“I Have Blocked out so Much”: The Influence of Family Storytelling and Sequestering on Mothers’ Legacies in Appalachia

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This dissertation titled
“‘I Have Blocked out so Much’: The Influence of Family Storytelling and
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by

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Abstract

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“I Have Blocked out so Much”: The Influence of Family Storytelling and Sequestering on Mothers’ Legacies in Appalachia

Director of Dissertation: Lynn M. Harter

Appalachia is a region riddled with many forms of poverty amidst family legacies of struggle, survival, or success. Communication researchers are interested in how communication through storytelling is related to these various legacies, with hopes of someday influencing more family legacies of success and less struggle. Employing interviews with ten pairs of mothers and daughters as well as my autoethnographic writing, I explored women’s role in family storytelling to influence family legacies. In addition to sharing stories, sequestering stories emerged as a major theme working to foster and disrupt family legacies. I have also discussed the findings, their implications, and future areas of study.
Dedication

To the women and my girls:

Be courageous, be vulnerable, be authentic and know that you are stronger than you’ve thought; you can do difficult things.
Acknowledgments

Like raising a child, this type of endeavor takes a village; I would never suggest I have come this far on my own. I simply could not have devoted time and energy without those professors, colleagues, and friends who believed in me; my parents who supported me emotionally and financially; and Cam who occasionally brought me coffee and kept Lil’ Bit out of the office. Many academically encouraging souls were classmates and professors who inspired, taught, and learned with me along the way. A special thanks to Dr. Harter and my committee members who guided and endured my journey. Sandy, Melissa, and Rachael who taught me about sacrificial sharing, and who sustained my soul with food and deep friendship in unlikely places and times.

I want to thank those who left me with stories I have sequestered, for the evil you intended will be...mostly forgotten within the ellipse, and through that you have taught me both that I am stronger than we thought and that the power of obstructing your devious plans rests in the acts of sequestering and storytelling.

Finally, I want to acknowledge what moved me and brought me tears so often—the sacred sharing of lives from the generous women of Wood County who welcomed me into their homes and families. What I learned from them truly changed me, and that will change the lives I might influence.
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Prologue

The stranger smiled politely, but her brow was furrowed with concern as I mindlessly ran over her with my shopping cart. Apologizing, I immediately came to realize that not only was I mentally spaced-out, my lipstick and hairspray had long worn off, as Mama so often warned would happen, and my neglected daughter was whimpering as she tipped over in the cart. I expected to feel embarrassed, but I just felt emotionally penniless, at least in comparison to the past few months. For the first time I had endless access to my husband’s account, and yet I had never felt so poor, lacking something I could not purchase. Was there fight or resiliency left?

For weeks, pain throbbed in every part of my body, and my face flushed with humiliation even in privacy. I felt as if I was tied to a chair out in the open and forced to watch a movie reel torturing me with glimpses of the unimaginably wicked stories I had confirmed had happened, and my imagination ran wild concocting stories of what else probably happened. I tried to ignore my feelings, but the pain just became a constant dull roar under every smile and happy moment. If I fed the pain, it grew and gnawed consumingly to the point I thought I would tear at my own flesh if I didn’t tear that of the not-so-innocent bystander (or run over them with a shopping cart). I never knew I could harbor such mean thoughts, and I was sorely disappointed at my inability to forgive and love my enemies as my church had taught. For my well-being, or perhaps just for spite, I chose mostly to deny and hide from the meanness, but mostly from the pain, because when it found me, it pounced hard, bowling me over whether we were alone or in public; time seemed to not be a healer for this insatiable beast on a prowl. Poor in spirit, I was now rich in experience.
Something in me wanted to fight, but I was not sure how or what. I needed help
healing, but there was nothing or no one to help. Counselors and pastors were no help.
No one in my family or close friends had walked in my shoes or survived my ordeal,
especially the degree to which I had. Mama and my mother-in-law had advised me to not
be too forgiving in these situations or they would happen again, and the second time
would be “shame on me.” The traumatic experience had also severed me from my church
and its support. The one friend I contacted sided with another party, condemned me for
not being immediately forgiving and loving, and wrongly accused me of foul play. I
feared nobody would be resourceful, and if they weren’t worrying about my sin of
unforgiveness, they would be in my way, worrying about possible post-traumatic stress
disorder or my future; therefore, it was best for everyone if I fought alone. My story was
withheld from almost everyone, possibly forever. Mama taught me to just not talk about
bad situations and always act like life is fine. I knew these expectations to act, but I did
not have the resources or the routes to take to get to a place where I could perform for
others. I withdrew.

I thought about the amazing women who gave me dissertation interviews;
particularly, I pined for the wisdom and strength of Hannah and Beth. Hannah, my
daughter’s godmother, had shared with me about the choice to change one’s legacy from
victim to victor. I wanted that; I needed that! But how? Mama recounted 30-year-old
wounds as fresh, not as scars worn as badges of victory or survival. My thoughts went to
Beth’s supernatural legacy, the script she sought when her situation had turned
threatening and her life was in physical danger. My life as it had been was in danger if I
didn’t deal with my pain. Not having many life-threatening experiences of my own or my
mother’s to draw from, perhaps White and Epston’s (2001) suggestions using Narrative Therapy could encourage me to revisit my stories of pain to find a similar resource? Yes, of course I had a similar story from a year earlier! Why did I not think of it before!?

Childbirth.

Isn’t life ironic? Before motherhood, I merely tolerated the stories of women’s births, but now, I understood what an important resource of life these stories are. Childbirth was the most intense process I had experienced, and yet the most transcendent as well. I needed to transcend pain again. In childbirth, without any medical intervention or explanation, I endured no pain as I birthed my daughter at home. Like Beth, I had drawn strength and belief from positive testimonies—birth stories. An acquaintance had told me about a book of testimonies, revealing how to allow Christ to reconcile birth to its original glorious form: with pleasure instead of pain. I was open to the idea, so I did what I believed my mother would have done, and I purchased the book and sought to learn the principles. I read and reread, and I began to stand in belief that living under the curse of pain in childbirth was a choice. During labor, I experienced no pain and even shocked my midwife as I softly sang a lullaby during active birth. My co-authored pain-free script was my gospel: a Hero, Father God, took all pain and suffering as He gave His son for us, and Christ became sin and suffering for us. To accept pain was me saying that Christ’s death was to no effect. For me to accept pain might be me rejecting Christ as my atonement. The one roaring like a lion, according to this spiritual narrative, was not Truth, but Deception that can become reality through belief.

I stood to fight, once again, wanting a heart-full of borrowed stories to construct my shield of faith, and several verses fashioned as my sword, declaring as David did that
I have killed the lion and the bear and will now slay this filthy giant. The pain unexplainably subsided as I dwelt on these unmerited blessings, and I could even begin to see glimpses of me forgiving many who dealt the battering blows that marked me as the easy, wounded target for this fierce deceiver….or is it deceivers? Having now written, shared, and heard my story, I am tempted to evaluate and re-author it again, as we storytellers often do as we are busy making sense of our lives.

Regarding the topic that I have sequestered, I have realized that I was hurt in my first attempt at sharing so I have added motivation to sequester. In the wake of my trauma, I called my one remaining close friend at the time—partly to warn her of the similar danger she was facing—and she blew up and metaphorically stabbed me in the back, so I had additional encouragement to sequester the story. About four months later, I met Pastor Lana whom I shared in exchange for counsel, and have—unfortunately—continued to sequester since that time. My dissertation work has challenged me to find the courage to tell my story. The research shows that I should, but courage is a matter of the heart, the body, and the memory, not just the intellect.

About twenty-three months post trauma, I received Lana’s version of my sharing our story, and it moved me. Lana wrote that she was excited to meet us but that she “saw caution in [me] and a hesitancy to be open.” I thought I was sequestering well, but much was not sequestered: damage, pain, fear, shame, betrayal, and my own loss of identity. Lana said, “I could see something was keeping [Jesus as your identity] from being true in your life.” A seasoned pastor, Lana recognized the shame I bore was an identity issue. She saw that and assumed I saw (or knew) much more about her as well, “You knew I had been through a similar betrayal.” In reading this, I realized she thought I knew about
her life, but shame has a way of making one feel as if everyone can see, or a fear of that at least.

Lana also wrote about her experience as a (seasoned and arguably a professional) listener when I first unfolded parts of my story:

So we met and you shared your traumatic story and I listened knowing you needed to feel safe in expressing all the hurt, shame, and betrayal done to you. I also was so impressed by the Lord to show you His love and my love for you and to show you your value and worth in the midst of this happening. Yes my heart hurt for you and I knew there was healing because I had been healed yet for the moment you only needed someone to listen without putting any condemnation on you or others involved.

Lana knew through experience, as a storyteller as well as a listener and a woman, that what was needed was a safe place to express the emotions and process the traumatic tales. As the moment unfolded, she felt a prompting to reassure me of worthiness and acceptance and to shield me from being judged as lacking. She reached to her own similar experiences to find solutions:

I also knew my greatest healing had been all the times Jesus held me in His presence and knowing He bore my shame that finally my traumatic story stopped identifying me and He alone became my identity. It was no longer having an identity crisis but a Christ identity. I knew this would happen for you in time so I was just available to you to bring His loving presence and listening ear.

Like most listeners, she heard my tale through her own lens shaded by her experience and realities. She assumed that what was good for her when she was in my shoes would be
good for me; likewise, what was not helpful (i.e., rushing the development of my “Christ identity”) was avoided.

We had built a safe place to share our hearts, and in this safety, Lana also opened to share her own stories, both of hurt and of healing:

And I found as I shared my story there were parts I had sequestered and found healing in sharing them with you. Thank you! I knew it was safe sharing with you. ..I continue to feel connected to you as a friend and momma … I’m grateful for the blessing of you trusting me with your heart and your friendship.

This quotation illustrated one of the most powerful aspects of storytelling: it promotes more storytelling. Lana recognized what a sacred space had been cultivated. She also recognized the honor I bestowed on her by placing my trust in her. She appreciated having someone in whom to confide, and she took advantage of the safety and shared previously sequestered stories. This experience left Lana hoping that I, too, would experience being the listener standing in her shoes:

I… pray for the day it will only be a vague memory without any sting yet never too vague to not be able to tell your story to someone who needs your listening ear and hearing how you were healed and that there’s hope for them.

Lana’s words encourage me to not be too vague in telling my story, as I purposefully was when I wrote the prologue months before this letter. I consider myself kindly advised.
Chapter I: Introduction and Problem Statement

My story is not so unique, it is in many senses everyone’s story: a story of handling life and its surprises to the best of one’s perceived ability, even when one perceives a total lack of resources. The details and resources may be different; however, the general process is similar. We each draw from or reject our available life scripts and particular resources. The state of our well-being, our preservation, our family, and our future legacies depend on how we author and enact a resourcing script. Discovering how we pass down these scripts to our children, and discovering how we survive and thrive with positive, optimistic scripts in bleak situations, is learning some of the secrets to negotiating healthier lives (as would avoiding scripts that lead to unhealthy behaviors).

The stories we author and the legacies we build or discard are resources that depend on particular resources we find and use. Knowing how to author positive legacies and find resources when we fear they are not readily available empowers us to hopefully create a better life, better families, and a better world, one story at a time. Beth taught me this in her interview, and her example inspired me to do the same.

I fashioned my prologue to demonstrate those similar experiences I shared with the women I interviewed in which we all engaged in the processes of what I call story resourcing. These processes require drawing resources from our repertoire of stories or scripts. In later chapters, I will discuss some of the processes.

For example, I perceived that many of my resources were disqualified, and I had to be more creative by digging deep and piecing together a resource and paving a unique legacy to enact for my future and my daughter. In the crises, I saw myself at a crossroads: I could either trust Christ to provide healing and a sense of reconciliation as an
overcomer or give in to believe reconciliation was impossible and take action. The latter, I believed, was choosing to play the role of a victim, and I was tired of being a victim. I decided to surround myself with opportunities for healing and re-authoring my previous attitude of victimhood, and this choice meant distancing myself from resources or influences to take the second path. This meant I would not draw directly or openly from family, church, or existing friends. This seemed like a stumbling block; however, I decided to look further and realized I could go to their sources directly. I could draw from such resources as their examples of leaning on the Lord, looking to books, looking to Bible Scripture and stories, aiming to do right, and surviving with hope for a better future with joy in the journey.

Interviewing my own mother taught me that, in bleak times, I should not openly seek help from the women in my family because they worry too much about their children and grandchildren, and it would cause them emotional and physiological harm (not to mention they might not be able to truly offer resources I believed useable). Mine is a history of daughters sparing their mothers the knowledge of them going into labor to prevent mothers worrying too much. This was a legacy I continued. As for my more current painful story, I could not tell it to the women in my family. When stories bring negative effects, often those stories are withheld. The stories the women told me about their worry prepared me to know I had to seek help from friends, church, books, God, His Word. In my case, I felt I could not turn to family or friends; all I had were books, God, and His Word. The “God” and “Word” I thought I understood growing up did not do much beyond exist as historical tales and principles for living. Fortunately, I had my own recently lived stories with God that proved that this more involved deity could be a
physical and emotional resource beyond that which my family believed. Living in Wood County without my family near, I had studied this new belief with Hannah and Beth, and they filled my toolbox with understandings of different types of praying, declaring, exercising God’s presence, breathing life into Scripture, and believing for healing and freedom. As Beth shared these tools with her own mother, I had begun sharing them with mine; however, my mother did not fully embrace them as Beth’s mother had. It is interesting how, in spiritual matters, mothers open themselves to learn from their daughters’ stories. This realization was one of many I had while I listened to interviews of women in Wood County, West Virginia.

All of West Virginia is Appalachia, a place labeled as impoverished, infamous for lacking material and educational resources. Appalachia is also a place known for snake-handling religions and other “ignorant” or “Scharismatic” Christian practices. I set out to study family storytelling and legacies in impoverished Appalachia; however, I found women who were so rich and wealthy with life that their cups overflowed into my own. In my proposal, I idealistically, claimed, “Only in the storied lives of those living in poverty might you find that poverty may also be a place abounding with love, resilience, beauty, or strength.” Perhaps this was prophetic, because this is exactly what I found, and I packed my own tool box as equipment for living. Sometimes Hallmark-worthy stories happen in the midst of our research, and we must stop and celebrate the beauty of lives intimately and vulnerably shared.

In my personal account in the prologue, you can see how I felt the intertextuality of my story as I imagined how my inherited legacy taught me to handle the situation in contrast with other available stories; I drew on language and stories from each and
overtly rejected a few. While it was not always conscious or skillfully calculated, storytelling was working to both foster and disrupt the intergenerational legacies of us women in Wood County. In this project, I aim to more deeply explore the role of storytelling in its functions of both fostering and disrupting intergenerational legacies of families.

In the first chapter, I explore the nature of mother-daughter dynamics in Wood County, West Virginia, and how women have learned to live out their journeys here. Chapter II overviews my theoretical sensibilities, research questions, and general research design. Chapters III and IV record my findings and general analysis of my two main research questions (RQ1 in Chapter III and RQ2 in Chapter IV). Chapter V incorporates my autoethnographic accounts and understanding of my analyses. Chapter VI is my summary, including implications as well as potential avenues for further inquiry.

**Family Legacies and Storytelling**

Family legacies are “strands of meaning that run through the family in ways that give it identity or sense, are constituted in communication through family storytelling, and are continually reshaped over time” (Thompson, Koenig Kellas, Soliz, Thompson, Epp, & Schrodt, 2009, p. 108). I was able to explain my own silent struggling because the women in my family had established a legacy of sparing one another’s feelings, therefore, often baring struggles alone. I also come from a line of very morally conservative women who had no experience (unless it was hidden) of similar immoral victimhood, and therefore the only script I received to inform me how to handle my unique situation was my mother’s consistent statement, or imagined story, of how if she was ever exposed to such a situation she would respond by beating one offender with a
baseball bat. In addition to the moral conservatism, the women of my family also possessed a religious obligation and perhaps guilt that made me feel ashamed that maybe my own lack of righteousness was the reason I was exposed to the trauma I had experienced, adding to my reasons for keeping my experience secret. Mama and Grammy had taught me to pray, seek answers in the Bible, and read relevant books, and I did find myself immediately turning to these resources to lift me from my despair.

I argue that stories and legacies are the given resources and the processes through which resources are transferred from mothers to daughters to equip them to live their lives well. Mothers (and grandmothers) feel responsible for their daughters’ well-being (Lupton, 2008). One way in which they act on the feelings of responsibility is to resource their lives in efforts to influence outcomes. These resources may be physically caring for vulnerable bodies, offering opportunities for educational stimulation, modeling positive behaviors such as correct speech, paying for certain education, or any number of activities that might influence the journey of one’s child (Lupton, 2008). How mothers may resource their child’s life may be unique to each family, but there is a general belief that “children need to be provided with resources for optimal development” and that need is the responsibility of the child’s mother (Lupton, 2008, p. 121).

**Legacies.** Legacies are authored in the remembrances of our lives; those who come behind use larger narratives as maps and our stories as signposts to navigate life in legacies. Connecting to one’s ancestors was once about finding pedigree; today, however, Americans are more interested in finding legacies of notoriety, whether positive or negative (Jeff Fromm, Marketing to Millennials, Forbes.com), as I also found in my interview with Kylie, who listed such notoriety as the American Dream of her peers. A
renewed interest for Americans to connect with ancestral roots has emerged and even propelled the making of TV shows such as Who Do You Think You Are? and Genealogy Roadshow as well as the success of subscription-based services such as ancestry.com.

**Family storytelling.** Family storytelling is a communicative process through which individual members learn lessons, morals, values, and meanings to carry with them beyond the family context (Langellier & Peterson, 2006; Jorgensen & Bochner, 2006). As suggested by Thompson et al., family legacies are fluid and can shift or solidify as members recall and pass down accounts. In contrasting my own lived reality to the interviews I received, I perceived legacies and family storytelling as a guidebook for life’s journey.

**Problem of Poverty**

Poverty is a complex social, political, and economic experience commonly defined as the state of lacking the usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions or even “the state of being inferior in quality or insufficient in amount” (Meriam-Webster.com, 2012). Indeed, social service assistance programs in the United States are driven by a deficit-based model. Only in the storied lives of those living in poverty might you find that poverty may also be a place abounding with love, resilience, beauty, or strength. Whatever one’s understanding and experience of poverty may be, fear of living in poverty has risen alongside escalating rates of poverty in the United States over the past ten years (Tompkins, 2009). Although significant research across the social sciences has been reported about the causes and consequences of poverty (see Tompkins, 2009, for an overview), the need exists for communication
scholars to understand and “flip the scripts of poverty” (Novak & Harter, 2008, p. 394) in an effort to reduce stigma, alleviate suffering, and enlarge human possibilities.

The state of poverty is often defined and determined by the U.S. Government’s Census Bureau or Department of Health and Human Services. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) sets poverty guidelines to verify if a family is eligible for federal assistance (2011 HHS Poverty Guidelines), while the Census Bureau is mostly interested in the demographics to track systemic patterns and to estimate predictions. The Census Bureau’s calculation of poverty is based on total yearly income and is sensitive to federal inflation rather than varying subject to geographic location. The Census Bureau set this threshold for a family of four at $23,018 or $11,491 for an individual in 2011 (Poverty, 2012). More than half of the adult American population (58.5%) spends at least one year below this poverty line between the ages of 20 and 75 (Hacker, 2006; Rank, 2005). Thus, poverty is a realistic threat to a majority of Americans at some point in their lifetimes.

Importantly, poverty is not a monolithic experience. Payne, DeVol, and Smith (2009) articulate a key distinction between what they term as generational poverty and situational poverty. “Generational poverty is defined as being in poverty for two generations or longer,” argued Payne et al., whereas “situational poverty is shorter period of time and is caused by circumstance (i.e., death, illness, divorce, etc.)” (p. 7). For some families, the experience of poverty is acute and episodic (i.e., situational). For other families, poverty crosses generations and becomes a shared way of life. Payne et al. refers to this as generational, which may be confused as being confined to one generation; therefore, I will refer to this as intergenerational. Whether situational or
intergenerational, experiences of poverty color the life of those families affected, often with goals or mere allusions of rising or transcending above their current state.

The mythic “American Dream” depends on intergenerational mobility (i.e., one’s generation will achieve more than one’s parent’s generation). Unfortunately, one third of Americans experience downward mobility (Isaacs, 2008). While the dream of great achievement lives for some, it seems to be the greatest farce for many Americans coming from a generation (or longer) of poverty; in fact, some reports indicate that there is less relative mobility in the United States than in many other rich countries (Isaacs, Sawhill, & Haskins, 2008). In fact, children from the bottom 20% of the socio-economic distribution are more than 40% likely to stay in that lower percentage and 94% never make it to the upper 20% (Isaacs, 2008).

Much public discussion focuses on how people in the lower rungs of the social economic ladder might climb upward. For example, some analysts suggest that upward mobility is determined by three behaviors: 1) completing high school; 2) working full time; and 3) marrying before having children and after one’s 21st birthday. In fact, these educational, vocational and relational choices may decrease the chances of staying in poverty from 12% to 2% and increase the chances of joining the middle class or higher from 56% to 74% (Haskins & Sawhill, 2009). Insightfully, this complicates our comprehension of poverty because these are life choices rather than financial choices, and yet they influence financial situations.

In my dissertation, I join the efforts of a few contemporary scholars and practitioners who espouse a resource-oriented approach to understanding intergenerational poverty (e.g., Leeman & Wasserman, 2011; Payne et al., 2009). While
poverty is commonly characterized as a lack of financial means “to purchase goods and services” (Payne et al., p. 11), poverty could also mean lack of capability to live the kind of life one values, a life with access to information, education, health care, or political power. In efforts to help bridge students from poverty into the higher education system, organizations such as the College Achievement Alliance (2012) use a much broader definition of poverty: the extent to which an individual does without resources. These resources may be strictly financial but also include the following nine resources: financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, relationships/role models, knowledge of hidden social rules, and coping strategies (Payne et al., 2009).
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<th>Potential Resources</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Financial</strong>: having the money to purchase goods and services</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Emotional</strong>: being able to choose and control emotional responses, particularly to negative situations, without engaging in self-destructive behavior. This is an internal resource and shows itself through stamina, perseverance, and choices</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Mental</strong>: having the mental abilities and acquired skills (reading, writing, computing) to deal with daily life</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Spiritual</strong>: believing in divine purpose and guidance [personal worth and value]</td>
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<td>5. <strong>Physical</strong>: having physical health and mobility</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. <strong>Support Systems</strong>: having friends, family, and backup resources available to access in times of need; these are external resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. <strong>Relationships/Role Models</strong>: having frequent access to adult(s) who are appropriate, who are nurturing to the understudy, and who do not engage in self-destructive behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. <strong>Knowledge of Hidden Rules</strong>: knowing the unspoken cues and habits of a group</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. <strong>Coping Strategies</strong>: Being able to engage in procedural self-talk and the mindsets that allow issues to be moved from the concrete to the abstract; the ability to translate from the personal to the issue</td>
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These nine potential resources serve as the basis for the work of Payne and colleagues, activists working across the nation to help families build bridges out of poverty. By acknowledging different resources associated with living in (and sometimes disrupting) poverty, Payne and colleagues recognize that there may likely be unique discourses, stories, and legacies in families experiencing intergenerational poverty.

Like Payne and colleagues, I believe the path toward empowerment must begin by acknowledging and respecting the knowledge, experiences, and resources of those living in poverty. In my dissertation, I explore how women narrate their life priorities and resources amid intergenerational poverty. My work was guided by narrative theory and practice. In the remainder of this chapter, I situate my project in Appalachia and articulate my narrative sensibilities.

**Intergenerational poverty in Appalachia.** As illustrated in the introduction, poverty is a chronic and intergenerational experience for many families in the United States. Appalachia is a region infamous for persistent poverty; however, it may or may not be uniquely different from other rural areas of the country with a history of chronic poverty (Duncan, 2006). Appalachia is an area of more than 25 million people spanning across 410 counties and mostly the mountainous areas of 13 states, from New York to Mississippi (Economic Overview, 2011). West Virginia is the only state that is entirely situated in Appalachia. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) claims that progress and development are to credit for decreasing poverty rates of Appalachia, so they are much closer to the national average, yet the development can be selectively beneficial, leaving some developed areas in surprising contrast with their neighboring regions overwhelmed with poverty.
Rural Appalachia, in general, and West Virginia, in particular, are legendary for laborers with keen work skills, loyalty, and a great work ethic to make West Virginia’s people some of the nation’s most productive people (West Virginia Commerce Department, 2012). However, while unemployment is low, financial poverty persists as a complex, deeply rooted, and extremely political issue. Some argue that poverty in Appalachia began with the opening of coal mines, when the coal operators wanted to keep their laborers uneducated and inept from unionizing in an effort to control the labor costs in a competitive market, a market they ultimately sold to absent owners oversees (Duncan, 2006). Today, as a result of these early transactions, much of the surface acreage (72%) and most of the mineral rights (89%) are absentee-owned. Historically, the land had been under-assessed and under-taxed for so long that the local municipalities did not have the revenue to finance physical infrastructures (e.g., water, sewage, roads, and landfills), health care, phone or Internet lines, or education (An overview of poverty in Appalachia, 2009). These conditions affected generations of families in West Virginia. The fact that much of Appalachia, and almost all of West Virginia, is mountainous, making travel into, out of, or through dependent on bridge and road structures, means that many areas remain quite isolated even today. Although digital technologies have helped bridge many remote sites in the world, because of the difficult terrain, many sites in West Virginia still lack Internet or cellular phone connection. WV House Bill 4613 (engrossed February 2012) demands state access to Internet and raises the concerns that 40% of West Virginia’s population was living without Internet access, and the state as a whole ranked 48th in broadband availability, making the state unappealing to today’s commerce
The Department of Commerce is working, through such actions as this bill, to maintain the economic security of the state.

While West Virginia is my larger context, the specific context for my dissertation is Wood County, West Virginia. Wood County rests at the heart of the Mid-Ohio Valley and includes the metropolitan area of Parkersburg. The County Economic Status and Number of Distressed Areas in West Virginia for the Fiscal Year 2012 (ARC, 2012) indicated that in Wood County alone there exist eight distressed areas, attributing to Wood County’s status as a transitional county of Appalachia. Less mountainous and isolated than many other areas of Appalachia, some Wood County residents have migrated from even more impoverished areas, perhaps even squatting.

It is not uncommon for people to squat in abandoned coal mining areas or hollows, finding inadequate roads, electricity, running water, or sewage (Appalachia Poverty Project, 2012). These issues were brought to national light in the bestselling autobiography, *The Glass Castle*, by Jeannette Walls (2006), who admitted to squatting in McDowell County, West Virginia (the poorest county in West Virginia, according to the ARC, 2012), before transitioning out of poverty by moving to become a journalist in New York City. While Walls’s autobiography recounts her heroic capacity to break through the intergenerational legacy of financial poverty from her paternal side (and possibly emotional poverty from her maternal side), odds were stacked against her and her siblings. It is more common for similarly situated individuals in intergenerational poverty to remain in poverty (Isaacs, 2008); therefore, we should be careful to not judge those who seemingly cannot “lift” themselves out of poverty. Transcending poverty requires systemic support beyond one’s own figurative bootstraps (see Payne, et al.,
2009), and a critical eye should recognize that even Walls, case in point, gained access to external resources beyond herself to make her success possible.

The history of financial inequality in West Virginia is arresting. For example, McDowell County is the poorest of all 55 counties of West Virginia with a per capita income of $10,174 and median household income of $16,931 (ARC, 2012; US Census Bureau, 2012); however, McDowell’s neighboring county to the east is Mercer County, which is famous for the little town of Bramwell, which, historically, had the most millionaires (coal barons) per capita in the United States, as well as hosting the historic Concord University in Athens, West Virginia. Today Mercer County ranks only 25th of 55 counties in the state with a per capita income of $15,564 and a median household income of $26,628 (Hutson, 2010; US Census Bureau, 2012). Wood County, in comparison, ranks fifth of 55 counties in the state with a per capita income of $18,073 and a median household income of $33,285. To place these figures in perspective, the U.S. average per capita is $27,334, meaning that, at fifth in the state, Wood County residents still only make about 66% per capita compared to average U.S. citizens. Additionally, the U.S. average median household income is $51,914, meaning Wood County residents make only about 64% of the average U.S. citizen’s median household income.

These figures demonstrate that the family legacies of West Virginia have been passed down in various ways, with little to explain why they were accepted or rejected by heirs. Only stories could tell why generations from legacies of social and economic affluence, such as that in Mercer County, did not continue to be as affluent; meanwhile, counties such as Wood County now transcend its Civil War legacy as “the other side of
the River,” merely a stopping ground for excessive drinking and brothel hopping (Towner, 2010). Each county in West Virginia has a complex history with poverty. The rise, or transcendence, of Wood County as a whole makes it a compelling place for narrative-based inquiry and practice. Through this project, I sought to better understand legacies and female family members residing in Wood County.

Appalachian residency. Residency does not necessarily equate identity with a place. The Appalachian label is imposed on many living in or near Appalachia, but this cultural identifier is not merely a place identifier, but one that comes with cultural implications and stereotypes that both glorify or diminish people (Reiter, Katz, Ferketich, Ruffin, & Paskett, 2009). Outsiders have tried to create a single identity for Appalachian peoples, often with negative associations such as poverty and unemployment, but few have actually asked Appalachian residents how they view themselves, or if they view themselves as Appalachian at all. When researching with female Appalachian residents, Reiter et al. (2009) found that labeling complicates issues because many of the women whom scholars and practitioners would position as Appalachian do not identify with the label, while others who do not qualify want to use it. In a participatory study, participants label their realities, not researchers or outside stakeholders. Although my research may speak to some Appalachian studies, my focus is any woman with family legacies who is seeking to acquire resources in Wood County; therefore, Appalachian identity of the women themselves is not currently under scrutiny.

My dissertation explored how women in Wood County, West Virginia, account for their experiences with intergenerational poverty. In particular, I explored the role of storytelling in fostering and/or disrupting inherited “legacies” of poverty. To create a
space for these experiences to be articulated, I relied on a narrative framework and interpretive research methods.

**Narrative Theory**

Narratives guide both the storyteller and listeners in making meaning. A storyteller often makes sense of her lived experiences as she endows disruptions with meaning and organizes events according to time, space, characters, relationships, and causality (Harter, Japp, & Beck, 2005). Narratives are shared and shifted within familial contexts as individuals make meaning and craft legacies across generations (Jorgenson & Bochner, 2004; Langellier, 2006). “Family narratives can influence the creation and practice of routines and rituals,” argued Manoogian, Harter, and Denham (2010, p. 42). For the storyteller, a narrative serves as a sense-making tool to not only help the individual examine a circumstance but also chart future actions (Burke, 1984) or a future legacy. So, in a sense, our life trajectory depends on the stories we believe we are living.

The phenomenon of humans simultaneously being consumers and producers of communal experiences through narratives positions us as *homonarrans*. *Homonarrans* is the term that defines humans as storytelling animals, “an extension of Burke’s metaphor of ‘man’ being a symbol-using animal” (Fisher, 1984, p. 6). As we commune through narratives, we not only share our lives but better understand ourselves. Collecting and interpreting narratives allows researchers and practitioners to explore how storytellers make sense of their experiences. Harter (2009) discussed how narratives are a tool of meaning making, of reflecting on punctuated moments and crafting important links and truths.
Narratives about ourselves and our own lives are what we use to recreate past events or develop new, unanticipated stories that bridge the present with the future (Sharf, 2005). Narratives as emplotted functional artifacts are worthy goals in and of themselves; however, narrative is also powerful because it is tied to a storytelling process. Narration is such a powerful process that even the fields of psychology and counseling have developed a therapy process around the narration process (White & Epston, 1990). To better understand family dynamics, narrative therapists focus on the stories members tell and the meanings members attribute to events. Narrative therapists ask people to reflect on their beliefs, skills, principles, and knowledge to help them re-author their life to incorporate a new goal or possibility, especially by externalizing problem behaviors. Narrating requires identifying what is helpful in the plot and what is a hindrance.

The actual “process of storytelling has a force all its own” that often compels the narrator to reconsider and search for meaning in situations that are not always easy and often serve as fodder for reasoning (Sharf, 2005, p. 338). Sharf recalled one such experience as she weighed both personal and shared narratives, saying, “All these narratives intersected with my own settled my doubts” (p. 338). This reflection on how she perceived intersections among her stories and those of others helped her regain control of a seemingly unmanageable experience. Counseling researchers have also found that since the dawn of humanity, storytelling has served as a vehicle for meaning making in that storytelling promotes self-understanding and healing in a form that can feel natural in the progression and in the form of telling (Pillay, 2003; White & Epston, 1990).
While it may feel natural or insignificant, the intertextual or relational nature of meaning making through narratives is not to be underestimated. One of the *exponential powers* of narrative is that stories can build on one another to deepen meaning as seen as social support (Sharf, 2005). In this dissertation, I am interested in legacies of experiences passed down through generations, as different storytellers and listeners make sense of how their lives intersect with those who have gone before. Meanwhile, familial storytelling cannot be understood in isolation from broader cultural discourses. Consider the argument by Japp et al. (2005):

Personal narrative becomes the building blocks of public knowledge. More and more, mediated and public dialogue, from legislative testimony to newscasts to public health promotion, rely on individual stories to embody problems, shape argument and engage emotions, as well as to persuade, evaluate, reward, and punish. Personal stories increasingly provide a “face” for any issue, a convention of reality-making news, advertising, promotional campaigns, or entertainment….Although it is evident that personal narrative energizes public narratives, it is often less obvious that the cumulative force of public narrative shapes and constrains personal narratives. Personal stories can never be constituted independently from pubic narratives, those pervasive patterns that provide the language, structure, and formulas that shape our ways of thinking and our collective understandings. (p. 5)

In this passage, scholars not only recognize personal narratives as building blocks but also realize that the narrative force works on individuals as well. This may be how stereotypes and ideologies function as blanketing statements, limiting the possibility of
recognizing individuals who may live within a culture but not subscribe to that culture’s beliefs. While these references were made about larger cultures, the truths exist for families.

**Narrative and identity construction.** Personal and family identities are often “narratively configured” (Thompson, Koenig Kellas, Soliz, et al., 2009, p. 107), and researchers highlight how narrative analysis has become increasingly accepted as a valid process to analyze selves and identities (see Bamberg, 2004). A person as a storytelling or story-receiving agent positions herself in a meaningful position, “given by pre-existing social forms of communication (*Discourses*), but also in another way something that is taken” (Bamberg, 2004, p. 335). It is through discursive practices, such as storytelling, that the speaker and hearer are constituted, and it is through these practices that they negotiate new positions. For example, individuals might feel positioned as victims, but as they share their story, they may find themselves as victors.

Homonarrans, in this sense, are agents actively construing self and one’s life world, finding belonging and making sense of self through “local, everyday situations, together with others, because it is aimed to be understood by others” (Bamberg, 2004, p. 336). From Bamberg’s position as an educator and psychologist, he easily perceives a need for narratives in research, and he advocates that investigations into identity generate micro-discourses, especially because such investigations could be fodder to feed the “development of communicative strategies of adults (teachers and parents as well as … policy makers) for how to work more productively *with* positions that typically are not representative” (p. 354). Beyond the realms of psychology and formal education, others in daily living could develop communication strategies to negotiate, validate, or even
challenge different positionalities of storytellers; tapping-in to help negotiate fruitful Appalachian family legacies could have powerful influences.

