

**“SPILLING MY HEART TO COMPLETE STRANGERS”: PRISONERS’
FAMILIES COMMUNICATIVELY CONSTITUTE RESILIENCE ONLINE
FROM DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF**

by

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To the children

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ABSTRACT

This research advances communication theory, resilience, and concepts of disenfranchised grief. Data are posts collected from an online forum called PrisonTalkOnline (PTO), and the research investigates how families of prisoners offer and access resilience through online communication, specifically in response to grief that is unsupported by friends, family and community. The research extends theoretical concepts about communicatively constituted resilience (Buzzanell, 2010, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c), or the Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR), into online communities experiencing disenfranchised grief (Doka, 1989, 2002, 2008), and with respect to the nature of resilience online.

This dissertation explored whether and how disenfranchised grief acted as a trigger for resilience responses in an online forum created by members of a marginalized group, namely, family and other loved ones of prisoners. Research goals were threefold: first, to examine online posts of prisoners' families to identify and examine the nature of disclosures of disenfranchised grief; second, to examine replies to those disclosures to see whether communicators communicatively constitute resilience; and third, to define the networked construction of communicatively constituted resilience in these online conversations and reveal new knowledge about the nature of resilience online. Specifically, the researcher asked: How is disenfranchised grief expressed in the originating PrisonTalk.com posts? What CTR processes emerge as the top ways PTO members communicate resilience in replies to expressions of disenfranchised grief? How do these particular processes manifest themselves communicatively in the PTO online forum? What are the characteristics of resilience found in the networked connections of these online conversations?

Through text mining of PTO originating posts and replies to these posts, content analyses of these posts-replies, and semantic network analyses of these data, this dissertation contributes theoretically to the linkage of the Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR) and disenfranchised grief, to how and why people engage on PTO, to which CTR processes are more frequently enacted and why, and to the dual-layer , self-other, resilience processes in which resilience labor enables both identification with an online organizing community like PTO and identities aligned with empathy and sense of normalcy. Through semantic network analysis, this research reveals CTR processes as dialogic in nature, embedded in networked connections between conversations about “my” and “your” experiences. These findings have the potential to impact those working in the media, the justice system, and advocacy for the incarcerated so that they can better respond to the needs of families whose loved ones are incarcerated.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Incarceration. Although defined simply as “confinement in a jail or prison” (Merriam-Webster, 2019), the word generates a host of associated labels: crime, punishment, convict, victim, justice, sentence, and penalty, amidst others. Estimations of incarceration’s annual cost to the U.S. taxpayer range from \$81 billion in 2010 (Kearney, Harris, Jacome, & Parker, 2014) to \$182 billion in 2016 (Wagner & Roxbury, 2017). Whereas the first figure mostly calculates supervision, confinement, and rehabilitation costs, the second broadens the scope to include extended human and economic costs. These human and economic expenses include judicial and legal costs, salaries for corrections employees, prison construction costs, health care, construction costs, and private prison profits.

The expenditures listed in many reports about incarceration, such as those listed above, concern the prisoners and prisons themselves. However, there are costs to other stakeholders. Many of these outlays incurred by other stakeholders are less visible and able to be calculated than those required for supervision, construction, corrections employees, and so on. In particular, there are costs to the families and friends who love those who are incarcerated. Families pay the expenses of phone calls to and from prisons. They suffer the financial consequences of asset forfeiture, the price of travel on visiting days, and the bank charges and commodity expenditures to deposit funds into prison commissary accounts so that their loved ones can purchase hygiene products, over-the-counter medications, snacks, and clothing. In fact, Wagner and Roxbury (2017) report an estimated \$2.9 billion cost to families of those incarcerated. Furthermore, the long-term direct and indirect financial costs to families result in significant loss to income and overwhelming barriers to future success and prosperity, according to research by deVuono-powell, Schweidler, Walters, and Zohrabi (2015):

In fact, these costs often amount to one year's total household income for a family and can force a family into debt. Latent costs include, but are not limited to, mental health support, care for untreated physical ailments, the loss of children sent to foster care or extended family, permanent declines in income, and loss of opportunities like education and employment for both the individuals incarcerated and their family members, opportunities that could lead to a brighter future. (p. 7)

Families also pay psychosocial costs, one of which is the stigma of having a loved one in prison (Bailey, 2017; Goffman, 1963; Rivard, 2011). A second psychosocial cost is the experience of grief or loss, especially grief that is unsupported by society and the family's social networks because the incarcerated, especially those convicted of violent crimes against people, are not considered to be worthy of love and familial or friends' expressions of support and care during their loss (Bailey, 2017; Doka, 2002; Jones & Beck, 2006; Moran & Disney, 2017). Incarceration acts as a major disruption to family lives, and as an event that has the potential to trigger a number of stressors listed on Holmes and Rahe's (1967) Social Readjustment Rating Scale (e.g., marital separation, change in financial state or living conditions, or change in social activities). Compounded by the stigma associated incarceration is grief that also is stigmatized, and also contains elements of labeling, stereotyping, status loss, and discrimination (Link & Phalen, 2001), as well as aspects of shunning, marginalization, reduction of resources, isolation, and types of "social disapproval" (Feigelman, Gorman, & Jordan, 2009, p. 592). This is disenfranchised grief. As socially rejected sorrow or anguish over loss because such grief is considered unworthy of social support, it is often suffered in silence. It also can trigger the need for the communicative processes that enact resilience.

These costs are not borne equally across the United States and among social identity group members. Researchers from Cornell University, Rutgers, and other institutions collaborated with FWD.us, a bipartisan political advocacy group, to survey a nationally

representative population of more than 4,000 adults (in Spanish and English) to produce a 2018 report outlining the impact of incarceration. The research revealed how

incarceration impacts people from all walks of life — for example, rates of family incarceration are similar for Republicans and Democrats — but the impact is unevenly borne by communities of color and families who are low income. Black people are 50 percent more likely than white people to have had a family member incarcerated, and three times more likely to have had a family member incarcerated for one year or longer. People earning less than \$25,000 per year are 61 percent more likely than people earning more than \$100,000 to have had a family member incarcerated, and three times more likely to have had a family member incarcerated for one year or longer. (Fwd.us, 2018, p.10)

This research advances the Communication Theory of Resilience (Buzzanell, 2010, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c), and, for the first time, examines how resilience is communicatively constituted in people experiencing disenfranchised grief--that is, grief that is unsupported by friends, family and community. Data are posts collected from an online forum called PrisonTalkOnline (PTO). Analysis of these data show evidence of families of prisoners accessing and constructing resilience through online communication, in response to disenfranchised grief. This dissertation breaks new ground by extending the Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR) into communities experiencing disenfranchised grief (Doka, 1989, 2002, 2008). It is the first to do so with regard to families of prisoners and the first to examine communicatively constituted resilience, and CTR, using semantic network analysis. The goals of this dissertation are threefold: first, to examine online posts of prisoners' families to identify and examine the nature of disclosures of disenfranchised grief; second, to examine replies to those disclosures to see whether communicators communicatively constitute resilience; and third, to define the networked construction of communicatively constituted resilience in these online conversations and reveal new knowledge about the nature of resilience online.

1.1 Theoretical and Methodological Summation

This dissertation is theoretically grounded in Buzzanell's (2010, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c) Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR), which positions resilience as communicatively constituted. Thus, CTR's definition of resilience resides not in individual traits, development, or training, but in interaction, and "fundamentally grounded in messages, d/Discourse, and narratives" (p. 2). Communicatively constituted resilience is articulated through five specific communicative processes where communication is the vehicle for and process through which resilience is constituted (see Chapter Two for details). It develops from a rich background of resilience scholarship, which I describe in the next section. Data are analyzed using three kinds of analysis. I first used a qualitative, hermeneutic approach that included reading the whole of the text, making notes and brief reflections, considering the scholarly literature about resilience and disenfranchised grief. Second, I employed content analysis, carefully constructing two theoretically grounded codebooks—one for disenfranchised grief and one based on CTR--and training a Ph.D. student to aide me in the double rounds of coding that the dissertation required. Third, I ran a subset of data through sematic network analysis to determine the network structure of CTR. Thus, this project was the first time that CTR was tested through semantic network analysis, which provided visual representations of the connections and structure of communicative resilience.

1.2 Key Definitions: Resilience

In 1987, psychiatrist Michael Rutter challenged researchers to "ask why and how some individuals manage to maintain high self-esteem and self-efficacy in spite of facing the same adversities that lead other people to give up and lose hope" (p. 316). Rutter's (1987) definition of resilience was "the positive pole of individual differences in people's response to stress and

adversity” (p. 315). Psychologist and child development expert Ann Masten (2001) later defined the concept as “good outcomes despite serious threats to adaptation or development” (p. 228); and health and education expert Glenn Richardson (2002) identifies three waves of resilience inquiry, the first of which describes “those internal and external resilient qualities that help people to cope with or ‘bounce back’ in the wake of high-risk situations or after setbacks,” while the latter two focus on the process of developing resilience and the identification of innate motivating factors that people can use to gain a more “self-actualized” self (p. 308). Richardson (2002) defines resiliency as “the process of coping with adversity, change, or opportunity in a manner that results in the identification, fortification, and enrichment of resilient qualities or protective factors” (p. 4), as well as the ability to recover from or withstand life’s difficulties, tragedies, or other stressful situations. Resilience is also linked to communication and is described as the “process of meaning making through everyday messages and stories that enable reintegration from life’s disruptions” (Lucas & Buzzanell, 2012, p. 190). This process may occur in multiple ways and in multiple spaces, including online spaces that members self-describe as communities.

Other scholars interested in advancing knowledge about resilience have studied it within the disciplines of psychology, public and mental health, environment and climate change, sociology, economy, and business. Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) point out that the body of resilience scholarship contains substantial differences. Despite these differences, there is one commonality in resilience scholarship, namely, that resilience has captured the public and academic imagination, thus contributing to an explosion of research and popular media using the term and lauding those individuals, communities, and nations deemed resilient (Buzzanell & Houston, 2018).

Scholars have recognized the value of communicative processes in overcoming or working through traumatic events and thus building resilience. For example, Buzzanell and Turner (2003) examined communication after family breadwinners' trauma of job loss and found that these kinds of difficulties "can be coped with in constructive ways that communicatively foster capacities for resilience" (p. 203). Lucas and Buzzanell (2003) illustrated how career narratives of blue-collar workers discursively enabled them to "construct a strong occupational culture that enables them to find dignity and meaning in their work despite outsiders' perceptions of dangerous and dirty work conditions and of lack of success as defined by normative models of financial gain" (p. 285).

1.3 Research Context: Online Expressions of Disenfranchised Grief

Disenfranchised grief is a kind of stigmatized grief. For decades, researchers across diverse academic fields have studied stigma, helping to expand the body of knowledge on this topic. These scholars include psychologists, anthropologists, and communication experts. Stigma is connected to a multiplicity of topics; in fact, a February 18, 2018 Purdue University library website search yields more than 750,000 search results on the term. Stigma-related topics include marginalization (Caserta, Pirttilä-Backman, & Punamäki, 2016; Mavundla, Netswera, Bottoman, & Toth, 2009; Moore, 2014) and discrimination (Gormley & Quinn, 2009; Koschorke et al., 2014; McGinty, Goldman, Pescosolido, & Barry, 2015). Goffman (1963) calls stigma a deeply discrediting attribute, and describes it in a number of circumstances, including incarceration. He also links it to social identity, saying it spreads like a disease from individual to family and groups; "thus, the ... daughter of the ex-con ... [is] obliged to share some of the discredit of the stigmatized person to whom they are related" (Goffman, 1963, p. 30).

Stigma intersects with the study of grief, an emotion that has many facets. Strobe et al. (2008) define grief as “the primarily emotional (affective) reaction to the loss of a loved one” (p. 5), noting that researchers hesitate to offer specific definitions between so-called “normal” and “complicated” grief, since “grief is a complex emotional syndrome, encompassing myriad reactions, durational changes, and cultural differences” (p. 6). Experienced and expressed both culturally and personally, “one person’s grief may be dominated by intense feelings of loneliness, another’s by anger at being abandoned” (Strobe et al., 2008, p. 5). Psychologists and sociologists who study this emotion in connection with stigma have found differences in grief communication, objects or locus of grief, and outcomes in research on varied topics and in diverse contexts. These studies include grief expressed by partners of sex offenders, women with experiences of stillbirth, public stigma associated with grief perceived to be overly prolonged, men’s experiences of pregnancy loss, and grief in the wake of a loved one’s suicide (Bailey, 2018; Burden et al., 2016; Eisma, 2018; Riggs, Due, & Tape, 2018; Scocco, Preti, Totaro, Corrigan, & Castriotta, 2019). The deeply human experience of grief is not consigned to the experience of death; it can and does occur in the wake of “nonfinite losses” that occur during the course of our lives. Nonfinite losses refer to the ongoing presence of loss (Ray & Street 2007), including the birth of a developmentally disabled child, adult-onset disability, traumatic brain injury, or remission after cancer diagnoses (Bruce & Schultz, 1998). Jones and Beck (2007) identified families of Death Row inmates as having experienced nonfinite loss. They classified these families’ experience based on the fact that the loss is experienced and reexperienced due to its ongoing condition, the recognition of missed milestones even though the loved one is living, and the “continuous” nature of the loss:

With each new phase of their loss, including the arrest, conviction, sentencing, death warrants, numerous failed appeals, and, in some cases, eventual execution

of their loved one, family members feel as if they are experiencing the loss for the first time. (pp. 285-286)

Doka (1989, 2002, 2008) describes disenfranchised grief as loss and suffering that is connected to stigmatized individuals or circumstances. Grief is socially constructed and experienced under certain “grieving rules” (Doka, 2002, p. 7) that limit and define how the emotion may be enacted, experienced, and expressed, so those who grieve may be unrecognized in their grief, may be constrained by circumstance and societal assumptions, and/or be deemed undeserving of support (Doka, 1989). Families of individuals who are incarcerated may experience their grief as unrecognized. They may find their expressions systematically curtailed and censored; they may find themselves lacking support and they may be deemed unworthy of such consideration by others. Examining these online posts may learn how expressions of disenfranchised grief are met with responses associated with support and strategies aligned with resilience communication processes.

1.4 PrisonTalk.com: A Self-Defined Online Community

In this section, I first discuss the creation and online architecture of PrisonTalk.com as well as my decisions to focus on two of the many forums. Second, I describe why and how I consider PrisonTalk.com or PrisonTalkOnline (PTO) to be an online community and the implications of this framing of PTO for my dissertation.

PrisonTalk.com was created in 2001, and its home page described it has having been “conceived in a prison cell, designed in a halfway house, and funded by donations from families of ex-offenders” in order to bring together people interested in supporting prisoners (PrisonTalk.com, 2001, paras 2 and 3). Since then, over 488,500 members have made it a rich repository of communication and online organizing. Throughout, members and administrators

identify and describe PrisonTalk.com as an online community with goals that also include goals connected to prisoner advocacy and prison reform (PrisonTalk.com, 2001, paras 2 and 3). The site also aims to provide social support and counter family members' feelings of helplessness and of being alone.

Some of PrisonTalk.com's pages require passwords and authorizations to view (e.g., blogs, the chatroom and "user control panel," where members can customize their preferences). Attempts to access these areas result in popups requiring a username and password. Other pages are publicly viewable, such as the website home page, history, and forums. Users wishing to access to three sections—"information," "gallery," and "help"—are met with an error message for information ("the requested URL /coming-soon.php was not found on this server") and "this site can't be reached," or "access denied" for the two latter.

PrisonTalk.com's most accessed area is its forum, known as Prison Talk Online (PTO), which requires logins for individuals who wish to post. "Lurkers", such as I am during this dissertation, can view threads and their individual posts, scroll through pages, and evaluate the many discussions. There are thousands of threads and posts: As of May 14, 2019, 481,509 members had created 545,927 unique threads on everything from the best way to send holiday packages to specific prisons to requests for prayers for families of those whose loved ones were executed. As of the same date, more than 6.67 million unique posts had been created, with the site's top poster (a site administrator) creating 42,500 of them.¹ Although this site is publicly accessible, I have chosen not to publicize usernames throughout this dissertation. I made this decision slowly, having become familiar with the emotions of families through reading of their posts. Not only is this decision an effort to respect their privacy, it is in response to their oft-

¹Without becoming a member of the forum, I cannot access further information about this poster.

repeated expressions of the violations they have felt from their experiences as family members of the incarcerated. I make no evaluation as to the veracity of their statements; it is their truth, and that is what is important. I paraphrase their language if content seems particularly personal or revealing. In these small ways, I try to treat my online research participants with the dignity and support that they often say that they do not receive in everyday life.

PTO forum threads are organized under 15 different section headings. The first is “Welcome to PTO” which offers new members information on what they would find there, and spaces to introduce themselves. Within this section, the “Resource Center” provides information about and conversations on everything from prison legislation, criminal immigration, and domestic violence, to rehabilitation. Here, users also can find information about prison/jail weddings. Other subsections concentrate on medical issues, capital punishment, and activism. A section called “Regional Forums” has threads from every state of the union, where in-person “meet ups” can be arranged. There are forums designed for the incarcerated as well; these contain posts from people who are waiting to go to prison and have questions about doing time; information for families about what to expect after homecoming; and posts discussing some powerful issues that demonstrate conflicted emotions: “Husband coming home, feeling worried-- is this normal?”, “Coming home: do guys really change after doing time for domestic violence?”, and “How do you feel about your boyfriend/husband coming home?”

Additional forums deal with other family concerns, relationships, and emotions that are not specific to a family member’s return home or to incarceration in different countries. Instead, these forums often contain threads about long-term interactions and different events and activities over time. As a result of the wide variation in posts and threads among the different sections of PrisonTalk.com, this dissertation confines itself to posts located under the headings

“For Families and Friends” and “Loving A...” (violent offender, lifer, or long-term sentenced offender). In this dissertation, the term “family,” includes anyone who self-selects into a family-centered PTO subforum; if the poster considers him/herself family, so do I. Likewise, for posters who self-identify with loving a violent long-term offender, then I accept that self-description for research purposes. I confine the dissertation to these sections because 1) “For Families and Friends” contains the most threads/posts on the site, with 87,611 threads as of March 10, 2019, the date data collection began; and 2) because “Loving A...” contains threads that specifically deal with the ongoing emotional and practical challenges of having a loved one imprisoned for years. The contents of these threads provide a rich repository for data collection and examination.

PrisonTalk.com meets definitions of a virtual community according to Rheingold (2000) and Parks (2011), who explain that virtual communities’ members express a strong sense of identification with and belonging to the site, and also self-identify the site as a community. PTO, PrisonTalk.com’s forum, has a structure and activities that operate to meet the overarching organizational goals for which it was created and to meet the personal goals of its members. In this study, PTO is a community whose members interact with each other in ways that these individuals and families felt that they could not interact in broader society. In particular, examination of posts and threads can provide insight into what happens when some members share experiences of disenfranchised grief and others respond with communicatively constituted resilience.

As a research site, PTO has been used previously by UK scholars in a literature review that sought to uncover the impact of family visits for the mental health of incarcerated women (De Mott, Bailey, & Ward, 2012); and as a place to recruit inmates to participate in studies on

the challenges of prison visitation for the significant others of women who are incarcerated. The most extensive study to date of PTO was also part of Chua and Balkunje's (2013) study of online interactions demonstrated by discussion forums. The researchers performed content analysis on a total of 1800 posts from six separate online forums, one of which was PTO, to learn more about the kinds of interactions that took place in online discussion boards. This study, however, is the first to identify resilience in response to disenfranchised grief among PTO's families, the first to use such a large, diverse, and rich dataset from the site, and the first to perform semantic network analysis to examine resilience in the PTO community.

