns that caregivers would have to provide supports for ex-offenders longer than they were anticipating. What it meant to be a felon and on parole was more explicitly described by the young men (n=9) as they talked about their reunification concerns. Their experiences with incarceration seem to influence not only their thoughts but actions as they attempted to find employment, interacted with their parole officer and on their return home to their families.

Anthony talked about how his institutional baggage follows him and the consequences he thought it could have on his life:

“It’s hard to get a good job. Once you been down that road [prison] police are more willing to get you, things like that. I might get pulled over for something simple and they might see my past record and just get at me for something...”

Jeff talked about how his prison experience and things that he did in prison has impacted his ability to move beyond his felony status:

“Will I be able to get a job and stuff like that? Or how would society look at me because I’m a convicted felon and I done been to prison. And I didn’t have no tattoo and like I got a whole bunch of tattoos while I was locked up...just my appearance and what people would think of me... Society might think like...like you a criminal. Like you always up to no good or just cause you been to prison you got your criminal ways and stuff like that. Society just look at you different. They won’t give you a chance...Like when you lookin for a job and they ask you if you ever been convicted of a felony or have you ever been convicted of a crime and if you tell them the truth...or you put will explain during the interview...and when the interview come and tell them what happen or you tell them that you just need a chance and that you looking for better opportunities and you don’t want to go back to the same route you came from and they still tell you ‘Well I can’t do nothing for you’...People look at you different”

Jeff’s sister Tameka talked about the talk she had with Jeff prior to him coming to live with her and her husband and daughter about how having the felony and being on parole would make life harder on him:

“I said you have to find your own way so it wasn’t going to be easy as far as with a felon record. It’s hard and you can’t find places to stay...try to get him a little apartment. It’s hard. So...uh...not having a job and the parole officers badgering you about they need they money, you know, little things like that...The trials that he would be facing when he came home and I was just letting him know it wasn’t going to be easy.”

Marcus also agreed that by having a felony or having experience with the criminal justice system created situations that prevent a person from moving on to better circumstances:

“But see that’s just how the system is set up...cause if I ain’t have money to get down here, then 9 times out of 10 I’m going to Wright St, so not that don’t bother me. Cause I know that’s just how they got it set up. If you going, then maybe that’s just how GOD wanted it to be”

Peter is the only participant who had college credit and solid financial support from his caregiver via an inheritance left by Peter’s grandfather. Despite these positive resources, he still ruminated about his felon status and his fears on its impact later on in his life:

“My job because I’m a convicted felon, you know honestly I don’t know how hard it is to get a job because I haven’t tried. The only reason I got this job was because I asked for an application and it didn’t say anything about if you were a felon or now because you don’t need a liquor license or anything to work there, so I don’t know if it’s going to affect me in the long run. Or if I’m well-qualified and you look at my record and see that felony are they going to say ‘I’m sorry I can’t help you’...that’s the only thing I’m really worried about as far as working.

Peter’s mom Mary also reported her concern about his felony and how it might impact him in the future as he tries to move up and find better employment:

“The fact that he has a felony record...him getting a decent job...I’m concerned about. Right now he’s working at a restaurant and he’s getting really tired of that...”

The implications of felony status were not only practical (in terms of employment) but also emotional. Participants were anxious about their ability to move ahead and in thinking about the future. As a group the young men reported having their own thoughts and perceptions about the “system” and how they thought they would be affected in the long run. Caregivers reported similar anxieties and acknowledged that having been imprisoned would have negative consequences for positive progress away from “old ways”. Institutional baggage was an issue throughout the interviews as the young men were out of prison and having to deal with having a felony but were also still under the watchful umbrella of corrections.

*Young Adult Reentry Expectations*

*Theme: Meeting caregiver's expectations: "I'm not where they think I should be."* Young men (n=5) expressed similar thoughts as caregivers in their perceptions about their own behavior in terms of going back to old ways, trying hard but getting no where, effects of felony/progress) but major differences in their feelings on meeting caregivers' expectations now that they were home. Young men spoke about the subliminal messages caregivers were sending either directly or indirectly through their actions or words regarding the young man's presence in the home and about the progress they thought he was making. These subliminal messages were typically perceived as negative by the young men. Topics that the young men perceived being at the root of the subliminal messages concerned the young men not being where thought they should be for their age and caregivers having unrealistic expectations on achieving goals specifically in finding a job.

Tom shared his thoughts about living with his Uncle Kenneth and the subliminal messages he perceives from his uncle about his uncle's thoughts of him and his feelings on helping Tom while he struggles as a part time student:

"Yes, I believe he still believes there's hope and a future for me but at the same time there's still doubt in his mind and he thinks I'm just a worthless piece of shit...it's something I feel because of some things he might indirectly say or certain things he might do...like he wouldn't take something serious that needs to be serious as far as my career or school like for instance a couple of weeks ago I had a deadline to finish a portfolio and I told him about the portfolio and like a few days before this incident so he already knew what the risk was and everything because someone else gave me a deadline and like two day sit was either yeah...like two days before that deadline...he wanted me to rake the yard and this is a huge yard and he wanted me to rake the yard and mow it. And I was telling him that I'm a little busy I'll take care of it when I'm done with whatever I'm doing it's not like I'm avoiding it and he told me no. He said no...I told him it wasn't fair and he said life isn't fair and stuff like that..."

Darrel, in addition to his reunification concerns, also reported struggling with an addiction, talked about his feelings about not being able to live up to his mom's expectations and the verbal messages he often receives that substantiates his perceptions of not being where his mother thinks he should be:

“Because they don't realize it's hard out here...especially with me being young and me as a person, especially being Black. It's hard cause I guarantee you if one of these white boys in here was to get a job...they can get a job faster than we can. Just based on color. I already got, what...I'm Black, I'm a male and I done already got sent down the road, so that's three strikes. Statistics say I won't make it past 25...or I be in jail...or somewhere...Besides put me down a little bit...talking about 'you don't want to do nothin', but I'm like 'Ma, I'm looking for a job' and she's like 'Naw you that and you ain't gonna be nothing'...you aint where you supposed to be right now' and all that suff. Nobody be wanting to hear that...I don't...I'm supposed to be having a job...doing work...doing something productive with myself”

Davis reported not meeting his mom's expectations based on not being his mom's favorite child, not because of his inability to meet the expectations of finding employment. The crime that Davis committed that subsequently leads to his incarceration was committed with this older brother who had an extensive criminal background. Davis, who did not have criminal history at the time the crime was committed, was willing to take responsibility for all of the charges on behalf of his brother. Somehow during the trial/negotiation period, the lawyers told Davis that his brother had “turned on him” and implicated him as the sole perpetrator of the crime. As a result of Davis then had to be honest with the lawyers about what actually took place which resulted in Davis's brother receiving a longer sentence. Davis felt like his mother favored his brother over him and his inability to meet her expectations had more to do with his not being not the favored child rather than letting her down by going to prison. His perception of her lack of encouragement to him therefore is more of a punishment because he is not the favorite child:

“She could give me a couple of dollars here...like...get off my behind about doing this. Arguing at me and try to encourage me more like ‘son you doing a good job...keep tryin’...you’ll get something’...People will tell me like just wait it will get better...but I aint gonna get that [from caregiver]...I don’t give too many problems. Don’t have too many folks coming to her house keeping the door down, nothing like that...or fighting or arguing in her house...you know little stuff like that...but some attitude will come up...”

Anthony, who lived with his maternal Grandmother Sheri also, disclosed his perceptions on the subliminal message he receives about his Grandmother’s belief in his abilities to reach his goals and the feelings about meeting caregiver expectations:

“I’m sure they’ll feel real happy for me...you know really shocking...like I couldn’t ...not saying that they’ll be like ‘I couldn’t believe it’ [that he can achieve his goals in life]...you know some of them don’t believe...they prolly do have doubt [about staying out of trouble and out of prison], but at the same time they still want me to stay out. I can’t really say what’s in the back of they mind. But nine times out of ten there probably is [doubt].”

Caregivers (n=6) reported their concerns about the young men not meeting their expectations in terms of the young men’s maturity level. While caregivers, acknowledged that the young men were “grown” in terms of their age they frequently referred to the young men in terms of his maturity level. As the caregivers talked about the young men not meeting certain expectations due to maturity level, issues seemed cause conflicts between the dyad as a result of the caregivers perceptions of the young men (as felt by the young men). For example, Dwayne’s mom talked profusely about Dwayne’s immaturities which often lead to disagreements between them:

“He still hard headed. He still act like a baby, you know even though he twenty...he wants things his way and like I say he love playing video games...if he don’t want me to think his way he’ll get an attitude and start pouting...I don’t understand that.”

Tom’s uncle Kenneth also expressed his feelings about Tom’s maturity and how he thought his having spent his teenage years in prison contributed to conflicts in their relationship:

“I think he was maybe 15 when he was first incarcerated and then you get out and you’re 22 or 21...there’s a lot that you’ve forgotten because you’ve been away. Those are your growing years that you’ve been away so a lot of the stuff that you were taught as a child, so I think that’s part of it...”

Jeff’s sister Tameka summed up the caregivers’ views on the differences of being a legal adult with maturity level and highlights the conflicts that can arise for caregivers as they negotiate maturity with age related expectations:

“Uh...as far as his age go...yes (laughs)...his age is, but as far as his mindset, I don’t think that he is where he needs to be. I still think that he has boyish ways as far as how he things and what’s important to him. But you know as far as his age go...yeah...by law his is a man, but his maturity level and how he thinks...no, I don’t think he’s there.”

The concerns about the young men’s maturity level were translated by the caregivers and the young men as being “off-time” which meant that the young men were not where the caregivers felt like they should be maturationally. This perception of being off-time also included the young men’s activities like finding a job and being able to provide for himself and if necessary for the family based on his age. The subliminal messages the young men reported perceiving from caregivers put pressure on the young men to meet the caregiver’s expectations in an unreasonable time and undermined their reunification efforts with the family. These subliminal messages perceived by the young men were undermined not only in reunification, but also in the way the young men perceived their reliance on caregivers.

Despite the feelings the participants expressed about reunification, these families reported that their reunification experience was a happy time for everyone. Caregivers were happy to be able to step in and support the young men upon his release from prison and young men were happy to be home with family.

### *Reliance on Family*

“I’d be messed up [without family support]. I couldn’t do it. I probably be out here trying to sell drugs again...like for real. No jokes aside, I’d be in a...I’d be back to my old self cause I wouldn’t be right here talking to you...that’s how I feel.”-Darrel

Reliance on family was the second major content area used to organize the findings. This content area consisted of perceptions, thoughts and feelings on how young men and their caregivers felt about the utilization, availability, and reliance of supports offered by the family system. Emerging from this reliance on family were the following subcodes: (a) Perceptions of family support, (b) family interdependence, (c) time limitations and (d) conflicts with identified role. The coding scheme for this content area is presented in table format and can be found in the appendix F. Quotes from participants will be included to highlight reflections of the themes and were selected based on their ability to tell the participants’ story as it relates to the specific theme.

#### *Perceptions of Family Support*

*Theme: “I need my family’s help just to make it.”* All of the young men (n=9) in the study reported needing support from their families in specific ways as it related to reentry and staying out of prison. This support was reported as being both instrumental in terms of providing housing, food, financing and transportation as well as emotional in terms of being encouraging, not “throwing their past in their faces”, and providing a listening ear. This theme of “needing their family’s help in order to make it” was prominent in all of the interviews with the young men. Receipt of this support resulted in the young adult being able to stay away from previous activities that resulted in their incarceration. In reflecting on needing his family’s support after



being incarcerated, Carlito, who returned to live with his father and stepmom Rhonda, talked about the types of support his family was giving him:

“Like giving me good job leads...I don’t have a job right now so helping me with transportation and just staying on me and encouraging me...staying on me and make sure I try...keep me tightened up.”

Jeff, who lives with his sister Tameka, had similar perceptions and feelings about his receiving support from his family:

“I just need her to keep supporting me...like keeping me on the up and up...like making sure I go out and find jobs and just stay on me...I just thank the Lord that I have some people who love me and that they can take me in and I ain’t never burn no bridges with them, you know, I feel wonderful about that.”

Marcus, who is under electronic monitoring and wears an electronic device on his ankle talked about how his family provides him with specific supports and how those supports help to keep him from getting into trouble:

“ They provided me with a place to stay...big screen television...Xbox...DVDs...like anything I want really...Any time I’m thinking about doing something I just pop in a movie...Like on the weekends because you know I’m on a leg monitor and I can’t go nowhere, so I really just be thinking about, man I need to dip...and if I leave I’m going to get in trouble and get locked up, so I just go turn on the TV and watch a movie.”

Tom, who had his parole supervision transferred from Wisconsin to Georgia, reported on the outcomes in the event his Uncle Kenneth withdrew his support:

“I would be homeless...I would be withdrawn out of school...probably would be asking the person to transfer me back home because I would be assed out bad.”

The need to be supported and the availability of resources to support the young men were felt on one occasion where limited resources caused tensions within the household. Davis, who lives with his mother, his 4 year old daughter, his pregnant younger sister and her two small children

talked about how support in his busy household was hard to come by and the reason why he thinks support in from his caregiver is so limited:

“Support...that’s it...a couple of dollars here...like...get off my behind about doing this...arguing at me and try to encourage me more like ‘son you doing a good job...keep trying...you’ll get something’...people will tell me like just wait it will get better...but I ain’t gonna get that [at home]...you can give a lot of encouragement when you have one baby...and you got a daddy and a mama encouraging you. But when you got a lot of things coming at you, you can’t worry about one thing...you got to worry about four or five things...it’s a lot of problems. You’ve got to have your stuff together. Two is enough, especially if you’re doing it on your own. Basically, she doin’ it all on her own, don’t get me wrong...I feel sorry...I mean I like my mama...I love my mama to death, but I guess I been...life is different for me...”

Relying on family for both instrumental and emotional support was something that all of the young male participants voiced needing in order to make it when released from prison.

Without this support from family, the participants reported uncertainty on being paroled, felt like they would return back to old ways in order to take care of themselves, or would be not be able to progress and achieve goals they has set for themselves. The availability of resources was critical to caregivers’ ability to provide supports to the young men. When resources were available, the young men seemed to be more positive about their situation and achieving their goals. However, as was seen with Davis, his family’s lack of resources were reflected in a more negatively reflection of his family as a support system.

*Theme: “Helping those who help themselves.”* While the young men voiced their need for support from their families and catalogued the variety of ways that their families’ supported them, caregivers also vocalized their willingness to provide support to the young men with specific parameters. Caregivers (n=9) reported assisting the young men with their needs and with many of their wants. However, caregivers set the parameters of help by being willing to “help those who help themselves” and not giving support to the young men without conditions.

Although the caregivers acknowledged that the young men could not totally care for themselves, the young men had to display the behaviors that signified to the caregivers that he was making an effort to help himself out of his dependent state. For example, Marcus's Aunt Tracey talked about her feelings on Marcus's efforts to help himself and how that motivates her to help him get back on his feet:

"It's cool as long as I know he's trying to do something I would do it. If he was just out here I wouldn't, you know. Everybody knows that I would do it...so it's not like everyday he has to come to me....Cause like I say, he will do the yard or painting or something to try and get the money hisself. So I know he don't have no...he don't make that kind of money to get his own place and even if he did he couldn't right now. So it's cool."