Family communication scholars find a clear connection between personal and family identity and narratives (Langellier & Peterson, 1993; Thompson et al., 2009). Some narratives, especially those pertaining to legacies, serve to preserve or shift an identity of a family across generations (Langellier & Peterson, 1993).

Narrative and Family Communication literature. Micro-discourses often happen in the form of storytelling. Researchers (Langellier & Peterson, 2006a, p. 109) have argued that we are ‘‘born into’’ family stories and histories, family myths and metaphors, family rituals and routines, family language and secrets.’’ Storytelling, as a speech act, is a socializing agent that teaches personal lessons, morals, values, and meanings, and family storytelling equips individual members to carry what they have learned beyond the family context (Langellier & Peterson, 2006a; Thompson et al., 2009). Just because legacies are established, they are still subject to treatment by individual family members who may choose to accept, reject, or extend the legacies in differing degrees contingent on appropriateness. A question of efficacy, or how narratives function strategically, is more important and interesting than what motivates the storytellers (Langellier & Peterson, 2006b). Legacy stories may be more strategic stories. Family legacies are created through storytelling and the narrative process; consider Thompson et al.’s argument (2009): We defined family legacy as strands of meaning that run through the family in ways that give it identity or sense, are constituted in communication through family storytelling, and are continually reshaped over time. This perspective underscores the malleability of family legacies since stories
about these legacies may be told, re-told, and re-shaped across generations. The fluidity, or constantly changing natures of identity, is an idea central to narrative scholars studying identity, as identity is produced and reproduced through the narrative process. (p. 108)

The authors highlighted that legacies serve as identity stories for families; however, these identities are unstable and contingent on members recalling and passing the stories through continued discourse, at times strategically to influence the actions and feelings of family members.

Stress can be necessary to bring about the storytelling that helps families understand belief systems and family meanings. These stories and conversations lead to structuring life, labeling and naming, explaining, and reappraising life (Koenig Kellas & Tree, 2006). Tense times may be necessary for healthy families, or at least family stories. Jorgenson and Bochner (2004) also suggest that tension leads individuals and families to create and recreate stories. The authors present a fascinating typology of family stories that may be used to perpetuate legacy, especially when younger generations are faced with the dilemmas of finding resources to live. One such story is the one that provides motivation—a story that tells us what we think we can become. Another story is the survival story that prepares children to survive in the world through clues to where and how the children should fit or be positioned in society.

These stories often construct a divided world which focuses on the *haves* who may dish out and the *have nots* who must take what is dished. Beyond historical accounts of previous generations, these stories offer identity and places, as well as the knowledge to “emotionally and psychologically cope with difficult and menacing circumstances”
Some survival stories are merely inspirational and recount how the family could overcome hard times, deprivation, and suffering in ways that adds values, tactics, and coping strategies. Such acts of storytelling to each other and to ourselves help family members make sense of epiphanies or tragedies such as existential turning points or even personal traumas, such as incest, child abuse, addiction, family violence, teenage pregnancy, abortion, adultery, chronic illness, and unexpected death.

Telling stories in families is a way of doing family (Langellier & Peterson, 2006a) and of creating a family identity that may extend to individual identities. Stories may actually serve to alter family traditions and change the family (Jorgenson & Bochner, 2004). What is important and interesting is that these stories offer equipment for living to each engaged family member; however, it is each member’s responsibility to accept, reject, or expand the stories. While each individual negotiates her relationship to family stories and legacies, usually a designated storyteller keeps both the stories and sense of family identity alive.

**Women as kinkeepers of family narratives.** In today’s society, many extended family members live far from one another and engage in different daily business; therefore, there is a need for family lynchpins, or kinkeepers, who serve an important role in bringing and keeping a family and its stories together. Kinkeepers actually construct a “canon of stories that are told and retold,” and often this is through performances, such as scrapbooks (Langellier & Peterson, 2006a, p. 110).

A four-generational, twenty-year longitudinal study was used to examine the phenomena of families staying together or disintegrating, and the researchers found that
issues of health, care giving, and direct efforts of kinkeepers were to credit for maintaining a family unit or identity (Richlin-Klinsky, & Bengtson, 1996). Such kinkeepers are most often women (74%) who pass down the duty to their daughters (Rosenthal, 1985). Additionally, women and their adult daughters are most often responsible for caring for the health and emotional well-being of the family (Bracke, Christiaens, & Wauterick, 2007). Often family storytelling happens at family meals, holidays, and celebrations, during which women have been historically “responsible for the conversational and relational work that is required if storytelling is to happen” (Langellier & Peterson, 2006b, p. 105). With a gender role expectation for women to be the kinkeepers, women are responsible for invoking family identity, especially because most family storytellers are female family members, such as the mother, grandmother, or aunt (Thompson et al., 2009). As such, much of the identification process through stories happens through the performances of female family members. Considering the statistical odds of family legacies being maintained by women, my research focuses on women.

**Summary and Research Questions**

I began this project inspired to create space for women living in Wood County to narrate how they and their families navigate intergenerational poverty and obtain and/or develop resources to cultivate resilience. My review of literature inspired me to inquire specifically about the role of storytelling in fostering and/or disrupting family legacies. My research design was guided by these general questions:

RQ1: What is the function of family storytelling within generational legacies?

RQ2: How, if at all, do mothers and daughters engage in storytelling to obtain resources amid their family legacies?
As an interpretive scholar, I am committed to creating spaces for participant researchers and storytelling, especially by including various ways of “voicing” and knowing these stories and experiences in more aesthetic and less texto-centric approaches. In Chapter II, I outline my methods of inquiry.
Chapter II: Interpretive Methodological Approach

My research questions were exploratory and participatory in nature, and I used interpretive methodologies. Interpretive methods are commonly practiced when including participants as co-researchers and exploring their worlds and ways of communicating about them (Singhal & Rattine-Flaherty, 2006).

Qualitative methodologies aim to delve more deeply into stories than statistics may, to hear the individual stories and accounts of participants, especially to explore and learn what may not already be recorded in research. The challenge is that not all researchers are prepared to hear or listen to participants. Brenda Ueland (1998) argued that “when we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand….ideas actually begin to grow within us and come to life” (p. 1). She likened this process to a fountain that would bubble up inside some people if the conditions of the listener were right. Some listeners can stifle this fountain:

Now, there are brilliant people who cannot listen much. They have no ingoing wires on their apparatus. They are entertaining, but exhausting, …by not giving us a chance to talk, [they] do not let this little creative fountain inside us begin to spring and cast up new thoughts and unexpected laughter and wisdom (p. 2).

This passage highlighted my fear of stifling participants. What if participants had much to share, but because they thought I expected them to speak like academics do, they felt that I could not listen? I had to ask if I was giving room for their fountain of creativity, or if answers to systemic poverty and female empowerment have been articulated over and over all around, but I was not hearing because I was listening for these marginalized groups to speak a more academic language.
Qualitative methodologies are beginning to adapt and fill our virtual tool boxes with more sensitive tools to help us be attuned to the different means of available communication.

**Discourse Collection through Fieldwork**

My collection of data aimed to privilege aesthetic and creative possibilities through storytelling and interviews.

The data-collection process initially combined interviews and photography akin to the process explained by Gillian Rose (2007) in her book *Visual methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*. I eventually began to focus only on interviews when I found that participants struggled to create or provide even a single photograph. As a researcher, I successfully executed two previous research projects using photography methodologies with two separate groups of women in the Mid-Ohio Valley; I was surprised about the resistance the women gave toward the idea of offering representative photographs but felt confident with the stories and interviews I collected.

**Sampling Plan**

I recruited mothers and daughters with intergenerational experiences living in Appalachia, and which one or both had lived in Wood County specifically. I chose Wood County both out of convenience and to narrow a point of reference when discussing history and resourcing. I imagined common resources would emerge, such as a local favorite store. For example, one family had discussed that their legacy of sewing for necessity had evolved with the youngest generation into a legacy of sewing for privilege because clothing could be purchased more reasonably at the new Gabriel Brothers (a buy out store). I had imagined other families would have discussed evolving resources as
well. I did not assume the women shared a cultural heritage (e.g. Appalachian), it was more important that the women had the potential to share the same resources (e.g. Gabriel Brothers or Walmart) geographically situated in the financially impoverished Appalachia.

I asked the recruits to provide pseudonyms that would continue to represent who they were, often a name their parents had considered for them. Some of the women asked me to select a name for them, and I occasionally selected new pseudonyms when the participants had told me they did not choose a name that might represent them, rather they had selected a silly name that made them laugh (i.e. Matilda).

The process of recruiting these participants proved to be somewhat challenging. As an outsider to the area, my personal connections are mostly with other outsiders who join mothering support groups, and when I asked several women in my husband’s family, they told me they did not have any family stories nor the 90 minutes needed for interviews. For a year, I was a member of a large church and was able to ask about four pairs to join in exchange for me bringing pastries or entrees from Panera Bread. My easiest recruits were asking academics who sympathized with my need and local self-made millionaires who were very generous by nature.

In total, I found ten pairs of mothers and daughters—one mother served also as a daughter in one of the pairs; I also interviewed my own mother, as well as a woman called Hannah, who served as my daughter’s godmother and a mentor and professor at the local junior college.

**Sample size.** Before a study begins, generally it is challenging to work through details such as a specific number of participants needed for a study, especially while remaining open to a flexible grounded design. As I recognized that recruiting was
difficult, and my five pairs of participants were not engaging with the idea of giving more time or incorporating photography, I expanded my scope to include 10 pairs of women who would at least commit to an interview. Grounded scholars have written about these progressive designs:

An appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question. For simple questions or very detailed studies, this might be in single figures; for complex questions large samples and a variety of sampling techniques might be necessary. In practice, the number of required subjects usually becomes obvious as the study progresses, as new categories, themes or explanations stop emerging from the data (data saturation). (Marshall, 1996, p. 523)

According to interpretive versions of grounded theory, the emergent nature of sampling should determine how and who a researcher samples as the theory emerges, so interviews could theoretically begin with a sample size in the single-digits before recruiting more participants (Legewie & Schervier-Legewie, 2004). With this in mind, I finished with 10 pairs, which proved to be adequate for my protocol.

**Saturation.** Appropriate sample sizes for qualitative studies are not always easy to determine because saturation is not pre-determinable, and each participant may provide data at multiple times. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explained that saturation occurs when no new information is emerging from the discourse or data; they defined categorical saturation as when the initial open or axial coding stops providing “new properties, dimensions, conditions, actions/interactions, or consequences are seen in the data” (p. 136). Similarly, the general rule for saturation in theoretical work that aims for density
and precision is indicated by (a) a lack of emerging new or relevant data regarding a category, (b) revelation of a well-developed category in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation, and (c) the establishment and validation of relationships among categories. My data collection ended as I realized I had exhausted my interpretation, or that my I had a reached a point of saturated sense-making. This seemed evident to me as the last two or three couples I interviewed were no longer offering any new revelations but were repeating my existing themes and relationships.

**Interviews**

Experiential knowledge is often elicited through stories, accounts, and explanations, which makes interviews an efficient means to gather such information (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; 2011), as well as a great method for examining storytelling and narratives related to my questions. Qualitative interviewing is a method employed to gather information with a *referential* point outside the context of the interview, while remaining a *sound* source of witness information (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p.172); in my case, the points were the lives and histories of multiple families that I could not personally observe ethnographically. I acknowledged that people are not always *sound* sources and that their narratives are inherently biased. They may look back at the interviews, having grown, and not agree with their past selves. Fortunately, my questions were less inclined to explore the truthfulness of family stories and more interested in the role of the storytelling and their constructed experiences.

Qualitative interviews are often informal and semi-structured. They are structured in that researchers begin the interview with a preplanned list of questions to which they follow to an extent; however, they remain flexible to respond to unforeseen contingencies
that can arise during the interview (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Many types of qualitative interviews yield stories, tales, anecdotes, and other kinds of narrative discourse, but I mostly engaged in narrative interviewing. Narrative interviewing allows equal appreciation and observation to the actual act of storytelling, not only the story told. Rather than extracting certain elements from an interview such as references to people or opinions, narrative inquiry is interested in the stories as a whole.

Lindlof and Taylor (2011) identified two streams of narrative interviews they claimed do not differ significantly: organizational and personal. Organizational narratives, they alleged, vary from personal in that the organizations, themselves, like families, become a source of stories that may become consequential to the individual members, and a collective storytelling system exists to influence members’ sense making and organizational memory. Personal narrative interviewing avoids monologue in favor of conversational interaction between self and others, often telling stories in relation to cultural discourse; in my study, this was often the culture of one’s family or society. These personal narratives help to provide stories for making sense of the meaning of life, the metaphysical, or even autobiographical exploration. In my study, I played in both streams, often facilitating the conversation—as suggested by Lindlof and Taylor (2011)—and allowing the participants to engage in storytelling or dialogue as they chose. This allowed me to witness family storytellers and the function of storytelling. Some of my questions asked participants to share specific examples of storytelling or family stories while other questions asked them to mentally step away and analyze the functions of storytelling or legacies in their families. Sometimes I would facilitate a moment for a speaker to give a monologue about the family; other times, I would personally converse
or draw in the other participant to interact in a style more fitting to personal narrative interviewing.

My protocol questions focused on family stories and legacies as well as the role and function of storytelling within families. I began with an open question, simply asking them what came to mind when one thinks about family stories, and I began asking more directly personal questions as the interviews progressed such as asking them to recall if they remembered how their parents met. I kept to a general interview protocol approved by the IRB. As the study progressed and I began moving toward what seemed like saturation in some of my themes while needing to explore others themes more fully, I built on emerging themes and honed my questions to affirm what seemed to be repeating and to dive deeper in newer or vague areas.

In this study, I interviewed ten pairs of women for approximately 90 minutes each, as well as interviewing one respondent. Each woman chose a pseudonym (or granted me that permission) and signed a release form for the interview allowing for me to use the information and to record the conversation. I then took the audio recordings and transcribed each interview verbatim before beginning the next interview. At this time I also began to code while the interviews were still fresh in my mind (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). For this reason, I spaced out the interviews so that I had time for the process of transcribing, coding, sending a copy of the transcription back to the women for approval, and then preparing the protocol before the next interview.

**Discourse Analysis**

Inductive analysis is far more efficient than attempting to present all aspects of one’s data (Ellingson, 2009); seeking patterns, while they may not represent a singular,
valid reality, is beneficial to help digest information. I used inductive analysis during my constant analysis. In this study, I read and coded each transcript with narrative sensibilities. As transcriptions of the interviews and field notes were completed, I uploaded the text files along with any digital images into qualitative software, Atlas.ti.

Using this software, I conducted a thematic analysis of the discourses in a method loosely based on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998). As suggested, as I first generated as many themes as possible: 50 (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Ultimately, I was able to reduce the many themes into smaller, more manageable groups. Initial categories originated from my proposal, which was based on literature relevant to legacies, family storytelling, and Ruby Payne’s categories of poverty. I then began to go through chunks of the discourse at hand and openly coded it based on its coherent meaning, constantly comparing the data. Through this process, I built, named, and ascribed attributes to emerging codes. Initially, though on rare occasions, when participants succinctly characterized their own scene in conversation, I was able to use in vivo codes such as work hard and don't be lazy; work through your problems; and dresser drawer full of things. Naturally, my codes, categories, and category definitions changed dynamically while I was in the field, as I began to “see more clearly how the categories are differentiated from each other, how they interrelate, and how full (or empty) of compelling evidence they are” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 251). The Atlas.ti software was useful as it allowed me to catalogue the category definitions, codes, and examples of text for each category as well as the number of incidents coded, and the location of incidents in the discourses. I was also able to add
memos about the social actors themselves and tag instances in the interviews with these memos.

In this process, I reduced and interpreted the discourses to gain a holistic understanding as I coded themes according to my emerging analyses. This grounded process allowed me to be a sensitive tool to constantly compare any patterns of recurring behavior or meaning in the storytelling and interview performances and accounts.

I remembered that researchers before me had found that we should not necessarily trust what is told about families; rather, we should realize that people inside a situation may not understand the situation (Jorgenson & Bochner, 2004), so I continued to ask myself and observe their partner for affirmation; as women shared their understandings, I asked questions and compared other accounts given by them or others.

Throughout the process, I examined my own theoretical sensitivities that might have caused me to draw out some interpretive possibilities while suppressing others and further engaging in member checking to refine or deepen my analysis. For instance, after the first few interviews, I believed women liked to pity their mothers and excused many of their misbehaviors; however, I began to check back with some of these women and learned I was reading my own life into theirs. I found that, while they often storied a reasoning why their mothers misbehaved and were fascinated that their mothers did not have modern resources, in general daughters did not pity their mothers. It was my goal to keep my subjectivity from intruding to limit the possibilities that I might internalize or project into family stories (Jorgenson & Bochner, 2004). Nevertheless, I acknowledge that it would be naïve to believe I can completely remove my own lenses.

**Autoethnography**
In Chapter V, I have offered an autoethnographic treatment of my findings, layering accounts as I unpacked my prologue as well as offering some reflexive ethnography as I revealed ways I have changed throughout or as a result of executing fieldwork and analysis.

Similar to engaging in grounded theory, layering accounts allowed me to focus on my experience alongside my data, abstract analysis, and relevant literature (Charmaz, 2005; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010). This allowed me to tell my story like a representative anecdote (Burke, 1969) and to both demonstrate sequestering and supply stories with elements that could have been sequestered. Sharing vulnerable stories invites participants and readers to witness or to observe in a way they may give a testimony of a phenomena (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010). This chapter comes after chapters including the voices of other women whose accounts I contrasted with my own experiences.

Because the fieldwork was so compelling, and my life was moving along during the process in the fact that I was unexpectedly having daughters of my own and becoming a mother just like my participants, I became emotionally engaged, reflexive, and hopefully forever changed because of the process of comparing who I was and who I wanted to be in contrast to the stories women shared. I share some of this experience in my writing similarly to that in a reflexive autoethnography.

**Conceptualizing Rigor**

Forms of rigor naturally change as the nature of *academically acceptable* research methodologies evolve. Glaser and Strauss (1967) first established four standards to assess the rigor and quality of grounded theory reports: fit, workability, modifiability, and
relevance. Fit assures the thoroughness of the constant comparison method by describing how closely the claimed concepts actually fit with the incidents they aim to represent.

Workability refers to the utility of the theory when it is used to explain how the problem is being solved. Modifiability gauges whether the theory can be altered as new relevant data emerges. These standards still exist, but in the opinion of Charmaz (2005), most of these previous standards focus more on saturation of categories than ethics or social justice. In an effort to be more cognizant of the social implications of research, Charmaz added four criterion, all of which are in line with my stance as a researcher: *credibility* of the data collection, analysis, and representation process; *originality* of the analysis and its significance; *resonance* of the analysis with participants and larger social trends; and *usefulness* of findings for both everyday life and further research.

**Researcher’s positionality on rigor.** Considering the complex history of the discussions of rigor, especially of rigor in qualitative inquiries, I positioned myself within the argument and defended my stance. Many discussions of rigor focus on how the researchers aim to establish claims of (1) value-free, (2) validity, and (3) reliability in knowledge constructions that are part of a universal, (4) Truth (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). These four goals may be worthy, but my personal stance in research more greatly influenced my expectations of rigor.

First, as a researcher, I do not think that any of my research—or any research for that matter—can be completely value-free, mostly because I know I have several biases that have colored not only how I interacted with my co-researching participants but how I have analyzed their communication and situations. As Charmaz (2005) was concerned about ethics, I too was concerned that it would be unethical for me to have assumed that
any communication (as part of my data collection or my write-up) would not inherently be intertextual or political. To deny this is to deny my very understanding of communication. In addition to this concern, even while I have tried to claim co-ownership with my co-researchers, in the end, I am the one who ultimately assumed the power to represent all others through a text I chose for reporting (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). This power dynamic is one on the forefront of my mind, and it is why I found tools such as member checking so important.

While I believe in certain Truth (e.g., there is a God), I believe Truth is rare because most of our social lives are socially constructed. For example, many may believe in a God, but each will experience this belief and relationship differently and their beliefs are cultivated by society. I believe my convictions about some existing Truths transcend the old arguments between social scientists who argue for finding truths, or Truth, especially regarding symbolic interactionism. If I had to join the Truth versus truths argument, I would argue for truths, aligning more with critical or feministic thinking regarding individual standpoints, power, agency, and social structures (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002); therefore, I am less interested in seeking or imposing any Truth and more interested in exploring and understanding the experienced and constructed truths of my participants.

**Member checking.** Member checking brings me to my second point: I was not interested in validity and reliability for the sake of generalizing. Rather than generalizability, or even transferability, I was more interested in whether my interpretations ring valid for my co-researchers. I also aimed to make our representations
of these truths provocative for readers of whatever texts or performances resulted, which was almost strictly text.

Member checking gave me an opportunity to further credit my findings and at times to go deeper with some themes. True to my interpretive social science perspective, I assumed that my social-scientific knowledge was not superior to that of my co-researchers; therefore, following the advice of Lindlof and Taylor, I asked members to review my analysis (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). I also gave every couple a copy of their interview transcript for them to review. This gave participants the opportunity to correct my analysis or discuss whether they felt I had been unfair or unethical. During member checking conversations, it is “not uncommon for the researcher to learn new information from a member validation, which then can be used to revise the findings” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 243). While participants agreed to have their likeness and their stories included in the project, it was important that the project remained a collaborative effort that could extend beyond the site and moment of the data gathering and reach beyond the interpretative analysis. The importance of this continued collaboration is illustrated in a report from Laura Lewis (2004). Lewis wrote about the researcher Maya Goded, who published a book with photographs of villagers in Guerrero, Mexico, who had agreed to be photographed; however, the villagers felt violated when they barely recognized themselves in what they perceived as degrading and inappropriate portrayals—meanwhile Goded advanced in her career (Lewis, 2004, p. 491). While participants, like among any co-researching team, may not agree with my interpretations completely, my hope is that, as the project ended, my co-researchers felt valued as members contributing to the larger discourses of research.
Aesthetic

One way to assess the value of qualitative work is to see whether it is provocative, whether it moves readers to feel with the participants rather than achieving a mere objective read. Truths can be “multiple, fluctuating, and ambiguous” and, thankfully, many scholars now “believe in the value of humanistic, openly subjective knowledge, such as that embodied in stories and poetry” (Ellingson, 2009, p. 32). In my case, I privileged not only participants’ words but whatever else they judged meaningful, whether it be photographs, personal moments from their lives and stories, poems, songs, or other ways of knowing their worlds. For instance, one couple valued the power of communication they imbued to oranges used to decorate while another talked about the photographs in her hall. Most of my participants did not immediately relate to visual aesthetics; however, I included their words and stories that I found moving as well as my own autoethnographic writings and metaphor.

I took on a duty to privilege aesthetic constructions of these co-researchers by writing and representing their accounts in an aesthetic form. Ellingson (2009) advocated for an evaluation of rigor that is not separate from the evaluation of quality of the re/presentation because it is deeply intertwined with the actual production. I was hoping for a specific shared aesthetic form to emerge from my sample. Interestingly, these women overall, were resistant to include photographs, diaries, or other forms of expressing their legacies. I ultimately focused on interview transcripts and my own writings and autoethnographic interpretations.

Practical Utility
My research interest extends beyond mere curiosity and is inherently “political, potentially revolutionary, and never neutral” (Ellingson, 2009, p. 178). As a public intellectual, it would be my goal to bring ideas to the general public, those outside the worlds of the academy, in order to effect social change. My findings yielded answers that could influence Appalachian families to adopt storytelling practices with the conscious aim to influence resourcing techniques. Missions or food pantries might benefit from exposure to the stories of how people resource beyond the kitchen or pantry. Church small groups or support groups are intimately involved in daily behaviors and attaching meaning to personal lives; therefore, these would be great places to use the results to impact lives. I plan to also take my results and teach a short seminar about the impact of family storytelling to the mothers of our local chapter of MOMs Club® and potentially network to nearby towns to encourage conversations about purposeful and powerful storytelling and intergenerational legacies.

In a more narrow scope of impact, though none the less significant, I anticipated and believed I witnessed a confidence-building experience for the participants as they recognized the stories they are living and began making connections with legacies lived and desired. Linking an examination of the internal identities and past behaviors of their families and selves with future desires linked their conscious with their subconscious, empowering them to more deeply examine their lives.

**Reflexive Journaling**

Reflexivity is vital in helping a researcher account for her own role in social action and helps to sensitize the researcher to different orders of reality in a scene (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The process of grounded theory methodology is constant
comparison and reflection; therefore, it made sense to take time and actually journal about my own potential biases and reflexivity with respect to how I approached the discourses—both those collected from interviews as well as any larger discourses that emerged as relevant. While I was researching residents of my county, I was both an insider and an outsider because—having lived in West Virginia for only a few years—I have not shared an intergenerational experience of poverty. Also, feminist research teaches to de-center from privileging the experiences of white, middle-class women, such as myself. While Wood County is 97% Caucasian (US Census Bureau, 2012), and many people fall into a middle-class category, I may seem to be very similar in some ways, so I needed to be even more aware of the similarities and differences that colored my encounters. Acknowledging similarities, differences, and my own biases was critical in terms of providing adequate context of my findings and overall research process.

Journaling served as an avenue for me to determine my positionality, articulating why I was studying these questions, why I was drawn to see or omit certain themes, and to ask myself where I might have blind spots.

Furthermore, I used my journaling to reconstruct an exemplar account and as an explanation in my write-up as a way to account for my methodological processes. Ellingson (2009, p. 119) claimed that “by explaining my process, I alleviate suspicions that I took an ‘anything goes,’ sloppy attitude toward constructing my representation.”

**Methodology Summary**

In summary, my methods aimed to make space for discourses about family storytelling by encouraging women to openly disclose and to engage me as the researcher to better understand their lives in intergenerational poverty. Using grounded theory, I
proposed to stick with a sound systemic process of inquiry, yet also be flexible for more
direct questions to emerge. I began a process of reflexivity and articulated my own biases
that might have colored my interpretations of the discourses. Using member checking and
reflective journaling, I addressed gross misunderstandings, unethical behaviors, or faulty
interpretations.
Chapter III: The Function of Storytelling in Intergenerational Legacies between Mothers and Daughters

During my preparation for my move to the People’s Republic of China, my mentors handed me a small leather guidebook for my city, complete with their notes about bus routes, American coffee shops, foods to try or avoid, phrases to use to shop or catch a taxi, and many other local tips and resources, as well as blank pages and spaces for me to update information and add my own experiences. For a year, I never left my apartment without this book in my pocket; sometimes I followed the advice blindly without question, though some pages I never actually used.

My experiences confirm that “guidebooks are $25 tools for $4,000 experiences…. [One can] travel like a pro, not because [one is] a super traveler, but because [one has] reliable information” (Steve, 2015). Similarly, family storytelling is passing down a well-loved guidebook filled with handwritten notes and anecdotes, so the one inheriting can navigate with tried and true resources. I turned to this metaphor of a guidebook to answer my first question:

RQ1: What is the function of family storytelling within generational legacies?

Both stories and the act of storytelling sometimes could be resources used along the journey. Storytelling also serves as both signposts and traffic signs to navigate journeys of living out intergenerational legacies by Illuminating Confirmation, Instructing Roads, or Inspiring Exploration. Interestingly, the Absence of stories as scripts halted some legacies and made room to explore alternative legacies.

Originally, I aimed to delineate separate roles between fostering and disrupting legacies; however, I found that disrupting legacies is part of the process of fostering
alternative legacies. It is difficult, or maybe impossible, to distinguish a clear event in which disrupting ends and fostering begins. A more interesting question might have been: *How does disrupting work to foster alternative legacies?* I believe I unpack the answer to this question throughout this chapter, in which I discuss how storytelling fosters legacies as well as moments of disrupting legacies, as these disruptions work to foster alternative legacies, particularly as new legacies are inspired and there is an absence or sequestering of stories or storytelling of the older, disrupted legacy.

**Story and Storytelling as a Resource**

Guidebooks include keys for icons highlighting additional travel tips, such as fun facts, special finds, overrated experiences, insider tips, advisory warnings, and so on, that one might pass along in conversation to resource a loved one in their own journey. Sometimes having a companion to share jokes, share grief, pass the time, or give relationship advice during a trip is also resourceful along the way. Family stories and storytelling are resources as well as channels for resources used for entertainment, remembrance, honor, explanations, or emotional connections.

*Story as a resource.* Betrayed and waiting for an apology, I did what I was taught by my family legacy and sought wisdom and comfort in reading. I read the Jewish historical account of Joseph finally facing Judah, the brother who faked Joseph’s death and sold him into Egyptian slavery. Mesmerized, I read how, in his powerful position, Joseph could have secured restitution or retaliation, but he believed a greater narrative, one that claimed it was God of the Jews that had him sold and not this jealous brother. Meanwhile, he watched as Judah demonstrated that he had not only changed his thinking but was willing to sacrifice his own life to avoid losing another brother—an act of such
great restitution that was, in my eyes, far greater than anything a human could orchestrate. This story somehow soothed my need for an apology and gave me hope that something greater would come. This story has been my companion, so I do not feel alone in my waiting and has improved my perceived relationship with God by exhibiting more patience for God to bring restitution in ugly situations.

Often, stories like these become the resources, not just to inform but to hold something together. For this reason, these stories are treasured and perhaps not shared for guidance, but, instead, offered as a gift or a travel companion in their own right.

For Allison, her grandfather began to tell her stories that brought the two walking together in a unique way. These stories had never been shared before with the granddaughter or her mother but were privately treasured—or sequestered—until they could be cherished by others. These stories were not used for teaching lessons as a guide; in fact, they could be stories without a moral and even about “fun” or “reckless” behavior that is not meant to be remembered as a warning nor a model, but perhaps told for guilty pleasure and connection.

Allison: The [story] that always tickled me the most was when my mom’s dad, Jay, … he was never much of a storyteller, neither of my grandparents were … when he found out that I played guitar, he—he said, “oh”—and … he asked me to give [my guitar] to him, and he picked it up and he started playing this Tennessee Waltz just out of nowhere. And I had no idea that he even played or any idea, and Mom said she didn’t even know that he played guitar. And then he just started telling me stories and stories about how, he said he—he played more fiddle than he listened in school, and he didn’t finish school because he played the fiddle too
much. And we’d talk about like they’d have—they’d have music sessions at barns that they would go out into the country and have like hoedowns and stuff like that. And he talked about one evening they were out, and it started to pour and so everybody left. And he said that the four members of the band, him and his buddies, he said, we jumped into the hay piles. We were like pigs in a blanket until the—until the storm went away. So it was just funny. I think that just the—for me, that was the connection of—we shared this, you know, musical thing that I had never known and that was just kind of the opening up of a—it just made me feel connected with my grandpa, I guess…. Just a fun—and just to think of your grandparents as being young, kind of reckless, you know, that’s just kind of fun.

Allison acknowledged that the story was fun to hear, and to have, and that it bonded the two family members. She did not acknowledge that she learned anything about her own journey, other than learning that she was not alone. The stories served as travel companions on the journey without overt moral or educational guidance.

There are some family stories that are sequestered and later shared for access to resources. Many women had stories about other members in their family, and they shared these stories often to receive something from the listener. Telling such stories is like a traveler sharing her picnic lunch: the listener profits, but the teller also gets something in return, whether it be merely understanding, sympathy, help, or even a bit of vengeance in tarnishing the perpetrator’s image in the eyes of the listener. Laurie discussed why she told some of these stories to her own mother.
Me: You have shared with me some stories about a hurtful woman in your life. When you shared stories … with your mother, why do you think you shared them with your mom?

Laurie: For comfort, to see if I was wrong in my thinking, and because the one who does the hurting gets by with it all the time—and others need to know her true character that only her family gets to see—which is so wrong of me because the Bible tells us to not to take vengeance on those who wrong us, that God will take care of the vengeance when needed—I did not take vengeance but I did tell the bad things that were done by this woman that affected me negatively.

Me: What was your mother’s response?

Laurie: Sometimes shock and usually sympathy and [she] agreed that I was wronged; then she would gently remind me of a how a Christian would handle the situation.

Like a bartered resource, Laurie gave the stories and received all that she wanted: vengeance, sympathy, wisdom, and comfort. The story was a resource that she used to receive other resources she desired. The listener could receive the story as a resource (i.e., the story as gossip) or may exchange resources for the act of storytelling (i.e., deriving pleasure from being the chosen recipient or building friendship from the act of listening and offering resources).

**Storytelling as a resource.** Telling a family story may also be part of a process, perhaps cathartic, that helps people situate themselves in a greater narrative map. Laurie talked about how each member needed to tell stories to help deal with family incidents, great or small.
Me: When you say stories of crises, who tells those?

Laurie: I think we all do. I think everybody that’s affected by it has to work through it by telling people and sharing you—you work through your problems….

Mom talked about how good her childhood was even though they were very poor, just all the neat stuff they did and all the neat stuff that her mom did for them, making pretty clothes, and cooking, and just different things they did. I mean she saw a lot of the hardships as what she remembers as good memories.

In using storytelling as a resource, Laurie recognized that everyone needs to storytell. She believed that storytelling was how people worked through problems. She highlighted how her mother made sense of hard times by celebrating how resourceful the family became. It was through storytelling to herself and her children that Laurie’s mother became resilient.

**Story as Signpost or Navigation**

Storytelling served as signposts for younger generations modeling and showcasing how life has been or how life could be lived.

**Illuminating confirmation.** Storytelling can serve as route confirmation signpost, illuminating that a life is, indeed, following an existing legacy. Stories that reveal legacies are often told with the function of honoring. These functions are motivated by the desire to illuminate the desirable aspects of a legacy that may overshadow less desirable aspects, to help frame a legacy in such a way that the story crops out the less desirable, or even helps hide or sequester competing narratives. Women often told these stories about the people they loved or even to freeze some people in time, such as their children when they were young and cute. “I just want people to love him the way I loved
him,” Laurie explained why she framed stories about her brother in ways that positioned him as a highly admirable man. Family stories are given and storytelling happens as a way to honor family members and help place them and their actions in high esteem of the listeners. Perhaps there is a residual esteem the teller hopes will trickle down to them by family affiliation, or at least they will avoid any residual shame in the shared family identity.

Laurie demonstrated honoring as she explained that she told people about her late brother to help others esteem him. She summed up his life as one that was used for good. Interestingly, she said that she hated revealing that he had AIDS because of her own inner struggle to manage whether people would label him a drug addict or a homosexual. She felt it would be more honoring to clarify that he was not a homosexual, after which distinction she immediately changed the focus from him to herself, commenting about how she would have accepted either label, and she had a duty to not be prejudiced. Her continued focus stayed on herself and how she personally used his story, suggesting that this family story had become part of her, and, in managing it, she was managing herself. She claimed to be using his story to caution others to see warning signs and get help.

Laurie: I don’t—I guess when people ask me if I have any brothers and sisters. I say, yes, my—you know, I had a brother, but he passed away. Oh, and they want to know why. And—and I hate to say, well he—he had AIDS because most people think he was homosexual. Well, he was not. He was a drug addict. And it’s—I guess—and we would’ve loved him no matter which one it was. And I know we’re not supposed to be prejudiced and all, but anyway. It just—I just want people to love him the way I loved him and respect him and ...
Me: So telling the story helps people love and respect him, you think?

Laurie: Uh huh [yes].

Me: As a way to honor him.

Laurie: Yeah. Yes, as a way to honor him. And in a way that his life is used for good. You know, I don’t always tell people the story, but if they tell me their kid’s having trouble at school, he’s being bullied or a teacher’s bullying him, or he doesn’t want to go to school, I tell them you need—you need to find some help. You need to talk to him.

