Relationship Narratives: Rural Appalachian Women's Lived Experience With the Familial Process of Reentry

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ABSTRACT

The reentry process post incarceration has been identified to be difficult in the most ideal of
situations and family support has been shown to be nearly essential to avoid re-incarceration
(Bahr et al., 2005; Visher & Travis, 2003). This study is a first attempt to delve into the
nature of relationships between women in Appalachia specifically, and their male relative
who is a formerly incarcerated person. Informed by an intersectional feminist framework
and symbolic interactionism, this study interviews eight women who reported maintaining a
relationship with a male relative who had been incarcerated and reported assisting in his
reentry process, in effort to extract the essence of daily lived experience in the context of
multiple identities and social locations. A feminist phenomenological approach based on
Husserl's philosophy and Van Manen's method was utilized, whereby the researcher
employed bracketing prior to further data investigation and analysis, in attempt to distill the
distinct experiences of these unheard women. Key findings included two prominent themes,
and one overall essence of the lived experience of women interviewed. The essence of
women's lived experience in Appalachia within the context of reentry is that family is
everything, and exists at the center and above all else. Subsumed within this lived
experience were the themes of family traditions, or how things are done in Appalachia, and
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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

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Essential to the analytic process was identification of how the researcher's
identities may intersect with the research process and participants themselves. Key
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DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to the women of Appalachia, who I had the honor of working with over the course of seven years during my clinical work, research, and field work while living in Southwest Virginia. These women welcomed me into their homes and lives, fed me both body and soul, and taught me about the beauty of the mountains of Appalachia. I learned more than I could have expressed on paper about the true meaning of family, and for that I am forever grateful.

Table of Contents

Chapter One
Introduction
Background and Significance

As systemic thinkers, how families' process, understand, and manage significant life events is the focus of scholarship in Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT). One consequence of historically high incarceration rates is that an increasing number of individuals face reentry (Travis, 2005; Travis, Western, & Redburn, 2014). Approximately 700,000 prisoners are released from prison or jail every year, and many will return to prison within 3 years of release (Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014; Langan & Levin, 2002). Some scholars have explored family relationships in the context of incarceration (Naser & La Vigne, 2006; La Vigne et. al, 2008) however those studies examined the change in family relationships from the perspective of the incarcerated person. A family perspective on incarceration necessitates a consideration of how non-incarcerated kin are affected by their family member's confinement and participate in the reentry process of their family members (Arditti, 2012). Understanding the processes that contribute to successful reintegration has captured the attention of sociologists, criminologists, and family scientists alike (Mowen & Visher, 2016; Western et al., 2015; Arditti & Few, 2006, 2008). Formerly incarcerated (FI) persons returning to their families and communities face multiple challenges such as finding employment, housing, and meeting the requirements of their probation or parole (Travis, 2005; Visher, 2007).

Reentry scholarship is beginning to unpack the important role of family support in facilitating positive reentry scenarios (Naser & La Vigne, 2006; Berg & Heubner, 2010;

Mowen & Visher, 2016; Western et al., 2015). For example large, close family networks along with marital and parenting ties appear to contribute to more successful reintegration trajectories for the formerly incarcerated (Bahr et al.,, 2005; Visher & Travis, 2003). The support of female kin during confinement (Braman, 2004; Comfort, 2008) and post release (Pettus-Davis et. al, 2015; Western et. al, 2015) has been linked to more successful outcomes. An examination of the reentry experience, and the role family plays during that critical time is warranted, given the barriers they face and intense stigma associated with being formerly incarcerated. Families are seen as integral to reentry (Mowen & Visher, 2016) yet reentry may contribute to stress and conflict for family members (Phillips & Lindsay, 2011) along with resource shortfalls (Codd, 2007). Women in particular seem predominately tasked with the care and support of formerly incarcerated family members (Pettus-Davis, 2015; Western et. al, 2015).

The present study examines the "life experiences" (Van Manen, 1997, p.345) of rural women experiencing the reintegration of their formerly incarcerated male family member, with attention to the process of reentry. Based on observations gathered throughout the duration in the field collecting data for this study, and during five years of clinical family work with rural Appalachian families, this researcher considered women's experiences within rural Appalachia to be unique because while these women have instrumental power within families, this researcher observed women to have no social capital within their communities. Social capital here is defined as resources that facilitate cooperation amongst unrelated individuals for mutual benefit (Putnam 2000, 2004). Social capital has been researched within rural Appalachia as an approach that can augment or replace conventional economic development activities that have not brought about

meaningful economic improvement (Keefe, 2009). Participatory approaches seek to leverage social capital in distressed rural Appalachian communities as a way to supplement economic development, however social capital may be considered to be useful for enhancing common familial processes such as reentry. As a rural designated region, Appalachia provided a fertile environment to examine women's lived experience relative to a family members' reentry and the intersectionality of gender and other chosen identities, marginalization and invisibility, and women's role in family member reentry. This research took place in two regions of Appalachia, South Central and North Central (Scales, Satterwhite & August, 2018). Specifically, data was gathered from Southwest Virginia and Huntington, West Virginia.

Appalachian Women as Caregivers

While common themes concerning the stressors associated with a reintegrating family member have emerged, unique family contexts in which they occur have not been considered. Specifically, Appalachia has been identified as a distinct regional and cultural area, worthy of study and definition (Hunsucker, Flannery & Frank, 2000), particularly as it related to health care and mental health. A study of Appalachian families by Mather (2004) found lack of jobs combined with declines in public assistance income presented special challenges to families living in Appalachia's rural areas. The report recognized that many families lack transportation, child care, and other resources needed to make the transition from welfare to work. These problems were assessed to be most acute for families living in the Central Appalachian region (Mather, 2004). Given these tendencies, it is logical to assume that rural Appalachian families would process and cope with a reintegrating FI family member in a unique manner. The area of rural Appalachia where this research was conducted consists of small rural communities where the poverty rate is 24%

(http://unitedwayswva.org, retrieved April 2, 2019), and the rate of employed people living with limited assets, and income restraints (ALICE), is 35%. Meaning, nearly 59% of the population struggles to meet their basic needs (http://unitedwayswva.org, retrieved April 2, 2019). These communities are filled with households with usually one functioning vehicle and family members working blue collar jobs where taking time off for appointments is challenging. It should be noted the majority of the sample in this study did not report living in poverty. Reasons for this possible sampling bias are considered in the Discussion section.

Rural communities where FI persons return to have been studied for unique factors that may contribute to reentry. First, the rate of female-headed households is nearly twice the national percentage (12.2% nationally, 23.2% in rural Kentucky), and second, these communities present with greater indicators of social disorganization than urban samples. Social disorganization is defined as a community trait where areas with less desirable conditions create an atmosphere of neglect, which facilitates social problems, and groups are less able to maintain social order through informal means. Higher levels of social disorganization has been linked to greater rates of poverty, higher levels of family disruption, and lower levels of family and residential stability (Tewksbury, Mustaine & Stengel, 2007).

In a study investigating the social and cultural factors influencing health behaviors in Appalachia, researchers noted that pervasive stereotypes of patriarchal family structures were largely untrue, and have been eroded by need for the greater financial stability which comes with women working outside the home, and led to more egalitarian family decision making, where women self-identify as strong, and the main source of support for their families (Coyne et al., 2006).

Stereotypes about the people of Appalachia have existed in mainstream culture and media for centuries (Cooke-Jackson & Hansen, 2008). The images of women as barefoot and pregnant, and her male partner as shiftless and toothless began appearing in national media in 1900, where a "hill-billie was defined as a free and untrammeled white citizen of Alabama, who lives in the hills, has no means to speak of, dresses as he can, talks as he pleases, drinks whiskey when he can get it, and fires off his revolver as the fancy takes him" (Cooke-Jackson & Hansen, 2008, p. 187). Appalachian feminist scholars have begun to deconstruct the stereotypes that have endured noting that focus on poverty and social class in previous research has ignored the role of gender and race in developmental processes and daily life (Smith, 2004). Obermiller and Maloney (2016) critiqued the use of the broad term of Appalachian culture, finding it problematic due to the deeply contextualized nature of local cultures impacted by variables such as social class, geography, and degree of urbanization. A recent phenomenological exploration of Appalachian women's resilience found their cultural values played an integral part in their ability to develop and foster strength (Helton & Keller, 2010). This finding is particularly relevant to this study, as the process of successful reentry for formerly incarcerated individuals and their families is an exercise in resiliency, defined by Walsh (2003) as the capacity to spring back, rebound successfully in the face of adversity, and develop the capacity to struggle well over time.

Documentation of the challenges faced by family members when their loved one returned home after incarceration reveal emotional and psychological effects, economic hardships, housing and employment difficulties, lack of privacy, and social stigma as a result of supporting their family member (Phillips & Lindsay, 2011; Codd, 2007). Yet little is known about the influence community culture may have on the family's ability to provide

that support. Utilization of a purposeful lens to explore a specific family process in context, here Appalachia, may elucidate gaps in programming for women, given the unique role Appalachian women play in families.

So given that family is crucial is to a successful reentry process, and that women are the main sources of family support for that process, further research into the experiences of the women providing these supports, and the meaning they ascribe to the process, is fundamental to unpacking how reentry unfolds in rural Appalachian family systems.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a rich description of the experience of female family members' relationships with a formerly incarcerated male family member. Phenomenological exploration of lived experience as defined by Husserl (1970) is the method that can best lead to better understanding of the topic, while considering researcher subjectivity and its influence. Further, the phenomenological approach allowed for the application of an intersectional feminist framework to the investigation, via bracketing concepts of power, authority, access, and bringing preconceptions about culture, and gender, into researcher reflexivity.

Research Questions

1. What is the life experience of women who maintain a relationship with a formerly incarcerated male family member in Appalachia?

2. Do women in the study experience stigma/shame/dishonor/disgrace in their daily lives, and if so, in what ways?

3. How do women manifest resilience in their lives as it pertains to their experience with their male relative?

Summary of Approach

The present research utilized a qualitative approach, guided by an intersectional feminist framework phenomenological methodology based on Husserl's (1970) description of phenomenology. Husserl characterized phenomenology where "linguistic discussions are among the philosophically indispensable preparations of the building of [knowledge] . . . and has, as its exclusive concern, experiences intuitively sizeable and analyzable in the pure generality of their essence" (Husserl, p. 249.).To this researcher, that meant diving into the text with the experiential knowledge of this researcher, bracketed, but not discounted, to fully understand the lived experiences of the women interviewed. Coding and analysis was structured by Van Manen's four steps of phenomenological writing (Van Manen, 2014). Here, interviews with women in relationships with formerly incarcerated male relative (FI) was the first step to uncover the unique experience that involves being in that relationship. The acquisition of knowledge, of understanding a particular phenomenon, needed to begin with accessing that essence of what the thing *is*. The addition of an intersectional feminist framework to a phenomenological approach acknowledges the inherent power structure embedded in the researcher/participant relationship as well as women's own privilege and oppression. This study seeks, as much contemporary feminist scholarship does, to "give voice to women's lives that have been silenced and ignored, uncover hidden knowledge contained within women's experiences, and bring about women-centered social change" (Brooks, 2007, p. 54). Recruitment for participants utilized a flyer posted at a multiple locations (4) of a Community Services Board within the New River Valley of Southwest Virginia. Please see Appendix C for a sample flyer. Community Service Boards (CSB) was the point of entry into the publicly funded system of services for mental health, intellectual disability, and substance abuse (www.dbdhs.virginia.gov, retrieved 8/12/2016), and likely had significant foot traffic for

7

individuals who were receiving mental health services themselves, attending appointments with family members or friends, or simply waiting as a provider of transportation. As the study's target population was women who maintained a relationship with FI male relative, it was assumed a sample may be attained within this context. The flyer was written at a seventh grade level in an attempt to account for lower levels of literacy in rural Appalachia (Shaw, De Young & Rademacher, 2004).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with women who met study criteria (to be detailed in Chapter 3), focused on the identified research questions. The analytic strategy of the study was based on a process outlined by Van Manen (2014) for investigating experience as it is lived, rather than as it is conceptualized. Arditti and Parkman (2011) define "lived experience" as significant moments in existence, when reflected upon, in the process of describing details or situational specifics, true meaning or essence is revealed. Hence, lived experience is not simply experiencing a given thing, but recognition of that thing as meaningful as it was being lived. In addition to closely examining lived experience with our preconceptions transparent or suspended, phenomenological analysis involved reflection on essential themes that characterize the phenomenon, discovery of the essence of what it is that makes the lived experience *what it is*; and description of the phenomenon through language and writing.

Key Theories

Two key concepts drove the conceptualization of this research: the symbolic interaction of identity formation in context, and an intersectional feminist framework. The ideological threads, which are common through both of these concepts, involve intersubjectivity of experience and meaning making, context as significant to perception of experience and

therefore meaning, and the role of identity and identity formation within specific social locations.

Symbolic Interaction. Symbolic interactionism is a theory of family functioning based on three core principles: (1) that people act toward things, including each other, on the basis of the meanings they have for them; (2) that meaning is formed through social interaction with others; and (3) that these meanings are managed and transformed through an interpretive process that people use to make sense of and handle the objects that constitute their social worlds (Blumer, 1969). In this study, the relationship between a female family member and FI male relative was the entity or dyad of interest. Of interest in this research was the meaning women assign to specific relationships and institutions associated with those relationships (e.g. the penal system); what the social interactions that shaped meaning look like; and women's perspectives on meaning making in the context of social interactions. A critical assumption of this study was the belief that the experiences of our research participants were the culmination of an iterative process, unarticulated and unplanned, but present. Stryker and Burke (2000) emphasize how the importance of situating identity and identity formation within context, specifically how individuals interpreted their environments rather than simply responding to them, which in turn shaped behavior. Again, for this study the contexts of interest were the regions of South Central and Central Appalachia, and participants' experience of these distinct environments.

Intersectional Feminist Framework. An intersectional feminist framework embodies principles that broadly represent both feminist epistemologies and an intersectional theoretical lens that considers how structural social categories coalesce to shape experience. With regard to this research, social categories pertaining to class background, geographic region, age, gender,

and criminal justice involvement are categories of interest (Morris & Bunjun, 2007). When applying an intersectional lens, the expectation is that participants will be viewed across all social identities, and exploration will include how they intersect with, and shape each other. For example, the experience of a self-identified black woman, age 64 as contrasted to the experience of a white man, age 30. These social categories were relevant to the object of study, the nature of relationship between FI and female relative, but also the research process. Categories were identified by the researcher, not participants.

Socioeconomic class background is a wide term with relatively indistinct identifiers for who falls into what class, often with multiple factors influencing what class with one self-identifies (Acker, 2005). Application of an intersectional feminist frame to this topic acknowledges the social contexts which may influence ability to manage stress, or provide access to resources, and recognizes women as the bearers of majority of emotional and instrumental familial work for reintegrating formerly incarcerated men (Pettus-Davis et al., 2015).

The multiple interactive relationships contained within proposed research call for a theoretical approach that provides opportunity to explore every aspect and facet of the thing being examined. Symbolic interactionism illuminates the process of relationship formation, both between researcher and participant, and family members being studied. An intersectional feminist framework emphasizes the importance of the women's experiences in her relationships, and the fluid and dynamic social locations she moves within and between to function in those relationships.

Guided by the current literature suggesting the reentry of FI's is particularly challenging and successful reintegration often involves the support of kin (Mowen & Visher, 2016)), as well

as theory highlighting the need to more fully consider the voices of women who are often relied upon by the FI, the aim of this study is to extract who these women are, specifically how they identify themselves; what they do in their daily lives to cope or manage challenges associated with maintaining a relationship with FI male relative; and how cultural context influences their daily lived experience.

Chapter Two
Theoretical Influences

As summarized in Chapter 1, key theoretical concepts guiding the proposed research

originated from Symbolic Interactionism (SI) and an intersectional feminist framework, or

intersectional feminist research practice (IFF/IFR). Here I elaborate more fully on theoretical

influences situating the proposed research. The intersectional feminist framework was applied

broadly to all aspects of the research design, and in particular the qualitative methodology and

its trustworthiness. Symbolic Interactionism elucidates key aspects of the experience of women

in South Central and Central regions of Appalachia as it pertains to their male reentrant kin-

particularly the meanings women ascribe to the interactions they may have with him, any care

provided, and any experience of stigma or a sense of feeling "different" due to their relationship

with this person. The two frameworks (SI and IFF) are quite complimentary because Symbolic

Interactionism attempts to explain the meaning formation and social interactions that shape the

structures of power and oppression which Intersectional Feminist Framework/Research practice

seeks to define, deconstruct, and change (Morris & Bunjun, 2007).

Intersectional Feminist Framework

An intersectional feminist framework guided this research and establishes the

expectation that a woman centered approach will be utilized in all aspects of the investigation,

from the theoretical to the practical (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). By documenting women's

experiences, revealing gender-based stereotypes, and uncovering subjugated knowledge,

feminist research attempts to confront principles, institutions, and beings that oppress women.