Jeff's sister Tameka also expressed her willingness to help Jeff as he helps himself get to the "next level" in his life:

"I'm always open to solutions and like I say...I will help him as much as he need and as much as he help himself. You know, I feel like if you can do it...do what you can to help yourself because your family is all you have...so if he continue to help himself then I will continue to help him...but when he stop helping himself, then there is nothing that I can do when he's not helping himself, you know what I mean? So I help someone when I see them helping themselves."

Peter's mother Mary reflected on how she has supported Peter financially since his release from prison and what she expected out of him in return for the financial support:

"But the purse strings are getting cut really soon. Uh when my father passed away he left me a little bit of money...and I can use that to help him to financially get on his feet a little bit...although I don't give it to him until he saves up the money for me to match the goal for me to give him anything. And he's done that. I'm not just giving him handouts...I've let him have a place to live rent free for a while, but you know...I'm paying cheap rent right now...but he is being responsible..."

Davis's mom Therese also talked about supporting Davis and his daughter with limited resources after having to return some of her disability payments she received due to an overpayment. She

discussed how because of her new financial situation, she is expecting Davis to help with the household bills in order for her to be able to help him with housing:

“He [Davis] would have to pay some of the bills cause you can’t stay for free...and that’s how it used to happen like that, you know. Cause I can pay my own bills and I can give you everything you want, you know, but now I can’t because last year, I took care of his daughter, last year Christmas I took care of my grandchildren for Christmas and I bought them Christmas toys and everything...but right now this year, I can’t buy nobody nothing because they want they money back...right now, I’m just trying to keep me a place to stay and keep my little light on and enjoy myself and keep quiet.”

Caregivers and young men both voiced their perceptions of family support with young men perceiving the need for substantial resources from family in terms of instrumental and emotional support, particularly in staying out of prison. Caregivers perception of being able to provide support were based on if they were able to witness the young men attempting to take care of himself. The availability of resources to support the young men was an important factor in how the supports were distributed and how the level of caregiver expectation was expressed.

### *Family Interdependence*

*Theme: Family members “chipping in.”* Reliance on caregivers by young men after being incarcerated appeared to be a unidirectional relationship with the caregivers supplying support to the young men. However, based on the interviews with both groups of participants, interdependency among family members was found. While the bulk of the support is consumed by the formerly incarcerated young men, caregivers reported utilizing contributions of all family members in order to facilitate family functioning. Although the young men could not provide financially for the household they provided other types of support and were active agents in the family system. Every member of the family unit, including the young man was expected to help out and all reporting contributing to the family system in some way. For example, young men

were utilized to perform household chores and tasks such as cooking, yard work and child care, specific tasks that made the caregivers tasks at home easier. In analyzing caregiver reports, caregivers (n=9) reported that the young men played an active role particularly in terms of not being a burden on the caregiver by not picking up after oneself, helping out with household tasks or performing duties that caregivers were physically unable to do. Davis' mom Therese reflected on Davis's contribution to the family:

“Yup, he has changed...keeping his room clean. Cleaning up. Like he say ‘mama you need some help? Do you want me to clean up? But he doing good.”

Marcus's aunt Tracey talked about how Marcus helps her with household chores and how he offers his assistance whenever he can:

“He will clean up and if I don't feel like cooking, he'll do it. Really it was like, let's see how do I put this? Now I get ‘it's like whatever you need I'm available to you'. That's how he is with me. He's always available for what I need or for whatever he may think I need.”

Peter's mom Mary reported on how Peter's maintaining the living space contributes to a positive shared environment:

“We moved into an apartment in May so there's been lots of...so we're living in much tighter quarters than we lived in than we lived in our house. Like less than half the space. I'm kind of having to let go of ‘hey you're a slob but I don't have to look at it'. But the part of the house that other people might see please don't make it disgusting...You know and he's actually turned around and respecting my wishes on some of that. You know his bathroom is pretty much off limits to the rest of the world...cause GOD knows it's a war zone if you walk in there...he's a slob...22 year old boy...That's the way they are...it's been fine.”

Even though Anthony's Grandmother Sheri talked openly about cooking and doing laundry for Anthony and the three other siblings she cares for. Sheri reported on Anthony's willingness to take care of tasks that she can no longer physically do herself:

“I asked him about helping him do the yard cause I’m on the corner and there’s leaves and straw...and he did get out there last Wednesday and he did do the yard. Anything you tell him...he’s not a sassy child, not a smart mouth talking child. He don’t talk back...if he like it or don’t like it you wouldn’t know it cause he don’t talk back...”

Caregivers reported on the ways in which the young men were active agents in home life. The tasks involved household duties that respected the space of the house like picking up after oneself others were contributions that helped the caregiver to complete tasks they could no longer physically do. These tasks were important to the caregiver because it symbolized the young men’s willingness to take care of the family space, but to give back to the family who was giving so much. In addition, chipping in also symbolized that the young men were indeed a part of the family system and were interesting in protecting and taking care of the family space.

*Theme: Family helping family.* Another theme that emerged under family interdependence the idea that it is the responsibility of family to take care of one another. The young men talked about the importance of finding employment was not only a necessary task in order for them to get back on their feet but to be in a position to be able to give back to the family. This idea of being able to help their loved ones was a major worry voiced by the young men and something that motivated them to move forward. Being able to give back to their families emerged as an implied obligation they felt they had to do, were more than willing to do and looked forward to being able to do upon gaining independence. In addition to being able to provide resources for their families, being able to give back to family members symbolized their allegiance to the family and acknowledged the lengths the family had gone through while the young men were incarcerated. Darrel talked about the sacrifices his mother made during his incarceration and his feelings on being able to one day be able to return the favor to her:

“She [mother] took care of me when I needed her help, you know what I’m saying? And that’s the same thing I would do for her if I could and I tell her thank you to this day for it. Cause it was hard. She paid \$1400 to come and get me out of jail, then come back and have to do this every month...have to drive all the way up the hill to come and see me...gas money and she was pregnant...She just had a baby last year...December 26<sup>th</sup>...So that was hard...came up there to see me while she was pregnant...drove by herself and came to see me while she was pregnant...talked to me...sat there a couple of hours, you know she helped me out...”

Anthony, who was raised by his father and maternal grandmother also reflected similar thoughts about being able to take care of himself and being able to one day take care of his grandmother as she had done for him:

“I’m sure she [grandmother] probably would really want me to get married, have kids, a family, a good career. A good job going for myself. So hopefully if she still be here I can take care of her. Stop working and things like that.”

Marcus talked about the importance of getting himself together so that he can not only do for himself, but also for his other family members and what that would mean to him to be able to be a resource to his family:

“And that’s why, yes, I’m going back to school. My little sister just had a baby...I got other people to think about just for myself...other than myself...uh...if I’m doing a lot better and I see and start saving enough money and then maybe I can have a baby or two...maybe...maybe get married...maybe...maybe help somebody else. That would mean a lot to me.”

Dwayne also thought about the day when he would be able to help his mother once he is able to get back on his feet:

“Yes, I would be glad to help my mama cause she always help me.”

Jeff joked about the day in the future when he has his own apartment and when he is able to fully support himself without help from his family. He talks about what will happen once he is able to be a financial resource:

“Oh, they’ll love it...cause they’ll want to borrow some money (laughs)! They’ll love it...they are looking forward to it! (laughs).

This “turn taking” in being able to provide support to one another appeared to be a natural part of family life for the participants in this study. The young men looked forward to one day being able to provide for their families if needed just like the families had done when they were incarcerated. While the young men accepted most of the help from their families, they expected at some point to be able to be a person with resources that their families could one day turn to for support if needed.

#### *Time Limitations*

*Theme: “He’s got to do something soon.”* Relying on family support after being incarcerated appeared to be a natural part of family life for the participant young men and their families. Despite, the desire or ability expressed by caregivers to provide supports to the young men, two themes emerged that related to expectations of caregivers in terms of how long these supports could be available. While all caregivers (n=9) expressed their willingness to help the young men during the reentry period, caregivers differed in the expected length of time they thought it would take for the young man to “make something happen” particularly in terms of employment, getting their own place and being independent. Time limitations seemed to reflect caregivers concerns about the young man being not being where he should be for his age, their assessment of his maturity level, and what it means to be a man (discussed later). Caregivers ranged in expectations of the young man being able to be dependent on himself between 4 months to 4 years. These concern’s were reflected by caregivers in the theme of “doing something soon” and were linked with other issues the caregivers expressed such as “returning back to old ways.” Caregivers were mostly concerned about the time it was taking for the young



men to find employment. The main concern seemed to imply that the efforts the young man was making in finding employment were not enough or could be improved. Thus the theme of “he needs to do something soon” emerged. Other concerns reflected caregivers’ hopes to reclaim their “space” and “time”. Jeff’s sister Tracey talked about Jeff’s timetable of support after living with her for the last four months :

“Uh...well I knew he was going to live with me cause one of the stipulations of...my mom is in a gated community...so I’m the only person with a home and he had to come stay with me. But uh...I expect him to get his own place shortly. I don’t expect him to be with me for long. So he just recently got off his leg monitor so he comes and goes sometimes...but yeah...I do expect him to get his own place shortly.

Peter’s mom Mary reflected on her time limits in terms of offering her financial support or what she calls the “closing of the purse strings”:

“So I’m helping him to get his car in shape. Right now he’s relying on me for a place to stay. Social support I think...like I said all of that is fine. But the purse strings are getting cut really soon...But I helped him out with his car and I told him after that, his car is his car.”

Carlito’s stepmom Rhonda talked about Carlito’s time limitations and his needing to “do something quick” in terms of finding a job. Rhonda was concerned about Carlito’s languishing and questioned if he was trying as hard as he could to find a job:

“I told Carlito, you gone have a certain amount of time, I’m telling you, cause it’s gonna play out. I explain to him that he’s 23 years old and you know I just can’t say get out. But like I explained to him you got a certain amount of time that’s gonna play out that you keep lingering and lingering cause I know without a shadow of a doubt that you could do something...”

Carlito appeared to have gotten the message about his time limitations from his step mother’s talks and acknowledges his time limitations:

“For the time being they don’t mind me being at home. They want me...they keep encouraging me to find a job so I can have my own...that’s what I wanna do myself...she [stepmom] says I need to get it together soon (laughs)...that’s something she’ll say

because it's like...if they just keep letting me chill at the house then I won't get out there and see for myself...see what it's like"

Despite their willingness to help the young men get on their feet, some caregivers (n=4) reported a timetable of their offering support to the young men. While these caregivers did not openly say they would halt all support at a specific time, they expressed a generalized view of needing to see certain improvements, like finding a job within a specific timeframe in order for supports to continue.

*Theme: "He can take his time."* While time was of essence for some caregivers, other caregivers (n=3) seemed to take into consideration the environment that the young man was living in and the role having a felony might play in how long they were willing to assist the young men. In the three instances where caregivers did not express a time limit, caregivers also spoke about the important contributions the young man was making to the family based on his presence in the home. Marcus's Aunt Tracey previously reported her feelings about Marcus living in the spare bedroom because of the neighborhood she lives in and that his presence would deter crime. She also reported that she thought that it would take Marcus at least four years to get on his feet if he were to get a trade, then a job, and then save his money. In speaking about the time it would take for Marcus to get himself together, Tracey analyzed Marcus' environment with realistic goals for him to be able to be an independent person:

"Because you know he would have to get a trade, and a job and get people to you know trust him...really, I would just help him in any way that I could. I just know it's hard out there with the economy and the way everything is."

In addition to overseeing Anthony's path towards independency, Sheri also reflected on the responsibility she has to help Anthony's sister, a senior in high school, with the same goal of moving out. Sheri's thoughts reflected observations of what Anthony needed to do in order to be

on his own as well as the dual concerns she has about his sister who also is in the process of being launched:

“If he found him a job...I think he and his sister was discussing that one day...and they didn't say anything about it to me...I just overheard them. And she's in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade this year and I'm hoping that she go 'head on and march down that aisle and finish. And I'm looking that one day they might get an apartment together...I know if he could do right now he would do it...Somebody got to help him...when he first get out...oh...I would say like March...something like that...cause he goin have to get him a job and he would have to save up you know...get him a little apartment...”

Davis's mom, Therese, reflected earlier on Davis's presence in the home as a possible financial contributor to the household where financial concerns were reported to be a primary stressor for this dyad. The benefit for allowing Davis to remain in the home without time limitations rendered Therese financially better off if Davis were able to contribute to the family system. Here, she talked about having Davis home and allowing him to stay as long as she can hold out and provide for the family.

“I don't worry...as long as I can keep a roof over my head, he can stay...As long as he try...as long as he try...”

Caregivers spoke openly about their ability and willingness to help the young men get on their feet by applying pressure to “make something happen” or by allowing the young man to “take his time” while taking into consideration factors that could be prohibiting his success.

### *Conflicts with Perceived Identified Role*

*Theme: What is a man?* Relying on family for support appeared to cause identity conflicts with the young men as they acknowledged their need of their family's support but had mixed feelings about being the recipient of that support. These mixed feelings came as a result of not being able to meet their own expectations like not being able to provide for themselves and

their families. The phrase “being a man” was reported numerous times by the young men and caregivers as they talked about the expectations they had of themselves and their perceived role in the family. This idea about “being a man” appeared to cause ambiguity in how the young men (n=7) thought about themselves in the context of being dependent on family members. What it means to “be a man” was described several times by the participant young men as they talked about their being dependent upon family after being incarcerated, as well as in the hopes they expressed for themselves in future. The meanings made by being a man and doing what a man does stirred anxiety as young men struggled with what they wanted to be and wanted to do with the reality of what was actually happening. Anthony, who was unemployed and lived with his grandmother and his three younger siblings, defined what he thought it meant to be a man:

“Uh to take responsibility, uh and doing what you got to do. Maintaining a life. That’s really taking care of your own”

Similarly, Dwayne who was also unemployed and lives with his mother Amanda and younger brother defined being a man in this way:

“Like taking care of business doing your job paying bills doing what you’re to do not being a teenager I would say. Cause when you’re a teenager you like to have fun go to parties and do a lot of crazy things. But after you get older it gets kind of old, so that what I can say being a man is about...I would say as long as you take care of business and doin’ what you supposed to do I would consider you a man and doing what’s right”-  
Dwayne

Darrel, the youngest participant who lives with his mother Erica reflected on his goal of one day living up to being a man and what he thinks that will look like:

“Me being married and having kids...have a little picket fence house and all that. I want to have it all...I want to be able to say I’m a grown man...I have my own...I want to be able to take care of my business...”

For young men, their inability to take care of themselves or their families was reflected as “not being a man” and meant a prolonged reliance on their caregivers, a place that brought them worry and concern particularly as they received needed support from family. The perceptions that young men had about being a man also could be seen as participants reflected on being dependent on family and the feelings associated with not being able to take care of oneself. Peter talked about having to rely on his mom Mary and the mixed feelings he has being dependent upon her:

“It’s frustrating because you know having to answer to your parents again. But I respect my mom and she has helped me out a lot since I’ve been back and I would prefer to live on my own...but I do need to save a little bit more money...and I don’t mind it at all...it’s just the whole freedom thing...having to be back under your parent’s roof is just frustrating at times...just having to clean up after yourself when they want you to and not on your own time, you know...that’s it.”

Jeff lived with his sister Tameka and her family and talked about the benefits of having his own place and what it would mean to be able to take care of himself and live on his own:

“ It would mean a lot...cause I can walk around my house how I want to and I can do the kind of things I want to...my own privacy...like walk around butt naked and stuff like that (laughs), you know...just live!”