Laurie retold the story of her late brother—a victim to AIDS in the early 1990s while serving as an advocate and a counselor—framed in a way that brings honor to him and fosters a positive relationship between listeners and his memory. She was not falsifying the story; she was truly proud of how he chose to live out the remainder of his life and wanted people to see him beyond his poor choices, yet she was still motivated to help move people past dwelling on his risky and stigmatized choices.

Storytelling about her late brother is an act of honor that Laurie recognized, and she was allowing the story to influence lives. While Laurie talked about the story, she shared about her late brother and explained that, while she may not tell the story to others, she allowed the moral and his legacy of helping others continue through her as she tried to help others recognize similar stories in the lives of their loved ones—so they may intervene the way she wished the family had intervened for her brother. Her actions to help “his life [be] used for good” were honoring him—or at least the character she created in his memory through her stories.
Participants were often happy to tell stories of honor, so excited at times it did appear they were feeling some residual honor bestowed on themselves. At the beginning of one interview, I asked a couple if they had a favorite story, and the mother was anxious to share a great story about her own mother.

Me: Do you have a favorite story? Family story?

Connie: It—it’s a story that mom always like—always liked to tell too. When she was 15, her mom was sick and died of diphtheria. But on—on her death bed, she said, “I don’t want any of you”—she had four daughters, and she said, “I don’t want any of you girls to go and live with Aunt Emma.” Aunt Emma was evidently living on her farm by herself, and she said, “I don’t want you to go and live with her, none of you.” And of course, my mom’s mom died, and Aunt Emma did come and ask for one of the girls to come and live with her. She said, “If you would come and live with me, then I will give you this farm.” So my mom, who was just a freshman in high school, she must’ve been either 15 or 16, she did go. And Aunt Emma did give her the farm, but she was such a crotchety old woman, nobody—nobody liked her. She was just nasty. She made my mom heat water in the washhouse on rocks that were heated. Now they had free gas and they had a stove, but my mom had to use the washhouse. And I remember from—my dad told me this, he said, one time he came home from work, and he said—he said, “Your mom was in tears because Aunt Emma got upset with her because when she locked the garage, she turned the key to the left when it should’ve been to the right.” That was the kind of nasty lady that she was. And the day she died, there was a buzzer on the kitchen that went up to her room that she would ring.
anytime she wanted something. And I was—I was told that the day that she died, my mom took a broom and knocked that buzzer off the wall. And to know my mom, who is very, very—a very small lady, very easygoing, very quiet, very, you know, not—not—not easily aggravated, I think’s a good ending to that story. But she did—she did get the farm. She did get the farm and that—and that’s where we were all raised. And I have a picture on the wall, Allison can attest to that, of the house that she grew up in. So the—the—what she got, 220 acres with the farmhouse and out building and—I’m sure that was [inaudible 0:03:50.9] American Dream. But her—she, at 15 or 16, had [the] potential to have the American Dream.

Connie relished in telling this story about her teenage mother accomplishing the American Dream against the will of her mother (Connie’s deceased grandmother) and in the face of cruel adversity. Honoring her mother, she authored her mother as a heroine who provided for the family. At first blush, the segment of her mother knocking the call bell from the wall seemed unflattering; however, I believe sharing this event revealed that her mother was truly enduring a cruel reality of which she was constantly aware.

While Connie positioned her mother as a heroine, she did not actually label her mother. Elizabeth did label her mother as superwoman-esque. She summarized her view of Shirley and fashioned example summaries to support her claim of her mother’s super powers.

Elizabeth: She’s very superwoman-esque, my mom, there’s a lot of people who, um, who, who—I mean even my dad, it even became an issue in their m[arriage]—Mom just shined. You know she can’t help it; she just shines.
Everybody loves her. Men love her; they want to hang with her. Women, like you, can hang out; you know, I’m not a girly girl, but she can get down with me; she can get down with girly girls; she can do anything. And so I think that [turns to address Mother] in your marriage, I think Dad became resentful of you because you were better than he—I mean, he’ll tell you that she was better at business than he was—I think that, um, … Mom got out. She made it out. Like we were saying earlier, she’s kind of the American dream story.

Shirley: You come from nothing.

Elizabeth: You come from nothing, and you get it [Shirley is affirming], but all of that does have a price, and that’s one thing that you pay too.

Elizabeth was telling these stories about her mother to bring honor to her for all of her great qualities in social, work, and personal arenas. Elizabeth doubly honored her mother by attributing Shirley’s faults as part of her being so super that she outshined people who could not take being outdone, and she sacrificed personally to maintain her status.

Elizabeth carefully framed her mother as a character whose faults even served an honorable purpose.

**Honoring by keeping the memories alive.** Similar to sitting around a photo album, storytellers tell stories like historical markers with the purpose to remember or even to relive or reenact the past. Tellers may be reliving the moments they narrate, and often they narrate collectively as a family. Debbie and Gawgie joined together to recall their late grandmother and build a collective memory of her.

Debbie: But my grandmother, she—she was like this person … when they would get in trouble in life, they would cross the country and make their way to her
house. She was just one of these people that you just knew was there for you, no matter what, even if you were doing something she didn’t think was right, she just was this—this—Gawgie, how do you describe her?

Gawgie: Like that. That’s kind of how she was.

Debbie: A solid intelligent woman, and just solid.

Me: So, can you give me an example or tell me a story about a time that happened, somebody’s in trouble but they went to her?

Debbie: Which one?

Gawgie: It was—

Debbie: Doug, not Doug, was it Doug?

Gawgie: It was Doug, yeah. I don’t know how he got here from Lincoln, but—and my dad was not a person to have—you know, people who had all this hair, he didn’t like that…. He liked the [hair] trimmed up nice, and Doug came from Nebraska with all his little problems, and his hair was this big. And they didn’t make one bit of difference. They just took him in and took care of him.

Me: Okay. So was she a woman that—how would she kind of take care of you? When you say, “take care of you,” what would she do?

Gawgie: She’d make sure you had something to eat, always.

Me: Okay, always?

Debbie: Yeah.

Gawgie: And—

Debbie: Clean clothes and she just would talk turkey with you. I mean, she would. She would talk to you about anything and was just interested. She just absolutely
was interested in what—even as a little kid, I remember her being interested in what I had to say. Of course, it helped that I loved to— those things I loved to do, I enjoyed cleaning, and cooking, so I would go to her house and we’d—we’d do spring cleaning and—

Gawgie: My mother was a country woman, a good—like Debbie says—very solid person. I think that’s a good word to describe her.

Debbie and Gawgie worked together to piece this story together, helping one another remember more details of the grandmother who passed and asserting their individual perspectives. This process of storytelling gives an opportunity for families to remind one another of details, stories, or legacies and perhaps even defend the storied version of the truth they wish to remain.

Remembering family stories is a way of keeping the family together across miles and generations. Often families will tell stories just to recall the story. Connie said her family would actually begin some stories by saying, “remember when.”

Me: Is there any other way, Connie, that you kind of document family stories?

Connie: Not, not documented. This week I was trying to write the names on the back of pictures so that you know who they are [inaudible 1:05:40.9] get older. It—it’s all—we’re all spread apart. One sister lives in Washington State. My other sister lives in Texas. My brother lives on the farm in Pennsylvania. And we don’t get together very often. My brother has requested that we all, that Brenda and Denise and I come up to see him in October. So I think we will do that. And then at that time, there’ll be a lot of storytelling and “remember when” and that kind of thing. And too, I’m the baby of the family and there’s six and a half years
between my sister and I. And so that there must be eight years in between my
brother, or nine maybe, and then 16 between my older sister. So we’re really
spread out. Not anything written down or documented, but it’s just through, you
know, verbally, you know, what—what’s the memories, you know, verbal
memories.

In this excerpt, Connie also revealed a desire to remember, using photographs
with labels to help the memories live and pass along. Though some of her statement was
not audible, it was clear that she was alluding to the fact that, as people get older, keeping
the memories requires more deliberate actions to do so; therefore, she was using
photographs and labeling them.

**Honoring by delighting in one another.** Part of revealing a legacy through stories
is to enjoy the journey, much like stopping at a lookout over a ravine just to take in the
sights along the way. These stories are told for enjoyment, stories many in the family can
appreciate. Often, these are stories that make listeners laugh at something silly or coo at a
cute child, but the motivation is to have fun.

When asked about storytelling, several families recalled retelling family stories
about entertaining things family members said or did, especially things people did as
children. The stories had been retold so often that years had passed, and younger
generations were referencing or telling them second-hand.

Heather and her mother, Pauline, both remembered stories told about them at a
young age; these stories were treasured and retold for entertainment purposes. Heather
recognized that her mother was good at telling these stories; in other words, her mother
told them to the family’s liking. Heather deferred to her mother to tell the stories about both her mother and herself.

Heather: Mom’s good at telling the little kids stories … stories about when we were little and when the kids were little, grandkids, her grandkids.

Pauline: [inaudible 0:00:28.8] You know and how they interpreted words.

Heather: She’s good at words.

Me: Like? Can you give an example of one?

Pauline: Well, Heather was playing in the living room, and I was fixing myself a cup of tea, and it was really hot. I kind of felt it squiggle all the way down, and I said, “Oh dear, I burned my esophagus.” And she came around the corner and said, “Yippee, we won’t have to eat it for dinner.”

Heather: I thought she meant asparagus, obviously. I was bright from an early age.

Me: That’s cute.

Pauline: So things like that. Now my mother’s really good at telling stories. She remembers everything from the time she was born, I think.

Both Heather and Pauline represented storytelling by reminiscing over entertaining family moments. Pauline told this story about her daughter, but she also recalled a story told about her:

Pauline: And so she [Pauline’s mother] tells this story that the wives got together; they—they wanted their husbands to be a part of the church community, so they were going to have an ice cream social and—and invite their husbands. Well, I don’t know how I got in on it, but I was begging my daddy to go. And he said,
“Oh if I go the church roof would fall in.” Well, he would’ve probably done just about anything for me at that time, you know, I was three years old. So he went. And I guess I backed up, put my hands on my hips and looked up at the 6’1” guy that was my dad, and I said, “See there, Daddy, the roof didn’t fall in.”

Pauline tells this second-hand story about herself, crediting the telling to her mother. Pauline and Heather smiled and giggled at the thought. The event was instrumental in starting a family legacy of church membership, so while it is a cute story, it might have been remembered and cherished partially for its importance in the family history.

Many mothers have stories they retell and relive about their children when they were little. These stories are often retold so often and with such passion that other family members remember and can tell the story second-hand. Anne told a story about Beth, and even Beth was touched to hear the story about the little girl she once was but does not fully remember:

Anne: And she did, she told him she was sorry; of course, she didn’t know what she’s doin’. I mean she was just too little, and I was busy with the groceries, but anyway what was so sweet about the whole story was he looked at her, and he grinned, and she, and she, oh, it was so, so cute. She handed the card up; it could make you cry, and, um, it was so sweet how she did it. and I was so proud of her and then we started to walk away, and Cody was grinning and we walked away from the counter a little bit and he goes, “Wait a minute,” and he had his candy case, and it was glass, right over from this counter, and he goes “Wait a minute,” and he went to that case, and he got some penny candy for her and her sister and gave it to ’em. [Beth laughing]. And he said, “Thank you.”
Beth: Aw!

Anne: It was so precious. [Beth laughs].

Anne and Beth both enjoyed telling and hearing this story again almost forty years later. This story was kept primarily for what “was so sweet” rather than to use as an illustration of a lesson. The story is situated in a larger legacy of being honest and took place because as a child, Beth accidentally violated the family legacy and had to learn that legacy through trial and error. Many stories climax at a point or punch line because they do violate expectancies.

Violating social expectancies can be humorous or fun. Jannie and Jacklynn previously said they did not have many stories of history passed down to them; however, they revealed that they had documented their own stories simply for laughs.

Jannie: I was going to say, you [referencing Jacklynn]. We always have a funny story about mother because she’s always doing crazy stuff. I mean I even made a book on it.

Jacklynn: Yeah, she’s made a book [laughing].

Me: I would like to see it.

Jacklynn: Where do I have that?

Jannie: I don’t know.

Jacklynn: Yeah, it’s always about Mother and the stupid things Mother does.

Me: Like what?

Jannie: Like what?! I will tell you like what [Jacklynn laughing]. I [don’t] even know when this was, how many years ago was a pogo-stick story? When was that? I would say it was at least five years ago, maybe more. We were up at my
dad’s house. I don’t know why you were there. She was there. We were, I think we were getting ready to leave.

Jacklynn: I was getting Joshua.

Jannie: My dad had a small pogo stick he was going to get my girls. I don’t even think I can jump on a pogo stick. So I tried, and I couldn’t do it, and Mom was like, “Ah, I can do that. Let me see that.” So she took it down on the sidewalk, and it’s just raining a little bit [laughing]. She gets up on the pogo stick, jumps; it goes flying out; her feet go flying up; she lands on her back on the sidewalk.

Jacklynn: In the flower bed.

Jannie: In the flower bed. And she’s trying to get up, and she’s rocking back and forth trying to get up. And my dad’s like, “Give me the pogo stick” [Jacklynn and Jannie laughing].

Jacklynn: Jannie is laughing her butt off!


Jacklynn: It was very funny. I mean I was even laughing. I was laughing, laughing, and that’s why [I] couldn’t get up, because the one thing I was heavier then too, and I couldn’t, but I just couldn’t get up so Jannie’s going, “Rock, rock, rock, rock.”

Jannie: She’s always doing crazy things like that. We were at the Amish country sitting in the store waiting for some women to get done, and, I don’t even know how we got on this either, but she gets down in the middle.
Jacklynn: We were at the register. We took a bunch of church women, with this, with my husband and I had the church, and so we’re sitting in the chairs there waiting for the other ladies to get back, and Annette was there, Annette Smeaks, and they were talking about doing push-ups, right?

Jannie: I don’t remember, I just remember her getting down on the floor trying to do some push-ups.

Jacklynn: At the check-out counter.

Jannie: And she couldn’t.

Jacklynn: No, I couldn’t do one [laughing].

Jannie: Basically she was just laying in the floor, in the store at the Amish country.

Jacklynn: Yeah. I’m just not embarrassed to do stuff like that. You know, you just have fun. So it makes them write stories about me because I’m, I do dumb stuff.

Jannie and Jacklynn interrupted each other and even pointed out details the other did or did not remember, suggesting that the women believed they both own a version of some of these stories if they were both present. In co-storytelling, they were both asserting the details they believe are important. Jannie and Jacklynn enjoyed these family stories so much that they not only documented them but happily recounted them to me, laughing along as they did. The stories suggest aspects about this family, such as who individuals are within the story and who the collective family is, if they think these stories are worth remembering. This duo thought these stories were told in a good spirit of fun.

Jacklynn: I was standing there with my finger in the food. Ah, we got so many stories.
Jannie: That’s what we like to do—we like to make fun of Mom [laughing].

Jacklynn: And I don’t mind.

Jannie: And I don’t think we do it to be mean though.

Jacklynn: Oh no, no, no.

Jannie: I think we are just...

Jacklynn: Just for laughs.

Jannie: Remembering.

Jannie and Jacklynn clarified that the stories may not be told to honor their mother, directly, but they are not told to dishonor her; rather, they are told for entertainment and shared joy. Jannie also acknowledged that the family engages in storytelling as part of remembering.

**Instructing roads.** Women often told stories to instruct their daughters about certain paths and ways of doing things. These stories might be to point daughters to those paths: stories that help label or indicate the features and condition of the path; stories that caution; stories that allude to appropriate narrative maps; or stories that simply remind daughters of what the mother wants her to remember.

**Pointing/guiding the way.** At the end of the New Bridge over Route 50, arrows indicate drivers’ options to exit first to Belpre or second to Athens. These signs guide a traveler’s way. Stories work to guide a listener to goals as well. Stories are told to reveal actions or conditions that will lead to certain outcomes, so listeners can determine if they would like to repeat the story (or legacy) in their own life.

Stories of great success or failure are emotionally moving to persuade younger generations to heed the lessons learned. Pauline and Heather discussed stories about how
the family financially resourced their lives through God’s provision and how that brought them to establishing their families in Wood County. I began asking about how Pauline learned that she could resource through the Lord, and Heather added that Pauline actually had several good stories about this legacy.

Me: What’s the first thing you do when you think, okay, I have this financial need.

Pauline: Well.

Heather: She’s got some good ones on this.

Pauline: When we first opened [the franchise store], it opened well. The next month, the bottom fell out…. And, you know, I always hand that to God because there’s no way we’re where we are without God…. So, you know, there were still ups and downs, as there always will be, but we just always—I—I can remember saying, “We’re going to make it. We’ll make it.” And…

Me: How did you know that God would help you with your finances?... How did you know you could ask?

Pauline: I mean, I didn’t know what his will was going to be. We had prayed from the get-go, I mean from the time that we even started talking about it whether or not to do it. But it seemed as we went along, the doors opened…

Heather: Yeah, it didn’t always work out.

Pauline: When they left to go to Florida to do this franchise, we were left with this old building…. It was such a dog that we couldn’t get a real estate agent to take it and put it on the market. And so we—we started trying to figure out how to sell it…. I remember getting on my knees. Heather was four years old at that time, and
I said—I said, “now Lord, we prayed about this move; we believe that this is your will for us.” … And I said, “But we don’t want to walk and leave this old building for this old fellow,” and—and so I just kind of laid it out there. And, I kid you not, 30 minutes later, I had a phone call, and I sold it over the phone…. And Winston probably remembers more about—I don’t remember too much more about it; that’s the part I remember. And so he was just kind of—and then I heard somebody say, “Well, I don’t think God cares one way or the other where you move. I think he cares.” I think he cares what we do and how he’s going to use us wherever he wants us to go. And so anyway, it’s just kind of been a thread all the way through our life. I mean, it hasn’t been perfect. I’m, you know, nobody is, but trust is what it’s all about. It’s got to be trust.

Heather: They always put God first. I mean they…

Me: Could you have told that story?

Heather: Uh huh [yes].

Me: You’ve heard it a few times?

Heather: Oh yeah.

Me: Have you told any of the other grandkids or anybody that story or stories like that? Do you tell your children stories from Grandma?

Heather: Sure, yeah, I’d say anybody in this family, probably, you know, as they get—it depends on the age, which parts you tell them and how much they can process and all that kind of thing, but yeah, I’d say that’s a big story is—is moving here, starting a business, and how Mom and Dad, it wasn’t always easy and…
Pauline: Probably wasn’t always easy for the kids either because…

Heather: No, it wasn’t. It was a sacrifice.

Pauline: You know, it was a lot of work. I, you know, I did—I did the accounting for our business, and so I’d have to do that after the dishes were done, and the kids were in bed a lot of times or when they were playing in the daytime. And then Winston always worked hard.

Heather: Yeah, that was another biggie. He worked hard. There wasn’t any slacking.

Me: Now is that something that you feel like is also maybe a family legacy is hard work?

Heather: Uh huh [yes].

Pauline answered my question about her knowledge of resourcing through Grace, and she answered with testimonial stories about trying and succeeding in this area. Heather suggested from the beginning that Pauline could answer the question with family stories. After Pauline’s stories, I asked Heather about those stories, and she confirmed that those stories served the family and had been told and retold to a point she could tell them for her mother and probably had even told them to her own children to illustrate Pauline’s example. Heather added that she perceived the provision was not just Grace but her father’s hard work; the stories are always open to other interpretations.

While Pauline jumped straight into a story to teach about how the family resourced their lives, sometimes families offer an abstract answer and may use stories to support their understanding. The stories served, in both instances, to point and guide the way for listeners.
Anne identified a family legacy that had been passed to her and she had successfully passed to her daughters about being frugal while hopeful with faith. While she talked about the legacy abstractly, she referenced a family story to demonstrate the principle. Her daughter agreed that this was a successful, long, and living legacy.

Anne: Well, well, I’m going to say one thing this way; when things are going well, I try to look ahead and think you don’t squander everything at one point. You try to be, what’s the word I’m searching for?

Me: You try to make sure you store up a little bit for the future?

Anne: Yes, yes. There’s a word I’m trying to think of.

Me: Is that ... did you see that in your family? In your mom? Is that a legacy she handed down to you? Or is that something that you have done that’s new?

Anne: I guess I saw her being frugal.

Me: Okay.

Anne: And then, like, when we were married, it was like ... like I said, well, let’s take my money now. Okay? And what I ... the money I have. It’s like I knew the car I wanted, and I knew that God was going to put that car in front of me because I knew exactly what I wanted. But in preparation for that, I would put away so much money of mine, and then I would allow myself so much money. And this is how, okay, like the savings we have and these different things, she learned it, it is, you know, I mean you can go blow everything you’ve got, you know, in ... in ... in a day’s time, a week’s time or a month’s time, if you want to. You know, but it’s ... it’s ... I guess I watched my mom. She was having a hard time, but yet she was frugal and she knew how to stretch things with her family. And then with
marrying Gilbert, he was very ... thinking, I’m searching for a word, it’s like if he could fix something, he’s not going to call somebody to do it.

Me: Okay.

Anne: And she learned—

Beth: Self-sufficient.

Anne: Yeah, and she learned that from her dad. And so did Michelle.

Beth: I try to do things on my own.

Anne: Yes, learning to do things on your own.

Me: Yeah, okay. So do you feel like you ... you learned to financially resource your life the way your mom did?

Beth: Absolutely.

Anne recognized that the legacy was part of her mother’s way of being; while she never recalled her mother lecturing her about frugality, she recalled witnessing it in her mother’s actions and attributed the teaching to her mother. While there is no recollection or documentation of the mother verbally telling a story of frugality, her life lived was a story or script for Anne to read and enact.

This excerpt from Anne and Beth also illustrated how legacies and stories allude to narrative maps, discussed in the following section.

**Alluding to appropriate narrative maps: Opportunities put in our way.** “The Log Cabin sells oils cheaper than buying through a doTerra rep, so I’m headed there. Yes, it’s the first exit once you’re in Ohio, so I can be there and back in 25 minutes and pick up the baby before the end of your lunch break. I’m about to cross the state line, so I’ll have to hang up; I’ll call you in 15 minutes when I’m back in West Virginia.” This was my
conversation with my husband as I embarked on a monthly shopping trip. Many of our friends talk about driving Route 50 over the new bridge to Ohio; in West Virginia, we have perceived a lot of freedom to speed and use cellphones, but, in Ohio, we follow the rules to avoid penalties from the seemingly more prevalent and strict law enforcement. We could exhibit consistent behavior, but we feel restricted by our perception of differing realities. Each narrated mapped area offers a different experience or reality. Our life stories are situated on such routes; we may feel that we are all traveling on the same one, but we are having different experiences by the constructed realities we perceive with the map we are reading. In the next chapter, I discussed two main maps of Grace and Works in more depth. In this section, I merely want to show the function of alluding to such maps.

Anne referenced a story about when she saved money for a car in faith that her actions were in accordance with God’s plan, which suggested that she situated this legacy as an action that falls on a greater narrative map of faith (Grace), but the resourcing (receiving God’s provision) still required the input of her physical actions.

Anne: I knew the car I wanted, and I knew that God was going to put that car in front of me…. But in preparation for that, I would put away so much money of mine. … I mean you can go blow everything you’ve got, you know, in—in—in a day’s time, a week’s time, or a month’s time if you want to.

Anne revealed that while she believed she was in control to “put away so much money” or “blow it,” her life was happening on a larger map written by God, who had placed a specific car within her reach if she could faithfully navigate to it.
Anne’s idea of humans navigating our way through a larger map area in which God has placed opportunities in our reach is shared among others. Connie talked about a similar view. Like Anne, Connie believed that “opportunities have been put in my way,” and we must work to “look for the opportunities.”

Connie: I try to enter each day with the mindset of “I am not in control.” I don’t put my shoes … [on without crediting that] God allows me to do that. He’s very gracious in that I have every—I have every genetic opportunity to have the same kind of Christianity that my mom had, but I don’t. That’s—that’s part of faith building for me because I really expected to walk the same walk that she did. You know, and there are those that would argue with that, you know, “well, that’s just the way the cards fall.” But I don’t think the cards just fall. So I, I, I try to …, I try to look for the opportunities that have been put in my way, and I credit them to Him.

Connie alluded to living a life not of chance, but of design and opportunity. She believed we are placed within a larger narrative, and we have choices to look for things “put in our way” and the humility to admit they were placed there by God, not self.

Most of the narrative maps were variations built on a faith in Christ. I chose to include at least one mother-daughter couple who did not practice a Christian faith. Before I interviewed them, the mother talked of the effects of the Mayan Calendar prediction and her horoscopes. Though she was unique to my sample for not professing a faith in Christ, she did talk about her life belonging on some greater narrative map in motion by something or someone larger than humankind. Her daughter surprised me with her turning point story, in which she credited prayer. Many of the women I interviewed in
Wood County talked about being active in a prayer life with God or Christ, and so this narrative would have been available to Elizabeth. She acknowledged that she had not been living with a prayer practice, but, once she began, it was as if a new road or map was available.

The daughter talked about being engrossed in her personal narrative, and she made a life choice to change her road once she realized her personal narrative might be pressing against fate, a larger narrative.

Elizabeth: So you’re living in everybody’s dream world and you were miserable, and I think that was that was, uh—the first thing I remember was Mom showed up in North Carolina and—actually I can take you probably down to one day where it all started to change and that was when Pat committed suicide—and my mom had a really good friend who was going through a lot, and I was going through a lot and she knew it. And instead of being with him she came to me, as she should, I was her kid, but the say—anyway it was all I I was a mess; I couldn’t talk; I was crying rolling around because I was—soul my soul was completely frazzled. And I prayed for the first time in a really long time, and I think I remember walking into your room, and I said, “Mom, I feel better. I think it’s going to be okay now.” And Pat committed suicide that night. And I remember thinking to myself, “I’m not going to make that be in vain.” Because I know how bad that affected her to not have been able to be there for her friend. And so I think that started [it]. And so I decided I needed to go home; I don’t deserve to be here right now, so I moved home. I moved back in with my dad. Still not completely clear, but it was a steppingstone; I came home and I dropped everybody, all of my friends, I quit
hanging out with everybody; I went back to school, got my two-year degree, and, uh, I met Josh, my husband.”

Though she did not elaborate about a greater faith or understanding, Elizabeth associated feeling better after praying, after connecting her current situation to something greater. This transcendent idea preceded or coincided with the events of her recognizing that the part she was playing in life was not what the character she had played deserved, so she made that character return home and make changes and start new goals and relationships. It is interesting too that she connected her life to the life of the late friend Pat, and she felt their lives were connected in a larger story, and it was her duty for her role to be deserving of such a great sacrifice. It was moments like these that revealed that these women believe their life stories are connected or are taking part along a greater narrative, whatever they may believe that greater narrative is. It is almost as if Elizabeth saw herself as a player in an ecosystem and her being unstable or out of place put ripples in the life of Pat and others, and so she needed to return home and get stable for the sake of others.

What is also phenomenal about Elizabeth’s story is how it exemplified a major shift in her greater narrative map. When she said she “prayed for the first time in a really long time…. I think it’s going to be okay now,” she demonstrated that she had been living with one type of subconscious faith in a map and decided to take a different path or map area. After what she felt was a shift, she “came home and dropped everybody … went back to school … met … my husband.” Metaphorically, she had her cruise control set going down a familiar path and decided to try a different route, but she was not in the exit lane to make a gradual merge or exit; rather, she slammed on her brakes in the middle of the interstate, cut off other drivers to cross lanes toward the exit, and took a
different path, potentially having caused others in her life to reroute or detour or maybe
even wreck themselves. These major shifts happen. Her mother experienced—or fell
victim—to people making drastic exits as well, such as that of her husband’s:

Shirley: Our dream had always been that we were both going to work real, real
hard and then we were going to own our own agency, our own ad agency
together, and then we were going to be able to retire by the time we were 55. That
was that was our little road map that we had all planned out. Well, when we’re
about 45, he quits his job and just stays at home and—to write this book. So I’ve
got two kids in college. I’ve got a mortgage that’s out the wazoo, and he made
more money than I did and now he quit. So I’m—you know, I was tolerant for
two years; then going into the third year, I became quite vocal and said, “You
know, you’ve got to get your act together and do something ‘cause I’m—I’m
going to fall apart here.” And, well, he did. He decided he was going to do an ad
agency as we had always planned, but he was going to do it with this other lady.
And I said, “Well, I thought that was what you and I were going to do,” and he
said, “Well, but you need to support me so I can go do this.” So they set it up as a
Sub S, which means that, you know, the comp—the taxes, everything rolls right
into our personal [finances], so I’m paying the taxes. He’s not taking a salary, he
gives her half the company, and I’m footing the bill…. Long story short, I came
home one day, found an e-mail where she—he didn’t answer it but, you know,
she professed her love and couldn’t live without him and blah, blah, blah, and I
said, “I understand things like that happen. It’s—you either get rid of her or I’m
gone.” And he said, “Well, she’s done nothing wrong,” and I said, “Yes, she has. And well, there’s nothing between us.”

Elizabeth: Well, plus the [inaudible 0:05:48:4]. I mean it’s kind of irrelevant; Mom and I were both in her wedding to her husband.

Shirley: She was my friend.

Elizabeth: Yeah, she was Mom’s friend. So, like, when they got married, I was, like, “This is the second wedding of yours I’ve been in. Isn’t that exciting?”

Shirley: So I—I just told him, I said, “It’s either her or it’s me ‘cause I just—I’m not going to hang around and do this.” And he said, “Well, she’s done noth—I can’t—I can’t” [inaudible 0:06:13.1].

Elizabeth: Oh, he kept up the façade.

Shirley: I could’ve even forgiven it, I think, had he made other choices, but he didn’t. And so....

Shirley found one day that she was probably not living on the “map” she thought: “That was that was our little road map that we had all planned out.” At some point, her life partner began living from a different narrative, a different map, and that action made Shirley believe that she was no longer on the same map and that the dream map could no longer exist, especially because the map was secretly in motion on another plane with another woman. Perhaps she thought there was still hope because she said she thought she could have forgiven him, but his actions prevented her forgiveness. It is clear that, whether an affair was happening or not, Shirley believed that it had been, and she believed that the greater narrative she had been living was a lie—she awoke to a reality
that she was not living on the map she once believed—a map of a thriving partnership personally and professionally with this husband.

Larger narrative maps potentially explained much of the existential questions women had. While there existed narratives about small events, or history, or planned futures, they all held some belief about how they were situated within the universe and if there was a greater design or designer with whom to interact.

**Indicating features and conditions of the path.** Signs indicate where a river can be crossed, or where to exit to catch a new road; likewise, some stories are told to define life or its laws (within the teller’s beliefs or truths). Signage also indicates levels of overflow waters or when lanes widen or narrow. Family stories are often kept and used to help people understand the conditions of a certain path, especially a passing lane, assuming that the knowledge would be helpful if history might repeat itself. Amarylis used her story like a “Short Cut Ahead” sign. She wanted to use her and her husband’s competing stories to indicate a fork in the road and the next steps would be crucial to choose the path that would be more correct. The correct fork followed her own path and made known how attaining her master’s degree immediately created opportunities for jobs and promotions that were not previously available and were not available to her husband, who did not have a college education. The experience was told matter-of-factly for her children to see what she believed were basic, unspoken laws of life: she had arrived because she chose the path or vehicle of education.

Amarylis: So they can see my story. “Okay, Mom was able to have a better education than Dad,” and it opens more doors in terms of jobs than what Paco has right now. And I think that they, I mean, it hasn’t been hard for me to find a job.
Actually, I never struggled to find a job here in Wood County, and I find really good jobs…. And after finishing my master degree I changed my position from three steps up and finish being operations manager of the company I was working for and have an increase in income tremendously in just six years. So they knew that it was worth it.

Whether or not she verbally told her children this story, she expected them to see it being lived (“so they can see my story”) and believe that it is always this way: education is a means to bettering one’s life. In her own words: “Education open doors to, um, be able to have your family, get what you want in life, travel if you want to travel—without education it’s hard to find a job.” She posted education as a sign showing the direction to success.

Legacies are told with stories of caution for the following generations, with hope to help generations avoid troubles that previous generations faced. Often negative experiences had to have happened (or maybe narrowly escaped) to create emotionally laden stories and burdens that can help younger generations avoid the same.

LaSara believed that her stories were vicariously lived by her children so that they learned from the stories. In this case, she told unflattering stories of her past to caution her children from following the same rocky paths she had chosen. LaSara strongly believed in the power of stories shared, not just personally experienced, to influence the lives of her children.

LaSara: No, I’ve been telling her a lot of stories. I mean, if you want to look at it on the Christian aspect because of the way I grew up. I grew up fast in Dallas, and I’ve told her ways I don’t want her to grow up because of things I did.
Me: Yeah. So you tell ... you tell stories of things you did that you don’t want—
LaSara: I don’t want her to do. And I honestly think that through what I lived through, growing up fast, or choosing that lifestyle, I ... I have been able to raise my kids and keep them out of trouble. Because they kind of live through my stories and they’re ... you know, and now that they’re both Christians, I think that I can say, you know, I needed to live that kind of life because then I honestly think that they wouldn’t be where they’re at today. I know that sounds crazy but that’s my story and Pastor ... said that last night. It’s my story and I believe it.

LaSara’s stories were told for instruction. She even perceived her repertoire of negative past stories as a major part of the life she was meant to live so that she could use those stories as instructions. She exhibited some justification or release of guilt to retell how her pastor almost approved of her sinful past in light of the good it could do for her children.

**Evoking gratitude for where you are and from where you came.** A sign may remind travelers that an overpass may ice over before other areas are icy; this is not new information, rather, a reminder. Sometimes stories instruct in a way that is not necessarily novel, but more a way to remind listeners of a truth they already know. This is often a way of reminding people of where they have been, what legacy they have inherited, and even to be grateful for their current situation.

Debbie and Gawgie shared a family story they used to remind their daughters to be appreciative of the little things, and how they came from women who appreciated the small things in life. They told this story during Christmas time, when there seemed to be a focus on acquiring more things.
Debbie: One of the fun Christmas stories, there was one around Christmas, is—see the oranges up there?

Me: Uh huh [yes].

Debbie: I, over the years, I haven’t done [it] every single year, but over the years have tried to use an orange somewhere in my decorating. And I always tell the story of my mother’s mother and her sister told about at Christmas; they each would get one orange. And they would eat it section by section, half a section by section. Then after they ate it, they saved the peel. And that even … Mom would take the peel and scratch it and sniff it and that orange would last them till summer. And that’s a very—that is such—that is a story to me that—that tells—that shows real appreciation for things and the [inaudible 0:11:42.6] things and—

Gawgie: And that you didn’t have everything. Don’t have everything.

Both women acknowledged that this family story influenced their lives for years, and they purposefully told the story orally as well as using décor to remind one another of the story and the story’s life lesson.

*Evoking regret (or shame) to sequester a legacy.* Another phenomena I began to recognize was how women appointed themselves to act as the legacy police, evoking regret or shame when they did not want their husbands to bring undesirable legacies into their new families. I listened as wives explained how they would use stories to teach their husbands what they saw that needed to change, and sometimes the stories were relaying what the offended wives were experiencing from the offenses.

A clear example was fresh from within a newer marriage. In this example, Beth narrated her recurring weekend experiences with her offending spouse and explained that
this was behavior he learned from his family, and she would serve as a policing enforcer
to help this legacy end.