Essential to the feminist research posture is self-awareness of her perspective and assumptions,

and how her power/privilege may interact with research participants and data collected, and

synthesize in research product (Charmaz, 2006). While a feminist approach to research honors the experience of women as central and recognizes power in research process, an intersectional feminist framework augments the study by ensuring the women sharing experiences were approached holistically (Morris & Bunjun, 2007). The population of investigation is women who live in a cultural environment plagued by gender-based stereotypes (Massey, 2007), but also affected by poverty, and the social stratification associated with economic challenges for rural poor (Norris et al., 2010; Anglin, 2002). National poverty rates in 2014 were recorded at 15.6%, 17.2% for the Appalachian region as a whole, and 18.8% in South Central Appalachian Virginia (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2014; retrieved from https://www.arc.gov/reports/ custom_report.asp? REPORT_ID=64, retrieved 9/23/16). Anthropologists who have considered poverty within Appalachia have articulated that while common values persist within regions of Appalachia, inaccurate assumptions or stereotypes about poverty also endure, and the social hierarchies that maintain and control power should be investigated with an appreciation towards the social location of participants (Anglin, 2002). It should be noted that the majority of women interviewed for this study did not report an income that would qualify them as living in poverty. Women who maintain a relationship with a male family member who has committed a crime (Burchfield & Mingus, 2008) may likely experience marginalization, and effect Goffman (2009) calls courtesy stigma. Intersectionality as a concept has begun to surface as a new way to integrate and discuss ideas of power, identity, relationships, and their dynamic interactions, and as such honors women's daily lives within rural Appalachia, in the diverse forms it may take.

Intersectional feminist researchers should deliberate on not only the junctures of identity and power within subject of study, here the familial relationship, but also within the research

process. Positioning one's self as a feminist researcher presumes the following suppositions. First, women are at the center of the research, specifically, women's concrete experiences are the building blocks of knowledge (Brooks, 2007). Tertiary to this belief is the assumption that women's experiences, daily lives, consist of what women *do,* and that those tasks are noteworthy in spite of lack of visibility, validation, compensation, or acknowledgment from scholars or institutions of power. Making women the center of research, and their daily lives as principal to knowledge formation is a feminist approach to scholarship. In this study, women's caregiving experiences for a male family member convicted of a sexual offense was the focus, and was principally addressed in design of interview questions, probes, and collection of demographic data. The second essential component to a feminist stance is acknowledgement of the "researcher as self", and her position, which can be more challenging. This includes acknowledgement of the researcher's *self* which encompass her own lived experience and what she is bringing to the study as it pertains to her biases, assumptions about participants, her current roles, the interactive experience of research, and identification of her power. Potential sources of power include elevated educational status, and elevated socioeconomic status. Further, the position of receiving and keeping the stories of women interviewed holds a kind of power, as the researcher is entrusted with respecting confidentiality and reverence for the sanctity of their experience. The interactional nature of the researcher/participant relationship during interviews must be recognized, biases and assumptions of both researcher and participant should be accepted, researcher biases should be bracketed to her best ability, and power should be documented and also bracketed, if possible. Specifically, the relationship between social locations of researcher and female participant is significant, fluid, and should be

acknowledged. Analysis of the dynamics of self and power as it plays out in relationships and greater social structures is what intersectionality discussions focus upon.

Intersectionality is a concept stemming from critiques of scholarly research that overlooked critical components of a subjects' experience such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and the dynamic interface of these social mechanisms (Ferree, 2009). With regard to investigating family processes, Few-Demo (2014) defines intersectionality as a theoretical framework that guides methodological choices and data analysis. The approach recognizes social location as the relative privilege or oppression individuals experience based on based on identity constructs. These identities are fluid, contextual, interactive with dimensions of privilege and oppression, neither discreet nor exclusive and may interact (Hulko, 2009). Scholars have identified multiple types of intersectionality, each pointing the researcher to a unit of study, relevant methodological approach, or analytical strategy (Choo & Ferree, 2010; McCall, 2005). Crenshaw (1991) identified two forms of societal intersectionality that are relevant to proposed research: structural intersectionality, how social systems oppress individuals and groups differently, and representational intersectionality, how images in culture about identities create narratives which influence dynamics of oppression or privilege. If the Penal or Justice system can be understood to be a social system, and social inequalities in rural contexts are also acknowledged as constructions of power (Norris et. al, 2010), structural intersectionality can be explored to identify within group differences that go beyond gender. Consideration of stereotypes of formerly incarcerated persons, assumptions made about these persons, and cultural expectations of rural Appalachian women coalesce to edify identity formation, which designates oppression and privilege in representational intersectionality.

Intersectionality has also been conceptualized as relational and locational. It is locational in the sense that identity categories and social locations are created when multiple oppressions interact. Relational intersectionality encompasses how individuals and groups manage conflict and inequalities created by cultural discourses manifested in institutional structures (Ferree, 2010). Both conceptual perspectives apply to this research, as women caregivers for formerly incarcerated male family members are defined as having interacting subjugated locations (gender, legal status), and how she manages the stigma associated with her caregiving relationship with male family member (relational) is a focus of this research. The multiplicity of identities a woman may express or associate with at any given time are experienced uniquely by her, but are of interest to feminist scholars as her management and prioritization of those identities in experience can shed light onto greater societal processes.

An intersectional feminist framework augments family and social justice research by suggesting exploration of socially constructed identities in complex social locations can distinguish variations within groups, highlighting resiliency and capacity. For example, women caregivers in rural Appalachia may be privileged by financial resources; access to transportation; personal physical health or able body-ism; comfort interacting with professionals, medical or otherwise; or literacy level. Absorption of legal documents and information is challenging when literacy level is low, and navigation of medical or mental health records also present difficulties when lay terminology is not utilized. Ability to understand legal and medical information may increase compliance for the family member for which she is providing care, may increase her ability to engage in services or access them, or contribute to disenfranchisement if not understood. She may be privileged or oppressed by her connection with greater community; it is not uncommon for individuals or families to own

police scanners that inform of local crimes as they occur, and the extent of community knowledge regarding family member's crime could influence her ability to access supportive civic resources.

Within the familial relationship between a formerly incarcerated male relative and female family member, identity formation of women in South Central and Central Appalachia is the social location of interest. Due to the study approach of encouraging participants to self-identify identities; it would be inappropriate to assume identities related to parenting, employment, race, or other institutional or social structures. However, gender identity as female is a criterion for participation, as is maintenance of relationship with male relative. Gender identity, as female in the context of rural Appalachia, is pertinent for explorations about how she utilizes gender to extract power or manage oppression in relationships: interpersonal, social, and institutional. Considering the formerly incarcerated are considered to be a hyper-marginalized group amongst the marginalized poor, female family members continuing to maintain relationships may be understood to be a stigmatized group due to courtesy stigma. Alternatively, the identities of women doing this emotional labor may be subsumed within the relationship whereby she becomes invisible. Identity formation and transformation throughout this familial process is part of what this study seeks to explore. Relevant queries include if she alters her gender expression when interacting with her male relative, if that expression varies by context, and how it has changed over time. Examining the role of gender in creation of identity for a hyper-marginalized group offers a specific social location, which is the entry into investigation of intersectionality within subject's familial relationship.

Intersectionality as a methodological approach begins with identifying the emphasis of research: group centered, process centered, or system centered (Choo & Ferree, 2010). The

process-centered approach as defined by Choo and Ferree (2010) observes when multiple types

of intersectionality are taking place in any given individual or group, and the crossroads at

which they meet. The proposed research will attempt to elicit the essence of experience of

women at the juncture of relational, locational, and structural intersectionality in the context of

one familial relationship. The purpose of process centered intersectionality research is to

capture data describing the agency she uses in making her world, and experiences of

empowerment or oppression, here, South Central and Central Appalachia.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism focuses on the connection between shared meaning (symbols)

and communication and actions (interaction) within families or groups (LaRossa & Reitzes,

2009). This theory serves to clarify the meaning making process of familial relationships; roles

and identity are co-constructed based on social interactions with others (Stryker, 1968). More

recent family scholars have applied the theory to examine marginalized populations (Glass &

Few-Demo, 2013), behaviors or labels that may be considered aberrant or 'other' (Vaillancourt

& Few-Demo, 2014), and highlight the utility of the theory to more fully understand

sociocultural identities and relationships (Ridgeway, 2006). In this study, the interactions

between female caregiver and male relative which form the relationship will be the emphasis,

and the co-created shared meaning (symbol) of that relationship, as communicated by her, is

subject of interest.

Symbolic interactionism as a model developed as a response to 'top down' analyses of

social constructs, where the impact of dominant institutions and oppressive societal structures

were examined without regard to the interactive micro-processes which shape meaning

assigned to institutions (Carter & Fuller, 2016). Social constructs such as gender have been

explored using concepts of symbolic interactionism (West & Zimmerman, 1987), establishing awareness that gender identities are developed through interactions with others, over time, and not imposed on individuals by biology or external entities, as previously believed. Power relations have been examined as well, to assess status implications between medical professionals and those to whom they are providing service post-interaction (West, 1984).

More recent scholarship utilizing symbolic interactionism as theoretical basis has recognized that individuals being considered often identify in myriad ways and multiple roles lead to necessity of a more multi-layered model, with culture and context as significant factors (Carter & Fuller, 2016). For example, rather than simply researching trans men's experiences of inequality during transition, Schilt (2006) chooses a specific context, the workplace, to tap into concepts of patriarchy, otherness, and access. Attention to multiple identities within specific contexts or relationships is an interactional viewpoint, meaning the researcher is attuned to the participants' potential for movement: within relationships or interactions, amongst her self-recognized identities, or amidst social locations.

Given what has been discussed regarding intersectionality, the significance of identity, and the co-construction of identities through social interaction, resulting in a social location, symbolic interactionism is a useful model to explore the meaning associated with women's relationship with formerly incarcerated male relative (symbol), and how her relationship has shaped her role and identity. While symbolic interactionism as a model is useful to examine familial relationships and more micro interactions, intersectionality can be expanded to investigate macro processes such as power and oppression in relationships.

Integration of Theoretical Influences

Given what has been presented regarding the theoretical underpinnings of this study, it is reasonable to question how they will be informing the proposed research. An Intersectional Feminist framework will be the situation, environment, milieu, or context in which I conducted my research and situated myself. Reflexive work, data collection, data analysis, and writing, were conducted from a woman centered perspective in effort to elicit the essence of her true experience. In addition, the critical concepts of intersectionality—identity, social location, oppression and privilege, power, and the interactions of all these constructions within a sociocultural context, surrounds both the researcher-participant relationship, and the relationship of interest between women and FI male relative. When a feminist lens is diligently applied, and principles of intersectionality considered, experiences of women caregivers in rural South Central and Central Appalachia can be framed by queries of social stigma as it relates to seeking mental health care, associated stigma from supporting a formerly incarcerated male relative, attitudes towards participation in research which draws attention to an emotion and value laden process, and response to direct feminist acknowledgement of her caregiving relationship as significant and important. Culmination of these influences leads to utilization of an intersectional feminist framework to structure this study.

Consideration of the patterns and dynamics, which form women's identities, will be informed by the tenets of symbolic interactionism. The model will be employed to frame our understanding of the meaning women apportion to relationships with formerly incarcerated male relatives, how that relationship has transformed over time, and how her identity and personal agency has been shaped by the relationship.

Chapter Three
Literature Review
Reentry Process for Formerly Incarcerated Men

Existing research has found the formerly incarcerated (FI) frequently return home to family, and rely on family members for a variety of supports: emotional, material (financial, housing), assistance finding employment, and community reintegration (Mowen & Visher, 2016; Naser & La Vigne, 2006).   While the reentry process for formerly incarcerated people has been found to be critical to reducing recidivism, research about the specific family processes and supports that facilitate successful reentry is still emerging. Barriers to obtaining housing, suitable employment, and lack of family support have been identified as factors that perpetuate the cycle of recidivism (Petersilia, 2003), but what are the protective factors, and who provides them?

We know little about the families of the formerly incarcerated and the reentry process during successful reentry. However, the corrosive power of mass incarceration on family structures, relationships, and functioning has been detailed by scholars, who identify female kin as particularly important in terms of supporting currently and formerly incarcerated men, and facilitating social reintegration (Braman, 2004; Travis, 2005). The multiplicity of roles and identities women embody when a male family member is incarcerated are recognized as existing in various social locations, and the application of an intersectional lens when investigating their experiences is crucial to consider both the collateral consequences of being in a relationship with a formerly incarcerated man, and sociocultural factors which impact her experience (Christian & Thomas, 2009). This study aims to add to current scholarship by examining experiences of a unique sector of women whose lives are shaped by mass incarceration.

As clinicians, the successful treatment and desistance after reentry should be of interest professionally, even if we do not treat the FI himself. The prisoner reentry literature provides evidence that family support is critical factor in successful reintegration and desistence from further crime (Berg & Heubner, 2010; Pettus-Davis et al., 2015).

For families of the formerly incarcerated, particularly women, supports may be provided out of a sense of obligation (Dolwick Grieb et al., 2014) and place stress on the individual providing support and family unit as a whole, especially when services to assist families are perceived as non-existent or not helpful. Re-connecting with a formerly incarcerated family member can be challenging due to the reentrant's experiences while living in an institution.

A family member's ability to support a formerly incarcerated family member involves responding to any prisonization that occurred during his confinement. Prisonization comprises an individual's acceptance of a powerless role within the correctional environment, adoption of the structure of the institution, and acquisition of passive stance for personal needs, whereby the institution provides for all basic requirements (Clemmer, 1940).

Inherent to acceptance of and compliance to an institutional structure is the recognition of prison culture as a unique one, bound by unspoken rules, codes of conduct, hierarchy, and behavior controlled by force or fear (Mann, 2012). Prisonization is not experienced only by those incarcerated. Comfort (2003) identified how prisonization can expand to women visiting incarcerated men, and become a secondary consequence to her involvement in his life. Secondary prisonization can be considered an extreme form of courtesy stigma, or being stigmatized simply by being associated with a stigmatized group (Goffman, 2009).

Prisonization decreases interpersonal capacity in the formerly incarcerated, which may have been inadequate before entering prison. If the additional risk factors for FI are considered, namely the treatment while incarcerated and baseline interpersonal deficits he may have, forming or maintaining a relationship with him likely will fall on the other person, here, female family members.

While scholars have not examined the supportive familial female relationships of the formerly incarcerated specifically, the challenges of women caring for a mentally ill family member has been explored widely, most often where the family member has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, and is applicable to the present study. This comparison is apt due to two aspects: schizophrenia as a disease is often characterized by symptomology that makes interpersonal relationships problematic (Pinkham & Penn, 2006), and there is a particular stigma associated with schizophrenia (Schulze & Angermeyer, 2003).

Caregiving for a mentally ill family member has been hypothesized to be an integrative process, influenced by micro and macro factors related to both the person providing care, the person receiving care, their relationship, and contextual elements (Mak, 2005). Investigations of this model revealed that subjective caregiver experience was most influenced by sociocultural factors (gender, age, social location, societal resources), interpersonal factors (relationship to person receiving care, both type and where they are in fall in hierarchy of obligation), and structural factors (what access to mental health care is available, and type).

Stigma has been shown to be a salient trigger for caregiver distress (Muralidharan et al., 2014), and gender and other familial contextual factors have been identified as playing role in the power of stigma (Sanden et al., 2015). Locality has been recognized as meaningful, where Kohn-Wood & Wilson (2005) discuss how in rural areas, family members as caregivers (for the

severely mentally ill) are currently and increasingly becoming integral to recovery outcomes, and, the most influential aspect of caregiver burden was their perception of said burden. Finally, scholars have found the caregiving relationship to be a meaning-making one, as well as a source of loss. Leith and Stein (2012) found caregiving can eliminate roles and routines, relationships, and sense of self, for the caregiver, but also created great meaning in their lives. The study examined perceptions of loss amongst individuals caring for a mentally ill sibling. However, sampling was conducted online and context was not considered.

Women in Appalachia

Appalachia has been studied for centuries as a distinct geographic region, typified by small rural communities that may be distinct in economy (coal mining vs. agriculture), but similar in social values and organization (Hicks, 1976). Despite completing his ethnography forty years ago, researchers continue to validate Hicks' findings that kinship ties are essential to every aspect of life (Farber, et al., 2005; Johnson, 2000), cultural morays influence development and identity formation (Phillips, 2007), and service providers must consider cultural elements when developing programs and interventions (Marek, Brock & Sullivan, 2006). Current researchers warn against assuming Hicks (1976) findings can be extrapolated to a vast term of Appalachian culture which applies to all residents of thirteen states within the four regions, stating that previously identified characteristics of personalism, familism, and fatalism (Weller, 1965) read like a "list of diseases" (Obermiller & Maloney, 2016, p105). The authors caution scholars to understand that while local cultures may exist, generalizing them to entire regions is a misstep resulting in crude simplifications of insider and outsider. It is with this understanding the researcher approached the women interviewed with the perception that their Appalachian identity was true and valid.