Carlito reported his mixed feelings of accepting his family’s support but how he really feels about having to depend on their help now that he is on parole:

“It’s ok...but I want to be on my own. I like being on my own....don’t have to worry about their rules...I can make my own rules...just having own...being able to live right...”

Dwayne reflected on what it would mean for him to be able to be independent and to not have to depend on his mom for housing support:

“Because I just want my own place...It’s just like freedom. It would just feel good to have your own place you can just call home of yourself instead of living with your mom. I can’t...some people stay with they mom til they 30...35...I can’t do that.”

Similar to the young men, caregivers (n=5) contributes to the meanings about what “being a man” in similar definitions and expectations. For caregivers, being a man was defined in terms maturity level and ability to support oneself and the family without the help of others. Caregivers expressed concerns about the young adult men not living up to their expectations of being a man in terms of being able to take care of themselves due to their maturity level. These unmet expectations caused mixed feelings with the caregivers as they negotiated giving supports to the young men while also trying to help them to be more independent. Caregivers then felt like the young men, were legally men and should be performing duties associated with manhood and were frustrated when the young men were not fulfilling those duties. Darrel’s mom Erica (E) reflected in the interview transcript on the personal conflicts caused by these “man” made expectations:

- I: And how do you feel about that [Darrel relying on you for support]  
 E: I really think...well once that happens then you know that there’s positive things that can happen in his life. And I think that it bothers him sometimes that he has to rely on me so much...but it’s ok because we all need somebody.  
 I: You think it bothers him?  
 E: Cause he want to be his own man. And he wants to take care of me.  
 I: So do you think it makes him less of a man if he’s unable to do those things?  
 E: Yes. Yes I think that.

Jeff’s sister Tameka also talked about how she defined being a “man” and how she thinks Jeff measures against her definition in the interview transcript below:

- T: Well as far as finances go, I feel like every man should hold their own. A man shouldn’t have to ask nobody for nothing...  
 I: Do you think he’s a man?”  
 T: Uh...as far as his age go yes (laughs)...his age is, but as far as his mindset I don’t think that he is where he needs to be. I still think that he has boyish ways as far as how he things and what’s important to him. But you know as far as his age

go...yeah...by law his is a man, but his maturity level and how he things...no I don't think he's there.

I: Do you think that he thinks he's a man?

T: Yeah...I do...I do...but I think in the same token that he know that he's behind...he's not where he wants to be. Yeah...but I do think he's a man. There's always room for improvement and he knows that I don't think he try as hard as he can, but I think he feel like he is a man as far as having a good heart and doing right by people."

"Being a man" and being able to take care of oneself and "one's business" appeared to be the measuring stick for character development for both the young men and caregivers. The meanings behind what a man is supposed to do appeared to cause ambiguity in how the young men's perceptions based on what they were not able to do for themselves. Despite admitting how much they needed their family's support, the young men struggled with accepting that support based on the meanings they made based on their expectations of themselves and what they felt they should be doing for themselves and their families. Caregivers also supported this implied role definition of being a man in terms of highlighting the areas that separated the young man's capabilities (what he can do) and what was expected of him (what he should be doing). Caregivers talked about the young men in terms of being grown and being "legal" and expected that he should also meet the expectations of the role sooner rather than later. These "man made" expectations created ambiguity and worry as the length of time for reaching goals associated with being a man, like having a job and being on one's own and dependency on the family continued instead of waned as both groups of participants had expected.

### *Fostering Independence*

“He needs to learn responsibility because he didn’t have that growing up with my sister...So because of that he doesn’t have anybody and that’s why I’m willing to sit down with him and you know either later today or tomorrow or sometime before the next week starts to take some days off and I’m going to take you to some places to make sure you have a job because you’re not going to keep depending on her [girlfriend] to pay your cell phone bill. If you’re going to have a cell phone, you’re going to pay for it. If you need clothes...you’re going to get them”- Tom’s Uncle Kenneth

The last major content area used in organizing the data was fostering independence. This content area examined the ways in which caregivers reported helping the young men with reentry efforts, towards independence and their feelings about this help. From foster independence emerged two major thematic areas: Parenting strategies and reliance on others. The coding scheme for this content area is presented in table format and can be found in the appendix G. Quotes from participants will be included to highlight reflections of the themes and were selected based on their ability to tell the participants’ story as it relates to the specific theme.

#### *Parenting Strategies*

*Theme: “Give’ em a good talkin’ to.”* Caregivers (n=9) reported using a variety of techniques in their attempts to foster independence in their formerly incarcerated young men. All of the caregivers in the study stated that they used some form of verbal expressions to guide the young men towards the right path of legal employment and pro-social activities. These talks consisted of sitting the young man down and discussing life options, getting a job, friends, relationships and schooling to name a few. For young men who did not live with their caregivers prior to being incarcerated (n=7), caregivers attempted to set strict rules and boundaries as to not allow particular behaviors the young men were known for having in their previous residences to follow them into their homes. These boundaries reflected “pro-social” behaviors and adult-like



responsibilities. Carlito's stepmom Rhonda talked about the rules and regulations that she told Carlito upon his living in her home as Carlito lived with his paternal grandmother prior to being incarcerated:

"That I was expecting him to get a job... And then when he start hangin' on Simpson Rd. [street known for drug activity] then he would be out of here...that I wasn't going to tolerate it...uh...I didn't want nobody in my house...Period...That they could not smoke no weed while they was here...None of that...not while they were here..."

Tameka also reflected on the house rules she gave to her brother Jeff, who lived off and on with his mother and friends prior to being incarcerated. Tameka felt that by restricting Jeff's activities in the home he could better reach the goals he set for himself and not be distracted by outside influences:

"He had to respect my house. He had to clean up behind himself. You know like I said I really didn't ask him for money, I just told him that any kind of habits you have or anything that you like you need to provide those things for you...you know...I told him to keep your room clean, to respect this house. I have kids running around and he was cussing, so he had to tone down the cussing in my house with my babies. Uh...you know when I left he had to leave. You ain't gonna be laying up in my house while me and my husband went to work. When we leave, you need to leave the house...even if you didn't have no where to go, you gotta go somewhere...no drinking or smoking in my house, no loud music, no company...weird people over at all times of night...friends...none of that...I wanted him to get focused."

Prior to being incarcerated at the age of 16, Darrel lived with his older girlfriend in an apartment that he paid for with his illegal earnings from selling drugs. Erica, Darrel's Mom disapproved of Darrel's living situation and job choice also talked about restricting Darrel's behavior in her home as a means to help Darrel stay on the right track:

"I was just letting him know that we was not having any drugs in the house...uh...no drinking...no smoking...He had a curfew...he had to be in by twelve...uh...he had to respect my house...no company unless it was approved by myself or my husband. And...basically just keep his room clean and just be a responsible adult... And he had to keep a job...that's about it."

Tom's uncle Kenneth who was concerned about his partner's employment with the military in accepting Tom into his home under parole supervision. Kenneth talked about the strict boundaries he established for Tom upon his arrival to Georgia from Wisconsin and in setting up his household rules:

“Well I don't remember everything I told him but I remember very vividly being very upfront about one thing, I said that Torrance [his partner] is in the military and so we are going to have absolutely no drugs in the house. We are not going to have any guns in this house. We're not going to have any police here. We're not going to have any criminal activity in here...And I am absolutely not tolerating that because my partner has been in the military since he was 18...And the other part about with, uh you understand my cleanliness and you understand you don't do your own thing here. We don't walk around and swear...”

After the household rules and boundaries were set, the caregivers continued the verbal expressions which consisted of guidance talks, encouragement and reminded the young men about the consequences of engaging in activities that could equate to a return to prison. Davis mom Therese talked to Davis about being a good citizen and a good father to his daughter:

“And I say [to Davis] now you know what I'm trying to tell you: stay out of trouble, go to work, get a job, you goin' have to do that. Get a job and do what you want because people out there will hurt you and they work hard for they stuff and they will hurt you. ...I told him today to get him a job and get on your foot...try to help these people, pay them people back for whatever you did, you pay them back, get you a job, raise your little girl and be a role model for your child...”

Similarly, Peter's mom Mary talked about what she told Peter if he does not chose to stay on the right track and obey the law in one of her guidance talks to him:

“I told him that I expect him to obey the law...the rules of his probation. I believe he understood that I would always love him but that I wasn't going to put up with the stuff that we had gone through before. Actually, I do believe the quote from was 'We've done it all and if you screw up again then I'll have to kill you and then I'll have to go to jail'.”

Marcus's Aunt Tracey spoke with Marcus about her expectations she had of him living in her home and that she expected that he already understood the rules of her household:

“Well, when he got here I did [talk to him]...he pretty much knew the rules...no company...you know...he’s grown, but no females can spend the night...nothing like that. He already knew that he knew he had to look for a job...his parole officer came by so he knew what time he had to be in and everything. And uh..you know we don’t drink or smoke so he knew that so I pretty much laid down the ground rules...it wasn’t anything that he couldn’t follow and he already knew the kind of person I was so...”

Anthony’s Grandmother Sheri, who had the double duty of reuniting with two imprisoned loved ones (Anthony and his mother) talked about her talk to Anthony as a part of guiding him towards a different path that included work and going back to school:

“I was talking to him telling him to stay out of trouble and get him a job so he can go to work. And I was telling him I want him to go back to school and get his GED. So I did talk to him...”

Finally, Carlito’s Stepmom Rhonda illustrates in her quote below the thoughts and feelings that many caregivers expressed to the young men through their verbal talks about making positive choices, living within the law, preparing for the future and moving beyond caregiver’s current lifestyle to greater opportunities:

“I asked them...’what is y’all goin do when y’all get old cause you get older every day...you get older you want to sit down and relax, put your leg up...what you goin’ do?’ so I tell them we don’t have no money, we working paycheck to paycheck. And I explain it to them that I don’t want them to go through the same thing that me and they daddy going through. You know they young...and so many opportunities out there now for them, you know some of the things they can do cause they not dumb kids and they not really bad kids...that’s why I tell them to get on the right track now...they’ll listen, he will sit and listen to me...”

Caregivers used verbal expressions not only to set household rules and boundaries to curb deviant behavior but to encourage the young men to make pro-social choices in order to move beyond their past. Verbal expressions were common for caregivers in their attempts to shape the young men’s behavior and to set the bar for expected pro-social behaviors at home. Finally, the

talks appeared to be well-received by the young men as caregivers reported (n=5), based on their observations of the young men being respectful and open to their suggestions.

*Theme: The monitoring of activities.* Another parenting strategies the caregivers used consisted of monitoring the activities of the young adult. The young men (n=7) reported that their caregivers monitored their activities by requiring them to check in if they were away from the home, questioning them on where they had been (when away from the home) and discussing where they should/should not be hanging out and who they should/should not befriend. The young men had positive thoughts about their caregivers' monitoring their activities. For the young men, the monitoring of activities meant that the caregiver was concerned about their well-being and wanted them to stay out of prison. Dwayne voiced his feelings about how his mother Amanda talked with him about his activities and social networks as well it meant to him for her to do so:

“She [mother] always telling me I shouldn't do this. To hang with these types of people or basically yeah...that I shouldn't hang with certain type of people...Good...cause most mothers these days don't do that. Some do, but I don't think they do...Just you know it's a crazy world and people do a lot of crazy things. I'm glad that she does that”

Anthony reported on how his Grandmother monitored his activities and how they work together to make sure he stays on the right track, particularly when it comes to monitoring his parole requirements:

“If I wasn't with them or around them, then it would probably slip my mind...basically it would be over...They remind me and I remind them too. They ask me about it and I tell them when I got to go [to the parole office]. They make sure I stay on track...they don't want me to go back”

Carlito, reported that prior to his incarceration, he and his brothers caused problems for his father and stepmom due to their involvement with the criminal justice system. Now that he is back

home, he talked about the efforts his stepmother had made to monitor what he is doing so that he does not fall back into bad behaviors:

“Like if I leave the house then (laughs)... like if I be out like dark or something then call me and say I need to come in the house. I don’t need to go to certain areas...something like that”

Caregivers talked about how they monitored the activities of the young men out of concern that they would be returning to old ways or habits that resulted in their incarceration. Marcus’s aunt Tracey voiced her concern about Marcus and what she does to make sure he is where he is supposed to be:

“I just make sure that...I worry if he’s out past six and you know he calls or I may call and check up on him to make sure that he is where he is supposed to be. Which he normally is...uh...if he do go over to his moms we call each other back and forth...he may stop by and holler at her before she goes to work or something like that...But yeah I be concerned...”

Finally, Therese talked about how she monitors Davis’s activities particularly the rules associated with his parole status and the efforts she makes to hold Davis accountable:

“As long as I keep getting on his behind and tell him to go see y’all [parole officer] and come on back home. And if you’re somewhere please call me and let me know that you’re alright. If I can just hear your phone and as long as you tell me ‘mama I’m on my way’ I’ll be sitting in the front room waiting on you...”

The monitoring of activities was an important way for caregivers to ensure that the young men were not reverting back to old ways and that they were keeping with their parole requirements. For the young men, it was a welcomed support and symbolized that the caregivers were concerned about their well-being.

*Theme: Action help.* The last strategy caregivers utilized in promoting independence came in the form of “action help”. Unlike the verbal assault and monitoring of activities, action help required the caregivers to physically perform some kind of action that assisted the young

men on the road to independence. The actions required caregivers to rearrange their schedules, required structured time to be spent with the young man and had to be prioritized as an effort made by the caregivers. Caregivers (n=5) reported that they would take off from work to help the young men, transport them to places to find employment, or make calls on their behalf to locate jobs. These action steps were taken often after the verbal strategies had not produced the required results (e.g. specifically in terms of finding employment). After not being able to find a job on his own, Sheri, Anthony's grandmother reported that she had to take him to businesses to help him to secure a job:

“So I think he'll find something...I hope by next week or I'm going to start carrying him around to different little places to help him get something. He's a smart young man.”

Tom's uncle Kenneth also talked about his plans to help Tom become more independent by taking time off of work to help Tom find a job:

“Next week I'm going to take some days off from work when he's not in school and take him to apply for a weekend night job or a waiter or something because all of the other college students are doing that...”

The young men (n=5) supported this theme by reporting how their caregivers were helping them to reach their goals by providing action help. These descriptions came mainly in the form of providing transportation to and from the parole office, to fill out job applications and for job interviews. Jeff reported that his sister Tameka used a variety of verbal and action help in helping him to get on his feet and what it meant to him for her to be able to support him in this way:

“Like keeping me on the up and up...like making sure I go out and find jobs and just stay on me. But I appreciate that she do because I know she want to see her little brother do well and I know she know I can do better...she might say: 'have you called them jobs back? Well why haven't you? Well, walk up here'...stuff like that. 'Well come on and let

me take you to meet this dude.’ She just try to...she look out for me. She do what she can.”

Darrel discussed how his mother Erica actively helped him to find employment upon his return home until he was able to find a job:

“Well...she took me to get my first job when I first got out. She like...she took me to plenty of job interviews...like she give me money to get on the bus to go and look for a job...She didn’t stop...she didn’t give up on me ‘til I had a job and I got one...”