1.5 Motivation for Project

Although the social scientific techniques do not require motivations and potential biases for particular research studies, I would like to express my personal interests in this topic of disenfranchised grief, incarcerated individuals, and friends and family of those in the U.S. prison system. Indeed, this project is a logical outgrowth of my master's thesis in which I studied three distinct career narratives, including an autoethnographic study of my own (Hughes-Kirchubel, 2013). In brief, I am a former journalist who covered the court system in ways that stigmatized families of the incarcerated. As I uncovered and publicized the most devastating of human losses, including missing children, torture of women and men, and the lives of those labeled as serial killers, I used the sources and information available to me, most often those of prosecutors and victims' families. Defendants' families were usually unwilling to speak to the press, but my job required that I attempt to gain their cooperation and present their quotes for public consumption. In most circumstances, I did not seek out expert or experiential information about the impact of such a lived experience of having a loved one accused of such heinous crimes, which could have helped to represent their views. After I left journalism, I began to question my

occupational role and its complicated ethics and structures. I grew to understand that my failure to effectively detail and help others to understand the suffering of the families of those convicted contributed to the reinforcement of their stigma and the further disenfranchisement of their grief (Hughes-Kirchubel, 2013). Absent representation, and due to media coverage, prosecutorial narratives took hold and were replicated throughout the community, the state, and, because these were extremely high-profile cases, locally and nationally as well as globally. At the same time that I was replicating and reinforcing these hegemonic practices (Mumby, 1997), a website (PrisonTalk.com) was taking shape to offer the support that society in general lacked for families of the incarcerated.

In 2009 I began my graduate studies, which focused on studies of critical theories, marginalization, and in-group/outgroup issues. These studies helped me to recognize the hegemonic works at force in my journalism career that constrained a balanced representation of sources and publics and resulted in my own reinforcement of stigmatizing practices. Reflecting on these learnings and my growing sensitivity to how different professional norms can contribute to others' marginalization, I situate my research within overarching assumptions that resilience, stigma, and grief are socially, historically, politically, and culturally driven but changeable. Additionally, I view all as communicatively constituted and managed with respect to their enactments in everyday life, depending on discourses and materialities--such as those found in PrisonTalk.com, the website that provides data for my research. In the next section, I offer a brief history, structural description and overview of PrisonTalk.com and its discussion forum, Prison Talk Online (PTO).

1.6 Overview of Chapters

This research is situated at the intersections of online organizations, resilience, and marginalized families. My project focuses on the communications of families of the incarcerated, with observation and data collection taking place in a web-based community. The project examines resilience in conditions of disenfranchised grief, online interactions of social support, and identity by using Doka's (2008) definition of disenfranchised grief to isolate particular threads, then by using the Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR; Buzzanell, 2010, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c) to examine responses to the originating post.

Throughout this research, the weight of incarceration on families is constant. PTO administrative pages, posts and the literature attest to the truth of this statement. There is “no worse feeling than that of being alone and helpless,” PTO administrators write as they discuss family challenges (PrisonTalk.com, n.d.), sentiments that are echoed throughout PTO posts examined for this research: “He may never come home. How am I supposed to get through my life without him?” or “How many of you have accepted LWOP [life without parole] and are trying to learn to do it?” Similarly, “Loving A Violent Offender” posters ask: “Are you scared of him (because of his violent offense?),” “How to deal with negativity concerning relationship w/violent offender?” and, finally, “Does it get easier?” Studies of families of sex offenders and those with loved ones on Death Row also demonstrate the difficulties and stressors they face (Bailey, 2008; Jones & Beck, 2006), while other research details the emotional, economic, and social hardships these families face (Bailey, 2017; Goffman, 1963; Rivard, 2011; Wagner & Roxbury, 2017).

Thus, the first chapter of my dissertation describes how family members seek out others through an online community, PrisonTalk.com, when their needs for understanding and support in their grief over the incarceration and loss of loved ones is unmet by society. I note my

research background as a journalist, which motivated my research, and sensitivity toward research participants in their disenfranchised grief.

Chapter Two reviews the literature on stigma, particularly with regard to these families. Stigma is organizationally based in “in group” and “out group” dynamics; therefore, this study draws on Tajfel and Turner’s (1985) social identity theory (SIT). Chapter Two also examines literature on online organizing for social support, since online sites have been shown to be useful as spaces for different kinds of short- and long-term support; and on disclosures/conversations, since the research methods evaluate these threads as discussions. Chapter Two contains a review of the literature surrounding the Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR, Buzzanell, 2010, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). This overview is followed by a review of literature about online support groups, identity and stigma, and families of prisoners. It concludes with an examination of the literature about disenfranchised grief, and the research questions that drive this work.

Chapter Three provides a detailed description of the quantitative and qualitative methods employed in this study, including content and thematic analyses. These methods are used to gather more than 44,000 originating posts, and organize and analyze a final dataset of more than 2,400 posts that contained discussions of disenfranchised grief and replies that focused on resilience, written by family members engaged on PrisonTalk.com.

Chapter Four records the results of data analysis, beginning with a discussion about the results of the qualitative analysis of the disenfranchised grief dataset. I discuss the results of analysis conducted on the replies to those data, including what appeared to be evidence of marginalization within the PTO community. I discuss findings that appear to refine “crafting normalcy” as a CTR process. I also detail the semantic network analysis done on all replies containing evidence of CTR processes, which include new information about communicatively

constituted resilience, drawn from the analysis of its network structure. Specifically, this new information appears to show CTR processes—that is, communicatively constituted resilience—as dialogic in nature, with particular focus on narratives that link conversations about “your” and “my” word pairs. This pairing would indicate the replies to the original poster link experiences that are outward focused (your) to those that are self-referential (my), and include sharing information focused on both self and the original poster.

In Chapter Five, I detail the theoretical contributions derived from the findings, including what semantic network analysis revealed about “crafting normalcy” as a CTR process. This chapter also provides discussions of limitations and theoretical and pragmatic implications of this work. It concludes by offering ways in which the research is significant to the families who deal, every day, with grief, stigma, challenges, and opportunities of loving someone who is incarcerated—a life of waiting, coping, and managing the stigma of loving someone “on the inside”—and details about how this research can be used to make a difference going forward.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This dissertation reveals how resilience is constructed in conditions of disenfranchised grief shared and supported online. As I began the research, I projected that two of Buzzanell's (2010) resilience processes were most likely to be shared among those posters expressing disenfranchised grief: (a) "crafting normalcy," which is communicatively constituting resilience through adherence to the familiar and the routine, and (b) "downplaying negative emotions while foregrounding positive action," which connects taking positive or productive action with a legitimizing and backgrounding of painful emotions, if only for a short period of time.

Because this dissertation focuses on resilience and communication online, this chapter begins with an examination of the construct of resilience generally, and an explanation of the Communication Theory of Resilience (Buzzanell, 2010, 2018a). It then moves to a discussion of online communities, identity, and identification. I then detail what researchers know about how prisoners' families are impacted by incarceration, including the stigma they experience. Prisoners' families are likely to experience shunning behaviors from friends, family, and strangers. Therefore, I expect that they are supported in the way that mainstream U.S. society—which we know is not monolithic but instead has a diversity of core values, that can be regional, gendered, raced, classed, and expressed through religious, familial, and cultural values—typically supports families experiencing loss—no sympathy cards, no casseroles, no coming to sit with the griever to assuage feelings of loneliness and despair. The lack or relatively low occurrence of these signs of support and acknowledgment of loss and sorrow is called disenfranchised grief, according to Doka (1999), and is explicated and contextualized in the next section of the literature review. I conclude with research questions that drive the research methods I employ to

understand how resilience is communicatively constituted following disclosures of disenfranchised grief online.

2.1 Resilience and the Communication Theory of Resilience

Resilience is a concept that has been studied in many contexts such as job loss and other career disruptions (Buzzanell & Turner, 2011; Coutu, 2002; Curtis & Cicchetti, 2003; Hamby, Banyard, & Grych, 2016; Lucas & Buzzanell, 2012; Palmer, 2008; Richardson, 2002). Masten (2001) describes resilience as “good outcomes despite serious threats to adaptation or development” (p. 228). It occurs as a response to disruption (Richardson, 2002), and the incarceration of a loved one would certainly fall into that category.

Facing trauma, changing life circumstances, challenges that demand response or adaptation, a person who copes “with adversity, change, or opportunity in a manner that results in the identification, fortification, and enrichment of resilient qualities or protective factors” may be said to be resilient (Richardson, 2002, p. 308). In Richardson’s model,

resiliency is presented as a simple linear model that depicts a person (or group) passing through the stages of biopsychospiritual homeostasis, interactions with life prompts, disruption, readiness for reintegration and the choice to reintegrate resiliently, back to homeostasis, or with loss. (p. 310)

There is a pre-disruption state that is jarred by the disruptive event(s), which prompts reactions in discursive and material spaces, and, inevitably is followed by a post-disruption state, in which the individual or group engages in behaviors that may or may not cultivate resilience.

For Buzzanell, however, resilience evolves and expands through communicative and material processes of many types depending on the situation, individual, or group in which resilience is enacted (Buzzanell, 2010). In theorizing on resilience, Beck and Socha (2015) argue that communication “can be a facilitating (or inhibiting) force in effectively managing bad

things” (p. 3), and that not only can communication help manage negative situations but that communicating resilience “can be seen as ‘magic’” (p. 3). This reference to Masten’s (2001) conceptualization of resilience as “ordinary magic,” highlights the importance of one key aspect of the definition: “Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities” (p. 235). If, as Dorrance Hall (2018) says, “communication is the vehicle with which marginalization of people is enacted, perpetuated, and received” (p. 308), then it is fitting that communication is a key process in the enactment of resilience, the “‘process of meaning making through everyday messages and stories that enable reintegration from life’s disruptions’” (Lucas & Buzzanell, 2012, p. 190).

2.1.1 Communication Theory of Resilience

Buzzanell (2010) creates a paradigm shift in the resilience scholarship by examining the role of communication in its development. The Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR) is interaction-based, not person-, trait-, or situation-based, and is grounded in narrative, messages, and d/Discourse. CTR generally situates resilience as a fluctuating, fluid concept that is accessed, produced, strengthened, and reexperienced through engagement in five communicative processes. This definition challenges other concepts of resilience, which rely on coping- or trait-based definitions. In other words, this dissertation is not interested in online forum posters’ means of adapting to disruption or hardship or in their individual differences but in the ways people interact with each other and develop capacities to reintegrate intersubjectively.

Resilience is thus constituted through application of five distinct communication processes: (a) crafting normalcy; (b) affirming identity anchors; (c) maintaining and using communication networks; (d) putting alternative logics to work; and (e) legitimizing negative feelings while foregrounding productive action.

The first CTR process, crafting normalcy, occurs when individuals or organizations engage in “talking normalcy into being” (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 4) in the wake of a trigger event, or disruption. When individuals have been temporarily displaced by fire or flood, they may continue to engage in communications and activities that maintain a sense of stability, “generated by talk-in-interaction” (p. 3). Crafting normalcy occurs when individuals’ discourse “implicitly and sometimes explicitly produces a system of meanings that enable them to maintain the mundane, the regularities in life that previously would have gone unnoticed” (p. 3). Throughout PTO communications, posters who offer advice often reference these “regularities of life,” and explicitly recommend engaging in them to finding solace or strength. Therefore, I would expect this systematic research to confirm the expectation that this crafting of normalcy would be among the top ways that resilience is communicatively constituted in the studied posts.

A second process, affirming identity anchors, is the construction and expression of communicatively based identities that enable individuals and organizations to explain “who they are for themselves and in relation to others” (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 5). For family members of incarcerated individuals, these may include identities of worth designed to counter the stigma of incarceration that touches them. These identities could be based upon economic factors (e.g., breadwinner, head of household), spiritual factors (e.g., use of or reference to a particular religion or faith-based identity), or other identities that pertain to positive descriptions of

themselves. By affirming identity anchors, individuals reiterate and strengthen positive associations with self despite or because of life disruptions.

CTR's third process of building and accessing resilience is that of maintaining and using communication networks (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 6). Maintaining and using these networks may involve reaching out offline, as in the case of Dorrance Hall's (2018) family "black sheep" who create new or fictive kinship relationships, and online, accessing networks of support, and engaging in communication with others in similar circumstances. Within these spaces, communication results in access to social capital, which Bourdieu (1986) situates in group membership (or networks). These networks provide "each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 51). Van der Gaag and Webber (2008) define social capital as the "relationships [that] can be invested in and form 'capital' that may harvest returns in the future" (p. 29); and Putnam (2000) refers to it as "social networks and the norms and reciprocities and trustworthiness that arise from them" (p. 18). Group membership, relationships, and social networks are all implicit in maintaining and using communication networks.

The fourth CTR process, putting alternative logics to work, refers to reframing through communication those perceived negative realities that remain in our lives as a result of the disruption that trigger processes of resilience. For example, families displaced by disaster and frustrated by the bureaucratic quagmire that prevents timely distribution of relief funds, might put alternative logics to work when they communicatively reframe a visit to a local thrift shop as a shopping excursion for chic, retro furniture in keeping with the current mid-century modern design movement. This process is also understood as sensemaking, work arounds, silver linings,

humor when situations are not objectively funny, and metaphorical reframings or logics that are communicatively co-constructed with others (Buzzanell, 2010, 2018a).

CTR's final process, legitimizing negative feelings while foregrounding productive action, is not a communicative equal to gritting one's teeth and soldiering on, and "this backgrounding is not repression nor is it putting on a happy face" (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 9) Instead, it is the twin discursive acts of recognizing and honoring experienced negative emotions, while prioritizing actions that are productive and meaningful. "Negative" does not mean stereotypically negative or gendered emotions such as the case where women are not supposed to feel anger but negative refers to unproductive or dysfunctional feelings and behaviors. As Buzzanell (2010) puts it, the foregrounding-backgrounding tension "is a conscious decision to acknowledge that one has the legitimate right to feel anger or loss in certain ways but that these feelings are counterproductive to more important goals" (p. 9). Those reading PTO posts would recognize this construct in the language. Frequently posters assure other members that: their emotions are legitimate; they are not crazy; and others have experienced the same emotions. Within the same posts, too, are suggestions on ways to take positive action in some way, perhaps to distract from the emotional upheaval or to make progress toward a goal. Thus, along with "crafting normalcy," I expect to find this process would appear more often than other of Buzzanell's five processes.

CTR has been studied in such contexts as breast cancer (Lillie, Venetis, & Chernichky-Karcher, 2018), disaster relief (Agarwal & Buzzanell, 2015), and job loss (Lucas & Buzzanell, 2012) on micro (individual and familial) through meso (community and organizational) and macro levels (national) (see Buzzanell & Houston, 2018). It has recently been used to study online resistance during the Women's March after Donald Trump's election (Hughes-Kirchubel & Eddington, 2018). This study is the first to examine its connection to disenfranchised grief in

online or offline contexts. In the next section, the literature surrounding resilience in online spaces reveals a space in which resilience may be cultivated for self and others, at present and in the future, thus noting the dual-layer nature of resilience (see Agarwal & Buzzanell, 2015; Lucas & Buzzanell, 2012).

2.1.2 Resilience Online

Most studies that employ CTR explore resilience in offline settings, with little attention to communicatively constituted resilience enacted online. Online, a majority of scholarly work investigates how resilience is built, enacted, and communicated “in real life”—that is, reflected through real-time, human-to-human interactions (Gilbert, Eyring, & Foster, 2012; Mealer, Jones, & Moss, 2012; Richardson, 2002; Vicary & Fraley, 2010). However, a growing number of researchers are examining how resilience can be built, enacted, and communicated through computer-mediated interactions. While some studies uncover risks related to internet use (Beard, 2012; Caplan & High, 2012; Delmonico & Griffin, 2012; Rainie & Wellman, 2012; Sagi-Schwartz, van IJzendoorn, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2008; Wenn, n.d.; Whitty, 2012), other studies suggest that the internet offers an important space for resilience-building, such as a safe place for social interaction, increased social support, and recovery from natural disaster and psychosocial trauma (Amichai-Hamburger & McKenna, 2006; Eriksson, 2016; Leavy, 2015; McKenna, Green, & Gleason, 2002; Merchant, Elmer, & Lurie, 2011; Richardson, 2002; Wellman, 2002; Ziv & Kiasi, 2016).

Constructing resilience is a communicative event, driven by a collaborative exchange “that invites participation of family, workplace, community, and interorganizational network members” (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 9), and since our interactions with family, workplace community,

and network members increasingly take place online, it makes sense that construction of resilience can occur in online organizations such as PrisonTalk.com.

2.2 Online Communities: “Click Here for Support and Understanding”

Online communities are answering the need for social support, particularly when support is constrained by marginalization and disenfranchisement. According to Coursaris and Liu (2009), online social support groups allow people in similar circumstances “to communicate with others who share an interest in the group’s theme, often in the context of exchanging support” (p. 911). Albrecht and Adelman (1984) define social support as “a network or configuration of personal ties where affect and/or instrumental aid is exchanged” and that focuses on emotional caring as the defining characteristic, along with acceptance and a feeling of belonging (p. 4). Exchanges of support are linked to social capital exchange, and studies are examining how social capital is constructed online—usually through examination of online community interaction (Jackson, Bailey, & Foucault Welles, 2018; Mehra, Merkel, & Bishop, 2004). As social capital—including resources, solutions, and shared information—is exchanged among members, these resources, and the members who share them, have the potential and the power to enfranchise emotionally as well as materially. In short, social support generally is associated with short- and long-term positive outcomes of grief and grieving for individuals and communities in many conditions of loss and suffering, and there are many variations in how it is transmitted and experienced (e.g. Bauer & Murray, 2018; Doyeling, 2017; Morehouse & Crandall, 2014). Meanwhile, disenfranchised grief is experienced as lack of support during times of loss, trauma, and disruption, based on social judgments about whether the griever is worthy to receive such social support, and it is clear from reading PTO posts, the lack of social support drives some to the online space.

Online communities like PTO are also spaces in which advice-giving and sensemaking take place. Advice or recommendations and guidance for another's conduct, feelings, and thoughts can function as one type of social support, and can take on multiple forms, some less threatening than others (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002). Advice may be given in ways that are solicited or unsolicited (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002; Carlson, 2016). When reading posts from PTO, it is clear that much of the advice includes self-care suggestions, and ways to manage the emotions that seem to be overwhelming at times. Often this advice comes in the form of suggestions that include "crafting normalcy" and "backgrounding negative emotions while foregrounding positive actions" (Buzzanell, 2010). According to Wang, Walther, Pingree, and Hawkins (2008), people using online support forums may value others who are in living through their same circumstances at present or in the past, judging that these others are more likely to offer useful suggestions based on their personal experiences and observations of others in similar situations. This valuation of others with similar experiences is true for PTO members. Having turned to the internet to seek support and information, PTO members engage every day in thousands of conversations, revealing a multiplicity of lived experiences of loving an incarcerated individual, often remarking that they are engaging online because they know other PTO members understand what they are experiencing.

Pan, Shen, and Feng (2017) describe how active participation in online support forums usually consist of two activities: first, contributing an originating post that "initiates a topic discussion" and second, "responding to others' posts" (p. 45). Their research further describes how originating posts often express the need for support, while replies typically offer social support or advice-giving. This pattern of topic initiation and responsive post is how discussions are enacted on PTO, too, particularly with regard to a need for social support.