Beth: One pivotal moment that I was thinking with my marriage was my
husband’s family’s ... lives are just crazy. I mean crazy. But I notice with Keith,
just about every Saturday, ‘cause, you know, we work every day and then we’d
have a Saturday, and my days off; I feel like I cherish them so much. And, you
know, that’s the day that we would go run errands, get our supplies, the whole bit.
And I noticed just about every Saturday he would grump and complain and be
irritable. And finally, it just ... I had that ah ha moment where I said to him, I said,
“This is my day off too. I choose to be happy because being happy is a choice.
And I’ve noticed that you’re like this pretty much every Saturday and you’re
negative and complaining and stuff. And that’s fine and you can be that way. But
you can’t be with me and be that way. So if you want to spend time with me, you
have to choose to be happy.” And I told him, I said, “You know, this is where I
draw the line. I’ll not spend time with you.” And that changed it, pivotal, and I’ll
never forget it.

Beth illustrated this moment in which she made her spouse acknowledge his family
legacy, how it was influencing their new family, and how that was no longer an
acceptable path. Her references to how she judged his family as crazy suggested that she
was labeling at least his behavior as shamefully crazy as well.

In my final interview, I actually labeled the phenomenon as policing and asked
how a wife had stopped her husband’s legacy from continuing. In this case, Heather had
recognized that a legacy was disrupted, but Pauline admitted how she helped her husband
begin to recognize the legacy as undesirable, first by using a story of similar behavior and revealing how shameful that behavior was.

Me: Well, the fighting legacy is gone.

Heather: Yeah, yeah.

That does not get passed for sure. But that was—that was a decision my dad made. There’s certain things that you recognize and you—I’m young enough, I remember that part of him. I remember that part of him.

Pauline: He had to grow.

That was hard. I mean that was hard to overcome. Plus, I mean we were told…

Heather: You’d never believe it now.

Pauline: I mean, we were totally on opposite directions as far as that was concerned. I saw that his family was proud of that temper and—and I would see him do little things, and one—one night, I decided this has got to stop and this was before we were married, and it wasn’t that he—he never did anything to me, I’m not talking about that, but I said, “I”—my uncle had kicked in a windshield. Now that was on my side of the family. And my—I remember my mom and dad never criticized people in front of us either, but I remember this one time, they said, “Well he’s just—he just acted like a two-year-old, kicking in that windshield.” And I said that to him, and, of course, that didn’t go down well. And it—but, sometimes things don’t go down well.

Heather: You know, sometimes the truth hurts.

Pauline: But—but things, you know, and I never—I never threw it in his face, either, you know, just trying to gradually work through it.
While Heather believed she remembered her father before his change, she remembered what she assumed was his personal choice to change. Pauline admitted that the change happened because she shamed the behavior, calling it immature or, to be exact, “like a two year old”. Pauline played the judge and police in the story, having judged the behavior and evoking similar judgments in the mind of her husband, so he could see and judge what behavior was childish, even in his own behavior. Of course, he had to submit to the correction or policing; therefore, Heather’s memory of her father making the choice to change was not completely untrue. While his submission was part of the process, there seemed to be more to the story than that of a man independently choosing and changing his own legacy. The stories his wife told ignited his attention to the problem.

**Inspiring Exploration.** Dreading the three-hour trip home from Lewisburg, my family saw a sign for a lookout point to the New River Gorge; we were immediately inspired to explore and turn a boring journey into a more adventurous one. Storytelling serves as a way to inspire legacies and instill values, disrupting an old legacy, or imagining a new legacy.

Storytelling inspires legacies by sparking emotional reactions that are supposed to lead to action. Debbie and her mother talked about using stories in place of lectures to spark motion in their daughters, so they would follow a desired path.

Me: Why else do we tell stories?

Debbie: Because it attaches an emotion to what you’re trying to tell them.

Gawgie: Well, if you can think of something in your life and—that applies to what’s happen[ed], then—then that’s the time to say it.
Debbie: It makes—it makes there be a transparency, makes more personal the conversation if I’m telling a story of my own. If I’m telling another story, I guess it’s the same reason Jesus told stories. Why is it people attach to stories more than they do just the fact? They hear the story and they remember it or they—

Debbie and Gawgie discussed the need to inspire action from their daughters, but their discussion focused mostly on why storytelling was crucial for inspiration. Relating and connecting fosters a safe environment for authenticity and creativity (Brown, 2012); therefore, sharing stories allowed their daughters to listen, cull out a lesson they could use, and have freedom to create a possibility for their own path. This inspiration leads to more possibilities for living and making one’s own choices. For daughters learning to make their own choices, this is a midway point to take wisdom from mothers without taking advice.

Disrupting and fostering legacies. Stories serve to disrupt some legacies or foster others. Often times when a story is disrupted,

Anne wanted the legacy of her family to lack abuse, alcohol, and so on; her focus was less on replacing these legacies with something different and more about just an absence of them. In fact, she did not communicate nor suggest that she had envisioned an alternative.

Anne: … my kids would never suffer some of the things that I saw in my home because they were never going to be subjected to them, no matter what. … I remember talking to them about when they were babysitting and things, do not let someone abuse you in any way. You don’t—you draw a line and don’t take certain things from people because you as a person, you don’t allow that. You
don’t allow them to harm you in any manner. I mean it applies to several different things. And—and, so.

Me: Maybe we don’t know another narrative to live…. The story that has been played out before you kind of teaches you what to expect… How did you know how to change?

Anne: I just did not want any of ... many of these behaviors. I didn’t want them.... I didn’t want them in my life, and I didn’t want my kids to learn them. I didn’t want them in my home.

Me: So how did you find a new way to do things?

Anne: Well, well, I’m going to give you an example. Okay, this is the only way I knew, at this point, there were many behaviors in my family that I had decided I was not going to do. I’m 73 and most of my siblings all died many years before this. And I saw drinking, I saw different behaviors, and—that were allowed and it wasn’t my mom allowing them. And I had made a decision that my children were not going to be subjected to those and they weren’t.

Even though I prompted Anne several times to narrate an alternative legacy in the place of negatives that might have existed in her culture, she was not able to offer an imagined alternative; Anne restated that she had only imagined a void of those negatives and a resolve to avoid them. Disrupting the existing legacy gave room to foster a new legacy, though it did not guarantee a different experience. Storytelling was more about cautioning of a repeating history than it was about calling forth new possibilities.

**Imagining new legacies.** Imagining a life change may happen because of an attractive alternative reality or the rejection of a perceived negative existing reality. The
difference is whether individuals talk about what they will not have in their life in the future or what they would like to add or change in the future: “I want that in my future” or “I don’t want that in my future.” Similar to disrupted legacies, sometimes an imagined future simply lacks a negative present reality; the nuanced difference between simply disrupted or imagined may be just that, the purposeful thought and intention that might be lacking in disrupted legacies that may simply have been neglected.

Change does not happen without a disruption. Younger generations often recognize the changed legacies and seem to agree with their mother’s choice to change. This was evident as Delia talked about how her mother Debbie had raised her with a purposeful and different legacy than Gawgie raised Debbie.

Me: When you think about the life that your Gawgie has … led, and your mom’s life, how do you see [their lives] as same and different?

Delia: I think the values are the same but paths are different, which is probably why I’ve seen a lot of struggling. I think she has the same values as my grandmother in a lot of aspects, but that’s the reason why she struggles because she doesn’t accept that she should have her own values that she goes by. Like, for example, like my grandmother is old-fashioned in many senses, and she kind of will always kind of take a man’s side or will—

Debbie: She always takes the man’s side.

Delia: She always takes the man’s side. And that’s very frustrating because that’s not the case. We’re all humans in this world, in this rat race. So I think in that aspect, she might have conflicting feelings ‘cause I think my mother also kind of has an old-fashioned feel as well, sometime[s] about like men having certain
responsibilities, women having certain responsibilities, and she gets frustrated with her life, though, because she has all the responsibilities of a man and a woman in the household. So I guess that’s where it’s different and that’s why she—it’s like the same values but different lives. I don’t know. It’s confusing. I mean, they don’t—they don’t have all the same values, of course. My mother also believes in women being independent, and it’s not all—you don’t have to get married. Like my mother, I remember me getting angry—upset because my moth—my grandmother was talking about me getting married or having a relationship, but I’ve never been interested in that. And my mom was—my mom just made a joke about it. She’s like, “It doesn’t matter as long as you’re happy.” I guess in that aspect, yeah, I mean, that’s probably what most old women and their daughters fight about, I guess, old-fashioned women [inaudible 0:08:16.1]. I can’t—I don’t know about anything else. ‘Cause I think a lot of their values are the same, like, hard work.

Debbie: [Inaudible 0:08:24.4] got married the first time because I remember my mother saying, “You either get married, or you have to come home from college.” And I haven’t gone over that with her for years and years, I mean, 20 years....

Delia: She’s probably changed [inaudible 0:08:39.4] too.

Debbie: But I really think that that was the way it was placed to me. She doesn’t remember it, but it really—I really believe it was.

Delia: That’s what you heard.

Debbie: That’s what I heard. That’s what I heard, yeah.
Me: So have—you have been sure to tell your daughters that they don’t have to get married if they don’t choose to.

Delia: Oh, my mother easily said, “I would rather you not get married to someone who doesn’t love you like you deserve” [inaudible 0:09:06.3].

Debbie: Cherish is the word.

Delia: Yeah, cherish, or worship, you know.

Debbie realized that the legacy she lived with her mother’s guidance pushed her down a path she resented, especially in marriage and gender roles. Debbie recognized that she did not agree with her mother about these attitudes and decided that the traditional legacy would not continue. Her daughter, Delia, confirmed that Debbie had urged the family strongly in another direction. Debbie did not merely want her daughters to have the freedom to choose when to marry; she wanted her daughters to be free not to marry and almost forbid them to marry if the groom did not passionately cherish them. Delia clarified that her mother said, “cherish,” but she felt that “worship” might be a better word for what her mother meant to convey, suggesting that her mother’s cautious attitude toward marriage might be extreme.

Anne was not conscious of steps she took to disrupt a legacy, but she was aware she wanted a different legacy and was thrilled to see that legacy living on in her daughter. In this case, Anne felt that the mother of the home was unfairly responsible for a bulk of the work, and she did not want to imitate that as she became a mother. Anne could have decided to disrupt the legacy by actions such as never having company or limiting or declining work for her own family; rather, she decided that she would have a family and would entertain company and that everyone would pitch in. So while she did not
consciously decide to start a new legacy, her goal was to stop an old legacy of unfair loads of work.

Anne: I saw my mom and maybe me and one sister that was older do things, and they had all of the bulk of the work, and I had decided when I had my home it wasn’t going to be like that. So, we, I, I don’t know how, if I don’t remember telling them that you need to help out, I don’t remember, maybe she can tell you, but we always all pitched in, and this is what they learned, and she told someone it was either holiday or some special dinner at someone’s house. I remember her telling me that she went in to help the lady clean up things in the kitchen because there had been people there, and the lady said, “Oh no no, I’ll do it later,” and Beth said, “No, my mom didn’t teach me that.”

Beth: [Laughs.]

Anne: She taught me that I need to help. And so, I, uh, maybe she can give you her version of it, but this is the way my daughters are, ‘cause like I said we had—over the years we’ve had a lot of extra people right, and, you know, I don’t have to ask them to come to the kitchen. I don’t have to ask them to do things; they just automatically do them.

Anne disrupted a legacy given by her mother; she re-authored a legacy that mandated children’s help with housework. Beth reinstated the legacy given to her, telling others how she would be seen as one who believed in pitching in to share the load. This particular excerpt always made me chuckle, because I was the host of the dinner party who told Beth I would do all the work, and she truly did roll up her sleeves and insist we finish the hand washing that evening. The experience made such an impact on Beth that
she told her mother, and it impacted me as well. Since that day, I have been a more helpful guest; I grew up getting kicked out of the kitchen, so helping was not a legacy I learned. I respected Beth, and once I saw her model how to offer help, I was inspired to follow her example.

Imagining an alternative script empowers one to leave a previous script; without another script by which to live, it could be possible to default to the existing known script. Hannah believed in helping others create new possible scripts; she mentored legacy changes through shared personal stories that helped younger women imagine a specific changed future.

Hannah: You start with ME. That’s how I start. I’m like, “You know what? This is how I was, and this is how I changed, because I saw something in someone that was a friend of mine. I liked those qualities, so I started thinking, ‘she’s really outgoing! I’m going to practice being more outgoing.’ Or, ‘I really like the way she does her hair; I’m going to do my hair differently for me.”’ Does that make sense? You find something where you can relate, “I saw this, that’s a good thing. I’m going to incorporate that!” So, ya know, “You would look a lot better and be able to present yourself better if you would think about our environment, you’re going to be, become a professional, so let’s start thinking how can you look more professional. Start here so you’re comfortable out there.” Just little things like that. Make sense?

Hannah’s shared stories and engaged listeners to help them imagine a somewhat specific different future, in her case, adopting a new physical appearance and encouraging listeners to do the same.
Hannah began with recognizing an attractive alternative to try. This is different from those who recognized an unattractive legacy and decided it would end but did not narrate an alternative. Shirley and Anne both talked about making a point to not be beaten by their husbands, as their mothers were. Neither one narrated an actual alternative. In fact, neither one of them liked to narrate or elaborate on the existing legacy; they both simply said they would not allow it in their personal future or that of their daughters.

Shirley: You know it was nothing for him to get drunk, come home on a Saturday night, and just beat the shit out of her. And so I spent my life pulling my father off my mother. And [whispers] I hated all that… And I was like, “uh uh, not going to go there.” And so, I worked hard, married, uh, the best guy I could find [Elizabeth and Shirley laughing] at the time. [Shirley chuckling] and that [was] what it was, and honestly through my life, I mean and what happened, and he insisted … was that he said, “My family is now your family,” and it was easy for me to give in to walk away from all that crap that was going on, plus both of my parents died fairly young.

Shirley revealed portions of what she did not want to repeat, such as an abusive spouse; however, she was unclear how she stopped that legacy. She did seem to believe that adopting new parents and family might have helped break the legacies from her old family. Anne also revealed some abuse and sequestered some but was not clear about her specific actions to terminate the legacy.

Anne: I just didn’t like what I saw for some reason. It ... I ... I can’t tell you how except I just knew it was so wrong seeing my mother beat up, and the blood over her face that you couldn’t even determine her features, and it was over a silly
stupid little thing. My baby sister had a toothache, and I … I … I didn’t want my daughters raised that way, and I knew Gilbert wasn’t that way. And I … it … it just … it was such a division. I don’t know.

In both Shirley’s and Anne’s excerpts, the women were emotionally upset at the thought of their mothers being hurt and wanted to avoid that future, so they found men they believed would not be abusive. While Shirley confessed that she did not want to tell the stories of the abuse, Anne demonstrated how she would not tell the stories in the fact that she began telling a story about a baby sister with a toothache and simply quit in the middle of the telling. Neither Anne nor Shirley narrated an alternative plan, nor directly credited any actions or supernatural provision for an alternative life. Within their interviews (included throughout this dissertation), they talked about other aspects of their lives, in which role models outside of their homes showed them different ways to live. They attributed the general success to these examples and perhaps the added success of their escaping abusive husbands to the fact that they excelled more physically, financially, emotionally, and socially than their own mothers or perhaps because they decided not to “put up” with abuse. While neither gave an imagined alternative narrative to life with an abusive husband and both of them withheld stories of the abuse, they both achieved their goal.

Absence. Guidebooks are often aimed toward a certain audience and include only a limited amount of information for that audience regarding a region, and readers typically use only what they feel is helpful. If the guidebook has been handed down, the reader can find the well-used pages easier than less-used pages, and if some pages have been torn from the book or are stuck together, the reader may never know those pages.
The absence of storytelling also influences family legacies, if only by subconsciously silencing them. An absence may be because stories are purposefully sequestered, forgotten or blocked, or merely neglected.

*Sequestered.* Guidebooks tell relevant stories only for particular audiences, which means many stories are not told. Often guidebooks even indicate when some experiences should or could be skipped, especially if they are overrated. Family stories are sequestered when sharing them does not align with a desired legacy. This may be because the stories or the storytelling may be incongruent with the family legacy at that time or perhaps to protect someone. In Laurie’s case, sequestering a story was not just to protect herself so much as it was to protect her mother from worrying herself sick. In a smaller way, she was protecting herself from receiving outdated advice.

Me: You talk to your sister but not your mom so much?

Laurie: Yeah, yeah. I guess—and another thing, at Mom’s age, I don’t want to—if I had something I was concerned about, I wouldn’t want to worry her. I mean she’s at an age where she just should enjoy the grandkids and enjoy good things, you know.

Me: So it’s like you don’t—you feel like if you have an emotional need, it would be some sort of, in a way, you can’t share it with your mother because she needs to only enjoy things? Can you explain that a little more? I’m trying to choose my words so I don’t put words in your mouth.

Laurie: I—my mother worried—well, she’s like—I am about my kids. If somebody hurts my kids, I’d—I’m mad enough to fight. And I—I think she’s just that way. It’s a protective thing. And I just don’t want her to know about
problems and things that she can’t do anything about because I know she already
prays for us, so...

Me: Does she do that? Does she not like talk to people about things to protect
them? Where did you learn to do that?

Laurie: Oh, well, okay, if this doesn’t get back to anybody, I just—the last few
years, she just doesn’t—something she says just aren’t the wisest thing. I think
because of her age, she’s not think—thinking. And she’s in such a tiny
community.

Me: Wait—just—I mean...

Laurie: She’s out of touch with reality.

Me: So you think when you share with her she tries to—are the things that you’re
saying that are “not wisest,” it’s like advice she’s giving you? Or...

Laurie: Yeah, yeah. And...

Me: Okay, so it’s not profitable for you?

Laurie: Yeah, and yeah.

Me: And you want to protect her? Okay, so—so, you’ve learned to not talk with
her about things through your experience. Not because she kind of taught you
that.

Laurie: Right. Right, just, yeah. Well, and she’s—she’s one of these people that
used to, when things upset her, she would get a headache and get migraines. And
IBS when she was—was upset or something. And then I think she learned to
handle that. But still, I just think it’s her age. I don’t—she doesn’t need to—to
worry.
Laurie recognized that sharing some stories with her mother was not promoting the family legacy of caring for one another, but she learned through experience that receiving unhelpful advice was avoidable by sequestering some stories.

Not all sequestered stories are dark—there may just not be an appropriate time to share. For example, Allison’s grandfather had not shared his stories that did not align with the family’s values, until there was a moment nearly forty years later when telling these stories promoted a legacy of family bond, though the moral of the stories were irrelevant.

Allison: He was never much of a storyteller…. I had no idea that he even played or any idea, and Mom said she didn’t even know that he played guitar. And then he just started telling me stories and stories about how he said he—he played more fiddle than he listened in school, and he didn’t finish school because he played the fiddle too much. And we’d talk about like they’d have—they’d have music sessions at barns that they would go out into the country and have like hoedowns and stuff like that. And he talked about one evening they were out, and it started to pour and so everybody left. And he said that the four members of the band, him and his buddies, he said, we jumped into the hay piles. We were like pigs in a blanket until the—until the storm went away. So it was just funny. I think that just the—for me, that was the connection of—we shared this, you know, musical thing that I had never known and that was just kind of the opening up of a—it just made me feel connected with my grandpa, I guess…. Just a fun—and just to think of your grandparents as being young, kind of reckless, you know, that’s just kind of fun.
Allison recognized that she and her mother did not hear many stories of the grandfather’s life, and when she did hear this story, the point was not the story as much as the act of storytelling. In other words, the story was shared for connection, not given as advice. Connection can be part of a legacy taught through storytelling, and in this case, a once-sequestered group of stories was finally shared when the conditions meant the act of storytelling could be used to promote connection.

*Forgotten or mentally blocked.* A handed-down guidebook would be marked and used to influence the next generation of readers. Some pages might have fallen out and never repaired, folded shut, never opened and stuck shut, or pasted over. Sometimes stories are purposefully forgotten or even mentally blocked out to keep from reliving the memories during the retelling to others or even oneself. Shirley blocked out some terrible family memories, and she disrupted that path with other available opportunities. She did not repeat the same behaviors, nor did she say she replaced the behaviors. The absence of stories was a powerful way to disrupt the legacy.

Elizabeth: Your mom and your relationship [referring to Shirley and her mother] is one that I think is very interesting.

Shirley: I don’t remember much of it, to tell you the truth. I have blocked out so much of my life. It was just miserable; it was absolutely miserable. I was physically abused; I was sexually abused—uh, now I will cry [reaches for tissue and chokes up a bit but speaks on through it]—and it was just terrible, and I wouldn’t wish that life on anybody. And having lived it, at a very young age, I decided, “That is not who I am going to be.” And so people who provided me or my teachers. I mean, I had some really good teachers who showed me a new way
of life….. We lived in the company house—you know the little two-room shack that you know you get for working there—[the company owner] would also give me golf clubs and I got to play golf. So I got to start playing golf when I was eight years old. Started working at the golf course when I was 14. And, um, my mother was only 16 years old when I was born, so she was, uh, she w—she [heavy sigh] she almost resented me, I think. Resented—the fact that I had this—wonderful—what she thought was wonderful—I played golf, I was head cheerleader, I was president of the student council, I was all of these things, and she was jealous of that. She never even finished high school. And she got pregnant, and she had me, and even though she was a strong woman in her own right, she wasn’t, she wasn’t much of a mother you know; she just, it was all about her. She started having affairs when I was very, very small. Uh, my dad was, uh, 12 years older than she was, and he was an alcoholic, ex-Navy guy alcoholic.

Elizabeth recognized that her mother did not tell stories about growing up with the grandmother. Shirley revealed that she not only did not tell Elizabeth those stories; she did not remind herself of those stories either. She said she was able to not retell those stories or dwell in that reality; she linked the blocking out or absence of stories to her ability to “walk away from all that crap.”

**Neglected.** A month before my daughter was due, my cousin gave me a beautiful guidebook for navigating pregnancy; obviously, I did not use much of the advice because it was no longer relevant. A guidebook given too late does not allow for all the possible information to be shared; therefore, a lot of information is lost. Stories may be sequestered, buried, or simply neglected. Jannie and Jacklynn had a handful of great
heritage items such as a Swedish Bible, spinning wheel, and crystal vases; however, while the items had been relatively cared for, their heritage had not. No one knew any real stories behind the items beyond that they originated in Sweden.

Me: My grandfather tells a story about how his grandfather was such a rugged strong pioneer who brought the wagon train over the hills of Texas….

Jacklynn: They never told anything like that. They weren’t very family oriented. My family was more about each other, about themselves—don’t you think? It wasn’t, it wasn’t, I mean they didn’t mistreat us or anything…It’s just that they didn’t have that family bond. Like we have. It was just all about what their pleasures were. And I never, heard any story from them.

Me: Did you ever tell your kids stories about your family growing up?

Jacklynn: Oh yeah.

Me: Do you have a favorite? Or one that just sticks out—maybe that you told often?

Jacklynn: Do you know one? [Jannie nods no.] Oh, she doesn’t remember anything! [laughter].

Jannie: I’m like, “What’s this Bible you’re talking about?!” She’s like, “the Bible! I’ve had it forever, and I even gave it to Parker—” And I’m like, “I don’t know anything about a Bible.”

The story behind the Bible was neglected and lost with Jannie; however, there was not much of a story that existed behind the Bible (or other items) from her mother, Jacklynn, or her immediate family; perhaps the neglect, or at least the attitude of importance, was
lost generations before. According to Jacklynn, this was the case, as she did not perceive her family valued family or family history.

Some family legacies are neglected and not passed. Allison began playing the guitar for another church because her family’s church did not approve of having instruments. Allison thought she was unique, or even a bit rebellious because some of her church family members thought she might be rejected by God for worshiping with an instrument. It was later when she found out that her talent might have been from her family, because her grandfather played the guitar but had neglected to tell his daughter and grandchildren. This sequestering kept them from knowing: “And I had no idea that he even played or any idea, and Mom said she didn’t even know that he played guitar. And then he just started telling me stories and stories.” Perhaps her mother or her siblings could have been encouraged to play the guitar or even chosen a different faith that accepted musical instruments if these stories had not previously been neglected. The legacy almost ended. As I write, Allison pursues music professionally and her family supports her, even to the extent of moving out of state and joining a reality television show to further her career.

**Function of Storytelling Summary**

Storytelling is the family guidebook to life’s journey and the legacies lived within. How stories are narrated and shared, and if they are narrated, influence how legacies are fostered. Disruptions to legacies happen before new legacies are fostered, and disruptions happen because of stopping some stories from continuing.
Chapter IV: How Women Engage in Family Storytelling to Obtain Resources

Robert Reid, from Reid on Travel (2013), said a guidebook:

- Knows more than you do and tells you how to learn
- Can save your resources
- Helps you plan a personalized trip for you, by you
- Gets you to places where no one goes
- Gets you to places where everyone goes
- Gives orientation to a region better than any other travel source
- Is your friend, perhaps your only friend, in a place you’ve never been before

Reid explained these functions of a guidebook as well as how one should use a guidebook, though he did not explicitly state that guidebooks are seldom meant to be read cover to cover and more often contain a few highlighted, noted, and revisited pages, while other pages are left never opened, whether because the content was undesirable or perceived to be too obvious to explore. Appalachian women narrate their experiences of obtaining resources amid their family legacies for the same uses as a guidebook and often with the same rhythm Reid suggested: 80% in preparation for the journey and 20% on the road. Women even choose to not narrate stories and legacies they deem obvious, familiar, or undesirable.

Like Reid’s explanation of a guidebook, women told family stories to listeners because those who possessed the stories knew more than the listeners. Storytellers explained how to learn by helping listeners save resources, plan and personalize their own journey, and go to novel and familiar places. They gave better orientation to mapped
regions and an offer of companionship for the listener. However, the listeners were the ones who had to choose to open, select, read, trust, and try the advice; the power to influence their own journey was much in their openness to receive and utilize the available knowledge.

The travel guidebook metaphor is a great way to understand my data, especially the findings for my second research question:

RQ2: How, if at all, do mothers and daughters engage in storytelling to obtain resources amid their family legacies?

Resourcing narration revealed that the storytellers either consciously or subconsciously resourced their lives in a similar or different manner than the legacies left from their mothers and grandmothers. It was common to find women who believed they had made conscious choices to change certain behaviors from those behaviors modeled for them, and these women were more ready to narrate these changes than they were able to narrate the less examined mimicry of what they less consciously learned from their family legacies. In other words, when women perceived that they were resourcing their lives in vastly different ways than their mothers had, they were much more aware of that effort and ready to narrate the decision, whereas women who resourced more similarly to their mothers were less ready to narrate conscious choices of resourcing and where they had learned their behavior.

Through interviewing, I found that women were not greatly consistent with a specific manner or vehicle for narrating their lives, but I found three consistent themes: 

*Hesitations to Narrate; Narrating Metaphysical Maps; and Narrating a Lack in Mothers’*
Resources. Before discussing some of these findings, first I will share examples of the spectrum of narration and legacy passing evident in the sample of women I interviewed.

**Family Storytelling as a Vehicle to Teach Resourcing**

Some women used family stories as an indirect way to ease lessons into a conversation. Beth was hesitant to assume the role of advice-giver. After she shared an example of a story with an explicit lesson for her goddaughter, she said she did not want the goddaughter to feel that she gave advice; therefore, she used such stories as an indirect approach.

Me: This sounded like faith advice. What advice do you typically give her?
Beth: I try to, if I do give her advice, I try to do it softly, to not make her think that I am giving her advice. I’ll just kind of slowly go into it.

Here, Beth acknowledged that she gave advice but that she was hesitant to do so, often disguising it as merely a family story. Many other women used stories to avoid giving direct advice. Debbie and Gawgie agreed that stories were a way to avoid insulting the listener and placing them as one to receive a lecture.

Me: Why else do we tell stories?
Gawgie: Well, people don’t like to be told what to do, number one. They don’t like to be, you know, someone to say [inaudible 1:22:29.5] to do this.
Debbie: Don’t like to be lectured.
Gawgie: No, they don’t like to be lectured.
Debbie: So our human nature accepts a story better than it does a lecture.

The couple agreed that lecturing and the appearance of lectures is unpleasant and to be avoided, while storytelling could bring pleasant emotions and is welcomed, especially as
an alternative to lecturing when someone needs to learn. Family storytelling becomes a vehicle to help women communicate without offending one another. In other words, it is a way to show the path that was taken while still allowing listeners to learn from that guide and still choose their own path. Debbie and Gawgie discussed that stories help to soften advice so they can teach one another how to resource lives without being preachy or condescending.

**Family Storytelling Avoided as Vehicle to Teach Resourcing**

The lack of oral storytelling to teach does not mean that women were not telling or receiving stories; many women believed that the most familiar and engrained stories were those embodied in their lives. These embodied stories were the stories from the pages the guidebook reader might have chosen not to read because they perceived themselves to be familiar with the territory (while some might have learned more and some might have missed more because they assumed they knew through experience). Maggie and Lynn, for example, valued these types of embodied stories, which were often performed by the mother and interpreted by the daughter.

Me: When your mom was trying to teach you things about life, how would she teach you? What are some ways? How are some ways she would teach you?

Lynn: Probably by actually doing it. You know what I mean? It’s—I can’t really think of an example.

Me: What about if she’s giving you advice?

Lynn: Well, I’m so stubborn. You know what I mean? She—I mean, she would—she would sit there, you know, I mean, she’d tell me, it’s like, look, you know, this is how it is, and it just wouldn’t matter. I would end up doing my own thing...
anyway and really just like learning by experience, I mean, regardless of what, you know, she would try to say or try to do. I mean—I mean for the good stuff, you know, and the bad stuff.

Lynn recognized that she learned best when she witnessed her mother’s lived example or her own lived experiences rather than from hearing a story.

Not all mothers tried to soften advice with a family story. Maggie and Lynn discussed how Maggie was direct, rather than telling stories; Maggie suggested that she was direct because Lynn would not receive advice or stories. This caused Maggie to hesitate to use her personal stories in teaching her daughter.

Me: Did you ever find yourself telling stories to her?

Maggie: Uh, let me think.

Me: Or did—just laying it on the line was pretty much the best way?

Maggie: I think we laid it on the line pretty much.

Lynn: Yeah.

Maggie: Pretty direct. Pretty direct and I’m—I’m not going to say Lynn was stubborn, that’s not the word, but she knew—she was very independent, very independent from a young age.

Maggie offered her daughter’s personality as a reason she did not tell more stories. Whether this was the true, it is evident that Maggie perceived that stories were not the answer, and she felt limited in options because of dealing with a strong personality.

**Hesitation to Narrate**
In general, there is a lack of storytelling because women demonstrated a hesitation to narrate in general and in what they perceived as limiting or inappropriate circumstances. Women often struggled to be certain that they and their families engaged in family storytelling or the passing or constructing of legacy narratives. Many originally denied that their family owned or told stories; however, after engaging in our interview, many would claim that they did have stories and they saw legacies weaved throughout their history.

In several conversations, women simply hesitated to share family stories, often because they were uncertain what a family story was or if they even had one. Family stories were rarely shared orally or in detail and length in the same fashion a fairytale might be told: with a beginning, middle, and end and for which everyone shared a similar moral interpretation. While they could be like a fairytale, they are not confined to such structure. Women often struggled to define a family story.

Me: So when I say family stories, what do you think about? [Pause.] What do you think family stories are?

Jacklynn: Family stories to me are … family stories … like the history of the family?

Me: Yeah, could be.

Jacklynn: Do you have something in particular?

Me: I’m just curious what comes to your mind when you hear “family stories.” Is it something that … does your family sit around and talk about stories much?

Jacklynn: Well, the family I grew up with?

Me: Hmm.
Jacklynn: Yeah, I have a brother in Indiana that, when I go back to see, he gives me all kinds of stories … about …

Jacklynn hesitated to guess what a story or family story might be. Her first response was to think of the linear history of the family; therefore, she deferred to an older brother with a longer history of being in the family and a greater recollection of that history.

Some women would more confidently jump in to explain what came to mind, but even they expressed uncertainty. Laurie’s elderly parents told a lot of stories, so she began to answer the question; however, she hesitated at the end.

Me: So when I say family stories, what do you think about? What kind of stories?

Laurie: Well, I guess I can think about crises, that was—that’s in my mind. I mean there’s many good times, but the crises, sickness in the family or bad weather that—the hail storms and stuff that destroyed the farm, tornadoes that came through the county close by, that killed people and tore up their homes. There was many, many good times but that you just don’t—I guess you remember the scary sad times a lot. But, so what kind of particular story are you…?

Laurie began to share examples of her family stories, but she hesitated to question whether she was sharing appropriately.

**Hesitation with denial of storytelling (I don’t remember any stories).** Some daughters did not perceive that their family engaged in storytelling that would qualify as a family story. Some of these women were ready to deny that their families told stories, even after agreeing to the interview.

Delia: I was actually going to say I thought our family wasn’t one to tell stories. I don’t remember any stories.
Debbie: Gawgie and I—I began to realize how much I use stories when I really begin to think about it.

Delia: Well then, I just don’t listen ‘cause I don’t remember any stories.

Debbie: Okay.

Me: Do you—do you know anything about your mom, like, at your age? Like, did she tell you stuff at her age?

Delia: Yeah, I mean she said that she always worked really hard and that she sold—she always made things and sold them, stuff like that, she made—she made purses in college. But, or she told me that she always complained that she was overweight when she was little so she said—because she’d always go back in the kitchen for fun if she had a bad day at school, I mean, stuff like that.

Me: So, okay, so she’s told you a few stories that you can think of…

Delia: Yeah, oh, I didn’t—yeah, I guess those are family stories.

In this conversation, Debbie had already interviewed with the grandmother and was appealing to her daughter to be open-minded about the concept of family storytelling. Debbie was trying to explain to her daughter Delia that she and Gawgie also thought they did not have family stories or engage in family storytelling, but after that first interview, they discussed that storytelling was quite prevalent. Delia, though somewhat begrudgingly, began to realize this as well and admitted that the definition of storytelling could be broader than she originally conceived.

While Delia opened the interview fully ready to discredit the idea of family storytelling, Jannie was more willing to participate, but she honestly could not fathom any stories.
Me: Do you have a favorite? Or one that just sticks out—maybe that you told often?

Jacklynn: Do you know one?

(Jannie nods no) Oh she doesn’t remember anything!” [laughter]”

Jannie: I’m like, “what’s this Bible you’re talking about?!” She’s like, “the Bible! I’ve had it forever, and I even gave it to Parker..” And I’m like, “I don’t know anything about a Bible.”

Jacklynn: Yeah, she’s doesn’t remember things—at all. [laughing] um, about me growing up? You don’t remember any at all?”

Jacklynn and Jannie laugh at Jannie’s denial of knowing or recalling any family stories, even after prompting.

**Previous hesitations and violations reveal expected fore-knowledge.** While couples originally did not perceive themselves being versed in family stories, they obviously tended to expect to know all the family stories. In many, if not all, interviews there were moments in which one participant was shocked, and this violation revealed that there was an expected knowledge of another’s story. It was a surprise to find that daughters and mothers learned more about each other during the interview; both participants often excitedly exclaimed that they were learning certain things about one another’s past. Their surprise indicated that they take for granted that they know the details about one another’s story.

Jannie: I think so. I think something else is, um, how important family is, ‘cause growing up we always go to her house for holidays—even though I hated it—we always went.
Jacklynn: You did hate it?

Jannie: I hated it.

Jacklynn: I never knew that!

Jacklynn interjected to question if Jannie truly hated the family get-togethers and admitted that she had never known Jannie’s true feelings. This new information was shocking because, after that moment, Jacklynn must have recalled the years of events with Jannie’s disdain, which is different than what she thought she knew; perhaps, this revelation of Jannie’s anguish might possibly explain Jannie’s past behaviors as well as her future expectations.