Caregivers also made plans and contracts with the young adult to foster independence. By not “just giving handouts to them” caregivers were attempting to instill responsibility by making sure the young men were working for what they were receiving. Caregivers built on the skills that the young men did have by paying them to perform at tasks that they would have hired out to someone else. Marcus’s aunt Tracey talked about hiring Marcus instead of an outside contractor to perform a minor household renovation. By providing Marcus with the job, Marcus could earn the money he needed to pay for his electronic monitoring device:

“We talked about you now like if he do some stuff like he’s already doing stuff around the house but like instead of me hiring someone to get my floor done in the back I would just pay him so that he can hurry up and pay off his uhm, you know his ankle thing he has. It’s like \$200.00, you know because I’m not just going to give it to him. He has to work for that.”

Mary, Peter’s mom made an action plan to help Peter, who is working full-time as a waiter to get on his feet financially. Instead of giving Peter the money he needs without restrictions, Mary came up with a plan to help Peter attain his financial goals by requiring him to save his money before she gave him anything:

“Like I said, all of that is fine. But the purse strings are getting cut really soon. Uh when my father passed away he left me a little bit of money. And I can use that to help him to financially get on his feet a little bit. Although I don’t give it to him until he saves up the

money for me to match the goal for me to give him anything. And he's done that. I'm not just giving him handouts."

The caregivers in this study not only used verbal expressions to help the young men towards independency, but they also performed actions that promoted independency and self-sufficiency. Some of these actions included taking time to provide transportation to maintain parole requirements, transportation to find jobs, or created plans that utilized the skills of the young men in order to fulfill tasks the caregivers could have contracted out.

### *Reliance on Others*

*Theme: "He needs someone."* Although the caregivers assumed most of the responsibility for helping the young men to improve upon his current situation, some caregivers (n= 5) felt that help should be coming from other places outside of the family. Caregivers voiced concern about the young man not receiving enough training or skill while he was in prison or felt that the parole officers should play a more active role in meeting the demands of the young man, particularly in finding employment. All of the caregivers reported that a return to school would help the young men be more successful later in life, but could not articulate how they could facilitate this process outside of calling someone else for help. For these caregivers, the level of help the young man required was outside of their control. Only five of the nine caregivers reported having an educational level at or above a high school diploma. Thus, caregivers were doing what they could based on their own resources and experience to help the young men, but that ultimately they felt outside assistance was needed. Darrel's mom Erica, who gave birth to Darrel at age 16 and who reports having taken college classes talked about her frustrations with trying to foster independence in Darrel by herself and what she thinks he needs in order to achieve his goals:



“Uh...[Darrel needs] a positive mentor. He needs someone who’s going to mentor him and touch him positively to stay strong and to stay focused because he gets discouraged...really fast. And even though I try to talk to him and be positive, it seems like when someone tells you ‘no’ like when he goes to see about a job...or they do a background check and they tell him no then he gets real discouraged.”

Caregivers also implied not being able to help the young men with certain areas in life and that resources needed to be found to service that area of needed attention. Dwayne’s mother Amanda, has an 11<sup>th</sup> grade education and expressed concern trying to help Dwayne budget his money and the difficulty she is having trying to teach him how to get the items he needs to take care of himself. Amanda hopes that Dwayne can go back to school or through church in order to learn how to better manage his money:

“If you don’t manage your money and buy what you ‘posed to have, your hygiene stuff. Get yourself some toothpaste and mouthwash, deodorant, some cologne. You know you supposed to buy all that stuff. He always rely on me...If I give him \$600 he will spend it...it’s like he still have a child mind....he need uh...to go to school and let them help him with how to save cause like I say, when he was little he loved to go to church...I think the church will encourage him, you know and going to school will tell him how to save and budget his money because he really don’t know how to save his money.”

Enlisting the parole officer to help with the young man on his journey was another route taken in fostering independence. While caregivers (n=3) reported using the parole officer in a consequential way (if the young man is not acting right, they could call his parole officer and have him sent back to prison), their main utilization was to resolve problems that were seen as obstacles in reaching independence. Tom’s uncle Kenneth voiced his concerns with Tom’s anger and wanted to talk to his parole officer to address the problem since it was not addressed while Tom was in prison:

“Tom really has an anger management problem. They were supposed to take care of it in prison, but I don’t think it was effective. I was going to call his probation officer and see if he could talk to him or do something to address this issue because when he was in prison and he went through that training it didn’t work, so he needs to talk to him.”

Caregivers tried to foster independence in their formerly incarcerated kin by talking to them, providing rules, monitoring their behavior, and transporting them to find employment. These activities on the part of the caregiver symbolized care and concern on the part of the young men who felt like caregivers were there to help them and did not want to see them back in prison. While these verbal assaults, monitoring of activities and actions plans by the caregiver seemed to provide guidance for the young men to remain on the right path, some caregivers felt like they needed more help in fostering independence in the young men. This additional help could come from enrolling in an educational program, be provided by the church or by the young man's parole officer.

### *Summary*

The findings that emerged from the interviews of formerly incarcerated young men and their caregivers yield three major areas of examination: Reunification, reliance on the family and fostering independence. Within these major areas, themes emerged to describe how young adults and caregivers perceived the return home from incarceration, how they worked together as a family unit to support one another and how they together to help the young men maintain pro-social lives. Upon returning home, young men reported improved family relations and their concerns about reentry. Caregivers were concerned about the young men's behavior and meeting their demands while balancing the needs of other family members upon reunification. Young men talked about their perceptions and ambiguous feelings about of receiving help from caregivers given their beliefs about being a man and what a man should do. Caregivers echoed these same concerns and expressed their thoughts by placing arbitrary time limitations. Both

caregivers and the young men reported relying on each other and that all family members were expected to help out in times of need. In the findings also arose an implied notion of family members' responsibility to one another. Caregivers utilized many strategies (verbal and action) that they used to foster independence in the young man, but expressed a need for outside help with areas they felt were beyond their scope in attending to the young man's needs.

## CHAPTER IV

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine reentry and the transition to adulthood through the fostering of independence for young adult males (age 18-24) and their caregivers.

Specifically, this study examined the meanings made by formerly incarcerated young men and their caregivers in regard to reentry, caregivers' ability to meet reentry needs, perceptions about reliance on family and the implications of a young adult child "returning home" within the context of release from incarcerative sentencing. This goal was achieved through conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with formerly incarcerated men between the ages of 18 and 24 and their caregivers for a total of 18 individual interviews that reflect nine young men-caregiver dyads defined as families for this study.

This qualitative study was informed using an integration of family life course perspective, symbolic interactionism and ecological theory. The theoretical amalgam provided the ability to examine the life course transitions of families impacted by incarceration, the perceptions and meanings made based upon the experience with incarceration while being imbedded within a socially stigmatized context of having a felony.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do young adult men feel about their reentry home and their reliance on caregivers after being incarcerated?
2. How do caregivers make meaning out of supporting their young adult male who boomerang home from prison?
3. In what ways do caregivers foster self-sufficiency in their young adult?

Guided by these research questions, research literature and theoretical frameworks, resultant themes to be discussed in this chapter will be guided by the following content areas: (a) Reunification paradox (b) The double bind of being helped (c) Regaining independence. Following a discussion of the findings, I will also present methodological observations, conclusions, implications for policy, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

### *Discussion of Findings*

#### *Reunification Paradox*

Returning home from a period of incarceration can have many implications for the families and communities who receive them. These implications can be positive or negative depending upon the meanings attributed to the incarceration, the return, the resources available to the family, and the ability for the family system to withstand the stresses that emerge as changes enter the system. For young men who have been incarcerated, relying on family members were crucial during reentry in that they typically do not possess the economic, physical or mental resources to emerge from prison to live and function independently. Therefore, the reunification process can be an area critical to understanding the reentry process of young adult men between the ages of 18-24 particularly as meaning, role conflict, the self and identities take shape.

The families participating in this study had similar characteristics of similar studies when looking at general reentry issues like living arrangement upon release, feeling welcomed by their loved ones and received emotional and instrumental support from their families (LaVigne et al., 2005; La Vigne et al., 2004; Naser et al., 2005; Nelson et al., 1999; Visher et al., 2003). The caregiver reports also confirm general reentry research in that they reported being happy about

having their loved one home from prison as well as providing emotional and instrumental support to the young men (LaVigne et al., 2005; La Vigne et al., 2004; Naser et al., 2005; Nelson et al., 1999; Visher et al., 2003 ). The themes that emerged from this study of young adult men and their caregivers highlight the meanings that families made about reunification as they interacted with one another and the community and moved forward after their prison experience. Also emergent from this study are the themes that speak to the role conflict and the roles the caregivers and young men expected from themselves and one another based on their experiences before, during and after incarceration.

The overarching theme that seemed to embody the reunification process was the psychological impact of post-prison adjustment on the young men and their caregivers in the form of ambivalence, anxious but happiness. Haney talks about the psychological impact of incarceration on post-prison adjustment for prisoners and how the “pains of imprisonment” carries certain psychological costs” for prisoners and their families (2003, p. 33). In essence, the prison environment subjects prisoners to a hostile environment and does not offer situations that prepare prisoners for life in the free-world. Consequently, the young men in this study were cognizant of the challenges ahead of them and seemed to have a great deal of anxiety about their reentry adjustment. They were particularly concerned about their ability to resist criminal means of earning money which interfered with the self-concept (felon) they developed as a result of being incarcerated and were attempting to change through pro-social activities, like finding a legal job. Many of these anxieties were initiated during incarceration as they interacted with older prisoners who attempted to sell them this fixed self-concept of being a felon by informing the young men that they would not being able to find employment due to their felony status and

due to their youth and chiding them by saying “they would be back” (to prison upon discharge). Even though the young men reported being happy about being home, these anxieties persisted as they considered what it meant to be a felony and the possibility of being shunned by family members and the community. Caregivers shared in this anxiety as they expressed worry and concern about the young man’s return home and his future, specifically when thinking about if he would return back to “his old ways”. Distress seemed to escalate given scenarios of trying hard and getting no where when securing employment was not happening “fast enough” thus making a return to the “old ways” more likely in the absence of legal employment.

Both the young men and their caregivers talked about the need for employment and making the connection that if the young men were not given a chance to live in a pro-social way (e.g., through legal employment) then inevitably there would be problems in the form of returning back to old ways. While being employed is one of the major assets a former prisoner can have upon his release in predicting desistance from criminal activities, studies show that finding employment upon reentry is an extremely difficult task for this population (Bushway & Reuter, 2002; Petersilia, 2003). Thus, caregivers and the young men appeared to be operating within an employment context that stigmatizes ex-prisoners, yet expects them to get a job immediately following release due to parole requirements. The young men talked about efforts to find employment and the rejection they faced as a result of their institutional baggage (having a felony). The stigma associated with having been imprisoned was faced each time the young men filled out an application for a job. Also, having to report on their past criminal behavior and prove that they were trying to live a different way seemed to further stimulate anxiety as they reported on their unyielding efforts to secure a job. Furthermore, the lack of employment as a

result of being in a socially stigmatized group (former prisoner), the young male participants were further excluded socially by not being able to participate in the workforce by earning a living in a socially desirable way via legal employment and thus intensifying anxiety in the young men and their caregivers. Thus, this inability to find employment symbolized a continued dependence on caregivers, contributed to the multiple demands on the family system and fostered anxiety expressed in other themes as reported by the participants. This inability to find employment also symbolized the possibility of a self fulfilling prophecy coming true in that a return to the old ways would alleviate distress in the relationship and confirm what was already believed about the young men: That because they were felons they would all eventually return to their old ways.

Nelson et al., (1999) examined reentry and family support and found that families not only play a critical role in reentry, but that families go beyond expectations to meet the needs of the returning loved one. The participant young men in the study reported that their needs were being met and that their caregivers were going beyond what they had expected prior to being released from prison. Caregivers also confirmed these reports of meeting the needs of the young men. The participant families appeared to be meeting all expectations despite the multiple demands placed on the family system they directly and indirectly reported on in their interviews. The caregivers appeared to have an understanding and acceptance of the multiple demands that would be placed on the family structure when the young man returned from prison. The idea of “family helping family” tradition appeared to be guiding the caregivers to make the necessary accommodations as they welcomed the young men home.



Yet beneath their apparent acceptance of meeting the demands that came with reentry on the family system, caregivers made subtle hints of ambivalent feelings about their new roles in having to meet the new demands of the returning young adult in theme of “not being where he should be”. The young men perceived feelings of disappointment from caregivers that reflected on his not having a job or his not being able to take care of himself by “not being where he should be.” These feelings of disappointment reported by the young men symbolized the effect of being a burden on the family system by not being able to provide for himself upon reentry.

The “boomerang” or “re nesting” effect (i.e., returning home as an adult) of the young adult is useful in understanding the complications which arise when kin return home after incarceration (Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995). Young adult participants were expected to find employment by their caregivers as well as be able to support themselves within an expected time frame of returning home. The ex-offender’s reliance on the caregiver necessitated by difficulties in finding employment resulted in a failure to meet caregiver expectations. The discrepancy created anxiety during the reentry process as caregivers were forced to remain in the role of provider for a young adult who was expected to provide for himself. Thus, family roles and identities were blurred as expectations were not met and anxieties about those ambiguities created stress between the young man and his caregiver. Unlike college students or adult children who boomerang home after a divorce, the probability of securing a job and financial independence for the participants in this study is likely much lower due to young men’s institutional baggage (i.e., felony status). In other boomerang scenarios, offspring may possess a college degree or work experience. Thus, the return of the young men from prison who is unable to secure employment increased anxieties within the family for both the young men and their

caregivers and was symbolized by the theme of “not being where they think I should be.” Young men acknowledged this role conflict in that they should be able to work and take care of themselves without the help of their caregiver, but due to not being able secure employment, perhaps as a result of their institutional baggage and lack of job skills they were unable to do so and subsequently remain reliant upon caregivers. Caregivers felt that based on their age and adult status, the young men should be able to provide for themselves. Because they often could not do so in a timely manner, caregivers had to continue to meet the extra demands placed on the family system. While caregivers did report meeting these demands, the pressure of having to support someone who “is not where he needs to be” were translated to the young men into subtle “vibes” that the young men reported feeling which further contributed to their anxiety. Thus, the return of the young men after being imprisoned coupled with the inability to secure employment contributed to the psychological distress by both groups of participants as they negotiated and renegotiated their identities and roles.

Despite the psychological distress resulting largely from emotional ambivalence and the ambiguities associated with employment and the need for care, the participants talked about how the young man’s going to prison had improved their relationship. This reflection on how prison was an intervention was reflected in the views that the type of lifestyle the young man was engaged in was leading to either two conclusions: prison or death. While the family members reported not wanting to see their family member incarcerated, they noted the benefits of incarceration equated with removing the young man from his poor decision making with saving his life. The reliance on family during incarceration by the young men through letter writing, visitation and telephone calls appeared to strengthen the relationships for the participants in the

study. As Peter reflected “when you are in prison the only phone numbers you know belong to your family members.” Consistent with Visher and Travis (2003) family interaction during prison was reported to be a positive force in strengthening the relationships between the young men and their caregivers and contributed to an overall positive experience upon reuniting with family members.