Sensemaking is defined as ongoing, retrospective, and rationalizing images and narratives that help people understand and reconceptualize what they have done and are doing (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Koenig Kellas and Trees (2006) demonstrated that sensemaking can occur through narratives, which facilitate “interpretive processes” (p. 50). Some of the first online communities facilitated sensemaking in the wake of illness and death (Rheingold, 2000), and as the digital age evolves, researchers have found online spaces to be effective for individuals to engage in sensemaking of life experiences that cross the spectrum, such as death of a sibling (Halliwell & Franken, 2016); relationships between white teachers and students of color (Deroo, Farver, & Dunn, 2017) and coming to terms with the death of a child (Elder & Burke, 2015). With respect to sensemaking and stigma, Pendry and Salvatore (2015) found that online support groups were particularly useful for individuals with stigmatizing conditions or circumstances, and that “forum identification predicted stigmatized forum users’ satisfaction with life” (p. 217). Forming online relationships in these spaces may also “help compensate for the social resources that are lacking offline” (p. 212), and thus benefit those with fewer, or less effective, resources. Online communications also appear to generate more self-disclosure (Barak & Gluck-Ofri, 2007), another apparent characteristic of online support groups.

Finally, online communities offer a space in which stigmatized individuals and communities can work to restore their social image (Gazit, 2018). For some, the virtual anonymity provides an even more supportive space in which to engage (Tanis & Postmes, 2007). Damaged social identity is for many a weight to bear (Doka, 1989, 2008; Goffman, 1963; Mehra et al., 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), but through online support groups, users co-create spaces wherein the marginalized can find others in similar circumstances, thus opening a path to resilience (Buzzanell 2010, 2018a; Mehra et al., 2004).

There are no such studies of PTO that interrogate its communicative use, nor are there studies that investigate how its users' messages function with regard to communicatively constituted resilience intersections with disenfranchised grief, both of which are linked to issues of identity and identification, two topics addressed in the next section of this literature review examines identity and identification.

2.3 Identity and Identification

Intuitively people understand the word “identity” has a strong connection to sense of self; it is a relatively recent idea that sprang from the questioning of traditional structures and social expectations. A core construct of identification is division (Burke, 1969), because without division, the sorting associated with the construct as we tell ourselves, “I belong *here*, but not *there*” (italics my own) would not be possible. Scholarship on identity evolved from identification scholarship, becoming a “salient *issue*” (Cheney et al., 2014, p. 695, emphasis in original) as traditional institutions eroded due to scholars' questioning those institutional values. Identification is described as “a person's feeling of oneness with some larger collective” which “represents the forging, maintenance, and alteration of linkages between persons and those collectives as oneness is experienced” (Scott et al., 1998, p. 371). Scott et al. also noted that social identifications drive everyday interactions and understandings of concepts at the most basic levels, generating individuals' own definitions of self and other. These concepts are important in context of disenfranchised grief and resilience, where identities, as perceived by individuals and groups, are at stake.

Identity and identification are hegemonic structures that dualistically enable and/or constrain our actions. As a social constructionist, I assign additional, flexible, and

transformational qualities to the definitions. Both are mutually constituted through communication. Kuhn and Nelson (2002) explain:

An identity is *structural* in the sense that it is medium and outcome of discursive acts; it is a source from which individuals construct expressions of self based on collectively generated identity types, such as “social worker,” “mother” or “attorney.” Identities such as these exist not merely in the cognition of individuals but also are properties of social structure. (p. 7, emphasis in original)

Because this argument positions identity as an outcome of communicative acts, it connects identity to the processes of *both* disenfranchised grief and CTR as outcomes of a wider societal structure. Families of prisoners experience strong, sometimes disabling, emotions that stem from their experiences of how the stigma of their loved ones’ actions impacts their lives, which in turn impacts their identity. Consequently, these experiences result in their decisions to seek help online. When they discover PTO, and interact with others in their same circumstances, they find that a welcoming online space that gives them increased access to benefits such as social support, with members offering valuable benefits, including resilience.

Tajfel and Turner’s (1985) social identity theory (SIT) states that identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his [sic] *knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership*” (p. 63, emphasis added). In other words, a person’s social identity stems from his or her perception of group membership as well as the significance that member assigns to the group, evolving from categorization and prestige salience of outgroups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). One way individuals try to maintain self-esteem is by comparing one’s social groups to other social groups. When individuals are members of a stigmatized group, as families of the incarcerated are, it may be difficult for them to see themselves in a positive light.

Goffman’s (1963) definition of stigma is tightly bound to social identity because it is couched in public contexts. He identifies two types of stigma--one that is immediately perceived

by publics, and one that is hidden. These are further examples of the complex interactions between the individual and group in experiences of social identity. The tensions created from the first example arise from publicly wearing a non-normative, negative label. The bearer of the second example must navigate the daily tensions of concealment, lest others discover the stigmatized identity. Meisenbach (2010) theorizes that individuals can manage stigma using a communicative perspective, and her first axiom, that “stigmas are discursively constructed based on perceptions of both non-stigmatized and stigmatized individuals” (p. 271) reinforces the importance of communication in stigma management. PTO users demonstrate the truth of this axiom throughout their varied communications. Smith’s (2007) posits that stigma is communicated among groups in order to separate and isolate those who are marked. She details how group labels—such as those that are affixed to families of the incarcerated--bring attention to the group’s stigma and emphasize the stigmatized group’s separation from the so-called “normals” (p. 469). These produce social identities connected to self-concept, as the stigma communication is delivered not only to the “normal” group but the one from which they see to detach. In today’s connected society, those who are isolated stigmatized can find solace and support with others who are stigmatized for the same or similar reasons.

2.4 Families of the Incarcerated

Incarceration is a life-altering event, not just for the individual who is sentenced, but for his or her family members. To illustrate this, consider government agencies and the structures they impose on those who access them. For example, they operate with the following definitions of “jail” and “prison” which underscore the differences between the two:

Jails are locally operated short-term facilities that hold inmates awaiting trial or sentencing or both, and inmates sentenced to a term of less than one year, typically misdemeanants. Prisons are longer-term facilities run by the state or the

federal government that typically holds felons and persons with sentences of more than one year. Definitions may vary by state. (Bureau of Prison Statistics, N.D.)

In general, these two kinds of facilities have different rules and regulations, including ways they deal with families and visitors. Many PTO posts detail how the structural differences impact their feelings of uncertainty, communication patterns with their loved ones, and their understandings of what to expect.

We could know more about these issues, but prisons vary in the amount of information that they collect about families of inmates, if they do, they usually omit questions focusing on romantic partners and children from previous relationships (Lee, Porter, & Comfort, 2014). Understanding the numbers of people have a romantic partner in prison is very hard to ascertain; but counting children is easier (Lee et al., 2014). For example, a Rutgers University research center found that “on any given day” there are more than 2.7 million children with at least one parent in jail or prison (National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated, 2017, para. 1). That number has skyrocketed due to the fivefold increase in incarcerations since the 1970s, based largely on changes in sentencing and policy, not on increases in crime rates (The Sentencing Project, 2017).

This increase has “cascading consequences” for families and “impairs children's wellbeing throughout the life course” (Turney & Goodsell, 2018, para.1 and 11). These consequences come by way of a number of experiences, some of which may have begun before the incarceration, such poverty, witnessing criminal activity, or arrest. After a loved one is incarcerated, families may experience financial hardship as they lose a family member’s income (Comfort et al., 2016; Massoglia, Remster, & King, 2011; Turney & Goodsell, 2018), experience trauma from separation (Mower & Visser, 2016), incur increased risk of homelessness and general instability (Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2011), and find themselves managing

additional time off from work for visitation (The Sentencing Project, 2017), which often increase costs to the family. In addition to financial hardships, the hardship of having a family member in prison can incur emotional hardships connected to the separation. For example, Bockneck, Sanderson, and Britner (2009) detail a high frequency of posttraumatic stress on children of the incarcerated, like other children whose parental separation has come through both concrete and ambiguous loss, such as death, divorce, or child welfare service intervention. Because of the loss itself, it is likely that the impact of parental incarceration produces effects similar to the effects of parental loss by other means (p. 324). As Bockneck et al. (2009) explain, families of the incarcerated experience this “ambiguous loss” (p. 324) because their loved ones remain part of their emotional concept of family, but the individuals are absent from their daily lives. Similarly, a parent who has shared custody of a child may experience ambiguous loss due to the physical absence of the child in the day-to-day activities of the parent’s household. Other examples of ambiguous loss include the loss experienced through deployment of a family member to a combat zone (Huebner, Mancini, Grass, & Grass, 2007) or the loss of a loved one through exile (Perez, 2013).

Agencies that have control over managing family interactions are taking note of this emerging research on ambiguous loss to produce more humane ways for families to interact. In 2016, recognizing the importance of building strong relationships between inmates and their families, the Department of Justice’s Board of Prisons launched a series of initiatives that focused on ways to accomplish this goal, including changes to parent-child visitation policies, mandated annually family reunification events, increased staff training, and engaged new partnerships to develop policies that strengthen family ties (Department of Justice Archives, 2017). Working with a number of agencies across the nation, the Osborne Center for Justice

Across Generations (2019) launched its “See Us Support Us” campaign to focus on lowering visiting barriers and educating the public about ways to reduce stigma. It states its efforts as seeking to inform and educate its members about ways in which they can help to remove the barriers to family visitation, thus advocating for improved relationships between children and parents in prison.

In addition, through concepts of stigma and spoiled social identity, scholars can come to understand families of the incarcerated as “othered” by society. This shunning is painful and disorienting for family members. By examining such experiences, researchers and practitioners can come to understand more about how “the nature of an individual...is generated by the nature of his [or her] group affiliation” (Goffman, 1963, p. 113). This understanding is an expected outcome of this study: not just to more fully understand how these families are disenfranchised, but also to understand how, through connections made in an online space, their online interactions construct resilience.

Having explicated what families of the incarcerated are faced with every day, I next discuss the stigma these families carry because of their loved ones’ incarceration.

2.5 Stigma and the Families of the Incarcerated

Definitions of stigma have been extended and refined since the groundbreaking work of Erving Goffman (1963). One of the most influential sociologists of the 20th century, Goffman (1963) links stigma, which he describes as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (p. 3) with social identity, and details how it spreads like a contagion from individual to family and groups. Stigma also has been defined as “some attribute, or characteristic, that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context” (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998, p. 505).

A related concept, oppression, is systemic, structural, steeped in historical context and institutionalized, eventually becoming normalized through repetition. For instance, Hill Collins (2000) describes the “matrix of domination [that] encapsulates universality of intersecting oppressions as organized through diverse local realities” (p. 227). The matrix transforms ideas about oppression and rearticulates discrimination by assuming that race, gender, and class are interlocking categories and require a new way of thinking about them. For families of offenders, this matrix begins before incarceration and can be illustrated in the ways the prison system keeps records on family members. The pervasive lack of record keeping on families—their demographics, their wellbeing—is a “major challenge to understanding the impact of incarceration” on them (DeHart, Shapiro, & Clone, 2018, p. 190) and implies a “not my problem” institutional mentality.

Research shows that people of color, especially African American men, are disproportionately incarcerated in the United States (Alexander, 2010). Michelle Alexander (2010) argues that mass incarceration has “emerged as a stunningly comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crowe” (p. 4), and examines how a carefully crafted system of laws, regulations and informal societal rules--reinforced by stigma--have racialized incarceration, thus creating a racially-disproportionate group of second-class citizens and their families. While this study does not, and indeed is not able to investigate issues of race or class², it is reasonable to assume that a majority of PTO participants are members of a racial minority, and thus that issues of race and inequity are embedded in these conversations. Lacking demographic information on users, it is not

² Information on demographic information of PTO members does not exist. Information on individual members can only be accessed for those who have a PTO account. As stated earlier, I chose not to have a PTO account (in order to avoid appearance of manipulation or deception), but rather to conduct this research as an observer of publicly-available information.

possible to analyze with this in mind. But the research is able to help uncover into how family members are coping under these stressed and stigmatized circumstances.

Research also clearly shows these families are apt to experience decreased psychological wellbeing, economic loss, traumatic separation, loneliness, and other negative outcomes (Arditti, 2005; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Beckmeyer & Arditti, 2014; DeHart, Shapiro, & Clone, 2018; Hannem, 2008; Hartworth, Farrant, & Attewell, 2016; Murray et al., 2012; Van Cleve, 2016). They are often treated poorly as they move through the justice system and elsewhere; Van Cleve (2016) documents her observations of this treatment by Cook County, Illinois, court professionals:

A sheriff, “Debbie,” joked with the courtroom prosecutor that when families call the courtroom to check on a defendant, she answers “County Morgue.” When they ask whether their loved one will be present in court on a particular day, she says “Oh, they’re dead,” and then hangs up. (p. 63)

Rachel Condry’s (2011) ethnographic study of United Kingdom families of violent offenders found that this kind of stigma is “more than just a shadow of the offender’s stigma, ...it has its roots in notions of kin contamination and kin culpability” (p. 5), wherein contamination spreads beyond the originally contaminated group. Families she interviewed described feelings of “shock, disbelief, unreality and feeling sick” (p. 27) about their loved one’s arrest or violent acts; they detail acts of shunning and harassment by neighbors and strangers, such as having eggs thrown at them (pp. 77-78) or feces placed in their mail box (p. 180). Romantic partners of the incarcerated might also suffer from the ongoing stress of “repeated encounters in which they are forced to manage the stigma of having an incarcerated [partner]” (Massoglia, Remster, & King, 2011). These repeated encounters involve disclosure, accounts justifying and legitimizing attachments, and (re)affirmations of relationships and one’s own integrity and non-criminal activities. Thus, stigmatization creates boundaries that families must

manage; boundaries of place (e.g., online and offline locations), time (e.g., before and after arrest), relationships and priorities (e.g., work and family), emotions (e.g., what is acceptable and unacceptable to feel and display), and space (e.g., discursive, politicized spaces of incarceration and “freedom”, undeserving and deserving), with scholars focusing both on boundary constitution and management as well as on transitions back and forth (e.g., in work-life studies, Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1995). The main issue is that boundaries become evident between these families and other social groups with no such life experiences, and help to establish broad differences between neighbors, family, or friends. Cumulatively, these differences and boundary constructions leave people feeling “uncertain, socially unsupported and vulnerable” (Shilling, 1993, p. 197). It is not surprising, then, that people facing these circumstances search for spaces of where they can interact with others who understand and have experienced this stigma and why PTO answers a need for so many.

In the next section I address a concept that refers to the stigmatization of grief and loss of rights to typical grieving rituals, including social support. This concept is called disenfranchised grief.

2.6 Disenfranchised Grief

Doka (1989) introduced the concept of disenfranchised grief, first at the individual and then at the group level. As a gerontologist, Doka studied the psychological, emotional, and physical aspects of aging, and his early work on disenfranchised grief focused on individual experiences with “othered” grief surrounding death. However, he and others later expanded the concept’s applicability to sociological work:

The [sociological] aspect of grief is often neglected...[Individual] loss and the ensuing responses may be unacknowledged by surrounding others or the society at large. Although the individual grieves, others do not acknowledge that he or

she has the right to grieve. Such persons are not offered the “rights” or the “grieving role” such as a claim to social sympathy and support. (Doka, 2008, pp. 224-225)

Working with Doka, Thompson et al. (2016) make a powerful case for sociology in the study of loss. They reject the idea of reducing bereavement studies to the single domain of psychology. Noting the impact of gender, race, and class on life experiences that impact individuals uniquely, they explain:

To neglect the social context can be just as problematic as neglecting what is unique and individual about each of us. It can give us a distorted picture that neglects key features of the circumstances.... In focusing on individuals in isolation we are neglecting highly significant sets of factors. (p. 173)

In “Generic Processes in the Reproduction of Inequality,” Schwalbe et al. (2000) advocate examining how inequalities are created and reproduced, placing primacy on the individuals who make up institutions and organizations. As the authors state, “the reproduction of inequality, even when it appears thoroughly institutionalized, ultimately depends on face-to-face interaction” (p. 420). Disenfranchisement of grief ostensibly occurs through such interactions; but there are societal and institutional factors as well. For example, disenfranchised grief is tightly connected to societal grieving rules—norms that govern expected behaviors as well as our thoughts and emotions (Doka, 2002, 2008). These rules dictate “what losses one grieves, how one grieves them, who legitimately can grieve the loss, and how and to whom others respond with sympathy or support (Doka, 2008, p. 225). Those whose grief is disenfranchised fall outside the boundary of societal grieving rules, and hence their grief is marginalized.

Although constructed in connection with bereavement after a death, disenfranchised grief has been expanded to include grief associated with other losses (Thompson et al., 2016). It contains five characteristics (Doka, 2008) but not all five need to be present for it to exist. First,

the grief is not recognized as valid by others. In the context of this work, the very fact that the loss is not a death may, for some, invalidate the grief. It is not uncommon for the families of homicide victims to make public statements to this effect. For example, after an 18-year-old man was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life in prison, his victim's father said: "He's lucky--he deserves more than that because I will never see my son again....At least his family can go visit him, wherever he's at" (Associated Press, 2008). It is certainly true that in these situations, the victim's family's loss is permanent. But in most circumstances of incarceration, for incarcerated families the loss is less black and white. Here, there is more of a social death, defined as a "those cases in which a person, though physically alive, is treated like a corpse....[T]here is significant change from the person the individual once was" (Doka & Aber, 2002, pp. 219-220).

Second, disenfranchised grief may also be present when the griever's loss is not acknowledged. In the context of incarcerated love ones, romantic partners especially are often urged to end the relationship. Online forums populated by partners who report their families recommend they sever relationships with the incarcerated (Hammondeggs, 2017) or make comments akin to "you are better off without him."³ Another example of an unacknowledged loss is the lack of grief rituals associated with the loss. Grief rituals are liminal, significant, and culturally construed acts that confer meaning to specific life events (Doka, 2002; Rosenblatt, 2008). In Western culture, these include: the publishing of obituaries; holding of memorial services; and visits and cards to the bereaved. But for families of offenders, the loss comes with societal judgment and isolation. Because the loss is not a physical death, there are no obituaries,

³ The body of research shows men are convicted of violent crimes at a higher rate than women--90.5% of the murders, for example (U.S Department of Justice, 2003).

but in some cases, public notice may come in the form of media coverage of arrest, trial, and sentencing of the offender.

Third, disenfranchised grief can be present if the relationship is not recognized. For example, society privileges some relationships (e.g., married, heterosexual partners) over others (e.g., unmarried, same-sex, transgender, or affair partners). Loss is thus invalidated due to the stigma associated with the relationship. Sometime these losses are assumed by others to be better in the long run (Jones & Beck, 2006). Other times, the reaction is quite the opposite. In Arditti's (2005) study of prison populations, "the behavior of the inmate [was] extended to the family. There seems to be little compassion not only for the prisoner, but also for the family that he or she leaves behind" (p. 254). At the same time, families reported social support and empathy failed to be offered "because they were believed to knowingly participate or encourage offenders' illegal activity and therefore were deserving of the consequences they received" (p. 254). This behavior disenfranchises grief.