Sometimes, pasts are rewritten when stories are told in full; other times, present and future are rewritten as imagined stories are told. Another mother communicated shock, as she heard for the first time that her daughter had a dream narrative she did not know.

LaSara: Are you wanting to be famous?

Kylie: I just thought it would be cool.

LaSara: To be famous?

Kylie: Yeah. So, I guess.

Kylie, the daughter, had defined the American Dream for herself and her friends as a dream to become famous. The interview halted as LaSara turned to her daughter to ask her pointedly, twice, if her daughter was actually saying that being famous was her personal dream. LaSara continued to briefly grill her daughter to affirm again, and Kylie’s response was to backpedal and express some uncertainty about how much she actually subscribed to this dream. Perhaps the mother’s disapproval is why Kylie had
previously withheld this value or imagined life narrative from her mother and continued to hesitate sharing.

Hesitation or completely withholding stories—real or imagined—seemed to have protected perceptions others had of these women. Pauline might have never shared a humbling story to her daughter for this reason, because the story was how she grew from a needy dependent girl to a self-resourcing woman—a lesson Pauline likely taught her children, though the story was not used for that lesson. Heather expressed shock upon hearing the story about how Pauline had to change into a person who could make decisions without her own mother’s help.

Pauline: And so, but that was the best my mother knew, and—but when I left home, I had—when I went to the grocery store, I literally had to—I decided I was going to know how to make choices. Now, this was on my own. So I would stand, I’d look at the toothpaste, and I would decide why I wanted that toothpaste over this toothpaste. And I did this mechanically about everything I did for a long time after I left home.

Vaness: Wooooooow!

Pauline: Well, I mean…

Heather: I didn’t know this.

Pauline: If somebody tells you what to do all of your life…

Heather: Oh, oh, oh, I got you.

Pauline: You don’t have it on your own.

Heather interjected that she was surprised to learn a new twist to her mother’s history. Her focus was no longer on the interview but totally on her mother and processing this
new information. Like Heather, each participant who experienced a shock was momentarily enraptured by the idea that they had not been privy to the fullness of a family story. Elizabeth suspected that this would happen as she previewed the questions directly before the interview (not all couples chose to read the general questions beforehand).

Elizabeth: I’m sitting there looking through your questions, and I know my answers, because I know my life story, but I said to her, “You know,” I said, “I’m interested in your answers to these questions.”

Here, and throughout the interview, Elizabeth strayed from her role as interviewee, turned toward her mother, and became interviewer, which suggests that she did not fully know how her mother resourced her life and she was very interested to learn this missing part, a story seemingly authored in Elizabeth’s mind. Later, Elizabeth began asking her mother questions.

Elizabeth: But she was asking about coming into adulthood.

Shirley: Uh-huh.

Elizabeth: Where were you at?

Shirley: What do you mean, “where was I at?”

Elizabeth: Emotionally—I don’t know, I’m hearing this on because I want to know the answer [all laughing].

It was humorous for all of us to witness the daughter grill her mother about her story in the middle of our interview, but these examples demonstrate the level of curiosity that couples had, to learn previously unstoried or withheld information.
It was also interesting to see how women responded to this new information about one another’s lives. Their responses were seldom, if ever, responses of relief or peace; rather, they were a knee-jerking, enrapturing moment for a bit of inquisition, as if the story-withholder had violated an unspoken expectation and must in that moment, even in front of a stranger and on recording, bring clarity and truth to the situation. This suggests that most mothers and daughters subconsciously narrate one another’s lives, or at least believe the lie (if only subconsciously) that they know everything about one another. The respondent on the figurative inquisition stand often began justifying the new information or trying to soften the blow, as we saw the mother, Joyce, defending her decision-making regimen or how Kylie softened her “yes” to merely an “I guess so.”

**Hesitation and withholding.** There were times storytelling was withheld, either from outsiders or from certain family members. Sometimes the stories were withheld because of shame they may bring or because they are not appropriate for younger children, or because the stories are surrounded with negative memories the tellers and listeners find unpleasant.

**Withholding stories in fear of shame.** One such instance is avoiding sharing a family story because of the shame it may bring to one or one’s family.

Debbie and Gawgie talk about how they often avoid any shameful stories to outsiders, but they even withheld from insiders.

Debbie: But I would say, in general, our family is a little—as far as sharing stories, we were kind of raised that you don’t hang out your dirty laundry. There’s another—there’s another one of our phrases that is really—we’re a little bit more private people, in general. Although there’s many things that I talk about with my
mom and with my daughters. I absolutely have been brought up—it’s a matter of fact, just the other night, we were talking about detailed sexual things, and I would say outside of the family we don’t—don’t bring up too much.

Me: Sure. What about inside the family? Are there ever stories that you don’t tell within the family? And why might you not?

Debbie: Well, yes. It—it probably would have to do with shame or embarrassment.

Me: Who doesn’t get told?

Debbie: Well, just recently, my oldest daughter is now living with a young man and I—I—months went by before I even mentioned that to my mom because I knew that that—that it’s embarrassing, and I knew that was something that she would not like. And yeah, there’s a little bit of—although, really, Mom shaking her head, it’s like, big deal.

Debbie discussed that shameful stories are often not shared with outsiders, but she also highlighted that it is shame that keeps stories hidden and that such stories are hidden from Mom or Grandma.

Family strife, such as a divorce or abuse, were also times when family storytelling was avoided. Sometimes women did not share a story because they personally wanted to forget the story. Shirley talked about this phenomena, as she not only did not share stories with Elizabeth but had convinced herself that even she had blotted those stories from her memory.
Shirley: There were a lot of stories I think that we as a family shared and created. But then I think 10 years ago it just all went, you know, everything told, I don’t think we were sharing a lot of stories at that point. Through the divorce. Shirley acknowledged that stories that once would have been shared and created were stifled, and she remembered the act of stifling those stories. She also talked about stories she tried to never author in her head or she discarded mentally, not just filtering in conversation. Shirley’s daughter recognized that she did not have a clear picture of her mother and grandmother’s relationship, and as she continued to play the role of interviewer, she encouraged her mother to share and fill in the gaps of history. Shirley admitted that there were gaps in Elizabeth’s collected history, but those stories were blocked out of even Shirley’s memory.

Elizabeth: Your mom and your relationship [referring to Shirley and her mother] is one that I think is very interesting

Shirley: I don’t remember much of it to tell you the truth I have blocked out so much of my life. It was just miserable; it was absolutely miserable. I was physically abused; I was sexually abused—uh, now I will cry [reaches for tissue and chokes up a bit but speaks on through it]-abu/and it was just terrible and I wouldn’t wish that life on anybody. And having lived it, at a very young age, I decided, “that is not who I am going to be.” And so people who provided me or my teachers. I mean I had some really good teachers who showed me a new way of life. um, I started playing golf when I was really—it was interesting my mother and father both worked for this meatpacking plant, you know, that cut up cows and stuff—but the guy running the meatpacking plant also owned the golf course.
Not only did Shirley block out the bad stories; she immediately discussed what replaced them: good people who provided and showed a new way of life. These stories she is willing to share, to pass along, and to dwell on.

Other families blocked out sad histories as well, not through just one story gatekeeper but by withholding or blocking as a collective group. Anne and Beth discussed the fact that they did not share or tell stories about their grandmother because memories of her are very sad.

Me: Do ya’ll tell stories about, about her?

Beth: It was a very, no, no.

Anne: No.

Beth: The story, anything that we, that involves her, is usually very sad because she was, she was a beat up woman, but her husband—

Anne: Abused.

Beth: Yeah, she was abused. And that’s the word. And when I think about her, I think of someone busy, busy, busy, busy, tired, didn’t have time to even stop long enough to even breath, and just bad conditions. They had 11 kids.

Anne and Beth offered the sadness of their grandmother’s life as a reason there were no stories. This not only suggests that there are reasons—such as sadness—to withhold stories; it suggests that there may be other reasons other stories are sequestered.

Families often keep unpleasant stories private. During an interview, we discussed a family story of a previous marriage that had been withheld and accidentally uncovered. Shirley claimed that there was never an appropriate time to share with her daughter that she had another husband because the children were too young. Shirley also asserted that
the duration was not as long as two years, but she did not offer any proof that it was only six months. In fact, she offered no information to validate (or consummate) this part of her history; rather, she suggested reasons why the experience was not real.

Me: You met him at that point?

Shirley: Yes, I met him at that point, and we left out one. I was married once before.

Elizabeth: That was traumatizing.

Shirley: Yeah, that was traumatizing. Between leaving college and going to work in the marketing agency, I was married for like, like six months.

Elizabeth: Two years.

Shirley: No, it was like six months. It was not that long.

Elizabeth: Jeanie said it was two years.

Shirley: Well, Jeanie is full of crap; it is not two years. And I then again I black that out. I didn’t love him; we never had a sexual relationship. It was just

Elizabeth: yeah, I didn’t know she was married until my grandmother passed and I found the [inaudible] wedding album, and I was like, “Mom gave you away at ...?” [Shirley and Elizabeth laughing.] What is this [indecipherable]?

Shirley: You just never did, that was never an occasion, you know, with little kids.

Elizabeth: I didn’t mean to interrupt you.

Shirley: And it didn’t mean anything, it wasn’t, it was, it was barely consummated; it was nonexistent. But, anyway, so Billy gets hired....
Even when Elizabeth was ready to drop the topic and suggested that the diversion was an interruption to the interview, Shirley continued to defend and talk about it. Most of the women revealing new information responded in a similar trailing defense. What is interesting is Shirley’s story filter of appropriateness that her daughter acknowledged, but her daughter did not adopt the same filter because she continued to tell stories she knew were not the most flattering.

Elizabeth: And that’s another thing, and I ask that you don’t—and I don’t mean to embarrass you [Mom] by this, but I’m going to just tell her. I, I abused marijuana for probably 10 to 15 years. So that’s why I say that I have arrested development.

Elizabeth recognized that sharing a family story outside the family might be a point of embarrassment and might be a time to withhold a story; yet, while she hesitated, she still chose to share.

**Withholding stories from children.** Many of the women recognized that family stories were told to appropriate audiences that would interpret the stories favorably, and women acknowledged that often children of the family were not appropriate audience members. Stories with less appropriate content were not told and often not even performed in front of the children. Hannah discussed this phenomena, which she called **shielding**.

You can’t let your child see the turmoil when they are at a place in their life when they can’t deal with turmoil. In other words, when [your daughter] is five, six years old, you don’t want to let her see if you’re really upset about, like, with somebody because there’s no process, and she would have the wrong perspective. So, I don’t know, you become age appropriate, the emotional ability to deal with
it, because I understood later as I was older, I had no idea, no clue, when I was younger. Her attempt was to shield me from—whatever—I’m sure things happened.

Hannah shared that while she was a child she was shielded from events. Now as an adult she was not privy to those happenings. Once a story was withheld from a child, there might not arise an occasion when the mother will share that story.

Shirley’s previous marriage was withheld from her young children, but once her daughter grew to a young adult, Elizabeth uncovered the story while going through her deceased grandmother’s belongings. Shirley felt that the previous marriage was not appropriate to share with her young children and continues to use that as her excuse for why she never shared: “you just never did, [there] was never an occasion you know, with little kids.” As for why Shirley did not discuss more about the marriage with her grown daughter, the only excuse she offered for her dismissal of the story was stating that “it didn’t mean anything; it wasn’t, it was, it was barely consummated; it was nonexistent” before changing the subject.

Like Shirley keeping her past child abuse and first marriage from her daughter, Allison found that her family had kept her grandpa’s past a secret. It was once Allison was considered a good recipient, probably with maturity and like-mindedness, that she was able to receive this story.

Allison: mom said she didn’t even know that he played guitar. And then he just started telling me stories and stories about how he said he—he played more fiddle than he listened in school, and he didn’t finish school because he played the fiddle
too much. …Just a fun—and just to think of your grandparents as being young, kind of reckless, you know, that’s just kind of fun.

Here the story was withheld possibly because of the reckless interpretation; when given the opportunity for the story to seem productive, bond a relationship, and be told to a nonjudgmental listener, the story was told. Before then, the story was kept from the younger Allison and others.

**Interview process fostering reflexivity and disclosure.** While not all of the women directly stated that they had learned more about one another, often they would say the interview had caused them to be more reflexive about their lives than they ever had been and heightened their awareness about examining their own lives as well as the legacies they live and share. Typically in interviews, I would ask women to acknowledge a goal they had and how they went after that goal. Sometimes they would realize they were not enacting a plan to accomplish their purpose. In one such instance, a mother pointed out that my questioning was making them think more deeply about the lives they were living, and her daughter agreed.

Me: How would you describe what you want your girls to understand about living life as a woman?

Jannie: I don’t know if this is strictly about being a woman, but I want them to have a better understanding of finances and money than I did. Mainly knowing who they are, being comfortable in who they are, and not letting other people’s opinions affect that. Don’t want a boy to come along and change who they are or how they think or feel about themselves, want them to be strong.
Me: So who helps with that?

Jannie: [My husband] does more to tell them how great they are than I do. But I don’t know.

Jacklynn: She gives you things to think about doesn’t she?

Jannie: She does.

This excerpt captured Jannie in an instance in which she communicated her hope for a changed legacy, but not a clear understanding of how she is making that change or imparting to the next generation that which is necessary for a new legacy. The process of the interview might have helped her to realize that she has not thought about hope in terms of a goal with a plan to attain. Jacklynn recognized the lack of thinking that has gone into the supposed dream of Jannie’s and tells Jannie that I was making them think “a lot” more than usual. Interestingly, the mother desires for her daughter to develop into a person with a specific knowledge and skill set; however, the mother lacks a narrative for this line of thinking. If she placed herself as an influential character who sets out with a goal to enact certain behaviors with the expected outcome of developing her daughter into that person with a specific knowledge and skill, she might be able to narrate where the characters are in that storyline or trajectory and how the actions are influencing the plot. In Jannie’s case, this narration would cast her as the goal-setter and the goal being that her daughters become women with clear financial understanding; the details of who and how the goal is attained would become the plot. No such narrative was clear in the interview. Later, Jacklynn expressed her appreciation of the interview process for the fact it helped them be more reflective in regard to their lives.

Me: Well, thank [you] so much for your time.
Jacklynn: Well, thank you! It gave us things to think about.

Me: If you come across anything, or think of something that you would like to add, I would love anything I can get.

Jacklynn: I don’t know what to tell you unless you ask the questions.

Jacklynn’s gratitude for helping her reflect on their lives is coupled with the continued feeling of uncertainty in how to be self-reflective.

Even when the women did not immediately narrate stories or easily recall family storytelling, it was evident that they were still embodying stories or their daughters were reading their mothers’ lives as stories when they labeled their mothers as a character. Elizabeth labelled her mother as a superwoman and an icon of the American Dream:

Elizabeth: She’s very superwoman-esque, my mom, …she can’t help it, she just shines. Everybody loves her. Men love her, they want to hang with her; women-like you can hang out, you know I’m not a girly girl but she can get down with me she can get down with girly girls, she can do anything. …Like we were saying earlier she’s kind of the American dream story.

Elizabeth painted pictures for the interview in which her mother played the role of superwoman in several settings, such as with groups of men or women where she was adored or even in her marriage or childhood home, from which she “got out.” Elizabeth quickly weaved plots of these stories summed up by alluding to her mother’s successes or escapes in each. Elizabeth is not unlike the other daughters who also demonstrated that they were reading their mother’s lives, as evidenced by the fact that daughters reported that their mothers had less access to resources than they have had. The fact that daughters, or even mothers, summarized a life without describing the person through a
single coherent story, or history, still suggests a story; therefore, women are still subconsciously storytelling by passing on characterizations of one another.

One mother asserted that she taught the family to not tell negative stories of family members. She briefly explained that they did not tell stories about family members, but her daughter countered that they did tell some stories because they characterized one another, though the stories were not told with a malicious spirit.

Pauline: One thing—one thing I specifically, I mean it was an overt choice, never to—I don’t know if—maybe I missed—messed up sometimes, I don’t remember, but my goal was…. And—and we don’t talk about one another in a way that is condescending to one another that I—I don’t—I mean I don’t think the kids do, we don’t.

Heather: No, it’s just kind of like, there’s funny little things about each of us, you know.

Pauline: But I mean to put another one down to …

Heather: No, you don’t put anybody down. You laugh about these things …

Pauline: You honor them.

Heather: You—it’s who they are, you learn to—it’s weird. You just—the more you love somebody, the more you can even love their little weird quirks that drive you bananas. It’s just how it is.

Heather acknowledged that in family storytelling, they characterize one another and talk about quirks to elicit a laugh from the family. Characterizing suggests that each person is positioned as a character with expected actions and outcomes. Not only does this excerpt highlight how family storytelling often happens from characterizing family members
from perceptions, but Pauline and Heather stated that there is subconscious storytelling
from talk such as characterizations; stories are often also stifled. Both Pauline and
Heather say that stories that dishonor or “put another one down” are not shared—whether
by edict of Pauline or in adherence to a family moral code or value.

Some women communicated more confidence in their knowledge of their family
in regard to sharing stories or legacies. Women who more easily discussed their family
legacies and stories demonstrated purposeful and reflexive life choices and answered
questions about their family more easily. Sometimes their reflexivity was revealed as
they shared stories of how they wanted to be different than family or how they reached a
point in their life in which they reflected on their own life and knew they needed to
change. What many of these more reflective and confident women shared was how they
talked about themselves as a character in a larger story who was capable to change her
course.

Confidence was also linked to more priming in the interview questions. While the
participants were given a summary of the research project with a copy of the interview
protocol, not all reflected on or read what was made available, nor had they all prepared
themselves to think about family or storytelling.

One daughter referenced having read the questions beforehand and felt very
comfortable talking about her life as a story and confident that she could answer all of the
questions for herself (she had read the questions only for a few minutes beforehand
because her mother had printed them before I arrived).

Elizabeth: I’m sitting there looking through your questions, and I know my
answers, because I know my life story, but I said to her, you know, I said, “I’m
interested in your answers to these questions… I don’t know why I’m going to get emotional here, and I really don’t mean to, but—and I hate that—but she just, um, I, ya know…. I know this is all recording you’re going to laugh when you play this.

While Elizabeth demonstrated confidence in narrating her life (as better indicated by the following example), narratives were a part of how she viewed life and how she shared her perspective. Narratives appeared to be a fiber of her being that flow naturally from her and illustrate how she viewed and explained life; I perceived her sharing as genuinely candid and un-scripted, especially because she broke into tears, which prompted her mother to leave to find tissues, and then she stopped to point out that we would laugh to hear her audio recording of her oversharing. She subscribed to the idea that she sees her history as a story, and she shares this story and her interpretations of what happened and how she understood herself as an active and responsible agent within the moment of living out a malleable storyline.

Elizabeth: They say that hitting rock bottom, so this is brutal, this is the truth, this is ugly, this is going [to] sound ugly, and you’re going to want to hit me. But I was living in North Carolina in an oceanfront beach house by myself—at 24 years old—drinking Jim Beam, you know, blaaah, you know smoking, and miserable. So you’re living in everybody’s dream world and you were miserable. And I think that was, that was, uh, the first thing I remember was Mom showed up in North Carolina and, actually I can take you probably down to one day where it all started to change, and that was when Pat committed suicide. And my mom had a really good friend who was going through a lot, and I was going through a lot and
she knew it. And instead of being with him she came to me, as she should, I was her kid, but…”, anyway it was all I I was a mess. I couldn’t talk. I was crying rolling around because I was—soul my soul was completely frazzled. And I prayed for the first time in a really long time; and I think I remember walking into your room and I said, “Mom, I feel better. I think it’s going to be okay now.” And Pat committed suicide that night. And I remember thinking to myself, “I’m not going to make that be in vain.” Because I know how bad that affected her to not have been able to be there for her friend. And so I think that started [it]. And so I decided I needed to go home, I don’t deserve to be here right now, so I moved home; I moved back in with my dad. Still not completely clear, but it was a steppingstone; I came home and I dropped everybody, all of my friends, I quit hanging out with everybody; I went back to school, got my two year degree, and, uh, I met Josh, my husband.

Shirley: Best thing that ever happened to you.

Elizabeth narrated her past during her turn from living a reckless life. In the midst of the turning, she recalled an epiphany in the form of a narrative: viewing her mother and herself as characters and seeing her character as being undeserving of her current material blessings and how she did not want to be the character responsible for hurting her mother. Realizing her choice to be either the protagonist or the antagonist, she exercised her agency to change her current path and began living a life she must have felt was more deserving of her mother’s choice to be with her over the opportunity to be with a suicidal friend. Her mother did not correct her story; however, her mother storied her daughter’s turn a little differently, attributing her positive change or “the best thing that happened”
in her life as marrying her son-in-law, rather than the mother’s actions to give her social support resources. Both mother and daughter had reflected on their lives and made sense of them in their own ways.

Some mentioned that their family was less reflexive because they were living in the moment. One couple realized that sharing past stories in a traditional sense of history was not a large part of their family legacy.

Me: So were there any stories that you would tell your kids about your family ... you know, things you thought exhibited their personality or things they thought were important.

Jacklynn: Important? Hmmm.

Jacklynn: They never told anything like that. They weren’t very family oriented. Um,“My family was more about each other, about themselves.—don’t you think?” “It wasn’t, it wasn’t, I mean they didn’t mistreat us or anything;... It’s just that they didn’t have that family bond. Like we have. It was just all about what their pleasures were. And I never, heard any story from them.”

Me: Did you ever tell your kids stories about your family growing up?

Jacklynn: Oh yeah.

Me: Do you have a favorite? Or one that just sticks out?—maybe that you told often?

Jacklynn: Do you know one? (Jannie nods no) Oh she doesn’t remember anything! [laughter].
Jannie: I’m like, “what’s this Bible you’re talking about?!” She’s like, “the Bible! I’ve had it forever, and I even gave it to Parker,” And I’m like, “I don’t know anything about a Bible.”

Jacklynn: Yeah, she doesn’t remember things—at all. [laughing] um, about me growing up. You don’t remember any at all?

Jacklynn and Jannie hesitated to tell stories and believed that their legacy lacked a connection to the family’s generational past. Jannie and Jacklynn found the situation humorous, but the truth is that the stories and even the inherited items are not being passed down; if this family passed legacies, they were not consciously replicating the greater family’s history. Eventually the couple told several stories about their immediate families, and we discovered that Jacklynn told many stories and storied her past, often when she had made conscious choices to be reflective about the situation and saw herself as a character within a story she wanted to change:

Me: What made that difference? Why did you chose to do different?

Jacklynn: I didn’t want that life. I saw that wasn’t [clears throat], it didn’t look fun to me. I mean, even as a teenager I didn’t go out partyin’ and that kind of thing; it just didn’t. I don’t know, think even at a young age I had that call from God … and I just knew it wasn’t the right life. I don’t know how I knew. But it’s not something I wanted for my family. I didn’t want to grow up like that. My parents fought a lot, and it was always because they’d been drinking. And I just didn’t want that lifestyle

Jacklynn could story her own experiences of being reflective. From a young age, she decided that she would not carry on some things she learned from her family, and she
would incorporate some things she learned from outsiders, in a sense refusing some stories and adopting others. While she did not know a lot of her family history, she knew and could story what she experienced and perceived about their lives. From these stories, she began to imagine a different life story for herself.

Hesitation was even evident when mothers used their own stories as teachable moments for their daughters. The hesitation is purposeful and thoughtful in framing the story as carefully as possible to teach the lesson. Debbie demonstrated how she planned to tell stories to illustrate a lesson or give herself experiential credibility when teaching her young adult daughters.

Debbie: We tell a bunch of stories. And when I think of going over something, even something recently, when I think of going over it with my kids, I—I—I now remember how I start it up with a story or I had planned a story as far as trying to illustrate something or give some experience or—experience, that’s the other reason to tell a story.

Debbie highlighted that it was through the interview process that she realized that she uses stories. This may suggest that even when stories emerged, there was a hesitation to immediately look to tell a story; rather, the immediate thought was to teach or influence her daughter.

Other times, women would adopt a story from outside the family. Sometimes these stories were adages, short stories with morals, history from their Christian Bible, or even testimonies; whatever the story, the family would begin to use it within their own repertoire of family stories and sometimes even add their own witness to experiencing a similar story.
Sometimes these stories became a part of the family, but only as adages and not referencing a single individual’s history or character. Gawgie was discussing how she modeled coping for her family, and Debbie summarized it with a phrase. Debbie began to explain how the family used adages to resource their lives.

Debbie: “Buck up” was a big phrase in our family.

Gawgie: Yeah, just buck up and we had—you know, life is—throws you a lot of curves, and I’ve had a lot of them too. So, but, maybe the buck up is—

Me: What does bucking up look like? What does that look like when you’re—

Debbie: Standing tall, putting your shoulders straight, put your chin in the air, and go forward. To me, that’s what bucking up is.

Gawgie: And today, it might hurt really bad. Tomorrow, it might be okay because I think today people have a problem and they just cave—they—they just don’t know what to do. So truth is, even in marriages, you can have a bad situation today, and if you just give it a few hours or a little time, it’s okay.

Debbie: Or, it’s not going to be better otherwise—I mean, there’s nothing any better maybe is another—grass is never greener. That’s another one in our family.

Gawgie: Grass is no greener.

Debbie: And that is, you know, there’s a bunch of truth in that, that if you think you change the situation, well, you’re just exchanging things that you have to deal with. I guess maybe that’s another thing we learned [inaudible 0:32:15.8].

Me: What are some other fun phrases you have? Buck up, the grass is never greener, what are some—

Gawgie: My husband had a list of them, and Daniel is always pulling those out.
Me: I bet he is.

Gawgie: He’ll say, as Bob used to say, so forth. What are they, Debbie?

Debbie: Why are none of them coming to me right now?

Gawgie: Oh, Dannie would tell us in a minute and so would Jerry Dillards.

Debbie: Give a guy a hundred dollars. That’s—that’s one of the ones I use all the time.

Gawgie: Oh yeah.

Me: What does that mean?

Debbie: If you give a guy a hundred dollars, he’ll say, “Wow, thanks.” Next week, you give him a hundred dollars, he’ll say, “Thanks.” The next week, he’ll say, “Where’s my hundred dollars?” So we just say, “give a hundred dollars!” and we all know what that refers to.

In this moment, Gawgie and Debbie quickly used several adages by which they believed they live. The family shared these stories, adages, and interpretations in a way that they merely need to be referenced to remind one another how to view a situation and the extant options. Interestingly, these adages could probably be replaced with actual family history of making good and bad decisions and reaping the consequences; however, the family chose to reason from logic rather than history or legacy. Ultimately, the use or reference to adages reflects a hesitation to tell the whole story or to share in something personal. Yet the family adoption of such stories makes them family stories.

Beth modeled an example of hearing a testimony and reenacting that story in her own life. She not only adopted the story for her own life but was able to share both the story and how it repeated to inspire the legacy to also take root in her daughter.
Beth: Okay, when I was a new believer, I heard a story about this woman who, a rapist had broken into her house and was going to rape her, and she used her authority as a Christian against the rapist, and he didn’t rape her and he left the house and went down the street and raped another woman. And I remember thinking, if I’m ever in a dangerous situation, then I know that I can use my authority, using the name of Jesus to, to overpower that, whatever it is. And I kept that in my heart for many years and hoping I would never have to use it. And so today, I was e-mailing my niece…. Let me tell you about my knowledge and experience. So I told her that when I was young, I had that fear also. And I heard that story as a new believer about that Christian woman who used her authority against the rapist and wasn’t raped, and I said, “I had to use my authority [in] one particular situation.”… And I explained to her that I was in shock at the time, but the knowledge of my authority was there…. I said, “In the name of Jesus, you can’t hurt me.” And he started to say, “Well that won’t work with me,” or something like that, and I said, “Oh, yes, it would,” and I think I repeated it. And he, he, he stopped and he held that chair above his head, and he twisted his body like he thought about throwing that chair into the, the window ‘cause he moved it toward there slowly, and then he just put the chair down…. And again, I wasn’t hurt or anything, and then the phone rang and that startled him back into reality or something and, and so he went to answer the phone and then I ran and, you know, got away. And I said to her, that it wasn’t a coincidence, you know…, that he stopped, and it wasn’t a coincidence that the phone rang. And her reply to me was, “Wow.”… And she said that that helped her. And as I was telling that story
in an e-mail, I told her, I said, “You know, you can have fear and that’s an emotion, but faith is always there. And if you use your authority as a believer, that gives ground to that faith to take hold for you to, to get through the situation and have, you know, victory, basically, you know, get out of the situation, a fearful situation.” And she said, you know, that it helped her. I think it, it encouraged her.

Beth shared how she had allowed this outside testimony to become such a part of her fiber that while she was in shock, she still knew and possessed the faculties to use the same authority as the character in the testimony. She shared that this story empowered her and would or could empower her goddaughter. Beth’s quotation is interesting because it also highlights one way some women in Wood County believe their resources are from a narrative map of supernatural Grace.

**Narrating Metaphysical Maps**

Kotre (2005) argued that faith underwrites one’s concern for leaving a legacy and guiding one’s offspring; therefore, it is not surprising to find that women talked about their legacies as motivated by their faith. Like legacies, or even as a legacy, families passed along their faith or metaphysical ideas as they narrated everyday events within their beliefs of Life, even to the point of suggesting, like participants Beth and Anne (see their example within this section), that faith could be the source to sustain their needs or the means to receive provisions.

Faith narratives also label one’s identity and role in life. I can attest to this because I was raised in a faith which taught me women should not preach nor teach men, but I felt I was born to preach like my father and his father, so I struggled to find an undamnable vocation and identity.
Because families make sense of their actions, whether small or large, within greater metaphysical frames, it is easy to imagine that one might justify their actions with these greater narratives or use the narratives to haunt or manipulate others. In Wood County, I got to know several of the research participants through involvement in a church drama that capitalized on persuading people into church membership with fear of punishment by way of torching in Hell.

I did not grow up subscribing to such a narrative of fear, but I still grew up hearing that the afterlife was a physical destination. The afterlife was described as a place far from Earth to which we must earn a ticket to go. We sang songs with lyrics such as “I’ll fly away” and “I’m just a’ passin through,” and it was not uncommon to hear someone justify enduring something in hopes to “gain another star in their crown” in a faraway land of the afterlife. I pieced together the narrative that my goal might be to get off Earth by earning a Heaven pass and enough stars so when I arrive I would have a good rank. Storied so succinctly, it is obviously a very self-centered doctrine that would make my loved ones blush and deny it. While these older generations may not tell such succinct stories about their notions of Life, in small statements they do paint a picture of a larger map of Life for their children. These maps suggested that certain resources existed and there were certain paths to take or avoid and specific activities one must do to acquire these resources.

As my participating women spoke and reasoned about resourcing their lives, they referenced two possibilities of either their own hard work or supernatural provision. They spoke about their life choices and actions as being embedded within these two universal narratives, or narrative maps laid before them, which were often passed down from their
family or culture. The women claimed that they and their families depended on these provisions I referenced as Grace and Works. Grace can be understood as a supernatural provision of gifts, talents, favor, and guidance, while telling women that their duty is to receive but not earn. Works is dependent on one’s own knowledge and hard work to earn any resource or relationship. Most women reported using a mixture of both Grace and Works, though theologians claimed any subscription to Works is all Work (Crowder, 2014).

The Grace map places belief that a Divine orchestrator (a Christian God in most of these cases) is the resource of an empowered life, and He supplies specific resources and access to resources for an empowered life, even supernatural provision. The Works map places belief that one’s own knowledge and hard work is the resource of an empowered life.

Shirley was one of the only interviewees who did not openly subscribe to a Christian narrative, but she did believe in Works. Shirley’s daughter learned a legacy of hard work from Shirley’s example. Shirley claimed that she was someone “who strived all their life to be better, you know, to work my way out of the life that I had,” and her daughter perceived that she continued that hard work:

The legacy of my mom, in the 30 years that I’ve been alive was, um, work your ass off and good things will happen. And I did not always embrace that until recently.

And now I’m trying to work my ass off.

Elizabeth was trying to follow her mother’s legacy of hard work; however, her own story of gathering resources included a supernatural element, a sense of peace beyond understanding and a series of fortunate events she received after praying:
And I prayed for the first time in a very long time … and I said, “Mom, I feel better. I think it’s going to be okay now…. That started [it]…. I moved home; I moved back in with my dad…. I dropped everybody, all of my friends; I quit hanging out with everybody; I went back to school, got my two-year degree, and, uh, I met Josh, my husband.

Elizabeth shared her mother’s resource map of Works, but she also included a supernatural map that other women in Wood County used, Grace.

Most of the women did use both maps. Beth’s quotation about using her spiritual authority given by God as a work to defend herself from harm exemplifies one way in which women report that they resource themselves from both Grace and Works. While she believed God provided the authority, she believed that it only resourced you, “if you use your authority as a believer, which gives ground to that faith to take hold for you to, to get through the situation and have, you know, victory.” She exercised her authority by maintaining faith in supernatural provision (i.e., that she could not get hurt) and working by speaking that faith out loud and verbally commanding that her husband could not hurt her. It is unclear whether she believed the Grace provision could have saved her if she had not done her share of the work in believing and speaking, because she narrated a mixture of God’s grace and her works. In this instance, Grace was provided but Works must be implemented for her to receive the resources Grace provided. Other families see these Grace and Works tightly intertwined as well; however, they often believe the works is more tangible than holding a faith belief. During my last interview, I directly asked the couple to explain their Works and Grace perspectives.
Me: What’s the mixture between relying on God’s provision and hard work? Is there—is it a mixture? Is it one or the other?

Pauline: Both.

Me: It’s both?

Heather: I feel like—I feel like it’s, you know, we—we all have certain—we’ve all been blessed in different ways. So it’s—it’s what you do with those blessings. It’s—it’s—from everything, financially, time, looks, education, personalities …

Me: So are you saying God’s provision is here, and you’re supposed to take that for hard work? You’re supposed to use what he’s provided you to work hard?

Heather: Absolutely. Yes. I feel like not that—I—it just, yes, I feel like look, you know, he’s given us this, we need to share it, we need to …

Me: Do you think he gives …

Pauline: We do the best we can with it.

Heather: Right. Do the best you can with it.

Me: So the provision comes first and then the hard work? Or is it hard work or then provision?

Heather: Well, chicken [or] the egg. I don’t know. I mean I think—I think, you know, it does—it goes back to John, and he tells you, it’s the tree, and the fruit, and—and the more you’re in him, he’s in you, and you’re in him and he’s in you, and you bloom, and you—storms come and things get, you get pruned, but you keep going and—and some things keep going and some things get pruned. And is it God or is it—is it nature? Is it—is it—we don’t know. I—you don’t always know. Is it this ugly world we live in why some of these really cruddy things
happen? Well yeah, I think it is. But can God use that? Yeah, he can. And, you know, he—he can use—he can use finances; he expects you to be sharing and giving. He can use time, he expects us to—to give of our time and be gracious with our time and to be not selfish and to, number one, he gives us love. We’re to be loving all the time with everyone. That’s—that’s not really—that’s the number one thing he gives us, and he expects out of all of us. I don’t care how beautiful, poor, educated you are, he gives that and you want to give it. When—when you feel it and you have it, you wish you could give it and people would get it. You know, not everybody receives it but you try to give it. And so it’s all complicated. I don’t—I don’t …

Pauline: I always think—I always think of people in the Old Testament. I feel like we have as a blessing, I don’t feel like, I mean, yes, we worked but to have this attitude that we’ve pulled ourselves up with our own bootstraps, I don’t have that attitude. I believe that we’ve done the best we can, and what we have is the Lord is blessed us and—and you hear people talk about materialism, well, God blessed Abraham with many donkeys, many camels, gold and silver because Abraham was faithful. And so I—I don’t see materialism falling into it. I think you can be materialistic about a loaf of bread. I—I just see it as blessings because it—without God, it wouldn’t be that valuable. It would be materialism. But to—to do things to keep up with the Joneses, to do things to have a house like somebody else, that’s not the reason to do things. That’s—I mean if I can use what we have to help somebody else, that’s hospitality.
Heather began her answer with “I don’t know,” while Pauline began with “I always think”; this difference summarizes how clearly they felt they understood how God worked and His expectations for humans to work. Heather felt that Grace and Works operate hand in hand; she believed that God (Grace) is in mankind (Works) and mankind is in God, so trying to separate these two maps is impossible. She admitted the relationship is a mystery, like whether the chicken or the egg came first. Pauline took a stance that suggested life resourcing is all Grace, and the Works are merely part of Grace too. When it comes to resourcing, even if she was working hard, she believed that the work was given from God and the ability to carry out the work and the fruit of that labor are all from God. She shared her daughter’s sentiment that the two narratives are inseparable; however, she seemed to communicate that works are situated within the Grace narrative.