### *The Double Bind of Giving and Receiving Help*

The literature on ex-offender’s reliance on family members upon reentry is filled with studies that show that families not only welcome their loved ones home, but provide the necessary instrumental and emotional support the ex-offender needs upon returning home (Nelson et al., 2002; Shapiro & Schwartz, 2001). Consistent with the literature, the participants in this study confirmed the need for family support and the willingness of caregivers to provide support and resources upon reentry. The themes that emerged from reliance on family give us a deeper understanding on how relying on family can place young adults and caregivers in a double bind situation where the giving and receiving of resources is a necessary but emotion filled situation that impacts the entire family structure. The young men in the study openly acknowledged their reliance on their families and reported feeling like without the support from their families they would indeed have to return to “old ways” in order to survive. This reliance on family had double meanings for the young men as they grappled with the reality of not being able to care for themselves with conflicts of their perceived identified role. These conflicts emerged as the young men talked about what it means to “be a man” and what it is that a man “does”. The young men talked about being “grown” and “being a man” but struggled with not being able to perform the tasks they thought they should be doing given their self-defined role of

“man”. For example, the participants described being a man as someone who takes care of himself, handles his responsibilities and “has his own” (i.e., his own house, car). But the participants in the study were all living with caregivers, not working jobs that could support them independently and had to rely on family for basic needs. Caregivers too had their own ideas of the young men’s roles and what it meant to be a “man” which closely resembled the language used by the young men. Their shared language of what it means to be a “man” and the expectations of a man’s role highlights their shared expectations and shared disappointment when the roles were not fulfilled.

Life course theory contributes to our framing of these conflicts in thinking about how participants’ life course trajectory was shaped upon being incarcerated and acquiring a felony. Life course also helps to frame our understanding of how the transition from adolescence to young adulthood within the context of imprisonment informs the formations of adulthood. The young men in this study revealed life course transitions that counter normative models of life course development to adulthood that suggest adolescence is a period of preparation and transition for adulthood (Elder, 1985). The participants in this study reported achieving adulthood milestones during adolescence between the ages of 13 and 17. The participants reported living on their own, taking care of themselves in terms of food and clothing, earning money through illegal activities and providing financial resources to family members, including parents and siblings. Thus, the examination on how caregivers fostered self-sufficiency in their recently released young adults is a misnomer in that the young adults were actually self-sufficient adolescents prior to becoming incarcerated.

The life course concept of being off-time can be used to frame the complications that are resultant of young men who return home from prison without the ability to perform the same adult tasks they did prior to being incarcerated. Being off-time in life course development refers to the time in which milestones are reached based on social, political and cultural influences (Elder, 1985). Because the young adults in this study had already acquired adulthood status in their families as adolescents, upon discharge from prison as young adults, they were unable to obtain the status of adulthood again due to failing to reach important milestones attributed to adulthood status like finding a job and supporting oneself financially. The impact of incarceration contributed to a young man being “off time” and their inability to live up to their self-defined identity (being a man and being able to take care of oneself) by removing him from an environment where he was a provider, and replacing him in that same environment as an older young adult dependent on caregivers. Newly released, the transition from independent adolescent to dependent young adult created conflicts within the young men and their families that challenged the family system to make adaptations that support a once independent individual.

These conflicts also emerged in the caregiver participants as they also talked about this notion of “being a man”. For caregivers, these concerns emerged as the young man “not being where he should be” in terms of life progress. Caregivers also spoke to these off course conflicts through placing arbitrary time limitations on the young men. These arbitrary time limits translated into pushing the young men to catch up or motivating them to become more active in becoming independent persons or more like a man.

In addition, caregivers’ support was not unconditional. That is, many were only comfortable offering support if the young men were doing what they could to “help themselves.”

As long as the young men were actively trying to catch up or get on the right track like finding a job, following household rules, reporting to the parole office, then the caregivers were willing to support him. While none of the caregivers reported withholding supports to the young men during the interviews, the young men sensed they disappointed parents and kin by being off-time and a failure to meet caregiver expectations.

Another important finding from this content area is that while young men consumed family resources due to their financial and emotional dependency, the young men also contributed in many ways to the family system. Caregivers reported that young men's "chipping in" and becoming active agents of the family system through many activities like household chores or childcare were necessary for the family system to operate. This give and take of "family helping family" was thematic throughout the participant stories and symbolic of family interdependence in that family members relied on each other to get their needs met. It also highlights family roles and identities, in the form of shared expectations and familial duties. From the arrest, incarceration, and release, the implied meaning was that family would be there to do what they could to help the person get where they needed to go. Despite, having been to prison and having a criminal background, the participant caregivers were more than willing to accept the young man home under this implied theme of family helping family.

### *Regaining Independence*

The final content area to be discussed focuses on how caregivers prepared the young men for living independently as adults. The themes that emerged from this content area spoke to the types of strategies caregivers used in order to instill independence in the young men. Instilling independence in the young men, for this study translated to how to keep them on the right track

and eventually back living independently. Caregivers reported spending time talking to the young men, monitoring their activities and taking the young men to find employment. These strategies seemed to be the best way the caregivers could foster independence in the young adult based on their current situation.

In examining the issue of independence, complex family structures, living arrangements and alternative life transitions shaped the reentry trajectory and how caregivers “fostered independence” in the young men. Unlike achieving developmental milestones towards adulthood as in mainstream culture, the participants in this study reflected differing patterns in their life course transitions. My initial review of the literature suggested that prior to being incarcerated young men lived with their families of origin and upon release from prison, most ex-offenders return to live with those same family members (Visher et al., 2003). However, seven of the nine participants in this study were not allowed to return to live at their previous residences due to their parole status and the requirement that their living arrangements be approved by the parole board. These new housing arrangements after incarceration were to be located in a low-crime/drug area, easily accessed by the parole officer and be free from any type of public aid; environments that the participants reported as being different than the environments they resided in prior to being incarcerated. So the types of behaviors that were expected in the new environment encouraged different behaviors from the young men and were enforced by the caregivers via the parenting strategies.

In addition to the fact that the majority of participants could not “return home” due to parole requirements, I learned that six of the nine young men participants in this study actually lived on their own or with friends and were providing for themselves through illegal enterprises

prior to incarceration. These six participants reported leaving the family of origin home at an early age prior to legal adulthood. Work encompassed selling illegal drugs or stealing items for resale and leaving home was a means to keep illegal activities out of the sight of parents, kin and younger siblings. Six out of nine participants also reported that money earned from illegal employment was used to support their family of origin when the family was facing tough financial times. These six participants reported initially becoming involved in illegal activities in order to support their families financially to take care of bills, provide food, and to make sure the family had housing.

These discoveries suggest that “returning home” after release represents an alternative and complex transition quite different from more typical boomerang scenarios (i.e. college kids and divorcees). The life course patterns of these participants are not reflective of societal measures of reaching milestones particularly for when adulthood is achieved. Many of the participants in this study were quite independent prior to their incarceration and performing tasks associated with adulthood such as breadwinning and contributing financially to their households. Their roles within the family illustrated that these young men were in fact quite independent from parents while they were adolescents.

Roy, Tubbs, and Burton (2002) examined how impoverished families improvised their daily rhythms in order to obtain and maintain resources and how their daily rhythms did not mirror that of mainstream society. This type of adaptation seems relevant to this study in that the young male participants adapted to the needs of their families at a young age by engaging in activities that would provide resources for family viability. The early adaptation of adult roles and responsibilities afforded the young men of the benefits (making their own decisions) and



consequences (being held responsible for actions) of adulthood. Upon incarceration, the young men, so used to their independence, were completely dependent on the criminal justice system for their sustenance and lacked the freedom they had enjoyed prior to their conviction. Upon release, men must again learn a different rhythm and role as they returned home to family and attempt to return to their previous role of being breadwinner and independent contributor without and new skills to face the challenges of living in legal way.

This study highlights the family distress that can arise as the young men are forced to find a new way of taking care of themselves and living independently without the appropriate skills and to face a society that contains obstacles for individuals with institutional baggage. Thus, caregivers had to offer strategies on how to stay out of trouble and how to make better choices, with the goal of fostering independence within the confines of the law. The psychological distress experienced by both the young man and the caregiver arise as young men attempt to provide for himself and his family like he did as an adolescent, but now in a legal way as a young adult. Specifically, the independence young men experienced as an adolescent was stifled by their incarceration and subsequent dependence on the criminal justice system. Upon reentry, the young men were no longer adolescents and were no longer able to depend on the type of skills they were able to use as adolescents (if they wanted to remain on parole) to regain their breadwinning and financial contributor status in their families. Thus, young men remained dependent on caregivers and struggled with trying to establish a new role while attempting to regain their independent status as legal, yet older, unskilled men on parole.

For caregivers, the distress comes as they try to help the young adult get back on his feet without returning to old ways, but without the resources or support to bridge the gap. Caregivers

who benefited from the former adolescents financial independence through receipt of money acquired through illegal means could also feel particularly distressed at the reversal of roles where the economic situation of the family has not improved since the young man's incarceration and additional financial resources are still needed. Thus, regaining independence contributes greatly to dissipating distress for both caregivers and the young men as they attempt to achieve independence without the necessary legal skills to do so and under the pressures (i.e. social, personal, family) that cause young men to return to "old ways" in order to obtain independence and once again be contributors to their families.

Therefore the traditional notions of the timing of certain developmental milestones for emerging adulthood as well as what constitute "on or off time" don't apply to young men who experience imprisonment.

#### *Study Strengths and Limitations*

Qualitative investigations facilitate the study of in depth issues and increases the understanding of the situations being studied (Patton, 2002). As insightful as qualitative studies can be, "the human factor is the greatest strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis –a scientific two-edge sword" (Patton, 2002; p. 433). In making methodological observations and reflecting on this qualitative work, I bring about several issues that reflect the "human factor" that added strength and weaknesses to this study.

First, the use of gatekeepers in recruiting participants for my study was key to gaining entry into the criminal justice system and securing smooth access to the participants. By utilizing young men who were on parole, I was able to access a population that best represented the participant criteria while also being able to easily locate and recruit them via the institutional

gatekeeper. The institutional gatekeepers were helpful in not only providing me with a list of possible candidates for my project, but also spoke positively about my study and recruited parole office leaders for their support. This proved to be an invaluable asset to my study when the list of age appropriate parolees dwindled due to parolees coming off of parole, absconding from parole supervision or being returned to jail. Because I had established and maintained a positive relationship with the office and staff, the parole officers regrouped and were able to secure another site that contained a new group of potential participants to ensure I obtained the sample I needed for a successful study. My ability to build a positive relationship with the institutional gatekeepers and parole officers was also seen in my ability to connect with the participants.

As a physically youthful, African American female, my experience working with prisoners aided in my ability to connect with the young male participants by being able to understand most of the lingo/slang, talk about topics they were interested in our pre interview chat and by sharing the same racial background and experience (for all participants except one). The pre-interview chat was important in establishing a safe and friendly environment for talking about the issues discussed in the interviews. The young men were open about their criminal histories, the relationships with their families and in telling me their personal stories.

My positive rapport with the young men also was important because the young men were used as the gatekeeper to their caregivers. The young men were asked to talk with them about the study or to call them (at the time of the interview) so that I could recruit their participation. I believe that my efforts to build a positive relationship with the young men and by having their support, the caregivers were able to lower their guard in talking with a “stranger” on the phone about their loved one’s incarceration. One caregiver felt open enough to me to ask for help in

finding her other son who was incarcerated who she had not heard from since his incarceration. The thought of someone listening to their concerns seemed to give the caregivers a voice in a situation where they are rarely consulted, in terms of the young man's parole situation.

In reflecting on my assets as contributing positively to this study, I can also see where there were some disadvantages that negatively affected the study such as being an outsider to the experience of incarceration and parole. This means that my attendance at the parole office as a researcher and not a parolee equated to being someone outside of their world and perhaps not being able to relate to the types of situations the participants might be engaged. I would further posit that by being an outsider a power imbalance was created because I was given all rights, privileges and access to the parole office and ultimately to the parolees. Upon arriving to both parole office sites, the parolees (mostly men) would be gathered outside talking and smoking. On most occasions where there were groups of parolees waiting to be seen by their parole officer, they would look at me with pondered expressions and ask if I was the new counselor or teacher. Despite my efforts to not dress like a researcher and wear jeans, a t-shirt, and my Chuck Taylor tennis shoes, the parolees knew that I was not there to "check in" with my parole officer. On another occasion when one of the participants was speaking about their caregiver in his thick southern Georgia drawl, I got completely confused and discombobulated on not being able to understand a specific word he was saying. Finally after being utterly confused, apologizing profusely and asking him to spell out the word out, it finally clicked in my brain. This embarrassing encounter on my part led to him to comment: "I'm sorry...I'm not smarter than you." These two examples show that despite my efforts to mingle in with my environment, to make the participants feel equal, and to continuously remind them that their words were more

important than mine, in the back of their minds, they still saw me as an outsider. These perceptions of me as coming from a different location or even as a person with power over them could have lead to telling me what I wanted to hear or what they thought I wanted to hear vs. what was actually happening. While in my gut I did not feel like the young men reported scripted feelings, on two occasions I did get those feelings from one caregiver, particularly when talking about her willingness to help and provide supports for the young man; who I suspected she was not so willing to do without additional resources and help. After the interview, she questioned me: "Now why did I have to do this again?" as if she were forced to participate and as if she did not have a voluntary role in participating in the interview.

Face to face interviews with the young men not only provided an opportunity to obtain information about their experiences after incarceration and upon reentry, it allowed me to experience who they were as a person via sights, sounds and smells. The face to face interviewed allowed me to pay attention to body language, facial expression, attire and as well as their physical reactions to the questions and to me. Our physical interaction allowed me to follow up on changes in body language, examine and question affect and was easier to build and maintain rapport. Because I conducted the caregiver interviews over the phone, these opportunities were missed and proved to be limitations to the study. Only one caregiver was able to come into the parole office for a face to face interview and her interview provided a much richer account of her experience as caregiver to her formerly incarcerated kin. By not being able to see the physical reactions to the questions or their affect as they talked about their loved one, opportunities were missed that could have provided richer detail about the caregiver experiences to the study.

Finally, another factor that served as an asset as well as an obstacle was that of being a trained marriage and family therapist and my skills as an interviewer. I was able to use my therapeutic interviewing skills to steer the participants towards issues that seemed to be important to them and the study, redirect when necessary and to delve deeper in to questions that were guided by the interview protocol. These skills helped to provide the study with thick rich descriptions in order to paint the stories of these young men and their caregivers. On the other end, my training as a therapist had to be constantly quarantined as I had to remind myself that I was there to be a researcher and not a therapist. While I did not take on a therapeutic role with the participants and maintained appropriate boundaries, it was difficult to remain silent for much of what I thought I could have been resolved with a quick therapeutic intervention. While I did offer brief stories about myself in the beginning to establish a good rapport, I waited until after the interview was officially over to brief them on my work within the prison system and to answer specific questions they had about me or the study.

### *The Phenomenology of Coming Home*

This qualitative study provided insight into the meanings of prison reentry and returning home to and the essence of the lived experience for formerly incarcerated young men and their caregivers. The meanings the young men and their caregivers made about their lived experience with incarceration provided a unique view of reentry, reuniting home and about moving forward towards independency. The essence of the participants' lived experience with incarceration can best be described as an ambivalent emotional experience for young men and their caregivers as they negotiated role expectations, behavioral expectations and family expectations while still being confined within the boundaries of the criminal justice system.