Women born and raised in rural Appalachia have been found to be very resilient, and derive their psychological durability from cultural values. Internal and external assets both contribute to women's ability to manage challenges, where internal assets were defined as social competencies, or women's' exhibition of skills which assist her in making positive choices, help her forge relationships, or increase her ability to succeed in life. External assets were delineated into supports, boundaries, and expectations. Paired with the values of close kinship ties and a supportive family system, women identified positive family communication, a caring neighborhood and other supportive relationships within the community, and parameters for discipline as the structures that sustained their resiliency (Helton & Keller, 2010). These same women recognize their resiliency is a process, one that is influenced by stereotypes of rural Appalachian women poverty, patriarchal family systems, a rural location and lack of transportation or easy access to amenities, lack of employment opportunities, and poverty. Of the four counties within South Central and Central regions of Appalachia where data was collected for this study, three are designated transitional, and one is designated distressed (ARC, 2019). High chronic poverty, low-skilled jobs, unemployment, as well as lower educational attainment have contributed to high psychological and physiological stressors (Bornstein, Putnick, & Suwalsky, 2012). Substance abuse has increasingly become an issue in Virginia with approximately 2.5% of individuals ages 12 and older being dependent upon or abusing illegal drugs as reported between 2009 and 2013 (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2015). Southwest Virginia where this study was conducted has been particularly impacted by substance use. In these four counties, 85% of all drug cases involved prescription drugs (U.S. Attorney's Office, 2016). Substance use has myriad consequences for

individuals and their families and ties in to the process of incarceration and reentry closely, as will be further explored in the findings and discussion.

Women ensconced in a multi-stratum of hardship are said to be in a context of cumulative disadvantage. Cumulative disadvantage is a conceptual framework that has gained increased recognition amongst family scholars as a valuable perspective through which to view our subjects of inquiry, as it illuminates trajectories of change in behaviors such as parenting (Arditti, Burton, & Neeves-Botelho, 2010), life course events (Nurius, Prince & Rocha, 2015), and overall disparities in social stratification (Seabrook and Avison, 2012; Schafer et al. 2011). Essential to the framework is the concept of stigma, an externally assigned label or labels that adds another layer to the individuals' experience (Arditti, Burton, Neeves-Botelho, 2010; Foster & Hagan, 2007). As the research about effects of cumulative disadvantage accumulate, ancillary factors that may magnify or exacerbate stigma should be considered. Pilloried populations (LGBTQ individuals, or people with disabilities), those branded socially as 'other' (non-native language speakers, or individuals without homes), and those impacted by stigma-by-association (family of the formerly incarcerated, observant Muslims assumed to be violent/terrorists) must be on the forefront of the next wave of scholarly inquiry.

Individuals returning home from prison may be burdened with the label of 'felon', in addition to a variety of other informal monikers (drug addict, ex-con). This can impact the supportive female relative significantly through the process of stigma by association, a concept that has been shown to influence how others perceive and behave towards her (Pryor, Reeder, & Monroe, 2012). Others may be her personal supports, or even other family members, who judge or alter their interactions with her based on her care of her formerly incarcerated relative. Based on observations gathered during prolonged engagement in the field and clinical work, the small

communities of rural South Central and Central Appalachia provide for an environment where

information travels quickly. Many homes have police scanners and know when individuals are

arrested for crimes. While a woman caring for her formerly incarcerated relative may be

positively judged for the behavior of caregiving, simply being the focus of discussion due to

relative's crime may be uncomfortable.

Contributions of This Study

Female family members who provide integral care to a convicted male relative have

been investigated by Comartin, Kernsmith & Miles (2010); however, their design was a focus

group of mothers of juvenile offenders who were enrolled in a support group for families of

convicted sex offenders. Focus groups can be a beneficial methodological design to facilitate

open discussion about a given topic, when participants have something in common, increased

feelings of comfort lead to feeling respected and freer to share opinions without being judged

(Krueger & Casey, 2014). More concerning, however, are the potential complications of

intellectualizing or adjusting answers in response to social desirability, particularly when

considered in the context of rural South Central and Central Appalachia, where it is not

uncommon for families to be extended and communities insular. Consistent with a

phenomenological approach, this research utilized in depth individual interviews for data

collection. Interviews were used as it allowed for greater customization of interaction between

researcher and participant. Comartin, Kernsmith, and Miles (2010) investigated the unique

relationship between a mother and juvenile son to whom she provided support, in the context of

participating in a support group for families. This study provided a broader perspective in that

all female relationships, rather than solely maternal relationships, were considered. The

purpose of expansion in scope was due to recognizing that an adult male attempting to

reintegrate into his family and community may connect to relationships as he finds them. This

study also did not seek to explore only the experiences of women receiving external supports, as in the Comartin, Kernsmith & Miles (2010) study, whose study design centered on a support group. Women in this study were not excluded from participation if they received external supports. An intention of this study was to examine women's lives in context, and identify needs and wants of women who provide this type of familial support in an effort to pinpoint the logical next steps in research, community development, and clinical practice.

Women who provide support to formerly incarcerated men deserve a distinctive methodological approach based on theory that is adapted to her experience and recognizes the inherent power structures in the research process. This section outlined a deliberate application of theories and conceptual models that worked towards distilling the distinctive experiences of her familial relationship. By acknowledging the challenges that may be inherent in forming and maintaining relationships with her relative, specifically his interpersonal deficits, social or personal stigma, or other instrumental factors, this study initiated a conversation about resiliency. Utilization of an intersectional feminist framework allowed conversations to be about the creative ways women resist oppression, domination, and violence; examined beliefs about oppression and power within the researcher/participant relationship, and how that may be altered by the research process.

Chapter Four
Methods

This study utilized a qualitative approach employing a feminist phenomenological method to extract rich, full, dense descriptions of women's experiences that related to familial relationships and social stigma in the context of South Central and Central Appalachian culture. The design of this study was based on the suppositions of Husserl (1970), and structured by Van Manen's (2014) four steps of phenomenological writing. Husserlian philosophy asserts that the only way to obtain knowledge is through experience, and Van Manen's process emphasizes the bringing of reflective awareness to research, so the interactive involvement of endeavoring to uncover the true essence of lived experience can result in a transformation of self in true obtainment of knowledge.

Family scholars have identified vulnerable populations as demanding particular research methodologies (Easterling & Johnson, 2015; Arditti, 2015), particularly when more traditional techniques lead to perpetuation of invisibility and silence. These two studies conclude that vulnerability is often a consequence of social inequality, and hence vulnerable populations are frequently marginalized. The authors cite Young (1990, p.53) and Arnold (1995) who call marginalization "the most dangerous form of oppression" as it is how social inequality is built and disseminated. Hence, a particular approach, developing a "qualitative consciousness" (Arditti, 2015, p.1570) is needed. Adopting a qualitative consciousness may include increased focus on researcher reflexivity, use of adaptable and thoughtful interview practices, and ultimately allows researchers to reflect and possibly view their own lives differently as a result of the research process.

Congruent with our intersectional feminist research approach, this study acknowledged social inequalities experienced by women, in South Central and Central Appalachia, who

maintain familial contact with a stigmatized male member, and sought to understand her experience by eliciting an autobiographical narrative through semi-structured in depth, face to face interviews. An essential component, indeed the first step in feminist phenomenological research, is epoché or bracketing. Bracketing attempts to set aside the researcher of assumed power of knowledge, of position, and honors the pure narrative of women's experience as true. The Greek meaning of the word is to abstain or stay away from, and this initial stage is where the researcher becomes transparent to herself, sets aside any previous ideas, assumptions, and disconnects herself from previous judgment about the object so the focal point of study can be the core of the object and its essence (Husserl, 1970). As articulated in Arditti's (2015) previously cited paper on vulnerable populations, participants' experience with social inequality will prompt inquiries concerning how intersectionality of identities, invisible or otherwise, contribute to resilience in women's daily lived experience. The emotive aspect of research with at risk populations is also acknowledged, where the author articulates, though not directly, a modification of research process and method, adapted to honor the distinctive experiences of women. Again, arguably, this typifies a feminist research attitude.

Phenomenology is the investigation of the meaning a person assigns to a particular phenomenon as it is experienced (Munhall, 2007). Meaning is significant and essential to understand because it influences and forms the ways in which individuals comprehend their experience. There is a need to better understand how women in South Central and Central Appalachia experience the reentry process for male relatives they provide support to in an effort to better understand the role of Appalachian women in family processes in general and specifically reentry, design programs to assist these women, begin rethinking how reentry is planned for formerly incarcerated people, and, ultimately, review our judicial and penal systems

as a whole to unpack why we are incarcerating our citizens in record numbers. A better understanding of these women's experiences would impact how we understand the family process of reentry, as we know women do the majority of emotional and instrumental family work in South Central and Central Appalachian families, and that family support is essential to successful reentry. Hence, phenomenology as both a belief system and method steered this research study.

Analysis of the research process began by bracketing of researcher biases and preconceptions. The layers, or multiple selves whom I attended to in my epoché, included student researcher, therapist, outsider/Northerner, and feminist. Documentation of such occurred in my reflexivity journal, which was also utilized throughout data collection for field notes. My preconceptions about the women I was attempting to reach presented a significant stumbling block in gathering a sample and data collection. I posted flyers in many locations where I believed these women would spend time, but I did not consider the time commitment of two hours and the little compensation originally offered of a twenty dollar gift card. Given the large workload many of these women face daily, I wondered if twenty dollars was worth their valuable time, particularly to speak to a stranger about something very personal. I also believed a greater sum would enhance recruitment. I hence changed the compensation to a seventy five dollar gift card.

After careful deliberation about what phenomenology *is,* Van Manen (2014) distilled the methodology to what he describes as four 'procedural activities' (p. 2). Specifically, identifying a phenomenon which interests us and compels our research; commitment to inquiry of experience as lived rather than as conceptualized; deliberation on essential themes which typify the phenomenon; and description of the phenomenon through the act of writing. Fundamental to

Van Manen's method is the supposition that language is the core of meaning making, and ultimately knowledge attainment. Here, language, and more specifically conversation, was capitalized as the tool to exemplify feminist research stance, maintain reflexivity, explore intersectionality, and perhaps most prominently, employ symbolic interactionism as a conceptual model.

Van Manen's four activities were mapped onto four steps, two of which can be considered to be 'analysis', defined as evaluation of accumulated data. The first and last steps included the work of orienting self to the phenomenon of interest in effort to develop research questions, and iterative writing process where the most exemplary illustrations of the phenomenon were examined. Existential investigation, or dedication to investigation of experience as it is lived, begins with generating data, here, conducting interviews and transcribing them. Investigations of this kind must have personal experience as beginning point, and work towards experiential descriptions of lived experience, which has been specified via this research's guiding theoretical influences and intersectional feminist approach. Due to the personal nature of the data, Van Manen (2014) provides two techniques for initial understanding. First is tracing of etymological sources, or the historical meaning of specific words or terms that may be unknown to researcher, and second, is searching for idiomatic phrases, or colloquialisms that are culturally specific, or otherwise related to the phenomenon of interest. The purpose of these two steps is to fully understand the narratives, as presented by women, rather than allowing any assumptions regarding language be integrated into the data. For example, when individuals described behaviors and symptoms of anxiety, that condition is 'having nerves'. If a person is hospitalized for psychiatric reasons, regardless if substances are involved or not, they go to 'rehab'. These examples are presented as anecdotal instances

documented during clinical work in this area. In data collected for the present study,

participants used terms such as "Johnny and June" to describe an ideal relationship, and

multiple participants referred to the "hillbilly highway" regarding why Appalachian people are

drawn back home.

These deconstructions of language were part of the Interpretive Phenomenological

Analysis (IPA) process used to analyze the data, resulting in a more in depth examination than

van Manen's method, using a continual process of text review, researcher reflection, return to

identified themes, and reiteration of the process until identification of core themes and, finally,

integration amongst the narratives could occur. When this particular method is employed, it

allows for prioritizing depth over breadth regarding complex subjects and research topics

(Smith & Osborn, 2003, 2008). With its theoretical roots in phenomenology (lived experience),

hermeneutics (interpretation), and ideography (the particular) (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012), the

primary aim of IPA is to clarify the meaning individuals' make of their subjective experience,

which the researcher then tries to make sense of. This process is known as the 'double

hermeneutic' (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 53), whereby a meaningful narrative is co-constructed

between the participant's phenomenological account and the researcher's interpretations of that

account. In IPA, the central purpose of the analysis is to discern meaning through a close and

interpretative relationship with the data. Six stages of analysis were used, including initial

reading of the text, identification of emergent themes, clustering of themes, production of a

summary table, continuing analysis with other cases, and integration (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Thus, in IPA each transcript is analyzed separately before completing analysis across data sets

(Smith & Osborn, 2003). The application of each of these stages is described in the Data

Analysis section. Given the small sample sizes in IPA studies, their contextual nature, and the

philosophical assumptions underlying IPA, no attempt is made to generalize the findings to wider populations. However, some theoretical generalizations can be made. Interpretive phenomenological analysis was chosen given its congruency with the exploratory aims of this study, and an approach which allows for study of complex topics. All study procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board for research involving human subjects at Virginia Tech.

Participants

This study utilized purposeful sampling and intensity sampling in a multiple case study design. Patton (1990) described intensity sampling as accessing information- rich cases, which exemplify the phenomenon of interest, but not in an extreme manner, and purposive sampling as choosing participants for certain characteristics. Specifically I sought study participants who were female family members of formerly incarcerated male relative. This choice was based on research conducted in southern West Virginia, counties that are proximal to the areas used to collect data for this research, which found that stigma is a factor in women's help seeking behaviors (Hill, et al., 2015) and kinship/family relationships are essential (Coyne et al., 2006). Intensity sampling did not focus on extreme examples of any particular phenomenon; hence did not exclude (or include) participants based on intimacy of relationship, which provided equal opportunity for inclusion of a breadth of rich description of the experience. Intimacy in this context was broadly defined as familial closeness or, the nature of current relationship. As affiliated kin often defined families in Appalachia loosely, blood relation, frequency or duration of contact with male relative, or physical proximity did not measure intimacy level. Family as defined by participants was key, hence if a participant defined the man to whom she provided caregiving as a 'family member'; he was family for the purposes of the proposed research. The definition of family as defined by the participant was important due to the nature of kin or

fictive kin relationships that are prevalent in Appalachia (Farber et. al, 2005), meaning a participant may identify a person she cares for as "family" without having any blood relation to them. Honoring these relationships, as defined by the participants was congruent with my intersectional feminist methodology.

A sample size of ten women was data corpus sufficient to extract concentrated and meaningful narratives, focus on depth rather than breadth of data, and achieving saturation (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Eligibility criteria for participation was self-identification as female, acknowledgement that she provided one or more of three identified critical resources to her family member, and did not meet criteria for a severe mental illness. Severe mental illness (SMI) was defined by the National Institute of Mental Health as a condition afflicting those who meet three criteria: a diagnosis of non-organic psychosis or personality disorder; duration characterized as involving "prolonged illness and long-term treatment" and operationalized as a two-year or longer history of mental illness or treatment; and disability, which was described as including at least three of the eight specified criteria (NIMH, 1987) and was screened for using the K6 (Kessler et. al., 2003), an empirically validated tool shown to be effective across a broad spectrum of populations and social locations (Wittchen, 2010).

Formerly incarcerated individuals are responsible for essentially six primary tasks during the reentry process: transition to increased autonomy in daily lives; housing challenges; employment barriers; mental health; social stigma; and possible lack of support from family (Martinez, 2006). While substance use issues are sometimes subsumed under the umbrella of mental health, for this region of Appalachia the problem and concern for FI should be considered a challenge in its own right. Moody, Satterwhite, and Bickel (2017) discuss ways in which rural life, poverty, identity, and values of rural Central Appalachia have influenced

substance use and treatment. The researchers identify barriers to treatment including lack of access to health care and a dearth of health care providers with expertise in addiction and substance use to care for the immense need. Subsequently, the care for FI struggling with substance use and abuse may fall more on family members. For the purpose of this study, these six tasks were grouped into three conceptual critical resources that family members may have provided a reentering relative. Criteria for participation was that one of the three were provided directly by our participant to her relative. First was providing one of two fundamental necessities, housing or employment. Participants who directly provided housing, or provided or secured employment for their male relative, were eligible. The second critical resource was tangible support related to achieving autonomy, housing, employment, or overcoming mental health concerns or social stigma. This may take the form of financial support, meals, transportation, phones, clothing, childcare, presence at appointments, or assistance with reading legal materials or researching information. The last critical resource was defined simply as emotional support, however it must pertain to the functions of accomplishing the aforementioned tasks. Women who provided one or more of the three critical resources were eligible to participate. If they provided either tangible supports, or emotional supports, they must have agreed that rate at which they provided the support was 'frequently' as defined by participants themselves.