Fourth, grief may be disenfranchised when the griever is excluded, or if society deems him or her incapable of experiencing grief (e.g., individuals with intellectual disabilities, or infant children). However, these judgments are not borne out by research, which for example, shows children of the incarcerated may have difficulty establishing prosocial networks as adolescents. According to Cochran, Siennick, and Mears (2018):

Stigmas and labels, whether they stem from external or internal sources, can then cause children to seek out friendship networks that reinforce their perceived sense of who they are or what their family is (i.e., "criminals" or "outsiders"). (p. 494)

Fifth and finally, disenfranchised grief may be present if the nature or circumstances of the loss constrains "the solicitation of the bereaved for support as well as limit the support extended by others" (Doka, 2008, p. 233). This characteristic is particularly salient for families

of those whose loved ones expect to die in prison. Social conventions may act as constraints, as friends of the family member hesitate to offer support for fear of being perceived as intrusive. The fact that no one reaches out may then prompt the family member to withdraw and isolate themselves. In this cycle of disenfranchisement, both become complicit in the act of marginalization. Because of the nature of these families' situations, that is, the incarceration of a loved one, it is this definition of disenfranchised grief that I expect to find appearing most often within the posts that I analyze for disenfranchised grief.

As negative as stigma and disenfranchised grief are, they can be met with a multiplicity of processes. Grief can be diagnosed as chronic or complicated; depression is not uncommon, as is the tendency to ruminate (Bonanno, Boerner, & Wortman, 2008). But adjustment, adaptation, and transformation also are possible. It is this process of resilience that I propose occurs within the PTO space, specifically as it is communicatively constituted. In the next section, I detail salient resilience literature, and describe Buzzanell's (2010, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c) Communication Theory of Resilience.

2.7 Conclusion

Families of the incarcerated are stigmatized and underserved in terms of services and support. While district attorneys around the nation have victim assistance programs that help them understand court proceedings and access the rights to which they are entitled, defendants' families have no such parallel group. They are left on their own to find help from often overworked public defenders with little time for their cases. Those families that choose to go online at PTO do so to alleviate lack of knowledge and social support. Understanding more about how they do so, and in what ways they do so, is an important way to help inform the advocates

who work on their behalf. It is also crucial to help those who are marginalized to access the support and resilience that they deserve.

This research project aimed to fill gaps in the research on these families by interrogating intersections of communicatively constituted resilience and disenfranchised grief in online spaces. It theoretically extends the Communication Theory of Resilience into online spaces and is socially relevant in that it shines attention on a marginalized group. As I sought to understand more about disenfranchised grief, the consensus of literature led me to believe that of Doka's (1989) four definitions of disenfranchised grief, the last would be the most salient for this research. This definition—disenfranchisement due to the nature of the loss—seemed clearly associated with stigma.

Furthermore, as I analyzed replies to posts containing evidence of disenfranchised grief, I sought to understand how resilience is constructed online in families experiencing disenfranchised grief. Of Buzzanell's (2010) five processes, I believed I would likely find two processes most often: "crafting normalcy" and "legitimizing negative emotions while foregrounding positive action." The second process couples social support (legitimizing negative emotions), while foregrounding positive action, which in this context is advice giving; both social support and advice-giving has been demonstrated to be present in online communities like PTO. Finally, I believed a semantic network analysis of all resilience posts would reveal information about how the language of the resilience posts enriches understandings of how CTR is represented on the site. Thus, the research questions were as follows:

RQ1: How is disenfranchised grief expressed in the originating PrisonTalk.com posts?

RQ2: What CTR processes emerge as the top ways PTO members communicate resilience in replies to disenfranchised grief?

RQ2a: How do these particular processes manifest themselves communicatively in the PTO online forum?

RQ3: What are the characteristics of resilience found in the networked connections of these online conversations?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

I have chosen PTO to explore the communicative constitution of resilience (Buzzanell 2010, 2018 a, 2018b, 2018c) in spaces of disenfranchised grief (Doka, 2008). To do so requires a two-phase methodology using (a) content analysis and (b) computer-aided thematic analysis. After describing the units of analysis, I move on to explaining the steps taken in each phase.

3.1 Units of Analysis

During PTO's 17-plus year existence, members have posted thousands of comments into sections that focus on various subjects. For example, two sections are organized by region: United States or international. One section is specifically for offenders. Others focus on issues such as health, capital punishment, activism, and "sharing experiences." Still other sections provide a place to share resources or submit a request for a prison pen pal.

Units of analysis were generated from two of PTO's 15 sections: "For Family and Friends" and "Loving a..." The literature on families of offenders indicates these individuals experience societal judgment and stigma associated with their loved one's crimes or incarceration (Arditti, 2005; Bailey, 2018; Jones & Beck, 2006); and often the behavior of the inmate is "extended to the family" (Arditti, 2005, p. 254). Research also indicates family members describe specific experiences wherein other relatives, friends, or acquaintances demonstrate lack of compassion or empathy for stigmatized relationships (Bailey, 2018), so I was most likely to find expressions of disenfranchised grief in these two sections. Units of analysis included both the title of the post and the post content itself.

All units ($N=44,040$) came from eight subforums--most were associated with family members, partners, or other non-kin but close relationships. I excluded such subforums as "Met While

Incarcerated” or “When the Relationship is Over” because they dealt with specific issues rather than more generalized conversations within the contexts of friends and family, and thus appeared less appropriate for this research. All the subforums studied were designed for a particular kind of close relationship (e.g. husbands, wives, partners and parents), or in the case of “Loving a ...,” relationships of deep emotional connection. Throughout, I refer to all these online posters as family, specifying relationships when needed.

Written by family members or partners, these data thus represent their own thoughts, emotions, struggles, triumphs, judgments, and joy. Together they created narratives of their personal life experiences, and with their replies make up a “sequenced discourse, a network of narratives” (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 66) that are relevant texts from which to draw inferences because they:

conjure, bring forth, and make present (*re-present* as they are reread, hence re-presentation, with a hyphen) rich worlds consisting of people in relationships with each other, objects that do things, and ideas, morals and perspectives that guide observations. ... To analyze *texts as re-presentations*...is to analyze the conceptual structure that a text invokes. (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 66, emphases in original)

In this chapter, I detail the two separate but theoretically connected methods (Lambert, 2017) employed to examine these data—content analysis and computational text analysis. Beginning with content analysis, I detail how, in order to answer RQs 1, 2 and 2a, these data were collected, processed, and coded. I then detail steps taken to answer RQ 3, that is, the cleaning, processing, and analyzing these data qualitatively and through computational text analysis, followed by semantic network analysis.

3.2 Content Analysis

Krippendorff (2013) defines content analysis as a research method that is designed for “making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (p. 24). Content analysis represents the data *in context*--that is, in context means at the time the data were created and for the purpose for which they were created. Even though the context is important for

understanding the data, content analysis at later times still can “provide new insights, increase a researcher’s understanding of particular phenomena, or inform practical actions” (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 24). In this study, content analysis proceeded through two phases. The first consisted of data collection, cleaning and coding of thread originators, which are the posts that begin new subforum discussions (hereafter referred to as “originating posts”). These data were examined for the presence of disenfranchised grief; and analyzed in order to answer RQ1: “Which of Doka’s disenfranchised grief definitions are most likely to be revealed in the originating PrisonTalk.com posts?” Those that contained disenfranchised grief, by definition, moved on to further analysis while the rest were discarded.

The second phase sought to answer RQ2: “What CTR processes emerge as the top ways PTO members communicate resilience in replies to disenfranchised grief?” and RQ2a: “How do these particular processes manifest themselves communicatively in the PTO online forum?” During this phase, I collected and analyzed replies to each eligible originating post that contained evidence of disenfranchised grief, looking for the presence of communicative resilience. For example, one of the processes is “downplaying negative emotions and foregrounding positive action.” As an example (the following posts are not found in data and are instead constructed as an example), an originating post might state “My husband got sentenced and all I do is sit around and cry all the time. I can’t eat or sleep. I don’t know what to do and need help.” A reply might be, “I know you feel hopeless right now, but things will get better in time [downplaying negative emotions] and you can’t sit around and cry all the time [foregrounding positive action, i.e., “stop sitting around/crying”]. If you have hobbies, you should throw yourself into them as a way to keep your mind off of things. Or you can journal about your feelings. There are lots of ways to keep occupied, and you just need to find some things that work.” The reply contains an example of communicative resilience, and thus would be coded appropriately,

meaning that it would be coded as the process legitimizing negative emotions and foregrounding productive action.

3.2.1 Disenfranchised Grief: Data Collection and Cleaning

Data collection began in February 2019 using a manual method of copying and pasting the first five pages of originating posts from the eight subforums into an Excel spreadsheet. In addition to being laborious, the task yielded a small dataset of fewer than 300 originating posts.

Early in the process, I came across site notifications that indicated the subforum data were periodically archived during the past 17 years. Archived data were not downloaded as the data were housed elsewhere on the site. I noticed a heavy concentration of posts during the first ten to twelve years of the site, and fewer since 2011. PTO opened a Facebook™ page May 14, 2011; today, Facebook has many support groups for families of prisoners, with 10 for wives of incarcerated individuals alone. It may be that rise of social media sites resulted in a decrease of the use of PTO as a discussion forum and thus impacted the number of posts between 2011 to the present day.

After consulting content analysis experts, including members of my dissertation committee, I decided to study more recent, rather than older, data. In March 2019 I hired a computer programmer, who wrote a script to speed up and automatize data collection, enabling the download of a clearinghouse dataset of more than 44,000 originating posts. The script was a detailed list of commands that told a computer what functions to perform, written specifically for the purpose of downloading PTO posts.

To accomplish this task, the programmer:

uses an ID number for each forum topic, combined with the number of pages that topic has, and creates the URL for each page of the topic. Those URLs are used to pull the titles of each thread as well as its specific part of the URL address that directs a browser to the thread. The script creates the full URLs for each thread and then uses those URLs to grab the Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML) from each thread. It then pulls the username and the first comment [originating post] out of the page. The URL, username, title and comment [originating post] are then written to a Comma-Separated Values

(CSV) file with a line for each thread. (Corple, T., personal communication, September 14, 2019)

As a result, the final dataset included all posts from January 1, 2015 to March 20, 2019. These 4.3 years represent 25% of PTO's existence, but not the Krippendorff-recommended (2013) 10% of a corpus. This time frame yielded a final dataset of 2,202 originating posts (see Table 1). This may be a limitation, which I address in the discussion section.

Table 1. Date Range, Subforum Location and n of Originating Posts*

Table 1.			
<i>Originating posts that coded positive for disenfranchised grief.</i>			
<u>Subforum name</u>	<u>Earliest data coded</u>	<u>Latest data coded</u>	<u>Total data coded</u>
Loving a violent offender	9/14/2015	3/20/2019	15
Loving a long-term offender	1/24/2015	2/14/2019	37
Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people in prison	1/12/2015	11/28/2018	38
Adult children and siblings of people in prison	1/19/2015	10/2/2018	60
Loving a lifer	1/5/2015	2/5/2019	76
Wives and girlfriends in prison	1/23/2015	1/27/2019	84
Parents with children in prison	1/2/2015	1/16/2019	325
Husbands and boyfriends in prison	1/3/2015	3/8/2019	1,567
Total originating posts (n=2,002)			2,202
<i>Note.</i> *Coded for disenfranchised grief.			

When I received the posts, the programmer sent them to me in multiple files based on the subforum from which they were pulled (e.g., "Husbands and Boyfriends in Prison"). These data did not appear to be in chronological order. I believed chronology might be important for full understanding of the nature of the posts. I therefore sorted posts by date of creation, newest to oldest. I also recorded the number of originating posts in each subforum accessed (see Table 2).

Table 2. Overall Frequencies of Subforum Originating Posts

Table 2. Overall Frequencies of Subforum Originating Posts		
<u>Subforum name</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>% of <i>N</i></u>
Loving a violent offender	418	0.95
Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people in prison	695	1.58
Wives & girlfriends in prison	970	2.20
Adult children and siblings of people in prison	1,034	2.35
Loving a long-term offender	1,309	2.97
Loving a lifer	2,311	5.25
Parents with children in prison	6,188	14.05
Husbands and boyfriends in prison	31,115	70.65
Total <i>N</i> *	44,040	
<i>Note.</i> Frequencies of all originating posts in subforums.		
*Contain posts that eventually coded positive for disenfranchised grief.		

After creating a single Google spreadsheet with all these data, I cleaned the downloaded post files by removing blank lines on the Excel spreadsheet, and identifying and removing eight posts that were garbled and incomprehensible. All other language remained unedited, including grammar and spelling. Concurrently, I created codebooks for disenfranchised grief and CTR, described in the next section of this chapter.

3.2.2 Codebooks and Coder Training: Disenfranchised Grief and CTR

Grief is disenfranchised when “social support is withheld during the mourners’ grieving period as a result of the disapproval towards the type of loss being grieved, the person being grieved, or the griever themselves” (Bailey, 2018, p. 641). In many cases, expressions of grief are met with “empathic failure” (Neimeyer & Jordan, 2002), which occurs when an individual does not empathize with another because of pertinent social and psychological factors. Research shows that empathic failures predict discrimination, aggression, and other negative social interactions (Cikara, 2015), and that people suffering from disenfranchised grief typically “experience amplified and extended grieving periods as a

result of their inability to resolve emotions” (Bailey, 2018, p. 642); they may also socially isolate themselves (Attig, 1996; Kauffman, 1989).

Data were coded based on Doka’s (2008) definitions of disenfranchised grief, which was said to exist if the post described or could be categorized as expressing sentiments that fit into one of his defined circumstances. I created a codebook (Appendix A) that contained definitions and examples of disenfranchised grief according to Doka’s (2008) criteria. I used the codebook as well as salient literature on disenfranchised grief to train a Ph.D. student coder. Together, we coded the originating posts for presence (1) or absence (0) of disenfranchised grief. All coding throughout this dissertation was conducted using two coders: myself and the aforementioned trained student coder.

Posts that met the criteria for disenfranchised grief were saved as a new dataset for a second round of data collection and analysis. Posts that did not meet the disenfranchised grief criteria were set aside. An example of a post that was set aside might be a process question, such as how to send mail to certain facilities, or a quote that shared an upbeat quote or good news the poster wished to share. After achieving inter-coder reliability, disenfranchised grief posts were qualitatively examined by two coders: myself and the trained Ph.D. student. Coding independently, we examined the data for posts that met the criteria as set forth in the codebook for disenfranchised grief, which was built on salient definitions (Doka, 1989, 2003, 2008). This analysis included reading and re-reading the text of each post, then making determinations based on Doka’s conceptual definitions.

Posts that coded positive for disenfranchised grief became the basis for a new set of data. This new set was used in the next phase of data gathering, described shortly. The next phase necessitated the creation of another codebook (Appendix B), which was based on the Communication Theory of Resilience. In this second phase, replies to posts exhibiting disenfranchised grief were first downloaded, then coded for the presence (1) or absence (0) of one or more of CTR’s five constructs: (a) crafting

normalcy; (b) affirming identity anchors; (c) maintaining and using communication networks; (d) putting alternative logics to work; and (e) legitimizing negative feelings while foregrounding productive action. Once again, coding was conducted by me and a trained Ph.D. student.

3.2.3 Validity and Reliability

According to Krippendorff (2013), content analysts must be able to know, with confidence, that their data have been generated without “pollutants, distortions, and biases, intentional or accidental; and ... mean the same thing for everyone” (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 267). Researchers must take care in unitizing, must ensure they have a valid sampling frame, and must develop a codebook based on theory, past research and message pool immersion; ensure coder reliability; and “report, report, report” (Neuendorf, 2011, p. 282). What follows is a detailed, step-by-step description of “the procedure followed, including accounts of any preparatory research already undertaken” as recommended by Krippendorff (2013, pp. 374-375). The same procedure was followed for coding for disenfranchised grief and communicated resilience.

In a large analysis of published studies, Neuendorf (2011) found more than 30 percent of content analysis studies reported no validity measure. According to Krippendorff (2013), “validity is that quality of research results that leads us to accept them as true” (p. 329); this project’s validity is evident in its ability to address an important social issue and contribute to public debates about the impact of stigma on families of offenders (social validity, p. 329); as well as empirical validity (“the degree to which available evidence and established theory support intermediate stages of a results process and its results”, p. 334). Additionally, to produce reliable results, techniques must be able to be replicated (Krippendorff, 2013); so multiple coders were employed to help reduce the likelihood of bias and ensure that even though they are working independently they can achieve the same results. Inter-coder reliability testing was conducted using a sample of 400 posts collected from the “Husbands and

Boyfriends in Prison" subforum. These data, which were posted between February 27, 2014 and December 31, 2014 were excluded from the final data analysis and used only for training purposes. The "Husbands and Boyfriends in Prison" subforum was chosen because it contained the most posts out of all downloaded subforums, and because the researcher, who was deeply familiar with the content of all subforums studied, judged the posts from the "Husbands and Boyfriends in Prison" forum would be representative of all subforums, since it included similarities of content with all other subforums studied. These posts and this subforum were selected to intentionally exclude the studied timeframe and thus were posted before January 1, 2015.

Inter-coder reliability testing was conducted using Krippendorff's alpha (α), a reliability coefficient developed to measure the agreement among observers, coders, judges, raters, or measuring instruments drawing distinctions among typically unstructured phenomena or assign computable values to them. Coders achieved reliability by resolving differences and coding incongruities through discussions, clarifications, and reviewing and discussing the coding schemes found in the codebooks (see Appendices). For disenfranchised grief, each definitional code underwent reliability testing, and the overall presence or absence of disenfranchised grief was tested separately. For communicative resilience, this process was repeated, with each definitional code undergoing reliability testing using Krippendorff's alpha (α), which requires a minimum reliability of .70 or higher (Krippendorff, 2012). For resilience, the coders achieved a reliability of .89 at a minimum on all coded definitional constructs (see Table 3).

Table 3. Measures of Inter-Coder Reliability

Table 3 <i>Inter-Coder Reliability</i>	
<u>Coded definitions/processes</u>	<u>Krippendorff's alpha (α)</u>
<u>Disenfranchised Grief</u>	
Relationship not recognized	1.0
Loss not recognized as worthy of support	1.0
Griever not recognized as valid	1.0
Nature of the loss not recognized as worthy of support	1.0
<u>Communication Theory of Resilience</u>	
Crafting normalcy	.. 0.91
Affirming identity anchors*	----
Using/maintaining communication networks	1.00
Alternative logics	1.00
Legitimizing negative emotions while foregrounding positive action	0.92
<i>Note.</i> No post coded positive for this code.	

3.2.4 Replies: Data Collection, Cleaning and Preparation

I then moved on to methods designed to answer RQ2: “What CTR processes emerge as the top ways PTO members communicate resilience in replies to disenfranchised grief?” and RQ2a: “How do these particular processes manifest themselves communicatively in the PTO online forum?”

Originating posts that contained elements of disenfranchised grief entered the next phase of analysis and were hand-coded by two coders for the presence of communicative resilience (described later).

Coding for disenfranchised grief revealed a set of 193 posts containing the concept. To analyze these posts and answer RQ1, I read and reread their content, searched for key words such as “judge” (as in “people judge me”), “alone” (as in, “I feel so alone”), and “understand” (as in, “no one understands” what I’m going through; or, conversely, as in “I know PTO members will understand”). I chose these

words because they are contained in descriptions and explanations of Doka's (1989, 2002, 2008) disenfranchised grief concepts. I also searched for phrases like "thank you," "this forum," "site," "community," and "PTO" to help understand narratives surrounding individual and collective reasons for joining the forum in the first place. On a spreadsheet, I highlighted the posts containing the phrase, and saved unique, highlighted spreadsheets for each phrase searched. The exception were the searches for "this forum," "site," "community," and "PTO." Results of these searches were recorded on one spreadsheet, since all were synonyms for the PTO site, the concept I was targeting.