While not theoretically or theologically exclusive, many Wood County women revealed that they pride themselves in a mixture of lives lived resourcing from Grace and Works as they see fit, not articulating any conscious effort of when to use which or the option of using only one map for all. Heather expressed a bit of confusion—or mystery—of knowing which comes first, though her mother was more assured that it was all Grace.

These narrative maps are interactive because they invite travelers to author and share their personal narratives. The Christian Evangelical narrative is based on a premise that sharing one’s story of resourcing through Jesus will influence or even inspire others to follow one’s legacy of relying on Christ as a resource; therefore, listeners will be evangelized or converted to subscribing to the same narrative for living (Crowder, 2014).
Beth talked about sharing a resourcing testimony to empower her niece in such a way, if only her niece would subscribe to a similar narrative.

While some women such as Beth indicated believing that Christ worked supernaturally to help her through a struggle, others perceived that Christ merely left storied examples and commandments of hard subservient work, as recorded in the Christian Bible. Most of the women respected hard work, and while they might have believed in the occasional supernatural provision of Christ, they more often subscribed to a life narrative of being self-reliant; therefore, they mixed the maps of Grace and Works. Believers of a narrative that included common supernatural provision were not necessarily fully Grace-reliant. Many indicated believing that Christ supernaturally provided resources if they first enacted the right works in service and submission; however, I would argue this provision as a reward for hard work and therefore consider this a Works-based narrative.

Christian morality (keeping a list of rules through one’s own effort or works) is not the same as Christ discipleship (relying solely on God’s Grace Example—Jesus Christ [Crowder, 2014]). When women in Wood County talked about what it means to live a Christian life, many began to share that it means to live by a moral code; one couple listed some values and likened this training to enrolling a daughter in Girl Scouts:

Maggie: Honesty, hardworking … I think helping each other is a very big part of it. And, you know, worshiping God and—and we’re trying to instill that in the grandchildren.

Angela: How do you do that?
Lynn: Take her to church [inaudible 0:21:54.2], Girl Scouts, Girl Scouts, well, I’ll say Christian—Christian-centered, prayers before meals, prayer before bedtime.

Maggie: And just telling her right from wrong.

A list of morals, or a moral code, lacks the pathos of a personal story of encountering the power of a divine being and having Him resource one’s life. These two different faith maps are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but examining the nuanced differences may suggest why one type of narrative (that of encountering a Being) is more of a narrative to pass than those narratives of keeping a code of conduct. Because I focused on legacies, I did not gather a lot more personal narratives of women’s encounters with God than I have already shared (i.e., Beth’s supernatural delivery from an abusive husband; Elizabeth’s supernatural blessing to change her life; and Pauline’s supernatural financial blessings); however, faith was a dominating theme among these Wood County participants as they discussed their family legacies and how they resourced their lives. In fact, every couple except Shirley and Elizabeth described their family as a group of faithful Christians, and they identified a desire to pass down their faith whether through stories or lists.

**Narrating Mothers’ Lack of Resources**

In general, many women storied their family legacies as ones in which mothers survived with fewer resources than their daughters, that new resources of younger generations brought new complications, and that mothers were the agents responsible to create an environment for their daughters to experience optimal success or development (Lupton, 2008) by providing or helping them acquire more resources. Interestingly, I also found instances in which mothers received resources through the help of their daughter as well.
Many of the women talked about how their mother had a hard life and dealt with unfair circumstances or had to survive without some resources, perhaps because of lack of technological advances. Previous researchers (Chance, & Fiese, 1999) found that when mothers tell their daughters stories about their childhood, they typically frame stories in sadness, which could be related to why daughters perceive a small sense of pity is due to their mothers.

When discussing mothers’ lives, daughters typically marveled at their mothers’ survival and reported that their mothers had fewer resources. Shirley and Elizabeth both look up one generation and see how their own mothers managed life with fewer resources.

Shirley: Um, my mother was only 16 years old when I was born, so she was uh, she w-, she [heavy sigh] she almost resented me, .. She never even finished high school. And she got pregnant, and she had me, … my dad was, uh 12 years older … and just beat the shit out of her.”

In storying her mother’s life, Shirley reflected on how hard her mother’s life was, even in regard to how her mother resented Shirley’s easier life. Shirley almost excused her mother’s resentment because of her perception of how few resources and what great struggles her mother endured. Shirley felt that her own life was much easier than her mother’s past, especially comparing how she was excelling in high school at the same age her mother was pregnant and married.

Elizabeth looked at Shirley with a similar reverence for what she had to go through. Elizabeth revered her mother for the strength she perceived that she lacked herself, though Elizabeth believed she had an easier life than Shirley.
Elizabeth: Whereas I have always had you [Shirley] in my support system, she’s [Shirley has] not had anybody, and so she’s always had to be—I don’t know why I’m going to get emotional here [her eyes fill with tears] and I really don’t mean to but—and I hate that—but she just um, I, ya know, you take for granted your mother’s strength. And that’s why, I think about my kids and I think, “Oh my God, their mom’s a hot mess!” Like how [are] they ever going to be able to come to me for this, you know, this [long pause reaches for tissue] strength that I don’t have. I know. I don’t know why.

Shirley and Elizabeth both pitied their mothers’ earlier life, even among any guilt or envious resentment their mothers might have bestowed on them. Elizabeth recognized that her support system is her mother, and she grieved the thought that Shirley did without a supportive mother figure. Elizabeth even more greatly grieved the imagined future, one in which she might lack the strength to be a great support for her children. Her emotions in this quotation demonstrated her desire to be a great resource in the life of her children.

Sometimes, the women viewed their daughters as having more resources for an easier life. Shirley’s mom supposedly believed Shirley had an easier life just as Shirley thought Elizabeth had an even easier time resourcing her life.

Elizabeth: And I think that how she said that her mom was very jealous of her at some time because of all these.... I’ve seen that with you and me.

Shirley: Uh-huh.

Elizabeth: Which I don’t blame her [she begins to imitate what her mother would say] “Elizabeth, you know you have, I’m pissed at you because you have, you
know, you didn’t struggle to go to school, you never struggled for this, you never struggled for that, and I resent that about you.’

Elizabeth wove the story about a blooming legacy of motherly jealousy: her grandmother was jealous of Shirley and in return Shirley had been jealous of Elizabeth because of the greater available resources that made for a more pleasurable life. While the mothers might have felt it was their duty to offer a better life to their daughters, they were jealous. Somehow, daughters did see that their lives were enviable, and they pitied their mothers, but this acknowledgement and pity did not satisfy this resentment.

Daughters often pitied their mothers’ lives, and while they might see their mothers’ flaws, they excused them. Not only did Hannah regard her mother as having fewer resources, she used the deficit as an excuse for her mother’s lack of personality development.

Hannah: She was a different personality. She was more of a…ya know, personalities are what they are, and then they develop because of the things you’ve gone through. So losing her mom and dad when I was an infant was pretty traumatic, so I don’t know if she learned to not be, su—; she could be emotional, but she wasn’t super emotional. Depending on the situation.

Hannah suggested that not only did her mother lose a resource and resourcer, her mother, but, like other mothers, she was not supposed to reveal the struggle to the children until they were in a place they could cope with seeing the struggle. Hannah may not have recalled witnessing her mother struggling or known it was happening at the time; however, she still seemed to revere her mother’s strength to endure the struggle and seemed in awe that her mother overcame the difficult situation that took away family
resources, a situation Hannah did not experience. When Hannah recalled her mother, she saw her as a woman who was shaped by that loss.

LaSara also perceived her mother in a similar light—being shaped by an experience of wanting for mother-given resources. LaSara similarly storied her mother’s actions as results of dealing with life’s turmoil when seeking and not receiving resources from her mother; specifically, she saw her mother’s personality was shaped by the experience.

LaSara: And even her sister was kind of coarse. It was like my mom, you know, like I can remember when my mom found out she was pregnant. She had no clue what her body was doing, so she, she had, she couldn’t go to her mom because her mom would’ve just probably—she had lost so many babies; it was like she wouldn’t have cared. It was no big deal. But she went to my, her, her sister and she was like not comforting. So my mom actually kind of makes up for that. Sometimes it’s over, it’s too much sometimes. It’s like she tries too hard to be that perfect mom.

Here, LaSara reasoned that her mother “tries too hard to be that perfect mom,” because she did without a helpful mother and wants a better life for her daughter. While LaSara saw her mother’s extreme attempt as a flaw, she credited her mother as still trying to react to her hard life and trying to offer a better one to her daughter.

**Irrelevantly archaic stories: Life was just different.** Not all daughters thought that their mother’s lives were more difficult than their own, per se. A few mothers in their fifties expressed the belief that their mothers’ lives were actually easier, because they were simpler and without the expectation of women to also work outside the home. This
might have been related to the obvious cultural and economic shift after World War II, or it may be related to being a mother going through midlife; whatever the case, several of these women voiced this idea.

Laurie: I do know that I bottle things up and then once something really gets me, then I fall apart, and I will cry for 12 hours, and I can’t quit even if I want to. So that’s real embarrassing, but anyway. I never saw [my mother] do that but my mom was not in public. She was at home all the time, and it’s a little different when you’re not working, and you’re not going to school, and you’re not trying to be a mom and a student and have a job and do—do your share of things that help out with the church and—so there’s just a lot of responsibility I feel like for women my age in—right now. I mean there’s just—there’s more responsibility than people like my mother, who were homemakers, had.

Laurie identified several things in her life that are more difficult than what her mother had endured. Throughout her interview, she discussed how her mother had survived without many modern conveniences, and she greatly pitied her mother for other areas such as not having access to manners, cultural experiences, or better shopping.

Some daughters acknowledged that in specific tasks there might have been some greater difficulties, but overall, new difficulties arise with new generations. Heather and her mother both acknowledged that newer resources are not inherently better.

Heather: Well, as far as technology, as far as the amount of things you have to keep up with in that way. We’ve had to learn to really go through the junk mail in just about every aspect of our lives whereas I feel like, you know, there were certain things that were simple, so much more of a treat, and I hear my kids
saying that same thing. They’re like, “Mom, you don’t understand, we didn’t—you guys didn’t grow up with cell phones; you didn’t have one all the time; this wasn’t expected of you.” And I’m like, “You know what, you’re probably right.”

Pauline: Well, I think that’s what I was going to say, that I think whatever generation you’re in, you’ve got struggles to deal with. It doesn’t matter that it’s a different struggle. My mother’s struggle was she had to cut cardboard out to put in the soles of her shoes to walk to school every day ‘cause the cardboard would wear out every day. And she had one dress. And she had those kind of struggles. She was the only child out of five that walked down the lane to go to church with somebody else. She was the only—my mother’s the only one out of the family that took—and my dad—that would take us to church and be a part of the church community. I mean, how fortunate can I be? And so then I come along, and I’ve got a different set of …

Heather and Pauline both identified that newer generations might have some more efficient conveniences, especially with advances in technology; however, each new generation presents itself with new struggles. Heather believed it is our responsibility to filter through, like junk mail, to find what is most important, and she sympathized with her young adult children when they say she does not understand their generation’s stresses. Pauline agreed and succinctly pointed out that it is simply a new set of struggles; however, she vividly remembered and felt compelled to share the family stories of stressful resourcing.

Stories of unique or creative resourcing are interesting to compare to our modern conveniences; however, many women do not suggest that, in times of modern
conveniences, lives are truly easier because of the technological advances. Debbie, like Pauline, had family stories of using archaic or creative resources, but she discussed how things are not necessarily easier. She realized that women are still very busy; the stories of archaic and less convenient resources have left impressions worth mentioning in detail.

Debbie: And then the other thing is when you think of house and home, in my mom’s day, I don’t know how to describe this, families were around each other more, and women, when they worked, they—they worked—literally, worked—’cause they—good grief, my mom had a [hand inaudible 0:39:23.3] washer when I was young, you know, things that you had to do as far as health and home was more time consuming and that was your business. It had to be your business, making clothing, if you look at the time it took to—to accomplish those things. Today, you can shop a whole lot cheaper at Gabe’s than to make something. Even the department store where they’ve got the 50%, you know, you can’t afford to sell today even though to me it would be fun. I go and—you know, I would love to design and make it, but it has to be—it’s not—it’s cheaper to go buy it. So it’s like the jobs of—because when you look at Proverbs 31, and you see all that women did, and it mostly had to do with what she had to do to take care of her family, and buying and selling property, and cloth, and these were all home businesses and things she, you know, she was up early. But I think if you translate that to today because the things that keep us busy at home is different. We’re not making candles. We’re not having to chop firewood for, you know, to cook, so—Debbie revealed that her mother had more difficulty doing housework because the resources were not as convenient; she used hand-cranked washing machines, chopped
wood for cooking, and made her own clothing. Debbie also began to identify the fact that with the new convenient resources come expectations for time spent with other duties. While women may not be thinking often of resources beyond finances, physical conveniences, and access to knowledge, Debbie highlighted that there were other resources that mothers had more of, namely how the women’s share of work was carried out with other women. This hints that her mother and grandmother had social support that she did not see in the later generations.

**Mother as responsible antagonist: Mother guilt.** While mothers frame their stories with more sadness and a lack of resources in comparison to their daughters, they also exhibit a guilt or responsibility to make sure their daughters are given the greatest chances at success (Lupton, 2008). Amarylis expressed the responsibility she felt to leave her children a financial gift to set them up for a more successful life than she had. Guiltily, she highlighted what she would not be able to provide for her family.

Amarylis: Um... well, we are not people that, like, we were people that we have to work really hard and live, basically, paycheck to paycheck to survive and try to give our kids a legacy, meaning, a house because we know that probably we’ll never be able to give them thousands of dollars when we pass away, so by studying and finding a good job, at least a house we can leave them or a piece of land. So for us basically to study was to reach a higher level than previous generations. They were probably just people that would just work; they were farmers.

Amarylis highlighted her expectation for each generation “to reach a higher level than previous generations” and more subtly suggested that this played into the reason for why
she regretted not being able to leave more financial inheritance to her daughter. She did not take time in the interview to acknowledge or express gratitude for what she inherited from her mother; perhaps it was expected rather than celebrated.

Lupton (2008) found that mothers feel responsible for children’s lives, for giving guidance, for developing children’s brain and intelligence, and for ensuring that their children “get the best out of everything” (p. 118). Mothers reported painful memories of justifying their actions to others, whom they feared were judging them for not doing what is “best” for their children (i.e., choosing not to breastfeed) (Lupton, 2008, p. 121). While mothers voiced that their children’s well-being was their responsibility, they struggle with feelings of inadequacy and perceptions of motherhood “competition” and judgment of strangers even though they articulated that resourcing their child is no one else’s responsibility. In my interview, Janie’s mother often told stories to excuse herself from any guilt associated with leaving Janie with her father.

Jacklynn: I left her dad. And I left her and her older brother with her dad. It was a very bad time in my life, very, very bad. It’s still bad, ‘cause I cry when I talk about it. And so, it’s about—how many years? Four years?”

Jannie: Till what?”

Jacklynn: Till we had a good relationship again. ‘cause they were very angry at me [clears throat], rightfully so. I mean I didn’t begrudge ’em. But I thought their dad would be a better dad to them than I could be a mom, and—I was really—

Jannie: And he was.

Jacklynn: Oh yeah, he was a wonderful dad. I never had—great dad! I just thought instead of making them choose who to live with, I chose for them. And
they were angry at me. But it worked, so anyway, they were—lived with their
dad, even though we would see each other, that was a period of time that was, it
was [a] bad time.

Jacklynn: Was it a bad time for you?

Jannie: We came around.

Jacklynn justified her actions as what was really good or even best for the
children despite what others might think. Her admission of continued crying, clearing her
throat, asking for her daughter to interject, and willingness to drop her line of thought to
pick up other topics demonstrated some nervousness or residual feelings of guilt when
talking about the situation. While going through her personal ordeals, she felt should
could not give to motherhood what was expected.

This sense of responsibility suggests an innate power dynamic complicated by the
mere fact that daughters must be able to receive the resources but are not initially
expected to be thankful (i.e., in infancy they are unaware of the mother’s sacrifices and
full efforts). If daughters are not thankful for the efforts, they may even reject some of
these efforts—creating situations that could be stressful for the mother who perceives the
responsibility as part of her identity as a mother.

Shirley had built success in the life of her family by working to get away from her
inherited negative past, and she voiced anger and resentment that her daughter took those
hard choices for granted and brought the same negative circumstances back into the
family. Shirley also talked about the frustration she had negotiating her sense of
responsibility to ensure her daughter had a better life than she had, and her daughter
rejected the idea.
Shirley: I was just, like, and I would say to her, “I, I, I don’t understand this. Why would you choose people who are mean to you and not nice to you? And lead you down this path of, terribleness? I mean, ugliness.” And I used to get mad at all the kids, because I said, “I have worked my whole life to get out of that crap and you guys keep bringing it back into my life; and I resent this. Because you know that’s just not where I want to be.

Shirley expected her children to learn from her stories and her example of living a new legacy of more desirable resources. She did recall the stories comparing her past life to what her children were choosing to live. In her narratives, she expressed how she had overcome or left behind negative situations and raised her children without those negatives. She expressed how shocked she was to see that her children would choose to bring that negativity back into the family after she thought her actions and stories had altered that legacy, and she was confident that the lectures had at least taught the children “That’s just not where [they wanted] to be.”

Mother benefits from daughter’s stories. Lastly, I witnessed more evidence that women often think daughters have greater resources than daughters; this emerged as mothers talked about learning new ways to resource their lives from their daughters instead of the typical downward direction of daughters learning from their mothers. Browne and Chan (2012) explored such upward family communication to find that daughters can serve as a source of information and influence in the beliefs, attitudes, and practices of their mothers regarding some health decision making. Women in my study talked about learning in areas such as spirituality, emotional support, and religion. Previous studies reported that this is common especially in cultures in which mothers
perceive that their daughters are more educated and have more access to correct and relevant information than they have; this would likewise be the case in Appalachia.

Jannie’s mother, Jacklynn, talked about how she learned from Jannie about spiritual and emotional support and growth.

Jacklynn: Through this divorce, I couldn’t make it without her—her and [her husband]. I mean they were just ... AMAZINGLY they STRENGTHENED [clears throat] me by their walk with God and teaching me how to draw on God’s strength. I mean that was a major, major thing, because I lived out there for a month, Grace and I both, and we would pray every night. Oh my, I mean I grew leaps and bounds spiritually by them. So she’s where I go to, when I have a need, because to talk it out, not, not a physical need, I mean, not money-wise or anything like that, but emotional.

Me: That’s interesting because your mom didn’t call you; you are the only daughter, and your mom didn’t call you.

Jacklynn: No, no.

Jacklynn labels the support as both spiritual and emotional and acknowledges that these resources are from her eldest daughter. Similarly Anne credits her daughter with helping her receive the Holy Spirit.

Me: What about are you able to tell me a turning-point story for your mom, a time in her life maybe that she decided to change or something changed or something ... for example, maybe a spiritual high point for your mom …

Beth: When we went to church, there wasn’t ... there wasn’t anything to where we knew that Jesus was our best friend, the power, salvation, Holy Ghost, none of
that. It felt good but ... and it was a social-type thing, but it wasn’t the power of God.... I went to high school and this ... there was a wave of the Holy Spirit during that time. And there were happy people that were Christians and I’m like, “Well, they have something I don’t have. What do they have?” And I started asking questions, and they told me it was the Holy Ghost, and they told me where to read to find it in the scripture and that I could have it too. And I said, “Well, I want it now.” They said, “Read about it first.” And I said, “I want it now.” So we went and we prayed and I received the Holy Spirit. And I come home and I tell Mom, and ... and so she goes, “I want it too.” And I said, “Well, just ask for it,” and she did and she got it.

Anne: Just like that.

Beth: Yeah.

Anne: Just like that.

Beth and Anne recounted that Beth was the one who had the spiritual educational opportunity because she was leaving the house to go to school, she acquired the indwelling of the Holy Spirit first, and she was able to help her mother acquire it too. This upward communication helped to resource the mother’s life.

How Women Engage in Storytelling Summary

While I introduced my research suggesting that the true power of legacies lies within the daughter’s receiving the stories, I discussed some upward communication from daughters to mothers, and I have closed with the recognition that mothers are often the ones in American culture who feel that it is their responsibility to influence these legacies.
Chapter V: Sequestering Stories and Legacies

“Your cousin Diane is a retired stay-at-home wife, her grown daughter works retail, and her elderly mother is single; how can she say they are too busy to meet me for an interview over a free meal—it would save them time cooking—and it’s fun?!” I moaned to my husband. “Sounds like she just doesn’t want to do it,” he said. Then I added, “You know what your cousin Mary told me? She’s in the same boat with an elderly mother and a daughter home from school, and she’s only working two days a week; she told me their family doesn’t have any stories!”

“What? She is the biggest storyteller of the family! Whenever we have family news to be spread we always say, ‘telephone, telegraph, tell a Mary!’ You’re just going to have to meet some other women.”

This was how my project began. In the thick of the study, perhaps the most interesting finding was the function of sequestering stories or legacies. I should have seen it from the moment I began attempting to recruit research participants, because the numerous rejections and the blatant denials that women told stories made it obvious that women in Wood County sequestered some family stories. My husband’s own family would not give interviews. “Why? Why won’t women give me an interview? Is there something off-putting about me?” Ashamed, I began to ask those women whom I had interviewed. Shirley responded, “They don’t want you to see what they don’t have. You look like someone who has more than her share, and you’re working on a PhD—that’s really something. I was intimidated when I first met you.” “I’m trying not to laugh,” was my response to Shirley, as I recalled how nervous I was to meet her—an attractive and confident self-made millionaire who grew up in poverty and retired as the president of a
Fortune 500 company. Shirley and her daughter gave one of my first interviews, and I found it to be one of the most fascinating, as I witnessed her change topics in the middle of a story as well as negotiate with her daughter about filtering out or even denying undesirable stories about her life.

In previous chapters, I shared accounts that exemplified answers to my direct research questions, and because of the nature of interpretive and grounded explorations, I found freedom to further explore the theme of sequestering. In this chapter, I have revisited some of these discourses from interviews, along with my own autoethnographic accounts in the light of the power of sequestering stories and legacies.

**Storyteller Roles in Sequestering Legacies**

Storytelling and sequestering may be what psychologist John Kotre called *healthy defenses* (2005) that could be used to “literally block the passage of a destructive tradition” and ultimately bring “enormous satisfaction from seeing their progeny free of the very scars they carry” (p. 42). (In this chapter, I later argue that buffering may happen in more productive ways than hiding or sequestering stories.) The study of family legacies is important because as legacies work to cultivate a family and are reproduced, the legacies can enrich or poison opportunities for future generations.

Family legacies, often passed through storytelling, are greatly dependent on older generation’s *generativity*, or concern for establishing and guiding the next generation (Kotre & Kotre, 1998), though we recognize that younger generations must be willing to receive from the older generation (Manoogian, Harter, & Denham, 2010; Peterson, 2006). Psychologists have been exploring the trait of generativity for some time but are still asking questions about how generativity is transmitted to later generations (Kotre, 2005;
Peterson, 2006), and communication researchers are interested in how generative people communicate and if their communication truly affects their ability to be as generative as they desire.

People with a great sense of generativity recognize that they serve as role models and teachers for their children (Hart, McAdams, Hirsch, & Bauer, 2001), and they consider communicating as an intergenerational lynchpin or buffer (Kotre & Kotre, 1998) for future generations to silence or foster storytelling that would maintain or disrupt family legacies (Manoogian, Harter, & Denham, 2010). Intergenerational lynchpins are individuals who use narrative discourse to link family members from various generations (Manoogian, Harter, & Denham, 2010). Intergenerational buffers are family members who sequester distressing storylines in the family to protect younger family members from toxic legacies by “absorbing blows from the past while shielding the future from damage” (Kotre, 2005). This definition is makes the buffer sound heroic, and the efforts could be, if it is truly generative, truly about the next generation, and not just about managing one’s own image, especially by hiding stories.

Storytelling and buffering “have reverberating effects on others. In some cases, participants noted family conflict that emerged from the sequestering of stories” (Manoogian, Harter, & Denham, 2010, p. 52). While many people may want to avoid conflict (i.e., avoid storytelling that would incite disagreement), conflict is not, by definition, a bad thing. Conflict is the breeding ground for creativity and, if handled positively, could actually bring about growth in the family, in the relationship, or in an individual (Keyton, 2006).
Manoogian, Harter, and Denham (2010) suggested that “buffers left younger family members with fewer paths for future choices and actions” (p. 52); younger generations were often left to face challenges without help if some stories were not told. This statement was made in regard to stories of health diagnoses, which would become known to family eventually; however, this idea of sequestered stories leading to sequestered paths holds some truth in this broader context as well. Storytellers who sequester do so with purposeful motivations, whether to protect themselves or others.

**Motivations to Sequester**

I don’t want to tell that story.

* I don’t talk about it, nor do I let my life tell it.

I don’t want other people to talk about it.

I didn’t choose that story for myself nor for anyone else.

I chose to get that out of my life, to never let it back in.

These are my words, and they echo the responses I have shared from so many participants, like Anne, Jacklynn, Beth, and Shirley, who left behind abusive legacies. We do not want to talk about it; we do not want the labels that come with the stories. We often sequester dialogue to avoid the claims stories make on and about people (Manoogian, Harter, & Denham, 2010). People often do not want to share some stories, and it is a challenge for researchers to know what has been hidden or to know what could be shared, but at the risk of placing participants in an emotionally vulnerable state, especially as they relive stories in their telling. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) pointed out:
[F]or the researcher, this is a portion of the complexity of narrative, because a life is also a matter of growth toward an imagined future and, therefore, involves retelling stories and attempts at relieving stories. A person is, at once, engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories. (p. 4).

This truth of reliving stories that causes us to not wish to tell, to relive. Perhaps to some the story seems benign; however, in our interpretation and in our retelling, the story could be misery, whether the misery results from having to tell or having a certain listener hear. Instead of digging to understand sequestering in those moments in which participants were sequestering stories, I was empathetic and respectful to their choices to sequester stories, and gladly so because I was not granted permission in this study to pry into such emotionally vulnerable spaces.

Even though I was not prying, my research participants revealed many motivations for sequestering family stories. Some were buffering to protect listeners but most wanted to protect the teller, or perhaps the teller should be called “the sequesterer”. Like the participants of Manoogian, Harter, and Denham’s (2010) study with families given diagnoses of diabetes, as well as my own participants, I too am reticent to share some stories for many reasons the researchers identified: I feel private about a topic; I have mixed feelings about a topic; I want to avoid attention that sharing might bring; I do not want to burden the family with the knowledge; I do not want to create tension for family members who might want to engage in dialogue about the topic; and perhaps I am in denial, hoping that the storyline will pass or be found to be fictitious.

During some member checks, I had the opportunity to ask participants to help identify or confirm why they sequestered stories. My participants identified several
specific reasons to sequester family stories. Some reasons to sequester were purely personal: fear of rejection, fear of retelling (reliving) a traumatic event, and fear of sharing a shameful event. Some reasons to sequester were focused on the listener: needing to “walk on eggshells” with a volatile listener, wanting to shield a listener (e.g., child) from graphic or taboo topics, or not wanting to make a listener envious. Many of these reasons are very similar to those found by Manoogian et al. (2010). With the exception of avoiding a volatile or inappropriate situation with a listener, every other reason falls under a definition of shame.

Kotre (2005) argued that storytelling and buffering were healthy defenses for memories and events, especially shameful events. Burgo (2011) identified defenses for dealing with shame; unhealthy defenses are blaming others or behaving narcissistically, while a healthy and healing defenses include narrating the event to oneself to free oneself to grow from the experience. A psychologist, Burgo also advocated narrating to trusted others. To explore these experiences, I offer definitions of shame and how shame is pertinent to the lives of women, especially mothers and daughters, and to storytelling.

**Shame.** It seems ironic at first, but communication, storytelling specifically, is important to defeat shame on an individual level as well as a systemic level. Shame, according to Brené Brown (2004), is something that feels like it should be hidden because it is happening only to us, but once shared, shame turns into a collective vulnerability, and we realize we are not alone. Shame blocks creativity, authenticity, and joy. Brown also demonstrated that shame is both a social and personal issue, and must be addressed as both in order to strip it of its power. Brown wrote that, to fight shame, we must know what it is and what it is not. Like other researchers and practitioners dealing
with studies of shame (Ablamowicz, 1992; Burgo, 2012, February 16), Brown (2012b) explained that guilt should not be confused with shame because guilt is knowing that one has done something wrong and needs to rectify the wrong behavior. Brown identified shame as a feeling that left women feeling at least one of three things: trapped, powerless, or isolated. The motivations my participants identified relate to these feelings. The fear of rejection is ultimately the fear of being isolated; the fear of reliving a traumatic event is the fear of being trapped; and the desire to avoid causing another to envy is to help another avoid feeling powerless. Brown identified shame as an intensely painful experience of believing the self is flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance or belonging.

My participants were sequestering stories because they believed listeners might judge the storyteller, possibly as they had judged themselves. If one cannot give oneself permission to be imperfect, how can one expect others to grant that permission? Brown’s analysis of why women feel shame is fascinating, as she described women as existing in an entanglement of layered, conflicting, and competing social-community expectations in and out of the home.

*Womanhood and motherhood as breeding grounds for shame.* My prologue began as I recalled pushing a shopping cart with my makeup amiss, my child toppling, an inability to connect or acknowledge other shoppers, and a desperation to pray to reconcile my fragmented existence—I was juggling many failing identities. I wanted to be the perfectly nurturing and attentive mother, while having the perfect physical appearance and taking note to be a good citizen and make excellent and swift shopping decisions,
meanwhile preparing my time to return home to act as the perfect wife, homemaker, and student and, of course, saving prayer for a more private arena.

Brown (2004) discussed that, as women, we are expected to perform an impossible number of roles and to perform them flawlessly. In her own words, “For women, shame is, do it all, do it perfectly and never let them see you sweat… Shame, for women, is this web of unobtainable, conflicting, competing expectations about who we’re supposed to be. And it’s a straight-jacket” (Brown, 2012b). Brown juxtaposed the layered web of “competing and conflicting” expectations of women to the singular (though also impossible) expectation for men: never show weakness. Setting up such ridiculous expectations is grounds for failure and self-rejection; however, most Americans have done this because of the cultural messages surrounding us, women and men.

Brown problematized motherhood even more seriously in what she called the shaming of “Mommy-wars.” Mommy-wars were rife with competing philosophies about motherhood, labor and delivery, breastfeeding, and disciplining and sleep strategies, to name a few (Brown, 2010). Sadly, women seeking support as they navigate life through such choices and hurdles are doing so with others who are shaming one another instead of creating a culture of empathetic listening and sharing.

**Envy and Sequestering.** Sequestering stories in Appalachia can mean sequestering stories of wealth—wealth of experience, wealth of education, wealth of beauty, wealth of any number of ways listeners might feel impoverished. During member checking, Shirley said she and Elizabeth protected her family and son by sequestering stories about her son growing up in wealthy privilege:
We would not tell stories around my daughter-in-law, so she would not feel alienated or have any dirt on the family. She would often resent that my son grew up with more privilege, so we would not tell stories. She also did not have a filter, and we did not want her to know everything in case she told people we would not want her to tell (Shirley, personal interview).

While this example of having to protect a family member from envious family members may be a bit extreme, it might not be uncommon. I once traveled with my cousin to New York City to visit her older sister, and I witnessed her taking great care to hide her pregnancy from her elder sister to avoid envy spoiling the trip. I grew up in a family of great shame. I have been no stranger to debilitating experiences of shame; however, I have not identified much with envy or jealousy. Being so full of shame and self-focus, it did not quickly register that I should hide things about myself to make others feel better about themselves. Shirley explained it to me, saying that even she, at middle age and with her money, power, success, and life experience, was intimidated by me when she first met me. In her words, I looked like I “had more than my share,” but I was too busy thinking the same about her. When she brought this to my attention, I thought back to strange experiences I encountered upon my arrival in Appalachia, one of which shamed me for years:

My face turned white as the blood ran from it and my heart sank; then I'm sure it turned bright red as I began to get angry. I was new to Wood County and was looking for my place, though not having kids at my age I felt juvenile and alienated from most conversations with women. In hopes to build relationships, I was attending a small life group, where we were encouraged to live life together
and share our thoughts in group discussions about the ancient Israeli and Greek texts of the Bible. Despite that I have high communication apprehension in groups, I challenged myself to attend and participate faithfully. Because relationships took precedence over intellectual conversation, I was extra mindful to validate others for sharing their opinions and to give them time to talk; however, as the blood rushed from my face that day, I realized that taking turns was not enough. The church pastor said I was too intimidating and was asking me to not tell stories that reminded people I had (1) spent time overseas; (2) taught at a university; or (3) had higher education. At the time I had just finished my master’s and was teaching and studying for my PhD. I literally spent every week in my life the previous six years and the next six years both at universities and overseas. If I could not talk about my life in regard to any of those topics, I was not free to be me.

To be asked to sequester stories was and is a disempowering experience, especially in a supposedly authentic and supportive environment. How was I supposed to be authentic or allow others to be if I had to conceal what I did all day long or what I dreamed about? How were others supposed to feel comfortable around me if I was full of secrets? If I wanted to share an encouraging story, even one about how I, too, was imperfect, I could not because it typically involved the untouchable topics. How much more empowering would it have been if listeners, who were impressed by my credentials, saw my struggles and insecurities were just like their own, perhaps even witnessing that I was less equipped to manage them? This experience should have been my first clue that
sequestering is a short-term band-aid solution and the shame festering underneath can be
death-y; however, storytelling in community can be the antidote.

_Envy as shame._ “I wish I had your skinny knees.” Mom must have said this every
year to me since I was eighteen. Mom feels that her knees are too large to be seen and so
her wardrobe is limited, a challenge for someone voted _best dressed_ in her high school
and continues to pride herself on “wearing a special outfit everyday.” She daydreams
about retiring from nursing and working at J Crew just to play with clothes all day. Come
to think of it, there is not a person in our family for whom she has not purchased clothing
to boost their wardrobe; I can safely say that clothing is intertwined with her self-identity,
and her supposedly large knees challenge that while mine seem to mock her. It is just
easiest for me to avoid the subject of summertime wardrobes. Researchers (Salovey &
Rothman, 1994) have explained that we do not envy random attributes about another;
rather, we envy within domains in which we define ourselves. In other words, envy is
what comes when we are ashamed we do not have something, and we see someone who
does (Burgo, 2012, February 16).