Recruitment occurred at a Community Services Board, which provides a broad array of mental health services and programs within Southwest Virginia. The CSB has four locations (Blacksburg, Pearisburg, Pulaski, Floyd) where flyers were posted requesting interested applicants contact this researcher. Additional locations identified where potential participants may be found included laundromats, local Department of Social Services and Department of

Health. Challenges to recruitment led this researcher to engage community partners, specifically New River Community Action, who provides support and resources to local individuals who are currently in the reentry process, for assistance in distributing flyers to their clients. Please refer to Appendix C for an example of flyer used for recruitment. A seventy five dollar gift card was provided to participants for willingness to engage in research.

Participant Demographics. Eight women from Southwestern Virginia and West Virginia volunteered to participate in the conducted research. They ranged in age from 24 to 73, with a mean age of 46.2 years. Six of the participants identified as white, or Caucasian, one participant identified as black, or African American, and one participant identified as mixed race, white/Caucasian and black/African American. Three participants reported being currently married, three participants reported cohabitating with her partner, one participant reported being divorced, and one participant identified as a widow. Two participants reported having two children, and one participant reported having two children with one of them deceased. One participant reported having no children, one participant reported having one child. One participant reported having four children, and one reported having six children, three biological and three foster. Four participants reported having some college education, two reported having an Associate's degree, one reported having a Bachelor's degree, and one participant had a high school diploma. One participant indicated earning income within each of the following income ranges: $30-$35,000; $50,000+. One participant declined to report income. Three participants reported being unemployed, and two participants reported they were retired. See Appendix D for details on all participants.

Formerly Incarcerated Male Relative. The women I interviewed maintained a relationship with a male family member, and their relationships were varied. Three women

reported the male relative was their son. Three women reported the relative was related, but they weren't sure distinctly how, perhaps a cousin or half-brother, or simply identified the man and the relationship as a sibling association due to growing up with the individual. One woman reported the relative was her husband, and one woman reported the relative was her grandson. Of the eight male relatives discussed, four were incarcerated for possession or distribution of drugs, two were incarcerated due to committing sexual offenses, and two for breaking and entering. Of the eight male relatives, seven were living in the community, either independently or with the participant, and one had been re-incarcerated.

The Interview

Interview questions were designed keeping at the forefront the ethical obligation of the researcher to not allow our "methods to dictate our image of human beings" (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 373). This statement by Fontana and Frey suggests we must balance delicately our need as researchers to pose interview questions, which delve deep into the participants' experience with the ethical priority of protecting participants from harm. In this study, protecting participants took the form of informed consent, which clearly delineated instances where confidentiality had to be broken, assurance of anonymity of data, and researcher sensitivity to participants' difficulty or discomfort during the interview. Transcriptions of interviews were de-identified of names and distinguishing information. Interview questions and probes were deliberate to focus on experiences and perceptions or beliefs, rather than specific events. It should be noted that no participants disclosed information that required reporting.

Consistent with intersectional methodology, interview questions were designed to elicit contextual information about women's lives including demographic information and social location (e.g. race, SES, education, women's age, membership in community or religious organizations, where she lived and distance from a town center), family of origin structure and

current family constellation (i.e. who lived with her and their ages and gender), where the formerly incarcerated relative lived and with whom), frequency of contact with male relative during his confinement and after reentry), and nature of contact with family member. These topics were presented purposefully, in the order they were discussed with participants. The order of interview questions was designed with the intent of developing trust by discussing information that is more general before attempting to gather sensitive information about feelings and emotions related to the experience. Questions aimed at eliciting descriptions of everyday life have been called 'grand tour' questions by some researchers, as they are aimed at information about the participants' daily routines and experiences (Spradley, 1979). A typical question could be "Tell me about your normal day." Questions like this allowed the participant to determine which aspects of daily life to discuss, and provide opportunities for the researcher and participant to further establish trust. Additionally, the participant's responses supplied valuable data for the researcher to probe into how those daily experiences relate to feedback loops and the symbolic interactions that form the meaning of her relationship.   This portion of the interview focused on the ontology of her familial relationship, or, what that relationship *is*. A copy of the interview questions may be found in Appendix A.

Presley (2013) stressed the importance of establishing trust and personal connection with individuals being served and engaged with in rural Appalachia, prior to discussion of family or private matters. Hence, this researcher was prepared to discuss her intention with this research and purpose of study, and possibly specific relevant personal history, with intent of gaining trust of participants. Further, based on this researcher's clinical experience it is considered rude to simply launch into 'business' without proper acknowledgement of cultural process. This took the form of asking about persons travel, chatting about the weather, or

offering a beverage or snack. These interactions were free form, individual to each participant, and occurred prior to semi-structured interview questions, and stem from researcher's skill to join with individuals in a therapeutic manner using best judgment and practice.

Subsequent questions discussed experiences associated with being a family member of a formerly incarcerated person, in effort to elicit if the participant felt stigma, and if so, *how* she knew she experienced stigma. Some sample questions included:

- Tell me about your relationship with your brother/father/uncle/son/cousin.

- How has your relationship changed now that he has been released?

- In what ways does your relationship with him affect *your* life?

Please see Appendix A for detailed interview questions.

TABLE 1 illustrates the proposed study integrative theoretical framework, how these theoretical influences inform the central research questions in the study, and ultimately guides the articulation of interview questions.

Theoretical Influence	Constructs/Concepts of Interest	Research Questions	Interview Questions/*Methodology*
Intersectional Feminist Framework • Intersectionality • Feminist Research Stance	• Identity, Power, Oppression, Social Location • Women Centered method, Cognizance of Researcher self, Power interactions in research process	In what ways did women's socially constructed identities shape how they experienced privilege and oppression as it pertained to their relationship with their family member? a. Did women in the study experience stigma/shame/dishonor/disgrace in their daily lives, and if so, in what ways? b. How did women manifest resilience in their lives as it pertained to their experiences with their male relative?	What would you say are the day-to-day challenges associated with supporting your male relative? Positives? If you needed help with your relationship, whom would you talk to? What influences your seeking help? *Bracketing* Tell me a bit about yourself please. Are you married? Do you have children? Follow up (for demographics and rapport: age, marital status, number of children and ages). Tell me about your typical day. *Detailed Reflexivity Journal, Bracketing*

		What was the daily life/lived experienced of women who maintained a relationship with a formerly incarcerated male family member in Appalachia? How did women manifest resilience in their lives as it pertains to their experiences with their male relative? In what ways did they provide care or support to their family member? What challenges did women in families with a formerly incarcerated male relative face?	Tell me about your family. Who do you currently live with? How would you describe your relationship(s)?
Symbolic Interactionism	Symbols/Meaning, Relationships, Co-Creation of both as iterative process	What contributed to resiliency and identity in the context of relationships with a reintegrating FI family member?	Did you take care of your family financially? If so, how? Tell me about your relationship with (male relative). Who supports you?

Data collection

Approximately 25 women contacted the researcher over the course of more than 2.5 years, resulting in eight full length interviews. The majority of women who made initial contact but were not interviewed was due to lack of response after first or second contact. Data collection occurred through semi-structured one-to-one interviews, allowing for in-depth personal accounts to be generated (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Interviews lasted 77–167 min and were conducted by the primary researcher. An interview script was followed, which gave sufficient flexibility to allow participants to share their experiences in their own way while ensuring that a basic line of inquiry consistent with the study aims was followed.

The interviews began with open exploratory questions, such as, formal semi-structured field interviews. Participants were presented with informed consent with an offer from this researcher to read and review the document verbally. Please see Appendix A for the informed

consent document used. A rolling consent procedure was utilized, whereby researcher paused during potentially difficult portions of data collection and confirm participants' willingness to continue. Participants were asked to identify a pseudonym for themselves and their formerly incarcerated male relative for use throughout the interview. Interviews were audio recorded for transcription, and lasted approximately 1.5-3 hours. An interview was considered complete when rich, descriptive detail has been obtained within her narrative, and her story/experience has been fully voiced not in the abstract, but in the particular. All participants completed the full interview, answering all questions.

Data Analysis

Once the data was collected, the process of phenomenological reflection began. Isolating thematic statements included a review of data from two different perspectives—first was a full reading of the text with intention of identifying a few meaningful statements or phrases that exemplified the phenomenon, and second was a sentence-by-sentence reading with the intention of extracting the essence of each statement.

This process was essentially Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2003), where a method is used of the researcher immersing themselves in the data, returning to the text, and then continuing to chew through the narratives, first individually, then across the greater scope of participants. This method explicated six steps: reading the text, identifying emergent themes, producing a summary table, analyzing other cases, and integration. This researcher used this model, with minor modifications, for analysis of data.

Reading the Text. This process included audio recording and transcribing each interview, and subsequently reading each transcription multiple times. The first reading was to familiarize the researcher with the data and identify linguistic identifiers that may be unique to

participants, or give special meaning to the experience of the women interviewed. Each

subsequent reading was to further immerse the researcher in the data, and identified meaning

units within each narrative.

Identifying Emergent Themes. This task involved reviewing each transcript

individually, with the purpose of noting specific quotes or 'meaning units' that exemplified

what the participant was trying to express about her experience. This researcher reflected on the

experience of interviewing, and attempted to identify when the participant was most animated

and engaged in the topic, in effort to extract from the transcript the most substantive and

meaningful narratives.

Summary Table. A table was formed to assist in the distillation of data from meaning

units (i.e. chunks of narrative text), emergent themes, to sub-themes, to the essence of the

meaning of the experience of assisting a male relative in the process of reentry in Appalachia.

Meaning units were entered separately for each participant and reviewed independently to gain a

deeper sense of the significance of the text. The individual interviews were separated to review

within the table, emergent themes were identified for each interview, and sub-themes were

gleaned.   A sample of the original coding grid, with data, can be found in Appendix E.

Analysis of Cases. Each transcript elicited one to two essential themes. The

identification of themes was achieved by pinpointing what the researcher believed to be the

genuine communicative objective in the statement made, or, what the interviewee's meaning

behind the meaning unit was. As the researcher is the primary instrument of qualitative inquiry,

the purpose is not to put forth an objective truth, but rather obtain trustworthiness, where the

results can be considered credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Morse, et al.,

2002). The researcher's process included reading and re-reading the statement, returning to the

full text to re-read passages for the context of the statement, reflecting on the overall feeling and tone of the interview and what the interviewee was expressing, and continuing this cyclical process until the researcher felt she had distilled the meaning from the text.

Integration. The themes across all eight women were assessed and the meaning and essence was extracted by re-reading statements, researcher reflection on the interview process and engagement with participant, and use of researcher's clinical skills to determine what the participant was attempting to communicate about her experience, verbally or non-verbally. The concepts of content and process were used to tease apart patterns across participants' experiences. Content refers to what the women were describing in their lives, whereas process describes what they were doing, including interactions with family members, community members, and other supports. Common patterns across participants emerged during the course of integration.

Rigor

Although standards for rigorous qualitative research have been debated (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002), general criteria have been established to guide a scholar through constructing validity into her inquiry. Creswell and Miller (2000) isolated eight practices, which contribute to a methodologically sound qualitative study, ultimately establishing credibility, transferability, and dependability. They include: prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation, peer review/debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checks, thick description, and external audits (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p 126-126, as cited in Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002). Creswell (1998) suggests use of at least two of these methods in any single qualitative study. I have chosen to use clarification of researcher bias, and prolonged engagement in the field to enhance credibility, thick description and purposeful sampling to increase transferability, and will establish an audit trail to maximize dependability. I also

conducted regular external audits in the form of scheduled meetings where data analysis, coding and interpretations, were reviewed.

Credibility is the idea that data and findings are 'true' representations of the phenomenon, in that they accurately reflect the lived experiences of the participants interviewed. Clarification of researcher bias was accomplished here through the process of epoché, or bracketing, which took place throughout the research process. Additionally, prolonged engagement in the field resulted in increased credibility. This researcher spent nearly three years collecting data across two states in South Central and Central Appalachia, allowing for complete submersion in the lives and experiences of the women researched, the barriers to participation, and the communities where they lived. Further, this researcher was employed as an in-home therapist for the two years prior to and for the duration of data collection, a positon which entailed meeting with children and families in their homes in South Central Virginia. This type of work increased researchers understanding and awareness of familial processes and South Central Virginia morays and traditions, which aided in data analysis.

Dependability of qualitative research may be attained through creation of an audit trail that details methodological decisions, changes to protocols or questions, and researcher reflections on both process and data. The purpose of a detailed account was to record researcher process as the primary instrument of the study. My field journal served as the audit trail for this study. The journal recorded my methodological decisions and thought processes, stumbling blocks, reactions to participants, thoughts and feelings about the research, changes to interview questions and why, emergent ideas, and ethical concerns. An audit journal provided not only a record of the choices made regarding methodology, but allowed the researcher to see her state of mind on a particular day of data collection. For this study, this was particularly relevant, as

participant/researcher intersubjectivity evolved over the course of the study. An audit journal is a piece of a large whole, and allowed the researcher to see more depth. As the tool of data collection, I was bound to identify assumptions, bias, and power as it related to the participant in effort to apply an intersectional feminist framework to the relationship between the research participant and myself. I self-identified as a white heterosexual female, who was employed full time as a Marriage and Family Therapist at a Community Services Board in the New River Valley of Southwest Virginia and completing her doctoral studies at local university. For the purposes of this study, I identified three identities of relevance I reflected upon during my process of bracketing: student researcher, therapist, and 'other' as it specifically related to not being born and raised in rural Appalachia, nor having the experience of having a family member incarcerated. To conduct feminist research, a scholar cannot remove herself from the process, but rather must recognize where power lays, how it may change over time, what influences it, and how it impacts data collection and methodology. This researcher accomplished this task through maintenance of a highly detailed reflexivity journal, specifying where I was socially located at the beginning of research, who provided me support during my research and in what ways, what external supports I sought out (media, behaviors) and how they connect to my research, if at all, and, how my identity changed by research process, if applicable. The purpose of the journal was to document self-reflections related to previously held assumptions that may be challenged, resistance from participants, or clinical concerns unrelated to research. It also served as record for identification of previously unknown sources of researcher privilege or power. For example, through anecdotal experience and clinical work, the professional gender presentation of this researcher produced varied responses, ranging from immediate identification as 'other', to overt comments about age, or hair color. A deferential stance with clients and willingness to engage in

discussions about these features with clients taught this researcher it built trust and deconstructed power in clinical settings, hence an intention of the journal was to scrutinize heretofore unacknowledged assumptions or social interactions with participants that influence research process in both micro and macro ways. Examples of this would be alteration of interview protocol or questions, or interview location. Ultimately, the purpose of reflexivity journal was to explore intersectionality as it relates to researcher/participant relationship and respective social locations, and the phenomenological experience of research and impact on social location and identity.

Transferability in qualitative research refers to the ability to apply findings to the population at large, which was studied. Although typically not a goal of qualitative research, here the concept was considered in the context of a specific methodological approach that allows for in depth investigation of multiply marginalized peoples and the transferability of theoretical development as it pertained to the study findings (Morris & Bunjun, 2007).

<center>**Chapter Five**</center>
<center>**Findings**</center>

Data analysis resulted in two overall themes, each with three subthemes, and one statement that captured the essence of what the experience of supporting a male relative during the process of reentry truly meant for these women. The themes which emerged focused on the family traditions in the context of Appalachia, and the meaning of incarceration to the women interviewed. The essence of these women's experience was that family is everything, and that while they do not like or condone the behavior of their relative, they still love them deeply.

Family Traditions: This is how we do it here

Rebel Culture and the Hillbilly Highway. The Appalachian Region is comprised of the entirety of West Virginia and parts of twelve other states running along the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from New York to northern Mississippi (ARC, 2019). Forty-two percent of the region is rural. The economy of the Appalachian Region once relied on heavy industries such as mining, forestry, and agriculture; however it has transformed in recent decades and now is comprised of regions of contrast (ARC, 2019). As an outsider, this researcher was acutely aware of the perpetuated stereotypes of rural Appalachian people, and wanted to understand how the women experienced their culture. The women who were interviewed were specifically asked what the term Appalachia meant to them. Some women spoke of the physical context of the mountains, and the woods. Some women referred to negative stereotypes of 'hillbilly' or 'redneck' and their perceptions of those labels, and some women reflected on the negative aspects of their experiences of Appalachian culture and communities. This woman, Alissa, a 51-year-old white woman, had previously in her interview referred to herself as a 'hillbilly'.