Grounding my research in literature that helped me as I analyzed these results (Doka, 2008; Goffman, 1963; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Koenig Kellas & Trees, 2006), I viewed each post as part of the human narrative of lived experiences. Thus, they collectively offered a glimpse of the human experience in a systematic way. Each post revealed the experience of a person in a stigmatized group, and systematic review of all the disenfranchised grief posts offered access to new knowledge about the individual experience, and why they chose to interact online in a forum like PTO.

The next step was to retrieve data to answer RQ2, "What CTR processes emerge as the top ways PTO members communicate resilience in replies to disenfranchised grief?" To do this, I sent the 193 posts that revealed disenfranchised grief to the computer programmer who had facilitated the first data download. He retrieved all replies to these 182 original posts, enabling me to examine them for communicatively constituted resilience. The computer programmer described the process thus:

I was provided a list of original thread messages from Linda and was asked to get the replies to these messages. I wrote a script that would search for each message and then pull out all the replies. Many replies were not only to the original message, but were replies to other replies. This was indicated with a section in the message demarcated as a quote. The script separated these quotes from the reply and indicated that even though they were in same thread, they were actually a response to something else. Each reply downloaded was saved to a spreadsheet that indicated various aspects of the message to be used for Linda's further analysis."⁴

⁴ Email communication from Programmer Trey Corple dated September 14, 2019.

This second script download resulted in a clearinghouse dataset of 2,229 replies, each of which (together with its title) comprised a single unit of data in this portion of the study. Each reply was recorded on a spreadsheet that contained columns of the following information: the original post ID as assigned in its URL, a link to the original post, the date of the original post, the user name of the person posting the reply, the text of the reply, and any text from a quoted user that was used within the reply text. During data cleaning, I discovered that in many cases, but not all, the original post was also included in the data download. I therefore examined each reply on the spreadsheet, looking to see if any were an original post rather than a reply. Those identified as original posts were highlighted, grouped together and excluded from the final reply dataset. Ultimately, the final reply dataset contained 2,072 individual replies dated from January 7, 2015 through March 20, 2019, when original posts were collected. Of those, 906 coded positive for one or more CTR processes, with legitimizing negative feelings while foregrounding productive action occurring most frequently (n=282) followed by maintaining/using communication networks (n=251). Crafting normalcy (n=198) was third.

3.3 Qualitative and Computational Text Methods

Qualitative researchers can methodically revisit their studied content to improve or refine their understanding and gather new directions for research and correct misinterpretations (Roller, 2017). Krippendorff (2013) points out that qualitative content analysis “puts the analyst in a *hermeneutic circle* whereby interpretations are reformulated based on new insights,” extending opportunities for mixed methods use. In fact, throughout the entire analysis process, I employed a hermeneutic approach that included reading the whole of the text, making notes and brief reflections, considering the scholarly literature when considering issues like resilience and disenfranchised grief and focusing on questions such as: What are the posters writing? What does that text mean, given its context and the authors’ situation (as much as can be determined)? What motivates these responses? What comments and

expressions give insight into their experiences, given their self-identification as a family member of an incarcerated person? In this way, I sought to understand “the deepest sense of a text” (Vieira & De Queiroz, 2017).

Finally, I used qualitative analysis in the form of semantic network analysis to answer RQ3: What are the characteristics of resilience found in the networked connections of these online conversations? Text mining makes it possible to code massive amount of text by using a form of content analysis with specially created algorithms, and use of content analysis constructs as their guide. Text mining and content analysis offer digital researchers the same opportunities to clean, process, sort, and analyze units to reveal potential relationships among them (text mining and semantic network analysis). Computational methods do not stand on their own; for example, the primary assumption of text mining is that neither the software nor the algorithms nor the preprocessing is the method. The method is in the human analysis and extraction of meaning behind what the text mining shows (Lambert, 2018). Computational analysis method was used to contribute to gathering insights that answered RQ3: What are the characteristics of resilience found in the networked connections of these online conversations?

To prepare the data for RQ3 analysis I combined all content of posts that tested positive for CTR into a text file, removing formatting. I then imported the text file into AutoMap (Carley, 2016). Next, I proceeded through a number of cleaning and preprocessing steps. I removed noise words such as “the,” “and” and “a” and applied a stemming command that took “ed” or “ing” out of words in order to leave them in their original form. I applied a delete list but soon recognized this list took out more words than I believed was needed, so I reversed course and restored most of the deleted text. I found that processing more judiciously resulted in a dataset that preserved concepts but reduced the number of extraneous words.

After running the analysis, checking results, and refining the text mining process enough times as to create a useful semantic network, I processed the data through NodeXL semantic network analysis. This too required processing and reprocessing. The entire procedure, from cleaning data, using the software, checking and rechecking emerging findings to ensure quality results in a method that is useful to classify, identify patterns within a given dataset, and perform “data-driven discovery...which allows the researcher to broaden his or her focus” to reveal frequently occurring topics (Lambert, 2017, p. 94). In this way, I generated clusters of frequently occurring words that were connected to each other through the patterns of proximity, allowing insight into topics of conversation in the forum. This method was used to guide my focus on a more traditional qualitative analysis that required reading and rereading the posts with the insights gained from the data-driven discovery. Together, the methods helped to answer the final research question. Results are described in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

In this chapter, I discuss results of the research. I begin by discussing the qualitative analysis of disenfranchised grief dataset, and the findings from analysis. I then move to the results of analysis conducted on the replies to those data, including evidence of marginalization and evidence that “crafting normalcy” may not be able to stand fully on its own in some instances. I conclude with the results of the semantic network analysis done on the replies. As I do so, I include quotes from users. In order to protect users’ identity, I have anonymized their information, attempting to provide them the maximum amount of privacy and respect throughout this process, even though their posts are publicly available.

4.1 Results of Qualitative Analysis: Disenfranchised Grief

Disenfranchised grief is nested in the understanding that all people experience loss; all people have the right to grieve; and that cultural and societal rules govern grieving and grieving rituals. Thus, it is society that adjudicates the right and access to these rituals; grievers who are denied access to these rights are thus disenfranchised in their grief. According to Doka (2008), grief is disenfranchised: (a) when the relationship between the griever and the object of the grief is not recognized; (b) when the loss is not acknowledged; (c) when society excludes the griever from social support, judging he or she lacks capacity to grieve (e.g., very young children, individuals with intellectual disabilities); and (d) when the nature of the loss itself can disenfranchise the griever; for example, suicide. To answer RQ1: “How is disenfranchised grief expressed in the originating PrisonTalk.com posts?” I used qualitative methods to examine each of the 182 posts, as described in Chapter Three.

As previously stated, I believed, based on the literature that identifies prison populations as marginalized and forgotten populations, Doka's fourth definition, the nature of the loss, would most directly apply to the families and friends who seek support on PrisonTalk. As shown in Table 3, my judgment appeared correct. There was little evidence of posts containing Doka's (2008) first or third definitions, that the relationship was not acknowledged, or that society judged the PTO members lacked capacity to grieve. Only a handful of the posts coded positive for Doka's (2008) definition that the loss was not acknowledged, the second definition for disenfranchised grief. However, it is clear that the nature of the loss, or the fourth definition, was a main factor in PTO posters' expressions of disenfranchised grief, with more than 91% of posts coding positive for this definition.

In the next section, I detail how disenfranchised grief is expressed by PTO posters: first, as they express feelings of isolation; second, as they detail experiences of being judged; and third, as they communicatively co-construct disenfranchised grief and resilience through posts that can be classified as "venting."

Table 4. Frequencies of Posts Containing Disenfranchised Grief

Table 4 <i>Frequencies of Posts Containing Disenfranchised Grief</i>			
<u>Definition</u>	<u><i>n</i> coded positive</u>	<u>% of <i>n</i></u>	<u>% of <i>N</i></u>
1. The relationship is not recognized.	8	4.4	0.4
2. The loss is not acknowledged.	13	7.1	0.7
3. Society judges the person lacks capacity to grieve.	6	3.3	0.3
4. The nature of the loss disenfranchises the griever.	166	91.2	8.3
Frequency of disenfranchised grief in all posts	193	9.1	9.6
<i>N</i> =2,002 and is all posts analyzed.			
<i>n</i> =193, and is all posts containing disenfranchised grief.			
<i>Note.</i> Sum of %s of <i>n</i> equal more than 100. Some posts coded positive for multiple definitions.			

4.1.1 The nature of the loss: Feeling isolated and alone

When a person experiences a loss, it is customary in most cultures for friends and family to reach out and offer social support. Of the posts studied, more than a quarter (28.02%) of people who came to PTO reported that they were there because they felt isolated and alone. They dove into explanations about the life circumstances that brought them to the site, revealing details that were highly personal and descriptive. Some admitted they gathered strength to post after reading others' posts for some period of time. They said clearly that the nature of their grief and their association with the marginalized and stigmatized prison population was the proximate cause for the shunning they experienced.

Navigating a crisis such as a loved one's incarceration without the support or understanding that families and friends typically provided was no easy task. For some, the challenges were so difficult that they became life-threatening. Harriet (2016) was one such individual and admitted to attempting suicide as a result of her loneliness. The pain evident in the most poignant of Harriet's posts was expressed in compelling, emotion-laden language that illustrated the profound experiences of isolation:

I feel kind of awkward spilling my heart to complete strangers, but I can't hold it in anymore....I've been so lonely. My depression has gotten so bad that I attempted suicide twice last year. My family sees it but they feel like I'm bringing my depression upon myself by "choosing" to stay with a man who is incarcerated. So they blow me off when I want to talk. I feel like I have no one.
[www.prisonstalk.com]

In addition to loneliness and/or isolation, some posters expressed anger at their incarcerated loved one for bringing pain upon themselves and the family. To some extent, each family member expressed a kind of anger, whether it be toward the justice system, their families and friends, or their incarcerated love one. For example, one poster, whose brother was

incarcerated, described how she was considering ending the relationship since, in essence, it felt like the death of a loved one:

I visited him and he just upset me, spoke of things that disturbed me and has no awareness of how he can affect other people. Im [sic] broken hearted. Ill [sic] always love him but Im [sic] so angry for what he has put us through. Its [sic] been in the media, caused my mother to have a break down, she is a very good person and deserves none of this. I have no one to talk to about this, its [sic] so isolating. I am not involved in a world of crime like my brother so its [sic] totally outside any of my friends [sic] realities. I feel like I need to step away from my family to be able to be happy in my life. Though I feel for my brother who will be away for a long time...my heart is so broken it feels like a death. (Carol-Anne, 2016)

Like Carol-Anne, some had media coverage of their case with which to contend; they struggled with the question of whether to end the relationship with the incarcerated; and they compared the situation to that of a death. It appeared that posters found this cluster particularly difficult to manage.

Many PTO members revealed relationships with family that were complicated by material issues, such as the need for emotional support intersecting with the need for housing or financial support. One woman joined the forum after she moved into her parents' home to help her get on her feet in the weeks following her husband's parole revocation. But the support had particular drawbacks, as she related, in a post she titled "Frustrated! I feel alone & have no one I can talk to" (Rosa, 2016). Though Rosa was receiving material support from her parents, they refused to offer her much-needed emotional support. Turning to the internet, she found PTO. She described the situation thus:

They [her parents] hate him so I'm not allowed to be upset so I can't even get out the tears I need to shed! I feel so alone. I don't have anyone to talk to about it that [don't] look down on me. (Rosa, 2016)

4.1.2 The nature of the loss: Feeling judged

Feelings of isolation were coupled with feelings of being judged in the data analyzed for this research project. Analysis showed that 18.68% of disenfranchised grief posts contained the word “judge,” “judgment” or some other form of the word. A close reading of these texts showed that these words often appeared in the context of explanations, particularly regarding explanations of why people used the site. Some users saw PTO as a judgment-free zone, a place where one could express love or support for a person “on the inside” and in return find their own system of support, rather than being met with disapproval or disdain. It was not uncommon for members to disclose highly personal information, including details of sexual encounters in unlikely places such as prison or jail. “I have been to a few other sites and could not find a single person who wasn't judgemental [sic] or down right mean,” said Beatrix, who followed this statement by explaining her sexual practices in the absence of her incarcerated boyfriend. She ended by simply urging others to reach out to her if they wanted to talk or get together:

Anyone with a similar story or advice or just want to talk please feel free to reply or message. I know that no two stories are ever the same. It would be nice to talk to others who are with someone who is locked up and hear their story. Thank you for reading. (Beatrix, 2015)

Like Beatrix, many expressed thanks and relief that they could come to a PTO and unload about their circumstances without fear of shaming or lectures: “It is nice to know that I am not alone in my feelings and in my situation. My family and friends are pretty judgemental [sic] about this so I don't have many people to turn too” (Audre, 2018). Users also sought to “make friends on here with people who can actually relate to me not just judge” (Louisa, 2015), or they asked for advice on how to deal with judgmental friends and family. “How do other people handle this issue? Of being judged?” asked Ella. “Do people assume you're desperate and sad? It so sucks because I feel like people who haven't experienced this will never get it” (Ella, 2017).

Many people who posted on PTO believed that sharing their story had no purpose other than saying what they needed to express but could not express in other contexts. One woman ended her originating post with the following:

I'm sorry, I know there's really no point to this post, I just need to say these things and I really have no one to talk to about it all. My family thinks I've made a huge mistake and only pretend to support me until they get a chance to throw it in my face...Anyways, I'm always checking out this site and getting information from it.. And everyone always seems friendly, so I figured no one will judge me for rambling about nothing (Lorraine, 2015)

Constant judgment caused one woman, Amelia, to question the choices she made. As she noted, people who stay with incarcerated partners bear more than just emotional costs:

I have been judged by so many people over sticking with my boyfriend that I am starting to judge myself....I've spent over \$800 for the phone, only because for the last three months I was unable to visit (bench warrant over unpaid fines) only to fix all of that and still not be able to visit him because I'm technically an inmate since I'm doing community service, which makes no sense. But I stay up at night thinking, am I dumb? Spending all this time and money for what?... He is going to miss valentines [sic] day, he hasn't been here for me when I needed him the most. My father walked out on me two months ago for his new family totally unexpected and my baby has tried to comfort me over the phone, but it isn't the same. I'm out here all alone, I feel stranded. (Amelia, 2015)

Issues of disenfranchised grief embedded themselves in the language of those who experienced it, as they questioned why it was that their pain and sorrow meant less than others' pain and sorrow. Like Amelia, they often mourned the loss of the simple, everyday things: a reasonable phone bill, since collect calls from prisons can be exorbitant; a Valentine's Day celebration; or a quiet evening at home. They lived with disapproving loved ones who, as one reported, throw away letters that come from prison before the intended recipient sees them. They withdrew from relationships, since, as one woman shared, it is "hard to reach out or open to anyone because I always have it hanging over my head that if they know where my husband is, they will judge me in some way" (Nancy, 2016).

4.1.3 Venting: Communicatively constituting resilience from disenfranchised grief

Finally, while posts that I examined for disenfranchised grief varied in form and content, many contained examples of one particular area of Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR)—that of maintaining and using communication networks (Buzzanell, 2010, 2017). This process use is especially true in posts recognized as venting, or “disclosing negative feelings” (Wendorf & Yang, 2015, p. 272). While scholarship notes that venting has been found to aggravate negative emotions because it increases the focus towards the negative and hinders coming to terms with the negative experience (Wendorf & Yang 2015), Nils and Rime (2012) found that venting negative feelings on Facebook had a mediating effect on an individual’s perceived stress in connection to relationship maintenance. Both online and in everyday life, venting is a common occurrence. Venting was a common occurrence on PTO and appeared linked to at least one aspect of communicative resilience: maintaining and using communication networks.

The frequency of the maintaining and using communication networks process of resilience may be due to the posters’ inability to vent elsewhere. PTO users often ended vents by expressing appreciation to the wider group for “listening” to the emotive outburst and/or some indication that the communicative act in some way gave them comfort, as they were connecting with others who were more likely to understand their circumstances. In this way, they were “maintaining/using communication networks,” one of Buzzanell’s (2010) processes. Even as they expressed their own disenfranchised grief, explicit comments of relief indicated that they knew they had come to a community where members understood and empathized with the emotions that they were experiencing. As they felt safe enough to unload the details of a bad day, detail a disappointment, or protest an injustice, frustration, or failure, they in many cases could

begin the journey toward a more resilient emotional outcome. Long-term PTO members often posted messages communicating that this “venting” was normal, tolerated, and even encouraged.

One particularly interesting example of venting occurred in the wake of a high-profile case that sparked conversations across the country, including on PTO. The 2016 conviction and sentencing of Brock Turner, the Stanford star swimmer who was convicted of sexual assault and related charges, caused at least one PTO member to create an originating post that coded positive for disenfranchised grief. The case apparently struck a nerve with her. After the judge in Turner’s case cited his character, bright future, and other mitigating circumstances, he sentenced Turner to six months in jail (he served 90 days). Turner’s victim delivered a powerful rebuttal vis-à-vis her witness impact statement, which went viral on the internet and garnered intense media attention. During this time period, a woman whose brother faced the consequences of conviction as a sex offender, but did not get a break in the punishment, posted her reaction on PTO:

How my heart aches for [my brother’s sentence] to have only been 6 months, so that he could have been there to say goodbye to our grandfather, so that it is even a possibility for him to be in a future wedding. ...Maybe I'm just jealous, but all I know is I had to say something in a community where I am anonymous but will be understood. I feel a little better now. (Maya, 2016)

The last statement represented a step away from the expressions of a powerfully emotional paragraph, as the act of communicating propelled the writer, through the communicative process, toward resilience. By maintaining and using the network of PTO, she was constructing, accessing, and reinforcing her own storehouse of resilience processes and strategies—acts that were reinforced and extended in replies to those reaching out in the first place.

4.1.4 Marginalization Within The PTO Community

Many of the posts collected through this research failed to fit neatly into the CTR framework, and thus are important to note as counternarratives. I use the term “counternarrative”

broadly and define it as one that runs counter to overarching themes found through my analysis⁵. The design of this study makes it likely that discussions would be focused around resiliency and support. But what about those who may not have found support, or experienced marginalization within the PTO community?

A prime example of this occurred when one original poster, a member of the law enforcement community, expressed feelings of isolation and shame over her son's arrest and subsequent journey into the justice. As she began her post, she asked, "Am I welcome here?" and proceeded to describe her son's situation. Within that description, she critiqued the experience and her son's treatment as biased and unfair. Many of the subsequent replies contained evidence of communicatively constituted resilience. However, several coded negatively for the construct. Within these, a defense attorney, who herself had an incarcerated family member, pushed back against the original poster's narrative and offered a frank, factual reply based on her understanding of the legal system, delivered in a no-nonsense tone. This engendered a sharp, critical response by the original poster, and an equally sharp counter. At this point, others got involved and took sides, and the thread became increasingly antagonistic, with sarcasm, mild insults and name-calling. Comments like the one below, directed at the defense attorney cautioned her to be more supportive:

[I]f you can't give information or make your comments in a supportive way, you should just not give it. Several of us have tried to help [the original poster] feel welcome on this site. I know [you] had good legal advice to impart (even though some of it went over my head), but it came across in a kind of snarky sounding way. Then [another poster] jumped in with another unsupportive comment. This is supposed to be a forum to support each other, not snipe at people who are already down. (Marjorie, 2015)

⁵ Lindemann Nelson (2001) interrogates the ability of dominant narratives to silence or marginalize narratives that are judged to be damaged or less worthy. Questions of agency, narrative repair, and identity are key to this research. In some ways, PTO serves as a space in which such narrative repair can take place.