Returning home to caregivers from prison was an emotionally ambivalent time for young men. On one hand, the young men were happy about getting out of prison and away from the hostilities of the prison environment. Returning home meant reconnecting with family members and an opportunity to make different life choices. The excitement the young men experienced was undermined by feelings of anxiety as the young men talked about their concerns and what awaited them once they emerged from the prison gates. Concerns about being accepted by family and society, finding a job, staying away from “old ways”, and being able to take care of oneself were areas that young men felt could undermine their second chance at a new pro-social life. The ambivalent emotions as a result of returning home after being incarcerated for young men represented the mental struggles the young men faced as they returned home to a new world with institutional baggage (i.e., felony status). For the young men in this study, incarceration meant a drastic change of lifestyle from living as an independent adolescent making their own decisions and in some cases being a financial contributor to his family to a dependent prisoner lacking the power to make his own decisions regarding day to day events. The incarcerated adolescent then emerges from prison as a dependent young adult lacking the skills or experience to face the challenges of living a pro-social life in a society that stigmatizes ex-prisoners. Thus, the involvement of caregivers and the utilization of their supports became a necessary evil for young men as they needed the support but felt guilty about not being able to take care of themselves and their families as they had done prior to their incarceration.

Caregivers' lived experience with their kin's incarceration was also an ambivalent emotional experience. Like the young men, caregivers were happy about their safe return from the prison environment and were willing to offer the supports and resources needed to help them

upon reentry. Ambivalence quickly emerged from caregivers as they talked about how they felt regarding the young men not being able to find employment and thus returning to “old ways.” Caregivers were optimistic about the young men’s ability to stay away from trouble but felt that if they were not given an opportunity to live a pro-social life, that included earning a legal wage, then they would ultimately return back to “old ways”. Caregivers utilized various strategies to structure the home life of the young men and to encourage them to make pro-social decisions. As this study shows, the unmet caregiver expectations were often met as frustrations that stressed the relationship with the young men as unmet expectations symbolized the increased possibility of returning back to old ways. Unmet expectations also symbolized continued demands and a longer reliance on the family system by the young men, for many families in the study were not financially prepared to do.

Thus, for young men and caregivers, the meaning attached to relying on family upon reentry and the ambiguous feelings expressed by the participants ultimately rested on what it meant to have a job and to be able to provide for oneself. Having a job for young men meant that they would be able to provide for themselves and was a milestone that put them back on the road to regaining independence. Employment also symbolized the ability to be a resource to family members and a return of provider status. Caregivers viewed that by having a job, the young men’s time was utilized in a pro-social manner and he would be least likely to return to illegal methods to earn money. A job also meant a decrease of caregivers’ resources and the opportunity for the young man to move out on his own was possible. A financially independent young man also meant an additional financial resource for families who were struggling economically; a meaning understood by both caregiver and young adult.



In conclusion, this study highlights the process of formerly incarcerated young men and their families upon reentry and informs a new way of understanding the life course of these young men and their families based on their experience with incarceration. Specifically, that the young men in this study do not fit the patterns or mold of acquiring adult status reflective of standardized life course models based on societal norms of individual development. The young men in this study were living independently, providing for themselves and often for their families as adolescents. Like other studies examining economically disadvantaged groups, the need for resources in these families forces young members into adult roles at young ages as a necessity to bring additional resources into the family in order to adapt to their economic environment (Stack, 1974). The impact of incarceration then disrupts the life course and forces the independent adolescent to a state of dependency which continues until he is released to his family as a young adult. The discontinuity of the young men's life course then causes anxiety for the family system as they seek to forge ahead as an older person but without the skills, resources, or experience to get back on track towards independence without going back to the "old ways."

In her classic work, Neugarten describes the lack of fit of life course models with realistic transitions based on social and cultural ideals (1979). She argues that the notion of what is "normal" in terms of when transitions occur and how we define where we are in life should be challenged as social and cultural influences change over time. Thus, we must change our ideas about life course transitions and how we think about what it means to be an adult and to reach adulthood. For the families in this study, their experience highlights the non traditional way in which individuals move throughout life and become adults. Not only do traditional models of life course not fit for these families but they do not take into consideration the disadvantaged context

that informs the behaviors and actions that family members engage in order to provide resources needed by the family. In addition, we must use the strengths and weaknesses of alternative life course transitions to better inform theorizing and ultimately our interventions as family scholars when studying and/or helping these families.

### *Implications for Policy*

As the United States incarcerates more and more of its citizens and continues to become the number one industrialized country with the highest rates of incarceration, alternative solutions answering the problems in the criminal justice system have become important topics. Understandably, reentry issues are at the forefront since many of those who are incarcerated are offenders who have histories that include a previous period of incarceration (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005). A great percentage of those incarcerated and subsequently being re-arrested and receding back to prison are young adult men between the ages of 18-24 (Mears & Travis, 2004). The significance for this study in examining implications for policy highlight the opportunity to entertain solutions for intervening the cycles of imprisonment for these young offenders.

First, when incarcerated, youthful offenders could benefit from programs that target their developmental and educational needs. The young men in this study reported sporadic availability of educational, psycho-social, substance abuse and technical courses. By supporting these types of programs, youthful offenders can make greater use of the time spent during incarceration. If young men were able to leave prison with his GED, a skill/trade, or skills needed to combat substance abuse issues, then they will be better prepared to handle to challenges they will face upon returning home to family, specifically in finding employment. As shown in this study, all but two participant young men had ever worked in a legal enterprise prior to his incarceration.

The lack of job skills, work ethic and overall knowledge that comes with being a part of the workforce contributes to the problems youthful offenders face upon reentry. By paying greater attention to basic needs during imprisonment could have promising outcomes for the young men upon reentry.

Second, upon reentry, there needs to be more community support and resources available to these young men and their families that focus the family unit. For example, like providing supports and resources that ameliorates some of the caregiver burdens and that address the psychological distress brought up as a result of the reentry. For example, community resources that assist with skill training and job placement would be beneficial to these families by providing a place where young adults can improve themselves and their skill set and improve the chances of securing employment. When young men are working, they are less likely to place financial demands on their families. The communities that these young men returned to lacked outlets that promoted pro-social activities and alternatives to illegal behavior. In addition, by providing multiple resources in the form of education, skill training, and counseling for these families can greatly improve the outcomes of formerly incarcerated young adults men and their families upon reentry.

Third, this study examined the effects of reentry on the family system through the eyes of the formerly incarcerated young man and his caregiver. What seemed to be missing in the reentry process is a focus on the family. Reentry policy should seek to include caregivers as equal participants in the reentry process. Support systems should be in place to assist these families through the reentry process, particularly for young men who have been incarcerated from their families for long periods of time. This period of adjustment, said and unsaid expectations on the

part of both the young man returning home and his caregiver could benefit from some kind of intervention that assists the family members in understanding topics that are important for them. For example, caregivers expressed concerns about how the young man might be affected by his prison experience as well as concerns about the impact of being away from society for long periods of time. Families could benefit from an educational session that prepares them for the homecoming of their incarcerated loved one to address any concerns they might have. In the same spirit, young men could be prepared for going home by focusing on their anxieties about reentry home and to the community. As a trained marriage and family therapist, I saw potential and need for programs that aid these families through therapy and educational sessions before release from prison and throughout the reentry process.

Deliberate policy action specific to young adult men who return home to family from prison could result in positive changes in the form of reduced recidivism rates for this group. By focusing on reentry issues specific to developmental stage while supporting the family that receives them can have positive consequences not only for the young man and his family, but for society as well.

#### *Limitations for the Study*

Although this study provided insights of formerly incarcerated young men and their caregivers, the findings are limited to those sharing similar experiences with incarceration: formerly incarcerated young men between the ages of 18-24 and their caregivers. The sample size contained eight African American participant families and one Caucasian family. The racial makeup of the sample size was reflective of the parole office and geographic region where the data collected. The racial make-up and sample size of nine dyads participant families (or 18 total

individual interviews) was sufficient for this study, but limits generalizations to families of similar racial backgrounds and geographic regions.

Another limitation to the study was that of providing an outsider's perspective to the topic of reentry. While having worked in a prison and with men who were on parole, I have never been incarcerated nor have experience on what it is like to be a young man returning home to caregivers from prison. This outsider's perspective can introduce the possibility of researcher bias in that I approached the topic with ideas and hunches based on my experience as an observer to the phenomena of reentry. My paradigm of viewing these families and how they respond to their experiences with incarceration have been shaped by working with families in these same situations, but never having experienced it myself. The lack of personal experience in presenting the meanings made by young adults and their caregivers limit this study in the depth of experience that is missing due to being an observer of this phenomenon.

Although the institutional gatekeepers and parole officers were instrumental in gaining access to participants, being aligned with the parole office could have placed limitations on the study. Although measures like the informed consent were put in place to ensure the participants had knowledge of their voluntary participation, they could have only volunteered to participate because the parole officer asked them to speak with me about my study. In addition, the participants could have been "self-conscious" about reporting truthful details of their current activities for fear of jeopardizing their parole status. By using parolees, young men who had been incarcerated for a period of time and then released to caregivers under community supervision (parole) limited the scope of the study due to not considering issues that could be unique to

young men who “max out” (are released from prison after an expired sentence) to families who are not monitored by community corrections.

*Suggestions for Future Research*

There are a host of possibilities for future research in the area of young adult male reentry and their families. This study examined the meanings made by formerly incarcerated young men between the ages of 18-24 and their caregivers after their experience with incarceration. In order to further this area of inquiry, longitudinal studies examining the reentry process of this population would further our understanding of how family process on reentry efforts for young adults, particularly when successful independence is achieved. Although this study examined participants views about their experience with incarceration and their current thoughts of how having been incarcerated is affecting them at present, a longitudinal study would further pinpoint areas of discovery that could lead to a greater understanding the life course and cycle of imprisonment for this population.

Additionally, this study highlights areas of family life for young men and their caregivers that could be addressed through clinical therapeutic interventions such as family therapy throughout various points during reentry. Research on interventions to support these families during reentry could unveil strategies that can strengthen family systems and aid in making family relationships stronger. These interventions could also address and promote strategies that are specific to the life course patterns for these families. In addition to mainstream life course patterns, an increase and appreciation of the diverse ways in which individuals and their families develop can broaden our knowledge and appreciation for the many ways in which families function.

This study did not examine the effects of socioeconomic status, racial background, community resources or the influence of the prison culture has on reentry. These areas of specification can contribute to this area of scholarship in examining the differences these variable make in how families experience reentry, the meanings they make as well as the processes of these families upon being released from prison.

Finally, future research that seeks to understand how to make incarceration a less stigmatizing experience and on understanding how to offset the obstacles young people face after being incarcerated would not only improve the life outcomes for the young adult and his family, but for society as a whole. Understanding recidivism and why people return to prison is a complex task for policy makers, clinicians and advocates for criminal justice reform and hopefully, researchers will continue to examine this much needed area of scholarship.

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APPENDIX A: Young Adult Background and Interview Protocol

Please respond to the questions to the best of your ability. Your answers are confidential and will not be revealed to anyone outside of the project.

AGE:

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How old were you when you were released from your last incarceration term?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How old were you when you served your FIRST incarceration term? \_\_\_\_\_

RACE:

4. How would you describe your race/ethnicity?  
White/Caucasian      African American/Black      Latino  
Other(specify): \_\_\_\_\_

RELATIONSHIP STATUS:

5. How would you describe your current relationship status? S M W Never Married
6. How would you describe your relationship status at the time you were incarcerated the last time?

CRIMINAL RECORD

7. What offense were you serving time for your last incarceration? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7a. How long were you incarcerated for your during your last incarceration? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How many times have you been incarcerated?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8b. For what offenses?

FAMILY BACKGROUND

9. Has anyone in your family ever served time in prison? Please describe (e.g. who and what types of offenses)



APPENDIX A: Young Adult Background and Interview Protocol Continued

Background Information

10. Who would you identify as the parent-caregiver with whom you feel closest? (e.g. who is the parental figure who you feel supports you the most emotionally? Who do you rely most on?)

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

11. What is the highest grade you completed before prison?

12. What is your current educational level?

13. Are you currently enrolled in an educational program?

14. While Incarcerated what types of programs did you participate in?

- A. Education/GED training
- B. Vocational/Skill training
- C. Mental Health program
- D. Substance Abuse program
- E. Other Educational program (e.g. corrective thinking, family violence, anger management, etc)
- F. Ready for Release programs

CHILDREN

15. Do you have any children?

15b. What are their ages?

Employment

16. Are you currently employed? Where? What kind of work do you do?

16b. If not currently employed, why not?

PART I: Living Situation

1. Tell me about your living situation before you were incarcerated this last time

Probes: Who lived in your home with you?

2. Tell me about your current living situation

Probes: Who currently lives in the home with you? What's different now that you are home from prison?

3. Tell me what it means and feels like to live back at home with your family?

PART II: Family

4. In your Pre-Interview, you said that you felt like you were closest emotionally to \_\_\_\_\_, tell me why you chose \_\_\_\_\_

Probes: How would you describe your relationship with them since you have been home?

5. What does your parent think about your incarceration?

Probe: How does that affect your relationship?

6. What do other family members (or people you live with) think about your incarceration?

Probe: How have they been helpful to you since you have been home?

7. If we were to ask your parent what kinds of things they hoped and wished for your future, what do you think they would say?

Probe: How do you think they help you with those things?

PART III: REENTRY

8. What is most important to your staying out of prison?
9. What do you need from your parents to help you stay out (of prison)?
10. What have they (parents) done for that has been helpful for you staying out of prison?
- 10a. How do you feel about that?
11. What have they done for you that has not been helpful for you staying out of prison?
- 11a. How do you feel about that?

PART IV: SELF

12. Thinking back to when you were incarcerated, what kinds of things did you worry about when you thought about your return home?

13. Tell me about your future...where do you see yourself in one year?

APPENDIX A: Young Adult Background and Interview Protocol Continued

Probe: Do you foresee yourself returning to prison? Becoming a parent? Getting Married? Returning to school?

14. If there was anything that you could change about your situation, what would that be?

APPENDIX B: Structured Interview Questions for Identified Parent-Caregiver

Background Information

Please respond to the questions to the best of your ability. Your answers are confidential and will not be revealed to anyone outside of the project.

1. Age: How old are you?
2. How many children do you have?
3. Other than \_\_\_\_\_ have any of your other children been incarcerated?
4. Have you ever been incarcerated?
5. How would you describe your racial background?  
African American/Black      Latino/not White      Caucasian/Not Latino      Other
6. How would you describe the type of work do you do?
7. What is the highest grade you completed in school?
8. How would you describe your current marital status?  
Divorced      Single, never married      Widowed      Separated

APPENDIX B: Structured Interview Questions for Identified Parent-Caregiver  
Continued

PART I:

1. Tell me about your relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ (young adult inmate's name) before he got arrested?

Probe: Were you close? Were there problems?

2. Tell me about your relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ now that he is home

Probe: Are you close? Are there problems or concerns?

3. How have things changed in your home since \_\_\_\_\_ has returned?

Probe: How have you adjusted? Others who live in the home?

4. Did you visit him when he was incarcerated? Send Mail? Accept phone calls?

Probe: How often? How were you able to visit so often or what prevented you from making more visits, calls, etc.?

5. What types of things did you tell him about coming home

Probe: What did you expect of him when he came home? Did you talk about those things?

6. Where did you think \_\_\_\_\_ would live when he got out of prison?

7. What does \_\_\_\_\_ incarceration mean to you? To your family?

Probe: How is going to prison or jail thought about in your family?

8. What do you think others (people in the community) think of \_\_\_\_\_ incarceration?

Probe: What kinds of things do people say about \_\_\_\_\_? Do they know he was incarcerated?