Just a down home country girl (chuckles). That has a really thick accent. [would you get upset if someone else referred to you as a hillbilly?] No, I would just be proud of it, because I am. (a hillbilly town is) just old fashioned values and people not likin' the big change of a.. like a city would be. We like the things the way they are… where we don't have access to things that a lot of other one's out there would (chuckles)… like big shoppin' malls and newer fashions and stuff like that. We just, like what we get.

Alisa continues, saying that although she believes small town life is what she prefers, she really doesn't see her community as any different than any other community, identifying another common value expressed amongst the women interviewed, that 'people are people'.

It could be that I'm from here and I live it everyday. (chuckle)… we're not a big city, kinda livin', small town 'ya hear more. More people know 'ya and stuff like that, but I don't view us as any different really…. I know we don't have a lot of advantages that a bigger place would have.

Some women expressed that Appalachia meant a different, more traditional set of values, where, as previously mentioned, family comes first. "Virginia has always been my home…when I think of Appalachian families I think of, uh, close knit families." Lynn, a 39-year-old white woman, lived in a town in West Virginia with a significant opioid addiction problem and struggled with her 22-year-old son and his addiction to heroin, which had him in and out of jails and prisons for the last several years. She has two other biological children, and had taken in three foster children, friends of her youngest daughter whose parents were drug addicted and not capable of parenting three adolescent girls. She believed "[Appalachia] is more family oriented…they work together… your children have to know that you care and you're goin' to be supportive. I think a lot of times family thinks money can solve everything

and it doesn't." Another woman states it this way: "the people here, like, even with nothing they're still happy." Alissa, when asked what she liked about her community of Giles County, Virginia, stated she perceived living in the South Central region of Appalachia provided benefits over living in other parts of our country:

> I think if the world ended we would probably know how to feed us more…. Because we're not afraid to get out there and do a garden or go fishin' or huntin' (chuckles). I raised my son to the same way, too. I mean, we was growing up after the pigs got slaughtered we turned the pig pen into a playhouse. (laughs)

Not all of the reflections about rural Appalachian culture were positive. Women shared individual experiences of racism, stereotyping, feelings of hopelessness, and chronic and widespread drug addiction.

> Nah, the word redneck doesn't offend me. A lot of 'em [other community members] would not… because…well why, it's true, I mean, around here a lot of people are happy to be a rebel [when you say "rebel" you mean living off the grid?] Oh, yeah. Oh, you mean the black and white terms? A lot of 'em still do that too. My adopted brother is black and I love him very much, we are very close, but…my brother, bless his heart, he cried one day he was called the N-word. He cried and he didn't know what it meant. And I told him, I said, it just means a low-down, trashy person. He said, well Alissa, you're a nigger then. I started laughing at him. … they don't realize how bad they hurt other people's feelin's bein' like that. I don't believe in judgin'… I don't.

Tam, a 39 year old mixed African American and white woman whose husband, Joe, was incarcerated after a woman verbally reported he was selling marijuana to law enforcement, had this comment: "…most people are pleasant and nice, mmm… That's kinda of what I think of. If

you go a little deeper, unfair. It can be unfair." Negative stereotypes about Appalachia persist, and can have significant effects on individuals and communities. Lynn reflects on interactions with people outside Appalachia:

> I worked in customer service and I can't tell you how many people would call and ask if we wear shoes…. They think we're hillbillies, still. Uneducated, can't read. And yeah, we do have that but so does every other state.

Annie, 64, who identified as African American, expressed that due to "living in the valley" she did not consider herself Appalachian. Annie resided in a metropolitan area within the Central region of Appalachia. When asked what the word Appalachia meant to her, she responded when "people who live in the mountains". Annie's tone and non-verbal communication conveyed she did not self-identify as Appalachian. This was her perception of Appalachian people:

> They don't believe in the stuff that we do, they don't come and do the stuff that we do. In Appalachia and some of the mountains, they believe in snake worship. I ain't worshipping nobody's snake. It's just like a culture to me I think.

Annie's characterization of rural Appalachian people was that due to her living in a more urban area, namely the city of Huntington, West Virginia, she did not categorize herself as Appalachian. This researcher found it to be an interesting distinction of a culture within a culture, as specifically articulated by Annie. Many women reported feelings of hopelessness, or challenges that come with adhering to Appalachian cultural morays: "the more rural the area, the less hope there is. People feel more hopeless." Esther, 73, a white grandmother is raising her grandson after her alcoholic son passed away. Her grandson is addicted to opiates and has been released from prison to her care. In her 50 years of working in healthcare as a RN in West Virginia, made this observation: "the more poor West Virginia, the less the men will help. I think

they just feel inadequate." Esther continued to state she felt when unemployment rates were high, as they are in West Virginia, she believed families that subscribed to more traditional forms of structure and roles, (i.e. where the woman is the homemaker and man is the breadwinner) were vulnerable to domestic abuse. If the man of the family could not fulfill his breadwinner role, Esther believed he re-asserted control by not contributing at all to the workload of the family and home, and took his frustrations out on his family. Her reflections were grounded in a history where she was taught by her mother, as her mother had before her, to be a caretaker, or at least be of service to others. She continued to share about how her mother influenced her life, and her relationship to Appalachian culture:

> [my mother] was raised in a culture of shame. She was raised by a grandmother and grandfather who were born the same year the Civil War ended. And you know, everything was about, everything you would enjoy, it was time in the church when it was a sin to want to be pretty and dress nice. The bible was taken literally.

Of the eight women interviewed, five of them reported their male relative had been incarcerated due to involvement with drugs, or was currently addicted to substances. Four of these five women specifically identified their male relative as being addicted to opiates. All four women reflected on the pervasive drug problem, specifically opioid addiction, which has been impacting the communities of South Central and Central regions of Appalachian, particularly in Huntington, West Virginia, for the last five to ten years. Lynn has been so moved and motivated by what she has seen and experienced with her son that she has initiated community based action programs: "My son has probably lost at least 30 people [to overdose] and he's 22 years old…I just got tired of seeing people dyin'. Seein' people dying and seeing this whole generation bein' completely wiped out…"

Lynn connects with parents, primarily mothers, all over West Virginia, to discuss and problem solve opioid addiction in their communities. The severity of the problem, both for families and the community, is illustrated by this statement, where Lynn is talking about a woman who she networks with:" Her son overdosed and died in the Town Center Mall. And he was a promised scholar at West Virginia University. He went up there for a college degree and came back with a heroin addiction."

Dunn, Behringer, and Bowers (2012) discuss two critical economic factors affecting substance use and its rise within rural South Central and Central Appalachia. When available, employment opportunities require heavy physical labor from the worker. Hours are long, and risk of injury is high. Injured workers may be pressed to return to work for productivity reasons or to keep a paycheck coming to a family and use painkillers, prescribed or otherwise, to be able to show up for work. A second factor cited by the researchers is the overall downturn of the economy in these regions, resulting in loss of personal income, employment opportunities, and community infrastructure such that rates of depression and substance use increase. Although the Federal Government has recently begun to address this crisis, women express it is not enough, and that, ultimately, to solve the problem the source of the epidemic must be found.

> We know there's certain plants, if we're going to use an agricultural example that we gotta get the root out. We gotta get to the root of this disease that is our society. …but it's bankrupting counties, it's bankrupting cities, it's bankrupting hospitals, it's killing and bankrupting families… and besides that, our relationships.

Lynn laments the lack of awareness of the greater institutions that can provide resources and assistance, when she and the women she knows are losing their sons and grandsons:

I was invited when Obama came. I was invited when Hillary Clinton came, to sit

through when they had their panels. It's hard to sit through those. It's hard to sit through

legislation sessions and forums. A lot of these people have no clue…..they had no idea

how broken the whole entire system is. It's like, where have you all been? … It's these

whole communities falling apart.

Several women talked about the "hillbilly highway", the idea that Appalachian people rarely

leave the region, but if they do, they are always drawn back home.

There's something about West Virginia… people ask me all the time about moving away

from here and I just can't do it. I know there's a lot more job opportunities and all kinds

of things out there, you know, beyond this state. I don't want them…

Esther discussed how her extended family viewed members leaving the area:

My father spent age 15-19 in the coal mines. They [his family] would say things to us,

the things I'm talkin' about in our ways that we speak, aww John, he's a loafer ain't he

now? Meaning he traveled, not meaning he's lazy. But an example of that is this—you,

he was very… even though he left he was still drawn back. Because you just don't leave

and stay gone…. Because as a child he was part of the hillbilly highway, and he always

came back to play in the creeks at grandma's. He writes a story about Appalachian

hillbillies feet have… grown roots. And no matter where you go they're still firmly

planted and they're not happy until they… they always yearn to go home.

The meaning of Appalachia to the women this researcher interviewed was a complex tapestry

of pride, history, and reverence for the culture they were raised in, despite its flaws and

drawbacks. Ultimately, the core of the rural South Central and Central Appalachian culture

returns to a focus on family, and what that means to each woman.

Women do It Because No One Else Will. A second subtheme under the topic of Family traditions is the concept that women are the center and strongest element of the rural Appalachian family system. Six of the eight women interviewed expressed that this trait had a long-standing tradition in their families, and would not likely change anytime soon.

> Yes, women do do it [fulfill traditional roles], they just won't break new ground. To use an old frontier saying when we went out… plowing new ground is hard because you've got the vines, you've got the roots still there in the ground, and those horses work extra hard. Change, we all know, is the hardest thing in the world. And we've lived with traditions passed down for so many generations, we don't even know why we still uphold those traditions.

Tam spoke about her husband Joe, and how he would have fared if he faced reentry without her support. She was very aware of the critical role she played in his success.

> If he was here he would tell you that if it wasn't for me having a relationship, us relationship together, he may have came out and did the same thing. He didn't have stability. He did have his grandmother before I was in the picture but that was it. So it makes a difference when you have somebody, you know. He had a family. And that's what kept him on the straight and narrow now.

Esther shared an anecdote from her family about how women serve as the stabilizing force in Appalachian families.

> I can remember when Geraldine Ferraro was the Vice Presidential candidate… and we would go back [to our hometown] to the funerals and my dad's brothers would chew their tobacco on the porch and spittin' and they always came to talk to me though. Course I was a married woman when this went on, and had my children. And it was, can you

believe what this worlds come to? Man, it's not gonna stand. It's gonna fail. I said, what's, what's wrong? We got a woman runnin' for vice president, she'd be president if that president died. And you believe a woman is runnin' on that, for that office and I said well, what's wrong with that? Oh honey, the bible's against it, the bibles against it! I said, how so? That bible says that woman shall not rule over man. And I said, boy, you'd be in a pitiful place without 'em.

Multiple women shared experiences of assisting others, or their community at large, mostly because they felt compelled, and worried that no one else would meet the need. Lynn explained her choice to take in three foster daughters, in addition to her own three children, this way: " One of them is my daughter's best friend and they were going to be taken and split up. Their parents are on drugs and they've been neglectful so I just didn't want to see that happen…." She shared about her motivation to begin community- based action work to fight against the opioid epidemic in her community. Her hometown has an overdose rate ten times the national average (Mitchell, 2018).

The mothers of people with a drug problem, is the reason that changes are happening. Because that's their child. And we're not going to take no for an answer….I got trained to be a national coach… for parents of people with substance use problems to call…. When I talked to the guy who started [it] he told me 95% of the coaches are moms.

Esther who lives in the same area as Lynn, describes the problem, and response, this way. "The women here, the women are fighting for their families right now. I wouldn't have made it this far without them. Because it's literally a war zone here right now." Esther reported using supportive women in the community when she experienced struggles with her grandson and his reentry process after incarceration. This researcher inquired as to what drives the women interviewed to

persevere and keep going in the face of such adversity. This was Esther's reply: " You remember that old commercial where it was some kind of cereal that nobody wanted and they said "Mikey will eat it"? I eat it. Because I know the consequences are so severe."

These statements exemplified an attitude and mindset of strength against adversity, no matter how big. These women fought tirelessly for their families. Appalachian women considered their communities their extended families, and fought for them as well, either person to person, or through organized community action.

Don't Judge How I Raise My Family: Mother Knows Best. This subtheme embodied ideas that women knew what the most appropriate and best choices for their family member were during the reentry process. Specifically "mother knows best" is a tradition that puts women as central to providing instrumental support to kin during challenging times, and in the case of reentry, not wanting others, particularly government or institutional systems, to be in control of decisions for their family member. Thereby taking matters into their own hands, and identifying systemic causes for re-incarceration. Specifically, women discussed deciding when and when not to report probation or parole violations of their family member, depending on current circumstances and risk factors. Women expressed feeling they knew their family member better than the correctional system, and therefore could judge when his unhealthy behaviors could be corrected by them, rather than the penal system.

Annie, 51, expressed the stress of parenting a child who had been in and out of jail and prison, and the anxiety associated with this cyclic process as such: "It's sad when it's relieving that your kid's in jail, you know? But he's alive, fed and warm." This mother articulated conflicted feelings of housing her addicted son, knowing he would likely steal from her and not wanting to enable him, but struggling with feelings of wanting to help him. Prior to this

experience, this mother reported many attempts to get her son help, with no success: "He said, I'm addicted to drugs. I don't want to be this way. There was no help if you're under 18 in West Virginia. Basically there's still not. And you still go out of town for mental health."

Some women identified the personal reasons why they stood up for their male relative, what was their motivating factor for fighting so diligently against forces that they felt judged them for doing so, or the specific instrumental supports they felt were necessary for their relative to survive the reentry process. One woman summed it up in this way: "We're so nurturing and willing to pick up the pieces. Yes, definitely is a cultural trait." Annie spoke about the challenges she faced with her employer, part of the probation and penal system, when they became aware of her son's conviction, and her struggle to reconcile her role in her son's behavior.

> I told him son, what did I do wrong? And he says, mom it wasn't you. He said this is all on me, you didn't raise me wrong. He tells me all the time because for the first two years I blamed myself…it already felt bad because my son was in trouble… and where I worked…. Some people were treatin' me like I was a criminal.

This same woman clarified why she fought so hard for her son, and why she was willing to use "tough love" when it came to his criminal behavior. Her older son had been killed during combat serving in Iraq.

> Until you put one of your children in the ground you don't know what I've been through, no one knows and no one wants to know…so much grief I didn't realize what I was doin'. But I still not allow him… I turned him into probation. I told them don't give him any breaks…. Lock him back up…because I don't want to lose another son. When I seen that he wasn't doing that well, I called the probation officer myself and told 'em don't give him no breaks. I'm not burying another child.

This mother expressed how she continued to parent her grown son after he was released from incarceration.

> I knew he was going to need more help than just getting out, getting on your feet. I understood the things that come along with going to prison. So before he got out I had already talked to a friend over here that ran… I'm gonna say senior citizens YMCA. And he needed someone to clean. So I asked him would he hire my son? So I already had him a job lined up.

This woman continued to report about how she managed her son's reentry process.

> So when I went to get him and I brought him home, I got him a cell phone. So when I gave him the cell phone he said what's this? And I said this is what we use now. And I said we don't use the home phone anymore. You know I said so we use this and you can call anytime. And he said Ma, I don't even know how to work this. I said ok I'm gonna show you. So I showed him how to work it and every day he would come back well what else can I do with this and this and finally he got used to it and he kept that flip phone forever.

Several women voiced their opinions about why their relatives behaved the way they do, either due to new technologies, or the absence of old familial and social practices.

> I think social media, I think reality TV…. It has ruined a generation and created a false reality for this certain age group. … I talk to my kids. I talk to my kids about drugs. I talk to my kids about sex. Because I knew if I didn't somebody else was… they were talked to about this is what happens, this, you know, real life. They wake up, they think they're going to be a rap star that they can party and be famous… or that they don't have to go

out here and work because everybody can just hang out and have fun. … I'm serious. I really think that it has hindered them developmentally.

Annie, 64, had a different perspective on reasons for social problems she thought s that families were not allowed to discipline (specifically use physical punishment) children as they choose.

Then not to mention the fact that people are not allowed to whup their children anymore. That was the worst law that ever came out of the government…. I feel like you know when people are abusing their children. Those are the ones you need to get. Don't make one rule in general for everyone in the United States "don't whup you children or you'll go to jail" and people took that to an extreme because people do, because they're thinking in their mind, "I'm not going to whup you because I'll go to jail" well I thought, they'll just have to take me to jail. Because first of all, kids aren't all alike. You can't sit 'em in a corner and say don't do this, don't turn around you're on punishment because you always have that one out of three just gonna turn around and hehehe and throw stuff at the other kids or whatever, get their attention, because they're not all the same. So you can't make an in general rule for all kids.

This same interviewee advocated for her sons to defend themselves, regardless of the rules imposed by schools or greater society. She made it very clear during our interview that she knew what was best for her family, and did not take kindly to outsiders telling her how to raise her sons.