Other posters came to the attorney's defense, directing comments to the original poster, as below:

[She] was honest and addressing the situation for what it was and giving feedback. Sounds like you are still in victim mode and mistook the feedback as criticism. Your response was childish and immature. Take another look at it and maybe you will see it in a different light rather than lashing out at someone who was just offering advice to your situation. (Anastasia, 2015)

Later in the thread, another poster asked: "Is this still the parent forum? It is sad that this thread has gone in this direction! I can cut the tension with a knife and it is highly uncomfortable reading the exchange" (Bonnie Jean, 2015).

During several instances, a poster asking for help was essentially instructed to buckle up for the ride and adjust to their new situation. Group responses to these kinds of posts were either overtly negative (that is, other posters publicly called for all posters to show understanding, if not sympathy); or ignored the offending post. Interactions between the originating poster and the less sympathetic poster occasionally hijacked the post to the extent that moderators were forced to step in. This is the case with the above post.

There are other instances of marginalization on the site, though these instances may be unintentional. These data were not in my dataset, because they were not contained in the studied forum (i.e., "Husbands and Boyfriends in Prison" or "Loving a Lifer"); however, they bear representation: The fact is, some forums have far less traffic and fewer overall threads. For example, "Around the World" contains threads regarding incarceration in the Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe, and elsewhere; many of these posts go unanswered. One woman, who asked for information after her relative had been arrested in a South American country, had to wait three years before a reply was posted. Her situation had drastically changed, as she replied to the individual who, finding himself in the same situation, reached out to her for information:

Thank you for responding to my old post. As you could see no one else ever did. Sadly my [relative], age 26, died in the...prison. He suffered many horrible things there and could just not manage to stay alive. I have been heartbroken since. I know what you are going through....I know how hard it was for me to feel alone and helpless. (Denise, 2009)

Clearly, no one responded to her request for information and help—not even posters who could offer sympathy, if not resources. Either the forum was infrequently visited, or those who did visit her post decided not to post a reply for three years. Further on in her post, she offered to have an offline conversation with the person who replied to her, saying she understood how difficult it was to feel so alone and helpless.

My data also did not include narratives that criticized PTO although there is evidence, external to the site, that indicated that there were such opinions. Complaints about PTO administrators and procedures can be found on a website called “Under Lock and Key,” that has ceased production of new information⁶⁶, but that still has pages visible on the web. In particular, one page cites PTO’s censorship of Under Lock and Key posts, stating:

It seems that the PTO staff want to prevent [us] from participating in the forums, but they don't want to do so openly. They have pursued an ongoing practice of making it as difficult as possible for us to share information about the fight against the criminal injustice system being waged by [us]. We have asked the PTO administrators to be honest with us and just tell us to stop participating if they want to kick us off. But they ignore this request and continue to pretend that the problem is our lack of compliance with policies. [www.prisoncensorship.com]

While these opinions are important to demonstrate a more complete view of opinions, the data for this dissertation are in PTO, authored by those who find some value in the site. The remainder of this chapter examines the replies that coded positive for resilience, attempting to unpack the how the concept is extended among strangers in the virtual world.

⁶⁶ Production ceased with the final issue, July 2019 in order to merge with another organization, the Maoist International Movement, to produce a publication whose name, the final issue said, had yet to be named.

4.2.1 Results of Qualitative Analysis: Communicatively Constituted Resilience

The answer to RQ2, “What CTR processes emerge as the top ways PTO members communicate resilience in replies to disenfranchised grief?” was found through quantitative analysis. By coding the data, it became clear that 45% of the replies to disenfranchised grief-containing posts contained communicative resilience, and of those a full 79% of those coded positive for three of the processes: legitimizing negative feelings/foregrounding productive action; maintaining communication networks, and crafting normalcy (see Table 4). In the next section, to answer RQ2a, I discuss these three processes in reverse frequency order, from smallest (crafting normalcy) to largest (legitimizing negative feelings/foregrounding productive action).

Table 5. Frequencies of Posts Containing Resilience

Table 5 <i>Frequencies of Posts Containing Resilience</i>			
<u>Process</u>	<u><i>n</i> coded positive</u>	<u>% of <i>n</i></u>	<u>% of <i>N</i></u>
1. Legitimizing negative feelings/foregrounding positive action	282	31	13.61
2. Maintaining/using communication networks	251	27	12.11
3. Crafting normalcy	198	21	9.56
4. Putting alternative logics to work	98	11	4.3
5. Affirming identity anchors	93	11	4.5
Frequency of CTR processes in all replies	922		44.5
<i>n</i> = 922 and is all replies coding positive for resilience.			
<i>N</i> =2,072 and is all replies analyzed.			
<i>Note.</i> Some replies coded positive for multiple definitions.			

4.2.2 Crafting Normalcy: A Question of Independence

RQ 2a asks, “How do these particular processes manifest themselves in the PTO online forum?” While analyses did support crafting normalcy as being among the top processes, it was

not the powerhouse process that I originally thought it would be; maintaining/using communication networks clearly emerged as the more frequently appearing process. Crafting normalcy was more likely to appear with one of the two other of the largest processes (48%) than alone (28%). This raises questions about its strength as an independent process, which I will address.

As I analyzed this difference, I looked at how often crafting normalcy co-occurred with the other two largest processes. Crafting normalcy and maintaining/using communication networks co-occurred in just 12% of its total 198 posts. Rather, crafting normalcy was much more likely to co-occur with legitimizing negative feelings/foregrounding productive action (34%), possibly indicating that the process was, at least in PTO contexts, embedded in the idea that emotions and thoughts expressed in originating posts are legitimized by replies, while at the same time linked to the idea that crafting normalcy *is* a productive way forward. It may be that, driven by overarching emotions of isolation and judgment, PTO members came to the website seeking community. Seeking to connect with others who shared similar life experiences, they found value in responding to those, through replies, through the same kinds of circumstances. Thus, resilience work was done in efforts to communicate and maintain networks within PTO, which for many became a virtual support system; for others, a virtual family.

Crafting normalcy and maintaining/utilizing communication networks were represented beautifully in a thread begun by Jennifer (2015), only a month in as a PTO member. Jennifer described details of her emotional state and ended with: “Sorry to blab, I just am so overwhelmed with missing him!” The first reply, from Amy (2015), clearly represented both these resilience processes:

Hunnie you are not blabbing at all. Its [sic] hard I know. I try to keep myself busy planning our future and staying ahead and on top of our plans as much as I can

[crafting normalcy]. I too understand when it comes to not having anyone to vent to because you are right people truly dont understand. That's [sic] why I spend so much time in front of my computer when I am not at work or busy doing chores or things around the house. The only REAL PEOPLE who understand are the wonderful ladies and gents I have met on here [maintaining/using communication networks]. Keep your head up. He needs you to be as strong as possible. #doingtime #hugstoyou. [www.prisonstalk.com]

As Amy created her response, she began with an example of what she does, offering advice to the original poster that is a clear example of crafting normalcy: "I try to keep myself busy planning our future and staying ahead and on top of our plans as much as I can." She ended by defining the value of the PTO forum. The tone and theme of Amy's message was reiterated across hundreds of posts elsewhere on the site.

In other responses to Jennifer's original post, representations of crafting normalcy were evident as PTO members offered suggestions on what normalcy might look like:

I'm in college, I work, and I'm a mom. None of these require off time. The busier I stay, the less time I have to think. ... I use I use this hurt of being away from him as fuel to drive myself. (Samantha, 2015)

As Samantha describes, all of these factors served to background the negative emotion (hurt) and spin it into productive action (education, job, and family) that keeps her mind occupied and her spirits up. Others described using travel, self-focus, and personal development as ways of keeping their minds occupied through normal activities and of ways of helping to distract them from loss, isolation, and sorrow. Martina said, "keep busy and don't drown yourself in prison-related stuff." Together, responses all suggested to Jennifer that she take active steps to do the same, beginning her own journey of communicatively constituting resilience in the face of disruption and crisis.

Like many original posters, Jennifer commented within the thread to express appreciation for the replies. In doing so, she explained her own attempts at crafting normalcy: staying busy with planning the details of her future wedding, caring for her young child, and going to work

each day. As she did so, she also expressed PTO's value as a communication network of resilience: "This forum is all that is keeping me sane right now and knowing that every day spent apart is a day closer to being reunited! I really appreciate your answers" (Jennifer, 2015).

4.2.3. Maintaining and using communication networks

CTR theorizes resilience as communicatively built through five processes, including maintaining and using networks, which was present in 27% of the replies to disenfranchised grief. My research demonstrated the importance of this particular process for people experiencing disenfranchised grief, especially with regard to reducing feelings of isolation and dealing with experiences of being judged. Conversations displayed original posters' expressions of gratitude for individual comments and for the site as a whole.

Most PTO members whose loved ones have ended up in prison expressed negative emotions surrounding the situation, but the strength of emotions varied from poster to poster. The closer the post was to joining PTO, the more emotional their posts seemed to be. For one woman, the shock, shame and disruption of the circumstances—her 19-year-old's conviction and sentencing for vehicular manslaughter—prompted her to join the site and, within the same month, post a brief, powerful originating post that included information about his previous good standing, his college attendance, and his status as a football player on scholarship: "Now instead he is in a Florida prison. I am devastated, and no one understands my grief!" (Janice, 2016). In reply, another woman in similar circumstances reached out; her comments included thoughtful comments about the importance of maintaining communication networks that supported the humanization and reputation rehabilitation of the offender, while empathizing with the mother and attempting to reduce feelings of isolation:

I understand and can truly empathize with your devastation. You are not alone in this despair. Although not my child, my husband was convicted of the same thing with no prior criminal history and still given 7 years to serve. It is hard and it's heart-breaking...but take solace in the fact that this is temporary. It's not quick...but it is temporary. Me and my kids keep the lines of communication open so that our family can remain intact and my husband doesn't forget who he is and who he was before this tragedy.... I hope this helps because it's been nearly 2 years since the accident and I first found this website and it was hard to find someone going through a similar situation and no amount of info was ever enough. (Nellie, 2015)

As Nellie told Janice, she and her family took active steps, through communication, to help her husband envision himself more than the sum of the actions that resulted in his incarceration. Maintaining and using communication networks were resilience-producing tools that sustained families in times of crisis, and helped to heal an individual's disrupted sense of self, offering access to a less stigmatized self.

Nellie also used a term found frequently throughout all posts that coded positive for resilience: "You are not alone." This phrase was stated explicitly and implicitly. Because individuals dealing with disenfranchised grief often reported feeling isolated and alienated, it seemed logical that responses directly focused on maintaining communication networks would frequently include messages that communicated that the community was there as support, and that the poster was not alone. Hope, a PTO moderator with more than 2,400 recorded posts, offered a welcome and a response to Janice with words that defined what membership meant, likened it to resilience, and used imagery that brought to mind the warm, soothing kitchen of a friend or neighbor:

I am so glad you found us. I am sorry you had to. We are the strong quiet, behind the scenes resilience that gets us all through this part of life we never wanted to acknowledge. No one ever dreams their toddler will grow up to be in prison or jail. But sometimes poorly thought out decisions can land them behind bars. They are not the only ones who pay the price--families on both sides and related to the inmate--do too. Have a seat and read, read, read. You are not alone. Check in often. We will be happy to hear of the little victories you and your family and

your son achieve along the way. Come back. We'll leave the light on for you and a pot of tea on the stove for you. (Hope, 2016a)

The notion that families of the incarcerated also “pay the price” echoes Doka’s (1989) definition of disenfranchised grief, that the nature of the loss disenfranchises the griever as well as the person who was the one whose actions initiated the loss, disruption, anger, sorrow, and/or trauma. However, the post was rich with language that connected other descriptions of PTO as a community—and it is lack of isolation, in the form of community, that helps them to access resilience. Janice responded to Hope’s post with words that demonstrated that this particular post, and others’ posts, had impacted her:

I am devastated! as [sic] I now see so many others are too! thank [sic] you for welcoming into this group. I hope that in the near future I will hear success stories from all of you! It is my wish for all of you, who will help me thru this grief!
(Janice, 2016)

Thus, maintaining and using communicating networks appeared to be a key process for accessing and extending resilience in online communities where people were experiencing disenfranchised grief.

4. 2. 4 Legitimizing negative feelings/foregrounding productive action

The most frequently used CTR process identified through analysis was legitimizing negative feelings/foregrounding productive action, with nearly one-third (31%) of all replies to disenfranchised grief posts coding positive for the construct. The prevalence of this process made sense. PTO is an online space dedicated to helping people manage life situations that are fraught with marginalization, separation from loved ones, and confusion about institutional processes; thus, negative emotions come with the territory. As a self-proclaimed online support community, the site is constructed as a space where people can receive understanding and social support, bringing people together from diverse backgrounds who share a common life experience.

The intersection of legitimizing negative feelings and foregrounding productive action was found when a post simultaneously offered support for the feeling and then pivoted to foregrounding productive action. Posts accomplished these dual purposes in a variety of ways. Most notable were the posts that described what the poster did to foreground the positive action, as Tom (2016) did:

I keep myself busy. I try my damndest to keep a positive mindframe. I completed a Masters Degree and I'm about to start a new business so doing positive things in my own life is something I've become rather adept at. But when things get quiet at the end of the day...in those moments, I get you entirely....Find what brings you balance and keeps your mind occupied. Brace for the moments when it isn't easy. And stay strong. None of us love this life. But all of us love someone in spite of the fact that we're in it. [www.prisontalk.com]

Tom's suggestion foregrounded activity that helped him, but he also advocated that the original poster find what works for her to keep her mind occupied and do it, while preparing for the difficult times. Like many others who replied to disenfranchised grief posts, all PTO members "love someone". This love motivated them to continue with the process of living life while waiting for the day when their loved ones would walk out of prison. Looking ahead and counting days seemed less productive to most PTO members; rather, staying in the here and now, keeping focused on what needed to be done were common themes within replies from this dataset.

Another common theme in replies was that of advocating self-care. Sasha (2016), a PTO poster whose loved one was out of prison, acknowledged and validated the original poster's pain and anguish, then offered her own regrets about not living her life when her loved one was in prison: "Just don't forget about yourself along the way because as much as it hurts you also deserve to smile, laugh, and live life. I say that as i [sic] reflect back on the things and people I [sic] missed out on.

Many disenfranchised grief posts raged over the convolutions of the justice system, which exacerbated already raw emotions. Disenfranchised grief posts included despair over institutional-induced circumstances, and sought advice on how to speed justice up—a bit like Sisyphus, the mythological character who was condemned to repeating the same daily task of pushing a boulder up a mountain only to watch it roll downhill again. One PTO poster urged self-care as the salve:

I can tell you are feeling frustrated and scared. That's understandable. It's one of the unfortunate truths that things in our justice system rarely move quickly and we tend to be faceless piles of paperwork on too many desks. That's not what you want to hear, I know. Believe me. But because you are such an amazing advocate for him, I'm going to ask that you take a tiny step back and find an advocate for you. A friend for coffee (or wine, whatever), a hot bath and phone call to a loved one who can just listen or cry with you. I'm so glad you're here sharing your feelings and I hope you have someone in your corner out there, too. (Addie, 2016)

A small but concerning number of original posts dealt with potentially life and death situations. In these, the original poster attempted suicide, was in an abusive situation, or was otherwise threatened by some individual or group. Unsurprisingly, people responded to these original posts in various manners—support, lectures, critiques, suggestions, all without addressing the underlying (explicit or implicit) negative emotions. But there were times when legitimizing negative feelings/foregrounding productive action occurred by someone who intervened in a thread wherein replies put the original poster on the defense. In these circumstances, the original poster often expressed relief mixed with gratitude for the help.

After one original poster described an abusive situation, she received replies that chastised her for staying with the abuser, disenfranchising her grief even further. Terri (2016) stepped into a contentious situation with this calming voice:

I think you are more in need of a soft place to land, where you won't be judged or threatened. Please please consider asking for help from your family, your church and/or locating a counselor who can guide you through the steps you need to take to get control back in your life and leave this man behind. Stay strong and focus

on your better tomorrows that will come to you after you get out of this abuse.
[www.prisonstalk.com]

As Terri inserted her answer into a contentious thread, she simultaneously legitimized the original poster's emotions from reactions within the thread (her feelings of being judged emerged as replies chastised her decisions), urged separation from feeling threatened (the abuser's actions), and then turned to foregrounding productive action. In subsequent replies, posts were more understanding of the original poster's emotions and the thread cooled down, ending with the original poster thanking all for the help and support. As PTO members sought to manage negative emotions and found ways to engage with a community that could offer social support, they also brought people together from diverse backgrounds who shared a common life experience. These differences among PTO members meant that sometimes communication was not smooth and congenial. However, the motivations of the members to ultimately support and advise seemed, in most cases, to overshadow the occasional thread gone awry, especially with people like Terri who communicatively refocused the topic and reminded others about the meaning of community.

4.2 Networks of Resilience: A Dialogic Structure

The final research question, RQ3, sought to answer the following question: What are the characteristics of resilience found in the networked connections of these online conversations? The answer: Communicatively constituted resilience in this online community has a dialogic structure that is built around the concepts of "you" and "me." Communicative resilience in this online space truly is talk in action—as well as action in talk.

This answer emerged after I performed text mining, a form of content analysis and semantic network analysis, on all posts that contained evidence of communicatively constituted

resilience. Semantic network analysis is an analytic form that operates on the assumption that words in close proximity to each other are more closely connected than those further apart, and that meaning can be analyzed by looking at a network of all words in a dataset (Lambert, 2018). The results of this analysis showed that replies were focused largely on sharing personal narratives as well as expressions that focused on the original posters: I will share stories about “me” so that I can help encourage and support “you” because others have done so for me.

The semantic network analysis is performing after text mining, which included cleaning and processing the data. All semantic networks were undirected and laid out using the Harel-Koren Fast Multiscale algorithm layout (Harel-Koren, 2001). The original findings were far from useful and contained far too many noise words. I continued to apply refinements to the text corpus, further reducing noise words (e.g., “and” and “the”), combining words to create concepts that indicated communicative resilience (such as “I_am_sorry”), and running semantic network analysis until meaningful outcomes began to emerge because noise words were less apparent.

I then ran a cluster analysis, which sorted word pairs into groups, thus giving a picture of underlying subconversations. The cluster analysis (Figure 1) shows groups sorted into neighboring clusters, with each group assigned its own color. By instructing the algorithm to show the pairs’ frequency strength visually (larger circles indicate greater frequencies), illustrative information began to emerge. The navy blue clusters had the highest frequency of pairs and what was clear was that these conversations that contained contain communicatively constituted resilience were centered around family, with member roles (son, husband, step-father) mentioned often, along with words like “family” and “children.” Nearby, the words “you” and “your” stood out as important connectors between the navy-blue group and the light blue

Thus, I chose to concentrate only on the “your” and “my” nodes during further analysis. The network above showed connection between words like “your grief,” “your decision” and “your story.” It also showed connections between words like “my journey” “missing my” and “make my day.”

Semantic network analysis of the largest cluster of the largest group from the cluster analysis indicated that conversations were both self-referential and outward-focused in nature.