9. Tell me about the things that you think about now that \_\_\_\_\_ is home

Probe: Young adult's health issues? Education?

10. What skills does \_\_\_\_\_ need to have to be a successful adult?

APPENDIX B: Structured Interview Questions for Identified Parent-Caregiver

Continued

11. Tell me about the types of things does \_\_\_\_\_ rely on you for?

11a. How do you feel about that?

12. Tell me about the hopes do you have for \_\_\_\_\_ future?

Probe: Tell me about his ability to stay out of trouble? To become employed? To be married?

13. Tell me how do you plan on helping \_\_\_\_\_ with those goals

APPENDIX C: Initial iteration of Coding Categories/Scheme

Young Men Interviews	Parent Interviews	Both
Adjusting to home/community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive Adjustment</li> <li>• Negative Adjustment</li> <li>• Feelings of being home</li> </ul>	Parent's Perceptions (of YM's future) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hopes</li> <li>• Wishes</li> <li>• Needs</li> </ul>	Family Relationships (Views of) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive</li> <li>• Negative</li> <li>• Ambiguous</li> </ul>
Perceptions of Parent/Family Help <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During Prison</li> <li>• Current</li> </ul>	Parental/Family Concerns/Worries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current</li> <li>• Future</li> </ul>	Family Stress/Strain
Obstacles from Parent/family <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	Parenting Tactics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting independence</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	Perceptions of Time (how long until independence/success/) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
Young Men's Future <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hopes</li> <li>• Wishes</li> <li>• Needs</li> </ul>	Parental/Family Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balancing</li> <li>• Limitations</li> </ul>	
Young Men's Perception of Need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	Parent/family Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of Self</li> <li>• Of Young Men</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>	
Extended Family <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help from</li> <li>• Difficulties with</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	Parent definition of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success</li> <li>• Support</li> </ul>	
Young Men's Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of Self</li> <li>• Of Family</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>		
Young Men's definitions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success</li> <li>• Support</li> <li>• "A Man"</li> </ul>		
Young Men's Concerns/Worries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current</li> <li>• Future</li> <li>•</li> </ul>		

APPENDIX D: Final Iteration of Coding Categories/scheme

Transition to Adulthood	Reentry Concerns	Family Relationships	Prison Experience
Promoting Independence ~ (parenting strategies; adulthood training, and monitoring)	Adjustment ~positive or negative issues at home, with family, etc.	Parental Concerns ~Issues with YM now or in the future	Reactions ~Positive or negative reactions felt by parents
Instrumental Support ~ tangible support descriptions (home, money, clothing, etc)	Effect on family ~ issues brought up as a result of young man's return home	Stress/Strain ~describes any problems with family members since coming home	
Emotional Support ~encouragement, advice, etc	Policies and Practices ~anything that relates to Parole requirements or felony convictions and reentry concerns	Intergenerational experiences with Prison ~family members' experience with prison	
Other Support ~ anything that fits	Living Concerns ~Issues surrounding living arrangements	Impact of Incarceration on relationships ~	
Barriers to reaching adulthood goals ~obtaining a job, etc.		Roles ~descriptions of family roles/obligations	
Timing Concerns ~Concerns about being off-time, off schedule,		Balancing Family Needs ~ descriptions of how families meet the needs of the YM and needs of other members	
YM Self Descriptions (describing themselves current and in the future)		YM Needs ~(descriptions of needs from family and others)	
Parental Descriptions of YM (describing YM current and in the future)		Parental Expectations ~Current expectations and future expectations of YM)	
YM Hopes/Wishes (descriptions of hopes for the future)			
Parental Hopes/Wishes (descriptions of hopes for YM)			

APPENDIX E: Reunification Coding Scheme

Coding Category	Theme	Exemplars (offspring= o; young men=Y)
Family relationships after of imprisonment	Ambivalence: Anxiety produced happiness Young men (n=8)	“Oh it’s been good. We got a real...real...good relationship you know. We watch movies together, go out to eat and stuff when my parole officer let me out...we sit down and talk...we got a good relationship” (Y)
	“Prison made our relationship better” Caregivers (n=9)	“He’s got a good heart. He’s got a really good heart. We have a good relationship right now. I really think that he’s turned himself around. I could never turn my back on him.” (C)
Balancing family needs	Multiple Demands family system Caregiver (n=7) Young men (n=6)	“Well uh the bills have been higher. The bills have been higher. I have to cook for not one, but uh two people now...uh...you know, well actually a third because of my husband and my baby.” (C)  “Well I’m basically doing everything by myself, but she’s [mom] I guess...emotionally supportive...All she can do. Cause she got to take care of her household and you know I do what I can. It’s not like...it’s all that she can do is give me support.” (Y)
Caregiver concerns about Young men behavior	Going back to his “old ways” Caregiver (n= 8) Young Men (n= 5)	“The same thing. I be riding him out about getting a job pretty much and I explain to him if he don’t find himself a job then he gone find himself going back doing the same thing he’s been doing.” (C)
		“Then I’d have to go back to the streets. If I couldn’t find a job and I didn’t have no good family support then I wouldn’t say it’s a good option, but an option is always there.” (Y)
	“Trying hard but getting no where” Caregiver (n= 4) Young men (n= 4)	“He trying to stay on the straight and narrow but you being straight up with people and they just close the door on you. So that’s the hard part.” (C)  “I don’t have no job you know, and that’s just been kinda hard for me. So I really been going out looking for a job. I gotta have money...” (Y)
	“Institutional baggage” Caregiver ( n=7) Young men (n= 6)	“The fact that he has a felony record...him getting a decent job...I’m concerned about that” (C) “I don’t know how it’s going to effect me in the long run...I’m really worried about that as far as working” (Y)
Young Adult Reentry Expectations	Conflict with meeting caregiver expectations (being off-time) Young men (n=5) Caregiver (n=6)	“I can’t really say what’s in the back of they mind...but nine times out of ten, there probably is doubt. But if they really see me trying to change then they might be like he’s really trying to change.” (Y)  “As far as his mindset I don’t think he is where he needs to be. I still think that he has boyish ways as far as how he thinks and what’s important to him...” (C)



APPENDIX F: Reliance on Family Coding Scheme

Coding Category	Theme	Exemplar (Caregiver=C; Young men= Y)
Perceptions of Family Support	“I need my family’s help to make it” Young men (n= 8)	“I probably would be incarcerated...if I didn’t have my family I prolly would be still selling drugs...” (C)
	“Helping those who help themselves” Caregivers (n= 9)	“I will help him as much as he need and as much as help himself...but when he stop helping himself, then there is nothing that I can do when he’s not helping himself...” (C)
Family Interdependence	Family members chipping in Caregivers (n= 9) Young men (n= 9)	“I asked him about helping do the yard work...and he did get out there last Wednesday and he did do the yard.” (C)
	Family helping family Young men (n= 7)	“I think it’s very important for me to stay out of prison...I got a lot of people to think about not just myself...I got my mama, my whole family...” (Y)
Time Limitations	“He’s got to do something soon” Caregivers (n= 4)	“I explain to him that he’s 23 years old and you know I can’t say get out...but like I explained to him you got a certain amount of time that’s gonna play out...without a shadow of a doubt that there is something you could do [to earn money]...”(C)
	Take your time Caregivers (n= 3)	“I don’t worry, as long as I keep a roof over my head he can stay” (C)
Conflicts with perceived identified role	Concept of what a “man” is/does Young men (n=7) Caregiver (n=5)	“ I want to be able to say I’m a grown man, I have my own...I don’t have to be rich, I don’t want to be poor though, I want to be able to take care of my business...” (Y)  “...I would say as long as you take care of business and doin’ what you supposed to do I would consider you a man and doing what’s right.” (Y)

APPENDIX G: Fostering Independence Coding Scheme

Coding Category	Theme	Exemplar (Caregiver =C; Young Men=Y)
Parenting Strategies	<p>“Give’em a good talkin’ to” Caregiver (n= 9)</p>	<p>“I was talking to him telling him to stay out of trouble and get him a job so he can go to work. And I was telling him I want him to go back to school and get his GED. So I did talk to him.” (C)</p> <p>“He always rely on us to buy and we like Dwayne you got to do what you got to do and have responsibility to buy your hygiene and stuff...If you don’t manage your money and buy what you ‘posed to have...” (C)</p>
	<p>Monitoring of Activities “Don’t hang with those people or do that” Young men (n=7)</p>	<p>“Always telling me I shouldn’t do this...Hang with these type of people or umm basically yeah...that I shouldn’t hang with certain type of people” (Y)</p>
	<p>Action Help I will take you... Caregiver (n=5) Young Men (n= 5)</p>	<p>“Next week I’m going to take some days off from work when he’s not in school and take him to apply for a weekend night job or a waiter or something because all of the other college students are doing that...” (C)</p>
Reliance on others	<p>They [prison/parole officer/ program] should help Caregiver (n=5)</p>	<p>“He need to uh, go to school and let them help him with how to save...” (O)</p> <p>“Uh a positive mentor. He needs someone who’s going to mentor him and touch him positively to stay strong and to stay focused because he get’s discouraged really fast...” (O)</p>

APPENDIX H: Letter from Pardons and Parole



L. Gale Buckner  
Chair

Marta C. Daniell  
Manager-Substance Abuse Services  
2 Martin Luther King, Jr., Drive, S.E.  
Balcony Level, East Tower  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-4909  
(404) 656-5651  
[www.pap.state.ga.us](http://www.pap.state.ga.us)

Robert E. Keller  
Vice-Chair  
Garfield Hammonds, Jr.  
Member  
Milton E. "Buddy" Nix, Jr.  
Member  
Garland R. Hunt, Esq.  
Member

September 11, 2008

Ms. Tiffaney Parkman

Dear Ms. Parkman,

As manager of parolee substance abuse services for the State Board of Pardons & Paroles I am looking forward to assisting you with your research project. We have identified 29 parolees at our North Fulton office that meet your criteria concerning age, time spent in prison and time out of prison.

When you are ready to move forward please contact me and we will work out the specifics.

Sincerely,

Marta C. Daniell

APPENDIX I: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



Office of Research Compliance  
Institutional Review Board  
2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)  
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061  
540/231-4991 Fax 540/231-0959  
e-mail moored@vt.edu  
www.irb.vt.edu


FWA00000572( expires 1/20/2010)  
IRB # is IRB00000667

DATE: September 15, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Joyce A. Arditti  
Tiffaney Parkman

Approval date: 9/15/2008  
Continuing Review Due Date:8/31/2009  
Expiration Date: 9/14/2009

FROM: David M. Moore 

SUBJECT: **IRB Expedited Approval:** "Homeward Bound: A Qualitative Examination of Young Adult Men Returning Home to Family From Prison", IRB # 08-524

This memo is regarding the above-mentioned protocol. The proposed research is eligible for expedited review according to the specifications authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. As Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, I have granted approval to the study for a period of 12 months, effective September 15, 2008.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.
3. Report promptly to the IRB of the study's closing (i.e., data collecting and data analysis complete at Virginia Tech). If the study is to continue past the expiration date (listed above), investigators must submit a request for continuing review prior to the continuing review due date (listed above). It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain re-approval from the IRB before the study's expiration date.
4. If re-approval is not obtained (unless the study has been reported to the IRB as closed) prior to the expiration date, all activities involving human subjects and data analysis must cease immediately, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

**Important:**

If you are conducting **federally funded non-exempt research**, please send the applicable OSP/grant proposal to the IRB office, once available. OSP funds may not be released until the IRB has compared and found consistent the proposal and related IRB application.

cc: File  
Department Reviewer: Joyce A. Arditti

*Invent the Future*

## APPENDIX J: Informed Consent Young Adult Male

08-524

### Informed Consent: Young adult male

Project Title: Returning Home: A qualitative examination of young adult men returning home to parents from prison.

#### I. Purpose of this Project

The purpose of this research study is to learn about reentry, transitioning to adulthood and family relationships, particularly the relationship between young men and their parent(s) after incarceration. This consent form is to help you to decide whether or not you would like to participate in this study. At this time and at any point during the study you are allowed to ask questions about the study, report any concerns that you may have, clarify your rights as a volunteer, know the risks and benefits and/or anything discussed now or in the future that might not be clear to you. At the conclusion of the reading of this form, you may decide if you would like to continue with the research study.

#### II. Procedures

If you decide to participate in this study, your participation will consist of a 90 minute interview. This interview will ask you several questions about your experience with incarceration, your experience since you have been released home, your experiences with your parent(s) and thoughts about your future. You will also be asked if you would like to share any personal letters that you received from your parent(s) during your time in prison. These letters should highlight topics like expectations of returning home from parent(s), aspirations and goals, etc. These letters will be photocopied and the originals will be returned to you.

#### III. Risks

Your voluntary participation in this study comes with a minimal degree of risk. You may for example feel emotional discomfort or anxiety as you discuss your experiences with incarceration and about your family relationships. Another risk involves the breaking of confidentiality with the disclosing of certain information that by law, the researcher is required to report. These types of disclosures include information such as child abuse, elder abuse, and intent to harm yourself or others.

You are not required to answer any question that might make you feel uncomfortable or withdrawal from the study at any time. The researcher will provide a list of referrals if needed at the end of the interview for follow up treatment for any emotional distress brought up during the interview. A list of community referrals will be available to you if you would like to seek any follow up care for any emotional distress as a result of the interview.

#### IV. Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you by participating in this study. Your participation will assist in understanding family situations and family processes of young men and their families impacted by incarceration. You may find benefit in discussing some of the topics in the interview that have been on your mind and/or of concern to you and your family since you have been home from prison.

APPENDIX J: Informed Consent Young Adult Male CONTINUED

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

08-524

Your participation in this study will not be shared with anyone outside of myself and my dissertation advisor and a graduate research assistant. All documents kept (e.g. notes written during the meetings) and audio tapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office at Virginia Tech. You will have the opportunity to select a pseudonym or false name so that you will not be identified by your real name to protect your anonymity. This pseudonym will be used in any published documents that are a result of this study.

In addition, if you choose to submit a letter for this study, a photocopy of the letter will be made and all names will be marked out to protect your confidentiality. Your original letter will be returned to you

As mentioned earlier, confidentiality cannot be maintained in instances where there is intent to harm oneself or others or in cases of child or elder abuse.

VI. Compensation

You will be compensated \$30.00 for your participation at the end of the study (interview). If you choose to stop participating during the survey, you will receive \$10 for the time you did choose to participate.

VII. Voluntary Participation

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. You may refuse to answer or skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable or anxious. If you decide not to participate, withdraw from the study, or refuse to answer particular questions, you have the right not to be penalized. You will be compensated regardless of the time you spend participating in the study.

VIII. Questions and Concerns

You have the right to ask questions about this research project at any time. If you have questions after the interview takes place, please feel free to contact the investigator: Tiffaney Parkman, Department of Human Development, Virginia Tech, (770) 235-6830 or Dr. Joyce Arditti, (advisor) Department of Human Development, Virginia Tech (540) 231-4795. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact

David Moore Chair, IRB Office  
of Research Compliance  
Research & Graduate Studies

(540) 231-4991

[moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu)

APPENDIX J: Informed Consent Young Adult Male CONTINUED

IX. Subject's Permission

I have had read to me and understand the Informed Consent and the conditions of this research study. I have had all of my questions answered, understand the nature of the study, understand the risks and benefits, know that I will be compensated for my participation, know the extent of confidentiality and have been made known to me who I can contact should I have questions or concerns about this project.