I raised them like this, because the way things were then, if your brother is in a fight, if he's winning, leave the fight alone. If your brother is in a fight and he's losing, you better help him. That's the way they were raised, because it's what you had to do. Because otherwise you'd always have some runnin' home bein' like "but he hit meeeee". I'd lock

'em out the house. Something you know, you're boys, you gotta get tough. …. And that's

the way I was raised. If I went home cryin' I got a whuppin' so I did not go home cryin'.

I'd rather fight five people than go home cryin' and take a whuppin'.

Finally, Lynn states why she, and other women, are taking personal action rather than asking

others for help, or waiting for assistance from federal or state programs for their families.

We held our first community meeting and it wasn't long from there that we started a

group and we had members and we were going to legislative forums…God puts a lot of

things on our heart. And so we threw it together and we had a lot of churches involved,

and we're just tryin' to bring our community together to do it because we feel like that's

the only way that anything's gonna get done. We can't wait for the government. .. I don't

think that they really understand the full picture.

The voices of the women interviewed clearly describe an attitude and drive to take care of the

men in their lives the best they know how- despite whether it was "culturally appropriate" and

subject to judgement by outside institutions and people. For rural Appalachian women, family

traditions of caregiving are the core of family processes. They are passed down generation to

generation and may become central to women's core identity. Families rely on womens' strength

to manage in tough circumstances, emotionally and financially. For most of the women this

researcher interviewed, they are proud of this role, and the quiet power it exudes.

Meaning of Incarceration: The System.

This theme was characterized by three prominent subthemes the women interviewed

articulated. They communicated that the penal system, which they perceived to have a purpose of

rehabilitation, was ineffective. Women voiced that they felt the system and process was

destroying and ruining their men. And finally, they felt their involvement with the process left

them with an overall feeling of mistrust and betrayal by an institutional system that was intended to correct behaviors of their family member, or help him change and become a functioning member of society. This failure of the system left women feeling stigmatized by their communities and the greater society as a whole.

You Lied to Us: A Broken and Flawed System. When speaking about their formerly incarcerated male relative, the women this researcher interviewed made it clear they felt the penal system was flawed in a variety of ways. They reported observing lack of programming to rehabilitate and assist their family member in changing his behaviors, and overall lack of coordination through the reentry process. Further, women felt the poor conditions exacerbated their family members typically behavior based criminal acts. For example, overcrowding led to incarcerated individuals having more contact with each other than typical, learning new criminal behaviors they had not known previously, or being able to access contraband more readily. Ultimately women felt that the flaws in the system contributed to the risk of re-incarceration for reentrants.

Lynn, whose 22-year-old son had bounced in and out of local jails due to his opiate addiction and petty theft charges had this summary.

> We didn't realize the regional jails are so… animalistic I'll say…. That's my opinion. I don't think they rehabilitate people. I think they cage people like animals. Now the prisons are different. They have programs and counseling and NA and AA. I truly believe we kinda need to move towards rehabilitating people because I think that's the problem… especially with the drug epidemic… people are falling through the cracks.

Esther, a grandmother whose grandson struggled with the same behaviors as Lynn's son, identified that she believed communities were looking to the penal system to solve a more complex and systemic issue.

> We've got a lot of communities who think that they can lock everybody up. It's just not the answer. When you go to a jail you can't even get counseling in AA for nine months. To me, a jail's purpose is to discipline a person for their wrong doing and rehabilitate them so they don't come back.

The last sentence of Esther's statement touches on the greater issue of the Prison Industrial Complex, or the privatization of prisons in the United States. This change occurred at the federal governmental level in the early 1980's and has resulted in a 1600 percent growth in incarcerated individuals in the United States since its implementation (www.justicepolicy.org). Esther continued to describe what she perceived as the penal system attempting to assist people who are facing reentry, but not implementing effective, robust, and evidence based transitional plans.

> They don't rehabilitate in prison. They don't have any programs for 'em. When they get out, the programs when they get out suck. All they do is sent them down to this one lil' place and they sign up, and they go to that little place and they sign up for some place that sends 'em jobs, but most people don't hire any of them…..there's nothing that helps them learn how to come back in to society…. My son got a hundred certificates that he done while he was in there….. but it's not real, it's just paper. It's something to cover up the show that they say they rehabilitate and they're not. Because the way they treat them when they're in there is like they're in an animal shelter.

More than one interviewee referred to the perceived dehumanizing conditions in jail or prison as "animalistic" or like "an animal shelter". Lynn, who made a point to be educated about the

conditions of her the jail where her son was housed, stated "80% [of inmates] are low level drug related property offenses. Non-violent. There is 750 inmates today in a Western regional jail that was built for 250." In addition to the deplorable conditions, when the incarcerated individual struggles with mental health issues, or drug addiction, the situation can become even more troubling. She continued: " In regional jails, the longer you sit, I just think it contributes to the mental health issues, and self-worth and all of the things that contribute to your sickness." Esther reported similar observations about a lack of procedures or programs that could benefit or assist in the rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals, while noting the financial constructs which restrict the incarcerated person and likely benefit the jail or prison.

> The booking fees [to be admitted to jail] are… I think they're $60 now… when you put money on their account by which they can order food, and it's jacked up prices for junk and it's all sugary and there's no protein. No nutrition at all. Studies at Marshall show that the brain can heal even with years of meth abuse with the right nutrition. So when a parent says ok I'll give you $40 on you books so you can order something and put $10 on your debit account so you can call me out of that. Well, before they see a dime they'll take half of whatever is deposited until the booking fees are paid. A trip to the doctor is $10. If you go to medical there's a $5 charge. If you see a doctor, there's a $5 charge.

All women interviewed reported feelings of disappointment and frustration regarding their expectations of how their male relative should be treated by the penal system for his crime. They largely expected him to be held accountable, but rehabilitated, by people and systems who were knowledgeable in the issues that led people to engage in criminal behavior. These women were left dissatisfied and felt let down by a system they believed was structured to correct and change their family member's life trajectory. Again, Esther:

The programs in prison, and there's nothing in regional jails, there's two programs under

the Justice Reinvestment Act, but they aren't working either because they just don't get

that… we just don't understand addiction…. And we expect family members to know

how to help. That's a false expectation on my part because it's frightening and there's so

much stigma and shame. And the prosecutor argued vehemently he doesn't need

treatment… he doesn't get a second chance at treatment.

Prison is Ruining Our Men. Many women interviewed described the effect incarceration had

on their male relative, either in terms of traumatic experiences or simply overall changes to his

persona. Diane described the process of reentry, and the effect it had on her male relative,

herself, and her family. However her case is somewhat unique, as her brother was convicted of a

sexual offense.

I think he just got the short end of the stick….um, with the accusations and charges and

all that kinda stuff…. Um, afterwards [post release] Steve just wasn't the same. He was

very down and out for long time. Probably for the first two three years. …it really played

a role in his job…Like I said he's always been a really hard worker…but at first…he

knew he had to go get a job, but I think, well I know he kinda looked at life like 'why

should I continue?'

Diane's relative had been convicted of a sexual offense, specifically child pornography on his

home computer. She adamantly asserted that she did not believe he committed the crime,

reporting her relative was a kind soul, and somewhat naïve, allowing friends and occasionally

strangers to stay with him and allowing access to his computer. She continued in the interview to

describe Steve's life post incarceration as one of isolation, loneliness, and disconnection from his

family due to the limitations and restrictions imposed by the Sex Offender Registry. In the

following quote, the activities "behind the curtain" she referred to were her continual efforts to defend Steve within her community and family, including verbal and physical altercations.

> I think if Steve would have known everything that was going on in the very beginning behind the curtain, with everybody runnin' through my house and all the things that were being said… I hate to say it but I think he would have committed suicide. He was already at that limit anyways.

Lynn noticed problematic behaviors she believed her 22-year-old son learned during incarceration: "I noticed that… he was just different when he came out of jail. After the nine months. He was just different. He was a different person. He seem like very criminalized and tries to work the system." Esther spoke of how the penal system, and incarceration, not only ruined men individually, but families and communities. Her 27-year-old grandson was the son of her alcoholic son: "He is a victim of a failed system. He is a victim of adverse childhood experiences. He is a victim of lack of socialization and he is a victim of poverty." Annie, a 51-year-old white woman, reflected on the impact her son's incarceration had on her behaviors, and ultimately her family.

> When they say the whole family becomes sick, we do… you start to make decisions and do things that you normally wouldn't do… and then we isolate, because it's embarrassing. I isolated in the beginning, I didn't want to tell my family because every time I have to tell somebody else, it's reliving it for me.

Annie, a 64-year-old African American woman, talked about how her son's incarceration eventually impacted her grandson, illustrating the ripple effects imprisonment has on a family system.

He missed a lot of his son's life. I used to take him to see him when he was in there so he knew his dad… it was devastating for him because he needed him, because now he's got issues.

Tam, 39, talked about the process of reentry, and how it impacted her husband's feelings of masculinity, self-worth, and his ability to care for their family.

you come home and you want to change your life… you want to be taking care of your family, you want to go to church, you want to get a good job, which the odds were stacked against him, you know, two time felon making that income [he made previously as a drug dealer] is not likely, especially in this area, and he's a black male. It's not likely. Making 8 to 10 dollars on minimum wage is not going to feed anyone's family. That was the stress. And he's a man that wants to take care of his family. So the stress of taking care and not getting the job that he wants and settling for something just to make ends meet was tough. Having what you had before and now going down to what you didn't really want. Settling was tough.

Lastly, Annie, 64, shared how the experience of incarceration, literally, almost killed her son.

One CO [corrections officer] in Chillicothe tried to kill my son, and he almost did. He was sick, they threw him in the hole, and he was sick and he was telling 'em, I need to see a doctor, I need to see a nurse, I can't use the bathroom… I can't eat, there's something the matter. They ignored him for a whole week. So they had to carry him out on a stretcher, he was gray, and take him to Ohio State Hospital. One of the inmates called me and told me, or I'd have never known. So I called the warden and she told me it's none of my business and that I wouldn't be able to go see him. I said, well we'll find out. I called Columbus, over her head and I told that man… my son just went to the

hospital from bein' sick in the hole because you all wouldn't let him have a doctor. He

said let me check into it. He called me back in five minutes and said you can go to Ohio

State University to see your son, you can stay as long as you want, someone will meet

you there and show you where to park. When I went in there I had never in my whole life

seen my son that small. It took everything I had not to cry.

While the women this researcher interviewed acknowledged their family member rightfully

received punishment for his crime, they didn't believe his life and spirit deserved to be destroyed

by the experience of incarceration, which is what many of the women chronicled as the outcome

observed. It should be noted that there was very little discussion of the crimes committed

themselves, nor the victims of said crimes, and how knowing those victims existed impacted

women's experiences. With the exception of Diane and her brother Steve, no other women

interviewed denied their male relative had committed the crimes of which they were accused. Of

all the other interviewees, only one woman reported her male relative was accused and convicted

of a crime that involved an element of violence. More discussion of this aspect of women's

experience of reentry will be explored in the discussion section.

Mistrust and Institutional Betrayal. This last subtheme under the general subject of the

Meaning of Incarceration, centered on what study participants perceived as disparities in the

execution of justice, operating outside the rules established by individuals or systems in

authority, and a general lack of faith that their family member was being treated fairly.

Esther described the progression of her grandson's illness (drug addiction) and how small town

politics can influence how justice was metered out.

Eventually it was heroin. But it started with a plain old Lortab. And everyone was doing

it. He found out he could sell his ADHD meds. But the disease progressed. Then he got

caught… there was a dome light on in a car with a purse sitting in it with the checkbook

sticking out. He eventually plead guilty to five checks and a swipe of a credit card. It just

so happened it was supposedly one of our high government official's wife's purse. That

was, all of this was less than $700 that he plead guilty to. [How much time did he get?]

30 years.

Esther continued to speak about not holding confidence or faith in greater authority figures

either, specifically our national leaders, to assist her community or solve problems.

When Trump came to Huntington, Justice [the Governor] announces, just the day before,

that he's converting back to being a Republican. I can't wrap my head around how people

can get entrenched so deeply into a political party that that party being the prevailing

party is their driving force. They're people. Why can't we see people? Why can't we see

our nation? Why can't we see our state? And we know when you're doing well, I'm

going to do better. Can't we see that our people are our greatest resource? And can't we

see that it doesn't need to be a hierarchy except to give us some organizational support? I

can't wrap my mind around corruption. We were taught not to hate, not to steal, not to

lie. And I don't know how anyone lives with themselves who do. But privileged people?

I don't know if they feel like they have the right to just step on like we would just step on

an ant? I had problems with Obama… not because he was black or a democrat, but

because I sensed insincerity. I thought he had an air of superiority about him a little bit. I

think Trump fits that same criteria. I don't think things are ever going to change in West

Virginia. People, people that are my everyday people, my dad's people, my mom's

people, I believe they are too afraid to speak up and speak out.

The idea that people of West Virginia, and greater Appalachia, are reticent to speak up about what problems they see, or are mistrustful that people in roles of authority will assist them, was echoed by Annie, 51, who identified a practical reason for the taciturn approach.

> I treat people the way I would like to be treated. And that is something that grew on me, out of our Appalachian mountain culture in southern West Virginia. In that I learned that we had a tendency to say what people wanted to hear and we didn't say what we really thought or believed for fear of offense. I learned that people didn't show any assertiveness. They didn't want to… neighbors depended on each other and you didn't want to offend anyone.

Annie seemed to articulate the view that in the small communities of Appalachia, neighbors were people who you relied on to survive, and to cross boundaries by sharing political or familial information that may be provocative or unpleasant was not the way to gain trust within the community. But ultimately, most women described experiences and feelings that the penal system was a biased and unfair approach to justice that utilized neither logic nor reason when dispensing punishment for crimes committed. Tam described her husband's experience, what led to his incarceration, and the underlying tone of racism she sensed.

> In my husband's situation they never caught him with anything, they put him in jail because someone else said something. And she was a Caucasian woman, and this is a black man, and they took her word and that's where they ended up. She got home confinement. Shipped to a house, marijuana. And [he] served five and a half years….they never caught it with him. She got caught. Well, it wasn't even her address. So that's how it works here in Huntington. They took her word for it and they went hunting for him. They came to my house with guns drawn, while my one year old slept in her bed and I

had no idea what was goin' on. They had rifles drawn on me and they pretty much told me to shut up and sit down. You need to get him on the phone…..so long story short, he turned himself in, because we were in jeopardy now. He didn't know what would happen to us. So you know, he went away for some weed. But the sad thing of it is, is that the other woman was his kid's mother. Who he took very good care of, his son. His son lived with us at that time.

Tam and her husband Joe lived in the town previously identified as the epicenter of the opioid epidemic, and after reflecting on her husband's alleged crime and subsequent punishment, she made this statement: "Gosh, we spent five and a half years for *weed?* And you're slappin' some of these people [opioid distributors] on the hands? You know, even the users!"

Another woman, Annie, 64, described the incident which led to three of her four sons being incarcerated, and subsequent sentencing for the other individuals involved.

So what happens is they gave the little white boy juvenile life. And that's till he's 21, in a children's home. They gave my son, my oldest one (age 21), nine years because he didn't stop it [the crime]. They didn't do anything to his girlfriend, for taking those 17 year olds across state line…. She was white. They said you have to press charges for that. I said I'm not gonna do that. If you don't wanna do anything, I'm not gonna do that to her either.

One of the more remarkable aspects of the above statement is that Annie made it clear she would not pursue criminal charges against her oldest son's Caucasian girlfriend, despite her committing a crime, due to feeling if law enforcement wasn't going to seek them, she wouldn't either. The overall nature of the crime her sons committed involved the youngest son attempting to retrieve stolen money and marijuana from a college classmate. His two brothers decided to travel across

state lines to support him and ensure the return of brother's belongings, and were transported by oldest brother's girlfriend and some other young men. The classmate was at a social function on campus and when he was found, one of the young men who came along, not one of the brothers, decided to rob the entire group of people in attendance at the social function. The tone of this mother's account of her sons' involvement in the altercation was one of misunderstanding, unfairness, and anger towards how her children were treated by the justice system, and, as typified by her refusal to charge her son's Caucasian girlfriend, refusal to participate in their unjust system.

> My youngest one, they offered him a deal for six years, but what they wanted him to do was get up there and tell on his brothers. He said yes at first but he didn't understand what it all entailed him to do. So then when he talked to his lawyer again and she told him, he said Oh Nah! I don't want to do that, I'm not doing that to my brothers, no. So they were upset with him, so what they did to him was they separate all the charges out on him… so he had three gun specs, that's five years automatically you have to serve. Plus the aggravated armed robbery is like three years. So automatically he had 21 years to serve.

Finally, Annie lamented about her attempts at warning and educating her sons about how the world, and injustice, works.