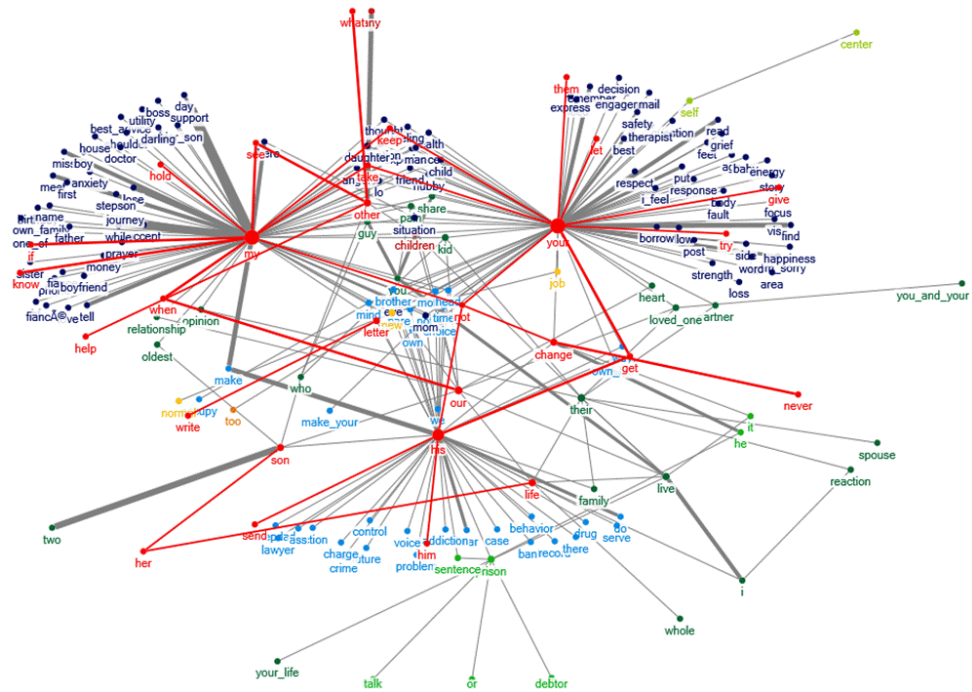


Figure 2. Semantic Analysis of the Largest Cluster of the Largest Group in the Network

However, it still contained too many nodes for clear analysis. On NodeXL, width is calculated by frequencies of each word pair, so the bigger the width, the more frequent the pair. Therefore, I reduced the number by retaining all those with edge widths larger than 1 but eliminating those equal to 1, as calculated by NodeXL. After eliminating these nodes, the final view of-my network appears (see Figure 3).

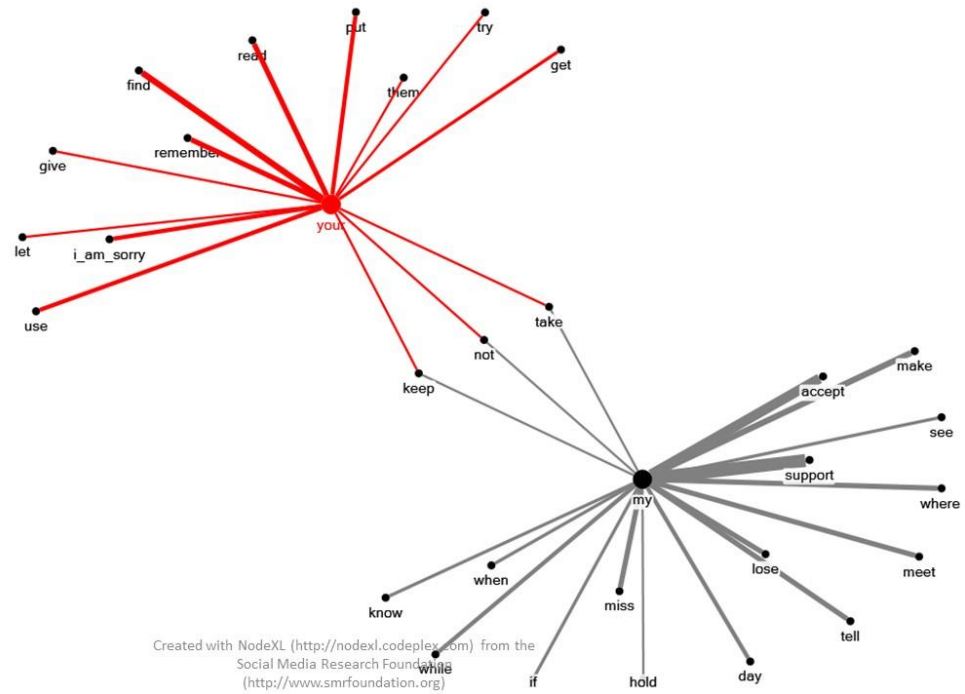


Figure 3. Final Analysis of Resilience Processes: A Dialogic Structure

These networks indicated the two most frequently occurring words with “my” are “accept” and “support.” These two words often occurred in CTR posts with regard to self-narratives designed to be used as examples for the person posting the originating post. Replies included details of the poster’s life history as people said that what they needed to do was to adjust to the situation (i.e., accept it) but also indicated what they did not have from friends and family (support), and what they could be expected to find at PTO (support.) In the “your” network, the phrases “find,” “remember” and “I’m sorry” stood out. Many replies began with the phrase “I’m sorry,” as the poster offered one thing that was often lacking among friends and family—that is, sympathy. In direct response to disenfranchised grief, PTO posters reached out and offered sympathetic language that was a traditional part of the grief ritual. Thus, these posters helped to reinfranchise grief with two simple word, typed onto a screen, from one stranger to another.

Posts also often contained the word “remember” and “find” as a means of communicating the need to stay focused on practical and necessary realities, as in “remember your kids depend on you” (Audre, 2018) or the need to stay focused on oneself by performing self-care activities as general as taking care of oneself, eating right, or being good to oneself, to the specific, like reading a good book, listening to uplifting music or attending religious services. This advice, found often in replies to disenfranchised grief, also was concentrated in concepts of foregrounding productive action. Productive action involved taking care of children. Such action was able to divert thoughts from the incarcerated loved one, and place priorities in the right, meaning productive, order. Additionally, suggestions for productive action were not always appropriately coded to the legitimizing/foregrounding process, since often they appeared in isolation, or without legitimizing negative emotions. Likewise, taking care of oneself helped to manage the many negative emotions associated with the situation of loving an offender.

This semantic network analysis provided a look at communication at a space for resilience to thrive in connection with the broader qualitative analysis. It provided a reinforcement of the qualitative findings in that it confirmed, through a look at one subconversation, that further semantic network analysis would likely add greater depth and nuance to the existing qualitative results.

4.3. Summary

Throughout examination of originating posts, the construct of disenfranchised grief was evident, suggesting that people came to the PTO website when they needed others who understood their circumstances, their feelings, their struggles with the justice system, their challenges navigating everyday activities and relationships. The data suggested that the nature of the loss, Doka’s (2008) fourth defining characteristic for labeling experiences as disenfranchised grief, was the

prevailing reason for PTO posters' disenfranchised grief, with more than 91% of posts coding positive for this particular definition. Only a handful of originating posts coded positive for Doka's (2008) other definitions, namely, that the loss was not acknowledged, that the griever is excluded from social support because society deems him or her incapable of grief, or that the relationship was not acknowledged. Finally, semantic network analysis indicated ways in which conversations in the replies were organized by simultaneously focusing on narratives of self (my) and narratives that focused on the original poster (your). Some of the word pairs that emerged were words one would expect to find in communications engaged in and representing CTR.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This dissertation answers calls to study the communicative construction of resilience in multilevel contexts with practical applications for individuals and collectivities who are pulled toward reintegration and some sense of normalcy after they experience loss, trauma, and other forms of disruptions (Buzzanell & Houston, 2018). This chapter includes discussion of the theoretical contributions, limitations, theoretical and pragmatic implications of this work. Finally, it concludes by offering ways in which the research is significant to the families who deal, every day, with grief, stigma, challenges, and opportunities of loving someone “on the inside.”

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

Analyses of posts on an online forum called PrisonTalkOnline (PTO) indicates that prisoners’ loved ones describe their disenfranchised grief, or stigmatized loss and suffering (Doka, 1989, 2002, 2008), in originating posts that then function as a trigger for other forum members’ replies. These members’ responses provide evidence that resilience processes theorized by the Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR, Buzzanell, 2010, 2018a, 2018b) operate in this particular online organizing space. Specifically, this dissertation contributes to both disenfranchised grief and CTR by explaining how disenfranchised grief prompts forum members to seek and express needs for understanding, advice, and spaces to vent because others not in similar circumstances reject their appeals for support and consideration. Considered undeserving of such understanding and support and considered tainted by their associations with prisoners, they turn to sensemaking with others. In doing so, they find a collectivity with which

they identify and they construct identities that help them manage stigma by framing their experiences as normal (see Meisenbach, 2010; Smith, 2007).

Besides extending the Communication Theory of Resilience into online spaces and to a marginalized group, this dissertation also contributes by utilizing a mixed method sequence of text mining, content analysis, and semantic networks so that the structure and meanings of resilience processes were explicated discursively and structurally. Previous studies did not utilize these methods in combination and for these online participants. Findings provide insight into which resilience processes among the five theorized by Buzzanell (2010, 2018 a, 2018b, 2018c) operate in the PTO context individually and in combination.

As the first to use semantic network analysis to examine CTR in relation to disenfranchised grief and a marginalized or stigmatized group, and by analyzing the replies to original posts, this research offers insights that support the findings of the qualitative analysis, but also provides a view of how resilience is constructed dialogically, with language that is distributed in nearly equal strength between conversations focused on “my” and “your” narratives. In uncovering this finding about resilience labor enacted for self and other (see Agarwal & Buzzanell, 2015; Lucas & Buzzanell, 2012), the semantic network analysis displays how online originating posts and replies operate as dialogic communicative practices through which organizing structure and sensemaking form communities. Indeed, CTR processes—that is, communicatively constituted resilience—is dialogic in nature as it appears in online spaces. Accessing resilience is reflected in dual interaction between and among strangers who come together to share grief, resilience, support, and advice using personal narrative as examples. These examples provide the hope that some need to manage the challenges associated with

loving an incarcerated individual. The isolation and loneliness experience from disenfranchised grief is countered by the interactions of support and comfort through these online conversations.

This finding is unique and should be further investigated to answer new questions that arise: What conversations are most likely to result in helping those grieving to access resilience? Does the very act of engaging do so? What happens to those who find themselves shut out of the dialogic process? These are only some of the ways these new findings can be further interrogated. These contributions to CTR and disenfranchised grief are expanded upon and a springboard for the next sections in which implications are presented.

This discussion of contributions also includes new insights about the Communication Theory of Resilience. As Buzzanell (2018a) states: “In communicatively constituting the new normal, resilience is activated by trigger events as well as cultivated and transformative” (p.15). Analysis shows that 79% of the posts coding positive for resilience fell into the categories of (1) legitimizing negative feelings/foregrounding productive action; (2) maintaining/using communication networks; and (3) crafting normalcy, with the first two processes comprising more than half the dataset (58%). This finding makes sense, since the reasons people come to the site include their needs to find support for, or legitimization of, their negative emotions (backgrounding unproductive and foregrounding positive action), and to find others with whom they could communicate who are in the same circumstances (communication networks). To a lesser extent they ask questions about how to navigate the unfamiliar emotional/practical waters in which they find themselves. Responses to these queries urge post originators to craft normalcy as an important part of constructing resilience. For PTO users lacking support and resources, the online space becomes the community that they lack offline. In this online space, individuals have experienced their own trigger event (disruption), and, finding a dearth of resources “in real life,”

they turn to the virtual world. Besides sources of advice and commiseration, originating posts act as emotional outlets (i.e., “venting”). PTO members feel safe enough to express their feelings of disenfranchised grief, to detail narratives of particularly difficult days or circumstance, or to express frustration and anger at their life circumstances. Such posts are encouraged and supported as part of the PTO culture. Thus, the research extends Buzzanell’s (2010, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c) CTR by showing how disruption and resilience can simultaneously and communicatively co-exist, and that they are not linear or sequential; the very act of seeking an online space such as PTO is a transformative act of resilience, wherein the activation of communication networks provides access to resilience through networks, emotional legitimization, and access to the new normal. As Hope (2016c) says:

This group illustrates and supports you enough to show more compassion than you ever thought you had to the next person you meet. Compassion for the disenfranchised is a gift we share here (with a big dose of reality checking and straight shooting). You will become a kinder person. We have belief in you. Hang in there.

The research uncovered new questions about CTR, in particular, finding evidence that “crafting normalcy” as a construct may not be a fully independent process. It may be that “crafting normalcy” is in fact a part of the foregrounding positive action—and a positive action itself. This possibility bears mentioning and should be examined further in future research.

In previous studies, PTO has been featured in an UK literature review (De Mott, Bailey, & Ward, 2012); as a place to recruit inmates to participate in studies on the challenges of prison visitation; and as part of Chua and Balkunje’s (2013) study of six separate online forums, one of which was PTO. The latter study analyzed a total of 1,800 posts from all six separate online forums and provided general information about the site’s functionality. This study, however, uses PTO as a space to conduct deep, multilevel investigation on CTR within and in response to

narratives of disenfranchised grief. As such, it is the first to investigate how disenfranchised grief acts as a disruption to prompt the enactment and engagement of CTR processes.

From this research, it becomes clear that in the context of prisoners' families, friends, and loved ones, disenfranchised grief is overwhelmingly triggered because of the nature of their loss as described by Doka (1989), with 91% of disenfranchised grief posts coding positive for that definition. However, analysis of the disenfranchised grief posts show that the grief is compounded by reports of societal isolation and judgment, references to which appear in a combined 46% of studied posts. This finding extends the definition of disenfranchised grief by showing how these two experiences—isolation and judgment—actually drive PTO users away from their “offline” lives and into online communities, in search of virtual support.

These findings are reflected in and through PTO members' comments. Hope, a longtime member and PTO moderator, echoes the feelings of many when she says the “worst” part of the “prison journey” is the isolation and judgment from others (Hope, 2016b). Although Hope is a participant in the findings, she produced a separate post (one that was not responsive to an originating post defined as disenfranchised grief) in which she directly references PTO as a site for those experiencing disenfranchised grief. Hope says: “Our grief, our loss (ours - as in the families and loved ones of those incarcerated) we grieve too. We are just never allowed to do so because our spouses or fiancées are members of a disenfranchised group” (Hope, 2016c). Acting as an educator and informer, Hope quotes definitions of disenfranchised grief from its Wikipedia entry, which cites Doka (1989)⁷. She ends by pivoting to CTR-infused language: “The gift of these boards is bringing us all together so that we know we are not alone” (Hope, 2016c). The

⁷ This post was not part of the dataset studied because it was not a response to expressions characterized by disenfranchised grief. Instead, the researcher stumbled upon it while searching Google using the terms “disenfranchised grief” and “PrisonTalk.com.”

language she uses implies dialogue one with another as a key construct that makes the model work.

5.2 Limitations

As with any research project, this dissertation has its limitations. First, I do not know the demographic backgrounds of those who post on PTO. Based on the content of posts and big data reports on the lack of resources that families and loved ones of prisoners have and on the characteristics of those incarcerated, as detailed in Chapter 2, I would suspect that those who post may more often be members of lower income brackets and may disproportionately be people of color.

Furthermore, I did not create a persona to give me access to restricted forums but utilized only open forums. I created pseudonyms and deleted intimate and identifying information from posts throughout my results presentation. I took these measures for ethical reasons, but they may have constrained my ability to access richer originating posts and replies and to contact those who have posted on PTO to arrange interviews. However, from my background as a journalist I know that people are loath to discuss their individual and familial relationships and grief for loved ones' incarceration publicly because of the stigma. My hope is that these ethical considerations would enhance my credibility for future studies. In particular, my hope is that these actions indicate that I am approaching my subject matter and my online participants with respect and with safeguards for PTO members' wellbeing.

A further limitation may have come about because reliability testing was confined to one forum, that is, "Husbands and Boyfriends in Prison." This decision was made because posts from "Husbands and Boyfriends" made up nearly 80% of my dataset, and because I learned, during deep and frequent reading of the site during a three-year period, that posts appeared thematically

similar from one forum to the next. However, it may have been wise to include representative posts from each forum to more fully represent the entire dataset during the reliability testing.

5.3 Theoretical and Pragmatic Implications

This dissertation is the first of its kind to connect disenfranchised grief and the Communication Theory of Resilience in an online organizing context of marginalized group members using mixed methods that enabled findings about content and structures (text mining, content analysis, and semantic network analysis). However, there remain many other areas for exploration.

Theoretically, findings prompt further research questions, including those that could investigate what kinds of CTR replies generate positive feedback from the original poster. Semantic network analysis on disenfranchised grief posts could also help to reveal subconversations within the posts, and how those do or do not engage with CTR processes. In addition, no research exists, to my knowledge, about ways to display appropriate emotions (for fear of sanctions) offline, or resilience labor within the context of families of prisoners communicating online.

Pragmatically, as an engaged communication scholar, I see this project as a means of continuing my program of scholarship to assist practicing journalists, members of the court system, and others about disenfranchised grief and the toll that it takes on the well-being of those experiencing this grief. Training sessions, popular essays and blog posts, and other interventions could educate others about PTO and the connections between online organizing for disenfranchised grief and resilience processes.

Training on CTR processes and disenfranchised grief may help professionals better serve populations that are impacted by the social and communicative burdens associated with incarceration. First, they could be used in presentations and trainings for members of the justice system, including courtroom personnel, judges, district attorneys, defense attorneys, prisoner advocates, faith-based volunteers, and groups that focus on social justice for incarcerated, all of whom would benefit from hearing the results of this research. Second, they should be used to support those who have access to federal funds that support victims of crime; and public defenders, who do not have equal funds for families. Trainings might include education about ways to increase families' resilience by increasing support networks, legitimizing negative feelings while foregrounding productive action, and pivoting from disruption to new normal as they manage the many challenges and opportunities ahead. From these, websites can be created, with resources for professionals and families alike. Trainings for journalists using this research can educate about the concept of disenfranchised grief and its intersection and crime coverage in the media, broadening journalists' access to sources that can provide a voice when family members do not want to talk to the media.

Finally, collaboration with PTO staff, administrators and members would provide valuable insights as to the findings of this dissertation. Feedback from these people, whose stories are shared on this site, would provide an opportunity to further refine the research by enabling critique. Ultimately, the very members whose words helped shape this dissertation's outcomes should have a say in the interpretative analysis. This is an important step in furthering this research and the findings here.

Put differently, this research matters. As stated earlier, and reinforced by posts containing disenfranchised grief, the stigma associated with incarceration spreads to families, as society

conveys upon them—and they themselves also recreate--a devalued social identity.

Institutionally, they become part of a system that marginalizes their needs. Individually, these families' wellbeing suffers at all levels--psychological, economic, physical, and otherwise (Arditti, 2005; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Beckmeyer & Arditti, 2014; DeHart, Shapiro, & Clone, 2018; Hannem, 2008; Hartworth, Farrant, & Attewell, 2016; Murray et al., 2012; Van Cleve, 2016). These families need and deserve support, and they have taken it upon themselves to access it. Through PTO, they are enacting resilience through the conversations they have found online.

Recognizing this need, they themselves have created PTO, and this research shows that it is successful for many. Findings demonstrate that CTR is a clear strategy for supporting families of the incarcerated who are experiencing disenfranchised grief. It helps to reduce isolation, gives support and resources for feelings of being judged, and, when exercised through community, helps those experiencing disenfranchised grief to know, both intellectually and emotionally, that they are not alone. These processes are enacted through everyday online communication. This online resource is good for those who have access to the internet, who are literate, and who have the ability and the time to engage. But certain segments of society do not have these resources. Education about marginalized group members' needs would benefit them and society in general.