**Sequestering to Avoid Inciting Mother Envy**

“I wish I could have had my babies at home, especially with your brother when
the doctor was so horrible and messed things up.” Mom’s words ring in my ears every
time I start to discuss my experience with birthing at home—so I often sequester parts of
that experience. Of course, she is so happy for me, but I know hearing about it causes her
pain as she reflects on her own negative experiences. She told me once that she wished
she could have had the information I have found when she raised us; I guess she thinks I
have had an easier time parenting. The emotional, social, and financial support I receive
from my mother promises me that she wants only the very best for me and that she will even work a job she hates to make sure I can live a better life. Yet I worry that she is a bit envious that she is helping me have what she never did or will. I sequester stories that I think might highlight disparities between what I have and she does not, whether that be positive birth memories or the chance of a future degree. I thought back to Shirley and her mother, who were both vocally direct about envying their daughters. Shirley recalled her mother’s envy, and she justified her mother’s feelings by narrating a story of why her mother was in a position to envy.

Shirley: We lived in … the little two-room shack that … you get for working there…. I got to start playing golf when I was eight years old. Started working at the golf course when I was 14. And, um, my mother was only 16 years old when I was born, so she was, uh, she w ... she [heavy sigh] she almost resented me, I think. Resented ... the fact that I had this ... wonderful—what she thought was wonderful—I played golf; I was head cheerleader; I was president of the student council; I was all of these things, and she was jealous of that. She never even finished high school. And she got pregnant, and she had me, and, and even though she was a strong woman in her own right, she wasn’t she wasn’t much of a mother, you know; she just, it was all about her…. My dad … it was nothing for him to get drunk … and just beat the shit out of her. And so I spent my life pulling my father off my mother. And [whispers] I hated all that!

Shirley storied a life of her mother as a woman who did not get to live, while witnessing her daughter live a wonderful life. This was Shirley’s perception. Shirley later recalled a painful story in which her mother did actually admit she was envious.
Shirley: Oh I adored her, but it was just ... it was complicated. When I took her
to—and this would broke my heart—I took [her to] Arthur James when she had
leukemia, and she was gone within two months from the day she got it till the day
she died—and I took her out to Columbus to check in, and she was standing over
there, and she turned around to me and said, “Why couldn’t this be you instead of
me?” And I, I just... I don't know. Gee, what mother says that? Who says that?
[choking up].

Shirley’s recollections of her mother are heart-wrenching, and while they may be at an
extreme end of the spectrum of mother envy, they do highlight what psychologists
identify as a normal response of mothers to their daughters. Shirley evidently learned to
vocalize her envy in a more constructive way to her own daughter. She chuckled as her
daughter recalled and imitated previous conversations.

Elizabeth: [quoting her mother] Elizabeth, you know you have—I’m pissed at you
because you have, you know, you didn’t struggle to go to school, you never
struggled for this; you never struggled for that, and I resent that about you….

You’re being a spoiled little brat, and you need to stop.

Elizabeth reenacted her mother’s vocalized resentment. Unlike my relationship with my
own mother, Elizabeth is left fairly certain about the areas of her life that her mother
envies. The relationship between mothers and daughters is unique from that between
mothers and sons. Fingerman (1996) found that while mothers are proud of their son’s
achievements, they respond to the achievements of daughters with self-contempt, which
leads to envy. Meanwhile, she found that daughters—especially as they age—begin to
become more protective of their mother’s feelings, doing what they can to avoid hurting
them or inciting envy.

**Mother’s infancy as breeding ground for envy.** Burgo (2012, February 16)
argued that shame, and the envy it fuels, were the “residue of failed attachment and early
parental deficiencies.” This harsh reality is a tall order for parents to face and deliver,
especially with the other roles competing for the modern woman’s attention. The truth is
that there is no perfect attachment, and Burgo claimed that everyone has a little
narcissism. In other words, women who attached less in their infancy were more inclined
to struggle with shame and therefore envy as well. Parenting styles are subject not only to
environmental and cultural influences on interactions but have also been found to be
related to genetic factors that influence such interactions as how mother’s control their
children (Klahr, Thomas, Hopwood, Klump, & Burt, 2013). This suggests that daughters
are predisposed to parent similarly to their mothers; therefore, a family culture of low
attachment or shame is likely and systemic.

**Communication solution for shame and envy.** Envy stems from feelings one has
about oneself as a person, especially about feelings about who one is; envy stems from
and is fueled by shame (Burgo, 2012, February 16; Salovey & Rothman, 1994). To deal
with envy—or eradicate it in an area—one may need to deal with the underlying shame.
Burgo (2012, October 12) treated shame as a good phenomenon, while Brown (2014)
treated shame as a bad phenomenon; however, they generally agree about what to do with
shame. I determine that it is neither good nor bad, but how one chooses to deal with it
makes it good or bad. Burgo (2012, October 12) suggested that unhealthy defenses are to
take the shame and blame others or be narcissistic, while a healthy defense is viewing
shame as an opportunity for growth. To learn from these memories, he suggested narrating the shameful memories as if you are a character doing a shameful action (not being something shameful), digging deeply to find out the reason for the behavior and the shame, bringing that memory into assimilation of the whole person—without offering excuses in which one compares one’s faults to others’ lack but simply owning the fault and growing. For example, ask oneself what the memory reveals about the self and how one needs to examine it more closely and go into greater detail instead of turning away. Having faced the truth, one can face the memories with less pain and aim to do better next time.

Brown (2004) offered a similar treatment for shame. She treated shame as one might treat guilt. While shame degrades a person, guilt degrades a behavior one might learn to correct. Perceiving that a person has guilt instead of that the person is shameful, is seeing the person doing something wrong and finding ways to rectify it, an opportunity to face reality and grow into a person with healthier expectations, self-talk, and even storytelling with others. Brown (2012a) ultimately came to the conclusion that to communicate a legacy that does not include unhealthy defenses to shame, one must model a life that children can read and repeat. In other words, one must be what or who they wish their children to be. I was thrilled to find this suggestion as it is what I felt the sum of this project taught me: to be whom I want my children to become.

Brown (2010), renowned for her research into shame and vulnerability, discussed shame as something that, if not talked about, would become greater; however, if storied to others and empathy is shared, shame would ultimately dissipate.
And shame is really easily understood as the fear of disconnection: Is there something about me that, if other people know it or see it, that I won’t be worthy of connection?... It’s universal; we all have [shame]. The only people who don’t experience shame have no capacity for human empathy or connection. No one wants to talk about it, and the less you talk about it the more you have it…. In order for connection to happen, we have to allow ourselves to be seen, really seen. (Brown, 2010)

In this quotation, Brown identified that connection is an antithesis of shame, and the key to connection is communication. To defeat shame, we must communicate about it, and to communicate about shameful events is storytelling. In families, we can deal with our shame by storytelling and empathizing with one another; yet, we find that women do sequester stories of shame or avoid shaming others.

While I make the link between connection and storytelling, Brown moves forward in her research to do the same. In her 2012 TED Talk, Brown identified the difference of people who struggled with shame and those who overcame it as whether or not the people had courage and connection. Her definition of courage is to story who one is as a whole person: the good, bad, and ugly.

[Courage is] to tell the story of who you are with your whole heart. And so these folks had, very simply, the courage to be imperfect. They had the compassion to be kind to themselves first and then to others, because, as it turns out, we can’t practice compassion with other people if we can’t treat ourselves kindly. (Brown, 2012)
The courage to be imperfect gives women the ability to not sequester stories of imperfections, and, in turn, gives their listeners the ability to open up and share their imperfections. This would mean that mothers could share stories they once sequestered, and therefore, model for their daughters how to be kind to oneself and possibly how to grow from one’s painful experiences.

Brown also found that those who were not struggling with shame had connections with others, much more so than those who struggled with shame, which she described as the fear of disconnection. Connection, she argued, came as a result of embracing a different identity, one that was true and imperfect but accepted. Brown (2010) illuminated this concept:

They had connection, and—this was the hard part—as a result of authenticity, they were willing to let go of who they thought they should be in order to be who they were, which you have to absolutely do that for connection.

Sequestering stories allows women to avoid this advice, managing an image of who they wish they were, in hopes of connection with listeners. Brown found that the opposite was true, that people connected more with those who did not manage their image but accepted their own imperfections, were authentic, and storied their shame with others.

To Sequester or Not

I get it! It’s like when you’re sitting on the edge of a pool at a party and you’re dangling your feet into the water. You see people who didn’t even bring a swimsuit, and you see others having a great time splashing in the pool. You wonder which crowd you should join. You don’t know if you want to get in because the water feels cold. Everyone outside is telling you that the water is too
cold or that you should look like a model before being seen in a swimsuit. Everyone inside the pool is telling you to just strip off your cover-up and get in. They say jump in feet first and it won’t feel cold, but if you try to tiptoe, it’s excruciating. Of course, you don’t trust that the water is not bad once you’re inside, so you’re noncommittal, so you don’t just jump; rather, you slowly wade in to your waistline awkwardly with your wrist hovering above the water to keep dry. You know all eyes are on you, and you and those outside the pool may point out that you look stupid. The farther inside, the less you hear the jeers from those outside and the more you hear the swimmers cheering you—admitting how stupid they also looked in your position. You reach that point you must decide whether to fully submerge yourself or run back out, and in a moment of courage or perhaps just a yearning to start enjoying yourself, you hold your nose and dive under. The sting lasts only a second or more, and suddenly the water feels great, and you’re gliding, you’re free, and you’ve joined the party.

My metaphor represents the reward and the vulnerability it takes to strip off the cover-ups and share a story that could be sequestered; it is uncomfortable or even excruciating at first to reveal oneself and to submerge oneself in the icy uncomfortableness—especially knowing there is no going back. One may hear the jeers and warnings of those who choose not to share, but what do they know, since they are not trying it? It is encouraging to enter into a sharing experience with the encouragement of friends. What is strange, and why it requires courage, is that the act seems to be utter foolishness: the experience is uncomfortable only if undertaken halfway but freeing if one dives in among those who
also share. Taking action is very uncomfortable and risky, which is why so many sit on the sidelines and never share but often heckle.

Sequestering shame-filled stories seems to make sense, so people can deny or hide stories or at least manage them more closely. Sequestering seems to be the answer for those who want to buffer younger generations or those who want to manage their own private information and identity. Sandra Petronio (1991) built Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory around sequestering information and stories based on the perceived costs outweighing the benefits of disclosure. She challenged and complicated Altman and Taylor’s Social Penetration Theory (1973), which suggested that people self-disclosed to develop closer relationships. While CPM does explain why women in Wood County might be sequestering stories because, in their socially constructed realities, they believe there are more costs than benefits to sharing stories, shame research is showing a possible return to the more simple Social Penetration Theory, which explains how revealing shameful events will actually bring deep connection with others that sequestering was meant to maintain (given that a relationship is established and moving closer). Brown (2012b) acknowledged that disclosure happens on a basis of mutuality, with those who have earned the right to hear. What shame research has yet to reveal is whether connection-profitable disclosure is contingent on the level of empathy.

Avoiding storytelling that might conjure envy in the listener can be counterproductive for the listener. I have established that envy stems from shame, and that hiding shame only causes shame to fester. Shame is the fear of disconnection but also further disconnects people. Sharing shame helps to connect people and to essentially dissipate shame and its effects. One of the unhealthiest activities women in Wood County
may be doing within family storytelling is avoiding dealing with shame and, therefore, avoiding storytelling because of shame.

Cultivating a family culture of vulnerability normalizes vulnerability, which Brown (2012b) claimed is one of the most powerful shame-resilience tools in families. A culture of vulnerability normalizes storytelling about instances of shame; therefore, family members not only learn from one another about how to grow from shame but also connect more deeply. Brown (2012b) wrote about this experience as it applies to mothers passing down legacies to their daughters:

There’s something sacred that happens between a parent and child when the parent says, “Me too!” or shares a personal story that relates to their child’s struggle.

Brown identified the powerful space of sacred union through storytelling that suggests that sequestering is not all that we hoped it would be. In an ideal family, Brown argued people would be authentic, vulnerable, and imperfect, engaging “the world from a place of worthiness rather than scarcity” with “no need to judge and attack.” Brown argued that shaming comes from those who feel shamed; therefore, shame can easily become a perpetual cycle.

Experiencing Sequestered Stories: The Problem, Not the Solution

I had to change my initial conclusions about storytelling; I reached the fifth chapter of this dissertation asking myself to summarize what I had learned. After reviewing the research on shame, vulnerability, and disclosure, I am now convinced sequestering is a problem and not a solution.
Recognizing that sequestering is a problem and not a solution means that I have to revisit my own life, my own sequestered stories, and deal with them by releasing them appropriately. I was very uncomfortable with this realization. Looking back, I am comforted by the disclosure of Brené Brown (2010) during her talk with the TEDHouston audience. We both realized this revelation meant we needed to deal with the shame in our own lives, and it was going to be even more uncomfortable before we were freed. She called her moment of revelation a *breakdown*; mine was a bit of a panic, quickly overshadowed by the need to finish writing this chapter.

I thought that I had learned that resilient women managed their lives by sequestering stories; therefore, as I was concurrently dealing with some sequestered experiences, I would continue to sequester my stories. I had hoped sequestering would keep things so vacuum-sealed that they would suffocate, die, and could be buried as if they have never happened. As a lot of time passed, I still could not shake the shame I felt when I was reminded of the traumatic experience; there was little healing, if any. I was in constant fear someone would reveal my sequestered stories. I began to explore shame and examine how to communicate about it.

**Selfish sequestering.** It was obvious that several women feared they would relive storied experiences and were sequestering because, as they recalled the stories, their voices cracked, their eyes teared, and they got away from the memory as quickly as possible. I noticed that they had sequestered their stories in some ways, telling small parts of their story when asked but sequestering more graphic details.

I personally recognized the fear and the feelings, and I empathized with the desire to not retell traumatic stories. Not wanting to relive a story and not wanting to be defined
by an event were two of my motivations for sequestering stories. During my member checking, Shirley identified keeping other family members safe from gossip as a motivation to sequester. At least three times this year, I have stumbled upon Anne Lamott’s (2012) famous Twitter encouragement to not sequester stories to save another’s face: “You own everything that happened to you. Tell your stories. If people wanted you to write warmly about them, they should’ve behaved better.” Amen, Sister! If only I was so brave to deal with the backlash of outing people. Furthermore, I have wrestled wondering why exactly had I not shared my stories. Was I protecting others or protecting myself? In my prologue, I was initially protecting others but ultimately realized I wanted to protect myself. But I have other stories, wonderfully happy stories, which I have sequestered, often to save the listener from envy. I came to the conclusion that it was my pride I was protecting—admittedly selfish.

**Autoethnographic rendering.** My mother would be mortified by my prologue; I assumed this because I inherited her sense of shame, and as I read it, I blushed. “Why did I reveal that? Maybe I can just change it” I talked to myself, regarding where I was in my life and even in my theology at the time. But I have allowed myself to be vulnerable and to let it stand written as it is, because vulnerability is where creativity and healing begin, and, like my participant’s words, those words were true at the time I wrote them. The prologue represented a time when I was even more integrated into Wood County and was using those resources during an impoverished time in my life.

For example, I noticed I wrote about wanting to be a victor, rather than a victim; this idea was presented to me through society, but I realized that I did not want to be a victor any more than I wanted to be a victim. A crime was committed against me that I
did not choose, and to define myself as a victor over that means that I define myself in relation to something I do not want in my life. Many other things have changed in my reality as I reread the prologue, but I wanted to focus on what I wrote and how that made sense at the time.

Today, I have continued to sequester the trauma, and I would not share the prologue story if I were not merely making an example of myself. Exposed, I stand with many other autoethnographers, as we have shared moments we perceive to have significant influences on our lives (Bochner & Ellis, 1992; Denzin, 1989).

My dissertation process invited self-reflection in my own life as well as the mentee relationship I have had with my mother. Originally, I resented my tendency to give up faith when the process seemed impossible, and I perceived that I had to make the same choice between either keeping my family functioning through hard times or pursuing my academic goal. My mother had chosen family every time over finishing some of her college degrees, and her mother was vocal about a Christian woman’s duty belonging to the home; women working undermined a husband’s worth. During seemingly impoverished times, I gave way to believing this legacy was Life, that I was neither bred nor trained to be any different. I was resentful toward the advice of my mother. I wanted to completely re-author my own legacies for my daughters and for myself; however, I began to realize that I should be grateful and not resentful. I realized that I felt secure enough and felt capable to imagine myself changing history because of the legacies I received from these women: while the women in my family are not highly academically educated and their goals typically are physical (i.e., laying wood floors or refinishing kitchen cabinets), they demonstrated goal setting, hard work, and a sense of
self-empowerment. They also taught me to seek Biblical scripture and self-help books to improve myself. These legacies fuel my own goal to re-author my life and legacies. My particular situations and goals and work may be foreign to them, just as much of their lives are foreign to me, but the underlying confidence remained the same. I felt adored in my childhood, and while I have experienced traumatizing rejection, disdain, and failure in my independent adult life, the legacy my mother gave to me inspired me with hope of a new life and the confidence in myself to be the author of that life. While I saw that my mother was not living the life I wanted, in order to change I immediately did what she and her mother would do: pray, read scripture, and devour a good self-help publication (though my generation reads more online sources than printed books).

My choice to continue my education in the midst of honoring my role as a family lynchpin was something I have negotiated against my values. Where women before me decided that the two goals were often incompatible, I ultimately decided that, in my lifetime, continuing my education was essentially honoring my family, not merely a selfish venture. The heritage of scriptural inspiration and self-help reading set me up to uncover truths such as the fact that I was not responsible for the actions or attitudes of my family. In other words, for me to forgo my calling to finish my degree in hopes to control the actions of my family has been a reckless choice partly because I could not control nor was I responsible to manipulate my family.

Marianne Williamson (1996) penned that it is not us playing small but us being liberated from our own fears of greatness that liberates others to the same. While I no longer agree with what I was taught—to let boys win and feel smarter—I have felt that I can still keep my core values while being myself.
My prologue is very similar to the legacies and family stories I gathered from women in Wood County. I felt that I similarly reflected the shame and worry that led to sequestering stories.

**Sacred Spaces: Reflexive Autoethnographic Account**

What began in a space of study moved to a space of the sacred, from imitating to imagining, from copying to creating, and from learning to living, I discovered how storytelling often happened in families with daughters, and I researched ways to make the process and legacies more vulnerable, authentic, and open for joy. I grew throughout this study and because of it. Looking back, I saw three spaces in which I encountered the sacred: listening to women, talking to my mother, and dreaming with my children. These were my stories of tears, parties, dreams, and growth.

**Sacred Listening with Women: Tears of Sympathy, Isolation, and Empathy**

I shed a few tears when engaging with the women in the study. Sometimes the tears were for others, sometimes for myself, and sometimes for all of us.

**Tears of sympathy.** Sympathetic tears streamed down my face as I read transcripts at my computer. My heart ached as I briefly was caught up in the stories of these women’s lives, wondering how they survived heartbreak or how they found role models outside of their family to encourage and guide them out of places of poverty. Sometimes the stories were traumatic. I felt they made the wrong choices, and I wondered if they saw them as mistakes, too. I knew I could and should not judge because I did not know what resources they had to have made different choices; perhaps those choices were their best choices. Would other listeners judge? Was I judging? I guess Shirley was right: they were so brave to tell me. Did they see me as a researcher, sitting
across from them with my audio recorder between us and several degrees behind my name? Did they think my family was affluent and assume that I started life off with privilege and that I had my whole life ahead of me to make privileged choices? Did they see my insecurity, my uncertainty, or my own impoverished past? Alone with the transcripts, I was able to escape my shame and focus only on them. I was in awe. I was witnessing vulnerability and courage in storytelling, and it must have taken a lot of vulnerability and courage to face what they faced.

**Tears of isolation.** As I began this journey, there were some tears of frustration mounting up in my heart. I expected this exploration into Wood County culture to foster a romance with the people and life here. Overseas in Italy, China, and Africa, I witnessed researchers and missionaries falling in love with their participants and making a home among them. I assumed I would be the same. While I did open myself and connect with some beautiful souls, I also was wounded and rejected and left feeling like I did not belong. I realized that the groups I had joined, MOMS Club and Kindermusik, and even the two churches we joined for awhile were populated with others who were from outside the county. In general, the locals we tried to befriend were not open to outsiders and were very busy with their families. If we visited local churches, members would occasionally smile and greet us, but they were always going to sit or eat with their family, so there was no time to develop friendships. When we felt friendly and began trying to invite them to spend quality time, they always had an excuse, and it was often something like they needed to attend their eleven-year-old’s soccer practice, just to watch. I initially thought this was a lie because my brother and I played as many sports as possible but, in the school we attended in Texas and Georgia, parents did not generally attend practices and
perhaps not even the games. Also, friendships mattered more in the South; my family has friends who are closer than family. I researched and found that families with traditional family structures “expect that resources, such as space and money, are given to the family first,” that an individual’s time should be subjected to the desires of the family before individual interests, relationships outside the family are not as equally important as family relationships, and “children are expected to act according to their parents’ wishes” (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014, p. 7).

Maggie and Lynn especially demonstrated these principles, as they talked about how each family helped the other to the point that prim and petite Maggie learned to build houses.

Maggie: There’s always been helping, especially with my mom … and we always had to—and there was never any complaints, or anything. I had one sister who lived with Mother and took care of Mother. And yeah, so there was always helping—helping her.

Maggie: And then her dad’s family, you know, there was always something going on with someone, you know, building [a] house—when Wayne and Lisa built the house, when Kenny built the house, you know, just stuff like that going on.


Maggie: Yeah, and always helping his dad, her grandpa and grandma ’cause—

Lynn: Yeah, when they got sick. Well, grandpa, you know, my—my grandfather was slowly dying of cancer, so everybody was taking turns watching him and—

Sharing resources seemed to be demanding work, but it was expected. I have not made real friendships with people like Maggie. My husband’s family members are like this in
that they have expected one another to share tools and to come help build houses and additions or garages. The friends I have made do not have family in the area, but they often tell me that their families in other counties are different. When my parents lived in Wood County, they had the same experience that my husband and I have had when visiting churches, and that is that most of the pews are filled with family who always sit together and leave for lunch together after church. There is little or no time to get to know people at church or afterward. Those few who have invited us to lunch or accepted our invitations are outsiders like we are and often do not have family here or, like Pauline, remember what it is like to be the new family (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014).

This familial bond was beautiful to witness, but isolating when I was not part of the families. I researched Koerner and Schrod (2014) and discovered that families are described within four quadrants, and I was raised in a family that values friendships, while I had just found myself inside a culture that has all needs met within the family structure. Reading the research about this did help me understand the culture better and make me feel less ashamed about being rejected; however, my hypothesis that my research would help me fall in love was wrong.

**Tears of empathy.** I found myself in happy tears too. It was a sacred experience, connecting with these women and having them story their lives and legacies. Punctuated moments occurred when I felt we were not strangers around an audio recorder but mothers with shared regrets, shared daily struggles, and shared dreams for our families. I found myself reciprocating the sharing, at first to elicit their stories but, later, because I felt so close to them. Many of the women found the interview experience empowering and invigorating, as I challenged them to put into words what had only been
subconscious. In my own time, I wrestled with the same questions and was equally thankful for this project and the mindfulness it gave me. Many women came to realize what a lovely life and family they have, or that they need to engage in better legacy building. There was also a sacred revealing and hiding, as they negotiated what to share and what to sequester. When they chose to disclose and I could tell they were feeling vulnerable, I was highly honored and often left in tears.

**Sacred Talking with Mom: Effects of Storytelling to Combat Shame**

“Hey, quick question: why do you avoid telling some stories about your life?” I often called on my mother at random times while analyzing the data and roughly bounced ideas off of her. She was a great sport about it, and by the end, she bounced answers back quickly. This particular question elicited the unexpected. “Because we don’t want people to know how we have behaved.” I indicated that I needed an explanation. “Well, when I was in high school, I had this boyfriend…” my mother began to tell me a heart-wrenching story I had never heard. She never mentioned this boy because she was so embarrassed that she was not the supportive girlfriend he needed, so he had broken it off without forewarning. They were both in midlife, but he was now dying, and she wanted to write him an apology, for she had never forgiven herself for letting him think she thought poorly of him. She gave me excuses for her behavior, embarrassed to be revealing her actions to me and feeling silly that a letter might seem like she was flirting.

I could not believe what I was hearing. I felt empathy for my mother, and at the same time I was a bit relieved in hearing this tale of shame because I was in the same boat. I also allowed things to end badly with a very sweet young man, and I was doubly
shamed at the thought of reaching out, being silly or misconstrued as flirting, when I just wanted to assure him that he is worthy and that I always saw his worth.

Sequestering limited the path for me. I wish she had not sequestered this story for decades. If my mother had told me this story years ago, before I ended this relationship with that young man, perhaps I would have ended it more kindly. Selfishly, I would have benefited because I would not have carried the grief for more than a decade, or perhaps my more mature actions would have led down a path to a different life.

Storytelling gave me perspective. Hearing Mom perform her story with her emotion-filled words and gestures allowed me to acknowledge my pain, insecurities, uncertainties, and certainties and forgive and accept myself. In her sharing, I shared that I had the same struggle. Weeks later, I encouraged my mother that she should not feel ashamed or fully responsible for how things happened with the boyfriend because she was not to blame for his choices and actions in ending the relationship: he could have chosen to work on the relationship or to ask her if her actions had another reason than he assumed (which was the true case). Hearing a new perspective, and that I released her from blame, freed her to release herself. Releasing her allowed me to further release myself. Together, we felt stronger, more assured; as we shared each other’s burden, we created ways to appropriately reach out.

**Sacred Dreaming for Daughters: “Make it a Party!”**

“Make it a party!” she encouraged as she handed me a glass of wine. “Maybe the whole bottle for this paper!?” It was a funny joke coming from a woman who hid the fact she enjoyed one glass of wine from her own mother. Mom had always brought me treats like popcorn, peanut M&Ms, and something fun to drink when I had to work late on
schoolwork. “Make it a party” was her positive spin on enduring hard work. At times, her positive spin grated on my nerves when I wanted to dwell in self-pity. This day, I was grateful. I took the responsibly small glass of wine and passed off my newborn for her to burp while I wrote. My baby girl screamed, and I yelled back at my mom, “Have fun with that! Make it a party!” I joked, but I did hope that I would continue this tradition with my own girls.

I had stared into that precious baby face long enough to know that motherhood is important; this family stuff is important, but I was not sure I knew what I was doing. I wrote a note to myself about my findings:

I think the families who are more likely to narrate where they have been in the past are also more likely to narrate where they are going. They have more clearly stated goals and tangible ideas about how to get there, as well as a stronger sense of security that they are achieving those goals or legacies. Heather and Elizabeth were very talkative and considered themselves experts in explaining their families, and they both admired their mother’s success in life. Many of these women are college educated.

I had asked Jannie about her mothering goal, and she revealed that she was not certain how she was carrying it out.

Me: How would you describe what you want your girls to understand about living life as a woman?

Jannie: Mainly knowing who they are, being comfortable in who they are, and not letting other people’s opinions affect that … want them to be strong

Me: So who helps with that?
Jannie: [Their father] does more to tell them how great they are than I do. But I don’t know.

Jacklynn: She gives you things to think about, doesn’t she?

Jannie: She does.

Remembering this moment in the interview, I judged that this was not the most effective way to parent; however, I did not judge Jannie, as I realized that I had not even articulated what I wanted my child to know. I decided to take some time to find what it was that I wanted my legacy to be and what I wanted my daughters to understand about being women. I also realized that I did not know how to be a mother or how to arrange a family to involve the father in the upbringing of my girls. I had more questions than answers for my own life.

How could I help my family live healthy lives? I wanted my family to not question if they are loved, accepted, belonging, or worthy. I wanted my family to be compassionate with one another and with others. I wanted a family who could be creative and have joy instead of anxiety. Brown (2011) suggested fostering a culture of vulnerability and authenticity where there is freedom and compassion to tell our stories, especially those we keep from mere acquaintances. Who could have taught me how to do that? I thought back to my participants and imagined their interviews as if they were a montage of voices leaving their wisdom on our hearts. I conjured up each face as they taught me how to teach my daughters. I pictured all the women sitting around one coffee table, and as the montage began, I imagined asking these memories, “What do I need to know to teach daughters? Well, to teach mine, to be exact?”

Anne: Oh my.
Beth: Read the book.

Anne: Read the book. We could ... yes, we could talk and talk about this—

Debbie: Tell stories. Because it attaches an emotion to what you’re trying to tell them.

Gawgie: Well, if you can think of something in your life and—that applies to what’s happen, then—then that’s the time to say it.

Debbie: It makes—it makes there be a transparency, makes more personal the conversation if I’m telling a story of my own. If I’m telling another story, I guess it’s the same reason Jesus told stories. Why is it people attach to stories more than they do just the fact? They hear the story, and they remember it.

Gawgie: Well, people don’t like to be told what to do, number one. They don’t like to be, you know, someone to say, “Do this.”

Debbie: Don’t like to be lectured.

Gawgie: No, they don’t like to be lectured.

Debbie: So our human nature accepts a story better than it does a lecture.

Beth: Okay, when I was a new believer, I heard a story… and I told [my niece], I said, “I’m very sad to hear you say that [you’re afraid], but I understand it. Let me tell you about my knowledge and experience.” So I told her that when I was young, I had that fear also. And I heard that story as a new believer…. And she said, you know, that it helped her. I think it ... it encouraged her.

LaSara: I tell … a lot of stories … because [my kids] kind of live through my stories.
Kylie: She told me not to do [things] because this is what happened to her when she did it. Just stuff like that. I appreciate it because I feel like if she never told me that it’s like she didn’t care. I probably would’ve. So like anytime like the opportunity presented itself, I always remembered what she said and never did it. And that showed that she cared … telling me stories and stuff.

Debbie: The opposite of direct…. I would say something in teasing but I’m really serious about it.

Hannah: You start with ME. That’s how I start.

Maggie: Examples from experiences I had … relate....

Elizabeth: [A good mom would] sit with you and talk to you about, you know, the best way to get what it is that you need.

Hannah: It’s those little things like that…. It’s never dramatic. It’s not the superman, swoop down, and scoop ’em up and fly off with them; it’s a word in season…. The right word can change a life, where the wrong word can mess up a life. So that’s why you try to think about what you say and what you do.

Connie: You’re teaching when you don’t realize you’re teaching.

Anne: Kids learn by example.

Shirley: I wanted them to be proud of who I was, you know. And it was work hard, be involved, be honest, have a good core values, live your life, probably, you know, surround yourself with good people, have honor, integrity, and, you know, that’s what I wanted.

Maggie: You know, you’re a product of your environment. You really are. And as I get older, I—I see that.
Anne: Kids learn by watching.

Connie: Be a parent worth modeling after; be gentle in speech.

Shirley: I tried to lead by example. I think that I probably should have been there more.

Connie: It’s not your job to make your child happy…. The spirit’s the real teacher … the spirit that God puts within them makes them able to hear.

Anne: It was like on the inside the Lord said, “You need to have [her] just sit down and discuss what I’m telling you to discuss with [her].”

Jannie: To teach … “if you have questions, or if need to talk to someone, you can talk to me.”

Shirley: Really, she can be anyone that she wants to be. I mean, it should not be driven by a man and should not be driven by a friend. It should not be driven by anything other than herself. I mean, she needs—she has the capability and the opportunity to be what she wants to be…. Live your life with no regrets.

Debbie: Standing tall, putting your shoulders straight, put your chin in the air, and go forward…. That’s what bucking up is.

Gawgie: And today, it might hurt really bad. Tomorrow, it might be okay.

Allison: Incorporate patience into everything. There’s not immediate gratification for most of the thing[s] that she does. I expect her to, you know, be kind and thoughtful in the way that she asks for things. And if it’s something that she can do on her own, to not enable her to be, you know, dependent, like, by making her do her own work for things like that.
Connie: [Give] five-minute warnings because I think God is patient with us. He—he does the same thing. He doesn’t jerk us around. He’s respectful of our—of our time. I mean, that just shows how patient he is with us.

LaSara: There’s like that definite unconditional love that a mother can give…. So a lot of it’s love … letting them know that they’re definitely loved.

And love is what I felt as these women taught me with their words, with their stories. From what they did not sequester, I learned about several paths I could take in this journey of motherhood. Some of the paths they revealed were difficult, or lonely, or sad, but in hearing about them, I learned enough to know that I do not want to choose those paths if I could help it, and if I could not help but choose those paths, I would be better equipped than if I had not heard their stories. They had given us their wisdom and legacies from which to learn, and now it is our turn. What was left was to write my own mantra of who I wanted to be—which is essentially who I wanted them to be at their core. Deciding what to write would take a lot of time, so I turn to my mother’s advice and say that I will enjoy the process and “make it a party!”

**My Story: Sharing and Sequestering**

“How do I begin?” I know readers want closure: to know the story I have sequestered since the opening line of my prologue. I, too, want the freedom to tell it. I *need* the freedom of telling it, of no longer fearing how or when or to whom the story will be revealed. Even after my first analysis, I believed sequestering would essentially suffocate the story, burying under years of silence. Instead, it is like an unclean wound festering under a Band-Aid. I realized that sequestering this secret was allowing this secret to *define me*, to *possess me* instead of me possess it. So much of the telling
depends on the audience, and for that I have little control or knowing. I do know that if I sequestered it would suggest that I do not trust my audience. How would an audience trust a writer who did not share that trust?

Honestly, I have not told the story enough to have made sense of it; perhaps I have sequestered from myself in effort to not dwell on it. I am not sure why it hurts so badly, why it threatens my identity. Lana told me that Christ should be my identity. I did not need to be told that; I preached the same thing for twenty years myself. I am the descendant of a long line of preachers and spent time in the mission field myself. I should have it all together. Ashamed, I must face the fact that I do not perform up to my expectations nor do I live up to that which I believe ae my culture’s expectations for me are. I am ashamed that my family and I went through the trauma and that I could possibly be to blame. I am also ashamed that I am ashamed; because I have recognized my identity is tied to something other than Christ. Now I am ashamed that I have unresolved shame. I should have it all figured out because I am a researcher, a missionary, and someone’s mother—responsible for more than my own life and health. I feel threatened in those identities when I have to admit that I struggle.

With each sentence I have written, I have thought, “Okay, the next one I could just tell the story”; however, I cannot find the space. Shirley said she never found the space to tell her children about her first husband; now I know what it is like to not find the space. A struggle with sequestered stories is that I usually try to tell them several times before I do—if I ever do. And while I may be communicating another thought, my mind is not fully focused on any one thought.
I struggled to focus for months when I had considered telling my girlfriend Melissa. One day she drove us to Hobby Lobby to shop for my Mother Blessing Way party, and I realized what an enormously supportive person she had become in my life. I had told her months earlier that I had a story I would tell her someday. I chose that day to tell her. When I told her, she just listened, and she cried with me, and she thanked me for telling her. I feared she would ask a lot of questions or make a judgment call, but she did not pry or ask questions, she just appreciated the moment, and it was a still, sweet, sacred moment as I let go of a big breath I had held for a year and a half and I sat taller in my seat. Where I had once jabbered on to fill silences I could now let them be filled with the quiet knowing of friendship.