> And this is what I was tellin' my kids. You gotta realize that they're not gonna—you have to fight to get everything that you gonna get. You're gonna have to fight for it, cause this is what they do to most young black men…you have to fight to get somewhere. But you know, men don't listen to women. They listen to men. They'll listen to men that

they never talked to before in their life before they listen to their momma. That's what

men do though, that's how they are.

Annie did not discuss the victims of the crime, or what they may have experienced while being held at gunpoint. She did not discuss how her sons obtained the firearms. This researcher did not ask these questions as the focus of the interview was intended to be Annie's experience, and clearly the victims of her son's crime was not an element of her experience she wanted to discuss or focus on.

Several women spoke about stigma they experienced in their communities, workplaces, and interpersonally. Diane, whose brother had been convicted of a sexual offense, detailed multiple interactions with community members where she defended him, alluded to becoming verbally and/or physically aggressive towards others in the community, claiming she "beat the brakes off a few people". All women interviewed were asked what they chose to share with others about their relative, and with whom. Esther said this about her grandson:

I don't share because people who don't understand and something frightens them are

gonna talk about it. People's perceptions, to them, that's their reality. And what you

might say to me, just, like, words matter, words really matter.

Esther continued to share that there are maybe two women at the church she attends who she trusts with information about her grandson. She stated these women also had male relatives who struggled with addiction. Lynn, the 39-year-old mother of six with an opioid addicted son, also identified with feeling some shame or embarrassment:

When he was in jail I started a group called Warriors for Hope. At that time no one was

talking about anything. I had been through my whole process of the shame and guilt, the

blame, the isolation from my family because I was embarrassed.

Lynn, like Esther, sought out others with similar struggles to support them in their communities. The concept of networks of care will be explored further in the discussion section.

The women this researcher interviewed reflected on the meaning of their male relatives' experience with the penal system, and overall interviewees reported feeling betrayed by the system, for not only mistreating their family member, but not fulfilling what they perceived as the purpose of incarceration: rehabilitation. These women truly believed their family members should be punished for their crimes, but that incarceration should teach them how to become productive members of society. Not only was this not accomplished, but in many cases women reported the experience of incarceration led to feelings and experiences of stigma, and damaged their relative and family as a whole.

Family is Everything: I love the person, not his choices.

The idea that "family is everything" was the essence of what all eight women expressed in their interviews. They conveyed deep and enduring love for their family member, despite not condoning or liking his past, and in some cases, current life choices. The essence of participants' lived experience was culled by examining each woman's narrative, but then stepping back and reflecting on clusters of themes that emerged across participants. Seven prominent clusters were identified, three related to the content of the women's relationship with her male relative, three related to the processes in her relationship, and one theme combined both content and process. A table of clustered themes is found below.

Content Themes	Process Themes	Combination of Content & Process
• Good people go to jail/prison for bad choices • People who commit crimes aren't 'bad' people • Even people who commit crimes deserve to be treated humanely	• Doing anything for people you love means believing what they tell you • Feeling sorry for male relative • Fear of losing male relative to system, addiction, or death	• I won't focus on how he came to commit the crime, or his level of responsibility for it, but he and I moving on from the experience

The center of the content themes is the idea that the male relative who had been incarcerated should not be defined by his crime, nor his experience of being incarcerated. The process themes focused on the feelings and practices women experienced and used to cope with the challenging task of supporting their male relative during reentry. Women appear to compartmentalize relationships between the feelings for the person and his behavior in effort to fulfill the caregiving role and provide unconditional love. These seven themes culminate in the essence of women's lived experience, where family is everything, and love for family is unconditional.

While the essence of women's experiences supporting a formerly incarcerated male relative was largely a palpable feeling rather than specifically articulated, some women did express outright this awareness. One woman described her thought process:

She [daughter] was born in February and then in November he got arrested for illegal drugs. And that's the chance you take. And he knew it and I knew it. So he did get sent away to prison for a second term and this time it was for five, five and a half years. And for five years I drove up and down the highway every weekend. I had his daughter. He also has two previous sons so I would take them, his brothers and sisters which are all around the same age, I would take them and just a lot of back and forth. You know, he's a really great guy, just made a poor choice. And that's the way I looked at it, and just decided you know, we're just gonna make this relationship work.

Another woman articulated it this way:" Because people make poor decisions every day. The difference between his decision and maybe my decision, he got caught and I didn't. People make poor decisions every day." This woman, in the context of speaking about how she

75

wouldn't give up on her family member, also touched on how valuable she felt this research topic was:

> a lot of people harp on the people incarcerated, they don't ever talk about their families outside of that. You know, you don't have people come and say "Let's talk to you, who was affected by your husband or your brother," whoever was incinerated, because I feel like a lot of people don't think about them, you know? Once the incarcerated person comes home, everybody is happy and is ready to support them and it kinda dies down and the family is still – whoever has been there is still left to take care of them, that person, to keep them boosted up. But I think people need to start looking at the mothers and the wives and the sisters who have supported them, those men. I think having a relationship, female relationship, would probably make sense, to say it would be them. Because in my husband's situation, the first time he was away his grandmother was there, she'd send him money, she'd visit him. But his mom wasn't right. And still he came home and did that, and then he had a child, and then had me, and changed him. He would say if "it wasn't for *you* and our daughter, that I may probably be out doin' it again." Because that's what he knows. That's the reason, that's what he knows. And that goes back to you know, people not givin' up on people.

In this phenomenological research study, the essence of participants' experiences, family is everything, determined through data analysis, was not simply a final theme which summed up the other previous themes, but a thread that was common across all narratives and themes, and was found at the core of each woman's experience. This thread, that emerged across all eight interviews, was the idea that family was paramount above all else. Women expressed how individuals will risk everything they have in order to help or save another family member,

regardless of impact on self. For the women in the study, this was the way families in Appalachia were formed to operate. Diane, a 32 year old white woman who had recently moved to Southwest Virginia from a town in West Virginia overrun with opioid addiction, described her relationship with her self-identified brother with whom she was raised (but was actually related by blood as her first cousin) in this way:

> I've always been raised to look after my friends and family. I put my family first and foremost. I mean, I'd lay down my life for my family. I'd die for Steve, know that! He's, he's my ride or die. I love him to death. And I believe him when he says he didn't do anything… because I know deep down who he is. I know his inner thoughts. Because we did spend every day together for the most part. If I have love for you and you're close to me, I'll break my neck to help 'ya. That's just how I am. I've always been raise to be that way. My mother's that way and my grandmother's that way.

Diane's quote exemplifies a common thread stretched throughout the narratives of the women this researcher interviewed, specifically that their love and care for their male relative and families in general superseded any other emotional or instrumental obligations.

Chapter Six
Discussion

This aim of this study was to get to the essence of women's lived experience who currently support and maintain a relationship with a formerly incarcerated male relative. The study utilizes a phenomenological approach as defined by Husserl (1970) and data analysis guided by the method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The key theoretical concepts directing the inquiry include an intersectional feminist framework and symbolic interaction. We focus on the interaction of identity formation in context. Use of an intersectional feminist framework in the context of Appalachia means this research looks at how these women's socially constructed identities shaped privilege or oppression as it pertained to their relationship with formerly incarcerated male relative. Data provided rich descriptions of women's daily lives and experiences providing support to a male family member during the process of reentry. Women spoke of the family traditions of Appalachia they learned and carried forth in their families, and the strong belief that they were the stewards of their families and knew best how to care for them. The meaning of incarceration emerged as relevant to women's daily lived experience, and they describe betrayal and mistrust. Ultimately, the essence of women's lived experience in the context of supporting a male relative during reentry is that family is everything, and she loves him, not his behavior.

Incarceration in a Rural Environment: Intersections of Multiple Elements.

The women interviewed for this research study spoke of their sons, grandsons, brothers, and husbands in terms of before and after incarceration. They describe their relatives as inextricably changed by the experience of being incarcerated. Despite this, they commit to supporting and loving the new person. The process of change a formerly incarcerated person experiences is *prisonization*.

Prisonization. Prisonization is defined by Clemmer (1940, p.270) as "the adaptation of the folkways, mores, customs and general culture of inmate subculture". While this is a succinct and precise operational definition, it subsumes a vast range of behaviors and behavior modifications the incarcerated and then formerly incarcerated person must endure in order to survive. Subsequently, these behavior modifications ripple into his social networks during reentry. That topic will be discussed in later sections.

While incarcerated, prisonization takes the form of shaping relationships between those incarcerated as it relates to social hierarchy (Clemmer, 1940). Lawson et al., (1996) discuss prisonization as determined by communication and socialization amongst those incarcerated, suggesting that greater communication with others incarcerated, and less communication with those external to the system of incarceration will lead to greater feelings of prisonization. Further, they proposed that social skills and prisonization will be positively correlated, and incarcerated peoples who feel a greater sense of powerlessness while incarcerated will report higher rates of prisonization. The researchers found that all measures of communication were significant, although not all data supported their hypotheses. Greater inmate contact and greater feelings of powerlessness were correlated with greater feelings of prisonization, but unexpectedly, greater contact with external sources was correlated with greater feelings of prisonization, not less as predicted. This presents another layer to the experience of incarceration and subsequent reentry process, as it may suggest that contact with outside society, specifically family, is a conflicted experience for incarcerated people, and can lead to even further tension and pressure once released.

These findings are important as they relate to what specific skills are present or not once a person returns to the community and his family. As noted earlier, the family is frequently the

primary support for a person re-entering to the community, and reengaging in a family system that has likely changed over the time of incarceration holds a unique set of challenges. The family may have journeyed through marriages, births, deaths, and many other normative life course changes that the formerly incarcerated person may be aware of, or not, but not fully immersed in the reality and day to day living of.

Family members may not understand the reasons or how long a man may need to cling to the habits of his prisonization. They may struggle with his poor communication or socialization skills, or find his new mannerisms scary. The strain not only impacts dyadic relationships, such as the one between the women interviewed in this study and their male relative, but it flows throughout the entire family system. While the women in this study report prison, or specifically prisonization, is "ruining our men", perhaps it is more accurate to state it is ruining their families.

Women Bear the Burden in Families.

As discussed above, the process of acclimating to incarceration or prisonization, has significant, long lasting effects on the formerly incarcerated once he is released from the institution. His communication skills and ability to socialize with others may be impaired which impacts relationship building and re-building. For his closest supporters, this presents challenges. Frequently for men, their closest supporters are wives, girlfriends, mothers, sisters, and grandmothers (Braman, 2004; Travis, 2006).

Secondary Prisonization. Comfort (2003) speaks about how women who have sustained contact with the penal system and correctional institutions by supporting and loving their incarcerated and formerly incarcerated male relatives experience *secondary prisonization*. Secondary prisonization ultimately extends the reach of the institution to the incarcerated or formerly incarcerated man's family, causing turmoil in their social and personal spheres.

Comfort's work describes experiences of women who, through ongoing engagement with the legal and penal system, can adopt the status of "quasi-inmate" (p103) where they take on the same characteristics of the man they are visiting while incarcerated.

Her later work cites Morris (1965) who has been calling for a systemic approach to problems identified in prison and social systems for decades. Comfort (2007) notes that this specific scholarship was largely ignored, but that even if it had been explored, the United States a penal institutions wholly neglect the systemic implications of incarceration on the family and person incarcerated, and has complete lack of ability to deal with family repercussions when they do occur. Given that the penal system and correctional institutions view reentry as an individual process, and it is clear a successful reentry utilizes the family system, who bridges that gap? The answer is women.

Networks of Care. As illustrated in the findings of this research study, women in Appalachia do the instrumental and emotional labor of families sometimes because they choose to, often because it is what they were taught to do, and frequently because no one else will do it and the consequences if not are dire. The emotional and instrumental labor of assisting a male relative adjusting to returning to his community presents its own set of hurdles, particularly when faced with the prisonization and secondary prisonization of the individuals involved. Codd (2007) refers to women who support a formerly incarcerated male relative as "instruments of penal reform", where they are unfairly made responsible for the successful reintegration of their male relative. Women in the study construct meaning around the care of their family member, bound up in beliefs that family is everything, and one remains deeply bound to family members despite their choices. This process of identity formation is symbolic interactionism at work. The identity created here is one where women are central to the family and know best. The process is

fueled by feelings of fear, a sense of tradition, and drive of duty. Study participants expressed that they experienced significant distress regarding their male relative and what might happen to him, both while incarcerated and out in the community. Women reported changing schedules and being hypervigilant to ensure their family members' safety. Women in the study also described a tradition of Appalachian women serving as the primary caregivers in their families, and being proud of this role, despite the downside of it being overwhelming at times. Finally, most women discussed their role in family as one of duty, where they felt if they did not fulfill the role, it would not get accomplished. Thomas, Smith & Muhammad (2016) explore how black women survive caregiving roles for children of incarcerated parents and identify 'habits of survival' as ways that women adapt to oppression. The behaviors they uncovered in their research are similar to ones described by the participants in this study: denial, detachment, extreme discipline of self, ceaseless accommodation for others needs without complaint, intense reliance on religiosity, abandonment of feminism. Further, this study is similar to cited research in that these behaviors, or 'habits of survival', were found to be taught by other women through modeling. While the majority of this sample was not black, the participants do experience oppression in the forms of low socioeconomic status, lack of resources, and some the double courtesy stigma of caring for a formerly incarcerated family member who is also an addict.

Another particularly salient framework for examining this family process and how women's meaning making in the context of intergenerational care is Stack & Burton's (1993) kinscripts. This framework defines any particular family process in terms of the interdependent lives of individuals entrenched in families across the life course within a specific historical and cultural context. While rooted in life course theory, Kinscripts also connects to the dynamics of how families construct meaning around the exit and reentry of family members "back into the

fold"-particularly as it pertains to the dynamics of giving and receiving help. That is, kinscripts is based on the presumption that families have their own agendas, histories, and interpretation of cultural norms (Stack & Burton, 1993). Findings from this study were indicative these processes in terms of how women interpreted Appalachian culture as woman-centered in terms of keeping families strong and stable through the process of a returning formerly incarcerated family member "back into the fold".

Kinscripts are relevant to this current work as it provides a multi-dimensional way to unpack the complicated relationships that unfold during reentry, and women's complex experiences and identity formation. Three different aspects of kinscripts define it: kin work, or who does the labor that allows the family to persist over time; kin time, the understanding of when life events should occur and in what sequence; and kinscription, the assignment of labor to individual family members who may be more focused on personal agendas (Stack & Burton, 1993). Kinscripts is particularly helpful as a frame due to its inherently intersectional feminist standpoint. The research conducted by two women researchers between 1968 and 1990 with urban and rural, black extended multigenerational families in the North and Southeast, and Midwest portions of the United States (Stack & Burton, 1993). When considering cumulative disadvantage, the population studied in the kinscripts research is not dissimilar to the participants in current study.

In Appalachia, the women do the kin work involved in supporting a formerly incarcerated male relative. They often provide housing, money, food, transportation, and emotional support. Codd (2013) labels this prison work. However they do this labor in the context of day to day family responsbilities. One woman in this research study spoke of her other children experiencing trauma as a result of interactions with the penal system and her son's constant

cycles in and out of jail and prison. Another discussed how she is now raising her grandson and feels he is struggling due to her son being in prison.

The women in this study spoke often of the kin time in their lives being disrupted and completely off track. Marriages were postponed, women spent hours per week traveling to and from prisons to visit male relatives often with small children in tow, jobs were lost in the course of caring for sons and grandsons with active addictions. Not all women reported negative alterations to their life course. Two women, both whose male relative had been formerly incarcerated for possession of narcotics, indicated they had found a sense of purpose they wouldn't had their son and grandson not been addicted. One woman even described testifying before former Secretary of State and First Lady Hilary Clinton about the opioid crisis and subsequently forming a network of mothers with addicted children in West Virginia.

Kinscription, or the idea of recruiting other members of the family to do labor rather than attend to personal agendas typically took the form of contracts or agreements between the women in the research study and the male relative she was supporting. The cost of her instrumental and emotional labor was his commitment to emotional and instrumental labor. One woman required her son to attend church with her weekly on Sundays in exchange for her supporting him and finding him a job. Another woman instituted the policy with her son that she wanted him to share honestly if he began using, as she was not willing to bury another son. One woman recruited other family members to not inform her male relative about some of her instrumental labor, as she feared if he knew the lengths she went to shield him from angry and aggressive community members, he may harm himself. The kinscripts framework was inherently feminist, as it honored the roles women played in their families, and this is unique to Appalachia as well. While sometimes neglected as a feminist viewpoint, the right to practice traditional

gender roles as many Appalachian women choose to, is an important part of the feminist perspective.

The networks of care men return to post incarceration are invisible but clearly present. They evolve and change over time, ideally stretching and adapting to the multifaceted needs of the formerly incarcerated person, and all the family members his life affects.