5.5. Conclusion

This dissertation sought to explore whether and how disenfranchised grief acted as a trigger for resilience responses in an online forum created by members of a marginalized group, namely, family and other loved ones of prisoners. Through text mining of PrisonTalkOnline (PTO) originating posts and replies to these posts, content analyses of these posts-replies, and semantic network analyses of these data, this dissertation contributes theoretically to the linkage

of disenfranchised grief and the Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR), to how and why people engage on PTO, to which CTR processes are more frequently enacted and why, and to the dual-layer , self-other, resilience processes in which resilience labor enables both identification with an online organizing community like PTO and identities aligned with empathy and sense of normalcy.

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APPENDIX A. CODEBOOK: DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF

This document is the codebook used during the first round of research coding, wherein posts were examined to determine whether or not they contained expressions of disenfranchised grief.

Grief is disenfranchised when “social support is withheld during the mourners’ grieving period as a result of the disapproval towards the type of loss being grieved, the person being grieved, or the griever themselves” (Bailey, 2018). In such cases, expressions of grief can be met with “empathic failure” (Neimeyer & Jordan, 2002), when an individual or group fails to empathize due to pertinent social and psychological factors. Empathic failures predict discrimination, aggression and other negative social interactions (Cikara, 2015).

People whose grief is disenfranchised typically “experience amplified and extended grieving periods as a result of their inability to resolve emotions” (Bailey, 2018) and may socially isolate themselves (Attig, 1996; Kauffman, 1989). They are not offered the rights or roles associated with grieving by the community around them, or wider society. These may include claims to “social sympathy and support or compensations such as time off from work or diminishment of social responsibilities” (Doka, 2008, p. 225).

This codebook defines disenfranchised grief based on Doka’s (1989, 2002, 2008) descriptions of the construct. Each definition used to develop this codebook is derived from Doka’s definitions. When possible, the examples are posts found on PrisonTalk Online (PTO).

The relationship is not recognized (Doka, 2008, p. 229). Society privileges some relationships. This is especially true for those relationships not based on recognized kin ties. These might be the roles of lovers, friends, neighbors, stepfamily and other such relationships. Nontraditional relationships fall into this category as well. Non-kin relationships--

unmarried, same-sex, or affair partners may face negative sanction or have limited social standing. This could also include relationships that are past or over—ex-spouses, former friends or children who never really knew their parent.

Example: “My mother NOW refers to him [the poster’s incarcerated fiancé] only as [a] guy I dated, which is so very untrue. We have lived together for a year and a half and got engaged on my birthday.”

The loss is not acknowledged. This can occur when “the loss itself is not socially validated” or is deemed insignificant, as in case of a miscarriage, abortion, paternal loss of child, or institutionalization of a profoundly disabled family member. There are other cases in which the “reality of the loss is not validated” (Doka, 2008, p. 11), as in those who are comatose, job loss, or the loss of the dream a person had for her life.

Society excludes the griever from social support, judging he or she lacks capacity to grieve (for example, very young children, individuals with intellectual disabilities, etc.). Instead of focusing on characteristics of the loss, this kind of disenfranchised grief occurs based on society’s judgment about the bereaved’s characteristics. A post that discloses the poster’s children’s feelings of grief are ignored by others might be expressing the disenfranchisement of their grief.

The nature of the loss disenfranchises the griever. In these cases, the circumstances surrounding the loss (i.e., conviction and subsequent incarceration) prevent the bereaved from seeking support, and limit the support extended by others. This is particularly salient for families of the incarcerated, as well as those survivors of a suicide loss or loss due to a stigmatized death, such as AIDS.

Example: Partners or family say they “can’t talk about” what they are going through, or about the person incarcerated: “I have no one to talk to and a lot of people here will understand what I’m talking about” (poster, PTO).

Example: Poster references reasons to post on PTO: “I just had to tell someone and I believe people here would understand and actually be happy for me, unlike a lot of people in my life.”

Example: A poster references judgment by others around him/her. “Sorry, I just needed to vent and I feel like if I say all that to him he’ll just get mad again and this is where I feel safe and unjudged to say how I really feel.”

Example: Poster experiences lack of access to grief rituals, or others telling them to move on. “Last weekend my best friend stayed with me and it just happened to be one of those nights where I was really feeling alone and of course I guess I was crying in my sleep for him. The next day she asked me if it hurts so much why do you stay waiting why not move on. The only answer I have is that I love him and I don’t want anyone else. She thinks I’m crazy it led into a big fight and she doesn’t understand and I can’t make her. But it’s lonely when no one gets it.”

How to code

Each post, including its title, is a single unit of data and should be treated as such. The data are contained on a spreadsheet with one row containing one unit of data. Each line contains a Post ID to help the coder see the data online on the site, if needed. To locate the post online, use the following link <http://www.prisontalk.com/forums/showthread.php?t=XXXXXX> . Then substitute the Post ID for the XXs at the end of the link.

To code the data, read the post and look for the existence of disenfranchised grief in accordance with the definitions above. The Excel spreadsheet contains columns associated with each of the definitions. In each column for each post, enter 1 into the spreadsheet if disenfranchised grief is present as defined, or enter 0 if it is not.

APPENDIX B. CODEBOOK: THE COMMUNICATION THEORY OF RESILIENCE

This codebook is situated in resilience definitions according to Buzzanell's (2010, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c) Communication Theory of Resilience. At the current time, all originating posts are not coded but should be coded at the time of the prospectus meeting. At that time, I will provide an updated codebook and include examples of actual replies. Currently the quote below are examples. In this phase of the project, coders will look for communicative resilience in replies to eight PTO subforum posts that had previously coded positive for the existence of disenfranchised grief as per Doka (2008).

To identify communicative resilience, coders will examine each reply and ask the following questions. The individual processes will be coded separately and recorded so results of the existence of individual processes could be reported. Overall existence of communicative resilience will also be coded so that overall processes could be reported in results as well.

To code, coders will consider each reply as a unit and asked the following questions, coding (1) if the process exists, (0) if it does not.

Question 1: Does the Reply Attempt to Craft Normalcy?

Definition: In Buzzanell's (2010) Crafting normalcy means "bring[ing] normalcy to life"(p. 4); is often "embedded in material realities and generated by talk-in-interaction" (p. 4); includes the ability to "assert and perform the mundane in such trying times;" (p. 4) in essence is "literally created through talk and through maintenance of family rituals" (p. 4). Examples could contain language encouraging the poster to maintain daily routines and rituals as a method of coping, even if worded less sympathetically (e.g., "this is your life now" or "this is your new

normal.” (Language referencing “new normal” has been identified in some posts.) Any language that connects to normal processes, challenges the status quo and refuses to accept it would fit into this category. The second example urges the original poster to maintain a routine that “put a small glimmer of sunshine in a bad day,” implicitly because of the “normal” that are embedded within each offered example.

Example: The reply communicates support or endorsement of continuing to function with the day to day routines of life. In the following example, the original poster describes a situation in which her incarcerated boyfriend is constantly calling at work, and upset when she cannot talk for extended periods of time. The reply endorses the originating poster’s maintenance of routines, including normative behavior at work (such as limiting personal phone calls): “A grown person knows that it takes work and focus to keep things running smoothly for two...and that's what you're doing.

Example: I also make time for myself, going to the gym, spending time with my niece and nephews, getting my nails done, little things that put a small glimmer of sunshine in a bad day. Try to do what you can to allow yourself to smile and feel good, even if it's temporary. This has been something that's strengthened our relationship and us independently, as depressing as it can be, try focusing on the positives when they present themselves.

Question 2: Does the Reply Affirm an Identity Anchor?

Definition: Buzzanell (2010) defines an identity anchor as “a relatively enduring cluster of identity discourses upon which individuals and their familial, collegial, and/or community members rely when explaining who they are for themselves and *in relation to each other*” (p. 4, emphasis mine). Thus, to code positive for this process, a reply must affirm a social identity in

connection to the original poster and in more than just a passing way. For example, any statement that explains connection to life experiences (previous incarceration, survivor of DV, rape, etc.) or refers the original poster's status on PTO as a user – “newbie” or “longtime poster” or one who is “riding with” the offender (slang for sticking with the inmate throughout the length of the sentence). As the replying poster communicates an identity anchor message to the original poster, they are not just describing themselves; they are making an observation about the original poster “in relation to each other” (for example, inclusion in the group by use of the word “we”). In many cases they may implicitly or explicitly state “you are not alone” or point to positive characteristics of the individual or group.

Example: I read a lot of different stuff on here, and realize we truly are some strong ass women, to do what we do!

Example: “You are NOT alone! ...Come here when you need support.”

Question 3: Does the Reply Use/Maintain Communication Networks?

Definition: Buzzanell (2010) relies on a definition that emphasizes an example of communication networks result in connections that build social capital, stating “the process of building and utilizing social capital is essential to resilience” (p. 5). Since group membership, relationships and social networks are all implicit in maintaining and using communication networks (Bourdieu, 1986; Buzzanell, 2010; Putnam, 2000; Van der Gaag and Webber, 2008), coders should look for language that prioritizes at least one of these three. Examples could be replies that suggest a post may be better situated on another subforum, or a reply that suggests participation in a PTO meetup, or a reply that communicates the benefits of membership in PTO, or advocates for further engagement on the site or other helpful sites.

Example: “Do your best from this point on to get things together for your family and his homecoming. All you can do now is move forward, in know you feel terrible about all these things and feeling like you let them all down. You need rehab and therapy to get off the drugs, and learn self love and forgive yourself and move forward from this point. I hope it all works out for the best, and you can make things great again, it won't be easy but it will be worth it.”

Question 4: Does the Reply Put Alternative Logics to Work?

Definition: This statement refers to and describes an attempt to employ alternative framing toward the disruption (or disruptive experience). This provides a way to view or understand the disruption. The alternative logic employs a workaround to where the families are saying, “Here is the reality, but we don’t have to accept it.” Coders should examine replies for examples of reframing current situations from the stereotypical “criminal vs society” to one that emphasizes the human who has made a mistake but is striving to live a meaningful life, which includes times with family. These could also include reframing of family life definitions (for example, elevated importance of phone conversations) and the reframing of the prison experience as a life lesson that can lead to a stronger family. In the following example, the reply frames an alternative way of looking at a situation described in an original post wherein a wife is concerned her incarcerated husband has become envious or resentful of her success. The reply offers an alternative framework.

Example: “When you add up the degrading, dehumanizing experience that prison “life” (ha!) really is with the insecurity, uncertainty and self-doubt of those last few months and the possible feelings of envy/jealousy of LO’s who’ve made their lives into admirable success stories while you’ve been rotting, going crazy, being treated like a dog and dying one day at a

time in prison, the grand total you come up with can be overpowering. I don't mean to be a whining, bleeding heart about it all, but there are more dynamics to being inside and then getting out than most people are aware of. Your guy may very likely be more beat up, damaged and traumatized by it all than his pride will allow him to admit. Don't underestimate that possibility and don't be so sure his feelings are as uncomplicated as simple jealousy or feeling threatened."

Question 5: Does the Reply Downplay Negative Emotions and Foreground Positive Actions?

Definition: This process can be found in replies that simultaneously legitimize the original poster's negative emotions while suggesting foregrounding of positive actions. The reply may acknowledge emotions such as anger, depression, fear and hopelessness but encourage the original poster to attempt action that positively move forward past disruption, as in the first example below, which suggests a positive action of waiting until sending a letter written while angry. The second example suggests practical ways of dealing with the overwhelming emotions as her husband is transferred from county jail to prison.

Example: "When you are angry, or are dealing with a serious issue that really has an emotional effect on you, DON'T mail any letter your write until at least one day has past. In almost all cases you will re-read what you wrote and be grateful you didn't mail it yet. Things always look different in retrospect, so it only makes sense to "look back" before you mail that emotional letter."

Example: "I know it's difficult not to worry when our loved ones head to prison, but he's already been inside for a year and a half, so he'll be all right. Take some deep breaths and try to calm down. I'm sure that once he gets settled in, he will contact you either by phone or by letter. Take life one day at a time right now. That's all any of us can do."

APPENDIX C. PTO DISCLAIMER ABOUT MEDIA AND RESEARCHERS

PTO welcomes journalists and/or members of the media to learn and educate themselves about prisons, prisoners, and their loved ones, as well as students and researchers doing research on these subjects.

We will, occasionally, allow the media or students/researchers to request information and personal stories from our members. However, PTO does not endorse any journalist, member of the media, story/report, media outlet, student/researcher, or educational/research institution.

If you decide to communicate with a media representative or a researcher, then you assume all of the risks involved. PTO is in no way liable for the outcome of the story/report/paper. Communication with members of the media and students/researchers is completely voluntarily and PTO holds no responsibility for the consequences of that communication.

PTO does not screen or authenticate any person(s) claiming to be from the media or from an educational/research institution, nor does PTO authenticate their motivations for obtaining the information.

As always, the disclosure of personal information (either yours or someone that is incarcerated) may have some serious repercussions. PTO has no way of predicting how the media or any researcher will present your story or that of your loved one. Any relationship with the media or any researchers is to be entered into at your own risk.

If you receive an unsolicited email or private message from a person claiming to be from the media or researching information for an educational or research institution, report it to the PTO Administration immediately.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

Ph.D., Purdue University, Brian Lamb School of Communication, West Lafayette, IN 47807.

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ACADEMIC WORK

2014-2017 Adjunct Professor, Dept. of Communication, Ivy Tech Community College. Developed strategies to teach content in Fundamentals of Public Speaking. Classroom environment included remote/face-to-face combined (hybrid) classrooms with multiple locations. Teaching philosophy prioritized engaged scholarship, individual achievements, and attention to student success.

2014-2017	Research Assistant, Brian Lamb School of Communication, Purdue University. Guided by Dr. Patrice Buzzanell, I participated in research that interrogated the impact of faculty orientation at Purdue's College of Engineering, including participant recruitment, qualitative participant interviewing, data collection, mixed-methods analysis, and production of scholarly papers. In a separate research project under Dr. Steve Wilson, I helped develop survey instruments, recruited participants, and conducted qualitative pilot interviews to interrogate what veterans' family member messages were most effective at encouraging veterans to seek needed behavioral healthcare.
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2017 VA-qualified Research Assistant, Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University. Under the guidance of MFRI Research Director Dave Topp, I participated in qualitative interviews to learn how veterans in minority populations made decisions about seeking needed behavioral healthcare.

NONACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

2019-present	Director of Advocacy and Awareness, AACSB International, Tampa, FL
2017-2019	Director of External Relations, Military Family Research Institute, Purdue University, West Lafayette IN
2014-2017	Digital Content and Special Projects Manager, Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN
2009-2014	Marketing/Communications Specialist (2009-2014), Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN
2008-2009	Institutional Speechwriter, Office of the President, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN
2006-2008	Editor, Opinions Department, <i>Journal & Courier</i> , Lafayette, IN
2004-2006	Editor, Features Department, <i>The Record</i> , Stockton, CA
1999-2004	Senior Reporter, Metro Department, <i>The Record</i> , Stockton, CA
1997-1990	Senior Reporter, Metro Department, <i>Journal & Courier</i> , Ontario, CA
1995-1997	Reporter, Metro Department, <i>Journal & Courier</i> , Ontario, CA

Selected Books, Book Chapters and Journal Articles

- Eddington, S., **Hughes-Kirchubel, L.**, & Buzzanell, P.M. (2018). Millennial organizing for help and support: Hashtag work-life balance. In M. Z. Ashlock & A. Atay (Eds.), *From theory to practice: Examining millennials reshaping organizational cultures* (pp. 101-121). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Hughes-Kirchubel, L.**, MacDermid Wadsworth, S.M., & Riggs, D. (Eds.) (2018). *A battle plan for military families: Lessons for the leaders of tomorrow*. New York, NY: Springer International Publishing.
- Hughes-Kirchubel, L.**, & MacDermid Wadsworth, S.M. (2018). Introduction to *A battle plan for military families*. In L. Hughes-Kirchubel, S.M. MacDermid Wadsworth, & D. Riggs (Eds.), *A battle plan for military families: Lessons for the leaders of tomorrow*. New York, NY: Springer International Publishing.
- Hughes-Kirchubel, L.**, & Johnson, E.C. (2018). MilVet philanthropy: Challenges past, recommendations for tomorrow. In L. Hughes-Kirchubel, S.M. MacDermid Wadsworth & D. Riggs (Eds.), *A battle plan for military families: Lessons for the leaders of tomorrow*. New York, NY: Springer International Publishing.

Hughes-Kirchubel, L., MacDermid Wadsworth, S.M., & Riggs, D. (2016). State of the science regarding military-connected families. In S.M. MacDermid Wadsworth & D. Riggs (Eds.), *War and family life* (p. 1-15). Cham, Switzerland. Springer International Publishing.

MacDermid Wadsworth, S., **Hughes-Kirchubel, L.,** & Riggs, D. (2013). Research and training about military families: Where are we? In S.M. MacDermid Wadsworth & D. Riggs (Eds.), *Risk and resilience in U.S. military families*. Cham, Switzerland. Springer International Publishing.

Wilson, S., Kamal, D., Winter, S., Dorrance Hall, E., Gettings, P., **Hughes-Kirchubel, L.,** & Inderstrodt-Stephens, J. (2019). Comparing advice from military parents, partners, and veterans about how families can encourage service members to seek behavioral health care. *Journal of Family Communication*, 19, 15-29.

Selected Scholarly Presentations

Hughes-Kirchubel, L., & Eddington, S. (2018, November). *Tweeting, resisting, imagining: An analysis of global resistance and social change*. Competitively selected research paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association. Salt Lake City, UT.

Pauly, J., Eddington, S., Long, Z., & **Hughes-Kirchubel, L.** (2017, May). “*There is no box*”: *Ambiguity and contradiction of faculty in practices embedded teams*. Competitively selected paper presented at the annual conference of the International Communication Association. San Diego, CA.

Hughes-Kirchubel, L. (2016, November). Panel presentation. “Women, stigma and disenfranchised grief: Media coverage of serial murder.” Women’s Caucus Division. Competitively selected paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association. Philadelphia, PA.

Long, Z., Pauly, J., Eddington, S., **Hughes-Kirchubel, L.,** Buzzanell, P. M., & Kokini, K. (2016, June). *Understanding the participation, perceptions, and impacts of engineering faculty learning communities: A mixed method approach*. Competitively selected paper

presented to the annual conference of the American Society for Engineering Education.
New Orleans, LA.

Hughes-Kirchubel, L. (2013, November) *What's on your mind? A serial killer's family resists media through Facebook*. Communication and Technology Division. Competitively selected paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association. Washington, DC.

Awards, Honors and Service

Invited Judge, Texas Bar Association "Best in Journalism" Awards (2016, 2017).

Member, Nominating Committee, National Communication Association (2014-2015).

Invited Judge, University of Laverne Department of Journalism Clip Competition (2013, 2014).

Secretary, National Communication Association Graduate Student Division (2013-2015).

Nominee, Distinguished Master's Thesis Award, College of Liberal Arts, Purdue University (2013).

Nominee, Distinguished Master's Thesis Award, Organization of Communication, Language and Gender (2013).

Member, National Communication Association (2011-present).

Best Editorial Writing, Indiana Associated Press Managing Editors' Awards (2008) Best of Gannett, Commentary/Community Conversation, "Degrees Matter." Series highlighted the importance of a high school diploma. (2007).