True friendship is the sacred prerequisite, process, and the product of sharing a sequestered story. I recall that phenomenon as I told my story to Lana and Cathryn. I struggled for five hours writing and erasing this short section as I decided whether or not to share my sequestered story at what I feared was the risk of losing the trust of my audience. At first blush, I believed to demonstrate my sincerity, I had to share. However, I think my sincerity is demonstrated in the fact that I do not share my story here. I truly believe in the sacredness of sharing, and if I share something sacred in an arena that is not, my actions are perverse. I once heard a speaker say to offer up the sacred and to get intimate to earn something is mere prostitution. My storytelling is sacred, and while I have shared authentic and vulnerable accounts of my life and inner thoughts, I will be true to my findings and keep the sacred set a part for those who have earned my trust.
Chapter VI: Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions for Future Research

I landed in Appalachia as a young adult without a guidebook and with just a few images the media painted of a poverty-stricken culture. The people I initially met seemed to be normal Americans, but I began to realize firsthand what Ruby Payne and colleagues argued—that poverty is not merely the inability to buy goods; it is the inability to live the kind of life one values, a life with access to information, education, health care, or political power (2009, p. 11). While I witnessed these types of poverty limiting families, I found my own access was limited because I was an outsider. I was drawn by those local women who revealed a wealth and resilience. I sought to learn, how do they pass legacies to the next generation? Did they adhere to the American Dream ideal of the next generation achieving more than the last, or was some poverty systemic? Did their family stories empower or limit their daughters?

I initially felt I would be fairly objective because I was not naturally inclined to study women or mothers and daughters, but as the study began, the topic became very personal, as my own mother left Wood County, and I became a mother to a daughter. I was not only left to fend for myself but to provide for and guide my own daughter. Had my own mother, also an outsider, left me with any wisdom that would sustain a life here? What stories should I tell my children so they could be empowered? Should I sequester some of my stories—for my sake or theirs?

Summary of Study

I began this project with the specific purpose of exploring the function of family storytelling within generational legacies and how mothers and daughters engage in storytelling to obtain resources amid their family legacies.
To answer my research questions, I engaged in interpretive methodologies, drawing inspiration from Charmaz’s (2005) teaching of grounded theory, as well as layering accounts and reflexive autoethnography. These methods allowed me to be more sensitive to the data, opening up to what emerged instead of narrowing and looking for specific findings. For example, I was able to openly experience and analyze the sequestering of stories when I originally set out to gather them, not to observe them being sequestered—when or if that was even possible.

By word of mouth, I recruited ten pairs of mother and daughter couples from Wood County to give me interviews in exchange for organic entrees or pastries from Panera Bread, a favorite carry-out restaurant in the central area of Wood County.

After each interview, I reduced and interpreted the discourses by reading transcripts with my notes and journaling to gain a holistic understanding. I manually coded themes according to my analyses, using Atlas.ti qualitative software. This grounded process allowed me to be sensitive enough to constantly compare any patterns of recurring behavior or meaning in the storytelling and interview performances and accounts. I supplied participants with copies of their interview transcripts for review and asked several to follow up with a phone call months later to help check themes.

I mimicked the participants’ own experiences and demonstrated the themes through autoethnographic methods in the prologue and occasionally throughout my report, sometimes layering with both my findings and existing literature.

In this final chapter, I have synthesized and analyzed the discourses discussed in the previous chapters and used the analysis to answer my research questions. Before proceeding, however, I will briefly summarize the analysis.
Interpretation of Findings

After coding, I printed my themes and began arranging them on the floor to explore their relationships. What eventually emerged resembled a traveler’s journey full of informative stories as well as unknown paths. As I contrasted my own lived reality to the interviews, I saw the function of family storytelling as a guidebook for life’s journey, and the following scene played through my mind:

A worn path winds before her through the Appalachian foothills; she stares into the fog ahead, while leaping from the guidebook pages and alighting upon her ears are the voices from her mother and her mother and maybe even her mother storying their own experiences and advice. Consumed with thoughts of her hike, she listens only to that which seems useful. She’s not the first to embark on this quest; in fact, those who have gone ahead have helped pack her bag, set sign posts and warnings, and even left their own footprints. She remembers Grandma’s quest: barefoot uphill both ways, but her own mother’s quest (while she does not always agree) is what truly inspires her: unfair and in ways much harder than her own has been. Her mother promises that the daughter’s quest will be easier—or at least more efficient, if only she will heed all of her mother’s advice.

She can travel within the tracks of those who have gone before, but even that journey will require mindfulness to hold fast to the values and ways of life among which she was trained. Will the strides be challenging for her? Will her feet even fit in those prints? Perhaps the prints will be easy to follow because they belong to her own flesh and blood, and she was raised with that stride; however, she is unique from even them and her quest is unique as well. The new
companions who join her journey sometimes police her and influence her journey in ways unfamiliar to her family.

The signposts her family have left encourage her, teach her how to journey, warn her, explain to her why the tracks lay as they do, but she doesn’t always know how to read or interpret the signs nor have the motivation to try.

In her hand, her mother has placed the guidebook, complete with maps of the area as well as provisions and a book of phone numbers for her to call as life lines along the way. Surely, the mother’s hope was that this quest would be more rewarding for her daughter than it was for those who went before, but to know how to prepare a daughter for such a journey is more of an art than a science. Amid the patterned frenzy of voices, where there could be women swapping stories, she hears something unexpected: silence … perhaps it was a secret safely kept, or maybe merely her imagination. She might never know; she only hopes she did not miss out on some valuable lesson or opportunity. Equipped or not, it is time to add her own stories and her own voice, if she dares.

The metaphor of a journey or a book resonated with me greatly because other than childbirth, I have never felt more alive, engaged, and challenged as when I travel, and often books can take one places they may never physically visit. The daughter in this story is facing life yet does not come completely empty-handed because, as Burke’s (1973) parlor metaphor suggested, she entered and exited the scene in mid-conversation, and the stories older generations shared could help teach her. Like Jannie, who could not recall ever hearing about the family’s Swedish Bible, this daughter would hear only some of the stories, and she listened to only those she felt she would use. The stories about her
grandma were often about the lack of advanced technologies and resources. While interesting to imagine living without particular resources, she knew that new technologies have brought their own sets of expectations and challenges. More personal and useful than Grandma’s somewhat archaic stories were her mother’s stories and the stories she told about her mother; these inspired her to follow in her footsteps or even to avoid repeating them. While she might have seen her mother’s flaws, through her own storytelling, she often justified why her mother was flawed, in a sense excusing her mother’s behavior. I noted this phenomena as Laurie excused her mother’s archaic advice as a result of her lack of community to keep her culturally relevant.

While she saw her mother’s flaws, she understood that her mother believed her duty was to be the responsible agent for setting her daughter up for success, and the stories she might have told and retold to her daughter were in an effort to give her the best chance at life (Lupton, 2008).

Like the story, Beth and Pauline found themselves doing life with a companion who brought an undesirable legacy to the marriage, so the legacy was shamed and policed. Otherwise, stories functioned as signs along a path might, to encourage, teach, warn, or explain. But the daughter had to be willing and able to interpret the messages correctly, as when Debbie and Delia discussed how they interpreted conversations they had with their mothers differently than their mothers remembered. For example, Debbie swore her mother gave her an ultimatum in college that her mother had been denying; Delia and Debbie agreed, that, whether or not the ultimatum was spoken, it was what Debbie interpreted from the conversation.
The mother in the metaphorical story acted as if it was her role and obligation to help set her daughter up for success. The daughter noticed not only the stories that the women shared with her, but also a silence that represented stories that were sequestered. The legacies were fostered or disrupted as she began to add or omit her own voice and stories to the guidebook.

The most compelling phenomena I found was the sequestering of family stories. Sequestering is a communication choice, even if it is a subconscious choice to be negligent in sharing. Sequestering emerged as a phenomenon that was sometimes strategic and sometimes for survival in an awkward social moment. Whether purposeful or negligent, sequestering possibly influenced the choices of younger generations who could not learn from those stories. I have concluded with suggestions for future investigations to explore the use of sequestering in family storytelling and resourcing.

**Implications and Future Directions**

Understanding the multigenerational context of poverty and resourcing in Wood County from a narrative perspective has implications for several stakeholders: families, assistance programs, health practitioners, and educators, to name a few. To begin, families could benefit from greater awareness of how their storytelling influences younger generations, and they could be given access to the resources and knowledge necessary to communicate a more positive influence within their family and impact how family needs are met. Sequestering stories limits existing possibilities and often creates a culture of shame, and therefore families should be encouraged to cultivate cultures of authenticity and vulnerability, so they could share mutually and witness one another grow.
By listening to the stories families tell and identifying the communication roles that members play, agents working to help families in Appalachia can tap into the potential for legacy change. Some otherwise impoverished needs of families are currently being met with assistance programs, such as church food pantries or the county health department. These institutions could benefit from a deeper understanding of intergenerational buffers and lynchpins that help to perpetuate or break intergenerational poverty.

Health practitioners in Appalachia could use intergenerational lynchpins or buffers to assist in creating and maintaining health plans made for family needs. Manoogian, Harter, and Denham (2010) recognized this possibility as they imagined a future in which health professionals understood “what is valued and passed on in order to help persons … and their family members know which parts of the story continue to hold truth … and which parts need to be modified” (p. 53).

Brown (2010) found that all shame experiences fit in one of the following categories: identity, appearance, sexuality, family, motherhood, parenting, health, aging, religion, and a woman’s ability to stand up and speak out for herself. Future inquires could explore links among these shame experiences and storytelling and sequestering. Furthermore, inquiries could explore the process of revealing these sequestered stories and how these storytelling phenomena impact families. Participants in the study at hand responded to revealed stories with shock; however, they were generally accepting of the new information. Purposefully sequestered stories might be shameful and more difficult for family to hear, such as shameful events or even shameful beliefs or attitudes that might challenge the identity of the family or specific members.
Specifically for the field of Communication Studies, future opportunities could advance explorations of information or privacy management, storytelling, and qualitative methodologies, to name a few. Sequestered stories, those not shared through verbal communication, in Wood County families suggest that the verbal culture does not foster atmospheres of vulnerability and authenticity, and this gives rise to the need for methodologies that do not solely rely on the spoken or written word. A methodology should be adopted or adapted (or developed) that embraces creativity.

Privileging an aesthetic and creative possibility through storytelling and visual renderings aligns with the philosophy of Ellingson (2009), who believed that creative methodologies allowed researchers to learn new things.

The advantage of artistic representations lies in their capacity for readers to empathize with writers’ experiences. Like all art, creative social science representations enable us to learn about ourselves, each other, and the world through encountering the unique lens of one person’s (or a group’s) passionate rendering of reality into a moving, artistic expression of meaning. At its best, art engages our hearts and minds, sparking compassion and inspiring people to change themselves, their communities, and the world (Ellis, 2004). The limitation that art cannot (and should not) escape is the glorious indeterminacy of meaning that forms its very strength. Art shows, and showing is not always best; sometimes, an occasion calls for telling. (Ellingson, 2009, p.62)

In this passage, Ellingson discussed many benefits of artistic representations, as well as the caveat that art alone shows but does not tell. My hope to include both storytelling and artistic representations would be to address this concern, while capitalizing on the
mentioned benefits. The data-collection process would possibly be a combination of interviews, participatory photography or videography, and family scrapbooking or movies, akin to the process explained by Gillian Rose in her book *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* (2007), and Ellingson’s suggestion for crystallization in her book *Engaging crystallization in qualitative research: An introduction* (2009).

What would be exciting and potentially self-empowering would be for women to find their voice in less verbal ways to cultivate such atmospheres. Brown (2012) suggested that a way to cultivate an atmosphere for sharing stories is to share stories. The women of Wood County who were so reticent to share their lives with me might be open to sharing in more comfortable ways, such as through a scrapbook or anonymously behind a camera (that would be a first step to revealing sequestered stories, even though it would not be completely vulnerable or authentic). Other ways may be creating writings or even performances in theater or song, or a unique mixture. As I mentioned earlier, qualitative methodologies are becoming increasingly more sensitive to help us being attuned to several different means of communication.

Women need to share their stories. They need to be heard. I want to end by again sharing Brenda Ueland’s explanation about how sharing primes the pump for creativity:

> When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand…. Ideas actually begin to grow within us and come to life…. Now, there are brilliant people who cannot listen much. They have no ingoing wires on their apparatus. They are entertaining, but exhausting,… by not giving us a chance to talk, do not
let this little creative fountain inside us begin to spring and cast up new thoughts and unexpected laughter and wisdom. (1998, pp. 1–2)

Ueland truly understood the process of sharing and listening, and how they are much more than one might initially assume; they are the conditions for creativity and resilience. Women need to learn this process, as do men. As researchers, embracing more creative methodologies is acknowledging this and a step in the right direction for allowing the creative fountains of participants to bring new laughter and wisdom.

Sequestering emerged as one of the most interesting and powerful contributions of this dissertation. While I have advocated that families cultivate cultures of vulnerability and authenticity that do not foster shame and hiding of stories, I have not meant to imply that sequestering is always wrong or problematic. Future studies should explore the nuanced uses of sequestering in family legacies, especially as sequestering pertains to teaching families how to resource their lives. Participants such as Anne and Shirley sequestered—or “blocked out”—abuse they did not want to repeat in their own families, and they succeeded to stop those abusive legacies. Blocking out some of their memories and stories accomplished their goal, and perhaps limited possibilities for abuse in their future or the future of their children. It could be that sequestering stories limits possibilities in strategic ways beyond avoiding abusive or shameful legacies, perhaps in acquiring resources in smarter ways. Researchers may find that families could use sequestering as a proactive strategy to limit possibilities of their children as their children seek ways to resource their own lives even emotionally or financially, to name a few resource areas. For example, a grandmother who might want to encourage her daughter to stay home with the grandchildren may not tell stories that do not support that goal.
Perhaps the grandmother would avoid admitting that, as a young mother, the grandmother worked outside the home when the daughter was too young to clearly remember. This sequestering might not be related to personal shame or managing her image, it could simply be for limiting an unwanted possibility. In this study, Pauline revealed that there was a time she did not know how to make decisions for herself, and her daughter Heather was shocked. Perhaps she sequestered stories of indecisiveness out of shame, or perhaps it was something more. Perhaps, Pauline wanted to remain credible in the eyes of her daughter so her daughter would either continue to resource her life by seeking advice from Pauline, or so the daughter would feel confident making decisions on her own, or maybe it was unintentional—we do not know why she sequestered. Future studies should explore this link between sequestering stories and family resourcing and make suggestions for sequestering as a communication strategy in storytelling, family storytelling, and resourcing.
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Appendix A: IRB Approval

A determination has been made that the following research study is exempt from IRB review because it involves:

Category 2. research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior.

Project Title: Storytelling Among Professional and Lay Health Care Providers

Primary Investigator: Lynn M Harter

Co-Investigator(s):

Advisor:

(f applicable)

Department:

Robin Stack, CIP, Human Subjects Research Coordinator
Office of Research Compliance

Aug. 8, 2012

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
Appendix B: IRB Project Form

OHIO UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

PROJECT OUTLINE FORM

Proposal Title: Fostering and Disrupting Intergenerational Family Legacies Through Storytelling

Investigator(s) Information

Primary Investigator Name
First: Angela
Middle: Nichole
Last: Huffman

Department: Communication Studies
Address: Lasher Hall 22
Email: aj292608@ohio.edu
Phone: 304-482-5266
Training Module Completed? Yes X No

Co-investigators

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Advisor Information (if applicable)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Lynn M. Harter</td>
<td>Comm Studies</td>
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<th>Address</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lasher Hall Office #208</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Email</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:harter@ohio.edu">harter@ohio.edu</a></td>
<td>740-707-9047</td>
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<th>Training Module Completed?</th>
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Research Assistants

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## Name | Department
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## Name | Department
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### Training Module Completed?

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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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## 2. Study Timeline

### a. Anticipated Starting Date

(Study, including recruitment, cannot begin prior to IRB approval. This date should never proceed the submission date)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>November 25, 2012</th>
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### b. Duration of Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Months</th>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>
3. Funding Status

a. Is the researcher receiving support or applying for funding?  
   | Yes | No  | x |

IF YES

List Source

Describe any consulting or other relationships with this sponsor.

Funding will be used for:

| Paying Participants (Provide further details in compensation section) |
| Researcher Expenses (Postage, Equipment, Travel, etc.) |
| Other  |
4. Review Level

Based on the definition in the guidelines, do you believe your research qualifies for?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exempt Review — See description of categories at: <a href="http://www.ohio.edu/research/compliance/Exemption-Categories.cfm">http://www.ohio.edu/research/compliance/Exemption-Categories.cfm</a></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expedited Review — See description of categories at: <a href="http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/expedited98.htm">http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/expedited98.htm</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Board Review</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
5. Recruitment/Selection of Subjects

a. Maximum Number of Participants to be Enrolled – If screening occurs, include number that will need to be screened in order to get the N necessary for statistical significance.

b. Characteristics of subjects (check as many boxes as appropriate).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minors</th>
<th>Disabled (Physically or Mentally)</th>
<th>Elementary School Students</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x Adults</td>
<td>Legally Incompetent</td>
<td>Middle School Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners</td>
<td>Cognitively Impaired</td>
<td>High School Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant</td>
<td>Non-English Speaking</td>
<td>University Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants will be selected for inclusion in this study based on their residency of Wood County, WV. Participants will include mothers or daughters who may discuss stories passed down in their family.

c. Briefly describe the criteria for selection of subjects (inclusion/exclusion). Include such information as age range, health status, etc. Attach additional pages if necessary.

d. Please describe how you will identify and recruit prospective participants.

Participation in the study will be voluntary. I will pursue snowball sampling through which participants will be given the researcher’s email and phone contact information to share with friends and family who may be interested in joining the project.

e. Records

Are you accessing private, i.e. medical, educational, or employment records? Yes | No

If YES, Describe process for obtaining approval for the use of the records or for securing consent from the subjects. Attach a letter of support from the holder or custodian of the records i.e. primary physician, therapist, public school official.

f. Please describe your relationship to the potential participants, i.e. instructor of class, co-worker, etc. If no relationship, state no relationship.

No relationship.

Attach copies of all recruitment tools (advertisements, posters, etc.), label as APPENDIX B
### g. Performance Sites/Location of Research

<table>
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<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ohio University Facility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other – Describe below</td>
<td>Provide letters of cooperation and/or support</td>
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</table>
6. Project Description

a. Please provide a brief summary of this project, using non-technical terms that would be understood by a non-scientific reader. Please limit this description to no more than one page, and provide details in the methodology section.

My research explores the role of storytelling in fostering intergenerational legacies in families. Family storytelling is a communicative process through which individual members learn lessons, morals, values, and meanings to carry with them beyond the family context (Langellier & Peterson, 2006; Jorgensen & Bochner, 2006). Thompson, Koenig Kellas, Soliz, Thompson, Epp, & Schrodt (2009) defined family legacies as "strands of meaning that run through the family in ways that give it identity or sense, are constituted in communication through family storytelling, and are continually reshaped over time" (p. 108). As suggested by Thompson et al., family legacies are fluid, and can shift or solidify as members recall and pass down accounts. This project will allow me to explore the storytelling process in families, paying particular attention to how stories foster and/or disrupt family legacies. By interviewing family members about their storytelling experiences, I will enrich interdisciplinary literature on the role of storytelling in families.

b. Please describe the specific scientific objectives (aims) of this research and any previous relevant research.

Based on my review of scholarly literature, I will answer the following research questions:
RQ1: What is the role of storytelling in fostering intergenerational family legacies?
RQ2: What is the role of storytelling in disrupting intergenerational family legacies?

c. Methodology: please describe the procedures (sequentially) that will be performed/followed with human participants.

I will rely on in-depth interviews to answer my two research questions regarding narratives, because participants are the experts about their experiences. Experiential knowledge is often elicited through stories, accounts, and explanations, making interviews an efficient means to gather such knowledge (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In-depth interviewing as a qualitative research technique creates space for participants to describe and explore their understanding of their world and helps listeners or researchers gain a better sense of understanding of how they have made sense of their experiences and how they account for their world. I have attached an interview protocol developed to address the two aforementioned research questions. Once informed consent procedures have been followed, the protocol will serve to guide the interviews. Each interview will be audio recorded digitally, with participants' permission. Permitted interviews will be transcribed in their entirety. In the case that a participant does not agree to have her interview recorded, I will take notes during the interview. Finally, I will analyze transcripts and notes from the interviews to identify recurring themes or patterns.
d. Describe any potential risks or discomforts of participation and the steps that will be taken to minimize them.

There are no known risks or discomforts to involved participants.

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e. Describe the anticipated benefits to the individual participants. If none, state that. (Note that compensation is not a benefit, but should be listed in the compensation section on the next page.)

There are no anticipated benefits to individual participants in this research project.

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f. Describe the anticipated benefits to society and/or the scientific community in lay language. There must be some benefit to justify the use of human subjects.

In communication scholarship, storytelling has primarily been studied in terms of individuals’ personal narratives of hardship and struggle. Although scholars have theoretically suggested that narrative reasoning is central to how family legacies are constructed, maintained or challenged (e.g., Thompson et al., 2009), existing communication scholarship lacks empirical support for this assertion. This project will provide a rich portrait of the role of storytelling in fostering and disrupting family legacies.

7. Confidentiality

a. Check all that apply

- Data is collected anonymously
- Data will be recorded without possibility of identification
- Data will be recorded with a code replacing identifiers and a master list connecting the code and the identifier exists for some period of time
- Data will be recorded with identifying information, e.g. name, SSN, oak id, etc.
- Nature of data makes it potentially identifiable (e.g. material with DNA, photographs)

b. If master code list is used (3rd option); please provide detail, such as how/where code list is securely stored, when it will be destroyed.

c. If data is stored with identifiers, please provide details of how data will be stored securely (i.e. locked cabinet, password protected, etc.) as well as timeframe of when data will be de-identified.
d. Data Sharing
Will identifiable data be shared with anyone outside the immediate research team? Yes No X
If YES, please describe

e. Recording
Will participants be Audio recorded? Yes X No
Video recorded? Yes No X
If YES, please describe how/where recordings will be stored, who will have access to them, and an estimate of the date (month/year) that they will be destroyed.

Audio files will be transferred directly from a digital audio recorder to the researcher's laptop computer that will be with her at all times or stored in a locked office. The laptop is password-protected, meaning only the primary researcher can use the computer containing the audio files. Once all audio files have been transcribed, the original files will be deleted and only the anonymous transcriptions will remain.

f. Additional Details (if needed)

8. Compensation

a. Will participants receive a gift or token of appreciation? Yes No X
If YES, list the item and its approximate value.

b. Will participants receive services, treatment or supplies that have a monetary value? Yes No X
If YES, please describe and provide the approximate value.

c. Will participants receive course credit? Yes No X
If **YES**, please describe non-research alternatives to earn the credit, the number of points awarded and what percentage of total points for the course it represents. If you are using the Psychology Pool, which has already established guidelines that provide these details to the IRB, simply write Psych Pool.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>d. Will participants receive monetary compensation (including gift cards)?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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If **YES**, please detail the amount per session and total compensation possible. Additionally, describe what compensation amount is paid to participants who discontinue participation prior to completion.*

* If University funds are used to compensate participants, minimally, the name and address of participants will need to be provided to the Finance Office at OU. If participants will be paid $100 or more in a calendar year, participant social security numbers must be provided to Finance. The consent form must reflect this.
9. Instruments

a. List all questionnaires, instruments, standardized tests below, with a brief description, and provide copies of each, labeled as APPENDIX C.

| The interview protocol is attached and labeled as Appendix C. |
10. Data Analysis
How will the data be analyzed? What statistical procedures will be used to test hypotheses; if qualitative, how will data be coded, etc.

This is a qualitatively oriented study; therefore, there are not hypotheses to test. Research questions for this project were listed previously in this IRB proposal. Below, I provide the methods that I will use to analyze the data that will be collected.

I will rely on a constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to conduct a thematic analysis of the discourses collected through in-depth interviews. This process begins with data "reduction" and "interpretation." I will read all transcripts in their entirety to develop a sense of the discourse as a whole. After gaining a holistic sense of the discourse, I will start the actual analysis. A constant comparative method allows themes representing recurring patterns of behavior and meaning to emerge from the participants' own words. The process will begin by manually coding the data on the actual transcripts. By engaging in a constant comparative analysis of data, I will continually compare specific incidents in the data, refine concepts, and identify their properties.
### 1. Informed Consent Process

Select One of the Following **Options**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X - I am obtaining signed consent for this study</td>
<td>(Attach copies of all consent documents as Appendix A, using the template provided at the end of this document.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X - I am requesting a waiver or alteration of Informed Consent</td>
<td>(provide details below and attach information that will be provided to participants regarding the study (email, cover letter) as Appendix A.)</td>
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**Waiver of signature**
- Exempt study
- Waiver needed to protect the privacy of participants
- Waiver needed due to cultural norms (e.g. wary of forms needing signatures)
- Impracticable (online or phone study)
- Other

**Deception (incomplete disclosure)**
- Necessary to avoid participants altering behavior (e.g. not informing of 2 way mirror; providing cover story)

**Complete waiver of consent**

Provide additional information regarding the waiver, if needed.

Attach copies of all consent documents or text and label as APPENDIX A. Please use the template provided at the end of this document.

b. How and where will the consent process occur? Will participants have an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered? What steps will be taken to avoid coercion or undue influence?

**The informed consent process will take place prior to each interview.** The interviews will take place in a location of the participants’ choice. In order to enhance the potential participants thoughtful decision, I will first explain to them the overall goals of the project, their contribution to that project should they choose to participate, and I will make them aware of their ability to choose to not participate in the study.

c. Will the investigator(s) be obtaining all of the informed consents?  

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If **NO**, identify by name and training who will be describing the research to subjects/representatives and inviting their participation?
d. Will all adult participants have the capacity to give informed consent?  

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If NO, explain procedures to be followed.

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e. Will any participants be minors?  

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If YES, include procedures/form for parental consent and for the assent from the minor.

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f. Will participants be deceived or incompletely informed regarding any aspect of the study?  

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If YES, provide rationale for use of deception.

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If YES, attach copies of post-study debriefing information and label as APPENDIX D. Additionally, complete the questions related to a consent form waiver or alteration on page 11.
Investigator Assurance

I certify that the information provided in this outline form is complete and correct.

I understand that as Principal Investigator, I have ultimate responsibility for the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects, conduct of the study and the ethical performance of the project.

I agree to comply with Ohio University policies on research and investigation involving human subjects (O.U. Policy # 19.052), as well as with all applicable federal, state and local laws regarding the protection of human subjects in research, including, but not limited to the following:

- The project will be performed by qualified personnel, according to the OU approved protocol.
- No changes will be made in the protocol or consent form until approved by the OU IRB.
- Legally effective informed consent will be obtained from human subjects if applicable, and documentation of informed consent will be retained, in a secure environment, for three years after termination of the project.
- Adverse/Unexpected events will be reported to the OU IRB promptly.
- All protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. Research must stop at the end of that approval period unless the protocol is re-approved for another term.

I further certify that the proposed research is not currently underway and will not begin until approval has been obtained. A signed approval form, on Office of Research Compliance letterhead, communicates IRB approval.

**Primary Investigator Signature**  
(Please print name)  
**Date**

**Co-Investigator Signature**  
(Please print name)  
**Date**
Faculty Advisor/Sponsor Assurance

By my signature as sponsor on this research application, I certify that the student(s) or guest investigator is knowledgeable about the regulations and policies governing research with human subjects and has sufficient training and experience to conduct this particular study in accord with the approved protocol. In addition:

I agree to meet with the investigator(s) on a regular basis to monitor study progress.
Should problems arise during the course of the study, I agree to be available, personally, to supervise the investigator in solving them.
I assure that the investigator will report adverse/unexpected events to the IRB in writing promptly.
If I will be unavailable, as when on sabbatical or vacation, I will arrange for an alternate faculty sponsor to assume responsibility during my absence.

I further certify that the proposed research is not currently underway and will not begin until approval has been obtained. A signed approval form, on Office of Research Compliance letterhead, communicates IRB approval.

Advisor/Faculty Sponsor Signature

(Please print name)

*The faculty advisor/sponsor must be a member of the OU faculty. The faculty member is considered the responsible party for legal and ethical performance of the project.*
Checklist:
\( \times \) Completed and Signed Project Outline Form (this form)
\( \times \) Appendix A - copies of all consent documents (in 12 pt. Font) including
\( \quad \) Informed Consent to Participate in Research (adult subjects)
\( \quad \) Parental Permission/Informed Consent (parents of subjects who are minors or children)
\( \quad \) Assent to Participate in Research (used when subjects are minors or children)
\( \) n/a Appendix B - copies of any recruitment tools (advertisements, posters, etc.)
\( \times \) Appendix C - copies of all instruments (surveys, standardized tests, questionnaires, interview topics, etc.).
\( \) n/a Appendix D - Copies of debriefing text
\( \) n/a Appendix E - Approval from other IRB, School District, Corporation, etc.
\( \) n/a Appendix F - Any additional materials that will assist the Board in completing its review
\( \) n/a Appendix G - Copies of any IRB approvals
\( \) n/a Appendix H - Copies of Human Subjects Research Training Certificates

\textbf{All} fields on the form must be completed, regardless of review level. If a field is not applicable, indicate by inserting N/A. Incomplete forms will result in delayed processing.
Forward this completed form and all attachments to:

Human Subjects Research
Office of Research Compliance
RTEC 117

If you have the capability to scan the signed form and all relevant attachments, you may submit by email to compliance@ohio.edu

Questions? Call us at 740-593-0664, or visit the website at www.ohio.edu/research/compliance/ or email compliance@ohio.edu
The consent form template that follows is for you, the researcher, to follow, when creating the consent form to be signed by participants of your study. Please insert the details that are specific to your study. Additionally, here are some tips for creating the consent form:

Keep the language simple. Consent forms should be written at an 8th grade reading level or below. Avoid use of technical terms. When using acronyms or abbreviations, spell out the full meaning the first time used.

Compose the consent form to speak TO the participants, not ABOUT them, i.e. “You will be asked to…” instead of “The participant will be asked to…”

The title of the study on the consent form need not mention the title of the study in the project outline form. Sometimes it is warranted to use a simpler title for the consent form.

Most sections are required. However, you may remove the Compensation section if no compensation is offered to participants.

To see templates for other consent form models (parental consent, assent, etc.), please check the website: www.ohio.edu/research/compliance

If the researcher is a student, please include researcher and advisor’s contact information in the Contact Information section.

Include a version date in the footer of the consent form. If revisions are requested by the board, update the version date when requested revisions are made.
Ohio University Consent Form

Title of Research: Fostering and Disrupting Intergenerational Family Legacies Through Storytelling

Researcher: Angela Huffman

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done because the researcher wants to understand the role of storytelling in families.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview about your experiences of storytelling in family contexts.

Your participation in the study will last the duration of the interview which will be approximately 60 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated.

Benefits

This study is important to science/society because it will shed light on the role of storytelling in families. By better understanding how stories are told and used in interpersonal relationships, we can better understand how to foster healthy relationships.

You may not benefit, personally by participating in this study.

Confidentiality and Records

All interviews will be confidential (your identity will be known only to the researcher) and all interview transcriptions will be anonymous (no one will be able to connect you to your answers). Once interviews are transcribed, the digital recording of the interview will be destroyed.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Angela Huffman at aj292608@ohio.edu or by phone at 304-482-5266.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.
By signing below, you are agreeing that:

you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.
you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study.

you are 18 years of age or older.
your participation in this research is completely voluntary.
you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature ___________________________ Date __________________

Printed Name

Version Date: [November 17, 2012]
**Interview Protocol – Entrance**

Time of interview: ____________________  Date: _________________________

Place: ______________________________

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<tr>
<td>My main interest is about how family stories influence their families. I would like you to reflect on your own family stories.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you <strong>tell me a favorite story</strong> from your family (e.g. how your parents met; how your ancestors came to America; how grandpa herded the wrong head of cattle during an epic storm; etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>At what times or events does your family tell family stories?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Who</strong> tells the stories, and <strong>why</strong> do they tell them?</td>
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<td>Are there any stories that you feel <strong>explain a quality</strong> about your family?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What <strong>legacies do the women</strong> in your family tend to pass down through storytelling?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What <strong>legacies do you desire</strong> to pass down to your children?</td>
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<td><strong>In what ways</strong> are your family stories <strong>documented</strong> or recorded (e.g. oral history or memory books)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. What family legacy do you hope <strong>your children</strong> hear or learn?</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. How have <strong>you</strong> been a part of this family legacy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there important issues about family <strong>legacies</strong> that I have not talked about that you think are important for me to know?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there important issues about family <strong>storytelling</strong> that I have not talked about that you think are important for me to know?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Interview Protocol

Time of interview: ____________________  Date: _________________________
Place: ______________________________  Pseudonym: ___________________

Pseudo-Profile Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Home Address</th>
<th>Mailing Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

If another woman in your family is involved, please 1) write how you are related (e.g. she is my mother, stepdaughter, grandmother, etc.) and 2) write her name.

Relation

Name of relation

Demographic Questions Statistically Related to Achieving the American Dream

Feel free to decline answering any of the following questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you completed high school?</th>
<th>Do you work full time?</th>
<th>Did you marry after having children?</th>
<th>Did you marry before your 21st birthday?</th>
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My main interest is about how family stories influence their families. I would like you to reflect on your own family stories.

Can you tell me a favorite story from your family (e.g. how your parents met; how your ancestors came to America; how grandpa herded the wrong head of cattle during an epic storm; etc.)

At what times or events does your family tell family stories?

Who tells the stories, and why do they tell them?

Are there any stories that you feel explain a quality about your family?

What legacies do the women in your family tend to pass down through storytelling?

What legacies do you desire to pass down to your children?

In what ways are your family stories documented or recorded (e.g. oral history or memory books)?

What family legacy do you hope your children hear or learn?

a. How have you been a part of this family legacy?

b. Are there important issues about family legacies that I have not talked about that you think are important for me to know?

0 Are there important issues about family storytelling that I have not talked about that you think are important for me to know?

1 How would you define The American Dream?

2 I am specifically interested in how you and your family have learned to meet your needs in Wood County. Some of these needs may include financial needs but may also include needs for emotional support, spiritual support, mental support, physical support, social support systems, role models, knowledge of hidden social rules, and coping strategies.

Remember that your interview record will use your pseudonym and change names in your stories. Feel free to decline answering any questions.

As you need finances (to purchase goods or services), what are some things you may do?

a. How did you learn to do these things?

b. How does this compare with how your family met this need and desire?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>As you are feeling <strong>emotional</strong> (stamina to choose and control responses), what are some things you may do?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did you learn to do these things?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does this compare with how your family met this need and desire?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As you need <strong>physical</strong> support (health or mobility), what are some things you may do?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How did you learn to do these things?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does this compare with how your family met this need and desire?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>As you need friends for <strong>social</strong> support (friends/family), what are some things you may do?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How did you learn to do these things?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does this compare with how your family met this need and desire?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As you need <strong>spirituality</strong> (guidance for you cosmic worth and value), what are some things you may do?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How did you learn to do these things?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How does this compare with how your family met this need and desire?</td>
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<td>As you need a <strong>role model</strong> (access to nurturers), what are some things you may do?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How did you learn to do these things?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does this compare with how your family met this need and desire?</td>
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<td>As you need to learn about a <strong>hidden social rule</strong> in a different group of people (following unspoken habits and cues), what are some things you may do?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How did you learn to do these things?</td>
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<td>How does this compare with how your family met this need and desire?</td>
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<td>As you are coping (procedural self-talk/mindset to move concrete issues to abstract) with a difficult experience, what are some things you may do?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did you learn to do these things?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How does this compare with how your family met this need and desire?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>As you need <strong>mental</strong> support, abilities, and skills (reading, writing, computing), what are some things you may do?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did you learn to do these things?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does this compare with how your family met this need and desire?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you have any questions for me?</td>
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