- I voluntarily give my consent to participate in this study project with the use of the audiotape.
- I voluntarily give my consent to participate in this study project WITHOUT the use of the audiotape

---

Participant Name (please print)

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

I would like to submit personal letters received from my parent(s) while I was incarcerated. I understand that these letters will be photocopied and the originals returned to me. I also understand that my name as well as the names of others written about in the letters will be changed and that my anonymity will be protected. I am able to provide at least two (2) letters for this study project.

---

Participant Name (please print)

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

---

APPENDIX J: Informed Consent Young Male CONTINUED

I do NOT want to submit any personal letters received from my parent(s) while I was incarcerated for this research study. I am aware that I can still participate in the interview and be compensated for the time I spend participating in this research study.

---

Participant Name (please print)

---

Participant Signature

---

Date



## APPENDIX K: Informed Consent Caregiver

08-524

### Informed Consent: Parent

Project Title: Returning Home: A qualitative examination of young adult men returning home to parents from prison.

#### I. Purpose of this Project

The purpose of this research study is to learn about reentry, transitioning to adulthood and family relationships, particularly the relationship between young men and their parent(s) after incarceration. This consent form is to help you to decide whether or not you would like to participate in the study. At this time and at any point during the study you are allowed to ask questions, report any concerns that you may have, clarify your rights as a volunteer, know the risks and benefits and/or anything discussed now or in the future that might not be clear to you. At the conclusion of the reading of this form, you may decide if you would like to continue with the research study.

#### II. Procedures

If you decide to participate in this study, your participation will consist of a 90 minute interview. This interview will ask you several questions about your experience with your son's incarceration, your experience since he has been home, your relationship with him and thoughts about his future. You will also be asked if you would like to share any personal letters that you received from your son during his time in prison. These letters should highlight topics like expectations of returning home, aspirations and goals, etc. These letters will be photocopied and the originals will be returned to you.

#### III. Risks

Your voluntary participation in this study comes with a minimal degree of risk. You may for example feel emotional discomfort or anxiety as you discuss your experiences with your son's incarceration and about your family relationships. Another risk involves the breaking of confidentiality with the disclosing of certain information that by law, the researcher is required to report. These types of disclosures include information such as child abuse, elder abuse, and intent to harm yourself or others.

You are not required to answer any question that might make you feel uncomfortable or withdrawal from the study at any time. The researcher will provide a list of referrals if needed at the end of the interview for follow up treatment for any emotional distress brought up during the interview.

APPENDIX K: Informed Consent Caregiver CONTINUED

08-524

A list of community referrals will be available to you if you would like to seek any follow up care for any emotional distress as a result of the interview.

IV. Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you by participating in this study. Your participation will assist in understanding family situations and family processes of young men and their families impacted by incarceration. You may find benefit in discussing some of the topics in the interview that have been on your mind and/or of concern to you and your family since your son returned home from prison.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

Your participation in this study will not be shared with anyone outside of myself and my dissertation team that may consist of my advisor and graduate student assistant. All documents kept (e.g. notes written during the meetings) and audio tapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office at Virginia Tech. You will have the opportunity to select a pseudonym or false name so that you will not be identified by your real name to protect your anonymity. This pseudonym will be used in any published documents that are a result of this study.

In addition, if you choose to submit a letter for this study, a photocopy of the letter will be made and all names will be marked out to protect your confidentiality. Your original letter will be returned to you.

As mentioned earlier, confidentiality cannot be maintained in instances where there is intent to harm oneself, others or in cases of child or elder abuse.

VI. Compensation

You will be compensated \$30.00 for you participation at the end of the study (interview). If you choose to stop participating during the study, you will receive \$10 for the time you did choose to participate.

VII. Voluntary Participation

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. You may refuse to answer or skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable or anxious. If you decide not to participate, withdraw from the study, or refuse to answer particular

APPENDIX K: Informed Consent Caregiver CONTINUED

08-524

questions, you have the right not to be penalized. You will be compensated regardless of the time you spent participating in the study.

VIII. Questions and Concerns

You have the right to ask questions about this research project at any time. If you have questions after the interview takes place, please feel free to contact the investigator: Tiffaney Parkman, Department of Human Development, Virginia Tech, (770) 235-6830 or Dr. Joyce Arditti, (advisor) Department of Human Development, Virginia Tech (540) 231-4795. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact

David Moore  
Chair, IRB  
Office of Research Compliance  
Research & Graduate Studies  
(540) 231-4991  
[moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu)

IX. Subject's Permission

I have had read to me and understand the Informed Consent and the conditions of this research study. I have had all of my questions answered, understand the nature of the study, understand the risks and benefits, know that I will be compensated for my participation, know the extent of confidentiality and have been made known to me who I can contact should I have questions or concerns about this project.

- I voluntarily give my consent to participate in this study project with the use of the audiotape.
- I voluntarily give my consent to participate in this study project WITHOUT the use of the audiotape

---

Participant Name (please print)

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

APPENDIX K: Informed Consent Caregiver CONTINUED

I would like to submit personal letters received from my parent(s) while I was incarcerated. I understand that these letters will be photocopied and the originals returned to me. I also understand that my name as well as the names of others written about in the letters will be changed and that my anonymity will be protected. I am able to provide at least two (2) letters for this study project.

---

Participant Name (please print)

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

I do NOT want to submit any personal letters received from my parent(s) while I was incarcerated for this research study. I am aware that I can still participate in the interview and be compensated for the time I spend participating in this research study.

---

Participant Name (please print)

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

# Tiffaney S. Parkman

---

---

## Current Address

1011 University City Blvd I-8  
Blacksburg, VA 24060  
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## Education

Aug 2004- expected May VA Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA  
**Ph.D. in Human Development concentration in Family Studies**

Dissertation Title: The transition to Adulthood and Prisoner Reentry: An Investigating the Experiences of Young Adult Men and their Caregivers

May 2002 University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky  
**M. S. in Family Studies with a specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy.**

May 1998 Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, Mississippi  
**B. S. in Psychology**

## Teaching Experience

Fall 2007 Spr 2008  
Fall 2006; Spr 2007  
**Instructor** – Family, Law and Public Policy  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

- Fall 2005; Spr 2006 Developed syllabus and overall course structure, and administered all grades.

Summer 2006  
**Instructor** – Human Services I  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

- Developed syllabus and overall course structure, and administered all grades.

Spring 2005 &  
Summer School 2005  
**Instructor** – Families and Children under Stress  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

- Developed syllabus and overall course structure, and administered all grades.

- Fall 2004                      **Teaching Assistant** – to Dr. Gloria Bird for Families and Children Under Stress.  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
- Collaborated on curriculum and exam development, met with students upon request and graded all written work, including final exam papers, guest lectured on Stress and Coping topics.
- 08/99-05/01                      **Teaching Assistant**- to Dr. Donna Smith for Introduction to Family Studies  
University of Kentucky
- Assisted professors in organizing class materials, graded papers, guest lectured, and other duties as assigned by professors.

## **Research Experience**

- 8/08-current                      **Graduate Assistant** for Dr. Rosemary Blieszner  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; Blacksburg,  
VA
- Data entry for data collected as a part of ADRAF project into SPSS program, conducted preliminary analysis for mid-year report; entered data utilizing Atlas.ti software under a different project, analyzed interview transcriptions to inform a developing publication in the Gerontology field.
- 08/06-08/07                      **Graduate Assistant** for Dr. Peggy Meszaros  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg,  
VA
- Prepared IRB, developed research questions, interviewed participants, transcribed data, coded data, and developed evaluation report of the Diversity Small Grants Program Chair.
- 08/06-08/07                      **Research Team Member** under Dr. Shannon Jarrott  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg,  
VA
- Participated in research team meetings, coded and cleaned survey data involving project that evaluated programs with joined child and adult care facilities.
- 08/04-12/06                      **Research Team Member** under Dr. Joyce Arditti

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA

- Coded and analyzed interview data with research team, developed poster presentations from project.

05/05-08/05

**Research Assistant** for Drs. Cecilia Hayhoe and Michelle Stevenson Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA

- Prepared surveys for disbursement, recruited participants via telephone, entered data into EXCEL, cleaned data for project & created codebook for survey.

1/02-5/02

**Research Assistant** for Dr. Retia Walker University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY

- Worked on a Community Assessment Grant funded by HUD; surveyed participants in the community, entered & collected data; developed codebook for SPSS/SASS analysis

## **Publications**

Arditti, J. A., Smock, S. A., & **Parkman, T. S.** (2005). It's been hard to be a father: A qualitative exploration of incarcerated fatherhood.. *Fathering*, 3(3), 267-288.

## **Presentations**

Meszaros, P. S., & **Parkman, T. S.** (March, 2007). Diversity Small Grants Program: An evaluation study. Poster session presented at the 4th Mid-Atlantic Diversity Conference, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

**Parkman, T. S.**, Smock, S. A., & Arditti, J. A. (November, 2005). *Fathering Behind Walls: A Look at Fathering Identity and Incarceration*. Poster session presented at the 67th annual conference of the National Council on Family Relations, Phoenix, AZ.

Arditti, J. A., Smock, S. A., & **Parkman, T.** (June, 2005). Families and incarceration: An ecological approach. Poster presented at the Hawaii International Conference on Social Sciences, Honolulu, Hawaii.

**Parkman, T.S.** (April, 2001). Identifying the strengths of African American families for utilization in drug abuse prevention. Poster presented at the National Black Graduate Student Conference, Lubbock, TX.

**Parkman, T.S.,** Gulley, L.A., Mahone, S.A., & Turner, W.L. (November, 2001). Identifying the strengths of African American families for utilization in drug abuse prevention. Poster presented at the National Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, Nashville, TN.

## **Work Experience**

09/04- Current

### **Mental Health and Substance Abuse Assessment Specialist**

Lewis-Gale Center for Behavioral Health; Salem, VA

- Interviews and assess patients for appropriate level of mental health and substance abuse care within the hospital. Works with treatment team to evaluate best treatment options for patients. Provides crisis assistance to call-in patients. Initiates insurance benefits for patients admitted into psychiatric hospitalization. Conducts various therapeutic groups as needed on adolescent inpatient unit.

**Part-time average 20hours per week**

**Supervisor:** Leigh Frazier (540) 772-2801

Summer 2007 & 2008

### **Multicultural Academic Opportunity Research Graduate Assistant**

Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University; Blacksburg, VA

- Provided assistance to the MAOP Summer Research Internship program by mentoring undergraduates conducting research at Virginia Tech; Conducted presentations on research, poster/oral presentations. Organized network luncheons for students and faculty mentors. Provided leadership and expertise to interns on graduate school, research techniques & professional development. Provided overall assistance for the maintenance and program functions. **Part-time average 20 hours week**

08/02- 08/04

### **Mental Health/Mental Retardation Counselor**

Phillips State Prison; Buford, GA

- Provider of case management and counseling to mentally ill and mentally retarded inmates housed in a supportive living unit (SLU) within the prison; Responsible for case management, crisis management, dorm management, pre-release appointment set-up, psychiatric and medical appointments, and all things related to the milieu of the



assigned inmates; Conducted groups for unit and for other mentally ill inmates living in the SLU such as Corrective thinking, anger management, relaxation, current events, living with a mental illness, domestic violence, and substance abuse; Served on-call as after hours duty officer/counselor as needed. Handled crisis calls and made emergency management decisions regarding inmates with behavioral or mental health issues; Served as mental health advisor during institutional disciplinary hearings for mentally ill inmates who committed prison infractions; Worked with families of inmates for such things as discussing progress, discharge information; obtain information for parole, education on mental illness and medication Reviewed inmate files for parole reviews; Prepared monthly reports pertaining to inmates placed on suicide watch; Maintained inmate files Conducted intake assessments for inmates arriving to the institution who were found to have mental health problems Created behavioral management plans for inmates on case loads Provided crisis intervention with inmates on case loads as well as other inmates in co-workers' absence Conducted rounds in disciplinary lock down housing unit for mentally ill inmates and for general population inmates for mental health checks; Participated in treatment teams to discuss placement of inmates in various housing and mental health treatment level.

- Selected as the crisis stabilization counselor within 8 months of hiring. Duties included being the case management, counselor for mentally ill inmates requiring suicide precaution and hospitalization. Maintained 10 crisis beds equipped with cameras to monitor suicidal inmates. Conducted rounds and held meetings with the psychiatrist, psychiatric nurse to develop discharge plans for suicidal inmates. Worked with other state prison facilities within Georgia to accept or deny suicidal inmates for suicidal placement. Worked with inmates to assist them in achieving acceptable treatment goals.

07/03-08/04

**Aftercare Therapist**

Gwinnett Children's Shelter; Buford, GA

- Provider of in-home family therapy and reunification services to children & families who resided in the shelter as well as families in the community who needed family therapy.

10/00-05/02

**Staff Therapist** (practicum)

UK Family Center; Lexington, KY

- Provide therapy for couples, families, children, and individuals using a variety of therapeutic modalities (500+ hours of face to face contact); develop diagnosis and treatment plans, work with 2 Fayette County elementary schools, developed and lead a 6-week anger management/education group

02/99-08/99

**Alternative Families for Adults Case Manager/Therapist**

Southwestern Indiana Mental Health Center

Evansville, Indiana

- Responsible for keeping up to date with government programs as applied to clients, assisted clients in financial decisions and budget making, assisted clients to doctor's appointments, made home visits with clients, assisted clients in seeking employment/skills training, and other miscellaneous duties as needed by the 12 client load.

09/99-02/99

**Mental Health Technician**

Southwestern Indiana Mental Health Center

Evansville, Indiana

- Worked in group home for adults with severe mental illnesses, assisted residents with daily living activities, prepared and lead modules on various topics such as communication skills, personal safety and sexual awareness, and assisted with money management and household chores.

**Internships**

05/00-08/00

**Summer Intern**

University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Services

- Selected as a summer intern for the Family Consumer Sciences Division. Developed programs for the community (Grandparents Raising Grandkids), Served as an adult counselor for 4-H summer camp as well as taught a yearbook class; wrote weekly articles for the Winchester Sun Newspaper; Served as a judge for surrounding county fairs.

Summer 1997

**Summer Academic Research Internship (SARI)**

University of California, Santa Barbara

- 8 Week program researching in the Sociology Department of the University of California, Santa Barbara with Professor Gene Lerner on conversation analysis.

Research Topic and Oral Presentation on: Word Searches: An Investigation of Non-Native English Speakers in an Educational Setting.

**Membership**

2004-current

National Council for Family Relations

2000-current

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

2004-current

Black Graduate Student Organization

*Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University; Blacksburg, VA*

1999-2002

Student Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

*University of Kentucky; Lexington, Kentucky*

1999-2002

Black Graduate and Professional Student Association

*University of Kentucky; Lexington, Kentucky*

2000-2002

Kentucky Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

1998-2002

University of Kentucky Lyman T. Johnson Fellowship recipient

**Community Leadership**

2005- Current

Tau Mu Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

*Christiansburg, VA*

Serves as Official Hostess (2007-current); Serves as Membership Chair (2007-current); Chapter representative at National Leadership Conference (July 2007, New Orleans, LA); Committee Chairman for “Alpha Kappa Alpha loves the Family 5K/Walk Run & Community Bar B Que” (2007 & 2008); Volunteers on behalf of chapter to: Heritage Hall Nursing Home, Angel Tree Christmas Program; Serves as mentor to Debutante Cotillion Program.