Applied Implications.

Family process scholarship has applied implications for policy, program development, and clinical practice. From the perspective of a marriage and family therapist, these implications are presented through a systemic lens. Ultimately, the overall applied implication across policy, program, and clinical applications is that all three areas need to begin taking a systemic approach to the problems which are currently present and which may arise in the future. Given what we previously knew about the reentry process, and what has been supported by this research, family, specifically women family members, are crucial to a successful return to the community. A dyadic focus, with at least one family member identified to assist in the process, may improve success. However, as Codd's (2007) work suggests, centering therapeutic recovery or community programming on the reentering family member takes the focus off the significant effects incarceration has on the family members, specifically women.

Clinical. Implications for clinical practice with formerly incarcerated persons and their families are many, and may change over time as the formerly incarcerated person moves through stages of adjustment to his new environment. For example, it may be prudent to not begin with family sessions, but take time to meet individually with the formerly incarcerated person to build trust and rapport, as large family sessions, or even couple sessions, could feel like he is the target and identified client who needs to be "fixed" which moves away from a systemic perspective.

Also, being respectful of the mores and how counseling may have been viewed while incarcerated is essential and should be explored in the first several sessions. Adjacent to this concept is the power dynamic inherent in a clinical relationship, which should also be addressed early, particularly when the power dynamic is particularly skewed, for example if the clinician is white and the formerly incarcerated person is of color, or if the client has small children and lives in poverty, they may view the counselor as a person who only wants to have their children removed from their lives.

When the woman is being treated, it most likely would be best to see her individually, so she does not have to share yet another aspect of her life with her male relative who she is supporting. Validation is the best technique for women who feel overwhelmed or not appreciated for their efforts. It's important to keep her reality based, meaning not allowing her to gloss over what actually occurred in her male relatives' life, or his current behavior. In the context of Appalachia, honoring her culture, and not expecting her to change certain behaviors should be expected. Meet the client where she is at and be mindful not to impose clinician's belief systems on her. Being mindful of Codd's (2007) work, it is important to recognize that she is likely being pressured by external forces to be the one maintaining her male relative's behavior, what the author refers to as an "agent of correctional control" (Codd, 2007, p.260), whereby the institution her male relative has been released from has relinquished the burden of preventing his return to her. This is a constructed fallacy and would be useful to process therapeutically.

Program development. The most significant implication this research study identified about program development is that there needs to be accessible systemically based programs aimed at women engaging in prison work during reentry (i.e. emotional and instrumental labor supporting the reentrant). The most effective programs would begin prior to release from

incarceration, and link formerly incarcerated persons and their families with community resources that can assist with completing tasks such as finding employment, accessing affordable health care including mental health, and managing transportation needs. For example, United States Attorneys' Offices run many reentry programs throughout the country (Chambers, 2010) that are successful. Miami-Dade Reentry Task Force is in the Southern District of Florida and conducts "reentry fairs" within prisons where incarcerated persons can obtain government identification cards immediately, and apply for duplicate social security cards if necessary (Chambers, 2010). This same task force coordinates with community stakeholders committed to successful reentry: law enforcement, mental health professionals, parole and probation, prosecutors, workforce development providers. Ideally these programs would also link formerly incarcerated persons together, so organic community based support networks can form, and socialization and communication skills can be built. There is not a "one stop shop" for women who are assisting a formerly incarcerated male relative return to the community. However, there are programs that provide services, such as Head Start, where parents take children for low cost childcare that have bulletin boards and create organic spaces for people with similar issues and problems to connect in small communities. Similar posting areas in places like probation and parole, social services, court, and the office of the community service board, can usually provide information about programs available. Organizations such as local community service boards often have programs which make available Case Managers who can link women with the different pieces they need to assist their relative, or provide referrals to bridge programs; programs designed to supplement the support from family members with meetings and fellowship with other formerly incarcerated people.

Another significant area of program development is curricula aimed at incarcerated individuals with substance use disorders. Nonmedical use of prescription drugs is reportedly the primary type of substance abuse in some areas of rural Appalachia (Dunn, Behringer & Bowers, 2012). Oxycontin is a Schedule II opioid narcotic (www.fda.gov retrieved April 18, 2019) and is the most widely abused prescription drug in Central Appalachia. Its abuse has been linked to criminal activities such as robbery, theft, assault, and prescription drug fraud (Dunn, Behringer & Bowers, 2012). Property crimes have also increased due to perpetrators either seeking the drugs themselves, or money to purchase the substance. It is clear that linking substance abusers to effective programs while incarcerated would benefit them while incarcerated but also facilitate a more successful reentry.

Policy reform. Findings from the present study suggest a broken criminal justice system that does more harm than good. Critics of mass incarceration have argued that it is a tool of social control comparable to racial segregation in the Southern United States during the era of Jim Crow laws (Alexander, 2010). Others refer to the carceral state as a stage of time the United States must move through, requiring a surge of activism and reform that is impossible through ordinary politics (Dagan & Teles, 2014). Working within the current system, simply beginning reentry planning and family coordination when the person enters the institution would be beneficial. In clinical work, discharge planning begins essentially in the first session by setting treatment goals. A similar approach could be helpful when a person enters incarceration. Meeting with a supportive family member to identify what needs to change for the person not to return to incarceration and subsequently mapping out a plan for their time in prison or jail, leading up to reentry to the community. Essential to this would be supporting the relative,

typically a woman, in establishing external resources so the reentry plan and supports are not solely up to her.

There are significant gaps in the application of justice, most prominently due to race. Bonsu (2017) described a strike by persons incarcerated at over forty-six prisons and jails across the United States who were protesting, amongst other issues, the access to basic amenities such as clean water. She cites forty percent of the current prison population in the U.S. are African American. Although only two of the women interviewed for this study identified as African American or mixed African American and white, this researcher suspects it is due to the racial demographics of the area. Justice can also be applied disproportionately to those in poor and rural areas, as individuals have less access to public transportation to court or probation appointments, or child care. Rural areas also have the disadvantage of "small community syndrome" where everyone knows who you are and your family history. Frequently, in Appalachia, you are judged more by your family name and actions of your father and grandfather than your actions alone. The attorneys and judges metering out justice in these contexts are expected to be impartial, but the reality can stray far from the ideal.

A greater policy decision that should be addressed is what exactly our correctional and penal system is intended to *do*. Many of the women interviewed for this study perceived the system to be designed to rehabilitate and help their sons, grandsons, and husbands change so they would become functioning members of the community and not return to the correctional system. The prison industrial complex (Schlosser, 1998) is designed to make money for the prisons it operates and the people it employs, so it behooves the companies to continue incarcerating individuals. Our federal government needs to choose to either implement policy that supports the ideology of rehabilitating our most vulnerable members of society, or

increasing revenue for major corporations. This issue gets to the heart of the intersectional exploration of privilege and oppression. A person gains a certain stigma the moment he is incarcerated, and this study provides some evidence that the women who support him post incarceration gains some stigma as well. Should our penal system be designed to keep increasing the increasing the number of stigmatized people in our society, or helping people change and recover?

Another area of policy reform to be addressed and examined is the inability of jails and prisons to care for incarcerated people diagnosed with a mental illness or substance use disorder. This is a complex issue and certainly deserves further study to untangle and tease apart causation. Dually diagnosed people who are incarcerated are a unique population, as they may be prescribed medications that significantly affects their behavior which could impact ability to function socially. People with substance use disorders may be in withdrawal. Some institutions are better equipped to handle this population, but few are designed to manage mental health crises. Approximately 20% of people incarcerated in jails and prisons are diagnosed with a mental illness when they become incarcerated (www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org, retrieved February 20, 2019).

Limitations.

There are several limitations to this research that warrant review. First, the sample size of the study just reaches the suggested minimum for qualitative phenomenological research (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). While participant narratives were richly textured, the findings may not necessarily be generalizable to other populations of women outside of rural Appalachia. Specifically, several of the women interviewed lived in the same small community in West Virginia which happens to be the current center of the opioid crisis in the United States, as

documented in multiple national media outlets, reports, and documentaries. Their experiences were therefore focused on the addictions of their sons and grandsons, and how addiction impacted his and their reentry process. It may be that women in regions that are less affected by substance addiction would have experiences during reentry that are distinct. The area has been decimated by drug addiction, perhaps additional research how the reentry process has impacted these women and families specifically. Secondly, despite the flyer distributed for recruitment having been written at the seventh grade level, it is possible that this study missed valuable participants due to literacy issues. Alternatively, there may be some aspect of individuals who are willing and interested in participating in a research study which could influence caregiving behaviors.

Finally, as a systemic clinician and researcher, investigating one dyadic relationship in a family process narrows the scope a great deal. However, this research is intended to be a starting point, whereby the scholarship on the reentry process can begin to understand women's experiences, particularly in the rich culture of Appalachia.

Conclusion

In the words of one interviewee:

At that time no one was talking [to me] about anything… I had been through my whole process of the shame and guilt, the blame, the isolation from my family because I was embarrassed.

Another woman reports:

I still have people looking down on me. To this day I have people…callin' me, giving me grief. Um, friends that won't talk to me now.

The responsibility of supporting the reintegration process for formerly incarcerated persons often falls to family, most frequently female family members, yet, the effects and experiences

of providing this support on those women has not been fully explored or understood. Women who provide male relatives support and care despite the denigrated status of their family members reside in a very specific social location, particularly when Appalachia is considered as cultural context. This research contextualized women's lives by considering their Appalachian social locations, examined how they made sense of their relationships with these men and any support and care they offer them, and documented evidence of resilience within the scope of the challenges that were faced via women's involvement with a formerly incarcerated male relative.

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Commencement of interview will include requesting participants choose pseudonyms for

themselves and male relative to whom they are referring during interview.

Pseudonyms will be utilized throughout interview process.

Interview Questions

1. (Tour/Main) Tell me a bit about yourself please. Are you married? Do you have children?

   a. Follow up (for demographics and rapport: age, marital status, number of

      children and ages)

2. Tell me about your typical day.

   a. Follow up (not for data collection, but for rapport)

   b. Same as above

3. Tell me about your family. Who do you currently live with?

   a. How would you describe your relationship(s)?

   b. How does your family support themselves?

4. Tell me about your relationship with male relative (use chosen pseudonym).

   a. Do you provide care or support to male relative (use pseudonym)? What

      kinds or how?

5. Are there challenges associated with being in relationship with male relative (use

   pseudonym)?

   a. What are some positive aspects of the relationship?

   b. If you needed help with your relationship, whom would you talk to? What

      influences your seeking help?

Appendix B
VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
Informed Consent for Participants in
Research Projects Involving Human
Subjects

Title of Project: Relationship Narratives: Lived Experiences of Appalachian women in context of reentry

Investigator(s):   Joyce A. Arditti, Ph.D.   arditti@vt.edu/540.231.5758
                         Principal
                         Kathleen O'Rourke, M.A.
                         kate5283@vt.edu/631.905.2500
                         Co-investigator

I. Purpose of this Research Project

This study is about experiences of women who currently maintain a relationship with a male relative who has returned home after being incarcerated. The study is about your experiences with your relative, the challenges or positive aspects of the relationship, and how the relationship may impact your life   or   family.   The purpose of this document is to give you information about the study so you can decide whether to participate. This information is called "Informed Consent" which explains your rights if you would like to be in the study. This written copy is for you to keep for your records.

The researcher conducting this study is Kathleen O'Rourke, M.A, MFT, a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech. A research oversight committee at Virginia Tech has reviewed this study. You are being asked to participate in this study after responding to requests posted at New River Valley Community Services. NRVCS is not affiliated with this research. However, Kathleen O'Rourke is a current employee and if you and she have a prior relationship within that context, you are not eligible to participate.

II. Procedures

If you agree to be in the study, we will ask you to participate in one interview that should last approximately 90 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded. I will ask you to choose a different name for both you and your male relative, called a pseudonym, to use throughout the interview to preserve confidentiality. I will refer to you by this chosen name. I will ask you questions about your experiences in your relationship, your feelings about the relationship, and the impact it has on your life. Your interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed, removing your identifying information. I will ask you at certain points if you

are still comfortable continuing with the interview, to ensure you are not discussing topics that are too difficult. This procedure is called rolling consent. If you choose not to have your interview audio recorded, we will ask the researcher be allowed to take notes on a laptop computer for purposes of remembering important aspects of your story. No specifics related to you or your family member will be recorded to preserve confidentiality.

III. Risks

I am a therapist and mandated reporter of child abuse. Therefore, if previously undisclosed instances of child abuse is reported to me during the course of an interview, I am required by law to report it to authorities. Other instances where I am required to break researcher and therapeutic confidentiality is if you share with me intent to harm yourself, or another person. HOWEVER, the interview questions are carefully designed to focus on your experiences. *You are not required to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable and you may stop the interview at any time*.

IV. Benefits

No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate. However, we genuinely appreciate your time and will provide you with a gift card to use at WalMart worth $75.00. You will be given the gift card even if you are unable to complete the full interview.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

Your participation in this study is confidential. This means that no one, except the researchers, will have access to your interview transcripts and audio recordings. Your interview responses will be identified by a pseudonym, or false name, and will be kept separate from consent documents listing your full name and other identifying information. All information collected will be stored in password encrypted files on researchers personal computer. Only the researcher will have access to this equipment.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

We cannot fully repay you for the time and effort you will put forth to participate in this research study. However, a gift card worth $75.00 to WalMart will be furnished to all participants for your willingness to participate. You will receive the gift card even if you decide to stop the interview part way through.

VII. Subject's Consent

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ Date_____

Subject signature

_____

Subject printed name

_____

Witness Signature

VIII. Freedom to Withdraw

It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions that you choose or respond to what is being asked of you without penalty.

Please note that there may be circumstances under which the investigator may determine that a subject should not continue as a subject.

IX. Questions or Concerns

Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact one of the research investigators whose contact information is included at the beginning of this document.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991.

Appendix C

Researchers at Virginia Tech* are looking for women to participate in a study talking about a male relative who has been to jail or prison, has been home for more than three months and to whom you provide one of three kinds of help (job or housing; support to get a job or housing; or emotional support). The purpose of our study is to hear about your experiences, and explore what issues you face in your relationship. Every person who participates will receive a $75.00 gift card to Wal-mart for her time and effort.

Your experiences, and feelings about them, are IMPORTANT.
We want to hear from YOU.

What's involved:
- *Minimum age of 18 to participate.*
- *Two interviews. First will take about two hours. Second is short follow up by phone.*
- *Participation is voluntary, and confidential.*

If you are interested, or have questions about this research, please contact **Kate**, via phone call or text, at **631-905-2500**. This study is supported and sponsored by *The Virginia Tech Department of Human Development*.

Appendix D

Pseudonym	Age	Race	Number of Children	Relationship Status	Employment Status	Highest Level of Education	Annual Income	Relationship to Male Relative	Age of Male Relative
Alissa	51	White	1	Married	Unemployed	Some college	<$40,000	Half brother	Not given
Diane	32	White	0	Cohabiting	Unemployed	Almost complete with college	0	"brother", believes he is actually a first cousin	29
Annie	51	White	2 (one deceased)	Divorced	Employed	Bachelor's degree	<$35,000	Son	28
Lynn	39	White	3 bio, 3 foster	Cohabiting	Employed	Some college	+$50,000	Son	22
Esther	73	White	2	Widow	Retired	Bachelor's degree	0	Grandson	28
Skittles	24	White	3	Married	Unemployed	High School degree	<$20,000	"brother", fictive kin relationship	35
Annie	64	Black	4	Divorced	Retired	Associates	0	Son	47
Tam	39	Mixed	2	Married	Employed	Some college	Declined to report	Husband	Not given

Meaning Unit (Text Block-can be up to several sentences or include an entire interchange with interviewer)(Put in ID# or Pseudonym)	Subtheme/Code (short descriptor)	Theme	
(1019A) What a lot of people don't realize around here it's a small county and there's a lot of drugs in it. But aside from that it's a nice place….. people do know your business, they wanna talk about you, but they don't want to talk to you… to find out what the situation really is. So in that sensi I would say [small towns can be] badBut, it's a supportive county all in all.	Contradictions of small town life/Appalachian life		
(1019A)He'd call me Aliss, can you take some groceries to my family, they don't have nothin' to eat. And Can yo bring me some money. It was just one thing after another. I helped raise his oldest daughter.	Instrumental support of formerly incarcerated male relative		
(1019A) but I've tried personally not to judge him. And the last time I did talk to him I told him he needed to straighten his butt up and the next thing I know he's back in jail. But, the last time that he'd actually asked me to send money to his kids I got frustrated and told him you're able to work, just like I am, or you can get a disability check if that's what you're shootin' for…. But I can't keep on takin' care of 'em	Frustration with providing support to those who won't help themselves		

when you're able to get off your sorry butt and do it yourself.			